Baomu in China: The Portrayal of Female Domestic Workers in Newspapers and Social Media

Lu Wei, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China
Sun Jialu, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China
Yan Chenyu, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China
Yao Yueyan, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China
Zhou Yanyan, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China
Zou Jingyi, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China

Abstract
This study investigates how female domestic workers, known as *Baomu*, are portrayed in Chinese news media. Extant studies have provided an enlightening insight that this group is increasingly framed as a non-negligible threat in newspapers with the growing social demand of domestic services and the heated discussion of several vicious crimes committed by some *Baomu* in recent years. Nevertheless, few studies have explored how the portrayal of this group varies across news media featuring different degrees of political control and commercialization. To fill the research void, this study combines the attribute agenda-setting and framing theory to examine how different agendas and frames of *Baomu* are privileged by the party-affiliated newspapers, non-party newspapers that are more market-oriented, and social media that are populated by diverse privately-owned news outlets. Therefore, 630 *Baomu*-themed pieces of news between July 2018 and July 2021 are sampled and collected for the quantitative content analysis, including 130 from party newspapers, 390 from non-party newspapers, and 110 from social media. It is found that the differences between party and non-party newspapers in their use of agendas and frames are not significant. Additionally, social media tends to use more arresting agendas and frames, while newspapers prefer agendas and frames concerning social economy and stability. This study is conducive to not only generating a more comprehensive understanding of the news outlets representation of *Baomu* but also testifying whether social media have the potential to offer an alternative portrayal that is distinct from newspapers.

Keywords: Female Domestic Workers, Party Newspapers, Non-Party Newspapers, Social Media, Agenda-Setting Theory, Framing Theory

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

1. Introduction

In mainland China, *Baomu* is a term frequently used to describe female domestic workers who are often composed of rural migrant women. Either as a live-in or a part-timer, *Baomu* is usually responsible for looking after children, patients, and the elderly and in charge of cooking, cleaning, and other household chores (Sun, 2009; Tong, 2008). In most official discourse, a gender-neutral term "domestic workers" (*jiazheng fuwu renyuan*) is more favoured than the term *Baomu*, a female-connotation word, to overcome gender bias. Nevertheless, this replacement may obscure certain social issues such as gendered division of labour and unequal power relations as is argued by Wanning Sun (2009). Thus, this article will adopt the term *Baomu*, both for its popular usage and for its ability to capture social-economic tensions at the intersection of gender and class issues in contemporary China more accurately.

In recent decades, with the expanding urban middle-class, the social demand for *Baomu* hiring has been rapidly increasing (Tong, 2018). Despite a large number of this group, it is still marginalized institutionally and culturally. Without sufficient laws and legal contracts, their basic rights, minimum payment and working conditions can be hardly guaranteed (Sun, 2009; Ma, 2011), and their diverse fringe benefits including medical treatment and retirement benefits also tend to be lacking (Tong, 2018). In addition, the *hukou* system that differentiates the entire population between the urban and the rural further compounds urban/rural dualism and social discrimination against rural citizens who are usually considered to need to be modernised and civilised due to their low *suzhi* (Yan, 2006a, 2006b, 2010). All these factors predispose *Baomu* to become an alienated Other in media representations (Sun, 2009).

Since people's perceived reality is largely mediated by media, investigating the portrayal of *Baomu* on news media platforms is significant, since it may influence not only the public perception of this group but also *Baomu*'s own subjectivity. Extant studies (Sun, 2009; Li, 2018; Wu, 2018) have provided an enlightening insight that this group is increasingly framed as a non-negligible threat in news media against the backdrop of several vicious crimes committed by some *Baomu* in recent years. Nevertheless, few studies have explored how the portrayal of this group varies across news media featuring different degrees of political control and commercialization. Thus, to fill the research void, agenda-setting and framing theories are employed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do party-affiliated newspapers and non-party newspapers portray *Baomu* differently in terms of the use of agendas and frames?

RQ2: How do newspapers and social media portray *Baomu* differently in terms of the use of agendas and frames?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Agendas in Representing *Baomu*

The attribute agenda-setting, also named as the second-level agenda-setting, can be utilized to examine the relative salience of the attributes possessed by the object (McCombs, 2006; Weaver, 2007), namely, *Baomu* in this research. The attribute agenda-setting can be categorized into the substantive and the affective aspects. The substantive dimension deals with the factual information that media selectively cover to help the audience cognitively understand (Wanta & Alkazemi, 2018), while the affective attributes refer to the tone of the media coverage to elicit the audience's emotions (Kiousis et al., 1999; Wanta & Alkazemi,

2018), including the positive, negative and neutral tone.

Seven substantive agendas related to the representation of *Baomu* can be identified in the existing studies, which are enlightening for this research. They include Social compassion agenda concentrating on the assistance that *Baomu* receives from the government or society (Sun, 2009), Sexuality and marriage agenda emphasising *Baomu*'s unbridled sexuality and marital lives (Sun, 2008, 2009), Deviance and criminality agenda emphasising *Baomu*'s violations of social norms and laws (Li, 2018; Wu, 2018), Personal struggle agenda concentrating on the difficulties *Baomu* encounter in work and persona life (Li, 2018; Wu, 2018), Right infringement and protection agenda concentrating on the invasion and protection of *Baomu*'s rights (Li, 2018), and Market expectation and employment agenda emphasising market's requirements for *Baomu* and the industrial employment conditions (Li, 2018; Wu, 2018), Self-fulfilment and contribution agenda concentrating on *Baomu*'s sense of fulfilment and contribution to society (Wu, 2018), and Emotional bonds agenda emphasizing the harmonious relationships between *Baomu* and their employers' families (Wu, 2018). Furthermore, Spiritual life agenda is also proposed based on the preliminary sampling which focuses on *Baomu*'s spiritual and cultural life during their leisure time.

2.2 Frames in Representing *Baomu*

In addition to the attribute-agendas, media frames are of equal importance to examine *Baomu*'s portrayal. Entman's (1993, p.52) frequently cited statement defines frames as a way to select certain facets of the perceived reality to make them more salient, so that "problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" can be promoted. On the one hand, attribute agenda-setting overlaps with framing, for they are both concerned with *how* rather than *what* objects are reported and may influence the audience's thinking patterns (Weaver, 2007; McCombs, 2006). On the other hand, framing extends beyond attribute agenda-setting, since framing also involves a series of interpretive schemas and may function as an explicit or implied argument (Callaghan & Schnell, 2011).

Two typologies of frames suggested by de Vreese (2005) are helpful, namely, generic frames and issue-specific frames. Generic frames transcend the restraints of themes and can be universally applied to a different context, while issue-specific frames concentrate on the specificity and details relevant to the issues (de Vreese, 2005). Currently, the frames used to analyse *Baomu*'s media representation involve three generic frames: Conflict frame focusing on the conflict between *Baomu* and others (Li, 2018), Responsibility frame which attributes the cause of an issue to *Baomu*, their employers or agencies (Li, 2018), and Economic consequence frame concentrating on the economic impacts on *Baomu*, employers, and society (Li, 2018). Apart from them, the other four generic frames are also relevant: Morality frame which interprets issues with moral expectations, Human interest frame portraying *Baomu* from an emotional angle, Factual information frame which straightforwardly presents sensitive information about *Baomu* without indicating implications or moral judgements, and Leadership frame focusing on the actions or speeches of a leader of an institution.

Baomu's image serves as the issue-specific frames for more precise analysis: The vulnerable image, portraying *Baomu* as a victim and focusing on the struggles and difficulties they suffer from; Threat image, portraying *Baomu* as criminals who infringe employers' property rights or individuals who behave inappropriately and breach social norms; The unprofessional image, portraying *Baomu* as if they cannot perform their jobs properly and are indolent or

negligent while working; and Role model image, portraying *Baomu* positively, configuring them as qualified workers or individuals who make contributions to society.

2.3 Representation on Different Kinds of News Media

Shoemaker and Reese (1991) propose a hierarchical influence model to explain how various factors may affect media agendas and frames. From the organisational level, media platforms with disparate ownerships, purposes, and values may contribute to distinct agendas and frames in portraying *Baomu*.

Newspapers in mainland China are all owned by the state, but their degree of political control and commercialisation tends to vary for party and non-party newspapers (Kuang & Wei, 2018). Heavily relying on the state's organs' mandatory subscription as their major revenue source, party outlets are tightly controlled by the Party-state and are responsible for diffusing policies, guidelines, and other more serious content (Wei, 1999; Shao, 2002). In contrast, their non-party counterparts are more self-sufficient and enjoy more autonomy to generate entertaining content to cater to the market (Liebman, 2005; Huang, 2001; Wei, 1990). Departing from the state-owned newspapers, social media are populated by diverse privately-owned news outlets.

Although the existing research comparing the representation of *Baomu* between party and non-party newspapers is scarce, relative research concerning rural migrants is fruitful and illuminating. Regarding party outlets, they usually portray rural migrants in a positive light (Hu, 2014; Huang, 2013; Mei et al., 2019), highlight their contribution to society, and construct them as role models (Hu, 2014; Yin, 2016). Since party newspapers are often regarded as "mouthpieces" of government (Kuang, 2014), they are also estimated to use more Leadership and Factual information frames to explain political policies and reduce public debate than non-party outlets. Accordingly, two hypotheses are proposed:
Hypothesis 1 (a): Party newspapers use more Self-fulfilment and contribution agenda and Positive tone than non-party newspapers.
Hypothesis 2 (b): Party newspapers use more Leadership and Factual information frames and Role model image than non-party newspapers.

For non-party newspapers, a negative stance is frequently adopted (Wu, 2018; Mei et al., 2019) to capture audiences' attention (Marcus, et al., 2000). Accordingly, agendas concerning criminality and sexuality (Wu, 2018; Mei et al., 2019; Li & Bo, 2017; Li, 2018; Sun, 2008, 2009) are often used to blame *Baomu* and rural migrants as the cause of various vicious events and mark them as the urban and domestic threat (Wu, 2018; Mei et al., 2019; Li & Bo, 2017; Li, 2018; Sun, 2008, 2009). Based on these, two relevant hypotheses are suggested:
Hypothesis 2 (a): Non-party newspapers use more Deviance and criminality agenda, Personal struggle agenda and Negative tone than party newspapers.
Hypothesis 2 (b): Non-party newspapers use more Responsibility frame, Threat and The vulnerable images than party newspapers.

In contrast with bountiful studies on newspaper representation, the portrayal of rural migrants and *Baomu* on social media is rarely explored. Hence, hypotheses concerning the representation of *Baomu* on social media are not proposed.

3. Data and Methods

Content analysis was employed as the research method. In total, 630 pieces of news with the keyword of "Baomu" in titles were examined in this study. These include 130 pieces of news from party newspapers and 390 pieces of news from non-party newspapers, with the publication time from July 2018 to July 2021, and 110 social media news articles posted in the same duration. News articles from newspapers were collected from the database WiseSearch, a Chinese news data provider. Among these newspapers, those affiliated to party and government organizations belonged to party newspapers, and the others belonged to non-party newspapers. In terms of news articles from social media, they were collected from the top 500 popular WeChat official accounts in 2020 according to NEWRANK, an authoritative data provider for cross-platform ranking of media content.

After data collection, 20 percent of the entire sample was used to test the inter-coder reliability. For most variables, the inter-coder reliability was above .70 (See Table 1 & 2). A series of chi-square tests was performed in SPSS to answer research questions. In addition to the p value, effect size was also measured using Creamer's V, because the variables (media types, agendas, and frames) involved were nominal. The statistical significance level was set at alpha = 0.05; for the r family of effect size measures (Creamer's V included), 0.5, 0.3 and 0.1, respectively, represented the cutting points for 'strong', 'medium' and 'weak' associations.

Types of frames	Frame names	Scott's Pi
Generic frames	Conflict frame	0.74
	Responsibility frame	0.76
	Morality frame	0.74
	Economic consequence frame	0.70
	Human interest frame	0.78
	Factual information frame	0.83
	Leadership frame	0.70
Issue-specific frames	The vulnerable image	0.76
	Threat image	0.92
	The unprofessional image	0.68
	Role model image	0.88

Table 1. Inter-coder reliability of variables of agenda and tone

Types of agendas	Agenda names	Scott's Pi
Attribute agendas	Personal struggle	0.84
	Deviance and criminality	0.90
	Sexuality and marriage	0.79
	Right infringement and protection	0.65
	Spiritual life	1.00
	Self-fulfillment and contribution	0.66
	Emotional bonds	0.97
	Social compassion	1.00
	Market expectation and employment	0.67
Tones	Overall tone	0.69

Table 2. Inter-coder reliability of variables of frame

4. Results

4.1 Agendas and Frames Used in Newspapers

4.1.1   Newspapers' General Preference on Agendas and Frames

According to the collected data, party and non-party newspapers have a similar tendency of agenda and frame choices (see Table 3 and Table 4). In all agendas, Market expectation and employment agenda is most favoured in both party and non-party newspapers, used by 53.1% of party newspapers and 46.9% of non-party newspapers respectively. The secondly preferred agenda for both party and non-party newspapers is Deviance and criminality agenda (26.9% and 29.2% respectively). In addition, the most preferred tone for both is the neutral tone (53.1% and 60.5% respectively).

In terms of frames, Economic consequence frame is favoured mostly by both party and non-party newspapers (74.6% and 64.9% respectively), which is followed by Responsibility frame (40.8% and 49.0% respectively). Moreover, *Baomu* is more likely to be portrayed as Threat image and Role model image in newspapers, but there is a slight difference between party and non-party newspapers, which will be elaborated in the next section.

Agenda/Tone	Party newspapers	Non-party newspapers
Personal struggle agenda	10.0%	6.7%
Deviance and criminality agenda	26.9%	29.2%
Sexuality and marriage agenda	1.5%	6.4%
Right infringement and protection agenda	6.2%	5.6%
Spiritual life agenda	0.8%	0.5%
Self-fulfillment and contribution agenda	8.5%	4.6%
Emotional bonds agenda	13.8%	10.8%
Social compassion agenda	2.3%	2.1%
Market expectation and emplyment agenda	53.1%	46.9%
Negative tone	8.5%	10.0%
Neutral tone	53.1%	60.5%
Positive tone	24.6%	18.5%

A piece of news can simultaneously use more than one agenda and frame, so the percentage of all agendas and frames add up to more than 100.

Table 3. A description of agendas used in party newspapers and non-party newspapers

Frame	Party newspapers	Non-party newspapers
Conflict frame	7.7%	15.1%
Responsibility frame	40.8%	49.0%
Morality frame	12.3%	12.8%
Economic consequence frame	74.6%	64.9%
Human interest frame	20.8%	27.7%
Factual information frame	5.4%	4.1%
Leadership frame	5.4%	5.1%
The vulnerable image	6.9%	13.8%
Threat image	30.0%	37.2%
The unprofessional image	2.3%	8.7%
Role model image	36.9%	26.7%

A piece of news can simultaneously use more than one agenda and frame, so the percentage of all agendas and frames add up to more than 100.

Table 4. A description of frames used in party newspapers and non-party newspapers

4.1.2   Newspaper Types and Selection of Agendas and Frames

A series of chi-square analyses were conducted to check the four hypotheses derived from Research Question 1 that concerns the differences between party and non-party newspapers' agendas and frames using (see Table 5 and Table 6). For H1a, the p values of Self-fulfilment agenda and Positive tone are 0.098 and 0.300 respectively with low V values at 0.073 and 0.084, which means there is no significant difference between party and non-party newspapers in these two variables, so H1a is rejected. As for frames, the p values of Leadership frame and Factual information frame are also higher than 0.05 (0.909 and 0.538 respectively) with low V values at 0.005 and 0.027, so the difference in these two variables is also not significant. Although the p value of the variable Role model image is 0.026, the V value is 0.098, lower than 0.1, indicating an extremely weak association between the use of this image and newspaper types. Therefore, H1b is rejected.

Agenda/Tone	Party newspapers (N=130)	Non-party newspapers (N=390)	Chi-square tests	
			p	V
Personal struggle agenda	10.0%	6.7%	0.211	0.055
Deviance and criminality agenda	26.9%	29.2%	0.614	0.022
Sexuality and marriage agenda	1.5%	6.4%	0.030	0.095
Right infringement and protection agenda	6.2%	5.6%	0.828	0.010
Spiritual life agenda	0.8%	0.5%	0.738	0.015
Self-fulfillment and contribution agenda	8.5%	4.6%	0.098	0.073
Emotional bonds agenda	13.8%	10.8%	0.342	0.042
Social compassion agenda	2.3%	2.1%	0.086	0.008
Market expectation and emplyment agenda	53.1%	46.9%	0.224	0.053
Negative tone	8.5%	10.0%	0.300	0.084
Neutral tone	53.1%	60.5%	0.300	0.084
Positive tone	24.6%	18.5%	0.300	0.084

Table 5. A comparison of agendas used in party and non-party newspapers

For H2a, the *p* values of Deviance and criminality agenda, Personal struggle agenda, and Negative tone are all high at 0.614, 0.211 and 0.300 respectively, with *V* at 0.022, 0.055 and 0.084, lower than 0.1, so H2a is rejected. In terms of frames, a notable point is the *p* value of Responsibility frame is 0.015 with a *V* at 0.164 indicating a weak association, but that is because news can be coded differently under this frame according to different liable subjects in news. Moreover, 40.8% of party newspapers use this frame, while the number for non-party newspapers is 49%, so this difference is not very outstanding. For The threat image, the *p* is high at 0.138 and the *V* is low at 0.065, and for the image of the vulnerable, the *p* is low at 0.036, but with a low *V* at 0.092, so for both variables of the image, the differences are still not significant. Thus, H2b is rejected.

Frame	Party newspapers (N=130)	Non-party newspapers (N=390)	Chi-square tests	
			p	*V*
Conflict frame	7.7%	15.1%	0.112	0.107
Responsibility frame	40.8%	49.0%	0.015	0.164
Morality frame	12.3%	12.8%	0.843	0.026
Economic consequence frame	74.6%	64.9%	0.040	0.090
Human interest frame	20.8%	27.7%	0.119	0.068
Factual information frame	5.4%	4.1%	0.538	0.027
Leadership frame	5.4%	5.1%	0.909	0.005
The vulnerable image	6.9%	13.8%	0.036	0.092
Threat image	30.0%	37.2%	0.138	0.065
The unprofessional image	2.3%	8.7%	0.014	0.108
Role model image	36.9%	26.7%	0.026	0.098

Table 6. A comparison of frames used in party and non-party newspapers

In brief, the agendas and frames that party and non-party newspapers use to portray *Baomu* demonstrate no significant differences basically, which serves as one major finding.

4.2 Agendas and Frames Used in Newspapers and Social Media

4.2.1　Social Media's General Preference on Agendas and Frames

As for agendas used in social media, Deviance and criminality agenda ranks the first at 50.9%, while in newspapers it is Market expectation and employment agenda at 48.5%. Negative tone is more privileged on social media accounting for 29.1%, which is contrary to newspapers' widely-used positive tone at 20.0% (see Table 7).

Agenda/Tone	Newspapers	Social media
Personal struggle agenda	7.5%	13.6%
Deviance and criminality agenda	28.7%	50.9%
Sexuality and marriage agenda	5.2%	11.8%
Right infringement and protection agenda	5.8%	6.4%
Spiritual life agenda	0.6%	1.8%
Self-fulfillment and contribution agenda	5.6%	4.5%
Emotional bonds agenda	11.5%	5.5%
Social compassion agenda	2.1%	0.0%
Market expectation and emplyment agenda	48.5%	14.5%
Negative tone	9.6%	29.1%
Neutral tone	58.7%	60.0%
Positive tone	20.0%	8.2%

A piece of news can simultaneously use more than one agenda and frame,
so the percentage of all agendas and frames add up to more than 100.

Table 7. A description of agendas used in newspapers and social media

Frame	Newspapers	Social media
Conflict frame	13.3%	32.7%
Responsibility frame	46.9%	64.5%
Morality frame	12.5%	2.7%
Economic consequence frame	67.3%	46.4%
Human interest frame	26.0%	47.3%
Factual information frame	4.4%	4.5%
Leadership frame	5.2%	0.9%
The vulnerable image	12.1%	18.2%
Threat image	35.4%	58.2%
The unprofessional image	7.1%	6.4%
Role model image	29.2%	13.6%

A piece of news can simultaneously use more than one agenda and frame,
so the percentage of all agendas and frames add up to more than 100.

Table 8. A description of frames used in newspapers and social media

With regard to frames, Responsibility frame and Human interest frame are more favoured in social media, each at 64.5% and 47.3%. In newspapers, the top two were Economic consequence frame at 67.3% and Responsibility frame at 46.9%. For images, Threat image is more common at 29.2% in social media, and Role model image was more widely used with the proportion at 58.2 % in newspapers (see Table 8).

4.2.2 Newspapers' and Social Media's Selection of Agendas and Frames

According to the statistics, the significant distinction between newspapers and social media when portraying *Baomu* helps to answer Research Question 2 (see Table 9 and Table 10). Regarding the agenda use, Table 9 illustrates that newspapers use Market expectation and employment agenda much more frequently than social media, with the proportions of 48.5% and 14.5% respectively. The low p value approaching 0 means this difference is statistically

significant, and the V value is 0.260, reflecting a medium association. Similarly, social media shows a higher frequency in using Deviance and criminality agenda than newspapers, for the former one at 50.9%, and the latter one at 28.7%. This can also be reflected in the low p value approaching 0, and the corresponding V value of 0.180. As for the tone used, 29.1% of social media news articles use the negative tone, more frequently than do the newspapers (9.6%). Instead, newspapers employ a more positive tone with a proportion of 20%, and the percentage for social media is 8.2%. Both of their p values are extremely close to 0 and V values are 0.254, indicating the statistical significance and strong relation.

Meanwhile, the framing of *Baomu* issues in newspapers and social media reveals huge differences as well. Newspapers use Economic consequence frame much more often than do social media, with a comparison of 67.3% versus 46.4%. The difference is also significant with the p value extremely close to 0, and the V value of 0.165. Nevertheless, social media are more likely to use Responsibility frame, with a proportion of 64.5% compared to the proportion of 46.9% in newspapers. The second and third favoured frames for social media are Human interest frame at 47.3% (compared with 26% in newspapers) and Conflict frame at 32.7% (compared with 13.3% in newspapers). The p values for all these variables are extremely small (0.010, 0.000 and 0.000 respectively), and the corresponding V values are 0.155, 0.177 and 0.210 respectively, suggesting their statistical significance. For the use of image, Threat image is more often used in social media at 58.2%, compared with 35.4% in newspapers. With the small p value approaching 0 and V value of 0.177, the significance is confirmed. By the same token, newspapers use Role model image more frequently than social media, with the proportion of 29.2% versus 13.6%. The p value is 0.001 and the V value is 0.134, which indicates the significance is statistical.

Agenda/Tone	Social media (N=110)	Newspapers (N=520)	Chi-square tests p	V
Personal struggle agenda	13.6%	7.5%	0.037	0.083
Deviance and criminality agenda	50.9%	28.7%	0.000	0.180
Sexuality and marriage agenda	11.8%	5.2%	0.010	0.103
Right infringement and protection agenda	6.4%	5.8%	0.810	0.010
Spiritual life agenda	1.8%	0.6%	0.183	0.053
Self-fulfillment and contribution agenda	4.5%	5.6%	0.664	0.017
Emotional bonds agenda	5.5%	11.5%	0.058	0.075
Social compassion agenda	0.0%	2.1%	0.124	0.061
Market expectation and employment agenda	14.5%	48.5%	0.000	0.260
Negative tone	29.1%	9.6%	0.000	0.254
Neutral tone	60.0%	58.7%	0.000	0.254
Positive tone	8.2%	20.0%	0.000	0.254

Table 9. A comparison of agendas used in newspapers and social media

Frame	Social media (N=110)	Newspapers (N=520)	Chi-square tests p	V
Conflict frame	32.7%	13.3%	0.000	0.210
Responsibility frame	64.5%	46.9%	0.010	0.155
Morality frame	2.7%	12.5%	0.010	0.121
Economic consequence frame	46.4%	67.3%	0.000	0.165
Human interest frame	47.3%	26.0%	0.000	0.177
Factual information frame	4.5%	4.4%	0.955	0.002
Leadership frame	0.9%	5.2%	0.048	0.079
The vulnerable image	18.2%	12.1%	0.087	0.068
Threat image	58.2%	35.4%	0.000	0.177
The unprofessional image	6.4%	7.1%	0.779	0.011
Role model image	13.6%	29.2%	0.001	0.134

Table 10. A comparison of frames used in party and non-party newspapers

In brief, the agendas and frames that newspapers and social media use to portray *Baomu* have some significant differences. For agendas, social media more prefers Deviance and criminality, while newspapers prefer Market expectation and employment agenda; for overall tone used, social media is more likely to use negative tone, but newspapers are more likely to use a positive tone. In terms of frames, social media prefers Responsibility frame, Human interest frame, and Conflict frame compared with newspapers, and newspapers prefer Economic consequence frame compared with social media. In addition, for the choice of image, social media is more likely to portray *Baomu* as Threat image, while newspapers are more likely to portray them as Role model image. The difference between social media and newspapers serves as another major finding.

5. Discussion

In extant studies, *Baomu* (female domestic workers) are often included in the group of rural migrant workers and studied as a whole. Nonetheless, given the specific attributions and issues of *Baomu*, such as gendered division of labour, *Baomu* is innovatively studied as a separate group in this research. Through examining this group's portrayal in newspapers (both party and non-party) and social media, this research tries to fill the research gap of how such the marginalized group is represented both in official and unofficial discourse.

5.1 Newspapers: Party and Non-party

According to the degree of political control and commercialization, Chinese newspapers can be generally categorized into party and non-party newspapers. It is also because of these differences and the degree of censorship that studies comparing the two often find their choice of agendas and usage of frames have certain nuances. Kuang & Wei (2018), for instance, find that for nationally and locally sensitive issues, party and non-party newspapers tend to adopt different agendas and frameworks. However, the results of this research suggest that the coverage of *Baomu* is more consistent in terms of the agendas and frames employed by both party and non-party newspapers. Such convergence in the portrayal of *Baomu* in the two types of newspapers seems to be understood for several reasons.

Firstly, since the 1990s, the decline of the major party newspapers has led to the realization that what the public needs is no longer a mouthpiece of the government but a newspaper that

cares more about their daily lives (Wei, 1999). As a result, non-party newspapers have gradually emerged. However, Wei (1999) still draws an analogy between the relationship of the two types and "a mother-son relationship", implying that the emergence of non-party newspapers still fails to change the leader-led relationship between the two. The party newspaper still has an influential political, economic and organizational guidance on the non-party newspapers, such as ensuring non-party newspapers conform to the party's guidelines and policies and reviewing its reporting plans and important articles. As a result, many non-party newspapers, even though they have a degree of freedom, still trans-print a great deal of information from mainstream party newspapers with minor language revision to guarantee that they can successfully pass censorship. In addition to the dependence of non-party newspapers on party newspapers, there has also been a gradual stylistic convergence of party newspapers on non-party newspapers. After the reform and opening up of the country, the use of party newspapers for political education for all no longer seemed effective (Wei, 1999). Party newspapers' official and preaching style led to their inability to attract readers (Wen, 2016). As a result, in 2012 the government proposed that party newspapers should move closer to non-party newspapers in terms of writing style so that they can narrow the distance between them and the public. Therefore, in the portrayal of *Baomu*, it is perhaps the interdependence and stylistic convergence between party and non-party newspapers that has led to such homogenization.

5.2 Newspapers and Social Media

Unlike the high homogenization appearing in the party and non-party newspapers, this research demonstrates that there are some differences in the strategies used by social media and newspapers in terms of agendas and frames, after comparing newspapers as a whole to social media.

Different from newspapers, which are censored and primarily serve government propaganda, social media is more market-oriented. Its profit-making goal leads it to be more likely to create sensational stories to attract more audience (Kilgo, Harlow, García-Perdomo & Salaverría, 2018). In this way, Human interest frame, portraying *Baomu* from an emotional perspective is favored by social media. Furthermore, scandals with a voyeuristic tendency can also provoke audiences' curiosity (Grabe et al., 2001; Vettehen et al., 2005), which can explain why Deviance and criminal agenda, highlighting violations of social norms and laws among *Baomu* (Li, 2018), is preferred by social media as well. Furthermore, social media has a certain tendency to cater to the taste of elite groups and support their values (Jakobsson, Lindell & Stiernstedt, 2021), and thus the coverage on social media are more focused on their needs and satisfaction (Chen, Shi, Guo, Wang & Li, 2019). That is why *Baomu*, a group that serves the middle or elite class, is often portrayed as Threat image, accompanied by a negative tone. The frequent use of Conflict frame and Responsibility frame, discussing whether *Baomu* should be responsible for some mistakes, is also make sense.

Conversely, newspapers are engaged in political propaganda, which means that they need to promote core and positive values in line with the call of the 19th Party Congress. Therefore, newspapers extensively use role model images with a positive tone to calm public panic about *Baomu* and correct prejudicial impressions of the whole group to maintain social harmony. Apart from that, newspapers usually, from a macro perspective, focus on topics concerning the development of the *Baomu* industry to explain relevant industry regulations and the positive impact of the domestic worker industry on the national economy. In this context, Market expectations and employment agenda and Economic consequence frame are

more common in newspapers.

6. Conclusion

This research examines how the marginalized group of *Baomu* is portrayed in different news outlets, on the basis of agenda-setting and framing theory. The portrayal of *Baomu* is found quite unoptimistic. Newspapers are accustomed to portraying the domestic service industry as a whole from a macro-political and economic perspective and rarely pay enough attention to the real lives of *Baomu*. Newspapers also promote role models of *Baomu* to achieve a harmonious society. Social media, by contrast, prefers to portray them in a negative and sensational light. As a result, both of them seem to portray this group in an indifferent and unsympathetic manner without sufficient humanistic care. The highly generalized and official portrayal in newspapers and the stigmatized portrayal in social media might further marginalize *Baomu*.

Although this research fills the void in the study of *Baomu* to some extent, it inevitably has limitations. In terms of the coverage on social media, this research only selected news articles posted on WeChat as a sample of social media news but did not take into account the news posted on other social media news with different audiences and characteristics, which means that the social media news sample in this research may slightly lack representativeness. Therefore, future research could collect news from a diverse range of social media to explore more comprehensively how different news outlets portray vulnerable groups.

References

Callaghan, K. & Schnell, F. (2001). Assessing the Democratic Debate: How the News Media Frame Elite Policy Discourse. *Political Communication*, 18(2), 183-213. doi: 10.1080/105846001750322970

Chen, L., Shi, J., Guo, Y., Wang, P., & Li, Y. (2019). Agenda-setting on traditional vs social media: An analysis of haze-related content grounded in the extended parallel process model. *Internet Research*, 29(4), 688-703. doi: 10.1108/IntR-08-2017-0315

de Vreese, C. H. (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information Design Journal*, 13(1), 51-62. doi:10.1075/idjdd.13.1.06vre

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

Grabe, M. E., Zhou, S., & Barnett, B. (2001). Explicating sensationalism in television news: content and the bells and whistles of form. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45(4), 635-655. doi: 10.1207/s15506878jobem4504_6

Hu, X. (2014). New Generation of Migrant Workers: Different Shaping in Party Newspapers and Metro Newspapers. *Journal of Tianshui Normal University*, 34(5), 32-36.

Huang, C. (2001). China's state-run tabloids: The rise of 'city newspapers'. *International Communication Gazette,* 63(5), 435–452. doi: 10.1177/0016549201063005005

Huang, D. (2013). From "Mangliu" to "New working class" [Cong "Mangliu" dao "Xin gongren jieji"]. *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, 9, 42-48.

Jakobsson, P., Lindell, J., & Stiernstedt, F. (2021). Introduction Class in/and the media: On the importance of class in media and communication studies. *Nordicom Review*, 42(3), pp. 1-19. doi: 10.2478/nor-2021-0023

Kilgo, D. K., Harlow, S., García-Perdomo, V., & Salaverría, R. (2018). A new sensation? An international exploration of sensationalism and social media recommendations in online news publications. *Journalism*, 19(11), 1497–1516. doi: 10.1177/1464884916683549

Kiousis, S., Bantimaroudis, P., & Ban, H. (1999). Candidate image attributes: Experiments on the substantive dimension of second level agenda setting. *Communication Research*, 26(4), 414-428. doi: 10.1177/009365099026004003.

Kuang, X. (2014). *How Effective is Political Control over the News Media? Political Censorship and News Production in Authoritarian China.* Odense, Denmark: University Press of Southern Denmark.

Kuang, X., & Wei, R. (2018) How framing of nationally and locally sensitive issues varies? A content analysis of news from party and nonparty newspapers in China. *Journalism,* 19(9–10), 1435–1451. doi: 10.1177/1464884917731179

Li, M. & Bo, R. (2017). Salience and invisibility: Mass media's construction of rural migrant workers [Tuxian yu zhebi: dazhong chuanmei dui nongmingong de xingxiang goujian]. *Xinwen Zhishi,* 1, 21-25. Retrieved from http://www.cqvip.com/qk/82115x/20171/671330236.html

Li, Y. (2018) *Research on News Construction of "Nanny" from the Perspectives of Framework Theory* (Master's thesis, Guangxi University, Nanning, China). Retrieved from: https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CMFD&db-name=CMFD201901 &filename=1018132951.nh7v=ne9pZIAsrF4QcL3flxErb0BMNIV91j9dXnmdR53gz7 GUfE14xxRksQSKCkFg7wdz

Liebman, B. L. (2005). Watchdog or Demagogue? The Media in the Chinese Legal System. *Columbia Law Review,* 1(105), 1-157. Retrieved from https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/113

Ma, D. (2011). Research on Beijing domestic workers [Beijing shi jiazhenggong yanjiu]. *Beijing Social Science,* 2, 64-68. doi:10.13262/j.bjsshkxy.bjshkx.2011.02.015

Marcus, G. E., Neuman, R. W., & Makuen, M. (2000). *Affective intelligence and political judgment.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McCombs, M. (2005) A Look at Agenda-setting: past, present and future. *Journalism Studies*, 6(4), 543-557. doi: 10.1080/14616700500250438

Mei, H., Shi, S., Chen, X., & Li, L. (2019). The construction of female migrant workers' image in mainstream newspapers in China [Woguo zhuliu baozhi dui nvxing nongmingong de meijie xingxiang jiangou]. *Southeast Communication,* 8, 117-120. doi: 10.13556/j.cnki.dncb.cn35-1274/j.2019.08.035

Mei, H., Shi, S., Chen, X., & Li, L. (2019). The image of female migrant workers on Chinese mainstream newspapers – take the People's Daily, Southern Metropolis Daily and Yangcheng Evening News as an example [Woguo zhuliu baozhi dui nvxing nongmingong de meijie xingxiang jiangou ——yi 《renmin ribao》《nanfang dushibao》 《yangcheng wanbao》 baodao weili (2009-2018)]. *Dongnan Chuanbo*, 2019(8), 117-120.

Shao, Z. (2002). A discussion on party newspapers becoming mainstream media [Guanyu Dangbao Chengwei Zhuliu Meijie de Tantao]. *Xinwen Jizhe,* 3, 15–18.
Shoemaker, P. J. & Reese, S. D (1991). *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century.* USA: Longman Publishers.

Sun, W. (2008). Sexuality, Domesticity, and Citizenship in the Chinese Media: Man's Needs, Maid's Rights. *China Information*, 22(2), 221–244. doi: 10.1177/0920203X08091545

Sun, W. (2009). *Maid in China: Media, morality, and the cultural politics of boundaries.* London and New York: Routledge.

Tong, X. (2018). Gendered labour regimes: on the organizing of domestic workers in urban China. *Asian Journal of German and European Studies*, 3(1). doi: 10.1186/s40856-018-0036-7

Vettehen, P. H., Nuijten, K., & Beentjes, J. (2005). News in an age of competition: the case of sensationalism in Dutch television news, 1995-2001. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 49(3), 282-295. doi: 10.1207/s15506878jobem4903_2

Wanta, W. & Alkazemi, M. (2018). Journalism as Agenda Setting. In T. Vos (Ed.), *Journalism* (pp. 189-204). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Weaver, D. H. (2007). Thoughts on agenda setting, framing, and priming. *Journal of Communication,* 57(1), 142-147. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00333.x

Wei, Y. (1999). A discussion on the dependent relations between party newspaper and metropolitan newspapers [Lun dangbao he dushibao de yicun guanxi]. *Xinwen Yu Chuanbo Yanjiu,* 4, 14-22. Retrieved from https://www.cnki.com.cn/Article/CJFDTotal-YANJ199904001.htm

Wen, X. (2016) The changed paradigm of news reporting for the party newspaper [Dangbao zai xinmeitishijianzhong xinwenbaodao fanshidezhuanbian]. *Management Observer*, 614(15), pp. 12-14.

Wu, J. (2018). *A study on the image of Baomu on Chongqing's metropolitan newspaper from a sociological perspective.* [*Meijie shehuixue shijiao xia Chongqing dushilei baozhi baomu xingxiang yanjiu*]. (Master's thesis, Southwest University of Political Science and Law, Sichuan). Retrieved from https://cdmd.cnki.com.cn/Article/CDMD-10652-1018203395.htm

Yan, H. (2006b). Rurality and Labor Process Autonomy: The Question of Subsumption in the Waged Labor of Domestic Service. *Cultural Dynamics*, 18(1), 5–31. doi: 10.1177/0921374006063412

Yan, H. (2010). Class utterance and class transformation : second essay on brain work, physical Work, gender, and class [Jieji de Yanshuo he Gaizao—Laoxin yu laodong、xingbie yu jieji zhi'er]. *Open Times,* 6, 121-139. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10397/5413

Yan, H. (2006a). Self-development of migrant women and the production of suzhi (quality) as surplus value. In M. Y. Dong & J. L. Goldstein (Eds.), *Everyday Modernity in China* (pp. 227-259). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Yin, S. (2016). Producing gendered migration narratives in China: A case study of Dagongmei Tongxun by a local nongovernmental organization. *International Journal of Communication*, 10(2016), 4304-4323. Retrieved from: https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/4443

Contact email: Wei.Lu1802@student.xjtlu.edu.cn