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**U.S. REGIONAL NEWSPAPERS' COVERAGE ON
CHINA'S ENTRY INTO THE WTO
----A REGIONAL ECONOMY APPROACH**

**A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
Master of Mass Communication**

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

**by
Ying Kong
B.S., Beijing Normal University, 1997
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine whether a region's economy has an impact on regional coverage of China's WTO entry. It is predicted that regional newspapers vary in reporting this issue because of variation in the regional economic structure. The findings of the study support this prediction.

A content analysis of 282 news articles in the U.S. regional newspapers finds that the regional economy can be a predictor of regional newspaper's coverage. For North Carolina, Illinois and California, significant differences exist in the regional coverage of China's WTO accession in terms of reference to key economic issue, reference to regional economic gain/loss and coverage tone.

This study extends the community structure approach by including the regional economic variable. This regional economy approach will add to our understanding of the traditional theoretical perspectives in the framing of international news.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope of the Study

Studies of regional development patterns and issues indicate that there is no such thing as *the American economy* because the United States is rather a collection of heterogeneous regions with differing problems and opportunities (Hansen, 1988). Therefore, no trade policy can please everyone or result in equal benefits to all groups affected (Wheatley, 2001). This fact has important implication for U.S. news coverage on China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO).

International news tends to be formulaic and monotonous (Moeller, 1999). The formulaic coverage is especially outstanding in the issues regarding China. Research on the U.S. newspaper coverage of China has shown the presence of a clear and unified China frame (Majid and Ramaprasad, 2000). Yet, trade issues can be different because it will cause a plurality of interests, as in the debate over China's entry into the WTO.

The possibility of China's entering the WTO has different consequences to different U.S. states. China's entry into the WTO means it will greatly open its markets to U.S. goods from computer software and hardware to telecommunications systems and the Internet, to food and agricultural products, to financial and insurance services—all of which are needed by China to develop its infrastructure and to provide goods and services for its citizens. Therefore, those states that have competitiveness in those products and services will benefit greatly from China's entry.

However, like everything with two sides, China's entry will create losers as well as winners. One of the trends of globalization, especially in sectors that require large

amounts of unskilled labor, has been to relocate to countries where labor costs are lowest to reduce overhead. As a result, the increase of unemployment in the U.S. due to China's entry into the WTO is inevitable. For the states where factories of some sectors leave for lower production cost, it could be a tremendous economic loss.

Studies show that there is variation in media treatment of political and trade related issues in U.S.-China relations (Li, 1999). It is reasonable to expect that coverage of China regarding political issues such as human rights was relatively negative and uniform (Li and St. Cyr 1998). For news coverage on trade related issues, however, a plurality of interests could yield coverage of diverse orientations. U.S. economic interests in China vary with regions. For some states, the added economic benefits of liberalized trade with China will outweigh the drawbacks; for some others, it is the opposite. It would not be surprising that diverse regional economic interests produce considerable regional variation in reporting on China's accession into the WTO by regional newspapers.

Therefore, U.S. newspapers' coverage of China's entry into the WTO offers a good opportunity to test whether regional economic interest plays a role in influencing the media content. This study uses a regional economy approach, an extension to the work in community structure approach. The community structure approach, using counties or cities as a unit of analysis, links demographic characteristics to both the amount and the direction (positive or negative) of media coverage of critical events (Pollock, 2002). With regard to China's entry into the WTO, regional economy interest may work as a relatively accurate predictor of the attention to issues and direction of newspaper coverage.

Compared to other approaches, the regional economy approach has merit in revealing the factors influencing the news content. It is relatively sensitive in detecting systematic coverage variation. Regions differ in terms of gain and loss as a result of China's accession to the WTO, and such differences is likely to generate distinctive indicators of related issue in the coverage.

Background of China's Entry into the WTO

History of China's Accession to the WTO

China was one of the 23 original signatories of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1948. After China's revolution in 1949, the government in Taiwan announced that China would leave the GATT system. Although the government in Beijing never recognized this withdrawal decision, nearly 40 years later, in 1986, China notified the GATT of its wish to resume its status as a GATT contracting party. (Monedero, 2003)

On January 1, 1995, the WTO was formally founded, which completely replaced GATT after one year of transition. In May, talks on China's return to GATT, which had been suspended for five months, resumed in Geneva. China's negotiations on its return to GATT thus became negotiations on China's WTO entry (Wu, 2001).

China reached tentative agreement on its bilateral negotiations with the United States in 1999. The agreement to grant China normal trading status on a permanent basis (PNTR),¹ which is approved by Congress on May 24, 2000, paved the way for China's admission to the WTO.

On November 10, 2001, after fifteen years of negotiations, WTO members formally approved the accession package for China. China became a full member of the WTO on December 11, 2001.

U.S. Debate over China's Accession to the WTO

China's entry into the WTO has stirred heated debate among the Congress and the media. Those who support China's accession to the WTO and the preliminary U.S. measure of granting China permanent normal trade relations are those who stand to benefit from the economic advantages represented in the bilateral agreement, while those most opposed represent the potential losers of liberalized trade with China (Wheatley, 2001).

In terms of regional economy, China's entering the WTO will bring different costs and benefits to the 50 U.S. states, each of which has different industry structures.

On the one hand, the United States' bilateral trade agreement with China will significantly open the Chinese market to American products and services---from computer software, hardware and semiconductors, to telecommunications systems and the Internet, to food and agricultural products, such as corn, wheat, soybeans, beef, pork, poultry, fruit, nuts, wine and ice cream, to automobiles and chemicals, to financial and insurance services—all of which are needed by China to develop its infrastructure and to provide goods and services for its citizens. Consequently, these businesses are the most ardent backers of China's accession to the WTO.

As with any legislation, there are groups opposed to freer trade with China, most notably those who represent potential American and Chinese losers of the system. The textile industry, for example, objects that, by exploring cheap labor and lax

environmental policies, Chinese competition has the potential to undercut U.S. prices and ultimately drive U.S. firms out of business.

Production shifts out of the U.S. into China are highly concentrated in certain industries, such as chemicals products, household goods, toys, textiles and wood and products. The data on production shifts out of the U.S. also reveal a great deal of variation across states. California was hardest hit, accounting for 14 percent of all production shifts to China, followed by North Carolina (11 percent), and Texas (10 percent) (Wheatley, 2001).

Opponents are from varied groups. Labor unions protest that American workers in import-competing industries such as manufacturing will lose their jobs because the unrestricted entry of Chinese products produced cheaply with “sweatshop” labor would result in the downsizing of less competitive American manufactures.

Joining unions, human rights and environmental activists see open trade with China as a loss of leverage against China’s human rights and environmental issues. In addition, there are those in the U.S. who oppose China's entry into the WTO because they always oppose anything they deem to be in the interest of "Communist" China. It is obvious that people’s attitude on the issue is based on their own leverage of economic benefits and drawbacks of liberalized trade with China.

Endnote

¹ Membership in the WTO requires that each member country grant the other permanent normal trade relation (PNTR) status. For many years, the annual debate over this issue has been a political football, offering opponents from both sides of the political spectrum the opportunity to criticize China on a broad variety of issues. Despite these heated debates, Normal Trade Relations status has been granted every year since 1980 regardless of which party has been in control.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Studies

A thorough review of the mass communication journals and other research literature reveals no previous work on the specific focus of this study: the comparison of U.S. regional newspapers' coverage on China's entry into the WTO. However, there are a number of studies that have some general relevance to the study. These studies fall into two main categories: (1) International news coverage; (2) Regional characteristics and news coverage.

International News Coverage

Factors Affecting Foreign News Framing

Framing is the process whereby communicators act to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed (or ignored) in a particular manner, with some facts made more noticeable than others. When speaking of political and social issues, frames actually define our understanding of any given situation (Kuypers, 2002). The study of international news has identified many factors that affect the news framing of international events. In sum, those factors can be divided into two classes: external factors and internal factors.

A number of studies focused on factors external to news organization that may affect whether or how a foreign event is covered by the media. In a content analysis of *The New York Times* and *People's Daily* from 1987 to 1996, Li (1999) found that national interest affects the coverage of U.S.-China relations. Wang (1992), Lee (1995)

and Sung (2000) have all analyzed U.S. coverage of 1989 Chinese student demonstrations. Wang (1992) and Lee (1995) concluded political ideology plays important role in influencing overall direction of foreign news coverage. Sung found that news coverage is considerably influenced by the U.S. government's responses to the movements and its foreign policy.

While economic interest propels people to learn about countries that are more economically related than others that are not (Wu, 1998), research on economic influence over international news coverage has yield mixed results. In a study of factors determining international news coverage, Paik (1999) found trade is the best predictor, followed by GNP. Yet, many other researches found weak connections between economic factors and international news coverage. For example, Li (1999) found U.S. investment growth in China and U.S.-China trade are weak predictors of news content about Sino-U.S. relations. Robinson and Sparkes (1976) found that trade was not a significant determinant in shaping foreign coverage in the U.S. media.

In addition, in a study of U.S. newspaper's coverage of Canada and Mexico, Wu (1998) found geographic distance was a significant predictor of news stories about either Canada or Mexico—the closer the newspaper to the country, the more coverage. Werder (2002) studied news coverage and framing of the 2001 Israeli Prime Minister election in ten Western print media. His study suggests that close ties of a nation to another also have an effect on the media's handling of the news event occurring in the other country.

The other area of research has focused on internal factors of news organization that may influence international news coverage. By examining the influence of certain organizational and market variables on the extent and nature of foreign news coverage,

Lacy (1989) found that the circulation size and dependence on wire services had the most influence. Other internal factors included marketplace pressure, audience factors, newspaper size and ownership.

However, to date media studies have provided little insight into the regional or local economy as a predictor of international news framing. Consequently investigations of the framing of an international event in different regions within a country are rare.

Formulaic Coverage

Although the factors affecting international news coverage are diverse, international news content itself is monotonous in tone and perspective. Many factors have contributed to the monotonous international news coverage.

Hachten (2001) asserted the Cold War provided reporters with a coherent global road map in terms of what to cover and how to cover it. Also, treatment of foreign news in U.S. newspaper tends to be conflict-oriented (Lacy, 1989). Americans like to see the world in terms of good guys and bad guys. Identifying the good side in a conflict allows the public to root for them and encourages the public to care about their victory or success (Moeller, 1999). As a result, it levels the particularities and anomalies of each crisis into a uniform history and pigeonholes all situations into a good guy-bad guy dichotomy (Moeller, 1999).

Another reason is most newspapers in the United States depend on wire services to provide coverage of foreign events (Lacy, 1989). According to Hachten (2001), companies controlling 80% of daily newspaper circulation have made little effort to produce sustained international coverage. Kaplan (1979) observed a remarkable decrease

in diversity of viewpoints and perspectives since international news in the USA came primarily from the Associated Press (AP) and the United Press International (UPI).

What's more, the packaging of foreign news as a product tends to make all events uniform (Moeller, 1999). Most dailies, and nearly all major papers, are now part of larger newspaper chains. FCC Commissioner Gloria Tristani said consolidation could lead to lots of formats but only one voice (Croteau, 2001). Chain newspapers are often criticized because they reduce diversity of ideas and have a unified influence on editorial policies. As Risser put it, when an independent paper gets bought by a larger corporation, "some get worse, a few get better, and most get homogenized." (Croteau, 2001)

China Frame

The formulaic coverage is especially outstanding in issues regarding China. During the last four decades, China has been a major focus of American foreign policy and has received substantial coverage by American newspapers. Research on the U.S. newspaper coverage of China has shown the presence of a clear China frame (Roya, 2000).

As Kobland (1992) has pointed out, the predominant frame in covering China has been that of anti-communism. The 'deceitfulness of communists' has been a common narrative in the U.S. media, and coverage about communist states has almost entirely focused on the problems and failures of Marxist governments.

Evidence of this framing is also found in a study by Wang (1992) comparing six countries' media coverage of the 1989 Chinese student demonstrations. Her study found that anti-communist ideology is a dominant factor in influencing the actual content and themes of the U.S. newspaper coverage of the event. For example, the New York Times

coverage of the event was found to be full of anti-communist implications and messages. She concluded that when viewed through the lenses of cold war ideology, the complexities of the democracy movement and its historical context were reduced to a simple good guys (the young Chinese students) versus bad guys (the old and evil Communist leaders) melodrama.

However, the U.S. news media have been criticized often. The criticism is best summed up by Kenneth Lieberthal, an expert in Chinese studies at the University of Michigan: "The Western media coverage of China is overwhelmingly negative and overwhelmingly conveys the wrong impression that China is a tightly run, brutal dictatorship. The reality is that Chinese society is extraordinarily dynamic, and there is just a huge amount going on in terms of social change" (Cheng, 1997, p.g.5).

In recent years, U.S. investment in China and U.S.-China trade have risen so sharply as to make their economic interests increasingly intertwined. U.S. government has had to weigh U.S. business interests against its hostile stance toward China. Therefore, it is expected U.S. news media would break the old China frame when reporting U.S.-China trade issues like China's entry into the WTO.

International Economic News

A survey of the growth of economic journalism indicates clearly that the state of economic journalism is closely linked with economic development (Mowlana,1967). Since most of the media assume international issues, by nature, are unobtrusive, and the public is not interested in international news, foreign news is only an appetizer for the popular press. Yet, Hatchten (2001) found the one exception to this trend is the rapid

increase in business and financial news from overseas---a direct result of the globalization of the world's economy.

For most Americans, the press is the single most important source they have for information about the economy. Parker (1997) argued that we're all embedded in economic relations, but our personal experience is only an uncertain drop in the sea of economic actions and assumptions around us.

Moeller (1999) pointed out that coverage of international affairs is often viewed through the lens of "What does this mean for *us*?" International trade issues may be perceived as less relevant to Americans' life because of their abstractness, but personal experience of unemployment or threat of unemployment can transform such global trade issues into concrete and notable ones (Chang, 1999), as in the issue of China's entry into the WTO.

Studies show that there is variation while treating political and trade related issues in coverage of U.S.-China relations (Li 1999). It is reasonable to expect that coverage of China regarding political issues such as human rights was relatively negative and uniform (Li, 1998). For news coverage on trade related issues, however, a plurality of interests can yield coverage of diverse orientations.

Regional Characteristics And News Coverage

Community Structure Approach

In 1964, McLuhan (1964) contended that the "medium is the message." Tichenor et al (1973) modified that by saying the "structure is the message." They initially proposed that social structure and social conflict are most relevant in the area of mass communication research. According to Tichenor et al. (1973), "the press is an integral

subsystem within the total system, and its strong linkages with other system components impinge upon it as much as it impinges upon them, if not more (Tichenor et al., 1973, p.g.217).” Since communication subsystem are themselves creation of the larger structures in which they operate, both media personnel performance and media use patterns of citizens will differ according to structural characteristics (Tichenor et al., 1980).

Researchers then elaborated and tested this approach. According to Pollock (2002), the community structure approach, using counties or cities as a unit of analysis, links demographic characteristics to both the amount and direction of media coverage of critical events. Pollock et al. (1995) argues that for foreign affairs reporting, it is likely that broad differences in community structures may make a difference. Communities differ along structural dimensions, and such difference may give different communities varied stakes in different foreign policy issues. Those varied stakes may be reflected in reporting on those issues in major papers serving those communities. Pollock et al. (1997) also provided evidence in their study of city characteristics and coverage of China’s bid to host the Olympics. They found several city population characteristics—education level, percent professionals and poverty —that clearly correlate with the tone of reporting on China’s bid.

Structural-Pluralism Theory

While community structure may be characterized in several ways, a basic factor is the degree of pluralism (Tichenor et al., 1980). Scholars have used the concept “structural pluralism” to represent the distribution of power in a community. As defined by Tichenor et al. (1980), communities that are more pluralistic have a more diversified population, a

greater number and variety of interest groups, and more specialization. Usually these communities are larger in population. Less pluralistic (usually smaller) communities have a more homogeneous population and fewer competing power factions and, therefore, tend to work in an atmosphere of consensus; decision-making is commonly based on precedent and tradition.

Pluralism affects the role of the news media in the community and the manner in which news media report on, or raise, community issues and conflict (Olien, 1968). In less pluralistic communities, community leaders and interest groups tend to work out conflicts through informal means and interpersonal channels of communication. "A newspaper in a one-industry town is unlikely to report that industry in a critical way," observed Tichenor et al. (1980, 220).

More pluralistic communities, by contrast, tend to work in an atmosphere of greater conflict, and decision makers are forced to take into account the interests of the various groups that are often at odds with one another. In such communities, it is very difficult for community leaders and interest groups to negotiate conflicts through interpersonal channels. Conflict is a more routine part of public life in more pluralistic communities, and since more communication activity must take place at the formal and public level, the mass media engage in more conflict reporting (Olien, 1978).

Scholars also extended the conceptual definition of structural pluralism to include a consideration of political diversity (Ehrlich, 1982) and ethnic diversity (Hindman, 1999). Yet, few studies have ever explored the economic pluralism.

Regional Economy and News Coverage

In a democratic society, media should reflect the range of views and experiences present in a diverse society. Citizens using the media should be able to find cultural representations and political expressions that are both reflective of their own views and experiences and that diverge considerably from those views and experiences (Croteau and Hoynes, 2001). Likewise, economic diversity should be one of the characteristics of democracy.

The 1970s gave rise to rhetoric about the “new war between the states”¹ and to new terms such as Sun Belt, Frost Belt, and Rust Belt². This discourse reflected real and perceived regional economic differences and rates of economic growth (Barnes, 1998).

The economic differences were reflected in news coverage. Hall (2000) found differences among the U.S. papers in an analysis of frames in U.S. and Canadian coverage of audiovisual materials in the GATT. *The Los Angeles Times*, which serves an area that is highly dependent on the movie industry, devoted a relatively large amount of its coverage to the treaty’s implications for California and the Los Angeles area. In contrast, *The New York Times* is, in many ways, a national rather than a local paper. It devoted less space to the regional impact of the treaty and concentrated on exploring its consequences for various industries, which were more likely to be of interest to a geographically diverse readership.

Many other studies explored the relationship between local or community economy and news coverage. Building on the work of Pollock and his colleagues, the community structure approach suggests a Protection Hypothesis, that is the larger the

proportion of a community's economic interests with a stake in an issue, the more likely coverage will favor those interests (Pollock, 2002)

The press is part of a reciprocal process, affected by the system in which it functions and affecting it in turn (Tichenor et al., 1980). For example, on the one hand, local economics influence local news coverage (Hansen, 1991). A local newspaper's profits depend upon advertising revenue and readership, therefore, the larger the community's population and the healthier the local economy, the greater the potential revenue of the local newspaper (Kaniss, 1991). The type of system or structure in which the media operate affects the size of the local newspaper and its coverage. In many cases, the media content is determined partly by those who finance it: publishers, advertisers, and business elites (Shoemaker and Mayfield, 1987).

On the other hand, the local press legitimized local industry through positive framing in news stories during all stages of community conflict. Taylor et al. (2000) examined 600 articles in the local press coverage of environmental conflict during a ten-year period. Results suggest that the local press did frame the industry and activists differently and drew more attention to its position than the activists by citing more company sources. By framing the industry more positively than activists, the local press limited the information reaching its readers, information necessary to make informed decisions and reasoned opinions in a community debate.

Olien (1989), echoing the above scholars, argued that media coverage is affected by the extent that the community relies on manufacturing as part of its employment and economic base. News organizations commonly defer to economic and political powers in the community, and their content typically reinforces established authority.

Research Gap

Although there are many previous studies on U.S. newspaper's coverage of international news, few studies have explicitly explored the link between international news and U.S. regional economy. Some studies of the relationship between economic development and media content, while seeking to explain the economic influences that shape media product, have rarely treated regional economic interest as a major predictor. Also, the connection between news coverage of foreign event and regional economic difference, while often implied, has remained largely unexplored in the literature.

International communication studies examine the flow of information and influence from one nation to another (Stevenson, 1996), and tend to consider a nation as a single, unified system. While a country-by-country approach can serve some purposes, an important additional contribution will result from examining the social consequences of mass communication in a regional context (Unesco, 1970).

In the United States there are strong indications that distinct, metropolitan-centered regional economies exist. National average indicators of economic performance tend to mask important differences in the performance of these regional economies. Therefore, a nationalist view does not adequately explain economic reality in the United States (Barnes and Ledebur, 1998).

The present study seeks to bridge the research gap by focusing on regional economy as a major predictor of U.S. news coverage of foreign event. From a regional point of view, this study will examine and compare news coverage of China's entry into the WTO in newspapers from regions with different economic structures.

Endnotes

¹ In the “new war between the states,” corporations bargain with several states to find the best combination of quality of life, potential labor force, tax advantages, and other elements of a competitive “package.” This approach is logical for the business, but pits area against area. For state and local governments, offering incentives for business location and retention is a well-established practice that appears to have yielded good results. All the statistical evidence suggests that these incentives do impact on location decisions.

² In the 1960s journalists coined the term *Sunbelt* to refer to those areas of the US (especially the South, Southwest and Pacific Coast states) where temperate climate is a contributing factor to accelerated urban growth rates since World War II. *Frostbelt* refers to those regions of the US (northeast and north central) where severe winter climate has had some impact on out-migration of industry and population. *Rustbelt* refers to the same regions that have experienced job losses owing to industrial obsolescence.

CHAPTER 3

HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Hypotheses

Based on the previous studies, the following relationships are hypothesized:

H1. The key economic issue referred in the coverage of China's WTO entry reflected the major regional economy interest.

Previous studies show that communities differ along structural dimensions, and such difference may give different communities varied "stakes" in different foreign policy issues. Those varied "stakes" may be reflected in reporting on those issues in major papers serving those communities (Pollock et al, 1995). Therefore, it is expected that regional newspapers are most likely to report on the economic issues that can best reflect the economic interest of the region as a result of China's WTO entry.

H2. The more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the less non-economic issues will be referred in the coverage.

The debate between China trade supporters and opponents is characterized by a divide between economic and non-economic factors (Wheatley, 2001). Supporters look to the significant profit to be made from free trade with China, while opponents decry Chinese human rights abuse, Taiwan crisis and environmental abuse. H2 test the degree of association between economic interests and the attention to the non-economic issues.

H3a. The more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the more likely the coverage refers to regional economic gain.

H3b. The more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the less likely the coverage refers to regional economic loss.

Previous studies show local economics influence local news coverage (Hansen 1999) and local press legitimized local industry through positive framing in news stories (Taylor et al 2000). Therefore, it is expected to find a linkage between regional economy variance and newspapers' reference to regional economic interest.

H4a. The more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the more likely the coverage refers to national economic gain.

H4b. The more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the less likely the coverage refers to national economic loss.

It is expected that regional newspapers would expand regional economic interest into national economic interest so as to build a broader legitimization to either support or oppose China's WTO accession.

H5. The more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the more favorable likely the coverage of China's entry into the WTO.

Those who support China's accession to the WTO are those who stand to benefit from the economic advantages represented in the U.S.-China bilateral trade agreement. Those most opposed represent the potential losers of liberalized trade with China.

Therefore, the tone of coverage of China's entry into the WTO by regional newspapers can be expected to link to regional economic interests.

H6. The more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the more likely the coverage of China's entry into the WTO uses more supportive sources.

Frames are rarely presented without being attributed to an individual speaker or source. (Haider-Markel 2001) The news and current affairs media may themselves be influenced by how, where and from whom they source information to create their products. (Brand 2001) Study shows the media favor government and industry sources, supported local industry in editorials, and legitimize local industry over activist and citizen sources.

Research Question

RQ1: Is the framing of China's entry into the WTO associated with regional economy variance?

The debate in the United States over whether China should be granted membership in the WTO, and on what terms, has as much to do with politics as with international trade (Frazier, 1999). Therefore, the researcher expects two key framing methods, economical and political. Because of the lack of previous study on how regional economy influences news framing, the researcher proposes a research question instead of a hypothesis.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHOD

In order to compare the news coverage of China's WTO entry presented by newspapers of different regions, the researcher used content analysis to analyze coverage variations and economic influences affecting the coverage. As defined by Wimmer and Dominick (2000), content analysis method studies and analyzes communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner. A content analysis is a useful method for the researcher to get quantitative results from the printed material.

This study analyzed major newspapers published in three regions in the U.S. A region is defined as a broad geographical area distinguished by similar features. Region, in some cases, is used to refer to multi-state territories such as the Census Bureau's Northeast, Midwest, South East, and South Central regions. For a greater precision and consistency with economic system division--state economy, national economy and global economy, region is defined by state in this study

Rationale for the Selection of the Three States

The first step of this study was to determine which U.S. states could best represent the economic costs and benefits in terms of China's entry into the WTO. Illinois, North Carolina and California were selected because they bear distinctive economic interests as a result of China's accession to the WTO.

Illinois is one of the states that will benefit from China's entry into the WTO. The "Corn State" ranked second in agriculture product export to China in 1998. China's entry into the WTO means low tariffs for corn-related products, which are certain to boost exports of those products to China. Also, Illinois will enjoy increased sales of heavy

equipment, mining and construction equipment, burners, blowers, valves, auto parts, batteries and cell phones (The Trade Partnership, 2000).

North Carolina, known as one of the premier furniture production areas in the country, has been hard hit by production shifts to China. One of the most reported cases of production shifts out of North Carolina involved Universal Furniture. In January 2001 Universal Furniture started laying off 360 employees as it prepared to shut down its Marion, N.C., operation where bedroom furniture is built. North Carolina expects to suffer more than 40,000 jobs lost over the next decade (Bronfenbrenner, 2001).

China's entry into the WTO will be a sweet and sour deal for California. On the one hand, its telecommunications industries will benefit greatly from the elimination of tariffs on network equipment, computers, peripherals, components and instrumentation (The Trade Partnership, 2000). On the other hand, California will suffer a loss of over 85,000 jobs in the next decade due to production shifts to China (Bronfenbrenner, 2001).

Population

The population of the study was all news stories, features and editorials concerning China's entry into the WTO published in the regional newspapers in the three U.S. states from January 1995 to December 2002. In 1995, the WTO was formally founded to replace GATT. China's negotiations on its return to GATT thus became negotiations on China's WTO entry. China joined the WTO in 2001. The study period extended for one year after China joined the WTO. No sampling procedures are involved.

The news stories and editorials were located through the key word search from LEXIS/NEXIS database. The key words include "China," "WTO" and "Permanent Normal Trade Relations." The term "Permanent Normal Trade Relations" was included

because the cornerstone principle of the World Trade Organization is that members provide each other Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) status. China needs to receive PNTR status for the U.S. to accept China as a member of the WTO. Therefore, the PNTR is closely associated with the China's entry into the WTO.

Since the search yielded abounding data for California and Illinois, only when "China" and "WTO / Permanent Normal Trade Relations" appeared in headline or lead was the story included in the sample. Given the limited search results for North Carolina, as long as "China" and "WTO/ Permanent Normal Trade Relations" existed in the full text, the story was included in the sample. Articles from the Associated Press were eliminated from this study.

After viewing these articles, those containing less than ten percent coverage of the China's entry into the WTO issue were eliminated. As a result of this search procedure, a total of 282 articles were selected for the study, including 53 from newspapers in North Carolina, 97 from newspapers in Illinois and 132 from newspapers in California. No sampling procedures were involved.

Operational Definition of Key Variables

Key Economic Issues: Issues having direct relation with U.S.-China trade activity. The variable includes six aspects. **Export** referred to sales of U.S. products to China; **Import** meant purchase of China's products to the U.S.; **Production shift** referred to manufacturing of products that move out of the U.S. to China; **Unemployment** referred to issues related to job loss in the U.S. caused by China's entry into the WTO; **Investment** stands for U.S. financial credits to China. Trade and economy

issues that were related to China's entry into the WTO, but did not fall into the above categories were defined as *Other Issues*.

Non-Economic Issues: Issues irrelevant to U.S.-China trade activity. Six non-economic issues were defined. **Human rights** issue referred to China's social and political treatment of its citizens. Human right was the leading form of political leverage opponents used against China's entry into the WTO. **Taiwan** issue referred to the conflict between Mainland China and Taiwan. A threat against Taiwan was another excuse for people to oppose China's entry. **Environment** issue referred to the pollution situation in China. Opponents tended to argue that Chinese industry, as a result of the absence of restrictive environmental policies, would pollute regardless as to whether it sells its products domestically or abroad. **Labor** issues referred to worker conditions in China. Opponents also alleged that there were no protections for workers in China. **Other** issue referred to Non-economic issues that did not fall into the above categories.

Regional/National Economic Interest: Economic gain and loss for a state/U.S. as a result of China's accession to the WTO. Three categories were under this subject. **Gain** referred to opportunities, advantages or benefits that China's entry into the WTO would bring to a region or the country. **Loss** referred to challenges, disadvantages or costs that China's entry into the WTO might cause to a region or the country. **Neutral** referred to words, phrases, sentences or statements that indicated China's entry into the WTO would bring impact to regional/national economy, but did not specify gain or loss.

Coverage Frame: Framing is the process whereby communicators act to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed (or ignored) in a particular manner, with some facts made more noticeable than

others (Kuypers, 2002). The researcher defined three framings. A story was **politically framed** if China's WTO accession was treated as a political issue. A story was **economically framed** if China's WTO accession was treated as an economic issue. Framing that did not fall into the above categories were **others**.

Tone of the Coverage: Whether the coverage is favorable or unfavorable. Pollock et al (1997)'s definitions of favorability and unfavorability were used. Articles were considered **favorable** which positively described the opportunities that China's entry would bring, welcomed and supported China's entry or countered the reasons given by others who opposed China's entry. Articles were considered **unfavorable** which opposed China's entry into the WTO. Unfavorable articles tended to focus on China's human rights record, Taiwan issue, and its environment and labor issues. An article was coded **neutral** if it contained material that either made no effort to support or oppose China's entry, or contained an approximately equal proportion of favorable and unfavorable material.

Source Used: A source is a person or organization which gives information to news reporters. Sources are explicitly identified as such when news reporters quote or paraphrase information from them in stories (Riffe, 1998). The researcher defined nine sources. **Regional Government Officials** included mayor, trade secretary and other government officials from regional level in the U.S. **National Government Officials** included President, spokesman, negotiation representative and officials from national governmental bodies in the U.S. **Regional Industry** referred to businessman or investors or people on behalf of local industry. **Experts** referred to trade expert, economist, policy advisor; **Activists** referred to anyone speaking on behalf of, or as a representative of, any

organized or protest groups. This could include members of or representatives of anti-WTO organization, environmental organization and human rights organization, or other individual activists. **Individuals** referred to the U.S. individual or residents of a region who bear neither government nor business identity. **China** referred to sources from China. It included Chinese President, governmental officials or negotiation representatives. **International** sources referred to WTO officials, European Union officials, or sources from nations other than U.S. and China. **Other** sources meant sources that could not be categorized into the above groups.

Three kinds of tone of sources were also identified. **Support** referred to favorable statement about China's entry to the WTO; **Oppose** referred to unfavorable statement about China's entry to the WTO; **Neutral** referred to no bias or no related comment on China's entry to the WTO.

Coding Procedures

The coding of news content was conducted according to the prescribed procedures by Daniel Riffe et al. (1998). The study unit was the article, and the recording unit was the occurrence of the references of the indicators representing the key variables.

To ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the coding results, the researcher and another Mass Communication graduate student carried out the inter-coder reliability test. The researcher provided the coder a structured training session to explain the coding procedures and categories, and gave a representative sample content to be analyzed for an initial test. When the initial test of reliability yielded satisfactory results, the main body of data, approximately 10%, was coded. The reliability coefficient calculation formula used

is from Holtsi (1969). Each major variable was tested for inter-coder reliability. The score ranged from 70% to 100% with the average of 85%.

With inter-coder reliability satisfied, the researcher continued to code the remaining 90 % of articles. The coding process was the same as it was for the inter-coder reliability test. First, the researcher read the entire article to identify key economic issues and record the reference to each non-economic issue and the reference to regional/national economic interest. Then the researcher identified the source used and recorded the occurrence of the source stance in each category. Finally, the researcher determined the coverage framed and the tone of the entire article. In addition to the above data coding categories, the researcher marked the newspaper location and article placement when applicable.

Upon completion of the coding, the researcher entered the values into an Excel Spreadsheet. The categories were labeled and converted into SPSS format for further analysis.

Data Analysis Tools

Janis and Fadner's (1949) Coefficient of Imbalance¹ was used to determine the relative position of each paper on the issue of China's entry into the WTO. This formula can produce a number between +1.0 and -1.0, representing the strength of favorability in newspaper coverage. These coefficients are meaningful in that they represent the average presentation of relevant content and the degree to which the opportunity to present the predominant direction was used. Then Spearman-Rho rank-order correlation analysis was used to determine whether these coverage differences could be associated with differences in region economic characteristics, as suggested by the hypotheses.

Pearson Correlation test was used to examine the relationship between the beneficial level of regional economy and reference to regional/national economic gain/loss or the usage of supportive sources. To analyze the relationship between unfavorable reference to non-economic issues and coverage tone or frame, one-way ANOVA was carried out. In addition, for the variables dealing with nominal and ordinal data, the researcher used nonparametric statistical methods, Chi-square and crosstab to analyze.

Endnote

¹ Coefficient of Imbalance formula

$$C(f) = (f^2 - fu) / r^2 \quad \text{where } f > u$$

$$C(f) = (fu - u^2) / r^2 \quad \text{where } f < u$$

f= the sum of the attention scores coded “favorable”

u= the sum of the attention scores coded “unfavorable”

n= the sum of the attention scores coded “neutral”

$$r = f + u + n$$

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

H1. The data provide partial support for the first hypothesis, which expected that the key economic issue referred in the coverage would reflect the major regional economic interest. The findings ($X^2= 43.38$, d.f.= 10, $p< .01$) suggest that the key economic issues referred in the China's WTO accession coverage is related to regional major economic interest, and the relation is significant (Cramer's $V= .28$, $p<.01$). Table 1 shows the coverage of newspapers in North Carolina and Illinois reflected their respective economic interest, while the coverage of newspapers in California partially reflected its economic interest.

Table 1
Frequency of Key Economic Issues by Regions
(%)

Variables	Export	Import	Unemployment/ Production shift	Investment	Other	N/A
Illinois	42	2	2	6	6	41
California	46	1	5	8	6	35
North Carolina	9	4	19	0	6	62
Chi-Square=43.38 df=10 $p < .01$ Cramer's $V= .28$ $p < .01$						

In North Carolina, the major economic interest, which is huge job loss and production shift as a result of China's WTO entry, is reflected in the key economic issues referred in regional newspapers. Unemployment/production shift issues in North Carolina ranks first of all the six economic issues, accounting for 19 percent. The import issue, another issue relating to the economic loss, accounts for 4 percent. In total, the issues

reflecting regional economic costs in North Carolina is 23 percent, 14 percent more than the export and investment issues, which are related to the regional economic benefits.

Illinois' biggest economic interest lies in its agriculture export. It will also benefit from investment in China. Illinois newspapers devoted 48 percent to benefit-related export and investment issues, but only 4 percent to costs-related import and unemployment/production shift issues.

Unlike the other two states, California has complicated and relatively balanced economic interests as a result of China's WTO entry. It will have the biggest export rate and job loss rate in the U.S. California newspapers, however, didn't fully reflect its relatively balanced economic interest. Export issue, accounting for 46 percent, matches its major economic benefits, but unemployment issue, only accounting for 5 percent, failed to reflect its major economic costs.

H2. The data fail to support the second hypothesis, which stated that the more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the less unfavorable non-economic issues will be referred in the coverage. To test this hypothesis, Spearman's rho correlation coefficients are used. The results in Table 2a and Table 2b show that the four unfavorable non-economic issues are not significantly correlated with regional economy ($p > .05$).

Table 2a
Spearman's rho Correlation Between Beneficial Level of Regional Economy
and Unfavorable Reference to Non-Economic Issues

(N=282, 1-tailed)

Variables	Human Rights		Taiwan		Labor		Environment	
	r	sig	r	Sig	r	sig	r	sig
Beneficial Level of Regional Economy	-.05	.21	-.07	.13	-.01	.47	.02	.37

Table 2b
Mean Score of Unfavorable Reference to Non-Economic Issues

Variables	Human Rights	Taiwan	Labor	Environment
Illinois	.10	.04	.02	.01
California	.17	.14	.03	.01
North Carolina	.15	.08	.02	.02

Additional analysis were conducted to test the correlation between the unfavorable reference to non-economic issues and tone or frame. Results in Table 2c indicate the unfavorable reference to human rights ($F = 8.23, p < .01$) and Taiwan issue ($F = 15.45, p < .01$) have a relationship with unfavorable tone of coverage. Furthermore, comparing the mean score of unfavorable reference to human rights issue (.36) and Taiwan issue (.38), I find they were most often referred to in unfavorable coverage.

Table 2c
One-Way ANOVA on Unfavorable Reference to Non-Economic Issues by Tone
($N = 281, df = 2$)

Variables	Human Rights		Taiwan		Labor		Environment	
Tone	F	Sig	F	Sig	F	Sig	F	Sig
	8.23	.00	15.45	.00	5.24	.01	3.42	.03

Table 2d
Mean Score of Unfavorable Reference to Non-Economic Issues

Variables	Human Rights	Taiwan	Labor	Environment
Favorable	.09	.04	.02	.01
Neutral	.13	.05	.01	.00
Unfavorable	.36	.38	.10	.05

Results in Table 2e demonstrate that the unfavorable reference to human rights ($F = 5.38, p < .01$) and Taiwan issue ($F = 8.23, p < .01$) are significant different by framings. Results in Table 2f suggest how the variables related. That is, the unfavorable reference to human rights and Taiwan issue more often occurred in political-framed articles than in economic-framed articles.

Table 2e
One-Way ANOVA on Unfavorable Reference to Non-Economic Issues by Frame
($N=281, df=2$)

Variables	Human Rights		Taiwan		Labor		Environment	
Frame	F	Sig	F	Sig	F	Sig	F	Sig
	5.38	.005	8.23	.00	3.74	.03	1.61	.20

Table 2f
Mean Score of Reference to Non-Economic Issues

Variables	Human Rights	Taiwan	Labor	Environment
Political	.24	.19	.04	.01
Economic	.09	.01	.01	.01
Other	.05	.20	.10	.01

H3a. The data partially support the hypothesis that predicted that the more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the more the reference to regional economic gain. It would appear that the results support the hypothesis. The exception is in the case of California. Comparing the mean score of regional economic gain (Table 3aa), we find that mean score of North Carolina is .09, the lowest among the three states. However, the highest mean score is California (.44), instead of North Carolina (.38), which is inconsistent with the expectation.

Table 3aa
Mean Score of Reference to Regional Economic Gain

Variables	Reference to Regional Economic Gain
Illinois	.38
California	.44
North Carolina	.09

When only considering Illinois and North Carolina, correlation coefficient (Table 3ab) is .21 and p-value is .01, suggesting regional economy and the reference to regional economic gain has a positive relationship and the correlation is significant at the .05 level. But when taking California into comparison, the correlation between regional economy and the reference to regional economic gain is not significant ($r=0.11$, $p=0.08$).

Table 3ab
Pearson Correlation Between Reference to Regional Economic Gain and Beneficial Level of Regional Economy

Variables	Reference to Regional Economic Gain (Excluding CA) (N=150)		Reference to Regional Economic Gain (Including CA) (N=282)	
Beneficial Level of Regional Economy	r	Sig	r	Sig
	.21	.01	.11	.08

H3b. The data support the hypothesis that the more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the less the reference to regional economic loss. The results of Pearson correlation coefficients in Table 3ba suggest the regional economy has negative relationship with regional economic loss and the correlation is significant ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$).

H4a and H4b. The data reject the hypothesis that the more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the more the

Table 3ba
Mean Score of Reference to Regional Economic Loss

Variables	Reference to Regional Economic Loss
Illinois	.04
California	.05
North Carolina	.34

Table 3bb
Pearson Correlation between Reference to Regional Economic Loss and Beneficial Level of Regional Economy

Variables	Reference to Regional Economic Loss (N=282)	
Beneficial Level of Regional Economy	r	Sig
	-.22	.00

reference to national economic gain, or the less the reference to national economic loss. Comparing the mean score of the three regions (Table 4a), we find Illinois has lower mean score in national gain (.43) than North Carolina (.54), and higher score in national loss (.25) than North Carolina (.18).

The results of Pearson Correlation analysis (Table 4b) suggest that the difference in the reference to national economic loss ($r = -.13$, $p = .027$) and national economic gain ($r = .06$, $p = .29$) is not significant at the 0.01 level.

H5. The data support the fifth hypothesis, which stated that the more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks, the more favorable the coverage of China's entry into the WTO. According to the Coefficient of Imbalance (Table 5a), Illinois has the highest score (0.22), followed by California (0.18) and North Carolina (0.01). Spearman's rho analysis is used to determine if the difference

Table 4a
Mean Score of Reference to National Economic Gain and Loss

Variables	Reference to National Economic Loss	Reference to National Economic Gain
Illinois	.25	.43
North Carolina	.18	.54
California	.09	.60

Table 4b
Pearson Correlation between Reference to National Economic Gain/Loss and Beneficial Level of Regional Economy
(N=282)

	Reference to National Economic Gain		Reference to National Economic Loss	
Beneficial Level of Regional Economy	r	Sig	r	sig
	.06	.29	-.13	.03

is significant. As shown in Table 5b, Correlation Coefficient is 0.18 and $p < .01$, suggesting the correlation between regional economy and coverage tone is highly significant. Interestingly, all newspaper coverage is positive, ranging from slightly to strongly positive.

Table 5a
Coefficient of Imbalance

	Illinois	California	North Carolina
Coefficient of Imbalance	.22	.18	.01

(The scores above zero indicate relatively favorable coverage and those below indicate relative unfavorability.)

H6. The data do not support the six hypothesis, which predicted that the more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks, the more the

Table 5b
Correlation Between Coverage Tone
and Beneficial Level of Regional Economy
(N= 282)

Spearman's rho	Tone of Favorability	
Beneficial Level of Regional Economy	r	sig
	.18	.00

coverage of China's entry into the WTO uses more supportive sources. As shown in Table 6a, the results of Pearman' s Correlation indicate correlation between regional economy and supportive sources is not significant ($r = -.04$, $p > .05$).

Table 6a
Pearson Correlation Between Supportive Sources
and Beneficial Level of Regional Economy

Variables	Supportive Sources	
Beneficial Level of Regional Economy	r	sig
	-.04	.53

Additional analysis was conducted to determine which sources are used most by regional newspapers. The results, which are shown in Table 6b, suggest a similar pattern of source usage in regional newspapers. Government official and industry spokesman were the two major sources in the coverage of three regions, accounting for 74 percent in Illinois, 70 percent in North Carolina and 63 percent in California. To the contrary, regional newspapers devoted no more than 4 percent to citizen and activist in each state.

RQ1. Regarding the first research question, whether the framing of China's WTO entry is related to regional economy, I find no relationship between the two variables. Table 6 shows that North Carolina ranks first in political framing (45 percent), followed by California (39 percent) and Illinois (35 percent). Illinois ranks first in economic framing (58 percent), followed by California (53 percent) and North Carolina (49

Table 6b
Percentage of Sources Used by Regions

	Illinois		North Carolina		California	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Regional Government Official	43	20	15	13	44	11
National Government Official	68	32	48	41	101	25
Regional Industry	32	15	10	9	66	16
National Industry	14	7	8	7	46	11
Expert	14	7	12	10	39	10
Labor Union	12	6	3	3	8	2
Activist	4	2	2	2	15	4
Citizen	2	1	1	1	1	0
China	8	4	5	4	48	12
International	3	1	7	6	3	1
Other	14	7	6	5	31	8

percent). The ranking seems to suggest the more the economic benefits of liberalized trade with China outweigh the drawbacks for a state, the more economic framing and the less political framing. However, the results ($\chi^2 = 6.21$, d.f. = 4, $p > .05$) suggest the framing difference is not significant for the three regions.

Table 7
Percentage of Framing by Regions

	Political (%)	Economic (%)	Other (%)
Illinois	35	58	7
North Carolina	45	49	6
California	39	53	8
Total	39	54	7
Chi-Square=6.21 df =4 p= .18			

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The findings have some important implications. First, the regional economy can be a predictor of regional newspapers' coverage. Findings of H1, H3 and H5 indicate regional newspapers vary in reporting China's WTO entry. For North Carolina, Illinois and California, significant differences exist in the regional coverage of China's WTO accession in terms of reference to key economic issues, reference to regional economic gain/loss and coverage tone.

In North Carolina, its major leading industries deal with low-waged textile, furniture and wood manufacturing. Because Chinese labor costs are 50 to 80 times lower than in the United States, those labor-centered industry will move out to China. Statistics show North Carolina is the source of more than a quarter of all production shifts from the Southeast. Correspondingly, the findings indicate North Carolina newspapers focused more on unemployment issues and production shift issues than export issues, referred more to regional economic loss and used less favorable tones than newspapers in Illinois and California.

Illinois has agriculture as its leading industry and is the third biggest exporter of agricultural products in the nation. As was expected, Illinois newspapers emphasized on export issues more than job loss issues, had the fewer references to regional economic loss and more favorable tone than newspapers in North Carolina and California.

In California, the pluralistic economic structure leads to its relatively balanced economic interests in terms of free trade with China. Accordingly, California newspapers used a relatively balanced tone compared with newspapers in the other two states.

Illinois newspapers and North Carolina newspapers referred to the economic issues that best reflected regional economic interests in each state, and California newspapers used a relatively balanced tone to reflect the balanced regional economic interest of the state. These results lend support to Hansen (1991)'s idea that local economics influence local news coverage. Likewise, these findings confirm Taylor et al.'s (2000) argument that local press legitimizes local industry through positive reporting in news stories.

Second, findings of H1 and H3 also indicate that different regional economy plays a role in regional newspapers' coverage of China's WTO entry. In Illinois and North Carolina, where the position of each state in free trade with China is obvious in terms of benefits and costs, regional newspapers in each state had consistent pro-region attitudes in reporting China's WTO accession, which was found in their reference to regional economic issues and regional economic gain/loss. This is because regions that are dominated by only a few firms or industries are susceptible to economic instability (Smith and Kyriakou, 1999). Accordingly, newspapers in such regions tend to protect regional industry by reporting in favor of regional industry. Therefore, the regional economy plays a strong role in news coverage in regions with obvious economic advantages or disadvantages. This finding supports Tichenor et al.'s (1980) conclusion that the community press protects community institutions, reflects the concerns of dominant power groupings, and is unlikely to report industry in a critical way in a one-industry town.

Yet, the regional economy plays a weak role in news coverage in regions like California, where the economic structure is relatively complicated and economic interests

are relatively balanced in terms of free trade with China. On the one hand, California will benefit from huge export opportunities for its telecommunications industry, agriculture industry and increased market for investment in financial and insurance services; on the other hand, employment in California will be hit hardest compared with other U.S. states. The findings of H1 suggest California newspapers didn't reflect the huge job loss in the state, and findings of H3a indicate California newspapers referred to more regional economic gain than newspapers of the other two states did.

According to structural pluralism theory, more pluralistic communities tend to work in an atmosphere of greater conflict, and decision makers are forced to take into account the interests of the various groups that are often at odds with one another (Olien, 1978). Therefore, it is expected that in regions like California, a variety of interest groups and factors will affect the coverage of China's WTO entry. As a result, the role of the regional economy on coverage of China's WTO entry might be offset by many other factors.

Third, the findings of H5 might be the most unexpected of the study. It was expected that North Carolina newspapers would have negative coverage and California newspapers would have neutral coverage, but it turns out instead that the coverage tone in three states range from slightly favorable to strongly favorable.

It seems counter-intuitive that regions with unfavorable positions in free trade with China would welcome China's WTO entry, but it becomes reasonable when we take the trend of free trade with China into consideration. Although it is arguable whether economic globalization is inevitable, no one would deny that integrating China into the world trade system is a certainty. As *The San Francisco Chronicle* (May 12, 2000) said,

China will enter into the WTO regardless of whether Congress grants China PNTR status. If congress rejects permanent status for China, U.S. firms would be ineligible for China's WTO concessions on services and investment -- meaning that other nations' firms would be able to set up production, distribution and servicing facilities in China while American firms would not.

Accordingly, the results of the study suggest regional newspapers adopted a pragmatic attitude in reporting China's WTO accession, mirroring the trend of trade integration. In North Carolina, even though many of its leading industries like textile and wood furniture will suffer from production shifts to China and huge job losses, regional newspapers portrayed the local industry not only as a weak group, but also as a challenge-taker who is going to meet those challenges. *The Charlotte Observer* (September 14, 2002), North Carolina's largest newspaper, reported in a story headlined "Century Furniture Carves Out Its Future," that a leading regional furniture company adjusted its business strategy under the pressure of production shifts to China so as to make a profit. In the article, an economist was also quoted as suggesting that rather than seeking protection for vulnerable industries that are destined to fail, local industry should spend more money retraining workers dislocated by imports.

Forth, the variation of the regional economy did not necessarily affect regional newspapers when referring to non-economic issues and framing in terms of China's WTO entry. Although references to unfavorable non-economic issues and framing decisions were expected to vary on China's WTO entry coverage by regions, findings of H2 and RQ1 suggest this is not the case.

However, the study finds the reference to non-economic issues is related to coverage tone and framing. The results demonstrate human rights and the Taiwan issue are most often referred to in unfavorable politically-framed articles.

The debate in the United States over whether China should be granted membership in the WTO, and on what terms has as much to do with politics as with international trade (Frazier and Hansen, 1999). Opponents of China joining the WTO expanded the negative consequences of this event on the U.S. economy to include political dimensions. Opponents of the bill said that China should be sanctioned for its threats against Taiwan, not rewarded with a closer trading relationship and WTO membership.

Also, in the debate over whether China should be granted membership in the WTO, opponents saw trade with China as a loss of leverage against China's human rights problems. As Li (1998) said, human rights are not treated as a high-visibility, independent issue or as a separate issue in foreign policy. Instead, references to human rights were consistently entwined with other issues, both foreign and domestic.

Fifth, the result of H6 that supportive sources are not significantly different by regions, confirms Harry's (2001) conclusion that sourcing of newspapers in differing social structures generally reveal more similarities than differences. Findings of this study demonstrate newspapers in the three regions all cited governmental officials and industry spokesmen the most, and individuals and activists the least. This result adds support to the existing literature that mass media tend to promote interests of elite or powerful groups (Taylor et al 2000, Fishman 1980, Neuzil and Kovarik 1996). This study lends support to the argument (Taylor, Lee and Davie, 2000) that regional newspapers favored

government and industry sources and marginalized activist and citizen sources in a conflict.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The degree of variation in the economic performance of regions in the United States is inconsistent with the assumption of a single, somewhat homogeneous national economy. Evidence of the extent of this variation suggests that the region economies may be the basic economic building blocks. Therefore, economic thinking must be sensitive to the diversity of regions and their unique circumstances and needs. These ideas have consequences. Changing the lens through which we see the world leads us to reframe how we understand the problems and the issues we face (Barnes & Ledebur, 1998)

Likewise, changing the ways through which we analyze news media in covering trade issues---from a national perspective to a regional perspective, can also lead to new findings. The purpose of this study was to examine whether the regional economy had an impact on regional coverage of China's WTO entry. It was predicted regional newspapers would vary in reporting this issue because of variation in the regional economic structure. The findings of the study support this prediction.

The results have shown significant relationships between regional economic structure and favorability of coverage. Regional economy can be a predictor of regional newspaper's coverage of China's entry into the WTO. Trade, based on the principle of comparative advantages¹, inevitably leads to different outcomes or regions with different economic structures. Therefore, regional newspapers vary in reporting trade issues.

The findings also suggest different regional economic structures have different roles in regional coverage. In a region where the gap between regional economic gain and loss are very large, the regional economy plays an important role in the coverage of trade issues, while in a region like California where the economic gain and loss is balanced, the regional economy plays a relatively weak role in coverage.

The findings reconfirm previous research on community structure and news coverage. This study, echoing Taylor et al. (2000), argues that regional economy legitimize regional industry. Also, this study supports Pollock et al.'s (1995) argument that for foreign affairs reporting, it is likely that broad differences in community structures may make a difference. Communities differ along structural dimensions, and such differences may give different communities varied stakes in different foreign policy issues. Those varied stake may be reflected in reporting on those issues in major papers serving those communities.

This study challenges some conventional arguments that political ideology is a very strong indicator in determining the overall direction of U.S. news coverage of China. Li (2000) found in his study of U.S. newspaper's coverage of China's WTO entry, that anti-communist ideology dominated the content direction. However, the finding of this study that the coverage in three regions is positive suggests that when taking regional economic interest into consideration, political ideology plays little role in the coverage. This is because regional media have to weigh business interests against political ideology in reporting international trade with China issues.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

As with all previous research, the study experienced certain limitations. First, determining how to measure the benefits versus costs of U.S.-China trade policies is a challenge for both researchers and policy makers. Unfortunately, to date there is no comprehensive national data on the export and employment effects of trade agreements and policies. This study chose the three states based on two exploratory studies on the effect of China's WTO entry on U.S. economy (Bronfenbrenner, 2001 and Wheatley 2001), which may not fully mirror the economic reality.

Second, this study only uses newspapers from three states, which limits the ability to generalize or draw definitive conclusions. Therefore, before generalizing the results expansively, it is recommended that a replicated study be conducted using newspapers from other states.

Nevertheless, this study makes a contribution in exploring the factors influencing coverage of issues of international relations by applying the regional economic approach. This study extends the community structure approach by including the regional economic variable. In addition, the regional economy approach will add to our understanding of the traditional theoretical perspectives in the framing of international news.

Endnote

¹ According to the comparative advantage theory, trade across geographical units arises to take advantage of inherent differences (Donald, 1998). In other words, a nation has a comparative advantage in the production of a particular commodity if it can produce that commodity using fewer resources than other nations. For example, the U.S. possesses a comparative advantage in airliners over China, and China has a comparative advantage in clothes over the U.S.

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APPENDIX I

CODING SHEET

1. Newspaper (1) Illinois (2) California (3) North Carolina
2. Placement (1) Front (2) Inside A (3) Other
3. Economic issues _____ (Select only one issue from the list)
4. Reference to Regional Economic Interest Gain _____ Neutral _____ Loss _____
5. Reference to National Economic Interest Gain _____ Neutral _____ Loss _____
6. Reference to Non-Economic Issues Human rights _____ Taiwan _____ Labor _____
Environment _____ Other _____
7. Coverage Framed (1) Political (2) Economic (3) Other
8. Tone (1) Favorable (2) Neutral (3) Unfavorable
9. Source
 - 9a Gov Official-Regional Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9b Gov Official-National Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9c Industry-Regional Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9d Industry-National Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9e Expert Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9f Labor Union Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9g Activists Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9h Citizen Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9i China Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9j International Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____
 - 9k Other Support _____ Neutral _____ Oppose _____

APPENDIX II

CODING PROTOCOL

1. Newspaper

Select one of the regions where the newspaper is published

2. Placement

Select one of the categories based on the section the article appears

3. Key Economic issues

Select one from the list that applies

- (1) Export: refers to export of U.S. products to China
- (2) Import: means import of China's products to the U.S
- (3) Unemployment/Production Shift: Unemployment refers to issues related to job loss in the U.S. caused by China's entry into the WTO; Production shift refers to production shifts out of the U.S. to China.
- (4) Investment: stands for U.S. investment in China.
- (5) Other: Trade and economy issues that were related to China's entry into the WTO, but did not fall into the above categories

4. Reference to Regional Economic Interest

Count the number of reference for each category.

Gain: Words, phrases, sentences or statements indicating regional gains for a region will be coded as one unit. (For example, sentence like "Illinois farmers see promise in the trade deal because China has agreed to dramatically raise import quotas and slash tariffs on corn, soybean products and pork, three of the state's leading commodities" will be coded as one unit in this category.)

Loss: Words, phrases, sentences or statements indicating loss for a region will be coded as one unit. (For example, sentence like “North Carolina’s textile industry is one of the most vulnerable because Chinese manufacturing costs are much lower than those in this country” will be coded as one unit in this category.)

Neutral: Words, phrases, sentences or statements that indicate regional economic interest, but do not specify gain or loss. (For example, statement like “China’s integration into the world trading system presents both opportunities and challenges to California” will be coded as neutral.)

5. Reference to National Economic Interest

Record the occurrence of each category.

Gain: Words, phrases, sentences or statements indicating gains for the whole country will be coded as one unit. (For example, statement like “China’s entry to the WTO will open a potentially gigantic market to U.S. businesses” will be coded as national gain.)

Loss: Words, phrases, sentences or statements indicating losses for the whole country will be coded as one unit. (For example, sentence like “U.S. interests were obviously at stake” will be coded as loss.)

Neutral: Words, phrases, sentences or statements that indicate regional economic interest, but do not specify gain or loss. (For example, statement like “China’s entry to the WTO will have great influence on the U.S. economy” will be coded as neutral.)

6. Unfavorable Reference to Non-Economic Issues

Count the number of reference for each category.

Non-economic issues: issues irrelevant to U.S.-China trade activity.

Unfavorable reference: Words, phrases, sentences or statements mentioning non-economic issues in a critical, hostile or adverse tone. For example, sentence like “China has one of the world’s worst records of human-rights abuses” will be coded as unfavorable reference. Sentence like “Proponents of more liberalized trade with China hope that China’s entry into the WTO will propel China toward democracy and human rights” should not be coded as unfavorable reference.

Human rights issue: refers to China’s human rights condition, which was the leading political leverage opponents used against China’s entry into the WTO.

Taiwan issue: refers to the conflict between Mainland China and Taiwan. A threat against Taiwan was another excuse for people to oppose China’s entry.

Environment issue: refers to pollution situation in China. Opponents tended to argue that Chinese industry, as a result of the absence of restrictive environmental policies, would pollute regardless as to whether it sells its products domestically or abroad.

Labor issues referred to labor condition in China. Opponents also alleged that there were no protections for workers in China. ***Other*** issue referred to Non-economic issues that did not fall into the above categories.

7. Coverage framed

Select one that applies

Political framed: China’s WTO accession was treated as a political issue, like U.S.-China diplomatic relations.

Economical framed: China’s WTO accession was treated as a trade-related issue.

Other: Framing that did not fall into the above categories.

8. Tone

Determine the tone of the whole story. Select one of the categories.

Favorable: positively described the opportunities that China's entry would bring, welcomed and supported China's entry or countered the reasons given by others who opposed China's entry.

Unfavorable: opposed China's entry into the WTO. Unfavorable articles tended to focus on China's human rights record, Taiwan issue, and its environment and labor issues.

Neutral: if it contained material that either made no effort to support or oppose China's entry, or contained an approximately equal proportion of favorable and unfavorable material.

9. Source

Record the number of occurrence for each source with three different tones.

Regional Government Officials: include mayor, trade secretary and other government officials from regional level in the U.S.

National Government Officials: include President, spokesman, negotiation representative and officials from national governmental bodies in the U.S.

Regional Industry: refer to businessman or investors or people on behalf of local industry.

Experts: refer to trade expert, economist, policy advisor

Activists: refer to anyone speaking on behalf of, or as a representative of, any organized or protest groups. This could include members of or representatives of anti-

WTO organization, environmental organization and human rights organization, or other individual activists.

Individuals: refer to the U.S. individual or residents of a region who bear neither government nor business identity.

China: refer to sources from China. It included Chinese President, governmental officials or negotiation representatives.

International: refer to WTO officials, European Union officials, or sources from nations other than U.S. and China.

Other: refer to sources that could not be categorized into the above groups.

Support: refer to favorable statement about China's entry to the WTO

Oppose: refer to unfavorable statement about China's entry to the WTO

Neutral: refer to no bias or no related comment on China's entry to the WTO

APPENDIX III

INTERCODER RELIABILITY

Major Variables	Percent %
Economic Issues	79
Reference to Regional Economic Interest	75
Reference to National Economic Interest	70
Unfavorable Reference to Non-Economic Issues	79
Coverage Framed	79
Tone	86
Regional Government Official	86
National Government Official	79
Regional Industry	75
National Industry	79
Expert	93
Labor Union	93
Activists	93
Citizen	96
China	100
International	100
Other	75
Average percent	85%

Holsti's formula: Reliability = $2M / (N1 + N2)$

M = the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree
N1+N2 = the total number of coding decisions by the first and second coder, respectively.

APPENDIX IV

REGIONAL NEWSPAPER LIST

Region	Newspaper
Illinois	Chicago Daily Herald
	Chicago Daily Law Bulletin
	Chicago Lawyer
	Chicago Sun-Times
	Copley News Service
	Crain's Chicago Business
	Crain's Small Business Chicago
	Illinois Legal Times
	The Pantagraph (Bloomington, IL)
	The State Journal-Register (Springfield, IL)
North Carolina	Chapel Hill Herald
	The Charlotte Observer
	The Herald-Sun (Durham, N.C.)
	The Morning Star (Wilmington, NC)
	News and Record (Greensboro, NC)
	Sunday Star-News (Wilmington, NC)
California	The Business Press / California
	Cal-OSHA Reporter
	California Journal
	California Supreme Court Service
	City News Service
	The Daily News of Los Angeles
	East Bay Express
	The Fresno Bee
	LA Weekly
	Los Angeles Times
	Metropolitan News Enterprise
	Modesto Bee
	New Times Los Angeles
	The Press Enterprise
	The Recorder
	The San Francisco Chronicle
	San Francisco Examiner
	SF Weekly
	Ventura County Star (Ventura County, Ca.)

VITA

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