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「牙尖嘴利」的紙老虎：《南方週末》如何揭發社會矛盾

A Paper Tiger with Sharp Teeth

How *Southern Weekend* discloses social tensions in China

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the discourse strategies investigative journalism uses to disclose social tensions in China. It delivers a theoretical framework for the understanding of investigative journalism in general and its Chinese counterpart in particular. Furthermore, the author elaborates on the possibilities, strategies and limitations of investigative journalism in China. Investigative stories that disclose three major social tensions in China were selected for analysis. These social tensions focus on “crimes against the underprivileged”, “abuse in education” and “desperate crimes”. Since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) perceives these social tensions as a potential threat to its legitimacy of leadership, news about them are considered to be highly sensitive while at the same time useful in alerting the CCP to solve them. The research has found that most of the strategies used are “circumvention of value” and “interviewee opinion formation” followed by the strategy “open end”. However, Chinese investigative journalism has to toe a thin line in its practice.

Investigative journalism/ social tensions/ China/ *Southern Weekend*

Chapter 1. Introduction

In hand with the economic reforms of the 1980s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was forced to “secularize” the media sector and therefore loosen its grip on the absolute control over the media. As a consequence, China’s media departed from the rigid, totalitarian control characteristics of the Cultural Revolution. Triggered by Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms since the 1980s the Chinese state gradually shifted from an ideologically-driven dictatorship to a market-orientated autocracy (Lee, 1994).

Media in the People’s Republic of China was once an unquestionable part of the Communist political structure and served solely as a tool of political control. In this sense, journalists, regarded as “cadres”, were obliged to share the perspective and practices of the Soviet ideological model of the press, i.e. journalists equaled Party propagandists.

Beginning with the year 1986, journalists in China have begun to advocate for freedom of the press more forthright than ever before. They strived for a separation of the Party press and a non-party press. Subsequently, Chinese press began to experience tremendous structural changes. At that time, the Party proved to be too inflexible and dogmatic to provide functional policies. As a result the economic bureaucracies started to strive for self-reliance in information services. This marked the beginning of a new branch in Chinese media, the market-oriented press. The separation also led to the break-down of the monopoly of the Party-state over the media (Zhang, 1993).

During the propagandist post-reform period in the early 1990s, investigative journalism or any kind of critical reporting of the process of marketization would have been considered to be political suicide and a threat to the new pro-market agenda.

With the entrenchment of market relations and the consolidation of Jiang Zemin's pragmatic leadership by the mid-1990s ideological conflicts at the Party core were temporarily resolved, while left- and right-sided intellectuals were both marginalized. As a result of the settlement of the inner-party struggle for power, a new space for investigative journalists and their profession of focusing on specific issues and concrete problems was created. During the 1990s, the press system in the PRC began a revolutionary transformation process. The former pure propaganda tool of the orthodox Party-state was exposed to the forces of marketization and commercialization. The new market forces merged with the propagandistic ideas and formed a ground-breaking new hybrid. The vast diversification of media from a simple Party mouthpiece to a complex marketized medium offered newspapers a unique position. These new information-gathering systems entitled their journalists to initiate investigations and serve as the central leadership's eyes and ears on local situations. The problem of inadequate and unreliable communication within the state bureaucracy and now, with a commercial logic rooted outside the government bureaucracy itself, media-originated exposure sometimes helps to shape the terms of public discourse and led to the formation of specific reform policies. Nowadays, the reformed and commercialized news media are playing an increasingly crucial surveillance role, bringing certain issues to the public arena.

Although, nowadays the Party still is ambitious and also has the power to exercise control over the media, the economical reforms in China have nevertheless created some space for operational and financial autonomy (Pan & Chan, 2003).

This thesis will shed light on a particular practice of investigative journalism in China, the practice of disclosing social tensions, i.e. crimes of Party officials or businessmen against ordinary, less well-off citizens that are mostly located in the less

developed areas of China. The CCP itself pays close attention to this phenomenon of social tensions due to its unpredictable capability to disrupt social order. In this sense, the CCP is tremendously ambitious to fight corruption in society. According to the White Paper issued in December 2010 by the State Council of the People's Republic of China the Chinese government has always antagonized corruption in the country. In the past the CCP has already established programs to fight corruption and political power abuse. These organs and measures are elaborated in the first section of State Council's White Paper:

The "State Prosecutorial Apparatus", the "Government Supervision Organ" and the "CCP Discipline Inspection Office". The government, moreover, issued the "People's Constitution", the "People's Corruption Punishment Regulations" and other "anti-corruption" regulations. In order to maintain the pureness of the People's political state, the Chinese government launched the three-anti-campaign: anti-corruption, anti-squandering and anti-bureaucratization, and the five-anti-campaign, anti-tax fraud, anti-state property fraud, anti-inferior construction corruption and anti-economic espionage. The CCP attempts to eliminate corrupt behavior, punish corrupt elements in society, shape a healthy climate in society without corruption and to remarkably improve the overall situation. (p. 2)

Social tensions are mainly considered to be the result of corruption or corruption-related crimes. As elaborated in the Chinese White Paper, the Party is absolutely aware of the problem and considers corruption to be a crucial threat to its legitimacy. Since social tensions are often traced back to corrupt local cadres, public anger tends to target the authorities in general. Thus, the CCP perceives this issue as a

serious threat to the harmonious society (hexie shehui) and to social stability (Qing, 2007). According to the Party's rationale, social tensions lead to social disorder and social disorder leads to scrutinizing the Party's legitimacy for leadership. This phenomenon is also referred as the "social volcano". Journalists frequently discuss various issues of instability in rural and urban China, e.g. rural protests, labor protests, urban community mobilizations, housing demolition disputes, and assaults against public officials. Most of those social tensions have originated from the rapidly changing system of "social stratification in China" (Whyte, 2010).

It is for this very reason why investigative journalism and social tensions in China present the focus of this thesis. The present research consists of two theoretical parts that deal with investigative journalism and Chinese investigative journalism, a methodology section, and an analysis-finding part.

As post-reform Chinese journalists have found inspiration from both Western and Chinese journalistic practices, this thesis will begin with a brief discussion of these two traditions by addressing their respective, yet often similar values and principles. First, the author will present and discuss the concept of investigative journalism from a Western perspective. In this regard, several definitions of investigative journalism will provide a theoretical framework for later discussions. Pertaining to the content of that first section, journalistic paradigms, roles of the journalists and the connection between the reporter and the source will be explained in order to present a cohesive introduction to the topic and to provide the theoretical background for this thesis.

The second part will present the concept of Chinese investigative journalism and form the theoretical core of this thesis. In this regard this paper distinguishes between two different journalistic paradigms in China and therefore explains the

duality of investigative reporting in China. This second part delivers also a basic definition of the concept of Chinese investigative journalism in order to emphasize the limitation of the scope for this piece of research. In addition, this thesis will first deal with five aspects of the phenomenon of investigative journalism in China as a basis for conducting the discourse analysis.

First the author will focus on the historical background and the appearance of the market-oriented press in particular.

Secondly, since the Chinese media system tremendously differs from any of its Western counterparts, it is necessary to emphasize the difference of the Chinese addressee of media. Compared to the West, the Chinese receiver of media has not been referred to the term “audience” from the very beginning. The term audience has evolved with the end of the Mao-era and nearly successfully replaced its original predecessor, the masses.

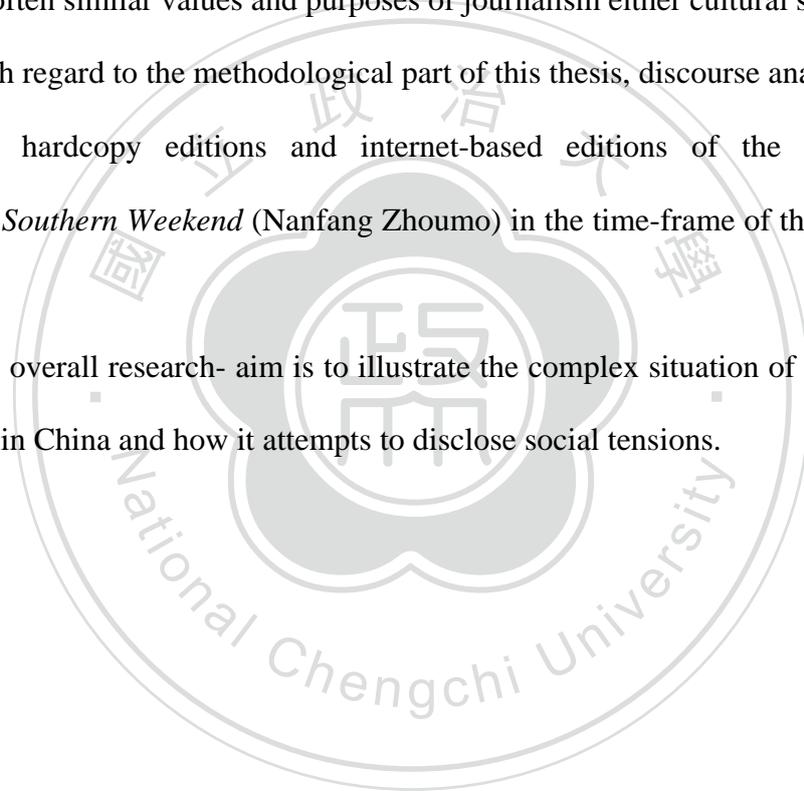
As to the third aspect, the author will elaborate the different roles that investigative journalists in China assume. In addition, one of the most unique and most controversial phenomena of Chinese investigative journalism, i.e. internal reporting, will also be analyzed. As a consequence of assuming all the roles explained in this part, investigative journalists are not only confronted with possible retaliation coming from the central-party authority, they also have to face the even more sophisticated and rather unpredictable threat of local media control.

The fourth aspect pertains to the question what kind of strategies journalists in China employ and how they defend themselves against punishment. Aside of the strategic and theoretical background of investigative journalism in China, the author attempts to elaborate how Chinese muckrakers deal with day-to-day issues vis-à-vis the state apparatus of the PRC.

Fifthly, observing the issues of Chinese investigative journalism in China from a Western perspective, this paper's attempt is to find an appropriate answer to the question whether it should be understood as the Party's adversaries or mouthpiece. In this regard, it is important to review the Chinese term of "yulun jiandu" that overlaps with its Western counterpart "watchdog journalism" in theory, yet, is still different due to its overall Party allegiance. As post-reform Chinese journalists have found inspiration from both, Western and Chinese journalistic practices, this thesis will also reveal the often similar values and purposes of journalism either cultural sphere.

With regard to the methodological part of this thesis, discourse analysis will be applied to hardcopy editions and internet-based editions of the investigative newspaper *Southern Weekend* (Nanfang Zhoumo) in the time-frame of the years 2007 to 2010.

The overall research- aim is to illustrate the complex situation of investigative journalism in China and how it attempts to disclose social tensions.



Chapter 2. Investigative Journalism

Since “journalism” is a relatively broad field of study, it is necessary to define the term “investigative journalism” in order to lay the foundation for a cohesive theoretical analysis. DeBurgh, (2003) argues that “journalism usually involves extensive research by one or more journalists to uncover matters which affect the citizenry of the society in which the journalists lives and of which the society generally does not approve but is unaware.” (p. 806) Journalists, in this sense, attempt to get the citizenry interested in matters which they were not aware of or did not care about before. Methods that are employed by the investigative journalists are documentary research, espionage and subterfuge and stings. These methods are considered to be controversial and expensive.

Different scholars offer different definitions of investigative journalism.

Feldstein (2007) elaborates:

Of all media actors, then, investigative reporters are the ones most positioned to independently shape the public agenda. In fact, in many respects that is their explicit mission, to investigate beneath the surface and uncover hidden wrongdoing by powerful individuals and institutions. As the newsroom’s most autonomous operators, investigative reporters alone are granted the resources and mandate to dig up original information, to develop their own agenda and not simply act as the megaphone for someone else’s. (p. 501)

Bloomfield and Moulton (1997) argue that “publicity in the age of global communications can be a powerful diplomatic instrument to encourage noncoercive compliance through its powers of, so to speak, shame, embarrassment, and ridicule.”(p. 63) In addition, Spark (1999) theorizes that “investigative journalism is

to discover the truth and identify lapses from it in whatever media may be available.”
(p. 369)

If one's attempt is to discuss journalistic paradigms in China, it is important to define the term “journalistic paradigm” itself. In this regard there exists a broad range of definitions. This study shares the idea that a journalistic paradigm is as a shared worldview, commitment, and way of doing things in journalist community. Furthermore, as an abstract cognitive map, a paradigm is embodied in a set of concrete cases that serve as shared exemplars of the logic and rules of trade (Kuhn, 1970). Journalistic paradigms in China, for instance, are exclusively defined by the Party authority itself. Technically there is no space for interpretation of or deviation from this monolith principle. Yet, Chinese investigative journalists employ different discourses to shape, discuss and legitimize their profession under the diverse conditions of the Deng reforms. Many journalists adhere to the principle of Party journalism, i.e. Party propagandists are the exemplary journalists. Other journalists believe in the Anglo-American way of professional journalism (Pan & Chan, 2003).

Pan and Chan (2003) stress that:

Research shows that the reforms to build media and consumer markets are eroding the Party-press ideology and could potentially elevate the canons of journalistic professionalism, such as objectivity and press freedom. The influence of professionalism is on the rise and may, in more opened regions such as Shanghai [...] even has surpassed Party journalism after 25 years of reform. (p. 653)

Except a broad range of different definitions of journalistic paradigms there also exists a multitude of roles that journalists assume while practicing their profession. With regard to the Anglo-American concept of investigative journalism

scholars allocate four different attributes to the role of the reporter. Journalists are supposed to be “interpretive”, a “disseminator”, “adversarial”, and a “populist mobilizer” (Pan & Chan, 2003). These four roles sometimes conflict and sometimes interact. The present research assumes that for professional Chinese investigative journalism, the role of the “disseminator” is supposed to be of superior interest. This role also seems to be the most fundamental one as it reflects the basic activity of investigative journalism, which is to provide information for the Party elite and the people. This phenomenon of dual activity will also be explained in the later section. Additionally, “disseminator” is also the most comparable role across media systems.

With regard to the general understanding of investigative journalism it is not sufficient to solely concentrate on definitions, journalistic paradigms or roles of journalists. It is rather important to look beyond the reporters and to identify their source. The relationship between the reporter and the source has also a tremendous impact on the output of investigative journalists.

In this sense, journalism can basically be divided into two major blocks, routine news and investigative news. Routine-news regards the political establishment as input for the press. In this case, the sources are dominating the procedure. In contrast, scandals are exceptional cases where reporters have access to “anti-normative” actions of the authorities, covered secretly. During the process of revealing the image, those representatives of authority attempt to conceal. The role of dominance shifts away from the source in favor of the journalist’s side. In this sense, journalism begins to fulfill its watchdog-role. It is also at this stage that journalists are put at risk vis-à-vis their sources since the balance between source and journalist is losing its equilibrium. As a result of this imbalance and in the interest of self-protection, the exposure of scandals must be foolproof if exposed in the Western

world, and harmonized with the current state of tolerance of the Party authority if exposed in China (Liebes & Blum-Kulka., 2004).

As for investigative news, the aspect of the source is also tremendously crucial. Not every source or “whistle blower” is trustworthy. The journalist needs to verify the credibility of its source in advance. According to experienced muckrakers, the more hesitant a source or whistle blower is, the higher his credibility might be. Since there is a strong connection between the sensitivity of a story and the willingness of the editor to publish it, investigative reporters constantly need to be aware of untrustworthy sources that can cause remarkable damage. As to Liebes and Blum-Kulka (2004), “the hotter the story and the more powerful the object, the more doubtful is the willingness of the editors or owners to pursue it and the greater the damage to reporter if it collapses.” (p. 1156)

Another issue that complicates the relation between the source and the reporter is over-enthusiasm of the source. Some sources might act when there has been “transparent hurt”. Reporters are likely to treat those sources with extreme caution since the information they try to provide to the reporter might be contaminated. Hence, such stories are rather dangerous and have the potential to backfire on the reporter (Liebes & Blum-Kulka, 2004). Finally, investigative journalism indeed is a crucial and valuable tool to promote government transparency and accountability to citizens and institutions (Ettema & Glasser 2007). Building on this fundamental theoretical knowledge, the concept and practice of investigative journalism in China is elaborated.

Chapter 3. Chinese Investigative Journalism

Chinese media is considered to be the mouthpiece of the Party. Media represents the Party and champions the central government's policies to secure stability. Hence, journalists are understood as the voice of the Party. Yet, they are not entitled to publish their own ideas or Party-criticism (Tong, 2010).

In China two definitions of Chinese investigative journalism can be observed. In his work "Reflections on Comrade Jiang Zemin's work on journalism" Zhang (2001) elaborates on the Chinese media's submissive attitude towards the Party and argues that "the Party and its journalism stand together through ups and downs. Journalism is part of the Party's life. Working with public opinion means working with political and ideological work. It is linked with the fate and future of the Party and the government." (p.20)

In addition, Hong (1998) interprets the Chinese media as an inseparable part of the Party and elaborates that "[the] media system should be an integrated part of political system as well as an absolute propaganda tool; the ruling Party holds a monopoly over media content in order to disseminate its ideology among the populace, to justify its governance and to prevent dissent."

Pre-reform journalistic paradigms in China fundamentally differ from their post-reform counterparts. Today there exist two competing journalistic paradigms. In this regard, Chinese Media, in contrast to its Western counterpart, has a very unique characteristic. It serves two masters, the Party and the audience (Zhang, 2000).

Journalistic paradigms in China, for instance, are exclusively defined by the Party authority itself. Technically there is no space for interpretation of or deviation from this monolith principle. Yet, Chinese investigative journalists employ different

discourses to shape, discuss and legitimize their profession under the diverse conditions of the Deng reforms. Many journalists adhere to the principle of Party journalism, i.e. Party propagandists are the exemplary journalists. Other journalists believe in the Anglo-American way of professional journalism (Pan & Chan, 2003) and seek inspiration from Chinese intellectual tradition of dissent (Lee, 1994). Yet, even though the Western model serves them as a source of inspiration, investigative journalists in China are constantly searching for a “political correct” adjustment for the Chinese sphere (Pan and Chan 2003). On the one hand, the new professional news media that has evolved in the 1990s attempts to inform the public, whereas on the other hand Party-organ media still adheres to its socialistic legacy of championing the propagandistic education for the Chinese people.

Technically, the concept of Chinese investigative journalism bears many similarities to its Western counterpart. As a matter of fact, the Chinese model incorporates a multitude of practices that originate from a multitude of sources. Since China’s reforms called for adapting the principles of market economy, Chinese investigative journalists had to invent and justify “non-routine” measures. The Chinese journalists accepted the fact that the only legitimate and practical framework for the new endeavors would need “collaborative efforts”. The Communist “commandist system” was maintained and “reproduced”. At the same time the new non-routine measures were successfully implemented. Pan (2000) elaborates that:

The process of forming nonroutine practices in such a context, therefore, takes away any explicit appearance of an ideological opposition. Rather, this is a process of reinforcing the supremacy of the ruling ideology by employing new symbolic resources and improvising new practices to expand the boundary of the dominant ideology. By symbolic resources, I mean those concepts and

interpretive schemes that journalists as strategic actors use to reason, invent, explicate, and justify what they do. The symbolic resources come from both endogenous and exogenous sources, that is, from Maoist ideology, traditional elite and folk cultures, and imported contemporary Western ideas. (p. 74)

Pertaining to Chinese investigative journalism it is rather difficult to import Western oriented models. Yet, a limited utilization is still practical and important for the theoretical framework of this thesis. According to the “Catalyst model” introduced by Feldstein (2007), investigative reporting acts as a catalyst that encourages the public to demand reform. Feldstein further elaborates that the disclosure, triggered by the journalists, can directly alter public opinion, which leads to a politically mobilized population that claims reform. The latter function, of course, is incompatible with the orthodox CCP- concept of Chinese investigative journalism due to strict governmental bottom-line to maintain stability and a harmonious society. Yet, if transported to the Chinese sphere of investigative journalism, this model is still partially applicable. Investigative reporting still stimulates the government to strive for reform or to at least alter current policies. Sometimes it even triggers public anger that demands reform or governmental action, e.g. the case of *Yang Jia*, a young Chinese citizen severely abused by the police, who eventually sought revenge by killing several police officers in Shanghai in 2008. *Yang Jia* was subsequently sentenced to death which caused anger among the population that portrayed *Yang Jia* as the “underdog’s champion” who stands up for his rights and fights. Indeed, if applied to the concept of Chinese investigative journalism it is necessary to stress the limitation of Feldstein’s (2008) model, nevertheless it is still useful to explain the functionality and momentum of muckraking in China.

Despite its monolith appearance, media and, especially one part of it, the press, has witnessed thorough varied changes. The market-press in China presents one of those milestones of change.

3.1. The appearance of the market-oriented press

In order to secure the Party's legitimacy of absolute leadership, the Party elite in Beijing gradually loosened its tight grip on the press in China in the late 1970s. The Party state also encouraged the financially state-dependent press to embark on the economic reforms introduced during that time by gradually cutting subsidies. In the 1990s, China finally witnessed a tremendous press transformation, the rise of the market-oriented papers and the simultaneously decline of the Party papers.

The divergence between the market-oriented press and the Party press also accelerated the eroding momentum of loosening-up the government's grip on key linkages and mechanisms of the Party-press system. As a consequence, more space for the activities of investigative journalists was created. Pan and Chan (2003) elaborate that:

Research shows that the reforms to build media and consumer markets are eroding the Party-press ideology and could potentially elevate the canons of journalistic professionalism, such as objectivity and press freedom. The influence of professionalism is on the rise and may, in more opened regions such as Shanghai [...] even has surpassed Party journalism after 25 years of reform. (p. 653)

One may question the motives of the authoritarian state apparatus of the PRC to liberalize the media market and create a bigger space for investigative journalism to operate in. One crucial rationale that might help to explain this phenomenon can be extracted from the theoretical work of Zhang (1993) on press freedom. Zhang's

theory especially proves to be coherent in the context of the economic reform in the 1990s. In this sense, free press can serve as a catalyst of economic development. Zhang ascribes numerous economic disasters, e.g. famines, of third world countries to the abstinence of a free press. In this regard a free press, if independent enough, is able to expose negative and malfunctioning state policies and provide the basic condition for a society's general welfare. Thus, the Party tends to promote press freedom in order to maintain economic stability, which in China subsequently guarantees social stability.

Yet, not only the market-oriented press evolved from the economic reforms. Since media was partly cut loose from its political master, the Party, in the same time witnessed a commercialization and therefore began to target a new group of media receivers, the original concept of the audience also witnessed a crucial turning point, the shift of the concept from "masses" to "audience".

3.2. From masses to audience

Interestingly, the term "audience (shouzhong)" is generally used in the Western world without hesitation. In pre-reform China, a much more politicized term, "masses (qunzhong)", was adopted. With the end of the Mao-era and the rise of the reformers, the politicized term of the "masses" was gradually replaced by the new term "audience". This seemingly trivial exchange of words actually mirrors a major shift in the political structure and media institutional arrangements and practices in the PRC. The "masses" in the context of media are submissive to a coercive state apparatus which serves the Party. In other words, the Party claims total domination over the "masses". This concept was particularly important before the reform era under the auspices of Mao Zedong. During that time media was perceived as a pillar

of the monolith socialist state, a propaganda instrument of the communist Party to carry out the revolutionary task. According to Zhang (2000):

Media were commanded to educate the masses (jiaoyu qunzhong), to rescue people from ignorance (shi renmin likai yumei zhuangtai), to serve the people (wei renmin fuwu), to organize the masses (zuzhi qunzhong), to turn Party policies into actions of the masses (ba dang de zhengce huawei qunzhong de xingdong) and to strengthen the connections between the Party and the masses of people (jiaqiang dang he renmin qunzhong de lianxi). (pp. 621- 622)

In contrast, “audience” gained importance during the reform era, which was characterized by the process of media de-politicization (Zhang, 2000). In the wake of that shift terms like professionalism, service and information have been gradually associated with the Chinese media. This new concept of the audience can actually be conceived as the starting point for the Chinese media to depart from the traditional politically determined role. With the introduction of this new concept, media also began to be tangent to issues of broad and intense concern (redian wenti) (Zhang, 2000).

In the wake of Deng’s call for further market-oriented reforms in 1992, annual advertising billing increased. The former “masses” were divided in different audiences, “audience segmentation”. Since the economic forces gradually started to prevail over the ideological values, terms like “effective audience coverage” and “consumer role” became intrinsically tied to the new concept of the audience (Zhang, 2000).

Yet, one needs to distinguish between the model of the audience in the West and the concept used in the PRC. In contrast to Western media, the concept of the audience is not rooted in a democratic institution. Whenever the PRC enters the crisis

mode during delicate political incidents in the country, media immediately falls back into the revolutionary tone of the Maoist era. As a matter of fact, the concept of the “audience” is still limited by ideological and political boundaries (Zhang, 2000).

Coming back to the main focus of this thesis, the author will concentrate more on the profession of Chinese investigative journalists in the following section. In particular, this section will illustrate the different roles that reporters in China assume and their motives for doing so.

3.3. Roles of investigative journalists in China

A factor that complicates the journalist’s profession in China is the duality of its formal and informal roles. Formally, all Chinese journalists are supposed to obey the official propaganda line. Thus, only the Party authorizes what kind of news gets published and how it is going to be interpreted. As for the informal side, Chinese journalists try to escape the grip of the Party-control, as their media seek liberties in the markets. Operations in Chinese media have been extremely commercialized despite their Party affiliation. As a consequence journalists have the opportunity to express opinions that might contradict the predominant Party ideology (Zhang, 1993).

Investigative reporters often perform as mediators in times of public dispute. In his book *The Mediation Process*, Moore (2003) describes nine different roles that mediators tend to assume. Since this thesis focuses on the concept of Chinese investigative journalism, which inherently differs from its Western counterpart, the author intends to focus on two of these roles in particular. First, investigative journalists in China tend to assume the role of the “problem explorer”. Thus, investigative newspapers in China enable people in dispute to examine a problem from a variety of viewpoints, help to outline the particular issues and interests, and seek “mutually satisfactory” options.

The second role that Moore mentions in his book is called “agent of reality”. In China, media assumes the role of a mediator that assists to defuse tense situations caused by unrealistic goals proclaimed by the Party. With regard to China, these mediators, or investigative journalists, give feedback to the Party whether certain policies, i.e. reforms have been implemented correctly or corruption, power abuse and incompetence of the local Party organs threaten stability. In other words, investigative journalists in China create new channels of communication, enhance existent communication and optimize processes.

That role of a mediator is also known by another more sophisticated term used and created by the Party authorities, internal reporting. Referring to Article 7 of the “Rules for Journalists”, Grant (1988) stresses:

The state of thinking of cadres and masses, every change in social direction, and reflections and proposals from every quarter on the Party’s line and general and specific policies – which has value as reference but is not suitable for public reporting – must be supplied to leadership organs and related departments through the active and responsible writing up of internal reference materials. (p. 55)

Investigative journalists in China are all supposed to fulfill their certain role of “problem solvers”. Thus, according to the Party line, a journalists’ work is meant to have an official purpose. As assistants of the leading Party elite they partially serve as the “eyes and ears” of the power core. In practical terms this means that Party leaders might assign journalists to particular tasks, i.e. investigating how certain policy issued by the central government have been implemented in the provinces. According to the findings, the Party elite is capable of evaluating whether the policy has not been implemented correctly by the local authorities or the policy itself is not suitable for

the specific situation (Grant, 1988). “Internal reporting” is, therefore, also an important information tool for the Party due to the lack of reliable inner-party information channels. Information channels of the Party are often blocked for political or bureaucratic reasons (Grant, 1988).

In contrast to the Western media system, journalists in China are obliged to issue two different versions of their reports. Thus, the functions of journalists are divided into public and hidden, or the external and the internal. Internal references are organized in certain categories, for example, references for the politburo or for officials of different ranks. Those internal references can be compared to the briefing sheets issued by information officers of Western governments. The only difference between them is that in the West those references are written by information officials or contracted academics, whereas in China they are issued by investigative journalists. In this regard, Internal References are a part of Party-internal decision making processes. Published in the appropriate category, internal references actually contribute to the subsequent action taken by the authorities (De Burgh, 2003).

Thus, internal references are supposed to supervise and improve existing Party policies. In contrast to the common opinion that journalism in China does not scrutinize governmental operations, internal references prove different. Although not accessible to the public, journalists in China also need to acquire skills to successfully expose malfunctions in the local political strata. Criticism and dissent is expected. Interestingly, the Party also utilizes this concept to recruit new, capable and promising people for the Party’s governmental system.

Since the public is not supposed to see those internal references and is therefore not affected by their content, Chinese investigative journalists are entitled to

write about a variety of sensitive topics, knowing that their reports supposedly will never appear in public media.

No need to mention that some local Party cadres sometimes are not tremendously delighted about the effort that journalists put into their investigative work to compile thorough reports, especially then when those local authorities are involved in corruption or other crimes. Thus, in China it is not necessarily the Party that restricts newspapers and their reporting. Local media control aims to protect local, mostly economically interests. As a matter of fact, these interests frequently contradict the official central government's will (Tong, 2010). As Tong (2010) elaborates:

The growth of local power has caused a fragmenting of the power of the central elite. When the interests of local elites diverge from those of the central elite, the Chinese Marxist principle of media control becomes a propaganda tool to serve the central and local elites' separate and even conflicting needs. Local power employs the classic principle to set and define news agendas in local media defending local interests. The rise of local propaganda control, therefore, leads to the centralization of the interests of the local ruling elites and the marginalization of both lower-level social groups' interests and national concerns in the public discourse. (p. 926)

The development of local media control has therefore disrupted the power relationship between state and nation. As the Chinese state's top-down hegemony has been "dismantled" and subsequently shifted to the local authorities, a new and most concerning threat for the Party has evolved (Goldman & MacFarquhar, 1999).

Local forces frequently counteract directives coming straight from the Party core. The result is often social injustice in the provinces. Social injustice, furthermore,

disrupts stability and local media control and local protectionism undermines the legitimacy of the Party authorities in Beijing. Thus, local authorities attempt to maximize their profits by ignoring Party directives at the expense of human and natural resources (Tong, 2010). Since these local forces strive to protect their interests, even if those contradict the official Party line and therefore are sometimes even considered to be illegal, journalists have to be aware of how they approach sensitive issues in the provinces. As a matter of fact, dealing with these kinds of sensitive issues might not so much endanger the professional career of the journalists, as it might threaten their physical integrity. In order to protect themselves and their position, local Party cadres might also try to discredit journalists or accuse them of “rumour-mongering”. In this regard “internal reports” are also highly protective. Journalists are able to convey an interesting story to their audience on the one hand, and protect themselves with the help of a constructive and informative report to the Party core on the other hand.

Although the reforms and the rise of the market-oriented press have facilitated the work of investigative journalists and the latter elaborated roles are also more convenient to assume for them, the journalistic profession in China sometimes still bears risks. Dealing with political sensitive issues in China or scrutinizing Party policies, no matter if directly or indirectly, is still considered to be an act of balancing on a knife’s edge.

A third role that can be allocated to Chinese investigative reporters is that of the “resource expander”. In other words, these journalists provide an “expansion of discourse”, triggered by their investigative reporting and by channelizing credible information to non-involved experts, e.g. think tanks that subsequently can take action as “problem explorers” and “agents of reality”. Thus, despite their own mediating role,

Chinese investigative journalists have the power to involve other mediating forces that can help to alleviate critical situations and to defuse tensions (Wetzstein, 2010).

While assuming all the previously discussed roles, Chinese journalists are not only exposed to possible Party leadership retaliation. In fact, local Party control in the provinces presents an even more challenging and sometimes even more dangerous threat to journalists and their profession. In contrast to the central Party leadership, acts of retaliation originating from local cadres are more difficult to predict and to deal with. In response, investigative journalists in China have over the years come up with certain strategies in carrying out their professional practice.

3.4. Strategies of investigative journalists

In the People's Republic investigative journalists continuously need to develop new strategies to avoid direct confrontation with the state. It is therefore extremely difficult for those reporters to work on behalf of maximized objectivity.

As Broersma (2010) strikingly stresses that “objectivity requires only that journalists be accountable for how they report, not what they report.” (p.27) This proves to be a tremendously complicated endeavor from a Chinese journalist's perspective, since reporters in the PRC have to be cautious not to incur the wrath of the Party that might lead to harsh retaliation. It is, thus, not surprising that in average 10 to 20 pieces of investigative news stories are cancelled by the editorship of *Southern Metro Daily*, one of China's more outspoken media, annually. Examples for those sacrosanct topics are murder crimes committed by provincial governors, funeral parlours illegally selling corpses, or police abuses. Since all of the latter mentioned topics bear an imminent political explosive power to disrupt state-order, guardians of the one-Party state are extremely sensitive to any kind of story touching on those issues (Shen & Zhang, 2009).

In order to practice their profession and to guarantee safety for their organization and themselves, investigative journalists in China are constantly in need to comply with the political establishment at the expense of professional values and goals. However, this priority does not prevent Chinese journalists from covering sensitive or banned issues. In order to cover sensitive issues, journalists in China are constantly in need of problem-solving during the process of information gathering. Hence, the process of maintaining safe reporting of political inconvenient or risky stories has proved to be a key-skill of journalistic profession in China (Tong, 2007).

In case investigative journalists encounter any sensitive issue that they intend to escalate to a major story, they often turn to the strategy of improvisation. Improvisation has been successfully tested in the past by a multitude of investigative journalists. These experiences have created a new term in the field of Chinese investigative journalism: “strategic deviance”. This concept consists of three major aspects. First, journalists ponder on the ambiguous phrasing of regulations periodically issued by the central government. The overall aim is to identify loopholes in the “mine field” (leiqu) (Tong, 2007). Hence, investigative journalists specifically exploit the weakness of vague terms in government documents. For instance a prohibition of “no textual news coverage of a topic” can be interpreted as “no prohibition over pictorial coverage”. Closely related to this strategy is the use of quotations from acceptable official sources. Relevant sources are supposed to be in political alignment with Party policy, e.g. high-ranking officials, experts from the bureaucracy or government publications. (Tuchman, 1978)

The second strategy can be named as what this thesis calls as “prevision”. Chinese investigative reporters deal with government prohibition by running a story before the authorities can actually implement a governmental ban. Knowing that news

coverage of stories touching on sensitive issues is not perceived as intentional confrontation against the government, investigative journalists dare to race with the authorities.

In terms of the third strategy, journalist might also delay a story to avoid confrontation with the government during a sensitive time. During these times, journalists take cover and remain silent or will unconditionally align with the official Party line. As soon as the storm has cleared, journalists again will advance more bravely.

As to strategies employed by Chinese investigative journalists, Tong (2007) observes that:

Sun Tzu maintained in *The Art of War* that if we want to defeat the enemy and win a victory, we should protect ourselves and survive battles (zibao quansheng). Tightened political control by the Chinese Communist Party has forced news organizations and journalists to consider the relevance of this very old saying. Political control makes fulfilling journalistic ideals impossible if journalists do not protect themselves by surviving when battling the enemy of government censorship. Just as one editor said, when she edits a news report the first thing to consider is not how to make the report better but how to avoid touching sensitive points. Investigative journalists especially must constantly search for the location of the ideological mine fields and consider the most effective reporting and writing tactics for going around them. This is *The Art of Journalism*. (p. 534)

In addition, the reporters also tend to seek for another news hook to deliver a story after the smoke has cleared (Shen & Zhang, 2009).

Even if some news events get banned by the propaganda department, investigative journalists still have the chance to report it without touching on the crucial elements of the taboo. Thus, a plain ban of a news event does not mean that Chinese investigative journalists will not cover the issue. On the contrary, it implies that journalists just need to employ safer strategies.

Logically, a direct articulation of political wrongdoing most likely leads to repression of the responsible muckrakers or ban of their stories. Journalists in China need to be aware of the red line between straightforward exposure of political wrongdoings and constructive criticism. Therefore, the author of this thesis argues that the practice of investigative journalism in China is one with “unique Chinese characteristics”.

Another way to avoid punishment by the authorities is to circumvent direct expressions of “value or opinion”. Chinese journalists need to focus on the presentation of facts. In this regard one can identify the fourth strategy of investigative journalists in China. Instead of stirring up the blood of the officials in Beijing by labeling or direct judgmental reporting, they use “implication of casual agency” and “description of meaningful detail” to convey their message (Tong, 2007).

Finally, Chinese investigative journalists often conduct “anonymous interviews”. This means that some journalists assume a different identity when conducting report-relevant interviews. Sometimes they even do not identify themselves as journalists to the interviewees. As a consequence, journalists who employ this strategy manage to protect their identity on the one hand and conceal the process of information gathering from the authorities on the other hand.

Compared to the West, another noteworthy aspect of Chinese investigative journalism is “pack journalism” (Shen & Zhang, 2009). As a matter of fact, Chinese

investigative reporters are aware of the inherent confrontational nature of their profession. Yet, according to their logic's bottom line, the government might not be capable to punish every single media institution. As media is gradually growing in China, journalists become more confident and more daring. Thus, they act according to the rationale that in case of a crack-down it would be rather difficult for the Party to identify a single scapegoat since the news most likely has been shared among many different publishers. The broad range of investigative news media in China should not be confused with a homogeneous entity. It varies from rather conservative to tremendously risk daring papers. In some cases, investigative newspapers that were not allowed to publish controversial stories passed those stories on to other institutions that might have more leverage regarding political decisions or that are just naturally more daring.

In order to emphasize public demand, investigative newspapers also turn to the internet through portal websites. In this regard, public demand serves as an excuse for exposing sensitive stories (Shen & Zhang, 2009).

In the latter section, the author illustrated several developments and analyzed phenomena in the professional and political realm of investigative journalism. The previous elaborations shed light on the historical background, the day-to-day business of Chinese investigative journalists and the difficulties they have to deal with vis-à-vis the state apparatus. From a Western perspective, in order to draw a conclusion for this section, it is of particular interest to elaborate on the question whether investigative journalists in China are rather mouthpiece or adversary of the Party.

3.5. Adversary or mouthpiece?

In the case of investigative journalism in China there are two forces in particular that theorists tend to focus on: "Political control" and "commercialization".

Compared to Western media systems political control in China is much more explicit and coercive. In addition, commercialization of Chinese media has complicated the old forms of political communication, which offers the media a much greater space and Chinese journalists a variety of new approaches to reporting news.

Chinese investigative reporting is often utilized by the Party-state to circumvent its own often corrupt information channels. Since this allows investigative journalists to operate more freely, they actually benefit from this phenomenon. Yet, a major problem of this delicate relation between state and investigative press is, that in order to maintain its status, investigative journalists might become instruments of their source's agenda. Thus, these newspapers are vulnerable to manipulation of their establishment sources (Ettema & Glasser, 2007).

In the wake of the great reforms in China, investigative journalism tremendously flourished. But even though this era offered broad spaces for investigative reporters it also displayed similar issues that Chinese journalists also have to face today. Zuckerman (1985) has observed:

There is opposition not only from the targets of criticism, but also from their 'connections', who may include leading cadres in important departments. A reporter who wants to write exposures has to be willing to take enormous trouble, spend a lot of time, and risk retaliation. However, any journalist with a strong sense of responsibility and initiative should dare go to the Tiger Mountain even though he knows there are tigers there. (p.35)

Although, today disclosure and criticism of social disparity in China are nothing new anymore, there is still an invisible line that only the Party defines and which is feared by the investigative muckrakers. During his term in office in the 1980s, CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang once proclaimed that Chinese newspaper

coverage should report 80 percent good news and 20 percent bad news. In this regard Zuckerman (1985) quotes the *People's Daily* reporter Liu Binyan saying:

I would be happy if it were twenty percent. It is not a question of the quantity of criticism, but of its depth. You can criticize a salesgirl or you can criticize a cadre. Both are criticism but they are very different. Chinese journalists are still afraid to expose official misconduct. For their part, Party and government officials are not used to receiving criticism [...]. (p. 37)

This quotation also stresses major problem of investigative journalists nowadays in China. Shen and Zhang (2009) stress that:

Investigative journalism has an extremely important role in China “because of its inherently confrontational nature, watchdog- journalism is at the forefront of catching audience’s attention through sensationalism and receiving pressure and penalties from the state, which can help reveal the intricate and dynamic interactions between politics, journalism, and grass-root civic involvement in contemporary China. (p.3)

Investigative journalism is therefore an indispensable and at the same time dangerous tool to uncover social tensions and to scrutinize social injustice. Investigative newspapers in China, notwithstanding punishments imposed by the Party, somehow manage to fulfill the role of a watchdog, even if that sometimes means to reveal government policies that led to social ills. In the late 1970s, the *People's Daily* Chief Editor Hu Jiwei asked in remembrance of the mistakes the Party had made during the Cultural Revolution, if the Chinese press was actually capable to help the Party to rectify or minimize mistake at all since it always had served as the Party’s mouthpiece. The logical answer to his question was that the press of course could not fulfill its role. Hence, it should transform into a press that speaks for the

interest of the people in its watchdog-role (Zhang, 2000). In this regard, the Chinese concept of investigative journalism and its Western counterpart are actually not that different. Although the Chinese journalists' perception of Western objective and professional reporting seems to be "distorted", Chinese reporters still claim the same attribute of professionalism as their Western counterparts (Lee, 1994). With regard to watchdog-journalism, a characteristic of professional Western journalism, a term was created in China that originally had been associated with Zhao Ziyang, "yulun jiandu". "Yulun Jiandu" is one example that proves that Chinese investigative journalism not necessarily only imported values and practices from Western models, but also employed reformed practices derived from the original Leninist media concept itself. Since the direct English translation "supervision" fails to convey the essential meaning of the term "yulun jiandu" in the Chinese media context, there appears to be the need of a more complex definition.

DeBurgh (2003) provides three aspects that help to define the term "yulun jiandu". They are:

1. Keeping functionaries in order by exposing wrongdoing and corruption.
2. Proposing ideas which improve government policies. There are successful examples in law, especially law of bankruptcy and law of copyright, all of which came about as a result of media opening up of the subject leading to discussions among parliamentary representatives.
3. Reflecting and interpreting social phenomena and social problems such as women's problems, the black market, gambling, drugs, peasant travails, unemployment. (p. 810)

From a Western perspective the term “yulun jiandu”, therefore, could be interpreted as acting like a watchdog, “keeping an eye upon society” and raise the attention of the authorities with regard to issues they might have missed.

In pre-reform China only the Party had the authority to decide and state what kind of event or behavior should be interpreted in a positive or negative way. Nowadays, Chinese journalists seem to believe that this pattern has shifted and that they have obtained the latter described power. Yet, that belief appears to be rather doubtful. Although the role of the journalist in China has tremendously changed since the early 1990s, they are not actual “Kingmakers”. The real power is still in the hands of the Party core. Chinese investigative journalists rather assume an institutional role in the reproduction of cultural values (DeBurgh, 2003). Still, regarding its theoretical understanding, Chinese investigative journalism overlaps in many aspects with its Western counterpart. A clear-cut differentiation between both concepts is therefore rather difficult.

Although the reforms enhanced the position and possibilities of investigative journalists, from a Western perspective it would be rather farfetched and illusionary to label the Chinese reporters as the Party’s “adversary” on the one hand. On the other hand, it is also not applicable to label these journalists as a plain “mouthpiece” of the Party. There have been too many changes in the field of journalism in China as explained in this section. Media in China has never been more diverse and there definitely exist certain muckrakers, like some journalists working for *Southern Weekend* that are searching for loopholes to expose Party misconduct. Yet, as has been thoroughly explained in this section, these journalistic efforts are strategically planned covered operations. Hence, instead of using terms like “the Party’s

adversary” or “the Party’s mouthpiece”, the metaphor “a paper tiger with sharp teeth” is a more appropriate one.

Given this understanding of the concept and practice of Chinese investigative journalism, this thesis intends to employ discourse analysis to examine how Chinese journalists engage in their profession to disclose social tensions arising in the reform years. For this purpose, *Southern Weekend* was selected for examination. How the discourse analysis is conducted is presented in the following chapter.



Chapter 4. Method

To address the problem described above, the hardcover edition of the newspaper *Southern Weekend* (*Nanfang Zhoumo*) and its internet-based edition (available at <http://www.infzm.com>) serve as the database for this thesis. As for the hardcover edition of *Southern Weekend*, the editions can be accessed through the Social Science Archive at National Chengchi University (NCCU). For the scope of this research, only articles published from January 2007 to December 2010 were studied. All the articles were obtained from the section “Investigation (Diao cha)” or “News (Xinwen)”. Only these two sections of *Southern Weekend* include investigative reports. Each edition solely offers a single report. The articles are mostly whole-page stories. Since only one article per edition is available, the total of stories of the 4- years study period adds to 208 articles (52 weeks \times 4 = 208 weeks).

4.1. *Southern Weekend*

Southern Weekend is selected for analysis for a variety of reasons. First, it is a general-interest weekly with a clear liberal orientation that has prospered in the years of media commercialization. Although it is a subsidiary of the Guangdong Party-organ newspaper group, *Southern Daily*, it has gained a reputation for its sharp and critical investigative reporting on social problems and official corruptions. Due to its controversial style and the fact that *Southern Weekend* was exposed to several crackdowns by the CCP in the past, it is regarded as China’s only paper of conscience. Known for being the most outspoken media voice in China, the newspaper is considered to be the voice of victims of power abuse and consumer fraud. As a result, the Party very closely monitors every change of the paper from editorial personnel to its layouts (Pan and Chan, 2003). Due to its nature as a print medium, its relatively

liberal Guangdong origin and its narrow reach (approximately one million in nationwide circulation) *Southern Weekend*, moreover, is even more outspoken than CCTV's News Commentary Department (Gu, and Goldman, 2004). Although *Southern Weekend* is still subject to Party control and has been exposed to several crackdowns it still takes a more independent approach to journalism. Stories published in the newspaper tend to scrutinize Party policies or contemporary society as a whole (Pan and Chan, 2003). However, especially the latter described characteristics led to a couple of conflicts with the authorities. In April 2001 *Southern Weekend* went beyond the typical law and order tabloid format and published a series of stories on the murderer *Zhang Jun*, emphasizing his poor social background as the reason for his negative development and anti-social stunts. In other words, the paper located the source of his crimes in the social structure: a depressed rural economy, excessive tax burdens on farmers, an urban-rural gap that was larger than in the pre-reform period, discrimination and lack of opportunity and social support for rural migrants in urban areas, young farmers' crushed dreams of prosperity the disintegration of the social fabric and value system, the brutality and inefficiency of the law and order apparatus, and other systemic problems (Gu and Goldman, 2004). Thus, *Southern Weekend* dared to do what all the other Chinese media watchdogs have managed to avoid. It established a causal connection between social injustice and the Party leadership. In this regard, *Southern Weekend* can be perceived as an anchor of Chinese investigative journalism which tends to disclose social tension in China.

Southern Weekend's persistent investigative reporting and its ambivalent relationship with the authorities qualify it as the appropriate choice for discourse analysis to understand the strategies used in disclosing social tensions.

4.2. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a frequently used tool to analyze news practices. For instance, in research on socialist nationalism, Wodak & Meyer (2009) consider it essential for the understanding and explaining the roles and importance of language and communication in totalitarian regimes and their propaganda. The researchers refer to the study of Utz Mass, the first linguist to subject the everyday linguistic practice of Germany's National Socialism to an in-depth analysis:

In his analysis of language practices during the National Socialist regime between 1932 and 1938, he showed how the discursive practices of society in Germany were impacted by the National Socialist (NS) discourse characterized by social-revolutionist undertones. NS discourse had superseded almost all forms of language [...]. (p.17)

Discourse, in this regard, is basically understood as the result of collusion in Germany. In other words, the conditions of the political, social and linguistic practice impose themselves practically behind the back of the subjects. Discourse analysis, moreover, identifies the rules which transform a text into a fascist one. In the same way as grammar defines the structure of a sentence, discourse rules define utterances that are acceptable within a certain practice. With regard to this study, latter theory will be applied on the topic of Chinese investigative journalism.

Through applying discourse analysis, the thesis will identify the rules which transform the samples into typical Chinese investigative reports. As discourse analysis was essential to understand and explain the roles and importance of language and communication in totalitarian regimes and their propaganda, it will help to understand

the practice of Chinese investigative journalists using language as a tool to conceal critical messages pertaining to Chinese government policies.

Following the rationale of “systematic functional linguistics” language users select from the limited scope of options that language provides in order to form and combine words. In this regard, close attention to the certain choices of words that were made in a newspaper article might reveal the social forces that were directing the article in a particular direction. In this sense, an author for example might use the word “freedom fighter” or “guerrilla” to describe the very same issue. Yet, using one word or the other can alter the social context of the story. The question is why was this form chosen, rather than any other available one (Halliday, 1994)?

An appropriate way to apply the above described principle is to carefully examine the content and context of news articles. Concerning the example of *Southern Weekend* analyzed in this thesis, the latter elaborated approach will help to outline hidden criticism of certain policies or propaganda paroles issued by the Party.

Fraser (1990, 1998) provides a framework that differentiates between content and pragmatic meaning. He theorizes that content meaning is referential meaning. “A more or less explicit representation of some state of the world that the speaker intends to bring to the hearer’s attention by means of literal interpretation of the sentence.” (p.385) In contrast, pragmatic meaning focuses on the speaker’s communicative intention, i.e. the direct message that the speaker intends to deliver to the hearer by forming a sentence.

4.3. Journalistic Strategies

As elaborated earlier in this thesis, Chinese investigative journalists often intend to remain under the radar of the CCP, especially when dealing with rather

political sensitive issues. Thus, this thesis intends to focus on the “content meaning” of the selected newspaper article samples.

For the basic understanding of discourse analysis it is necessary to explain its function and application. Discourse analysis distinguishes between a content-oriented phase of structure analysis and a linguistically oriented phase of fine analysis. As to structure analysis, the media and the general themes have to be characterized. In terms of the topic of this study, it means that it is necessary to define the term of investigative journalism in China. Regarding fine analysis six strategies of Chinese investigative journalists have been presented, i.e. the strategy of improvisation, the strategy of prevision, the strategy of delay, the strategy of avoiding value or opinion, the strategy of anonymous interviews and the strategy of pack journalism. However, strategies like “prevision”, “delay of a story”, “anonymous interviews” and “pack journalism” are rather difficult to identify in discourse analysis. Their identification comes mainly from intensive interviews with Chinese investigative journalists. This thesis will therefore focus on strategies that can be uncovered in textual context. For these considerations the strategies “improvisation” and “circumvention of values” are included in the discourse analysis.

4.4. New journalistic strategies

After carefully examining the sample articles of *Southern Weekend*, two additional strategies could be identified. These two new strategies will be added to the two selected from the theoretical section. During the process of collecting the articles, the author became aware of the strategy “interviewee opinion formation” and “open end”. As to the first strategy, journalists of *Southern Weekend* do not present their own opinions or values. Yet, that does not mean that they completely avoid the presentation of opinions and values. Instead of outlining those by themselves,

journalists rather utilize interviewee statements to build-up conclusions and to equip their articles with a certain direction of opinion. As a consequence, this new strategy further develops the strategy of “circumventing value or opinion” discussed earlier.

Secondly, investigative stories in *Southern Weekend* mostly do not culminate in an “ending”. Revealed social problems are not solved and justice is not done to the victims of certain crimes. In this regard, not only the issue or social problems but also the indirect criticism remains. Thus, investigative stories with an open ending also reflect a strategy of Chinese investigative journalists to disclose social tensions.

As already explained in the previous sections of this paper, Chinese investigative journalists take advantage of the identified strategies to disclose social tensions. Conversely, if identified within an investigative article, those strategies can be perceived as an indicator for the disclosure of social tensions.

As a consequence, this thesis aims to identify these four strategies in the collected sample articles to illustrate how social tensions are disclosed. Additionally, the author will also interpret the relevant articles to further strengthen this argumentation. This subjective interpretation of relevant articles will serve as the link between text and social practice by concentrating on the socio-cognitive aspects of text production and interpretation (Tischer, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000).

4.5. Social tensions in China

While the introduction and implementation of market economy has ushered in a time of rapid development in China, many social tensions have emerged because of the clash of interests among the various actors of the society, e.g., urban and rural, white collar and blue collar workers, etc., as well as between those who benefit and those who are affected. For example, in his comprehensive study of corruption and

market in contemporary China, Sun (2004) mentions several issues that lead to social tensions in China:

The general public has not benefited from the massive concession of public land and properties to new private owners, nor from the overpriced land developments that result from repeated speculation of land and building contracts, nor from the wide range of fees and charges levied by local agencies, nor from the shady constructions and failed infrastructural projects caused by abuse and negligence, nor from the type of “law enforcement by fines” practiced by some police agencies and courts. Poor farmers and citizens of underdeveloped regions have not benefited much from the state’s developmental assistance and programs. (pp. 203-204)

Another group of social tensions pertain to unemployed workers. Sun stresses that those jobless workers “have become a routine sight in industrial cities and urban centers. They have become the leading source of social instability [and injustice]”. (p. 205) In addition, inequity against migrant workers can also form a source of social tensions. Stories that pertain to this group mainly deal with the exploitation and inhuman treatment of migrant workers coming from the rural areas to work in the industrialized commercial centres of China.

4.6. The three major social tensions for analysis

Among the many kinds of social tensions, this thesis focuses on the three major types that have caught the attention of the CCP and the journalists. The first category of stories, “crimes against the underprivileged”, deals with Chinese citizens who have experienced abuses by the local governments or businessmen under the auspices of the authorities. As a matter of fact, journalists investigating these cases commonly utilize interviews to outline their attitude towards a case and quote official

statements to justify their conclusions. More importantly, the cases selected for this section present more than meets the eye. The journalists focus on particular, apparently trivial cases pertaining to single individuals or families that have been subject to corporate or official abuse, like victims of illegal housing demolition “chai qian”. The rather small-scale crime cases are often the result of high-official corruption. As it has been elaborated in the theoretical section, corruption among local authorities inhibits the successful implementation of central government policies and therefore present an immanent threat to stability. This leads to the conclusion, that these criminal incidents are an indicator for the lack of efficient central-government control. Hence, reports on those criminal incidents can be perceived as a disclosure of social misconduct and therefore a disclosure of governmental incompetence.

As noted before, corruption among local authorities inhibits the successful implementation of central government policies and therefore presents an immanent threat to stability. Criminal incidents of this kind can therefore be linked to the lack of efficient central-government concern for the underprivileged social groups. It is thus a concern that interests both, CCP and the journalists to uncover and maybe even solve the latter described issues. It should be noted that this group of “abused” people is mainly considered to have benefited from the economic reforms in China. They should actually have received the CCP’s assistance or protection. The importance of this category can therefore not be underestimated.

Of about equal importance is the “abuse in education”, which refers to social misconduct among students or in the field of education in general. Stories that pertain to this field mainly deal with corruption among the faculty on the one hand and student suicides on the other hand. Similar to the first category, those stories reveal the lack of efficiency of the central government to penetrate institutions, prevent

bribes and corruption, and guarantee equality for all students. The second aspect of this category, student suicides, elaborates on stories that deal with students that cannot bear the pressure of the competitive Chinese society and suffer from underprivileged, mainly financially related, circumstances, e.g. coming from the country side, i.e. being a “rural villager (nongcun ren)”. Pertaining to the economical reforms, these students, moreover, seem to belong to the disadvantaged spectrum of people in China. This category is crucial for the research of this thesis as its news reports reflect a negative perception of unbalanced and inequitable development of the society in post-reform China. Stories like the latter ones might lead to the question, if even the privileged and most benefiting part of society partly also needs to struggle with injustice and inequality on a daily basis, how can the CCP still justify its legitimacy?

The third category examined deals with news of, “desperate crimes”. “Desperate crimes” probably represent the most sensitive or explosive social tensions because these stories deal with crimes committed by ordinary citizens who have been subject to official or police-related abuse and therefore committed crimes as acts of retaliation against the authorities, e.g. the case of “Yang Jia” in 2008 or “Deng Yujiao” in 2010. The case of “Yang Jia”, a young man who had been harassed by the police and who subsequently killed several police officers as an act of revenge, and the case of “Deng Yujiao”, a young woman who kills a local cadre in self-defense preventing him from raping her, are only two examples for cases pertaining to this group. The suspects of these cases mostly have been arrested and found guilty. Yet, due to public pressure these “criminals” have been released or rehabilitated, in the case of Yang Jia even post-mortem. Stories that reveal the social misconduct that originally led to the process of turning an ordinary citizen into a criminal, sometimes even a murderer, disclose official power abuse or incompetence of Party cadres.

These stories reflect social misconduct among the lower end of the societal spectrum. The victims are often perceived as “champions of the underdogs”, explaining why these stories are perceived as tremendously sensitive by the Chinese authorities. In order to prevent the reader from confusing Category 1 and Category 3, it is necessary to stress one of the most distinguishing aspects that separate both from each other. In news stories pertaining to “*crimes against the underprivileged*” victims are always considered to be passive. They suffer from injustice and have to deal with the consequences. In contrast, the victims in news stories of “*desperate crimes*” are much more aggressive and strike back. As a consequence of their abuse, these victims decide to become active and stand up to fight for their rights with drastic means.

News stories of these three types of social tensions reflect the concerns of the majority of the Chinese population and the Party. Surprisingly, nearly all stories for analysis seem to fit the frame of, what can be called the “pyramid-concept”. That is, journalists investigate apparently trivial, insensitive issues of grassroot-level. The reason for that seems to be that it is easier for the journalists to circumvent the authorities and to remain under the Party radar. Yet, the main target of disclosure might still be the highest echelons of official organs in the country.

Using the selected stories of *Southern Weekend*, this thesis will apply discourse analysis to identify how the journalistic strategies: “improvisation”, circumvention of values”, “interviewee opinion formation”, and “open end” are being used to disclose the major social tensions that both CCP and the people have an interest in being informed about and getting resolved.

5. Findings

As given in Chapter 4, a maximum of 208 articles were published during the study period. Yet, only 64 articles could be collected due to the following reasons. First, because of the limitations of the NCCU Social Science Archive, the author could not retrieve all editions of the year 2010. Only editions from January 1st to March 31st of 2010 were available. Second, only 64 editions of *Southern Weekend* either included a “News-“ or an “Investigation-“ section. Editions of the year 2008 also included a significantly small number of investigative reports. This might be connected to the 2008 Olympic Games hosted by the PRC in Beijing. As the CCP and the nation were overwhelmed with presenting a peaceful and prosperous image to the world, any negative news had to be withheld. Among the 64 articles, 15 deal with the three categories of social tensions. The other 49 stories either do not touch upon social tensions described in the three categories or they do not touch upon social tensions at all. Many of the 49 cases focus on international issues or domestic issues that do not pertain to social tensions in general. Those of the 49 stories that actually deal with social tensions focus on issues like high official corruption cases. High official corruption cases are tremendously sensitive. Investigative coverage on these issues is relatively low and journalists rather refrain from including severe criticism in their reports, no matter if it is of direct or indirect nature. In addition, these stories do not directly affect ordinary citizens in China and, therefore, fall outside the scope of this thesis. Another part of the 49 stories only focuses on social tensions triggered by natural disasters or demographic issues. These issues can not be directly linked to the political leadership in the PRC and are therefore less sensitive. Thus, these stories also

fall outside the scope of this thesis. It is for the latter described reasons only 15 stories were collected for analysis.

5.1. Analysis of “crimes against the underprivileged”

To explain the nature of the nine different stories in this category (Table 5.1.) and their characteristics of disclosing social tensions, the author will summarize the essential content of each story.

The first story “Guizhou Paifang village: The touching story of 282 bachelors” deals with a village in Guizhou that is almost solely inhabited by male farmers. By illustrating the poor conditions of the farmers, their dilemma of being trapped in the lower segment of society, and therefore not being competitive enough to find a wife, the author of this article stresses that the reforms in China mainly focus on the coastal areas. Provinces in the inner country are mostly left behind so far. Secondly, the birth rate of women in the poorer provinces or even in general is drastically declining. Thirdly, post-reform developments led to a depreciation of rural labor and life. Urbanization attracts the young labor force and those who cannot catch up with this new Zeitgeist are left behind. One farmer is quoted stressing his disappointment in his own everyday life situation: “Our living conditions are too bad, too poor, almost no girl wants to move to Guizhou, and to trick girls to come to Guizhou is also not a good way of solving this problem.”

The second story “The boss of the company “Zhong Jie” runs of with huge amount of money” deals with the entrepreneur “Jiang Fei” that ruins his company and shareholders by accumulating a vast amount of debts due to insecure market speculations using the money of his customers. The author of this story targets the responsible authorities that failed to pay close attention to the issue and missed to prevent the financially disaster.

Table 5.1.
Strategies in news stories of “crimes against the underprivileged”

Stories	*Strategies			
	Impr	CoV	IOF	OE
Guizhou Paifang village: The touching story of 282 bachelors. (August 16 th 2007)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
CEO of the company “Zhong Jie” runs off with huge amount of money (November 22 nd 2007)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Son murdered, killers get away, the mother who is one of the residents that refused to move out against the pressure from a housing demolition company offers a reward for anyone who will catch the murderer of her son (October 23 rd 2008)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Haerbin police beats student to death: Who falsified the surveillance camera video? How do rumors influence the public opinion? (October 30 th 2008)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The story before the exposure of “San Lu”: The hidden 10 months (January 8 th 2009)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Anhui, the mining company “Feng Tai” follows the credo “first dig, then compensate”! 40,000 Mu acres are flooded and no adequate compensation in sight. (April 23 rd 2009)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How a couple of workers in Wanzhou, who suffer from “silicosis”, are fighting for their rights. (August 20 th 2009)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Can picking up golf balls considered to be a crime? The fight between landless farmers and a golf course. (April 4 th 2010)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
(http://www.infzm.com/content/53937 accessed on June, 6 th , 2011)				
The case of “Li Gang”: Family members of the female student that was killed in a car accident involving the son of Party official, “Li Qiming”, receive 470,000 RMB compensation. (December 27 th 2010)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

- *1. Improvisation (Impr.)
 2. Circumvention of Values (CoV)
 3. Interviewee Opinion Formation (IOF)
 4. Open End (OE)

As a result of this financial disaster, the author describes that the people’s confidence in real estate or other financial institutions has been severely shaken. The victims, former customers of “Zhong Jie” also accused the bank, through which Jiang Fei’s transactions were processed, to lack of public responsibility. This story does not

only disclose social tensions by revealing the lack of competence among responsible authorities and financial institutions, it also targets the economic reforms itself. Jiang Fei, a former farmer from the countryside that took advantage of the opportunities of the economic reforms, accumulates a fortune almost over night. What the author of this article might be trying to emphasize is that reforms in China solely seem to target economic development. Cultural and human development still seems to be tremendously inferior. As a consequence, Jiang Fei relentlessly exploits the opportunities of raw capitalism in China, without considering any social impacts.

Pertaining to the third story, “Son murdered, killers get away, the mother who is one of residents who refused to move against the pressure from a housing demolition company, offers a reward for anyone who will catch the murderer of her son”, the author discloses social tensions by revealing injustice against local citizens for corporate reasons. The journalist of this article tells the story of a family from Chongqing that refuses to move out their apartment complex that the housing demolition company “Heilong Group” attempts to pull down. After several incidents of harassments against the inhabitants of the apartment complex, most residents agree with the conditions of the “Heilong Group” and leave their apartments. Family “Cui” remains persistent to the end. The journalist delivers evidence that the company agrees to take more aggressive measurements to force the residence out of their apartment. As a matter of fact, “Heilong Group” seems to have hired some notorious thugs to harass “Cui Chen”, the son of “Cui Yingan” and “Cui Wanlan”. The harassment ends with the death of “Cui Chen”, who gets stabbed in the chest by one of the aggressors. The authorities seem to be helpless to detect the murderers. As a result, “Cui Chen’s” parents decide to take action by themselves and offer a reward of 100.000 RMB for anybody who will catch the murderer of “Cui Chen”. The journalist

of this article makes extensive use of the strategies “improvisation”, “interviewee opinion formation” and “open end”. He also has several targets that appear to be responsible for family Cui’s tragedy. Targets are “Heilong Company” and responsible officials. Corruption is also an important factor. The evidence that “Heilong Group” does not even operate its business with a legal “housing demolition certificate”, further exacerbates the situation for the corporate and official representatives in charge. Since the fines for illegal demolition can be easily paid off by big companies like “Heilong Group” the law itself does not offer sufficient protection for the citizens: “We are also helpless. The power to penalize illegal housing demolition is not strong enough. We also do not know what we are supposed to rely on.”

The author of this article even further stresses the helpless situation of local Chinese citizens by focusing on family “Cui’s” attempt to raise private money in order to catch the responsible murderer.

Concerning the fourth story, “Haerbin police beats student to death: Who falsified the video that was recorded by the surveillance camera? How do rumours influence the public opinion?”, the journalist narrates the story of “Lin Songling” , a student from Haerbin that gets killed after an argument with the police in a bar. The journalist concentrates on the evidence video, that recorded the struggle between the police and “Lin Songling” a couple of minutes before “Lin Songling” gets killed. It appears that the video has been falsified by the police in the aftermath of the incident. As a result “Lin Songling” was discredited and accused of being a trouble-maker, drug edict and son of influential Party-cadres in order to stir-up public anger against him and his family. According to the journalists’ information these accusations proved to be incorrect and invented by the responsible police-unit that tried to cover-up the inappropriate behavior of the responsible police officers. The journalist uses a

multitude of official statements that were proved to be wrong in the end. In this regard the journalist quotes the Haerbin vice police director who stresses that: “the video tape of the incident that was published by the media has not been edited in any way.”

The journalist also leaves an open end to this story that leaves the reader uncertain about the outcome of this story. Thus, using the strategy of “improvisation” and “open end” the journalists conveys a feeling of insecurity towards the local police forces.

The fifth story reveals the background situation concerning the milk powder scandal triggered by the food company “San Lu”. “The story before the exposure of “San Lu”: The hidden 10 months” describes the events at “San Lu” that took place before the disclosure of the milk powder scandal. The journalist sheds light on how the company attempted to conceal the milk powder scandal and continued to sell its melamine-contaminated products to maintain high production and retail quota during the Olympic Games. The author also stresses how the company was eager to keep the media in the dark and prevent any kind of investigations. “Interviewee opinion formation” leads the reader to the conclusion that the media can not fulfill its watchdog role due to the restriction of its power. Corporate entities like “San Lu” present themselves as impeccable to the public and appear to be impenetrable and intransparent. Ordinary citizens are presented as helpless consumers that can not count on the help of the media watchdogs and are therefore exposed to corporate and official misconduct.

In the sixth story, “Anhui, the mining company “Feng Tai” follows the credo “first dig, then compensate”! 40.000 Mu acres are flooded and no adequate compensation in sight”, the journalist targets the mining company “Feng Tai” that floods a vast territory of residential areas in Anhui to conduct a mining operation. The

company promises compensations for the residence, which are never delivered completely. The journalist utilizes the strategy of “improvisation” especially. He presents the regulations to which “Feng Tai” is ought to obey and stresses the contrast to reality: “According to the regulations of the Province Anhui, a mining operation has to be announced to years prior the start of any digging operations. During this time the relocation of the residents has to be finalized. But “Feng Tai” never obeyed to these regulations.”

Quotations like the latter one serve the journalist as a tool to emphasize the arbitrary behaviour of corporate entities in China and, again, the incompetence and incapability of the authorities to let justice reign.

The 7th story, titled “How a couple of workers in Wanzhou, suffering from silicosis are fighting for their rights.”, deals with seven workers from Wanzhou that used to work in mines over years. As a result, five of the workers already passed away due to the severe damage to their lungs (silicosis) that was caused by the dust in the mines. In an attempt to fight for their justice, the workers hire a lawyer. Yet, they merely received any compensation. The journalist again turns to the weak spectrum of society. The workers that have been considered to be the backbone of Chinese pre-reform ideology do now belong to the disadvantaged members of society. In this sense the story’s content reflects the situation of a tremendously big part of the Chinese society that needs to struggle against poverty and injustice on a daily basis. Probably due to the omnipresence of this issue, the journalist does not stick to the strategy of “improvisation” or “circumvention of values”, on the contrary, he interprets the facts himself and concludes: “Actually all they want is a bit more money so that they can live longer for at least a while. It is a race against time, a game, for which they might pay a high price, because their lives are at stake.”

The eighth story again targets the low spectrum of society and indirectly criticizes the post-reform situation, i.e. the arbitrary behaviour of the corporate entities and the inequitable procedures of the authorities. The article is titled: “Can picking up golf balls be considered to be a crime? The fight between landless farmers and a golf course company.” The article describes the situation of farmers in Guiyang (Guizhou Province) that had to give up their land for a diminishing amount of compensation money, in order to make space for a new golf course project. The farmers were promised to benefit from the new golf course, due to its potential to create employment in the region and to attract tourists. Yet, after the golf course was opened, the farmers are not allowed to sell their goods to the customers of the course on the course site. In order to benefit at least to some degree from the new golf course in Guiyang, the farmers start to collect lost golf balls and sell them back to the customers of the course. That catches the attention of the company running the golf course. As a result, the company accuses the farmers of stealing company property. Several farmers are punished for their “crimes”. The journalist of this article uses “interviewee opinion formation” rather frequently to express the anger and frustration among the disadvantaged rural population of Guiyang. The journalist quotes one farmer who stresses that: “In the beginning the golf course company used to promote its project by promising to decrease the unemployment rate in the region. In fact we are now providing low-wage labour.”

The story reminds of the heyday of raw capitalism in Europe during the 19th century. Ironically, in the self-proclaimed socialist state PRC, the ordinary people seem to be ruthlessly exploited by capitalist forces. The journalist targets the ignorance of the authorities that do not bring justice to the people, but on the contrary further exacerbate the situation of the rural population. In this sense, the journalist

indirectly criticizes the state itself for not creating equal conditions between the poor and the wealthy.

The ninth article, “The case of “Li Gang”: Family members of the female student who was killed in a car accident involving the son of Party official Li Gang, “Li Qiming”, receive 470.000 RMB compensation”, deals with the case of Li Qiming who drove under the influence of alcohol and ran over two female students, killing one of them. At the accident site, Li Qiming still demanded immunity by stressing his relationship to the father, high Party official Li Gang. In the aftermath the parents of the killed female student receive a compensation of 470.000 RMB and Li Qiming is brought to trial. Yet, the injured female student has not received any compensation so far. The author employs the strategies of “interviewee opinion formation”, “circumvention of values” in particular in order to remain under the radar. The journalist targets the situation of young Party officials’ children that take advantage of the powerful positions of their parents to bend the law or gain benefits in general.

Most of the stories in Category 1 focus on the disadvantaged components of the Chinese population like workers and farmers. Journalists who cope with stories of this area emphasize the gap between the rich and the poor. They also focus on the inequality that goes in hand with being a member of the disadvantaged social spectrum. Journalists of *Southern Weekend* reveal cases where large corporate entities of governmental officials exploit the weakness of the financial underprivileged population. The type of social tension that derives from these conflicts can be considered as highly sensitive due to its relation to a vast part of the Chinese population and the authorities.

With regard to the first Category “*crimes against the underprivileged*” multiple strategies can be identified. Yet, out of the four strategies for analysis,

“improvisation”, “circumvention of values”, “interviewee opinion formation” and “open end” only the strategies “circumvention of values” and “interviewee opinion formation” can be identified for every single story. As for the strategy of “improvisation”, it does not account for three of the 15 stories. Furthermore, the strategy “open end” does not account for one out of the 15 categories. Thus, the journalists of these 15 selected stories seem to be rather careful about critical statements addressed towards the government. In addition, they refrain from forming own opinions on the different cases. On the contrary, they let the ordinary people speak, which also adds credibility to the stories and represents the opinion of the affected people and not the attitude of the journalist or *Southern Weekend*.

5.2. Analysis of “abuse in education”

In terms of the second category, “*abuse in education*”, three stories were identified for analysis:

Table 5.2.
Strategies of news stories of “abuse in education”

Stories	*Strategies			
	Impr	CoV	IOF	OE
(http://www.infzm.com/content/23337 accessed on May, 25th, 2011) “The Chinese education system drives me crazy.” (February 24 th 2009)	No	Yes	No	Yes
“Deadly evening tutoring” (April 9 th 2009)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
(http://www.infzm.com/content/38831 accessed on June, 6 th , 2011) The case of Yang Yuanyuan: Narrow path into a dead-end. (December 16 th 2009)	No	Yes	Yes	No

*1. Improvisation (Impr.)

2. Circumvention of Values (CoV)

3. Interviewee Opinion Formation (IOF)

4. Open End (OE)

The first story of “abuse in education”, “The Chinese education system drives me crazy”, is an open letter of a senior high school student who describes his suffering in the Chinese educational system. Since the student is not among the very best in class he receives pressure from both, his parents and teachers. He describes his educational development from elementary school to high school and how he suffered and still suffers from being continuously despised by his parents. The student describes the common attitude of his relatives by quoting his father: “If you don’t make it to one of the better universities, you better just die! The earlier the better! We will not shed a single tear when you are dead.” The student also confesses that he has thought about suicide before. Yet, he stresses that he is not willing to capitulate in front of the Chinese educational system.

This article provides a detailed insight into the psyche of a Chinese teenager who cannot keep up with the Chinese educational system. His individual talents, ideas or hobbies are meaningless as long as he does not deliver the required outstanding grades. The article reflects the tension that this ultra-competitive system triggers.

The strategy that the journalist employs for this story is unique among the all the 15 articles. Since the article is open letter, the student himself expresses his thoughts. In fact, he embodies the role of the journalist. Apparently this method helps the journalist to create distance between him and the story on the one hand, but simultaneously express direct criticism on the other hand. This approach can actually be perceived as another form of the strategy “circumvention of values”. The message of this story is very clear as it is already included in the title: “The Chinese education system drives me crazy”. The student criticizes an institution of the state that fails to reform itself, cope with the issues of the young generation and live up to

contemporary problems of students that not only seldom lead to suicides or mental breakdowns.

The second article, “deadly evening tutoring”, tells the story of the 16-years-old high school student “Song Tan” who gets expelled from evening tutoring. The school uses this expulsion method to punish him for talking to his friend during class. Although “Song Tan” tries to apologize and struggles to get accepted into evening tutoring again, the school refuses to re-consider his plead. His grades decline significantly as he cannot manage to keep up with the learning pace in class. “Song Tan” finally commits suicide. After his death, a note is found that he wrote on the same day of his suicide. In the note he describes his helpless situation by stressing that: “Lately I am really tired. Studying makes me tired, relaxing or playing makes me tired, even sleeping, the activity we all love most makes me tired. I don’t know what is going on. My body is tired, my soul is even more tired”.

The journalist also emphasizes the relationship between students and teachers and the pressure on both sides. Due to this pressure, the relationship between both is tremendously sensitive. In case students do not obey the multitude of school regulations or do not deliver outstanding scores, they neither have a chance to obtain scholarships, which even causes greater pressure for their parents and, therefore, for themselves, nor can they qualify for a good university. A Teacher instead might never become senior-teacher if he does not manage to successfully cram his or her students for the final exams. Thus, his or her career is at stake. In this regard, if examinees do not meet a certain quota, the teacher also receives a punishment. This extremely competitive system creates an extremely pressurized environment for students and teachers alike, which not every individual is capable to bear.

The journalist uses the example of “Song Tan” to exemplify what can happen to students who do not manage to be on top of the system. As for his approach, the journalist uses a lot of “interviewee opinion formation” to draw a picture of “Song Tan” and the situation of being expelled from evening tutoring. With the help of this tool he creates the overall impression of an unfair and unbearable educational system that in worst case scenario can even claim the lives of less successful students.

The third story, “The case of Yang Yuanyuan: Narrow path into a dead-end.”, deals with the 30-years-old female university student “Yang Yuanyuan” who studied at *Shanghai Maritime University* until she committed suicide. The journalist of this story describes “Yang Yuanyuan” as a very poor girl who lives in the university’s dormitory together with her mother. Due to her poor financial background, her life in general appears to be full of hardship and struggle. “Yang Yuanyuan” seems to be overwhelmed by the financial burden and society’s pressure. In the end she does not see any other way out of her misery but to commit suicide.

The article deals with two different social issues. Firstly, “Yang Yuanyuan” is a student, a propagated beneficiary of the reform era. Yet, she lives in poverty and has to carry the burden of being the only hope of her family to become successful and economically well-off.

Second, aside from the educational component, the journalist also elaborates on the common issue of the women’s struggle for marriage in the Chinese society. For the 30 years bachelorette “Yang Yuanyuan”, marriage seems to be unachievable. Too heavy is the financial burden and too limited are her possibilities to play along successfully in the contemporary Chinese society.

Surprisingly, among the strategies of “interviewee opinion formation” and “open end” the journalist does not avoid to evaluate this issue of social tension. On

the contrary, he projects the fate of “Yang Yuanyuan” on the Chinese society in general by stressing that: “[*Yang Yuanyuan*] believed that people can never be defeated. Yet, in this unique solely success-worshipping society, she represents the archetype of the “underdog”. Although she struggled her whole life for her place in society, she was not capable of reaching this goal. In this sense, the death of “Yang Yuanyuan” is not only a tragedy that represents the fate of a single individual, but of many individuals.”

All three stories portray the fate of young individuals who are not capable to adapt to the competitive and pressurized environment of the educational system in China. Although the CCP tends to emphasize the beneficiaries of the economic reforms, these stories, using especially the image of students, show that there exist tragic cases of students who collapse under the pressure of the system or society in general. The responsible authorities in charge do not attend to their duty of protecting and championing the young generation. On the contrary, the monolith bureaucracy appears to be inflexible and corrupted. A system that solely cherishes success leaves no room for the “average”. Yet, not only the students suffer from this phenomenon. Since the success-oriented criteria also apply to the faculty, teachers can not perform in their pedagogic role as they are supposed to. The credo of “success at all costs” disrupts the relationship between student and teacher, causes tensions and sometimes even, as the latter examples have presented successfully, can lead to death.

As for the strategies applied, in none of the three news stories “improvisation” can be identified. Since news stories of “*abuse in education*” solely touch upon individual tragedies that are not linked to any official entities, the strategy of “improvisation” is unnecessary to apply as there just do not exist any official documents that could be quoted. With regard to “interviewee opinion formation” one

out of three stories does not include either this strategy. That is also the case with regard to “open end”. Since all of the three stories focus on educational institutions it could be rather dangerous for journalists to express criticism in some of their stories. Being the proclaimed beneficiary of the reforms and Party policies, students are not meant to suffer from any kind of abuse or restriction. Thus, in order to remain under the radar, journalists dealing with news stories in “*abuse in education*” might rather stick to the plain facts. They might also refrain from including any kind of interviewee opinion. Since universities and schools are institutions with a clear number of students and faculty, interviewees might risk their educational career if the critic should be identified.

5.3. Analysis of “desperate crimes”

For the third, “*desperate crimes*” category three stories were collected for analysis:

Table 5.3.
Strategies of news stories of “desperate crimes”

Stories	*Strategies			
	Impr	CoV	IOF	OE
The case of “Yang Jia” (17.07.2008) (http://www.infzm.com/content/30113 accessed on June, 6 th , 2011)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Observations on the case of “Deng Yujiao” (16.06.2009)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Who is “Zhang Yunliang”? (9.07.2009)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

*1. Improvisation (Impr.)

2. Circumvention of Values (CoV)

3. Interviewee Opinion Formation (IOF)

4. Open End (OE)

“The case of *Yang Jia*”, the first story in this category of “desperate crimes”, is considered to be one of the most widely known and most controversial cases among the 15 selected stories. “Yang Jia”, a young man from the Hebei Province kills six and

insures five police officers with a knife in the year 2008. After being harassed several times by the police without any provocation, “Yang Jia” decides to take revenge.

“Yang Jia” was prosecuted and sentenced to death. He was executed on October 13th 2008.

In the aftermath, “Yang Jia” became a symbol of the “underdog” who rises and resists against a corrupt and arbitrary government institution. The journalist of the story mainly employs “interviewee opinion formation” and “improvisation” to portray the background of this case. According to the profile of “Yang Jia” that the journalist manages to create with the help of interviews, “Yang Jia” seemed to be a decent citizen who valued order and loyalty: “Already in his childhood *Yang Jia* developed a special character trait. He always paid particularly attention that everything had to be orderly. He never just crossed the road without obeying the traffic laws. When his parents would randomly throw away their garbage, he would run over and pick it up.”

“Yang Jia” also came from an economically disadvantaged background. According to the journalist, he was not able to afford the expensive treatment for his psychological illness. All in all, the “Yang Jia” is not portrayed as the villain but as a hero of the people and a victim of the system.

The journalist utilizes quotations of “Yang Jia” to describe the logic behind the killing and to create understanding for the sympathy that he enjoyed among the population. During his trial “Yang Jia” argued that: “for everything you do to me, you are obligated to provide me with an explanation. If you do not provide me with any explanation for your actions, then I will provide you with an adequate reason for these actions.” What “Yang Jia” meant in this regard is that he condemns the illegal and arbitrary routine of the Chinese police. “Yang Jia” perceived his killing not only as an

act of revenge, but also as a drastic measure to remind the authorities that even they have to obey to the law.

The story of “Yang Jia” can be considered as politically highly explosive. Since the “ordinary” character of “Yang Jia” makes it easy for any average Chinese citizen to identify with, the story appeals to the “ordinary man” in general who struggles with the police and other powerful institutions.

“Observations on the case of *Deng Yujiao*” is a story that revises the story of the hotel servant at an establishment in Hubei that killed a local Party cadre out of self-defense to prevent an attempted rape-crime by the official. As a consequence, “Deng Yujiao” was later charged with murder and found guilty. Yet, due to public pressure of the netizens, the case was revised and “Deng Yujiao” was rehabilitated. The journalist employs “interviewee opinion formation” and quotes Deng Yujiao’s attorney who stressed the delicacy of this case and appropriateness of the harsh defensive reaction of the accused.

The case is considered as potentially sensitive due to the constellation of the protagonists. “Deng Yujiao” is but an ordinary girl from rural China gets abused by Party officials. In the eyes of the public, the case reflects the struggle between the powerless and the powerful. As a matter of fact, the Party did not only fail to fulfil its mission of protecting the people, on the contrary, it turned out to be the source of social misconduct itself. Similar to the case of “Yang Jia” “Deng Yujiao” is considered as a symbol, a “champion” of the people. Due to the delicacy of this case, the story of “Deng Yujiao”, because of its wide dissemination on the internet and the reversal of verdict can be regarded a leading example of the category of “*desperate crimes*”.

The third and last story in Category 3, “Who is Zhang Yunliang”, deals with the unemployed “Zhang Yunliang” from Suzhou who killed himself and 27 other people by setting a blaze on a bus in Chengdu. The journalist uses mainly “interviewee opinion formation” to explore the personality of “Zhang Yunliang”. In this regard, the journalist digs into the past of “Zhang Yunliang” to find reasons for his killing. As to the insights of the journalist, “Zhang Yunliang” had been dismissed from his job by a state-owned company. After that he gradually seemed to lose track. He did not maintain an intensive relation to his family and friends alike. Probably due to his perceived loss of dignity and due to being fed up with life in general he decided to end his life and defuse his anger by killing 27 innocent passengers with him.

With the story of “Zhang Yunliang” the journalist touches on another sensitive issue pertaining to the reform era. In the wake of the reforms, the number of state-owned companies significantly decreased and many workers lost their jobs and had to survive in the new market-economy over night. The old avant-garde, the proletarians, a relict of the socialist era of state-owned enterprises were not longer needed. “Zhang Yunliang” represents this mass of people who could not adapt to the new era. The former “champion of the communist state” suddenly became meaningless. With no support or appreciation from the government, “Zhang Yunliang” started to resign. The journalist introduces the fate of “Zhang Yunliang” to deliver an example of one part of the population that has been left behind prior the reform era.

The major difference between this case and the stories of “Yang Jia” and “Deng Yujiao” is that “Zhang Yunliang” did not become a “champion of the underdog”. His anger did not turn against government institutions or officials, but against the innocent bus passengers, i.e., the new Chinese society in general.

As for news stories of “*desperate crimes*” all strategies except “open end” are used by the journalists. Journalists dealing with these stories employ their whole arsenal of investigative “weapons” in order to disclose social tensions. This might be possible because the journalists might be able to perform more high-profile than usually. News stories of “*desperate crimes*” are extensively covered by the media. That exacerbates the chances of official hardliners to identify single scapegoats. In addition, the protagonists of these stories often enjoy the reputation of being “*champions of the underdogs*” and therefore receive the support of the vast Chinese internet community. Another rather plain reason for the exclusion of “open end” might be that the protagonists of “*desperate crimes*” in news stories are often executed as a punishment for their crimes. Overall, news stories of “*desperate crimes*” form the most delicate and most sensitive category among the three categories of social tensions being disclosed because the protagonists have resorted to extreme violence aimed at the authorities or the general “common” population at large. The responsibility of reporting these social tensions is thus obvious to both the CCP, the journalists and the media that employ them.

Investigative journalists that report news stories of the three analyzed categories seem to have adapted to the degree of sensitivity and the overall conditions of certain stories. As observed in each analysis of the three categories, the strategies “circumvention of value” and “interviewee opinion formation” have been applied most. Avoiding direct criticism and employing third-person interviews appear to be the most powerful tools of journalistic work analyzed in this thesis. Chinese investigative journalists employ a multitude of strategies to disclose social tensions. Although those strategies sometimes differ from each other, they all serve the same goal, to disclose social tensions in China.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This thesis has firstly presented investigative journalism as a theoretical concept and how it is understood in the West and applied in China. Secondly, it elaborated how investigative journalism developed in China since the market reforms. It shed light on the different strategies that Chinese journalists utilize to disclose social tensions. Given the CCP's views of journalism as a tool, there exists a dilemma of "serving two masters – the Party or the state and the audience", elaborated in Chapter 3, that journalists in China face on a daily basis. The author collected sample articles from the newspaper *Southern Weekend* for analysis and applied discourse analysis to elaborate how this China's only "paper of conscience" practices investigative journalism.

6.1. Major findings: Strategies in disclosing social tensions

The findings presented in the previous Chapter show that most of the strategies that journalists in China employ to disclose social tensions could be identified. Discourse in news about "*crimes against the underprivileged*", "*abuse in education*" and "*desperate crimes*" strategically and successfully display how journalists of *Southern Weekend* disclose social tensions by emphasizing the social imbalance between the privileged and the "underdogs" of Chinese society. The thesis has found that Chinese journalists mainly employed the strategy of "interviewee opinion formation", i.e. quoting certain people interviewed on site that formulate their opinions towards social issues and crimes. In this sense, the journalists refrain from directly criticizing certain issues. Instead, they let common people speak, that seem to be unbiased and represent the mass of the Chinese audience. This strategy does not

only attract the majority of the Chinese audience but also enhances the credibility of the information. Furthermore, it protects the journalists in their investigative reporting.

Chinese media does only sometimes directly criticize social ills. If one's attempt is to reveal the hidden and vague tactics of Chinese journalists, one has to read between the lines. By presenting stories that affect the lower social strata of Chinese society, journalists speak for the majority of the Chinese population. In addition, stories that uncover abuses or crimes against the propagated beneficiaries, i.e., students, of the government policies are considered to be even more critical. How can a political entity that claims to be representative of the Chinese people considered to be the legitimate leader and governor in the PRC, if it should fail to protect and support its protégés? The thesis findings suggest the journalists' role of the "problem explorer" than the "mediator", explained in Chapter 3.3.

This thesis has showed that Chinese investigative journalism can be politically challenging. In contrast to widespread Western polemic that overall questions the functionality of Chinese investigative journalism, it provides evidence that the existence of this kind of journalism can not be denied.

Analyzing investigative journalism in China and how it discloses social tensions showed that Chinese media nowadays is still subject to censorship. For Chinese journalists it is still a taboo to scrutinize social issues that can be considered politically sensitive by the government of the PRC. As already discussed in Chapter 3, Chinese investigative journalism is officially understood as a part of the political system and as a propaganda tool. If journalists in China decide to challenge this official definition of their role in the state, they need to protect themselves and their peers. Hence, these journalists have developed an arsenal of strategies to circumvent political control and to protect themselves from censure or punishment by the

authorities. This thesis sheds light on the procedures and tactics of investigative journalists in the PRC through analyzing discourse used in selected news of three major social tensions in China. With regard to this discourse analysis, four strategies have been applied identified in the news stories: “improvisation”, “circumvention of values”, “interviewee opinion formation” and “open end”. In this regard, Chinese investigative journalism cannot be separated from its Western counterpart. On the contrary, it incorporates many elements that can be found in the West. The major difference between both concepts is that in the West journalists enjoy legal protection when carrying out their watchdog profession, whereas in China journalists are at the mercy of the Party. If investigative reporting serves the authorities well, then journalists can actually conduct full-fledged investigative reporting. Yet, should the Party perceive an issue to be politically sensitive or harmful to its legitimacy, it would not hesitate to dictate, restrict, or ban the reporting of this particular issue.

6.2. Future studies

Since the sample of this thesis was reduced to 15 stories due to reasons elaborated in Chapter 5, future studies should cover a bigger time frame for sample selection than the one used in this thesis. Another option for more in-depth research is to conduct interviews with the authors of investigative news stories in China. With the help of interviews future research could also include more strategies that cannot be identified in a textual context.

Regarding future studies, it furthermore would be of interest to investigate, whether there are similarities between *Southern Weekend* or the Guangdong Group to which this newspaper belongs and Chinese newspapers in other regions, e.g., political center Beijing, Shanghai or inland cities. Since *Southern Weekend* seems to have already reached its prime of being the most daring newspaper in China, it will be

interesting to find out whether there already has been established a new, maybe even more daring papers than the newspaper being studied in this thesis. Another approach might be the comparison of the market-oriented press and the Party press. To which extent do the Party papers fulfill their official duty of serving the official political line and to which degree do they deviate from the official course and promote more liberal thoughts? With regard to the roles of investigative journalists in China, elaborated in Chapter 3.3., this thesis stressed that Party paper journalists are obliged to provide internal references to the Party core in order to improve existing Party policies. However, since these references are not accessible to the public, it would of significance to find out whether these journalists are completely loyal to the Party and restrict the controversial material they collect for official use only, or if those journalists, equipped with this rare and uncontaminated information, do not also leak information to the public. Further research should elaborate on the latter issues in order to compose a more coherent and nationally valid picture. After all, *Southern Weekend* is only a single paper in a huge media market in China

Further analysis could also shed light on the volatile reactions of *Southern Weekend* to crucial social and political developments and events in China. In the People Republic of China, the Party can vary or change its policies and day-to-day political acts according to the domestic or international conditions. In other words, if the Party perceives any potential domestic or international threat it might tighten its grip of power and act more restrictively or harshly towards dissidents or any kind of real or imagined threat toward the ruling regime. In this regard, one can distinguish between a “routine mode”, political business as usual, and a “non- routine mode” when CCP policies suddenly shift from lenient to harsh sanction measures. It would be interesting to know whether and how this shift between the two modes affects the

practice of investigative journalists in China. Examples for this “non- routine mode” include special events in China like the Olympic Games in 2008, the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, the sporadic riots in Tibet and Xinjiang, the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, etc. Do these special events affect journalistic practices of journalists of *Southern Weekend* or other investigative newspapers? During these events, are journalists more daring or more low-profile? These events are very special because of their potential in promoting an image of Chinese greatness or ruthless suppression to the world. In addition, there are other events that pertain to domestic issues, e.g. the annual convening of the Political Consultative Conference, the 60th founding anniversary of the PRC on October 1st 2009 or the anniversary of the Tiananmen Incident on June 4th. Leadership transitions in China are also highly sensitive events that could be a factor affecting CCP behaviors and journalistic practice. Intensive and extensive research over a longer period of time of cumulated cases can inform us with greater depth.

6.3. Conclusion

This thesis can still serve as a foundation for more future research of its kind. Since in post-reform years social tensions between the beneficiaries and the disadvantaged, between local cadres and the people who are displaced by development, between the urban residents and the migrant workers, between the police and the people they are supposed to protect, etc., are bound to arise, media’s roles in disclosing, hindering or contributing to resolving these tensions can not be underestimated, and deserve continuous systematic investigation. Despite harsh crackdowns against *Southern Weekend* in the past, the newspaper remains a critical voice and proves to be one of the most outspoken outlets of media in China. Journalists of *Southern Weekend* have successfully applied some of the strategies

elaborated in the theoretical section. Disclosing social tensions in China by journalists and media is no longer only a theoretical imagination, it has been measured and analyzed as of this research of *Southern Weekend* has shown.



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Appendix I: Excerpts of the *Southern Weekend* articles analyzed

A. Category 1: News of “crimes against the underprivileged”

1. Guizhou Paifang village: The touching story of 282 bachelors.

August 16th 2007 贵州牌坊村：282 条光棍的心灵史（新闻）
他（夏明凯）觉得在外面交女朋友很难：“我们条件太差，太穷，想来贵州的女孩太少太少。要把女孩子骗过来也不是个好办法。”“一些女孩一听说是贵州，第一反应就是：“那里很穷吧？”他很反感：“她们都没有来过贵州！”

8月3日，他趁着南方周末记者采访的机会，希望记者能帮他找个对象。“贵州，深圳那边的女孩挺多的，我上门（当女婿）也行。”

这3年来，他连一次相亲机会都没有，村里只有一两个未婚女孩，但也“看不起”他，尽管他已是村委会主任助理。

- Reforms are mainly focusing on the coastal areas. Provinces in the inner country are mainly left behind. Secondly, the birth rate of women in the poorer provinces or even in general is drastically declining. Thirdly, post-reform developments led to a depreciation of rural labor and life. Urbanization attracts the young labor force and those who cannot catch up with this new Zeitgeist are left behind.

2. CEO of the company “Zhong Jie” runs off with huge amount of money

November 22nd 2007 中介老板携巨款逃跑

蒋飞 “the boss of 中介 ruined his company by accumulating debts and speculating with the money of customers. The authorities missed to pay close attention to the issue and failed to prevent the financial disaster. This financial disaster has shook the people’s confidence in real estate or other financial institutions. The victims (customers) also accused the bank through which the transactions were processed to lack of public responsibility, since it was aware of the financial situation of 蒋飞.

3. Son murdered, killers get away, the mother that is one of residents that refused to move out against the pressure from a housing demolition company offers a reward for anyone who will catch the murderer of her son

October 23rd 2008 儿子被害，凶手潜逃，开发商否认与之有关钉子户母亲悬赏缉凶 23rd

按国务院 城市房屋拆迁管理条例，每平方米 50 元已是罪高的处罚，这对开发商来说不过九牛一毛。饶是如此，这笔罚款也一直未能执行。10 月 13 日，**黑龙集团**董事长向世全接受采访时坦承“我们交了几千元钱，剩下的打了欠条。”

“我们也觉得无奈。”胡荣冰不讳言拆迁办的尴尬境遇：行政处罚力度不够，违法成本不高，“我们也不知道，他们到底倚赖什么。”

The parents of 催军,催英按 and 秦万兰, from Chongqing offer 100.000RMB reward for catching the criminal who killed their son by stabbing him into the chest.

黑龙集团 had no 拆迁许可证 (国土证) so the company conducted its business always illegally. 违法拆迁，违法开发

4. Haerbin police beats student to death: Who falsified the surveillance camera video? How do rumors influence the public opinion?

October 30th 2008 哈尔滨警察打死学生案中，谁制作了“不完整版”监控录像？传言又如何影响舆论？

暴力，留言和录像带

“铁警版”录像和“哈市公安局发布会版录像”区别何在？多位参加 13 日发布会的记者证实，发布会上播放的录像比“铁警版”多出一段。“铁警版”仅仅到**林松岭**被追打近死角就截止，而“发布会版”中，林松岭和他的朋友们最后被警察围攻。

早 10 月 18 日地新闻发布会上，哈市公安局副局长卢洪喜说：“媒体公布的现场视频资料是一支的，没有经过任何拼凑和剪辑。”

但一周后，警方却向外公布了完整版录像，与之前流出的录像不仅多出了后边警察围攻追打 5 分钟段落，还多出了事件发生前地近 6 分钟段落。

Student 林松岭 gets killed after an argument with the police in the bar 糖果酒吧 in Haerbin. The evidence video, that videotaped the struggle between the police and 林松岭 a couple of minutes before 林松岭 got killed, was apparently falsified by the police. In the aftermath, 林松岭 was discredited and accused of being a trouble-maker, drug edict and son of influential party-cadres in order to stir-up public anger against 林松岭 and his family. The accusations proved to be incorrect and invented by the responsible police-unit.

5. The story before the exposure of “San Lu”: The hidden 10 months

January 8th 2009 三鹿曝光前 被遮蔽的十个月

Article describes the events at 三鹿 that took place before the disclosure of the milk powder scandal. The company tried to conceal issue with milk powder products to maintain high production and retail quota during the Olympic Games. The company was eager to keep the media in the dark and restrict them from investigations (lack of a free press).

6. Anhui, the mining company “Feng Tai” follows the credo “first dig, then compensate”! 40,000 Mu acre are flooded and no adequate compensation in sight.

April 23rd 2009 安徽凤台“沉”痾无解：煤矿开采“先挖后赔”，4万亩良田村庄沉陷难得赔偿

安徽省规定，对沉陷范围的通知时限要求提早2年，以期在期间完成搬迁。但在凤台该规定从未被执行。

Mining company floods a several villages in order to commence mining. Compensation for the residence is not appropriate.

7. How a couple of workers in Wanzhou who suffer from “silicosis” are fighting for their rights.

August 20th 2009 万州矽肺工人维权之路：他们逐一死去

在5年地司法维权拉锯战中，重庆万州大 梧村7个矽肺工人，已有5个陆续死去了。12年前，他们结伴去温州打工；7年前，他们肺里装满异乡的尘土回到家乡。在过去的5年里，他们打着难有尽头的官司——其实就是想多要一些钱，以便让自己活得久一些。这是一个维权迷宫，也是一个和死亡赛跑的游戏，而他们输掉的，是自己的命。

Out of 7 workers that used to work in a mine, 5 passed away due to severe damage to their lungs (silicosis). In an attempt to

fight for their justice, the workers hired a lawyer. Yet, they merely received any compensation.

8. Can picking up golf balls considered to be a crime? The fight between landless farmers and a golf course.

March 4th 2010 圈地无妨，捡球有罪？失地农民和高尔夫球场之争

作为财富与地位象征的高尔夫球场，毗邻的却是一群因为球场征地而失去大部分土地的贫困农民。一场场失衡的冲突也由此上演：

失地农民想赚点小钱，捡了球客们打丢的高尔夫球，然后再卖给他们，结果被判“盗窃罪”。失地农民只得到 4000 元/亩的补偿，高尔夫球场开发的别墅却卖数百万元套，他们去抗议最后收效甚微。失地农民有人心理失衡，去纵火泄愤，结果被科以重罪。。。

他们的命运，或是穷人面对夫人的一个极微又充满隐喻的样本，一个需要公共政策去救济和反思的样本。

一位村民认为：“高尔夫标榜他们为当地解决了多少就业，但实际上是我们为它提供廉价运动。”

An example that reminds of the peak time of raw capitalism in Europe during the 19th century. Interestingly, in the self-proclaimed socialist state PRC, the people are ruthlessly exploited by capitalists.

9. The case of “Li Gang”: Family members of the female student that was killed in a car accident involving the son of Party official, “Li Qiming”, receive 470.000 RMB compensation (<http://www.infzm.com/content/53937> accessed on June, 6th, 2011).

“河北大学车祸案”有了最新进展，肇事司机李启铭的委托代理人与死者陈晓凤的家人达成了民事赔偿协议，陈晓凤父母已经拿到了协议中约定的 46 万元赔偿，协议规定，“双方不能再联系，不能接触记者”。而对于另一名受害者张晶晶，李家还没有给出明确的民事赔偿方案。

据本网此前报道，2010 年 10 月 16 日，河北大学新校区发生一场“醉驾”车祸，致两女生被撞，其中一女生陈晓凤死亡，另一女生张晶晶受伤。肇事司机李启铭事后有逃逸行为，并扬言：“我爸爸是李刚”。后经媒体查证，其父李刚是保定市北市区公安分局主管刑侦的副局长。

B. Category 2: News stories of “abuse in education”

1. “The Chinese education system drives me crazy.”

<http://www.infzm.com/content/23337> accessed on May, 25th, 2011)

父亲说：“考不上一本你就去死，早点死，你死了老子不会掉一滴泪……”我想过自杀，但我不甘心被中国教育折磨死。我恨父亲，但没有真正恨过，我更恨中国教育，是中国的教育让所有亲人只用分数衡量人。

2. “Deadly evening tutoring”

April 9th 2009

“致命”的晚自习

被赶出晚自习教室的“惩罚”对于这个 16 岁的少年（宋铨）来说，是一个双重的打击，“不仅影响到我们正常的学习，而且还有很大的心理压力，我们成了班上的另类。”

同样被忽略的细节还有宋铨当天中午留下的一篇短短 34 个字的“日志”，问题“好累。。。”，“最近真的累了，学习好累，玩好累，就连咱最喜欢的睡觉都累，不知怎么了！身累心更累。。。 ”

Due to the pressure on both students and teachers alike, the relationship between both is tremendously sensitive. If students don't obey to the multitude of school regulations or do not deliver outstanding scores, they neither have a chance to obtain scholarships (more pressure for parents) nor can they qualify for a good university.

Teachers instead might never become a senior-teachers if they don't manage to successfully train their students for the final exams. If examinees do not meet a certain quota, the teachers also get punished.

3. The case of Yang Yuanyuan: Narrow path into a dead-end

<http://www.infzm.com/content/38831> accessed on June, 6th, 2011).

在自缢于宿舍之前，一向以坚强示人的杨元元最后感慨：知识为什么没有改变她的命运？她幼年丧父，家庭贫困，考入名牌大学却从未找到合适的工作；她 30 岁了还没有一次完整的恋爱，至死与母亲一起生活，且因此愧不如人。尽管她笃信“人不可以被打败”，但在这个单一崇拜“成功”的时代里，她是一个标准的“失败者”。她一生奋斗却无法

为自己在理想与现实之间找到一丝容身之地。从这个意义上来说，杨元元之死，并非她一个人的悲剧。

C. Category 3: News stories of “desperate crimes”

1. The case of “Yang Jia”

July 17th 2008

The case of Yang Jia - 杀人者杨佳青春档案。南方周末

Explanations of Yang Jia

有些委屈如果要一辈子背在身上，那我宁愿犯法。如何事情，你要给我一个说法，你不要给我一个说法，我就给你一个说法。

Background of yang jia

杨佳从小就有的一个特点是凡事讲究规则，不乱穿马路，看不惯父母乱丢垃圾，会跑过去捡起来，“练完丢沙包的游戏都从不作弊不赖”。

Reasons for Yang Jia’s outrage

王静梅（杨佳母亲）曾怀疑杨佳得了心理疾病，希望看心理医生，但因经济原因，最终还是放弃了。

Yang Jia’s dissatisfaction with the local “Danwei”

1999年技校毕业之后，杨佳在望京购物中心实习，最后在首体家乐福工作一年多。“他觉得单位里怎么有那么多尔虞我诈的事情，看不惯就走了。”王静梅的好友王铁栓说。

王静梅- Wang Jingmei fears that her son suffers from a mental disease, yet treatment is not affordable

有一次，王静梅曾向朋友说起，她怀念杨佳的了心理疾病，希望看心理医生。这也许是一次避免日后悲剧的机会，但因为经济原因，最终还是放弃了。

Social problems and financial issues

王静梅 1500 元的退休工资是全家唯一的经济来源。不得已，她经常找些促销或小时工的活儿打散工，她还曾到民

政部门给儿子申请低保，但遭拒绝。“民政部说王静梅有退休金，不符合抵押标准。”

What actually happened to Yangjia

然而，前年冬天杨佳在山西旅行时，不期然地跟当地警察发生了一场冲突。王铁栓说：“杨佳在太原火车站被警察打了。【。。。】门牙被打掉了，补牙花了几千块钱。”

2. Observations on the case of “Deng Yujiao” (<http://www.infzm.com/content/30113> accessed on June, 6th, 2011).

据巴东县公安局 5 月 18 日做出的通报，2009 年 5 月 10 日 20 时许，邓贵大、黄德智、邓中佳三人酒后陪他人到野三关镇“雄风”宾馆休闲中心“梦幻城”消费。雄风宾馆女服务员邓玉娇因黄德智提出的异性洗浴服务，被邓贵大两次“推坐”在沙发上。此后邓玉娇用水果刀刺击邓贵大，邓贵大不治身亡，黄德智手臂受伤。

3. Who is Zhang Yunliang?

July 9th 2009

谁是张云良

成都公交车纵火案告破，疑犯锁定 62 岁的苏州人张云良。这个曾被看作“脑筋灵活”的国有铁矿采购员在三十多年前被判“投机倒把罪”，人生从此转折。在试图重新证明自己的 30 年中，他跟自己的家庭似已陌路，与这个社会同样渐行渐远。

After 张云良 was dismissed from his job at a state-owned company, he gradually lost track (job, family, friends). Probably due to his perceived loss of dignity and due to being fed up with life in general he killed himself and 27 other people in a bus by setting a blaze.

Appendix II: An example of *Southern Weekend's* investigative reports: “The case of Yang Yuanyuan: Narrow path into a dead end”.

自杀女研究生杨元元：她的路为何越走越窄

作者：南方周末记者 叶伟民 实习生 赵一海
2009-12-16 23:48:12

在自缢于宿舍之前，一向以坚强示人的杨元元最后感慨：知识为什么没有改变她的命运？她幼年丧父，家庭贫困，考入名牌大学却从未找到合适的工作；她30岁了还没有一次完整的恋爱，至死与母亲一起生活，且因此愧不如人。尽管她笃信“人不可以被打败”，但在这个单一崇拜“成功”的时代里，她是一个标准的“失败者”。她一生奋斗却无法为自己在理想与现实之间找到一丝容身之地。从这个意义上来说，杨元元之死，并非她一个人的悲剧。

30岁的上海海事大学特困生杨元元死了——她用两条毛巾自缢于宿舍盥洗室内。此前，她想带着生活无着的母亲一起住在宿舍，但学校拒绝了这一要求。她无力另租房屋，母亲因此在冰冷的学校礼堂台阶上睡了一晚。

11月24日晚，一个言辞尖刻的宿管员再一次挑战她微薄的尊严——驱赶其母亲并威胁让她“拿不到毕业证”，她感到羞辱和愤怒，但奇怪地保持了沉默。

没有人意识到这是一次警告。两天后，这个终其一生试图通过克制和倔强来保持内心高贵并努力改变自身命运的人，终于在长期的贫困、冷漠、无助和自责中不堪重负，以极其痛苦的坐姿自缢于宿舍的盥洗室。

她的宿舍需年缴费1300元，比走廊另一侧的房间便宜200元——因为背阴，见不到多少阳光。

种种迹象表明，进入上海海事大学攻读研究生的两个月，是杨元元多舛与吊诡人生的一次回光返照。在这里，被命运胁迫的她完成了人生仅有的两次自决——不断读书以求改变命运，却最终屈服并结束生命。

从未放弃奋斗的自杀者

“她从未放弃过奋斗，却在曙光将现时谜一样退场了。”

2009年11月26日上午，海商法研究生杨元元不选择自杀的话，她的任务将是上午8点半在班上出演话剧《罗密欧与朱丽叶》中的女主角。

但直至近9点，同学等来了坏消息。杨元元被发现自缢于宿舍盥洗室内，场景恐怖：杨背对洗手盆呈坐姿，一条枕巾和一条毛巾首尾相接绑在洗手盆的水龙头上，绕过她的脖子并深陷皮肉中。她的腿微屈伸着，支撑着悬空的身体。

惊慌失措的发现者们用小刀割断了毛巾。首先赶到现场的是海大保卫科的陈亮，他把杨元元抱到地板上平躺，进行心肺复苏。此时她已摸不到脉搏，泡沫从嘴角冒出来。两分钟后，陈亮用筷子把杨紧闭的牙关撬开，发现舌头呈青紫色，并且发乌。“看是救不过来了。”陈说。

一些胆小的同学哭了起来。此时，杨元元的母亲望瑞玲，正被学生拉到对面房间，哭喊着女儿的名字——从女儿本科起，她们就形影不离地生活了8年，两个月前，女儿带着她来这里继续求学。

送到医院后，杨元元的心电图已是一条直线，随即被宣布死亡，时间是上午10时。

沉默寡言的杨元元以常人难以想象的方式带来轰动。海事大学随即发布了官方声明，称已尽了一切能力帮助杨氏母女，急救和善后工作也是规范和人道的。

但望瑞玲和亲属的描述却截然相反，她们坚信是学校持续地、不留情面地驱赶杨母，才让杨元元背上沉重的道德枷锁，走上绝路。此外，校方人员救助不力也是制造悲剧的根源。

这绝不是命运和这个女子开的唯一一次玩笑。在短暂的30年时间里，杨元元在现实的夹缝中所表现出的“坚强”和“要强”同样突出——成长于单亲家庭，自立完成学业，4次考研失败，度过了长达8年毫无成就感的不堪岁月，沉重的家负，带着母亲走到一个尴尬的年龄，甚至在自杀的前一天，她还担心朱丽叶演得丢人现眼，排练到深夜。“她从未放弃过奋斗，却在曙光将现时谜一样退场了。”一位生前好友这样总结杨元元的一生。