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**THE POWER OF ONLINE PUBLIC OPINION**  
**A CASE STUDY ON HUMAN-FLESH SEARCH**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to bring forward the issue of public opinion making as a tool for online collective action (literally known as human-flesh search) to implement social control in Taiwan. According to several months' multiple data collection from the internet, this study is designed to answer the question of how human-flesh search can implement social control.

The paper adopts qualitative research to present and analyze the relationship between human-flesh search and social control. Through qualitative research one could investigate in a detailed manner online action, looking in depth into the response from each stakeholder in order to discover who the driving force is behind and how each stakeholder exerts influence to the society.

At the end, the case has shown that through public opinion making, human-flesh search could implement social control since human-flesh search is a product which develops from public opinion. Through the process of discussing and criticizing revealing truth or information, public opinion raises awareness from the other to condemn or stop any social deviance. Furthermore, pressure from the public may push relevant administrative sectors to find or modify a strategy to deal with similar situations. That is to say, through public opinion making, human-flesh search can implement social control.

Keywords: human-flesh search, internet and public opinion, social control

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## **Foreword**

I would like to express my sincere thanks to those people who have helped me complete this study. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Tommy Shih. During the process of thesis-writing, he contributes his time, comments and discussions to help me construct my thesis in better way. The most important thing is he encourages me a lot and reminds me to be aware of the coherence within my article.

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## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Introduction

One PhD student at National Taiwan University once became a target of public criticism overnight due to that he tried to stop the ambulance, resulting in killing an old woman indirectly on Christmas Eve of 2010. It became the most notable social event in Taiwan after elections of five special municipalities since it triggered a hot debate not only online but also through media and television.

Knowing that the ambulance came from behind, this doctoral student who drove a small passenger car did not give way to ambulance; rather, he blocked off and put on the brakes deliberately. Furthermore, he rolled down the window and gestured middle finger. Due to this un-expected delay during emergent procedure, the old woman on the ambulance died. The whole process was taken by vehicle driving recorders and been uploaded to the network after the event came to the light.

How could this student become notorious all of the sudden? Based on a small plate number, some people discussed together via internet, and finally found out who was the owner of the car. Such activities taking place online is refers as “Human -Flesh Search” in Taiwan (Ren Rou Sou Suo) (Flynn, 2011).

The term human-flesh search derives from China. It refers to behavior which takes internet as an intermedium for conduct information searching (Wang, Zeng, Hendler, Zhang, Zhuo, etc., 2010). In general, the purpose of this type of searching method is to look for a specific person or to dig out something which disobeys the order within society. In Taiwan, human-flesh search has become a striking phenomenon on the internet (ChinaReviewNews, 2010). More and more people use it as a tool to solve some problems and raise consciousness of the public (ibid.). With the help of internet, human-flesh search has become easier for people to connect with each other as well as assemble opinion from everyone and bring it into full image.

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In modern society, accelerating development of internet is beyond our imagination. Internet is considered as fourth media after the followings: newspapers, radio, and television (People's Daily, 2001). Since the internet comes to be more important and almost integrates with part of our daily lives, reactions to its influence on culture, besides society tend toward the extremes, hopeful or pessimistic (Poster, 2001). Internet offers a prime platform for social interaction. The emergence of internet makes information-transmitted beyond the limitation of time and space (Zaborovsky, Gorodetsky, & Muljukha, 2009). In other words, transmission of information turns to be easier and more convenient through variety of means, e.g. instant messaging, BBS, e-mail, and newsgroups. People share aspects of lives and information.

Progressing network communication by virtue of one venue, the internet, could be said a completely new type of information disseminating activities. Communication forms coexist in various ways, combination of interpersonal communication, group communication, as well as organizational communication on the internet makes mass communication rolled into one. The internet is a type of multimedia. According to individual needs, users could convert one forms of communication; e.g. converts words to images (Glowniak, 1998).

In addition, the internet has high degree of flexibility. Everyone can communicate with and exchange information with any other person at any time, and any location as well. Based on lots of characteristics and advantages of network diffusion through the internet, the internet becomes one emerging force of human communication. Through online discussion and information diffusion, netizens gather together, launch debate for different issues, and share ideas and experiences via internet. Furthermore, cohering consensus of public then led public opinion to influence society (Zeng, Zhang, Wu, & Xie, 2007; Ross, 2009). According to E. A. Ross (2009), public opinion is one of the tools which cannot be ignored to implement social control. Based on moral judgment, public opinion applies mechanisms of mass media and crowd psychology to affect social assessment, emotion and behavior.

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In other words, with the help of internet, public opinion is easier to convene public then launch online collective action, e.g. human-flesh search by netizens. Under these circumstances, internet community is distinctly considered as a good venue to mobilize people. Within short period, internet users track this news spontaneously, and update latest news constantly. Since the case becomes clearer after netizens launch human-flesh search, and Xiao's behavior got more and more people's attention, under such pressure from public opinion online, the media was forced to keep reporting the news follow. Step by step, this incident raises attention domestically, not only for the public but also for those politicians. The public learned a lesson from this event and politicians tended to amend related rules or find a new way to restrain people to avoid similar cases happen again.

Although this phenomenon, human-flesh search becomes popular in Taiwan recently, take a 3 years old child who smokes and drinks, and several girls who deface public property for example, there are not many researchers conduct academic survey in this field. At present, the majority researches have conducted by scholars from China since this term derived from there and undoubtedly, the background of research are based on network environment in China. It triggered my curiosity to investigate related topic since I found out one commonality among those cases of human-flesh search, which is that someone express opinion online at first and soon those online public opinion could lead more people to involve in. Since more and more people pay attention to this event, public opinion may form certain pressure then influence the target-searching or relevant administrative sectors to make up or change their behavior.

As stated above, the main purpose of this paper brings forward the issue of public opinion making as a tool for human-flesh search to implement social control. Since in the past, most researches focus on law issues, this study primarily attempts to analyze and discuss one case of human-flesh search in Taiwan mentioned previously in order to investigate the relationship between online collective action and social control.



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## **1.2 Identifying Research Question**

This paper is trying to discuss the social phenomena- human-flesh search. This field is worth to investigate due to the reason that human-flesh search is cross-disciplinary, not only from social perspective but also from cultural perspective (Wang, Zeng, Hendler, Zhang, Feng, Gao, Wang & Lai 2010). Since the number of internet users increases a lot recently, this kind of online action may be used and applied in variety of ways. Without internet, human-flesh search cannot be implemented successfully. Netizens launch human-flesh search for specific reason and build pressure upon mass communication through public opinion to force and conduct deviant behavior which fight against general ethics and values into orderly society. And among this, public opinion belongs to one mechanisms of social control.

In order to know more about human-flesh search, the research question in this study is: how human-flesh search can implement social control. And the question will be answered through the case analyzing. Under the process of analyzing, I will demonstrate the relationship between human-flesh search and social control. Who is the driving force behind and in what way they exert influence to the society will also be discussed at the end.

## **1.3 Organization of the Paper**

This study is mainly divided into 3 sections in order to answer the research question. “*How human-flesh search can implement social control*”?

At the beginning, I will focus on one case of human-flesh search which took place in 2010, Taiwan. The second section will be literature review, containing some series of researches which relates to human-flesh search, internet public opinion, as well as the social control, showing on which theories this study build upon. After that, the relationship between social control and human-flesh search will be discussed in the last section based on the case I choose as well as influence which results from public opinion. I will follow the progress of this event and see responses from each

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stakeholder in order to find which the driving force behind is and how they exert influence to the society. The conclusion will bring out finally to answer the research question based on above finding and also give some suggestions for further study.

## **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

### **1.4.1 Social Control**

Based on Meier's research (1982:1), we can find social control in the sociological literature and then categorize in three contexts: "as a description of a basic social process or condition; as a mechanism to insure compliance with norms; as a method by which to study social order." Initially, the pioneer sociologists tended to focus on specific empirical topic such as law, the emergence of public opinion and collective behavior, customs, religion as well as some informal communication (Janowitz 1975).

Gurvitch (1945) asserts that the study of social control was equated with the study of society. This term, social control originally attempts to explain a common aspect of society and looks upon as an overall foundation for a sociological observation of the social order and appeared in the book *Social Control* which written by E. A. Ross (Janowitz 1975 ; Clark 1969). Essentially, Ross sees individual as objects of society's domination and uses 23 mechanisms of social control which groups influence individuals to explain social order. The mechanism of social control concludes public opinion, law, belief, social suggestion, education, custom, social religion, personal ideals, ceremony, art, personality, enlightenment, illusion, social valuations, class control, so on and so forth (Ross 2009; Meier 1982).

Social control and social order were always link together after 1950 since social control was seen as a collection of mechanisms to induce compliance to norms. Some functionalist sociologists take Parsons (1951) for example, the essential meaning for theory of social control is to react against deviance. Deviance here indicates that the "behavior consequent to the failure of personal and social controls to produce behavior in conformity with the norms of the social system (Reiss 1951:196)." That is

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to say, the essential meaning of social control is the capacity of social community or institutions which make rules or norms become more effective.

Not only Ross, W. I. Thomas, Charles Horton Cooley (1902) and Pound (1942) all suggest that regulation plays an important role for individuals since they had escaped the close influence of the primary groups. They believe that the order was created by society and could lead members behave in orderly relations. Social control aimed at guiding people into properly and orderly behavior. In other words, it brings “the pressure upon each man brought to bear by his fellow men in order to constrain him from antisocial conduct” into full play (Pound 1942: 18).

The following section will mainly focus on one mechanism of social control – public opinion.

#### **1.4.2 Public Opinion**

According to Ross (1969), public opinion consists of public judgment, sentiment, and action. Public judgment is the opinion which is pronounced by the public based on an action. Public sentiment is the feeling which expressed by the public with regard to an act, take admiration, respect, or abhorrence, dismissive for example. Public action is the movement taken by the public in order to affect conduct.

There are several features for public opinion. First of all, it has a wide range of influences, not just supplementing sanctions of law. Moreover, it includes moral suasion. Next, operate public opinion is less mechanical than law. The public can measure provocation better and think over excusing or irritating circumstances of time, motive, and place as well. Thirdly, public opinion enforces moral claims.

In general, “public opinion can act in anticipation of an offence, interfere at any moment, and apply a gradually increasing pressure” (Ross, 2009:95). It functions not only for social change, but also for social maintenance (Cho 2000: 301). Additionally, public opinion has the virtue of immediacy and cheap compare with the sanctions of law. That is to say, public opinion could interfere at any moment and apply a

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progressively increasing pressure to any offence. The discussion of the concept of public opinion is plentiful on account of that researchers have found out that public opinion represents complex social and political processes. Take China for example, this normative concept- public opinion has been seen as a source of social control and integrally related to personal cultivation (ibid.)

### **1.4.3 Internet and Public Opinion**

Currently, many researchers pay a lot of attention to the potential of computer-mediated communication since they see internet as an effective medium to foster deliberation, information gathering, exchanging as well among public (Hardy & Scheufele, 2005; Cappella, Price & Nir, 2002; Jennings & Zeitner, 2003). In addition, Ho and Mcleod (2008) recognized that differential rates of opinion expression among discussion participants may result in due to structural differences between face-to-face and computer-mediated communication contexts. Following the technological development, the internet becomes a spreading platform for the public opinion with its features of broad nature, openness, sharability and flatness (Li, Jiao, He, Shu & Ma, 2010).

Recently, online public opinions receive more and more attention on account of internet's technical characteristics and its impact which has potential to influence government decision making and the whole social opinion (Xu, Zhou, & Ge, 2010). Furthermore, network online comments affect people's daily life (Wu, Mou, Peng, & Huang, 2010). Through this medium, internet really increases lots of opportunities for audiences to give feedback by public sentiment and opinion in the cyber space and obtain information. That is to say, the more people utilize the internet, the more likely to post information, comments and responses online (Shen, Wang, Guo, & Guo, 2009).

“Internet public opinion is the collection of knowledge, attitude, emotion and behavior tendency through a variety of events which are generated by stimulation of them and communicated through the internet” (Zeng 2009). With the popularity of

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network, a bunch of unexpected event will be discussed and put through the public opinions. Apart from this, Zeng and Wang (2010) have conducted a research on college internet public opinion and found out some characteristics of the internet public opinion: sudden, emotion, and extensive. Public opinion is always formed quickly and leads to series repercussions and heated debates.

Online public opinion indeed has some features according to the research which conducted by Zong, Gu and Jiang (2010), taking more complicated, bidirectional and multi-dimensional for instances. Being a group of active thinking, netizens are easier to gather courage, to challenge and fight for something in order to achieve their goals. The influence of online public opinion is unexpected and affects extensively. Not only attract public attention to discuss online but also offline and the topic which concerned by public originally could change into another common subject.

In recent years different approaches to express internet public opinion have emerged, e.g. human-flesh search, and indeed it influences the society more or less. Realizing the cause and effect seem to be quite important. And the following section will introduce some basic idea of this term, human-flesh search, in order to answer the research question within this study.

#### **1.4.4 Human-Flesh Search**

Human-flesh search, also known as “cyber hunting” or “online manhunts,” is directly translated from Chinese root ren rou sou suo 人肉搜索, which relates to human users aim at finding the identity of a person or raised a question in a virtual community, and then conduct searches through collective skills by men instead of through an conventional automated platform (Yang &Zhang, Wang, Zeng et al. 2010).

Originally, this term takes place in one Chinese internet forum which called Mop in 2001, China. Mope is an interactive entertainment website that helps viewers to track down some information, such as books, music, movies and other trivia. Since those clues which posted on Mop have been proved correct, the one who post things will

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rewarded with "mop money" (Eberlein, 2008). Not only the one who makes request at first and get information they want at the end feel happy, but also the one who provides information then get a reward finally and gradually formed the framework of human-flesh search then laid the groundwork. Later on, human-flesh search have occurred in other countries, take South Korea in 2005 and United States in 2006 for example (Downey, 2010). At that time, people launch human-flesh search for the purpose of seeking the truth, and the entertainment trait has shifted to target human being.

Through the process of human-flesh search, information could be provided by different individuals gradually until a full picture emerges and exposes (Xu, & Ji, 2008). That is to say, with offline results, human-flesh search is a crowd-sourced detective work which tracked on line (Downey, 2010). Indeed, Yahoo Answer, Sinai Ask and Baidu, those online Questions & Answers projects which based on networked social collaboration could be regard as pioneer of human-powered search. Having the similar functions to Wikipedia and other online communities on basis of utilizing human power to edit, copy and categorize information, people realized that artificial intelligence is better than technology.

Being a new type of search engine which operates and runs by human power, with feature of crowdsourcing, social search, collective intelligence and distributed problem solving, human-flesh search widely utilize the power of internet as well as related networks within forum to address questions which bring forward by users (Wang, Hou, Yao, & Yan, 2009). According to Liu (2008), comparing with conventional search engine which operates by machine, human-powered search is more effective since the single aim is to find a person or to dig out mystery.

The rapid development of human-flesh search, results in large extent of social effects. In the past five years, human-flesh search has become a popular web phenomenon in China, the same place where it initiatively derived from. " Human-flesh search brings the power of internet users together, that looking for answers is shifted from the

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search engines to internet users” (Yang & Zhang 2010). Actually, to some extent, it relates to a search mechanism more. It refines the information which based upon artificial participation and provided by search engines in order to receive accurate answers. “Human-flesh search means searchers that are conducted with help from human users, and targeted at finding the identity of a human being” (Wang, Zeng, et al 2010). People-powered search can replace the name of human-flesh search. According to Yang and Zeng (2010), human-flesh search addresses the search questions through using the power of netizens by relational networks in community activities.

## **1.5 Method and Approach**

In this study, I adopt qualitative research to analyze the relationship between social control and human-flesh search. First I will discuss how does human-flesh search influence and form public opinion through analyzing several actors within case. Their interaction within each other would be taken into consider. Then, I would like to discuss the result of human-flesh search.

The common feature of this method allows a more detailed description of a certain phenomenon. Qualitative research emphasizes on words instead of figures. It begins with assumptions, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell 2007: 37). For qualitative research, social reality is deemed to be the outcome originated from the constant change of individuals. And the most important thing is that it interprets and understands the social world based upon the interaction between each participant. That is to say, qualitative research could gain a deeper understanding of a person or a group experience (Holliday 2007).

Through qualitative research, one could investigate in a detailed manner online action and generate an increased theoretical understanding by comparing empirical materials and theories. The basic assumption in this paper is that human-flesh search can be

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regard as a tool to conduct social control. I focus on one case of human-flesh search, looking in depth into the whole developmental process then investigate who push human-flesh search forward and which way the one apply to in order to influence society. Compare with quantitative strategy, the aims of qualitative research is to involve in reality and analyze the social phenomenon or human behavior from multiple perspectives (Weinreich 2006).

Several research strategies in qualitative research have been discussed and should be taken into account during process to design a research: narrative, case study, ground theory, ethnography and discourse analysis. Each strategy has its own advantages as well as disadvantages.

In this paper, I use a case study methodology since my research questions is “how” oriented, it would be better to use case studies as a strategy since it is more explanatory (Yin 2003). ”Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2003:10). Case study research includes both single- and multiple-case studies. Here, I choose single case study. Not only did I study human-flesh search in its real-life context but also I adopted a theory to investigate the relationship between this phenomenon and the context.

## **1.6 Data Collection**

Data for case studies can come from many resources of evidence. In order to answer my ‘how’ questions, I need to trace archival records over time instead of relying on incidence or frequencies. There are several ways for researchers to collect the evidence. For example, documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts (Yin 2003: 85). As Punch (1998: 150) mentioned, “the basic idea is that one case will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate”. While there may be a variety of specific purposes and



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research questions, the general objective is to develop an understanding of that case as thorough as possible. The case in this paper means human -flesh search. The research could be carried out by using multiple sources of data and then use it in a triangulation fashion (ibid).

In this thesis, I would like to use multiple data collection methods that include indirect observation and documents collection. I observed what's actually going on for this event online and mainly focused on the biggest Bulletin Board System in Taiwan-PTT, News Page as well as famous Social Network: Facebook. First, I collected data as Bryman (2003) mentioned: media outputs, virtual outputs and personal documents. That is to say information from television programs, internet resources, and personal blogs, may be taken into consideration. Since I have finished data collection, through cross-referencing theory and data, I could realize the relationship between social control and human-flesh search. Who is the driving force within the case, what kind of result comes out due to human-flesh search, and how the driving force affects society, those answers could be found out. At the end of this thesis, I will summarize the result according to my findings.

## **Chapter 2**

### **2.1 Case**

#### **2.1.1 Mental Illness?**

On Christmas Eve, 2010, the ambulance rushed to an alley in order to save an eighty-seven years old woman who became breathless suddenly. In such critical condition, passers dodged and it seemed that the ambulance could be on duty successfully because all of cars on the road spontaneous give a path to ambulance; however, it encountered a bad orange minibus in the intersection of North New Road. Ignoring other cars' response, the driver of orange car even switched lane to block and intended to stop ambulance which red warning light flashed as well as duty siren rang. Also, he hung out the window and gestured his middle finger while ambulance honk and the worst of all the emergency procedure was interrupted while the minibus driver

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stepped on the brake emergently. Normally it takes four minutes from the old lady's home to the hospital. For the sake of this driver out of the way three times and delayed medical treatment about one minute, the old woman could not survive the torment. This kind of behavior was fully recorded through tachograph and uploaded to YouTube on 25<sup>th</sup> of December. The video circulated online soon and raised lots of discussion among netizens since someone exposed it on famous BBS site – PTT, and after that through report of media, this event became news and excites an angry crowd.

Based on the video which circulated online, netizens recognized plat number of that minibus is 4569-ER and the model of the car is smart for four. Since ambulance workers decided to take the driver to court, the police informed the car owner, Xiang-Lan Sun to explain according to the license plate number. Xiang-Lan Sun is the mother of minicar driver. She indicated that the car was driven by her son, Xiao-Ming Li. In that case, the police contacted Xiao and noticed him to go to related liaison to describe what happened at that time. On December 25, the quarry was accompanied by their parents to police station and seeking to accept inquires by police. Since Sun saw there are a large number of media waiting in front of police station. In order to prevent exposure of their son's identity, the parents requested the police to interrogate Xiao in another secret location.

According to the paraphrase from the police, Xiao argued that he has manic-depressive psychosis. Due to siren and horn alarms from ambulance, neurosis with tensions attacked him, and he cannot remember what happened later, middle finger-extended, either. As for the emergency brake, Xiao said that he just wanted to stop and let the ambulance pass at first. He saw there is a room right front; therefore, he shifted to the right in order to make way for ambulance. Unfortunately, another bus blocked his car when he turned right. Parents of Xiao even showed medical records and said that they are very worry about their son taking things too hard since this event was known by lots of people through media report as well as network

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transmission. However, this kind of behavior was soon condemned by The Alliance for the Mentally Ill. This organization issued a statement and criticize that they feel considerably discomfort for both Xiao and his parents to use mental illness as exculpatory excuse.

Furthermore, Xiao and his parents claimed that they were very sorry about the occurrence of this event. They wanted to apologize to both ambulance workers and deceased dependent at the first time. Nevertheless, they were quite afraid that they would encounter reporters. So at the end they had no alternative to give up this idea.

Relevant police precinct headquarters said that Taipei District Public Prosecutors Office would take over this case based on ‘crime of interference with public administration’. As for section of traffic violations, police would denounce Xiao because danger driving as well as refusing to clear the hall for siren ambulance based on Act Governing the Punishment of Violation of Road Traffic Regulations.

Meanwhile, on PPT, there is a netizen who was suspected to be a substitute service broke the news that until so far, Xiao was subject to certain protect due to the reason that parents of Xiao are senior media professionals. Originally Xiao should take notes within branch, but Xiao was sent to another police station for the records (NOW news, 2010).

### **2.1.2 Inconceivable Call-in**

However, on December 26, netizens set off second wave of human flesh ever since Xiao’s father made a call-in to one program of Television Broadcasts Ltd (TVBS), 2100 Weekend lecturing, a political commentary talk shows which broadcast by Taiwan’s TVBS. At the beginning, Xiao’s father blamed those well-known talkers who were on the air are not qualified to be reviewers due to the reason that they criticize behavior of his son based on the record instead of truth. His son, Xiao was very sad over the incident and almost being pressured to death by them since they did not know how serious of illness he had and kept talking something badly about his

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behavior. In the program, Xiao's father said that first of all, his son did not know there was a patient in the ambulance. Second, his son did have heard siren and at that time he was struck with a panic. However, Xiao's father was attacked from all sides on the spot within program. Those well-known talkers inquired Xiao's father whether he needed to apologize to victim as well as important others at first instead of blaming them. Xiao's father replied that they released apology immediately when they know this event, and all of reports emancipate wrong information. Furthermore, he requested those well-known talkers stop talking if they do not know the truth, otherwise he would accuse them (Raindog, 2011).

After the program was broadcast, condemnation from all sides was raised not only focus on behavior of protagonist but also for father's explanation. Some people set up a 'Fans' on Facebook to launch human flesh search for getting some personal information about Xiao and his family as well and attracted approximately more than hundreds of thousand netizens join it within 2 days (Facebook, 2011).

Under the mobilization of human flesh search, some related photographs and personal information was posted online shortly afterwards. Netizens pointed out the man who wore a green and yellow hat and poses hip-hop gesture is the target driver who triggers lots of controversial discussion recently.

### **2.1.3 Who is Xiao?**

In the beginning, someone left a message on PTT, saying complete name of Xiao and his occupation: currently he is a doctoral candidate within institute of History at National Taiwan University, also serves as an assistant. Later on, school has confirmed that Xiao was indeed a doctoral student and schedule to graduate in January, 2011. Based on the report from Central News Agency (CNA) which is the state news agency of the Republic of China, Department of History at National Taiwan University stated that both school and academic performance of Xiao were normal. School was very surprised that he tended to block an ambulance. Furthermore giving middle finger since school did not know his condition of mental illness. Police

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and judicial unit were undertaking this event in light of that he is an adult already. Though Department cannot reach this doctoral student today, school is willing to provide some counseling and other assistance if student need (CNA NEWS, 2010).

Netizens initiated another wave of human flesh search soon, using those limited clues and found out that he used to study in National Chi Nan University. Additionally, some cyber users detected his Wretch information under the profile of Signature Network. Wretch is one of famous community website in Taiwan which offers a platform for free hosting services: album, blog, video sharing and Bulletin Board System, etc. What is more, netizens got more confidence when they hunt for Xiao's account on Facebook, knowing that he was born in 1977, coinciding with ages which reported through media and press and both Xiao's Facebook and Wretch shut down instantly since netizens started their discussion.

After series of discussion online since netizens found Xiao's Facebook, one man whose nickname online is Mobile said that he recognized that orange Smart because Xiao had offered rider service for him before. He believed that being a Ph.D. student, it must have lots of pressure, but no matter the driver was someone whom he knows or not, the troublemaker should come out and apologize.

#### **2.1.4 I am Innocent**

Both Xiao and his brother personal information is scoop out by anger netizens. Some public opinions circulated online since people who have sharp eyes even notice that within Wretch album from his brother, people can find the same orange Smart. So in the early morning of December 27, Xiao's brother jumped out and left some message on the internet. He claimed that he was really sorry that his family had shown such bad example to society, also felt ashamed to the family of victim. He knew that no matter how hard he tried to do or to say whatever, could not make up this sorrow, saving life of the old lady due to the actions of his family. But if he could do, he was willing to do everything. He could show up in farewell ceremony if old lady's family allowed that and made them feels better. He said that originally he think his parents

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should come forward to explain and handle this event; after all, being a junior generation, he was unsure what he could do. However, since there are lots of people thinking that he is exactly perpetrator, he decides to come out to apologize to public and say something to prove innocence of himself.

Girlfriend of the younger brother also spoke out to fight against those people who based on some photos within album on Wretch and started to doubt that the younger brother was the perpetrator. She said that notion which the wise man knew that he knew nothing was totally crumble while large number netizens started to reprove him sharply. Besides that, she clarified that Jia-Qing Xiao was not father of Xiao, and those information circulated online which in relation to father's identity is wrong (Amomo, 2011).

Netizens responded in different ways after seeing those messages from Xiao's brother. Some people say this courage, vocalizing and apologizing may amend deviant behavior while some appreciate and encourage Xiao's brother attitude. Nevertheless, others keep blame Xiao due to the reason that he still holds his tongue rather come out and face it no matter netizens use both soft and hard tactics. Soft tactic implies those friends who persuade Xiao showed up and confront this incident as soon as possible. As the old saying goes, repentance is salvation. As for hard tactic, it represents those people who criticize Xiao and express their own opinion online extremely. After all, under the power of public opinion and human flesh search, almost all of his family was involved in it. However, after two days, Xiao still kept silence.

On the same day, a legislator handed in a proposal to Legislative Yuan. She tried to persuade related department to amend the law. She pointed out that the existing Act Governing the Punishment of Violation of Road Traffic Regulations was too light. Driving license should be suspended since the driver hamper the way of ambulance and cause serious injury or death (NOW news, 2010).

### **2.1.5 Opinion from Media Persons**

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On December 28, deputy director of Taipei City Police Department made her way to visit Xiao. According to her statement, facing widespread criticism, Xiao becomes depressed. His family was very worry about him in order to prevent commit suicide, and currently family determined to accompany him the whole day (NOW news, 2010). In light of behavior of deputy director, netizens published different opinions. Some appreciated her consideration while others taunted her that it is unnecessary to take care such dreg of humanity, also it was not her job instead of social worker (Fw200, 2010).

In the afternoon of 28<sup>th</sup>, ETTV News raised some discussion about this event which concerned by the public subsequently. This channel is operated by Eastern Television in Taiwan. Within the program, the host mentioned that there were varieties of editions about Xiao as well as his father's information online since people used human flesh to search. Nevertheless, based on information which provided by netizens, there is one argument which is believed to be the most convincible one. They believed that Shi-Yan Xiao was indeed the father of Xiao according to his similar appearance as well as his wife surname is Sun.

The program invited some media persons, especially one, Xiang-Long Tang who used to cooperate with Sun. Tang described that he knew that Xiao has mental illness, and his parents seldom mentioned their son both order and younger among conversation. From record, the public might think Xiao is abominable and actually public procurator could involve in it directly and charge Xiao. Though Shi-Yan Xiao said something and did something foolish in order to protect his son, Tang said that under such pressure which caused by mental illness, he could realize this inappropriate behavior. Other guests within the program did a speech full of invective. They doubted that if the father was Shi-Yan Xiao, how could he know what role he played within public agenda. Furthermore, guests appealed that law enforcement agency should use it as an example to inform the public what kind of sanction he would get if people do not give way to ambulance (Mindming, 2010).

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### **2.1.6 Tending to Persuade and Influence the Public**

Later on, in the evening of 28<sup>th</sup>, outrage from public was triggered instantly after airing a program, News Night Club on TVBS. The channel of TVBS is a comprehensive political one which mainly focuses on news reviewing. The host, Yen-Chiu Li invited several guests to discuss and explore this social problem from different aspects. Li said that Xiao actually made his way in the first time according to record. Being one of the guests within program, Xiang-Long Tang said that he thought that action from Xiao indeed was kind of dodge; otherwise, he would not move. Then he added that, Xiao probably gave way to the ambulance in wrong side and causes this misunderstanding. As for other guests, there existed some suspicious that they offered some excuses obviously in order to rationalize this behavior (Twchannel, 2010). After seeing this show, large number of netizens sneered at this dramatic change from media, and sneering at both the host and guests could say that Xiao was leading the way for ambulance.

On 29<sup>th</sup> of December, National Taiwan University claimed that facing the requirement from many people which ask school should punish this student, school expressed regret once again. Based on the principle that one case would not get dual penalties, the school would not go to make any punishment for that student so far. Instead, school would assist student in doing his responsibility since the case has entered the process of judicial (Pts, 2010).

Confronting a number of legislators challenge the existing regulations, vice minister of Ministry of Transportation and Communications said that this is not a simple matter to solve through giving traffic penalties. The problem is derived from values. The Department of Transportation will enhance to advocate the importance of traffic safety, the same as driving ethics. Only through realizing the severity of the case from driver spontaneously, the occurrence of similar incidents can reduce effectively (Radio Taiwan International, 2010).

### **2.1.7 What Happened Under the Table?**



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Another senior media person, Hui-Wen Chen, on 29<sup>th</sup> of December, expressed his opinion in 2100 Lecture Show which broadcasted on TVBS. This is another kind of political debate show which is similar to 2100 Weekend Lecturing. Within the show, Chen used two news to illustrate some paper reports mislead world opinion, helping Xiao to purge his charge. The first news is related to the police. Chen questioned that why had undersecretary of police need to visit Xiao. Xiao is the wrongdoer instead of victim.

As for the second news, it related to the response from National Taiwan University. The dean of student affairs claimed that under such pressure from the public, Xiao must take the whole responsibility. The case has already entered process of judicial. In order to avoid interference with judiciary, school will punish Xiao according to rules and regulations after judicial determination has conducted. Due to the statement from Chen, it is kind of placement lobbying which manipulated by Xiao's parents. Furthermore, Chen shouted propaganda at Shi-Yan Xiao that if he found out more about that Shi-Yan Xiao attempts to use media to ease this phase, he would release other information (Euro0310, 2010). Nevertheless when the words came out, the host of political commentary show immediately changed subject and cut into advertising.

Another lawmaker who is also on the spot revealed that in the evening of 26, he have received a phone call from Xiao's mother, and she blamed him of giving some incorrect information to the public. In addition, Xiao's mother called him several times during breaks after watching the opinion from Chen.

### **2.1.8 Victory of Public Opinion**

As for other political commentary shows, under the pressure of public opinion since December 28, the next day started to accuse Xiao one after another. Li, the host also took the opportunity to defecate and stress repeatedly that Xiao was indeed acting this behavior, maliciously blocking the ambulance. Based on record from ambulance, TVBS has editing a film and the host invite audience to watch it again from beginning to end to see whether Xiao was too nervous to dodge in the wrong side or he did not

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have intention to clear the hall for ambulance throughout the process.

According to the film as well as opinion from other guests, Li concluded that Xiao had malicious intention to block the ambulance. First of all within video, Xiao gestured middle finger before a scooter rider who tended to persuade and reminded him to give way to ambulance. Secondly, the type of car which driven by Xiao was quite small. Comparing with other cars, it is easier for Smart to find space in order to give way to ambulance. Xiao did not follow other cars' step instead driving his car toward space which gave way by others. Furthermore, according to interview which conducted by TVBS with ambulance driver, ambulance driver said that at that time, those family members who accompany victims called 119 to report the incident to the police immediately (InDeepCloud, 2010). This description restituted the scene indirectly as well as anger on the spot.

Other guest, Xiang-Long Tang, who said Xiao dodged ambulance at first time unlike what he did on 28<sup>th</sup> instead he argued that referred to personality of Xiao's parents, their response was unexpected. They acted in low profile instead of fighting out. Tang also revealed that after the incident, he had talked twice on phone approximately five minutes with Xiao's mother. Tang asked mother several times what is the attitude of Xiao among conversation; however, she was still unwilling to explain and keep in silence. According to statement of Tang, Xiao's mother wished that conversation among each other would not expose to the public. But obviously, as Tang said that he felt Xiao as well as his family were still not willing to come out to explain the event.

### **2.1.9 Here I am**

Until the end of 2010, Xiao still did not come out to face the media and public to express repentance and rehabilitation officially.

Finally, on the forth of January, 2011, Xiao published an open letter for the purpose of apologizing to both victim's family members and mass society through Central News Agency.

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The full text of the open letter reads as follows.

Due to my emotion out of control temporary, I, Ming-Li Xiao committed some mistakes which were not be allowed to do– block the ambulance and made childish behavior, causing great disturbance within society. Even though I have confessed and apologized to the old lady’s family, I know the whole thing is really difficult to make up. My life is full of agony currently. And worst of all, I feel guilty because this event also affects reputation of school.

From December 25, after the occurrence of this unfortunate incident, I expressed my apologies to Miss Ho and Father Ho neither through phone call or short message service. I know it is too late but in my mind, I still hope that there is some opportunity to make up. Being a student, that behavior which I have done is a kind of shame, not merely ashamed National Taiwan University, but implicating those teachers who concerned about me for long time in and around school.

To this end, I need to face and reflect this error, expressing my deepest regret to my alma mater, history teachers and friends. In addition, I will wait and face disposal and judicial enforcement calmly.

I felt very scared and regret after the great stir which rose by this incident. At the beginning, I did not know how to deal with. Subsequently, teachers offer lots of suggestions and tend to communicate and enlighten me how to face the error. I realize that I must to review and temper myself instead of keep escape.

I am really sorry to everyone, full of guilt and remorse. Therefore, I have decided to work as volunteer, engaging in variety kind of social services to make up my fault, to make a fresh start to general public.

At the end, I want to say sorry one more time to the old lady’s family. I was wrong.

Ming-Li Xiao 2011/1/4 (InRed, 2011)

### **2.2.0 The Ultimate Penalty**

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The President of National Taiwan University said something on January 7. School felt sorry in connection about this event. The case has already submitted to Student Rewards and Punishment Committee, and the results of disposal would publish before Monday, January 10. The President, Lee pointed out that in accordance rules and regulations within school, means of disposal include reprimand, withdrawal, etc. Thereinto, result of dropping out of school is the same as sentencing death penalty. That's the main reason school needs to take some time to consider this case carefully. School will enhance Character Education for students and ask teachers to pay more attention to both physical and mental condition.

As for the Taipei District Public Prosecutors Office, it has received collected evidence on 6<sup>th</sup> of January from police precinct and it has start investigating the case by crime of injuring another person and crime of interference with public administration (EpochTimes, 2011).

Xiao, who previously have not come forward to make a public apology instead of issuing an apologetic letter through Central News Agency, in the morning of 8<sup>th</sup>, finally show up in the farewell ceremony of that old lady. His face was solemnly and hoped that could go in the venue to apologize to the family in person. However, he shall not enter the hall and was being blocked. Since he could not enter the farewell ceremony, Xiao departed there and escorted by support staff. When Xiao was interviewed by Next Magazine, he admitted that he really did something wrong and he wish that he could obtain forgiveness from both old lady's family and general public.

After the occurrence of this event, family of Xiao has moved away the original place where they lived. Mother, Xiang-Lan Sun indicated that she knew that her son had done something wrong while she was interviewed by Next Magazine as well. In order to express her sorrymess, she kept calling and texting to the old lady's family. Also a handwritten apology letter was transferred through church on behalf of her son and an apology letter to school as well as issuing one to general public through Central News

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Agency. Being a mother, she said that after the incident, Xiao had crying and crouched in the corner. He refused to leave his room and begged his family do not push him (NOW news, 2011).

After two weeks investigation, on January 10, National Taiwan University has published the result of disposal to Xiao: two major demerits, two minor demerits and disciplinary probation. This means that Xiao can no longer make any mistake in school, otherwise, he will dropped by school. Apart from that, Xiao need to receive psychological counseling as well as psychotherapy. In particular, school required Xian stop driving car on campus.

According to the Chief of Secretary statement, school made such resolution because Xiao has expressed his regret and apologies. Although Xiao has already written an open letter to convey his remorse, however, this case has affects reputation of school seriously. We, therefore, decided to keep him in school but placed under surveillance, and forced him to accept psychological treatment (TVBS, 2011).

After investigation from Taipei District Public Prosecutors Office, Xiao was suspected to interfere in official duties. However, considering that he has filled with remorse after occurrence of event, also NTU has already punish him, in the morning of March 28, 2011, Xiao got leniency from prosecutors. Prosecutors pointed out that first of all, Xiao has no criminal record. After the incident, he committed the crime. With fairly good attitude, he wrote report and confessions to NTU as well as prosecutors during the process of investigation. NTU has record demerits to punish Xiao, and prosecutors consider that Xiao has learned a lot from that punishment. For that reason, Xiao get deferred prosecution. Prosecutors just asked Xiao to pay NT\$6,000 to the national treasury. Additionally, Xiao needed to offer 80 hours for public service. Banishing those fines and service hours, within one year, if Xiao did not cause any offense, the charges will drop and Xiao will not leave a criminal record. As for another accusation from ambulance worker, since rescue worker withdraw the lawsuit, prosecutors decided not to conduct the suit (MSN news, 2011).

This car event which rose by a doctoral student leading to quite acute public opinion lambaste online. Due to the reason the current Act of Governing the Punishment of Violation of Road Traffic Regulations, people will only be fined approximately NT\$600 and NT\$1,800 if people do not give way to ambulance immediately, there are several legislators have proposed to amend the law to give an aggravated punishment beyond the maximum prescribed. So in May 3th, Legislative Yuan passed the legislation ‘Part Amendment of Act Governing the Punishment of Violation of Road Traffic Regulations’ through three readings. In the future, if drivers resist to give way to ambulance, engineering rescue vehicle or fire truck, or even followed by speeding, not only the driver need to pay fines from NT\$600 to NT\$1,800 dollars but also the driver license will be suspended three months (Yahoo News, 2011).

## 2.2 Timetable

Date	Activities	Persons
2010.12.24	➤ Blocking ambulance and gesture rude finger.	Xiao
2010.12.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Uploading video to YouTube and launch discussion on BBS. Furthermore, starting human flesh search.</li> <li>➤ Going to police station and taking notes. Claiming has mental illness.</li> <li>➤ Condemning Xiao and his parents to use mental illness as exculpatory excuse.</li> <li>➤ Denouncing Xiao based on Act Governing the Punishment of Violation of Road Traffic Regulations.</li> </ul>	<p>Netizens</p> <p>Xiao &amp; his parents</p> <p>The Alliance for the Mentally Ill</p> <p>The police</p>
2010.12.26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Making a call-in to 2100 Weekend lecturing.</li> <li>➤ Setting up a ‘Fans’ group on Facebook. Starting second wave of human flesh search.</li> </ul>	<p>Xiao’s father</p> <p>Netizens</p>

2010.12.27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Making an apology to the public and self-clarification.</li> <li>➤ Recognizing the identity of Xiao's father.</li> <li>➤ Using both soft and hard tactics to persuade Xiao.</li> <li>➤ Handing in a proposal to Legislative Yuan to amend existing regulations.</li> </ul>	<p>Xiao's younger brother</p> <p>Girlfriend of younger brother</p> <p>Netizens</p> <p>Legislator</p>
2010.12.28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Visiting Xiao.</li> <li>➤ Appreciating or blaming behavior of deputy director.</li> <li>➤ Confirming identity of Xiao's parents and raising discussion of this event.</li> <li>➤ Saying Xiao has dodged and made his way to ambulance at the first time in News Night Club.</li> <li>➤ Sneering at comments which attempt to rationalize and making excuses for the behavior of Xiao from both the host and guests within TV program.</li> </ul>	<p>The Police</p> <p>Netizens</p> <p>ETTV News</p> <p>Host and Xiang-Long Tang</p> <p>Netizens</p>
2010.12.29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Saying will assist Xiao instead to punish him until the result comes out from judicial procedure.</li> <li>➤ Challenging existing Act Governing the Punishment of Violation of Road Traffic Regulations.</li> <li>➤ Saying increase traffic penalties is not the solution for this event instead to advocate the importance of traffic safety, the same as driving ethics.</li> <li>➤ Using two examples to prove how Xiao's parents implement lobby for his son according to their status and authority.</li> </ul>	<p>National Taiwan University</p> <p>Legislators</p> <p>Ministry of Transportation and Communications</p> <p>Hui-Wen Chen</p>

	➤ Clarifying Xiao indeed blocked the ambulance and reveal that have communicated with Xiao's mother.	Host and Xiang-Long Tang
2011.01.04	➤ Publishing an open apology letter through CAN.	Xiao
2011.01.08	➤ Going to old woman's farewell ceremony, however, he was rejected by the dead family.	Xiao
2011.01.10	➤ Punishing Xiao by two major demerits, two minor demerits and disciplinary probation.	National Taiwan University
2011.03.28	➤ Asking Xiao to pay 60000NT and offer 80 hours for public service.	Prosecutor
2011.05.03	➤ Amending Part of Act Governing the Punishment of Violation of Road Traffic Regulations.	Ministry of Transportation and Communications and legislators

## Chapter 3

### 3.1 Analysis

As stated above, the whole event ignites public fury for a while, from December, 2010 to May, 2011. Under the pressure from the public, news spreading through variety of media, Xiao published an open letter to express his apology at the end. Apart from this, he got punishment not only from school but also from the public. The former refers to demerits and probation and the later means the psychological pressure which results from human-flesh search.

Since my research question is how human-flesh search can implement social control, the following I would like first introduce definition of social control, and public opinion which I applied later due to the reason that there are variety kinds of definitions. Then among several actors who showed up within case I could discover which the most important driving force is, how does each actor interact and create influence to the society, then discuss what result comes out after human-flesh search.

#### 3.1.1 The Definition of Social Control and Public Opinion

It is not easy to find a definition of social control which is agreed upon by sociologist



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since this term is widely used within sociological lexicon (Meier, 1982). Within paper, I adopted definition of social control based on the one which proposed in the book of *Social Control* (Ross, 2009). According to explanation from Ross (2009), social control is kind of social governance in order to prevent people breaking the law or do some behaviors which are not conducive to the society. Ross identifies two control systems based on a set of norms, one is hard control system and the other is soft control systems. The former one also was named as formal control is built upon law enforcement agencies or legal system, take law, moral for example. And the later one is based within social groups or we can call it informal control, e.g. custom, public opinion, religion. To put in short, social control in this paper refers to the society or group of people apply means of hard control or soft control to prevent and constraint any conduct that displeased society.

Among 23 mechanisms of social control which recognized by Ross (2009), public opinion is in the first place. There are three elements comprise this general term, public opinion, that is public judgment, public sentiment and public action. So I will take not only public opinion but also public feeling and public movement which taken by the public in order to affect specific conduct into consider.

After defining social control and public opinion, I am going to see the relationship between public opinion and the main point of this paper, human-flesh search. Here, I found out there are ten different actors show up in this case: Xiao, Family of Xiao includes parents and younger brother, netizens, The Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the police, legislators, media contains host and media persons (Xiang-Long Tang and Hui-Wen Chen), National Taiwan University, Ministry of Transportation and Communications, and prosecutor. Nevertheless, the following I would like to focus on netizens, Xiao, family of Xiao, and media to process further discussion in order to see how does human-flesh search influence public opinion since other actors were forced by human-flesh search to involve in then did some responses. I will like to see how do those four actors interact and create effects within case.

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### **3.1.2 How Does Human-Flesh Search Form and Influence Public Opinion**

In common senses, the public know the rules that if the siren of ambulance is shriek imperiously, there are two conditions be concerned. The first one is the ambulance needs to rush to somewhere to rescue people, and the other situation is injured has already in the ambulance and ambulance needs to rush to the hospital. No matter which situation, when hearing the sound of siren from ambulance, people will give way to ambulance automatically not only because it was specified by legislation but also the sense of morality. However, Xiao ignored the siren and he did not learn something from other driver's behavior. Instead clearing the hall for the ambulance, Xiao moved his car to block the way of ambulance, furthermore, he even expressed rude finger out of car when someone wanted to remind him giving way. Action from netizens was totally motivated by this video since the public thought that this behavior had against general ethics and values within society.

According to principle of human-flesh search, since plate number of car has revealed online, netizens soon worked together and found identity of Xiao. However, Xiao still kept in silence without saying a word over one week though anger from the public has ignited and netizens has started human-flesh search.

Netizens in the case, hold a crucial position. On the one hand, they produce variety of public opinion include opinion from their own as well as opinion from other people who is not really involve in activity of human-flesh search. In other words, netizens are the driving force behind human-flesh search. On the other hand, they are the one who influenced by the public opinion. In this sector, I just illustrated the first point. As for the second point, I would like to discuss in next sector.

Netizens are the one who launch human-flesh search, and the one who express information through internet which attracted attention from more and more people. Starting from forward event information, take uploaded video for instance, launching search activity and disclosing information, those activities which rose by netizens were took place online. That is to say, netizens see online community, take BBS for

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example as a platform to push human-flesh search forward. With the help of internet, one offered his/her views to the public. Internet users talking around this public-concerned matter, and expand discussion actively.

Netizens do different responses instantly according to different behaviors from different stakeholders. Lots of Xiao's personal information were not dig out and revealed in front of the public by netizens until his father telephoned a call-in program. Expression from father stimulated anger from the public due to the reason that people think the statement announced from father shows the depravity of moral. It was ridiculous for his father using mental ill as an excuse to dispute such disorder behavior from Xiao on account of Xiao is a doctoral student already.

In that case, some netizens commenced exhaustive search online in order to get more information. Started from that moment, not only private information of Xiao but also Xiao Family was forced to involve in by netizens. In addition, when someone pointed out that parents of Xiao tended to apply their personnel network and status to lobby media and relevant personnel, the sentiment of netizens has reach the climax.

Why father of Xiao telephoned a call-in program and attempted to apply human network to lobby the host and several media persons? On account of that mass media, as well as popular figures are significant during the process to reflect and guide the formation of public opinion. If public opinion is only kind of street gossip or record in the resolution, the power is quite limited. Only extensive spreading information through newspapers, news agencies, radio, television or other communication tools could arouse the attention from the mass as well as affect people judgment, sentiment and action.

Both of the host and Xiang-Long Tang on 28th of December claimed that Xiao indeed at the first place, yield space for the ambulance. Nevertheless, one day later, they changed their argument, saying that Xiao blocked the ambulance on purpose. Here, media seemed easier to be influenced by the parents of Xiao or the public. As I stated

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above, being one kind of intermedium media in some extent guided the formation of public opinion. With the help of media, parents of Xiao believed that through information expressing from those popular figure, people might change their views. That was the main reason why those popular figures tended to deliver some information which give help for Xiao to ease pressure from the public on the air.

However, this strategy did not work instead made thing worse, netizens not only doubted credibility of comments from popular figures but also questioned the position of TV program. Information which expressed through media did not in action at the end. On the contrary, information has strengthened public opinion. For the sake of their own right, the TV program as well as those popular figures modified their previous remark as soon as figured out tendency of the public.

Through human-flesh search, this information-delivered process, more and more people concerned with this event. During the process of constantly information exchanging, opinion became consistent, uniform as well gradually and eventually influenced then formed online public opinion.

Since I have shown that how human-flesh search influences public opinion by analyzing the interaction between Xiao, parents of Xiao, media and netizens, in the next sector I would like to illustrate other actors within case which are influenced by the public opinion and investigate how public opinion can implement social control.

### **3.1.3 How Public Opinion Can Implement Social Control**

Being majority view, widespread but coercive social forces, public opinion influences the course of event quite well, as Ross (2009) mentioned that public opinion has the advantage of a wide gamut of influences. In general, public opinion can be perceived as a social phenomenon since it is one product of collective interaction which arises from a social problem and usually it guards the social peace by enforcing moral claims and applies a gradually increasing pressure.

After human-flesh search, there are many group of people forced to involve in, take

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National Taiwan University, legislator, Ministry of Transportation and Communications, and the prosecutor for instance.

School issued a statement soon when more and more people paid close attention to its punishment to Xiao. In Taiwan, legislator is the one who speaks for the people. Protecting public right is their duty since they found out there exists a loophole. Under the influence of public opinion, legislators just represented the public to convey breadth of appeal to relevant department, which is Ministry of Transportation and Communications. In order to prevent and avoid this kind of displeased behavior took place again; Ministry of Transportation and Communications may implement new regulations.

To sum up, as I illustrated above, Xiao, parent of Xiao and media, all of them are those who proved that human-flesh search might formed and influence public opinion. With similar point of views, people in different classes and originally has nothing in common will form a group in short time and subsequently launch human-flesh search. After process of information exchanging online, public opinion was formed and strengthen gradually since more and more truth were dig out and more and more people discussed online.

Based on definition from Ross (2009), public opinion contains public judgment, public sentiment as well as public action. Two waves of human-flesh search in the case which brought out by Xiao and his father could be explained as one movement taken by the public in order to affect and correct their behavior which is not accepted by the public.

Through news reporting, comments or suggestions revealing, media has ability to gather public opinion, arouse attention from the mass as well as influence people's thoughts and actions. For the public, the expression from popular figures usually has certain influence in some extent. However, in this case, the situation is in the opposite way. The power of public opinion is stronger than media. Men's ideas were not

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determined by media easily. Considering their living space and market, media and media persons corrected their deviations which caused by lobby from parents of Xiao spontaneously, and tended to reveal the truth. In other words, public opinion influenced and supervised media.

Size of discussion group follows the development of human-flesh search would expand like a snowball, growing bigger as it goes on. The more information disclosed by netizens, the more ability public opinion owned to influence society. All related sectors or groups within society were possible to involve, e.g. the police, legislators, prosecutors and Ministry of Transportation and Communications though some of them tended to influence public opinion. In the act of series discussing, criticizing and information exchanging, new consensus or new system will come out under the pressure from public opinion in light of similar circumstances or events. That is to say, human-flesh search raise awareness from the public and form public opinion. And public opinion influences the society furthermore through carry out both soft and hard social control.

## **Chapter 4**

### **4.1 Conclusion**

This paper focuses on one human flesh search case in Taiwan. It aims to investigate the relationship between human-flesh search and social control. The results indicated that through public opinion making, human–flesh search could implement social control.

Belonging to one mechanism of social control, public opinion was formed while one exposed event was spreading through variety kinds of media. According to Ross (2009), public opinion could be divided into three sections: public judgment, public sentiment and public action. Due to one common goal, after series discussion and comments, different group of people launch specific movement in order to reach their goal. And that specific movement is known as human-flesh search.

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During the process of human-flesh search, public opinion plays a crucial role. Although public opinion is not mandatory, it has special function compare with other means of social control. Creating a social atmosphere through value judgment, public opinion influences members' social values as well as behaviors. That is to say, under the influence of social atmosphere, the same as moral judgment of society, members within society may comply with the guidance and restrictions of public opinion and ultimately, condemn and stop any behavior displeased by this society.

On the other hand, during formation process of human-flesh search, it could stimulate snowball effect, which means different group of people will be mobilized and involve in the formation of public opinion. Though public opinion cannot produce direct force to governed deviance, it could produce a wide range of pressure to push other social forces to form a new system for the purpose of avoiding similar situation take place again. Without loophole, the society may progress and develop in stable way.

Given limitations of the current study, future research can conduct more in-depth studies to investigate the role of media as well as the effects include positive and negative sides result from human-flesh search. Through internet and TV program, human-flesh search could conduct in high frequency, the same as the public could reveal and express information freely. Much insight could be gained by comparing cases of human-flesh search in Taiwan and China. Governed by different regimes, specific questions of human-flesh search such as information spreading or development could be researched.

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