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Different Standpoints and Evidence Lead to Different Writing Methods

In 2017, there were more than five terrible large-scale mass shootings that occurred in the US and hundreds of innocent people died. The latest "Las Vegas Casino shooting incident" pushes the debate about "gun violence" to the climax. Two articles, "Gun Violence: How the U.S. Compares with Other Countries" written by Nurith Aizenman from *NPR* and "Why Are There Always Shootings in the US?" written by Tian Feilong from *China Daily*, analyze the causes that lead to the serious gun problem in the US from completely different perspectives. Aizenman puts it that current social problems are the main causes of gun violence while Feilong points out that the issues left over from the past lead to present-day serious violent mass shootings. Apart from their different perspectives, Aizenman analyzes more concretely and scientifically by presenting data and comparing the social conditions of the US with other countries while Tian Feilong analyzes the gun violence in the US more abstractly and deeply from the perspectives of history, politics and psychology. The two articles are quite different though they are both dissecting the gun violence in the US which drives me to delve the two analytical articles from main differences between them, concerning standpoints, evidence and writing methods.

In "Gun Violence: How the U.S. Compares with Other Countries", Aizenman points out three possible problems that may cause high rate of violent gun deaths in the US by first showing reference data from *IHME (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation)* and then making

comparisons. Presented in five graphs, the data are visualized which is more lucid for readers to make intuitive comparisons than Feilong's full-text-reasoning. Using authoritative research data and graphs can not only get readers involved more easily, but also make the article more scientific and convincing. Aizenman divides the five graphs into two types clearly by their titles: "How the U.S. Compares with the Lowest/Highest Rates of Violent Gun Deaths Worldwide" put the US into the global scope; meanwhile, "How the U.S. Compares with the Highest Rates of Violent Gun Deaths in East, Southeast and South Asia/ North Africa and the Middle East/ Sub-Saharan Africa" are making comparisons between the US and specific regions. Classification like that makes the purpose of comparisons clear. What's more, the titles of the five graphs all start with "How the U.S. Compares with……" which is the same as the title of the article. As a result, these titles play roles as reminders that remind readers of the main argument throughout the text. If stepping further to analyze the standpoint, Aizenman puts "the US" as the subject in every title which makes Aizenman's standpoint clear: he is writing the article from the perspective of the US. Aizenman says with sorrow that "With the casualties due to armed conflicts factored out, even in conflict-ridden regions such as the Middle East, the U.S. rate is worse than in all but one country: Iraq." What implies Aizenman's standpoint is the expression, "worse than in all but one country". It puts the US on an upper stage to be compared with other countries. Simultaneously, the word "even" makes the author's regardful tone stronger which arouses readers' empathy. And it is where Aizenman's purpose attains.

In contrast, without any graphical evidence, Feilong just use historical, political and psychological facts which are convincing, powerful, sharp but elusive in the article. Compared with the evidence Aizenman uses, these historical and political facts make Feilong's analyses into the gun violence in the US more profound and incisive, though they are not directly related

to everyday life of normal readers which means these facts may be very difficult to be

understood. The incisive and sharp style of writing reflects on Feilong's standpoint. Take the title

for example, different from the gentle standpoint Aizenman's title refers to, the title of Feilong's

article implies that there may be acerbic analyses and comments on the gun violence in the US

which can be judged by the mood and word Feilong uses. Feilong asks a question "Why are there

always shootings in the US?" in the title and the interrogative mood gives readers the sense that

the author holds a negative attitude. In addition, Feilong uses "always" which means "at all

times" or "on all occasions" *(OED)* in the question to add up to his negativity. For common

usage, "always" is a neutral word, but if changing the title into "Why are there shootings in the

US at all times?", it sounds like the author is complaining and despising the bad condition of gun

violence in the US. Feilong's denial standpoint also shows up in some part of the article. As

Feilong puts it with satire in the first paragraph that "Claims that 'guns don't kill people, people

do' only serve to draw attention to the fundamental issue, which is the deadly potentiality of

people with guns." In this instance, Feilong uses "only" which means "No more than (implying

that more is expected); solely, merely, exclusively" *(OED)* to demonstrate that "guns don't kill

people, people do" is actually an excuse for not banning guns. The critical tone shown by "only"

in the sentence emphasizes that Feilong is strongly condemning the gun ownership and gun

violence in the US.

  The different evidence and standpoints the two authors hold lead to their totally different

writing methods. Based on providing evidence scientifically, logically and visually, Aizenman

first compares the US with developed countries which are in similar economic and educational

development level while having nearly the lowest rate of violent gun deaths in the world. The

quotation Aizenman uses with pity and concern for the US, "It is a little surprising that a country

like ours should have this level of gun violence. If you compare us to other well-off countries, we really stand out.", indicates that a country like the US should not have such a high gun violence rate. Meanwhile, this quotation also implies the severity of the gun problem which evokes the readers' curiosity and concern. For purpose of figuring out why the US has such a high rate of violent gun deaths, Aizenman compares the US with developing countries from different regions. By analyzing social problems that the US and other countries have in common, Aizenman points out three potential causes – the large presence of gangs, drug trafficking and armed conflicts. Instead of stating data and making comparisons, Feilong analyzes the roots of gun violence by logical deduction. The historical facts which are stated objectively that "The Anglo-American militia tradition, an attachment to Lockean liberalism and the Supreme Court's rights-centered jurisprudence for the Second Amendment all make gun ownership a fundamental individual right" indicates that Feilong regards the traditional gun ownership as the fundamental cause of gun violence. Besides, as Feilong criticizes in the article, the US constitutional politics leads to inefficiency which in some degree prevents the states' governments or even the federal government from restricting guns. Finally, combining with the historical and political aspects, from the perspective of psychology, Feilong draws the conclusion: extensive gun ownerships result in the citizens' insecurity which leads to more and more gun violence in society.

Aizenman stands in the position of the US, his attitude is concern and regret rather than criticism, therefore, he chooses a gentle method to analyze the causes of gun violence in the US. Feilong, however, is more like a spectator who tells the truth profoundly but sharply without inner emotion towards the US. The two authors' different standpoints result in their different tones in the articles: one is meek, the other is acerbic. Furthermore, Aizenman's data and graphs are more concrete that can be analyzed and compared, while the internal relations in historical,

political and psychological facts Feilong uses are more abstract that need to be logically

ratiocinated. In conclusion, though the two articles are both analyzing the gun violence in the

US, the different standpoints and evidence they hold make their writing methods worlds apart.

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