

# An Analysis of “Discursion-Power” in Network Buzzwords: A Case Study of Lone Warrior

Xingchen Liu

School of Public Affair, Nanjing University of Science and Technology, Nanjing, China

Email: 782233592@qq.com

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## Abstract

As a product of social construction, discourse is inseparable from power. This paper examines the “Lone Warrior” discourse as a product of power, using Foucault’s discourse-power theory to trace the evolution of “Lone Warrior” from a popular song to a symbolic signifier of mainstream ideology. It reveals how different power structures, such as the power of subcultural group segregation, mass discourse rights, market power, and state power, influence the narrative of discourse, discipline and control it, while transforming it into a multifaceted cultural signifier. In the concluding section, the contribution of Foucault’s concept of power to discourse studies is reflected upon, providing food for thought for subsequent research.

## Keywords

Discourse Power, Network Buzzwords, Foucault’s Power Theory

## 1. Introduction

Since its release, the song “Lone Warrior” has seen its popularity soar, not only consistently topping the charts on Chinese music platforms but also being ranked by Universal Music as one of the highest-streamed songs globally since 2022. It has even been played during the semi-finals of the World Cup in Qatar, broadcast to a global audience, making it a truly world-class song. Along with the widespread dissemination of “Lone Warrior,” the term “lone warrior” has been frequently used across various media platforms, associated with many different subjects, and spread across different fields, effectively becoming a multi-faceted internet buzzword with rich connotations. Looking at the dissemination process of the “Lone Warrior” discourse, its meaning has long been detached from the original song. In different media contexts, it presents different knowledge faces, and

the “Lone Warrior” discourse has been reconstructed by the social media. The sudden popularity of a particular discourse on media platforms is not without reason; it is often the result of a deliberate choice that expresses certain communicative intentions (Cohen & Young, 1974). Media that appear to be objective and neutral actually conceal their own power will in the process of disseminating discourse, endowing the discourse with various value orientations. As Foucault said, “In every society, discourse is controlled, screened, organized, and reproduced by a certain number of procedures.” (Foucault, 1971) In Foucault’s view, these dominant programs are the direct manifestation of power. It can be said that there is no pure discourse in reality, only discourse permeated by power. Therefore, the meaning of the words of the “lone warrior” who are frequently “commandeered” by the major media is intricately generated and flowed in the practice process of the “lone warrior” words. From the perspective of power, these seemingly spontaneous discursive practices that are continuously reproduced with multiple meanings have, in fact, become a form of representation, filled with the domination of power. Only by attempting to dissect the “lone warrior” discourse from the media context and viewing it as a discursive practice saturated with power strategies can we further reveal the reasons behind the production of discursive meaning and the social impact of discursive expressions.

This paper selects “lone warrior” as a case study, and adopts Foucault’s “discourse-power” theory to analyze the process of meaning transformation of the “lone warrior” discourse and its socio-cultural significance. Specifically, how does the discourse of “Lone Warrior” reproduce itself step by step and eventually get co-opted by mainstream media? Are there any power mechanisms that discipline and control the generation and dissemination of the “Lone Warrior” discourse? What social and cultural significance does the process of meaning transformation in the “Lone Warrior” discourse reveal?

## 2. Theory

### 2.1. Social Constructionism

Social constructivism posits that all social phenomena are not essential but are constructed by society. Due to the subjectivity inherent in discursive practices, these practices are filled with subjective choices, and discourse has always been the result of subjective construction. Therefore, any discourse adopted by actors has already gained the subjective approval of the actors and expresses some form of the actors’ subjective will. “Every discourse serves a will to power.” (Wang, 2001) In the internet era, the advent of all-media has blurred the boundaries between discourse subjects and objects, redefined the relationship patterns between them, and altered the power dynamics of discourse (Wu & Li, 2024). In the cyberspace, the subject’s will cunningly hides within the discourse. While controlling the discourse, it becomes invisible in its dissemination through the separation of the subject from the discourse, and as a result, certain discourses transcend personal expression to become public discourse. In the network society, the scattered

and spontaneous discourse is by no means free from the control of power. The “signified” and “signifier” that are casually connected, as well as the social reality constructed from them, are permeated with the will to power. Therefore, the exploration of discourse should not be confined to the meaning of the discourse itself, but should pay more attention to how discourse is constructed by power. In contemporary linguistics, critical discourse analysis emphasizes that while explicating discursive practices, it is important to further explore the influence of the relationship between subject power and ideology within the constitution of discourse, and to reveal the constructive role of discourse in the formation of social identities, social relationships, and systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough, 2003).

One of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, Antonio Gramsci, elaborated on the meaning of discourse power in his discussions on language and hegemony. Gramsci linked the study of language to the hegemony of political rule, arguing that related aspects such as intellectual thought leadership, national consciousness and unity, and the creation of popular culture are all infused with varying degrees of discourse power expression. His exposition on language and power provides insight into understanding the role of power that penetrates into the everyday life level (Peter Ives, 2018). For Gramsci, the hegemony of the bourgeoisie is not manifested in the general sense of political governance but also in the fact that the bourgeoisie achieves its rule by obtaining the consent of subordinate groups in everyday life and discourse practices. Many phenomena in daily life are associated with hegemony. Gramsci’s ideas reveal the power factors implicit in discourse.

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, from a practical perspective, has elaborated a theory of communicative action that emphasizes the practical nature of discourse. Habermas considers “discourse” as an expression of inter-subjective communication. In social interaction, subjects use discourse as a medium to communicate and dialogue on certain public issues, resolve differences, reach consensus, and achieve common action goals through joint negotiation. Thus, discourse can influence the political system from the practice of social communication. However, because completely rational communication requires an “ideal speech situation,” real discourse practices are always difficult to achieve truly rational communication due to various obstructions. Habermas believes that discourse itself can become a tool for the realization of power. Power can suppress the freedom of some subjects to speak through changes in communication conditions, altering the equality that should exist among subjects in discourse communication, which shows a deep reflection on the political dimension of discourse.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu revealed the complex relationship between discursive interaction and power domination. He pointed out: “The power relations of language can never be defined merely by the relationships between existing linguistic competencies. The importance of different agents also depends on their symbolic capital—that is, the recognition they have obtained from the group, whether or not this recognition has been institutionalized.” (Bourdieu, 2005)

Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power reveals how language is linked to power, especially the power relations that play a role in verbal communication but cannot be seen, and the role of this power structure even exceeds violent means, it is a form of symbolic violence. Bourdieu's discussion provides in-depth consideration for discourse analysis to reveal power relations within social structures.

French philosopher Michel Foucault fundamentally revealed the dominion and control of power over discourse, elucidating the nature and function of discourse. In a certain spatio-temporal context, the form, meaning, and even the dissemination path of discourse are not merely the product of free practice. The seemingly free field of discourse is always accompanied by a more controlling field of power. For Foucault, discourse is a series of speeches that belong to a single system of noncontinuous forms, and this kind of speech or discourse is controlled by power, which is a form of expression of power (Foucault, 1971). Discourse is closely connected to power, and both the external form and the internal meaning of discourse contain elements of power. It is by following the dimension of power that Foucault brings the analysis of the power of discourse to the extreme, revealing the complex and subtle relationship between discourse and power.

## 2.2. Foucault's View of Discourse

Discourse is one of the core concepts in Foucault's intellectual system. Unlike Saussure's abstract analysis of the linguistic system in terms of linguistic rules, Foucault emphasizes the study of discourse as a real and historical system of representation (Zhou, 2008). Foucault believed that the important question is not what people say, but why they say it and what limits them to say it in such a way (Foucault, 2019). Discourse is a set of statements that are not produced arbitrarily but are controlled, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures. Discourse is a construction of knowledge and cognition. It is no longer seen as linguistic signs involving some semantic features, but rather as a system of discursive practices. Indeed, the symbolic meaning of discourse cannot be overlooked, but discourse can express much more than just symbols. These additional elements cannot be reduced to language; instead, they carry unique social significance. These extra elements are precisely what discourse analysis needs to reveal. Foucault believed that understanding these elements that go beyond discourse requires a return to the real social and historical context. This means tracing the social and historical rules that make discursive practices possible. These rules are not the kind of systematic rules based on structuralist linguistics, but rather complex practical rules about history and reality. Moreover, these rules are external to discourse itself. Discourse analysis involves dissecting the various external conditions that influence discursive practices, which are the "external rules" of discourse (Zhu, 2020). This requires an exploration of the process by which discourse is generated, an understanding of the specific composition of discourse, and an understanding of the historical conditions under which these discourses emerged. It is also necessary to understand who, based on what conditions, was able to

produce these discourses within specific fields of practice. It is through this “archaeological” investigation of the external conditions of discourse that Foucault connects power to discourse analysis.

In Foucault’s view, discourse is a universal social phenomenon that is closely linked to both the internal space of language and the external space of society. Power operates through discourse, and discourse is a means of power. Foucault said: “Power is exercised through discourse, and the production and use of discourse are subject to a certain degree of selection, control, and organization, and are subtly dominated by power.” (Foucault, 2023) All discourse is influenced by the interwoven power relations within the social and historical conditions in which it exists.

### 2.3. Foucault’s View of Power

In Foucault’s discourse, power is endowed with a fundamental ontological status. Foucault views power as a universally existing force relationship (Luo, 2015). It is not a concept of an object that can be possessed at will, but purely a relationship or a state. Precisely for this reason, the process of power analysis in discourse should be dynamic, situated in an active, continuous production and reproduction process. Power is purely a dynamic force relationship (Hu, 2021). If power is viewed from a fixed perspective, it inevitably becomes attached to or fixed upon certain things, and thus the analysis of power is bound to fall into the trap of traditional views of power. The same is true for the power of discourse; although power exerts control and domination over discourse, this process is not static or one-time, but a dynamic domination. Discourse is constantly changing within discursive practices and may even flow within different power relations.

Power is not merely a suppressive, negative force; it is also a positive, constructive, and productive force (Yang, 2012). Power is not a powerful machine of violence, nor is it a domineering force that can be mastered by a particular subject. Power also includes forms of resistance, and power relations are bidirectional and fluid. Foucault said, “Where there is power, there is resistance, but resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. ... Power is only exercised through a series of resistances that are potential starting points for an opposing strategy. Resistances are the points where the individual can re-appropriate the power that is being exercised over them. These resistance points are everywhere in the power network.” (Foucault, 2022) Power is not simply a force that acts upon individuals; it is also a field of relations within which individuals can find points of resistance and leverage to challenge and transform the existing power dynamics. Indeed, there exists a capillary-like action of power, much like the blood that flows through the capillaries, where power relations permeate every aspect of social life and run through all strata of society (Hu, 2013). Under the universal grasp of power, one-way domineering power cannot exist, and it is not only the ruling class and political groups in control of the state apparatus that can exert power. Micro-powers also exist, and “the rationality of power is the rationality of the various tactics

employed.” (Foucault, 2019) Any individual or group that understands the logic of these tactics can exercise power, either to resist or to struggle. Although these power techniques often have a silent and hidden characteristic. Power is not external to things; it is born out of differences and changes. “Power relations are not external to other types of relationships; on the contrary, they are internal to them... Power relations are not structures that stand high above everything and only have a simple prohibitive or preservative function; on the contrary, they have a directly productive role when they are functioning.” (Foucault, 2022) Any change in things often produces new power relations, which means that the examination of power relations needs to focus on every change in things. Taking discourse as an example, every change in the meaning of discourse implies a change in power relations, either the birth of new power relations or the use of new power strategies. In summary, power is omnipresent.

### 3. Power Analysis of the Discourse Practice of the Lone Warrior

All discourse is a discourse of power, and the meaning of discourse does not exist merely in the textual sense of the variation of symbols, but rather in the power practices behind the discourse. The discourse of the “Lone Warrior” that spreads through various social media is both a product of social construction and exhibits a certain constructiveness in terms of social meaning. From Foucault’s perspective, as an output of a certain knowledge-power, the discourse that spreads through various media is not the creation of news reporters or a collective rationalization of imagination, but a product of power acting on various media institutions. Therefore, the discourse of the “Lone Warrior” in communication is a material form of the transformation of power discourse meaning, affecting people’s cognition and regulating people’s ways of behavior. So, in the process of discourse change, what kind of power has influenced the discourse? In what way does power incorporate discourse into the process of reproduction? By tracing the history of the “Lone Warrior” discourse in the media, we can depict the process of the meaning change of the “Lone Warrior” discourse and attempt to analyze the power at each stage of the discourse.

#### 3.1. Group Distinction Power—Constructing Identity

“Lone Warrior” first appeared in the public eye as the Chinese theme song for the animated series “Arcane,” a spin-off of the game “League of Legends.” At this stage, the discourse of “Lone Warrior” is directly related to the song “Lone Warrior.” The song, by depicting the image of a solitary warrior, expresses respect for those heroes who work silently behind the scenes and are not understood. It can be said that the song’s expression of profound respect for the ordinary heroes is the core meaning of the “Lone Warrior” discourse at this stage. During this period, the main audience for the “Lone Warrior” discourse primarily consists of three groups: the fan base of the singer Eason Chan, the player community of the

game “League of Legends,” and the animation enthusiasts of “Arcane.” These three groups are typical subcultural collectives, and their audience has a strong tribal gathering characteristic (Wang, 2021). As a symbolic marker of subcultural groups, the “Lone Warrior” is used as a construct for fan community building and IP consumption (Fang & Guo, 2018), as well as a symbolic token associated with the singer (Lu, 2019). As members of these online communities engage with the “Lone Warrior” narrative, they can develop a shared identity that is tied to the values and themes represented by the discourse. This shared identity can strengthen bonds between members and help create a sense of belonging and differentiation from other groups. At this point, the “Lone Warrior” discourse serves as both a symbolic marker of identity for members within the group and a unique label for establishing distinction from those outside the group. In other words, the “Lone Warrior” discourse is used as a power tool for building identity and creating boundaries.

The connection between “Lone Warriors” and the primary school student community is the most direct manifestation of this power of distinction. News reports have pointed out that “Lone Warriors” is widely sung among primary school students, becoming a unique code among them, and some parents have even reported in the media that their children may be ostracized by classmates for not being able to sing “Lone Warriors.” It can be seen that the “Lone Warrior” discourse has become a unique identifier for building group identity among primary school students, and this group has developed a collective consciousness with a sense of unity regarding it. On a larger scale, this group identity marker has been recognized by other social groups, using the act of “exchanging codes” as a differential identifier for distinguishing whether one is a primary school student or not, and even elevating it to the level of social news. From both the internal consistency of the group and the external differences, the primary school student community has clearly constructed a sense of group identity with the help of the “Lone Warrior” discourse.

As an important tool for constructing identity, the “Lone Warrior” discourse becomes a unique identifier for certain social groups, and the identity of these social groups is confirmed through the symbolic meaning of the discourse. Discourse is exercising a form of power of distinction, and subcultural groups achieve cohesion among specific types of subcultural members through this distinction (Chen, 2016). Through the power of discourse distinction, subcultural groups not only define the identity of their members but also exclude other social groups, constructing discourse as a unique group identifier, giving discourse a clear direction of meaning, and making discourse conscious in practice. Furthermore, once discourse becomes a specific mode of expression for a subcultural group, members of the subculture will converge more personalized meanings into the discourse. While solidifying the identity marker, the meaning of the discourse will also be infinitely expanded, which lays the foundation for the breakout dissemination of the “Lone Warrior” discourse. In this way, the “Lone Warrior” discourse is reshaped by the subcultural group without even realizing it.

### 3.2. Mass Discourse Power—Identity and Resonance

The identification in network society has a completely different meaning from that in traditional society. In network society, identification is the source of people's meaning and experience. The networked era has awakened people's "self-awareness". People are more likely to make self-choices and self-narrations on the basis of autonomy and independence, rather than passively accepting social class or social position. This is a typical "active constructive identification" (Liu, 2012). The "Lone Warriors" not only solidify the identity of subcultural groups, making their emotional expressions more profound, but also bring the recognition and perception of heroes into real life. More audiences can experience heroes and look forward to heroes from new perspectives such as music, animation, and fan-created texts. In the process of discourse dissemination, the distinct image of the ordinary hero in the "Lone Warriors" discourse resonates with the life experiences of the audience, arousing widespread emotional resonance. In the public's active constructive identification, the "Lone Warriors" discourse has accepted more projections of subjective meanings, becoming a mass discourse that expresses public opinion.

The "Lone Warrior" discourse portrays a symbolic meaning of struggling with fate in the ordinary, coexisting with loneliness, and the notion that everyone is a hero. This resonates with the heroic experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic era, where everyone fights against the virus lonely. This has led to the "Lone Warriors" quickly evoking strong identification and emotional resonance. The discourse encapsulates a tapestry of meanings, including dissatisfaction with reality, endurance of loneliness, desire for victory, longing for normal life, admiration for the ordinary people in the pandemic era, and gratitude towards pandemic fighters. These sentiments are all interwoven within the narrative of the "Lone Warriors," reflecting the complex and multifaceted experiences and emotions of individuals during challenging times. The open and unrestricted nature of short video platforms has allowed countless video creators to deconstruct, reorganize, and recreate the "Lone Warriors" discourse according to their own ideas. As a result, a plethora of secondary creative videos has emerged. These creations no longer strictly adhere to the original song but extend the "Lone Warriors" to encompass countless symbolic meanings. Railway inspectors, street cleaners, scavengers, and the general public who stayed at home during the COVID-19 pandemic era, among others, have all been transformed into "Lone Warriors."

The discourse of the "Lone Warriors" has been infinitely expanded, as it accommodates a multitude of public meaning projections, becoming a tool for the general populace to express themselves. Ordinary people have the right to speak their own words, rather than passively accepting the values imposed by society. Foucault linked discourse with knowledge and truth, arguing that discourse constructs the mental landscape of reality, thereby generating a power relationship within identification. The reproduction of the "Lone Warriors" discourse directly reflects the power dynamics within the network society. It is one of the

manifestations of citizen participation (Sui & Luo, 2019). By transforming and reconstructing the “Lone Warriors,” the instrumentality of discourse is highlighted, and it becomes the “spokesperson” for power. The power inherent in discourse manifests as a form of ideological power. The public, through the “Lone Warriors,” writes their own heroic narratives, asserting their right to speak and be heard within the societal context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Saussure believed: “There is no necessary relationship between the signifier and the signified of a sign. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary.” (Saussure, 1980) Therefore, discourse disseminators can reproduce the discourse of the “Lone Warriors” based on their own experiences and experiences, converging diverse meaning signs into the discourse. The connotation of the “Lone Warriors” discourse has been greatly extended, serving as a cultural symbol that carries a vast common space of meaning (Xiao & Zhang, 2022). At this point, the “Lone Warriors” discourse has transcended the identity label of the subcultural group and has become a discourse tool with power attributes, becoming a mass discourse that expresses public consciousness.

### 3.3. Market Power—Consumer Orgy and Pan-Entertainment

While the “Lone Warriors” have become a sensation on various social media platforms and are widely disseminated by the public, we should not forget the invisible hand—the driving force of the market. In the era of online media, internet buzzwords are closely linked to commercial culture and exhibit a clear commercialist tendency, gradually becoming the “traffic code” for publishers (Wang, 2024). The market power attracted by traffic is not negligible in the process of shaping the discourse of the “Lone Warriors.”

Although the “Lone Warriors” discourse has been endowed with a richer meaning due to the “subjectivized projection” of the masses, without the capital-driven traffic support and the continuous promotion by media platforms, it would not have been possible for the “Lone Warriors” to be disseminated so widely and at such a rapid pace. The role of capital and media platforms in amplifying and sustaining the reach of such discourses is crucial in the digital age, where visibility and reach are often determined by the algorithms and promotional strategies employed by these platforms. The discourse of the “Lone Warriors” is inevitably incorporated into the commercial track. In the media ecosystem rewritten by various online media platforms, “commercialism” becomes the dominant discourse, prompting the product attributes of online content to become more prominent and focusing more on catering to consumer tastes and demands (Li & Chen, 2016). Market power is not concerned with the cultural or social attributes of discourse; it only cares about whether it can be converted into commercial interests. The widely circulated “Lone Warriors” are merely exploitable business opportunities. Therefore, driven by the pursuit of profit, the capital market actively supports the “Lone Warriors,” and various media platforms’ algorithms focus on recommending them, making them the “new darlings” of online consumption. Short

video platforms and the like act like “turbines” generating traffic that attracts collective imitation, which in turn continuously produces new traffic. The “Lone Warriors” have thus transformed from an active choice of a specific group to a force driven by the combined efforts of “consumption and production.” The mode of discourse dissemination has shifted from active to passive, and the production mechanism behind it has transitioned from the social audience to the market. Although the discourse of the “Lone Warriors” has thereby reached a broader audience, its socio-cultural significance has been overshadowed by commercial interests. It has been swept up by the “algorithmic violence” of media platforms, participating fervently in various consumer carnivals and traffic rituals with an unstoppable momentum, becoming a wave in the consumption of online traffic.

In the carnivalesque consumption driven by the pursuit of traffic, the socio-cultural significance within the “Lone Warriors” discourse is gradually eroded, leading the discourse towards “pan-entertainmentization.” Under the influence of capital, the discourse space also becomes increasingly “one-dimensional.” With the injection of commercial capital, the support of platform algorithms, and the increasingly uncontrollable emotions of the public, various forms of anxiety, mockery, and sarcastic malicious emotions are being vented loudly. It has even evolved into a social trend, pushing the public into the “amusing ourselves to death” state described by Postman (Yuan et al., 2022). In such an environment, the original social and cultural significance of the “Lone Warriors” discourse may be overshadowed by the pursuit of entertainment and traffic. In the name of amusement and sensationalism, the depth and substance of public dialogue are sacrificed, and the public discourse space is filled with irrational voices. Meaningful public expression is eroded by fragmented internet language. Indeed, this is exactly the case: In the numerous “secondary creations” of “Lone Warriors” through methods such as parodies, teasing, jesting, and remixing, the originally positive and uplifting emotions inherent in the discourse are rejected and deconstructed in the pan-entertainment landscape. Mainstream values, moral consensus, and political identification are gradually nullified in the midst of capital and entertainment (Dou, 2021). The discourse appears to be spreading spontaneously, but in reality, both the discourse and the audience are dominated by the power of consumption, becoming a means of consumption. As Foucault said: “We thought we were producing discourse, but in fact, we were being firmly controlled by discourse.” (Foucault, 2021).

### **3.4. State Ideological Power—Integration and Co-Optation**

Unlike most internet buzzwords that fall into the trap of “amusing ourselves to death” and have their discourse value dissolved by disorderly entertainment, the core meaning of “Lone Warriors” as “ordinary heroes” aligns with the mainstream ideology of the era of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, where “everyone is a hero.” Therefore, the “Lone Warriors” have been embraced by the mainstream ideology, reshaped by the power of mainstream culture, re-integrated the

representational meaning of the discourse, and ultimately co-opted as a form of positive energy discourse.

Although the “Lone Warriors” discourse has been widely disseminated as a mass discourse, it is essentially a non-orthodox discourse hidden in the virtual space of the internet, a form of non-mainstream popular subculture. Its significance is close to what James C. Scott refers to as the “weapons of the weak,” serving as a competitive ideology to construct the “symbolic power of the weak” (Scott, 2011). However, the continuous expansion of public discourse can lead to a unified direction of public sentiment, becoming an important outlet for the gathering and release of mass emotions. To avoid cultural conflicts, the mainstream consciousness may absorb and utilize certain discourse resources with potential political implications, or politically mobilize them, reshaping them as its own discourse resources to play a role in guiding public opinion. This becomes a safe outlet for the release of political emotions, thereby facilitating constructive political engagement (Wang & Chang, 2022). Indeed, when mainstream media, including official outlets, frequently use terms like “Lone Warriors” in news headlines or as background music for videos, it signifies an acknowledgment of the term’s political value by the authorities. Compared to the previous stage where the “Lone Warriors” discourse was used indiscriminately in the pan-entertainment process of a “national carnival,” official media have co-opted and integrated the “Lone Warriors” discourse. They use it to promote the heroic figures who contribute silently to the nation and society. The negative, mocking, sarcastic, and self-deprecating value tendencies within the “Lone Warriors” discourse have been subtly resolved, while the positive image of the “ordinary hero” is advocated and praised. As a result, the “Lone Warriors” discourse becomes aligned with the mainstream culture and national ideology. Through continuous interaction with official propaganda and everyday experiences, it is integrated into a discourse with clear meaning and distinct positive values, becoming one of the mainstream cultural symbols.

The primary function of the mainstream cultural power’s co-optation of the “Lone Warriors” discourse is to maintain the legitimacy of ideological power expression. By integrating such discourses into the mainstream narrative, the cultural authority can reinforce the values and beliefs that are central to its ideological framework, ensuring that they are communicated in a way that is both resonant and acceptable to the public. The advocacy of the “Lone Warriors” discourse by official media, while seemingly dedicated to promoting the image of the “ordinary hero,” may also have a deeper implication of excluding those who do not fit the “Lone Warriors” mold or who struggle with adversity. The assumption underlying the “Lone Warriors” discourse is that we all live in adversity, and as ordinary individuals, we must endure until the realization of our ideals. Supporting this assumption implies, on a subconscious level, the exclusion of other assumptions, and this is where the ideological function of discourse practice comes into play.

Discourse is action, and once a discourse is used in life, regardless of whether

the connotation and extension of the discourse itself are correct, the shared assumptions behind it have already been shaped into legitimacy and correctness. As Foucault elaborated in “Madness and Civilization,” the establishment of civilization is, to some extent, developed in tandem with the identification of “madness” discourse. The unthinking acceptance of certain discourses by people already includes a default to the “natural attributes” of their basic assumptions, and such discourses have the strongest power to shape individuals and society.

When official media strongly promote the positive image of the “Lone Warriors” discourse, they not only clearly express the value of ordinary heroes but also dispel the other side of the “Lone Warriors” discourse, which tolerates loneliness and endures pain, and other depressing, negative emotions. In this sense, the “Lone Warriors” discourse is solidified into a positive energy discourse, no longer having the possibility of other expressions.

Through a historical analysis of the dissemination process of the “Lone Warriors” discourse, it can be observed that the context of its use and its inherent meaning are not static. The “Lone Warriors” discourse in different periods conveys different meanings and is directed towards different groups. These groups each employ power to produce and reproduce the “Lone Warriors” discourse. We can trace the evolution of discourse meanings by tracking the contexts in which it is used across different periods. However, it is only by viewing discourse as a form of disciplinary talk produced by different groups according to their own will to power, and by placing it within the “social, cultural, and political context” (Van Dijk, 1994), that we can uncover its deeper socio-cultural significance.

#### 4. Conclusion

Using Foucault’s discourse-power analysis, it can be seen that discourse is not naturally generated but is a product of social construction, always intertwined with certain power relations. Foucault emphasizes the relationship between discourse and power, where power operates through discourse, and discourse itself is a means of power, or rather, a manifestation of power. Through discourse, certain knowledge is legitimized, while other knowledge is marginalized or excluded. Just as mainstream media uses the positive energy of the “Lone Warriors” discourse to dissolve the entertainment meaning within the discourse. Furthermore, in different societies and at specific times, the production of discourse is not arbitrary; it is conditional and controlled by a certain number of procedures and rules. The conditions for the generation of discourse constitute the “grid of reading” for the “symbolic order and its expressions” of a certain period (Zhu, 2018), and the control of these conditions for discourse generation is where power is exercised. In Foucault’s thinking, power in modern society is not only omnipresent but also anonymous and widespread (Sun, 2010). In the process where the meaning of discourse is continuously reconstructed, every change in discourse involves a series of power practices. The process of discourse change is a process dominated by power, and any seemingly insignificant change may reveal the shadow of power,

even if this power appears trivial. However, discourse will inevitably change as a result and lead towards an unknown future. Thus, Foucault views discourse as a practice that forms within specific socio-historical contexts, closely connected to social structures, power relations, and historical backgrounds, and can influence individual behavior and identity. Based on this examination of discourse practice, Foucault's work provides an alternative research method for discourse analysis, namely the archaeology of discourse. This method focuses on how language constructs meaning within particular social and historical contexts, examining the formation and function of discourse from the external conditions and contexts of discourse practice. This offers a new perspective for understanding how discourse plays a role in society.

Although Foucault emphasizes the domineering and controlling role of power over discourse, this does not mean that discourse is only in a position of suppression. Discourse power also has a productive aspect. Discourse defines what can be said, what can be thought, and what is possible. While expressing ideas, discourse is also constructing social reality. As previously discussed, subcultural groups use the discourse of the "Lone Warriors" to form their own identity and construct group identifiers. Discourse is driven to distinguish others, but as a variety of individualized meanings infiltrate, discourse produces more social meanings and gradually detaches from specific groups to become a cultural symbol filled with meaning representations. This demonstrates the constructive role of discourse in subjectivity. Foucault emphasizes that an individual's subjectivity is constructed through discourse practices, and an individual's identity, self-awareness, and behavioral patterns are all formed by participating in specific discourse practices. In this sense, individuals do not dissolve within power. Even though Foucault underscores the pervasiveness and omnipresence of power, he also posits that individuals and groups possess the ability to resist it. This resistance can be actualized by creating new discourse practices or by redefining existing ones. The discourse of the "Lone Warriors" continuously evolves its meaning within the possibilities of resistance, transitioning to various power subjects. Each shift in the discourse's meaning is a process of contention among diverse power tactics, with a fabric of heterogeneous powers interlaced, making it challenging to pinpoint an eternal central locus. Power incessantly generates and impacts discourse through a multitude of strategies in everyday life, and discourse practices also generate power. Neither power nor discourse is a static entity with certainty. The only certainty is the inextricable interwoven relationship between discourse and power; only by understanding the operation of power can we truly comprehend discourse.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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