Diversity, News Source and the Politics of Production in the Chinese Media:
5 Ps Stakeplayers’ Influences on Disability News Content in Beijing and Hong Kong’s Press between 1982-2005

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Chinese press’s normative function as a forum for diverse representation through their news representation of disability. It also looks into how power relations of various news sources can affect media’s diversity performance and the politics of media production that lead to the ‘legacy of negativism’ traditionally found in media representation of person with disability. The ‘framework for a 5 Ps stakeplayers model of news source influence on news content in the Chinese press’ is developed to theorize the relationship between news source and the media. (The 5 Ps refers to person with disability (PWD), person with disability organization (PWD organization), policymaker, public and press).

Findings in the research show that media in mainland China provide reasonably good access diversity for the politically marginal groups such as PWDs but not PWD organizations. In Hong Kong, media access diversity performance has been better, especially for PWD organizations. Both presses in Beijing and Hong Kong are found to be performed less satisfactorily in terms of reflective diversity in representing people with disabilities with negative oppressive stereotypes.

It is also found that media content is connected with larger social interests and that meaning is constructed as a result of distribution of power in society. The power to shape content is shared with a variety of news sources (such as the 5 Ps) with different power and status in society. Media is thus not considered as a forum of equal participation of voices but reflection of power. However, all news sources are vulnerable to the conditions that shape news production environment. If any social actors, as news sources, want to gain access and to achieve the agenda that they wish to promote, they need to create and manage a favorable media condition(s) for themselves. Media diversity for disability reporting is less to do with the media system of a society but more to do with the media environmental conditions at the time that the media is in. The politics of media production can significantly influence news content but media environmental conditions can offset that balance which can lead to different level of media diversity performance.
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