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The Public and The Popular Media in China

Hsiao-Wen Lee

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Contents

List of Figures	p.8
List of Tables	p.9
Abstracts	p.11
Acknowledgments	p.13
 CHAPTER 1	 p.14
Introduction	p.15
The Research Topic	p.16
Research Background	p.16
Aims and Objectives	p.17
Research Questions	p.19
Scope and Method	p.20
Thesis Outline	p.23
 CHAPTER 2	 p.26
Habermasian Public Sphere and Its Debates	p.27
Introduction	p.27
From Habermas' to Mediated Public Sphere	p.28
The Definition of 'The Public'	p.31
Public Sphere and The Media of Entertainment	p.33
The 'Public', The 'Popular' and The People	p.36
The Popular is for The People	p.36
The Popular is to Buy The People	p.36
The Debates are Amongst The Public, The Popular and The People	p.37
The Tabloid, The Popular Press and Alternative Public Spheres	p.40
A Commercial Culture of Popular Media	p.40
The Definitions of The Tabloid	p.41
The Alternativeness of Tabloid Journalism	p.42
Ideology and Mass Communication	p.44
Summary	p.46

CHAPTER 3	p.48
China's Public and Social Order	p.49
Introduction	p.49
China's Public and Its Transformation	p.50
The Transformation of China's Public in History	p.50
The Public Sphere and The Private Sphere in Contemporary China	p.52
The Public and The Popular in China	p.55
Sentiment and Reason in The Chinese Context	p.58
The Nature of Chinese Social Culture	p.59
The Notion of Sentiment in China's Tabloids and Official Discourse	p.60
The Invisible Rule and China's Society	p.62
The Function and Controversy of The Invisible Rule	p.62
Corruption and Anti-Corruption	p.64
Summary	p.67
 CHAPTER 4	p.68
The Popular Press and Its Audience in China	p.69
Introduction	p.69
China's Press System and Characteristics	p.70
The Transformation of China's Press System	p.70
Three Academic Approaches of China's Press Studies	p.73
The Growth of the Popular Press	p.75
The Structure of The Popular Press	p.75
The Text of The Popular Press	p.76
Chinese Popular Press and Ideological Ambiguities	p.77
To Frame The Audience	p.79
Summary	p.81
 CHAPTER 5	p.82
Research Methods	p.83
Introduction	p.83
The Qualitative Approach	p.84
News Analysis	p.84
Focus Groups	p.85
Beyond Functionalism	p.86

Research Design	p.87
The Hypotheses	p.87
Research Questions	p.89
The Fieldwork Design	p.90
Rethinking Class and Popular Press Audiences in China	p.91
Reflection on The Research Process	p.95
The Research Process	p.95
To be a Researcher: My Position	p.96
 CHAPTER 6	p.98
News Coverage by The Beijing Press	p.99
Introduction	p.99
Social Unrest – Dingzhou Incident 11 June 2005	p.102
The Event	p.102
The Popular Press Coverage	p.105
The Party Press Coverage	p.106
Private Property in Land Acquisition	
- “The Hardest Nail House in China”	p.108
The Story of The Hardest ‘Nail House’ in China	p.111
The Popular Press Coverage	p.112
The Party Press Coverage	p.115
Subway Disaster	p.117
The Evening Collapse of Beijing Subway Tunnel	p.117
The Popular Press Coverage	p.121
The Party Press Coverage	p.123
Mine Disasters	p.125
A Series of Mine Disasters in Shanxi and China	p.125
The Popular Press Coverage	p.130
The Party Press Coverage	p.131
Conclusion	p.132
The Spectrum of Contemporary China’s Press	p.132
The Competitiveness and The Exception	p.134

CHAPTER 7	p.136
News Coverage by Kunming Press	p.137
Introduction	p.137
Bribery and Corruption	p.139
South Metropolitan Daily and Southern Weekly	p.145
China Youth Daily and Legal Daily	p.147
Xinhua News Agency and Local Papers	p.149
The Popular Press Coverage	p.150
The Party Press Coverage	p.151
Traffic Accident	p.152
The Breaking News From Witness	p.152
The Narrative of The Victims	p.155
The Public Officials' Descriptions	p.156
The Popular Press Coverage	p.158
The Party Press Coverage	p.159
Earthquake	p.162
Atmosphere of Social Harmony After The Earthquake	p.163
The Narratives of The Authorities	p.164
The Popular Press Coverage	p.166
The Party Press Coverage	p.166
Conclusion	p.168
CHAPTER 8	p.171
The Popular Public in Beijing	p.172
Introduction	p.172
The Popular and Public Affairs in Beijing	p.173
Disaster Coverage	p.178
Property Coverage	p.183
Sensational and Trivial Stories	p.186
The People and Class Discrimination in Beijing	p.189
Indifference	p.191
Champion	p.193
Conservation and Reservation	p.196
Conclusion	p.198

CHAPTER 9	p.200
The Popular Public in Kunming	p.201
Introduction	p.201
The Popular and Public Affairs in Kunming	p.202
Corruption	p.204
Crime Stories	p.209
Hero and Touching Stories	p.213
The People and Class Discrimination in Kunming	p.217
Personal Experiences	p.219
Controversy	p.222
Resistance and Expectation	p.224
Conclusion	p.227
 CHAPTER 10	 p.229
Analysing The Public Sphere in China	p.230
Introduction	p.230
The Popular Media and Its Ambiguous Popularity	p.232
The Strict Censorship In Sensitive News Events	p.233
The Normal Competitive Gap Between The Party Press and The Popular Press	p.233
The Political Intervention In Sensitive News Events	p.234
The Disasters' Paradox	p.235
The Comparisons of News Coverage Between Beijing and Kunming	p.236
News Analysis Versus Readers' Experiences	p.237
Reading News, Reading Differences	p.237
The Controversies In The Popular Public Sphere	p.241
China's Public Sphere In Popular Media	p.242
The Mindset of Sentiment, Reason and Invisible Rules	p.243
How The Public Sphere is Defined in Audiences Reading Experiences:	
- The Comparison of Region and 'Class'	p.245
The Genuine Public Sphere in China's Condition	p.248

CHAPTER 11	p.253
Conclusions	p.254
The Aims of This Study	p.254
The Controversies of The Habermasian Public Sphere	p.255
The Characteristics of China's Public Sphere	p.256
The Media System in Contemporary China	p.257
The Findings of This Study	p.258
Research Approaches of This Study	p.258
Research Findings of This Study	p.259
Research Limitations and Future Research That Could be Done	p.262
 Appendix	p.263
Bibliography	p.264
Glossary	p.276

List of Figures

Figure 1: Research Originality for Contribution to Knowledge	p.21
Figure 2: Two Axis of Journalism	p.44
Figure 3: State Control of Media in China	p.71
Figure 4: 'One System Two Strategies' The System in One News Group	p.76
Figure 5: 'The Public' in The Bourgeois Public Sphere and Cultural Studies in The West	p.88
Figure 6: 'The Public' in The Party Press and The Popular Press in Chinese Society	p.89
Figures 7a and 7b: Beijing News Photographs of Dingzhou Incident, Published 13 th June 2005	p.103
Figures 8a and 8b: Web Images of The 'Hardest Nail House' and Wu Ping, The Owner's Wife	p.111
Figures 9a and 9b: The Evening Collapse of Beijing Subway Tunnel	p.117
Figures 10a and 10b: Rescue Operations at Shanxi Mine Disaster	p.127
Figures 11a and 11b: Police 'Wanted' Posters of Hu Xing	p.140
Figures 12a and 12b: Dong Feng Square Traffic Accident	p.152
Figures 13a and 13b: Pu'er Earthquake	p.163
Figure 14: Education Demography in Beijing (2005)	p.190
Figure 15: Education Demography in China (2005)	p.190
Figure 16: Education Demography in Kunming (2005)	p.217
Figure 17: Education Demography in Beijing (2005)	p.218
Figure 18: Education Demography in China (2005)	p.218

List of Tables

Table 1: Blueprint of The Bourgeois Public Sphere	p.29
Table 2: The Comparison of The Debates of The 'Popular'	p.39
Table 3: Categories of Newspapers in Contemporary China	p.72
Table 4: Ten Social Strata in Contemporary China	p.93
Table 5: Ownership of Beijing Newspapers Selected for Coverage Comparison	p.100
Table 6: Beijing Newspaper Coverage, 13 June to 17 December 2005, of the Dinghzou Incident	p.104
Table 7: Beijing Newspaper Coverage, March 18 to November 9 2007, of The 'Hardest Nail House' in Chongqing	p.109
Table 8: Beijing Newspaper Coverage, 29 th March to 10 th May 2007, of The Beijing Subway Collapse	p.119
Table 9: Coal Mine Disasters in Shanxi, China (2007)	p.125
Table 10: Beijing News Coverage, 6 th November to 28 th November 2006, of The Shanxi Mine Disaster on 5 th , 7 th , 12 th and 26 th November 2006	p.126
Table 11: Beijing Newspaper Coverage, 29 th March to 16 th April 2007, of The Linfen County Mine Disaster 28 th March 2007	p.128
Table 12: Beijing Newspaper Coverage, 6 th -18 th May 2007, of The Pu County, Shanxi Mine Disaster 5 th May 2007	p.129
Table 13: The Spectrum of Newspapers	p.133
Table 14: Ownership of Kunming Newspapers Selected for Coverage Comparison	p.138
Table 15: Kunming Newspaper Coverage, 31 st January to 28 th December, 2007 of Hu Xing Corruption Scandal	p.141
Table 16: Kunming Newspaper Coverage, 26 th February to 30 th December 2006 of Traffic Accident in Dong Feng Square	p.153

Table 17: Kunming Newspaper Coverage, 4 th June to 29 th August 2007 of Pu'er Earthquake	p.160
Table 18: Cross-section of Beijing Print Media	p.174
Table 19 (a, b, c, d): Focus Groups and Participants in Beijing 19a- Group Title: S, Social grouping: 'White collar' workers 19b- Group Title: T, Social grouping: 'White collar' workers 19c- Group Title: U, Social grouping: 'Blue collar' workers 19d- Group Title: V, Social grouping: 'Blue collar' workers	p.175
Table 20: Cross-section of Kunming newspapers	p.202
Table 21 (a, b, b, d): Focus Groups and Participants in Kunming 21a- Group Title: W, Social grouping: 'White collar' workers 21b- Group Title: X, Social grouping: 'White collar' workers 21c- Group Title: Y, Social grouping: 'Blue collar' workers 21d- Group Title: Z, Social grouping: 'Blue collar' workers	p.203

ABSTRACTS

Abstracts

The focus of this research is whether the Habermas' 'bourgeois public sphere', which is characteristic of Western society, can be extended to China. My main contribution is to demonstrate that the concepts of 'sentiment' and 'reason' are central to any discussion of the public sphere in China. This is in sharp contrast to the West where rational discussion and the rule of law are the twin foundations of the classical discourse of the public sphere.

China's society is distinct from Western democracies the West in at least two fundamental ways. In the first place, the political system remains 'communist' with a single party controlling all of the media. As a result, the degree of freedom of thought and speech is extremely limited, and there is no obvious way in which the mass media can act directly as a forum for free and informed discussion of public policy. Secondly, whereas the rule of law is understood as a central element in Western democratic culture, it has a subordinate place in Chinese culture.

These assumptions are examined through a study of the readership of the Popular Press and through text analysis. How the Popular Press engages with the general public, how the general public reads and judges media messages, and crucially whether the Popular Press could employ an indirect approach working to constitute an 'imaginary' public in China were the discoveries.

In the end, this study concludes that while China's cultural, political and economic system of control is the main factor leading to the restriction and dissent of the general public, a 'reasoning' popular public might, in time, be shaped through their reading of controversies in political and public affairs in the Popular Press.

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CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In December 2005, journalists at a Beijing newspaper gained global coverage. A hundred, or so, reporters working for the *Beijing News*, one of China's most popular and progressive newspapers, walked out in reaction to the unexplained sacking by the Government of Yang Bin, the paper's editor-in-chief (*BBC 2005; The New York Times 2005*). A few days after the expulsion of Yang Bin, the journalists inspired a cryptic indication of their feelings in an issue of the *Beijing News*. A photograph of a flock of birds flying through the metaphorically dark sky above the newspaper's office, with one bird flying alone, out in front was published with the accompanying pointed message: 'The sky may not be very clear, but they will still fly into the distance with their mission close to their hearts' (*The Guardian 2005*).

There were two interesting aspects to the news. The first was the contradiction between the confrontational aspect of unexpected walkout [an action consistent with Western democratic societies but unheard of in a communist society] and the aesthetically intellectual publication of the tauntingly cryptic photograph and message. The second was the unknown response of the general public in China when they heard of the Government inspired sacking of Yang Bin and the reaction of the *Beijing News*' reporters. Although many of my Chinese friends in London have experience of working in Chinese broadcasting or newspapers, few of them had either heard of the event or were willing to discuss it. This suggested that either the activities at the *Beijing News* had, in contrast to the West's broad coverage, not been widely reported in the Chinese media or my friends had a different set of priorities concerning society and their life-experience.

Public interest and participation in the media-political discourse in Taiwan is broad and emotive. An issue such as the political removal of an editor-in-chief of a newspaper would be viewed as an assault on the bastions of democratic media, the freedom of speech and the representative voice of society.

My interest was sufficiently piqued as a national of Taiwan and a Communication and Media student to research the causes and the outcomes of the *Beijing News* incident. Consequently this research became my first experience of traveling to China and investigating China's newspapers.

The Research Topic

The focus of this research is whether the Habermas' 'bourgeois public sphere,' which is characteristic of Western society, can be extended to China. It is intended to demonstrate that the idea of 'sentiment' and 'reason' are central to any discussion of the public sphere in China. This is in sharp contrast to the West where rational discussion and the rule of law are the twin foundations (*see e.g. Fukuyama 1999*), of the classical discourse of the public sphere.

Research Background

Which dimension of Habermas' public sphere is appropriate for China's society? According to Madsen (1993: 189-190), the Habermas' public sphere, if properly "abstracted" and concentrated on "moral and cultural dimensions", is a good basis for understanding China's path to a democratic future. This approach is very different from the essential aspects of the public sphere in the West. Madsen's approach not only relates to the political system but also the mindset of natural culture in the Chinese context. With this in mind, this research will argue that the emotional and sensational approach in the Popular Press is appropriate to the reality of Chinese society as opposed to the rational approach of the Party [Communist Party] Press.

Another fundamental contrast, secondary to the difference in approach, between the Popular Press and the Party Press, concerns the issue of funding. Essentially all Chinese newspapers are official [Communist Party] organs. Generally, the Party Press consists of 'daily' national newspapers or the regional newspapers in particular press groups which depend on public money [central government funded subscriptions] to operate. In contrast the popular press consists of large circulation newspapers within press group holdings [*see Chapter 4 for details*], such as city [metropolitan] newspapers, evening newspapers or weekly newspapers, which are mostly sold from newsstands. Although the revenue from the Popular Press papers may have to support the Party Papers in the press group, the popular press is financially independent of government funding.

China's society is distinct from Western democracies the West in at least two fundamental ways. First, the political system remains 'communist' with a single party controlling all the media. As a result, the degree of freedom of thought and speech is extremely limited, and there is no obvious way in which the mass media can act directly as a forum for free and informed discussion of public policy. Second, whereas the rule of law is understood as a central element in Western democratic culture, it has a subordinate place in Chinese culture. The foundations of Chinese social order in order of importance are

"qing" [sentiment] and "li" [reason]. The category "fa" [legality] comes third in importance. As a consequence, sentiment is central to any conception of the public sphere in the Chinese context (*Chen, K. H., 2003, Chen, J., 2003, Rowe, 1990*).

These assumptions are examined through a study of the readership of the Popular Press. The object being to discover how the Popular Press engages with the general public, how the general public read and judge media messages, and crucially whether the Popular Press could work to constitute an 'imaginary' public in China using an indirect approach. The following aims and objectives of this study were set up to find answers to these questions.

Aims and Objectives

This research derives from three hypotheses.

- 1) China's Popular Press can shape a new and true 'public' by its emotional and sensational approach to communication with the general public.
- 2) The emotional and sensational public sphere in the Popular Press is more effective in provoking and reflecting public opinion and debates than the 'rational public sphere' of the Party Press.
- 3) In China, the abstract or moral and cultural dimensions of Habermas' public sphere are considered, to some extent, to outweigh the rational legal systems, and are therefore fairly practical.

Four dimensions of research are developed to demonstrate these hypotheses. These are:

- i) the 'sentiment' and 'reason' of the public sphere in the Chinese context;
- ii) the Press and Chinese Popular Culture;
- iii) the Popular Press and its alternativeness; and
- iv) the Popular Press and people's opinion.

Sentiment and Reason of The Public Sphere in The Chinese Context

The popular belief that press freedom does not exist in China is supported by data collected by Reporters Sans Frontières [RSF] and Freedom House. These organizations have evaluated press freedom in China as 'Not Free' with the rank of 181 out of 195 countries (*Freedom House 2008*) and 163 out of 168 countries (*RSF 2006*).

Despite the economic and media reforms of the last decade which have encouraged the formation of the Popular Press, the Chinese government has maintained press censorship. A key function of journalism, and a key tenet of Communist Party ideology, albeit in the Soviet Union, was to promote the ideology, and strengthen the power, of the Communist Party (*Lauk, 2005: 170*). To ensure control of the dissemination of communist ideology, the Communist Party (Government) maintains control of the press through the means of funding and censorship. Consequently, the Party Press, as a government mouthpiece always plays a propaganda role. Since the system of communist government has remained intrinsically intact during the marketization of the economy, the popular press has adopted the moral and cultural tactics of trivial 'yellow' news to attract a broad base of the general public and revenue to maintain their independence. This is a kind of cultural sphere embedded on personal experiences and enlarged on common experiences. The development of this cultural sphere provides the popular press with two opportunities of breaking free from political authority and creating the environment of a free press.

Historically, since the development and control and application of the legal system has been in the hands of State [i.e. unaffected by public opinion], the ideas of sentiment and reason [as in the cultural sphere] are closer to the general public. This mindset has been developing since the Chin Dynasty unification of China in 221 B.C.

Although the news stories of the popular press are based on the trivia, sentiment and reason, of the everyday life experiences of the general public, the Popular Press is more likely to provoke an open public debate than the rational approach of the government controlled Party Press. So, the approach of sentiment and reason is the embodiment of public sphere in China.

The Press and Chinese Popular Culture

Following the media reform of the 1990s, the circulation and influence of the Popular Press rapidly increased although the state remains interventionist. The Popular Press therefore reduces the risk of intervention by avoiding serious news issues to concentrate on soft 'trivia' news, which has greater appeal to the general public. Nevertheless, the popular press has become a complex and dynamic sphere, a web of interwoven relations and axes. Analysis of the relationship between the press and culture in the popular context indicates there are three viable research approaches in which the *raison d'être* for popular culture in China are:

- a) enlightenment,
- b) resistance, and
- c) autonomy

The Popular Press and its Alternativeness

In comparison with the rationale of the 'bourgeois' public sphere, the Popular Press exemplifies the opposite extreme:- the sensational, trivial and personal sphere. Since the Popular Press gained the leading position, by circulation, in Chinese press groups, it not only influences public opinion but also awakens latent opinions which have been ignored for a long time. The public, based on the circulation of the Popular Press, welcomes this form of storytelling as it reveals the serious social problems in the community. The Popular Press erodes political authority rather than acting as a direct opposition to the State. Consequently, the Popular Press shapes a new public sphere in contrast to the Communist Party Press.

The Popular Press and People's Opinions

The main aim of this research is to demonstrate how people negotiate with political power and form their day-to-day opinions through reading the Popular Press. Readership surveys of the Popular Press in Beijing and Kunming were conducted. Through analysis of dialogues with readers, it is argued that while the diversity of the Popular Press provides more content than the Party Press, readers remain suspicious of the content. This research uses focus groups to collect their opinions on political affairs and examine how 'the public' is framed by their reading of the Popular Press in everyday life in Contemporary China.

Research Questions

Considering these four research dimensions, the following research questions were developed:

- What is 'the Public' in China?
- What is the thinking or idea of the legality of the system and the authority of reason in Chinese history and traditional culture?
- What are the different approaches of rational thought between China and Western societies?
- What are the differences between the Popular Press and the Party Press when reporting on the same issues?
- What is the texture of popular journalism in the Popular Press?
- Does the coverage of the Popular Press provoke different debates from the coverage of the Party Press?

- Does the coverage of the Popular Press shape or indeed lead to an emancipation of democracy and reflect public opinion?
- Can the coverage of the Popular Press supplement the theory of the cultural sphere and revise the explanation of Habermas' 'bourgeois public sphere'?

Scope and Method

Qualitative research is open to different ways of seeing the world (*Krueger, 1998*). It makes few assumptions about how things work, and is careful about attributing causation. To identify 'the Public' in China, the research is divided into three sections. First, this research introduces the background information of China's media transformation and developments, including commercial and political forces. This institutional analysis comes from archival materials such as media history, political economy analysis and policy documents, etc.

To make a comparative texture analysis, and to examine the existence of genre variation and difference in agenda between the Party Press and Popular Press newspapers covering the same news event, seven significant news events were selected. These analyses form the basis of the third section: the audience focus groups in Beijing and Kunming.

A reading of the Popular Press of Beijing and Kunming provided a selection of headline news for discussion in the focus groups. Eight focus groups were organized, four in each of the two cities. In each city there are two groups of 'white collar' [administrative] participants and two groups of 'blue collar' [manual] workers. There were 60 participants in total [33 readers in Beijing and 27 readers in Kunming]. 'Class' is a central variable, relating to different life experiences and reading habits. Weber argued:

'Class situation means the typical probability of 1) procuring goods, 2) gaining a position in life, and 3) finding inner satisfactions, a probability which derives from the relative control over goods and skills and from their income-producing uses within a given economic order.'

(Weber cited in Wong & Lui, 1994:6)

For the focus groups fundamental questions concerning their reading habits were prepared.

Does the headline coverage, such as corruption or an earthquake, catch their attention and interest?

What topics are important to them but do not receive sufficient coverage?

By contrast, which topics do they consider less important but receives much exposure?

How do they think the Press should improve in regard to its functions and agendas?

In the process, questions were adjusted according to different situations and responses.

To find the participants, key individuals were chosen and through their networks other suitable participants were then found. As each key individual's network differed, the background of each participant was diverse. Some of the 'blue collar' workers, were invited from chance acquaintanceship at newsstands.

In summary, this research employs three research methods, institutional analysis of archival materials, text analysis of several newspapers within the Party Press and the Popular Press, and dialogue analysis of eight audience focus groups (consisting of white and blue collar workers) with sixty participants in Beijing and Kunming.

See *Figure 1* overleaf for a schematic of the research design and the fulfillment of the study's contribution to knowledge.

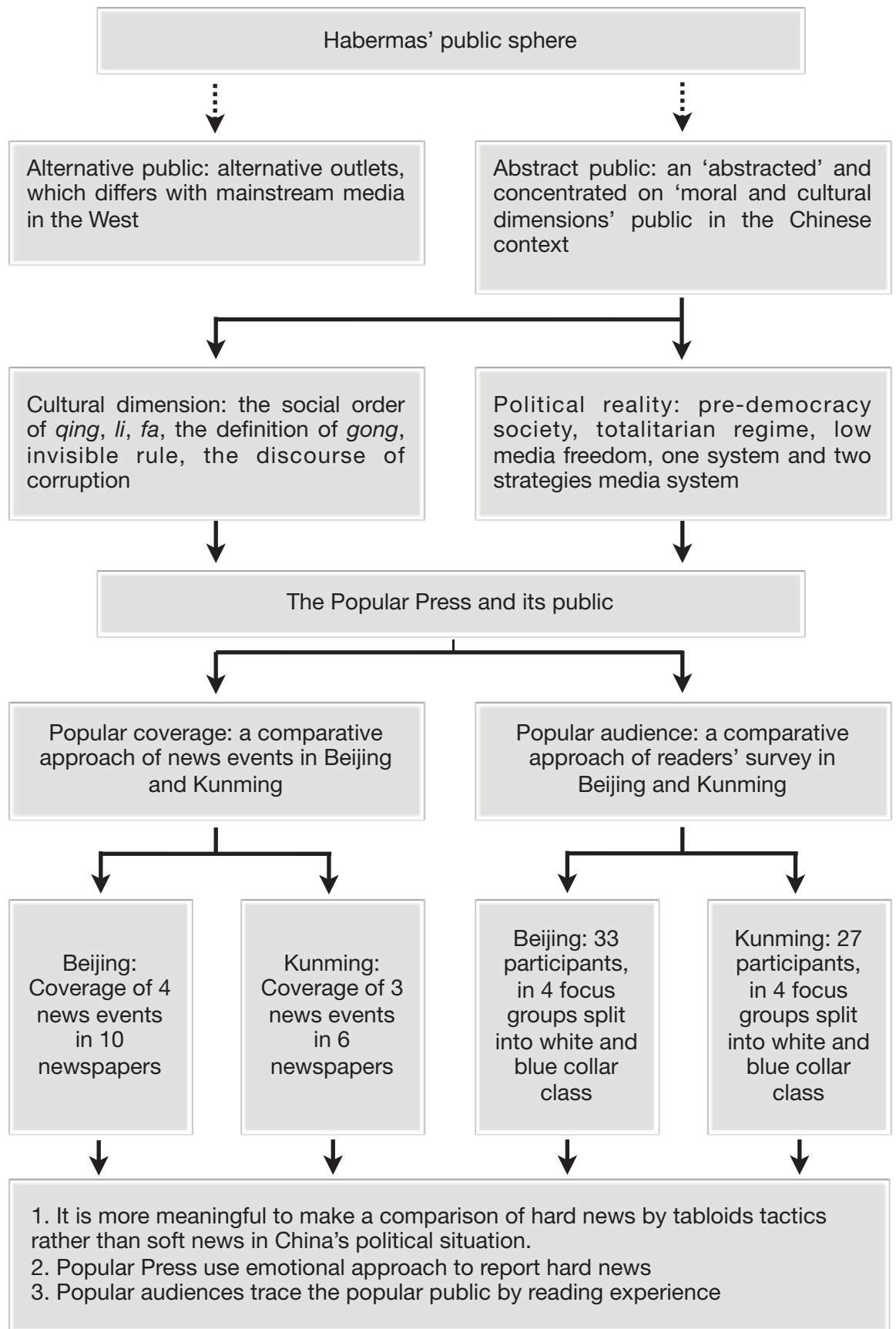


Figure 1: Research Originality for Contribution to Knowledge

Thesis outline

This thesis starts with debates about the suitability of Western society's concept of 'the public' to China's societal reality. Then, through the reading experiences of a cross-section of the audience of China's Popular Press, It attempts to realize how 'the Public' can be defined in China. The thesis has ten chapters. Chapters 1-4 are the Introduction, literature review and the historical background to contemporary China's social order and media system. Chapter 5 explains the research methods. Chapters 6-9 analyze the field works, selected news text and readers' dialogues analysis in Beijing and Kunming. Chapter 10 contains the summary and conclusion of the thesis.

Chapter 2

The definitions and debates of Habermas' public sphere in the West are reviewed. The contents of the public sphere are, due to popular media and media entertainment, changeable and challenged by scholars in disparate disciplines, including cultural studies, political economy and anthropology.

Chapter 3

China's historical context is explored to assess and explain the social order and natural culture. 'The Public' through historical literature and contemporary social problems is considered, and concludes that the idea of sentiment and reason affect Chinese Society. Furthermore how a significant subculture, the 'invisible rule', has replaced the official formal rule governing the dynamics of China's society is explained.

Chapter 4

The background to the development of China's media system and newspapers and the ongoing discord between the Party Press and the Popular Press is explained. The paradox inherent in the ideology of communism being involved in the marketization of China's media and the influence of state control, funding and censorship, on the ability of the Party Press and the Popular Press to influence public opinion is examined.

Chapter 5

The reasons for the chosen qualitative approach and the methods for collecting and processing the data is explained. In addition the choice of news topics for text analysis involving high profile societal, economic or environmental headlines is considered and the structure of the focus groups with the collection and analysis of their discussions explained.

The next two chapters concentrate on text analysis.

Chapter 6

Focuses on four major news events in Beijing, an act of violence, a mine disaster, a subway disaster and property problems. The coverage of each event in both the Party Press and the Popular Press is reviewed to make a comparison in genre and agenda. The analysis reveals the variations in the coverage, and how the coverage of topics sensitive to the State is blocked by the authorities. Chapter 6 also reveals how political and economic factors influence news stories in the Party and Popular Press.

Chapter 7

Focuses on three significant news events in Kunming, an earthquake, official corruption and a traffic accident. The inclusion of the latter event, brought to attention by the focus groups, shows the significance of trivial news in their daily lives as compared to the official headline coverage in newspapers.

Chapters 8 and 9

Focus is placed on the analyses of the readers' dialogues in the Beijing and Kunming's focus groups to ascertain the existence of a 'Popular Public.' The dialogues were divided into two categories. The first consists of the readers' responses to the chosen news events. The second consists of the participants' discussions of their views about the media coverage and the role of media in their daily lives. According to the topic of coverage the responses of the readers, their feelings and comments about these headline news stories were analysed. In Chapters 8 and 9, the participants' dialogues, both in Beijing and Kunming, in order to trace the concept of each of the cities' 'Popular Publics' an attempt to conceptualize was made and conclusions drawn. The primary aim of this comparative analysis is to ascertain whether there is any difference between the 'Popular Public' in the national administrative capital and a remote provincial capital. The secondary aim is to find the causes of indifference of the public to official news and how they link official news with their experience of daily life. The central issues are whether the public really do not care about political and public affairs, and where their dissent and controversy come from. The analysis shows the general public are concerned and do have strong opinions concerning public and political affairs. Their indifference comes from distrust of the authorities rather than public affairs. It is argued through this dynamic and interactive process that the genuine public is aroused although they also express their disagreements and comments to official and trivial coverage of the Popular Press.

Chapter 10

The research is reviewed and a theoretical framework sought on which to base both the contribution to knowledge, as well as making a comparison between the differences of the 'Popular Public' in a metropolitan capital, Beijing and that of a remote provincial capital like Kunming. This is essentially, in the context of China, the cause for the predominance of the ideas of 'sentiment' and 'reason' in the public sphere rather than the rational discourse of Western democratic societies.

It is concluded that while China's cultural, political and economic system of control is the main factor leading to the restriction and dissent of the general public, a 'reasoning' Popular Public might, in time, be shaped through their readings about controversies in political and public affairs in the Popular Press.

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 2

Habermasian Public Sphere and its Debates

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to trace the transformation of 'the Public' from the intellectual and the bourgeois, through to the popular tracing its developments in the media. In fact, the arguments of what the public sphere is have been moved from bourgeois public sphere to popular public sphere by many western authors. This chapter will discuss and present the different forms and debates of the public sphere. There are four sections in chapter two.

The first examines the definitions of the 'public' as collective behavior, controversy, and communication. How media entertainment forms a mediated public sphere in the mass media society will be explored reviewing the transformation of public sphere from the eighteenth century society to a mass media society.

The second section explores the concept of the 'Popular' from the different disciplines of cultural studies, the political economy and anthropology which can be contrasting viewpoints. The purpose of this section is to show where the ambiguity in academic debates of 'the Popular' is.

The third section demonstrates how the Popular Press can produce an alternative public sphere. The position of the Popular Press and the tabloid within the spectrum of newspapers of the West is discussed.

The final section provides a discussion of the arguments of ideology and mass communication. It shows how the ideological approach is used to explore and critique the dominant power in media discourse.

From Habermas' to a Mediated Public Sphere

Is there a Chinese popular public sphere that is organized around a specific Chinese notion of the structure of 'the Public' or does it bear some resemblance to the popular public spheres as identified by many western authors? That is the basic problem faced by this research. This section will discuss a variety of different concepts of the public sphere that are used in this research.

First, the public sphere as an open space or a space representative of the people.

'The Public' can mean the general public consisting of citizens who possess the ability to reason, discriminate between or reflect on their views and opinions. Alternatively it is an open space or forum in which people can discuss public affairs freely and openly even though it may oppose the authority of the State.

Secondly, the public sphere can be seen as a 'carrier' of the public opinion.

If the public is a body of reasoning citizens and marked by rational discourse, it can also be seen as a collection of varying public opinions. This public opinion may be also influenced by the pressure of legitimization, newspapers, mass media, or even the social (context) atmosphere. Therefore, what the public compromises of can be quite controversial in this sense.

Thirdly, the public sphere as the symbol of authority or the sphere of public authority.

For example, the State is the public authority. In this sense, the public authority is all the symbols of the State representing authority as opposed to the positions of the private and the general population of people. The public authority is also represented in several differing forms such as the court system, the State, the government institutions and buildings, the public organs or the public officials.

Fourthly, the public sphere as the society.

The civic society is the arena of uncoerced collective action focused around shared interests, places, purposes or values. The civic societies are often populated by organizations such as charities, non-governmental development organizations, community groups and so on. It is a society independent and separate from the state. For example, coffee houses and salons. By the first decade of the eighteenth century London already had 3,000 of coffee houses, each with a core group of regulars (Habermas, 1989:32). Habermas further explains how the autonomous society impacts on political equality in the future, 'the societies for enlightenment, cultural associations, secret freemasonry lodges, and orders of illuminati were associations constituted by the free, that is, private, decisions of their founding members, based on voluntary membership, and characterized internally by egalitarian practices of sociability, free discussion, decision

by majority, etc (Habermas, 1992:423).’ In other words, those are safe places where passionate disagreement can take place.

Fifthly, the public sphere is the main sphere of influence.

In mass society, the mass circulation press is based around the commercialization and participation in the public sphere and in general gives the masses access to the public sphere. Although Habermas (1989: 169) thinks this expanded public sphere lost its political character, this consuming and new public has replaced the bourgeois reading public. In other words, the public of the mass media has exploded and pushed aside the old public from below (out of the working class) and from outside (from the rural population) (Habermas, 1989: 173).

The concept of public sphere is a dynamic rather than a fixed, single notion. In different states or different societies debates about the public sphere continue. Habermas argues:

‘The public sphere itself appears as a specific domain- the public domain versus the private. Sometimes the public appears simply as that sector of public opinion that happens to be opposed to the authorities. Depending on the circumstances, either the organs of the state or the media, like the press, which provide communication among members of the public, may be counted as “public organ.”...’

(Habermas, 1989: 2)

The definitions of the public sphere are therefore quite varied, depend on the circumstances. The classical definition of the public sphere in Habermas’ argument, is the bourgeois public sphere. Habermas developed a theory of the classic bourgeois public sphere constituted through rational discussion: ‘the bourgeois avant-grade of the educated middle class learned the art of critical-rational public debate through its contact with the elegant world’ (Habermas, 1989: 29). Habermas drew the blueprint of the bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century and pointed out ‘the public sphere in the political realm evolved from the public sphere in the world of letters; through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society’ (Habermas, 1989: 30-31). Habermas is writing about the 18th century-yet all the time he is reflecting on that which was absent from Nazi Germany.

Private Realm		Sphere of Public Authority
<p>Civil Society (realm of commodity exchange and social labour)</p> <p>Conjugal family's internal space (bourgeois intellectual)</p>	<p>Public sphere in the political realm</p> <p>Public sphere in the world of letters (clubs, press)</p> <p>(market of culture products) “Town”</p>	<p>State (realm of the “Police”)</p> <p>Court (courtly-noble society)</p>

Table 1: Blueprint of the bourgeois public sphere (Habermas, 1989: 30)’

For Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere consisted of social spaces where private people gathered to discuss their common public affairs and to organize against arbitrary or oppressive forms of social and public power (*Kellner, 2004*). Habermas argues that in the 18th century it was the first time in history, private people and groups, could shape public opinion giving direct expression to their needs and interests while influencing political practice. The bourgeois public sphere made it possible to form a realm of public opinion that opposed state power and the powerful interests that were coming to shape bourgeois society.

Hence, the bourgeois public sphere arose with a society separated from the state, is a private autonomy. In this sphere, the critical public debates, public deliberation, and the reasoning of citizens with rational communication are the central concerns of Habermas' arguments.

Due to the development of different societies, Habermas' bourgeois public sphere has been criticised by many in the West; who alternatively have argued for a plurality of public spheres which some are marked by literary, emotional or other dynamics.

In this research, the concepts of the public sphere have been applied in these conditions.

1) The idea of communication:

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate how the popular media in China could shape 'the Public' rather than the Party media. That is, the popular media could make an effective communications medium to appeal the ordinary people in contemporary China. In this sense, the public sphere is a more effective meaning and convincing subject. Also, the public sphere is a process to look for an approach in representing the public opinion and making effective communication. This communication involves many elements such as political systems, traditional culture, media characteristics among other things. This research will analyze and examine this approach with its potential outcome.

2) The general public vs. the public authority:

The general public refers to the ordinary people in this research which is opposite to what is the public authority. The public authority is the representative of the government or the state. In mass society, the general public are the masses meaning the people affected by the mass media who have lost their individual or independent voice and character. This research chooses to divide the general public into class and the regional groups in order to map the general public in contemporary China.

3) The autonomous society:

The Public or the public sphere appears in the form of an 'autonomous' society. The autonomy of society could be represented in many forms such as popular literature, the

economic sphere, or other social groups. The 'autonomous' society is a society separate from the state and independent in looking out for the public interests. Due to the public being related to the enlightenment; the way to enlighten the people takes many approaches. For example through the popular media, supplemental schooling, government programmes or other different approaches that are separated from the mainstream discourse.

4) The sphere as generated by mass media:

This research discusses the spectrum of China's newspapers. The Party newspaper is the mouthpiece of the government and represents the public authority. The popular newspaper is closer to the people's needs and supposedly represents the general public. Therefore, public sphere of the party papers is the sphere of the public authority but public sphere of the popular papers is the sphere of the general public. The sphere generated by mass media has thus changed the classical Habermas' bourgeois public sphere. For the popular papers public sphere, is based on commercialism and uses news resources more diverse than the sphere that is generated by the Party newspapers.

The following section will present the debates on the relationship of the public sphere and media entertainment. The crucial point is to review how the public and the popular can be used, extended and their conditions transferred to different contexts or circumstances such as communication, media entertainment, popular culture as well as the tabloids.

The Definition of 'The Public'

There are many different approaches to discussing the definition and development of 'the public'. For instance, the term defines the people, the public space or the authority of reason, and so on. In this thesis, 'The Public' is viewed as public opinion of various types. The term 'public opinion' is largely a product of the Enlightenment (*Price, 1992*); that is, the public is a body of reasoning citizens (*Peters 1995: 8-9*). However, 'The Public' as a concept is still controversial and needs enquiry. *Price (1992)*, for instance, provides three dimensions: the crowd, the public and the mass to clarify these concepts within social structures.

The crowd is the rise of the popular classes in political life, in which these classes increasingly pressed for their political claims with escalating destruction and violence (*LeBon, [1895] 1960*). Yet, as the discipline of understanding collective behavior developed, various kinds of crowd-like phenomena were recognized, including fads, crazes or social movements, which could be centrally implicated in the formation of public opinion,

particularly in its earliest stages (*Foot & Hart, 1953*). Price (1992: 26) says 'the crowd is a kind of counter-concept against which the public is defined.'

In addition, 'The Public' is similar to a 'crowd'. Both are mechanisms for social adaptation and change in that they are transitory social forms taken by the social group to transform themselves into contemporary organizations (*Park, [1904] 1972*). The differences between them are that the crowd is marked by a unity of emotional experiences, whereas the public is marked by opposition and rational discourse. Furthermore, Price (1992) adopts Blumer's analysis and says that disagreement and discussion around a particular issue bring a public into existence. Blumer thought that like the crowd, 'The Public' is 'lacking in the characteristic features of a society' (*Blumer, 1946: 189*). Argument and counter argument are therefore the means by which public opinion is shaped. Blumer (1946: 191-192) adds: 'the very process of controversial discussion forces a certain amount of rational consideration.'

Furthermore, the mass, in comparison with the autonomy and interaction of the crowd and 'The Public', is geographically dispersed, more loosely organized than the crowd or 'The Public', and its members are unable to act in concert. Blumer offered some explanations of the mass:

'...who are excited by some national event, those who share in a land boom, those who are interested in a murder trial which is reported in the press, or those who participate in some large migration.'

(*Blumer, 1946: 185*)

Due to the mass media, Price (1992) states there is a little true public discussion in modern political life.

The discussions above, suggest that 'The Public' can be defined through three notions:

Collective behavior: 'The Public' is not only an idea but also an action that collects resolve and opinions. Through collective behavior, an issue can be addressed and consciousness is simultaneously raised.

Controversy: It is important to have debates and to continually form 'The Public' in the process. Crucially, disagreement is a vital element in reaching rational debates and the true 'public'. Disagreement contributes to people's ability to generate reason (*Price, Cappella & Nir, 2002*).

Communication: Public opinion can be viewed as part of a larger sociological process, as a mechanism through which stable societies adapt to changing circumstances through discussion and debate. In essence, 'The Public' is a constant process of communication.

'The Public' is genuinely formed by the three elements above. However, in a mass media society, the role of the media cannot be ignored. Although the media are a problematic issue for 'The Public', for instance, a "legitimization pressure" takes place in parliament, newspapers and the media and through polling, but none of them genuinely represents an ideally defined public (*Splichal, 2001*). *Splichal (2001: 45)* argues there is only 'mass', rather than 'public', and public opinion is a sort of fiction, mystery, or blind alley. Undeniably, the mediated public sphere has become the important shared, part of the genuine public. 'The Public' and media are becoming merged in mass society, including the intellectual, the bourgeois and the popular, while the commercialization and competition of media institutions is increasing rapidly. Media thus plays a crucial role in discussions of the meaning of 'The Public'.

The Public Sphere and The Media of Entertainment

Habermas (1989) argued that a 'bourgeois public sphere' came into being in the eighteenth century. This consisted of privileged private citizens who debated public affairs in a free, rational and disinterested way through personal interaction and debate in the press, and reached a consensus that influenced government. In reality, according to Butsch's (2007) historical analysis, Habermas extracted the characteristics of the public sphere that work to advance a democratic state. Within evolving bourgeois public institutions, such as the coffee shop, salon and the press, he finds conversation among equals whose private interests and inequality are temporarily suspended, which in turn allows for rational discussion and debate on questions of state policy and action (*Butsch, 2007*).

On the twentieth century, entering a mass media society, Habermas attempts to re-conceptualise the media and public sphere in a contemporary context (*Curran, 2000*). Curran argues that the public sphere is viewed as being much more differentiated, pluralistic and organised than before. The key activists are said to be public interest groups and radical professionals who identify, draw attention to and interpret social problems, proposing solutions. They are the 'sensors' of society who detect neglected issues, rise potentially above self-interest, and generate countervailing influence on behalf of the disadvantaged. Their interventions can also lead with the aid of press and broadcasting mediation, to critical debate coalescing into 'topically specified public

opinions' (Curran 2000: 103) and sustained pressure for a considered response from the political system.

However, Curran (2000) provides several versions of the relationship between media and entertainment ignored by Habermas.

He suggests that media fiction offers cognitive maps of reality, and furnishes social understandings that have political implications.

In addition he asserts that the media of entertainment is bound up with debates about social values and identities.

The media of entertainment is a vehicle of debate about certain 'political' issues such as race and gender relations, single parenthood and sexual minorities.

Entertainment is an important way in which disenfranchised groups are able to register their opposition to dominant structures and ideologies.

Garnham (1992) argues the entertainment content of the media is the primary tool we use to handle the relationship between the systems world and the life-world. However, Garnham thinks the only alternative is to accept the impossibility of liberation and the only truth is our deliberations are reduced to the merest trivia.

Moreover, Bird adopts anthropologists' research contending:

'The kinds of stories people remember are chronological narratives, with a clear structure, a moral point, and vivid imagery. The traditional inverted pyramid news stories, with the standard 'who, what, where' format are the most difficult to remember. The explanation also shows us why sensational and scandal stories are welcomed in common people

(Bird, 2003: 23)

This suggests that the media of entertainment, trivial news and storytelling news have become an efficient apparatus which can provoke public debates and appeal to mass interests instead of traditional news, critical-rational discourse or face to face communication. However, its function for emancipation or freedom is still controversial.

On the other hand, Calhoun (1992: 26) argues the public sphere has become more than an arena for advertising than a setting for rational-critical debate. Curran illustrates the use of legislator's stage displays for constituents. Special-interest organisations use publicity work to increase the prestige of their own positions, without making the topics to which those positions refer subjects of genuine public debate. The media are used to create occasions for consumers to identify with the public positions or personas of others. All this infers a return of a version of representative publicity, to which the public responds with acclamation, or the withholding of, rather than critical discourse. Indeed, Nieminen (1996) explains that Raymond Williams in contrast to Habermas' critical-rational discourse

suggests the expansion of a common culture, based on tradition, is the solution to class conflict. Common culture creates the necessary environment for common experiences and links people from different origins, offering a basis for communal feeling and mutual responsibility [solidarity].

Moreover, cultural recognition and popular culture are a significant area in this contemporary society; the key issues being how people become subjects and how they are continually adapting (*Hermes, 2005*). In other words, *Hermes (2005)* believes, for audience studies, the readership does not need their deepest feelings being explained. Instead, shared cultural frameworks and how they are built and rebuilt are the main things that are at stake.

In addition, Couldry, et al., (2007) discuss the relationship between media consumption and public engagement and question the existence of mediated public connection. They point out that mediated public connection, whatever its importance, cannot be taken as a fact. According to their survey, the social and personal embedding of habit is not simply the availability of any form of media consumption such as new media technology. Moreover Couldry et al., state:

‘...although the social context is more important in sustaining news engagement by survey, few citizens have had access to communities of practice through which they could act together in the public world.’

(*Couldry et al., 2007: 188*)

They conclude:

‘...media consumption plays an essential role in sustaining public connection, the basic orientation to a world of public issues, indeed. But the elements of mediated public connection for example, habits of consuming media, including news, a broad orientation to a world of public contention beyond the private, cannot be taken for granted; each is subject to complex instabilities.’

(*Couldry et al., 2007: 194*)

To summarize, the efficient apparatus of the mediated public sphere has three causes. These are i) interesting subjects that appeal to people

ii) subjects that share their common experiences;

iii) their subjects and positions are built in a social context.

In this dynamic and continuing process, people are looking for their identities somewhere more interesting than in the mass or in the main stream media. As a result, the ideas of the alternative and multiple public spheres are introduced. The next section further clarifies the different perspectives amongst ‘The Public’, ‘The Popular’ and ‘The People’.

'The Public', 'The Popular' and 'The People'

Two competitive debates exist concerning popular culture. One is a topdown concept imposed on the masses, of which the main purpose is to advance the interests of those in power and maintain their hegemony. The other acknowledges the control exerted by powerful societal groups over the production of culture. This debate also emphasises the active role of the disempowered and subordinated groups in their selective consumption and active reception of popular culture and the way they use it to promote their interests. There is, so to say, no longer an '*authentic*' folk culture. However, if popular culture can be the alternative for the people it leads to the oppositional direction.

'The Popular' is for 'The People'

Bennett (1986) analyses 'popular culture as definable neither as the culture of the people', produced by and for themselves, nor as an administered culture produced for them. Rather, it consists of those culture forms and practices' (Bennett, 1986: 18). Besides, 'the terrain on which dominant, subordinate and oppositional culture values and ideologies meet and intermingle, in different mixes and permutations, vying with one another in their attempts to secure the spaces within which they can become influential in framing and organising popular experience and consciousness' (Bennett, 1986: 19).

Fiske (1989) emphasised that the cultural sphere is more important work for popular culture than the economic sphere. The most important point is that popular culture not only maintains social differences, but also maintains people's opposition, and their awareness (Fiske 1989: 161-163). He explains that popular culture is organised around the various forms of oppositional relationships between the people and the power-bloc. This opposition always has the potential to be progressive, and in practice generally is.

To sum up, the popular is a micro and progressive power rather than macro and radical approach. In this public space, there are various forms of opposition to the power-bloc. However, there is an opposing argument that the popular is to buy the people.

'The Popular' is to Buy 'The People'

In contrast, Tetzlaff (1991) argues that the questions of what sort of social or cultural relationship exists between different sorts of popular culture, and what the politics of this relationship are might be largely left unanswered. Tetzlaff (1991: 31) says the overall systemic function of popular culture within capitalism is to reconcile capital's subordinates

to their position within the economy. Popular culture does not teach them to love their domination or to deny it, but merely provides enough opportunity for limited autonomy through keeping society from seeking more limited relief in the culture industry. In this sense, Murdock (2000) emphasises that class analysis should remain central to understanding contemporary change while popular culture and fan culture will ignore the class problem.

The Debates are Amongst 'The Public', 'The Popular' and 'The People'

Despite the controversy of 'The Popular', it clarifies the relationships among 'The Public', 'The People' and 'The Popular' in the media world.

In Habermas's work, a strict separation exists between the public and the private realm. However, when dividing line is blurred, the equation between the intimate sphere and private life breaks down with the polarisation of family and economic society and the rational-critical debate gives way to the consumption of culture (Calhoun, 1992: 21). By contrast, Sparks (1992b: 25) points out the people had been used to opposing the elite. 'The Popular' was a negative term to European governing elite, but entering the twentieth century, 'The Popular' somehow became unpopular. For example, the fashionable magazine like *Volkischer Beobachter* (published 1920-23, 1925-1945) appealed to 'The Popular' in a limited and special sense.

Fiske (1989) provides deliberative approaches to demonstrate the apparatus of popular culture and how it operates within the common people and dominant system. First, from the viewpoint of resources, popular culture is made by the people at the interface between the products of the culture industries and everyday life. Fiske (1989: 15) says:

'excorporation is the process by which the subordinate make their own culture out of the resources and commodities provided by the dominant system.'

This concept, according to Fiske, is central to popular culture, because in an industrial society the only resources from which the subordinate can make their own subcultures are those provided by the system that subordinates them. Fiske further explains there is no 'authentic' folk culture to provide an alternative, and so popular culture is necessarily the art of making do with what is available.

From the viewpoint of text, Fiske (1989: 125) says inter-textuality is effective in popular culture, where the object of veneration is less the text or artist and more the performer. Inter-textual competence is central to the popular productivity of creating meanings from text. Moreover, the poverty of the individual text in popular culture is linked not only to its inter-textual reading practices, but also to its ephemerality and repetition. In other

words, popular culture is marked by repetition and seriality, which enables it to fit easily with the routines of everyday life.

From the viewpoint of politics, the popular culture of capitalist societies works primarily in the realm of popular rather than populist opposition and its politics are therefore progressive rather than radical. Popular culture not only maintains social differences, it maintains people's opposition, and their awareness (*Fiske, 1989: 161-163*). Fiske, while pointing out the absence of the radical element, suggest that the direct effects of popular culture at a macro level are a major problem facing left-wing academic and political theorists whose focus upon the macro and the radical has led them to neglect, or worse still to dismiss, the micro and the progressive. In so far as the popular forces are attempting to evade or resist the disciplinary, controlling forces of the power-elite, they are working to open up spaces within which progress can evolve.

Yet Fiske (1992) argues that news became redefined as important information which the people need to have for democracy to work. 'The People', according to Fiske, were not responsible for defining what was important to them because it was taken to be self-evident. Fiske explains that information need not always be associated with an objective truth, but can be explicitly associated with the social position and political interests of those who mobilize it. Fiske argues, information in the context of tabloid news is not an essentialist knowledge system but is a process that works only in a political relationship to other knowledge. This information is a popular knowledge and a repressed knowledge, just as 'The People' are a repressed social formation. Therefore, this knowledge of popularity is a sociopolitical process in action. Knowledge about the political world needs to be transformed into popular information that forms the world and is a part of the conditions of the everyday life of 'The People'.

For example, Van Zoonen (2000) views political communication as a popular culture. She states:

'Popular means of political communication, celebrity politics, or populist rhetoric-to mention only a few cases of entertainment in politics-are not simply valuable because they are up to date, savvy, and in touch with the experience of ordinary people, although they are an important sign that politics is part of everyday culture and not above it. Entertainment in politics comes in various formats and qualities that need to be analyzed in their particular contexts, with their particular features and their particular effects on the democratic project, before they can be denounced, cheered, or blissfully ignored.'

(*Van Zoonen, 2000: 4*)

Sparks gives a different view, in the context of objective structure, pointing out 'the sense which people can make of newspapers depends at least in part in what the journalists

have actually written in them in the first place.’(1992: 39) According to his research, Sparks states that while traditional quality journalism does provide a fragmented picture of the world in which the construction of coherence and totality is the work of the reader, the Popular Press embeds a form of immediacy of explanation, which is achieved by means of a direct appeal to personal experience. In other words, the essential difference between ‘The Popular’ coverage of an event and the quality of coverage of the same event; is that the Popular Press offers an immediate explanatory framework with individual and personal causes along with responses (Sparks, 1992b: 40). Differing from Fiske’s (1992) argument, Sparks contends ‘The Popular’ rests upon the mobilisation and organisation of the concerns of ‘The People’ in a way that prevents them from becoming aware of their status as members of social classes.

Compared to these discussions, Bird basing her viewpoint from anthropology, discusses how the storytelling news of popular media works with democracy (Bird, 2003: 50). Earlier, Bird (2003: 30) contends media and oral storytelling are comparable, though not identical, communication processes, during which narratives are constructed from familiar themes that repeat themselves over time. Bird argues that although people, through media morality tales, come to terms with their own moral codes and values there are serious implications for the future of a functioning democracy if media morality tales are the dominant source of information. The danger in this variation of the transformation of news is that the trend toward personalisation may become the only way to tell a story, and that these stories become increasingly disconnected from a larger context (Bird, 2003: 180).

In summary, for a comparison of these different approaches see Table 2.

Position	Culture Studies	Political Economy	Anthropology
Main Arguments	Knowledge needs to be transformed into popular information that forms the world and is a part of the conditions of the everyday life of the people. ¹	Popular media offers the experiences of the individual as the direct and unmediated key to understanding of social totality. ²	Media oral tales repeat familiar topics within personal experience and coincide with personal morality tales. But the transformation of news towards personalisation may become the only way to tell a story. ³
Analysis Method	Text Analysis	Historical and Material Analysis	Audience Reception Study
Conclusion	The <i>Popular</i>’ is a micro and progressive process.	The <i>Popular</i>’ is a reactionary category.	The <i>Popular</i>’ is the implication of democracy.

¹ – Fiske 1992

² –Sparks 1992a, 1992b

³ – Bird 2003

Table 2: The Comparison of The Debates of ‘The Popular’

However, 'The Popular' definitely has an impact on the communication of 'The People' even if its influences are controversial. Moreover, the rapid rise of the Popular Press or the tabloid press is difficult to ignore. 'The Popular' produces the cultural public sphere which differs with 'The Public' in mainstream media. The most significant difference between the media of the mainstream press and the tabloids of the Popular Press is in its use of an alternative approach.

The Tabloid, The Popular Press and Alternative Public Spheres

One outcome of the rise of the tabloid method of storytelling is to change the form and subject of news narrative from serious to sensational, from consumption by the elite to consumption by the masses. The following discussions include the causes for the popular media [tabloid press] rise, its definitions and impact.

A Commercial Culture of Popular Media

There are many criticisms of the tabloids and in particular their affect on readers. Splichal (2001) explains that one of the roles of media is the development of a new form of communication, which caused an additional contradiction regarding the subject of public opinion. He added 'modern mass media have created a new type of "public", which is largely depoliticized and does not participate in political deliberations and decision-making' (Splichal 2001: 29).

By contrast, the characteristics of the public sphere have also been the subject of debate and controversy as there is no equality. As Butsch (2007) states the notion of reason is not the necessary foundation in that The Twentieth Century Mass Media have not destroyed the public sphere. Due to the theory being based on an Eighteenth Century reality in which communication media was accessible to only few citizens, it is a rather limited view. Nowadays, large populations make media necessary in the public sphere. LeMabieu (1988) analyzes Britain history and contends the crucial reason is the increase in leisure time of the working class and the growth of the lower middle class in the 1930s, which contributed to a greater demand for newspapers, films, and other mass media. In the marketplace, LeMabieu (1988: 19) explains:

'...producers measured approval sales. As a number of studies of the mass media have demonstrated, communicators constantly accommodated their often self-serving messages to fit what they believed the public expected. In other words, he argues far from dictating the cultural preferences of their

public, producers needed to bind themselves to the tastes of a diverse audience rather than Marxist arguments that the growing concentration of ownership of the mass media in the twentieth century carried with it power to help set cultural agendas, shape tastes, and mould political opinions.'

In addition, Hartley (1996) identifies the significance of 'the postmodern public sphere.' Hartley examines the critical pessimism of Twentieth Century social theorists who lamented the passing of an informed, rational public sphere and the rise of popular entertainment media. These theorists have overplayed the extent to which the enlightenment of the public sphere was achieved as an institutional and socially pervasive reality. The public sphere has also proven to be an impediment to understanding the role that the popular media play in producing and distributing knowledge as well as visualizing and teaching public issues in the midst of private consumption. Hartley (1996) argues that the postmodern public sphere, which like suburbia is not a place at all, is the loci for the development of new political agendas based on comfort, privacy and self-building.

After the rise of the commercial press, the function and role of the Popular Press, such as tabloids, have significantly affected the daily life's of ordinary people. The Popular Press is indeed a suburbia which differs from the serious coverage of the quality press. In the tabloid context, there are many discussions about their definitions, format, content and audience reception as well as the relationship between the tabloids and the Popular Press. A key discourse concerns the tabloids alternative role and what this role means in a mass communication society.

The Definitions of The Tabloid

The meaning of tabloid press varies widely from country to country and there are at least four definitions of what tabloids are. The tabloid is a prime example of 'infotainment', in which the audience cannot draw a meaningful distinction between what is information and what is entertainment (Hallin 1992; van Zoonen 1998). Other scholars attribute market forces, commercialization and commodification of media content to the ongoing blurring of boundaries between information and entertainment (Dahlgren & Sparks 1992; Mcmanus 1994; McChesney 1999). In Western society, the popular papers derive from commercial society. The press appeared exclusively as a commodity in the 1880s in the UK (Hampton 2001). Due to the increased concentration of press ownership, the principled owners of a small newspaper could not survive (Lee 1976: 117-130). The increasing domination of advertising revenue placed a premium on mass-circulation. Additionally, the advertisers demanded the right kind of readers, and sometimes exercised an effective censorship over

press content (Curran & Seaton 1997: 31-41), [i.e. the paper wanted to represent the voice of 'The People']. Commercialization could be seen to liberate the working-class consumer who, in a less commercial setting, would not receive adequate 'representation'. The opposite view is that commercialization could appear as the driving force behind the production of 'featherbrained' journalism (Hampton 2001: 220). This is an outcome of concentrated ownership in the hands of increasingly fewer capitalist proprietors, whose commercial interests led them to give the hopeless 'quarter-educated' members of the working class what they wanted (Hampton, 2001: 220).

The tabloid is 'other news'. Compared to hard news, the 'other news' are remnant categories. Langer (1998) analyzes thousands of pieces of news in the tabloids, concluding that these crime stories, traffic events or other trivial news can reflect the real life of common people more effectively than those newspapers reporting serious news.

The tabloid has a subversive role in challenging the hegemony of the power elite (Glynn, 2000). Glynn argues that the tabloid media while trying to establish truths are destabilized by a proliferation of competing voices.

Fraser (1992) uses the late Twentieth Century feminist movement as an example of a subaltern counter-public, using alternative outlets like journals, publishing companies, bookstores, film and video distribution networks, meeting places, and festivals to invent, formulate and spread new ideas and terms for describing and evaluating social phenomena. Unlike Habermas (1989) who is interested in the public sphere as a locus for political power, Fraser (1992) is discussing the role of the public sphere as an arbiter of cultural recognition.

The Alternativeness of Tabloid Journalism

Örnebring and Jönsson develop four dimensions of the alternativeness of tabloid journalism.

"First, alternative might be taken to mean that the discourse itself takes place *somewhere else* other than in the mainstream mediated public sphere:- in alternative media outlets, in specialized journals or fanzines, on the Internet, etc. Second, the alternative public sphere may be alternative in the sense that *other participants* than those normally dominating media discourse have access to and a place in the debates and discussions taking place. Third, an alternative public sphere might be alternative in the sense that *other issues* than those commonly debated in the mainstream are discussed-or that issues not even debated at all in the mainstream are discussed in the alternative sphere. Fourth, the "alternativeness" may derive from the usage of *other ways or forms* of debating and discussing common

issues than those commonly used in the mainstream, for example forms which encourage citizen participation and non-parliamentary direct action.”
(Örnebring & Jönsson, 2004: 286)

Jönsson (2007) also confirms tabloid newspapers as an alternative public sphere. According to her audience analysis of tabloids, the public sphere concept is at its most useful when developed and its problems categorised for a variety of real audiences and media forms. Jönsson suggests:

‘The major function of the newspapers is to provide ‘talking points’, around which readers make judgments through interactive with each others, further corresponds with a communicative public sphere ethos. Such discussions do not necessarily confine to public affairs in a strict sense, but, as in the case of talking about celebrity stories, covering morality and social privilege, they (readers) raise questions of what is deemed to be in the public interests.’

(Jönsson, 2007: 94)

In other words, tabloids provide what are in many senses the foundations for a public sphere as derived from Habermas, as accessible and participatory forums to many readers, especially female readers.

Tabloids and the Popular Press conduct oppositional approaches with the quality press to access their public. Sparks (2000) compares the basic characteristics of The True Tabloid, representative of all tabloids, with those of The Journal of Record, representative of quality newspapers (see Figure 2). Tabloids place an emphasis on private life and are replete with sex, high profile personalities from all backgrounds, scandal, entertainment and sports news. By contrast, the quality press emphasizes public life and focus on political, economic and social news.

Serious, quality press journalism scores highly on the ‘public’ and ‘politics, economics, and society’ axes. Tabloid journalism scores highly on the ‘private’ and ‘scandal, sports, and entertainment’ axes. Sparks (2000: 12) explains the schematic:

‘This is the site of the tabloid in news, and the process of tabloidization refers to a slide down the diagonal from the *Journal of Record* to somewhere much closer to the *True Tabloid*.’

(Sparks, 2000: 12)

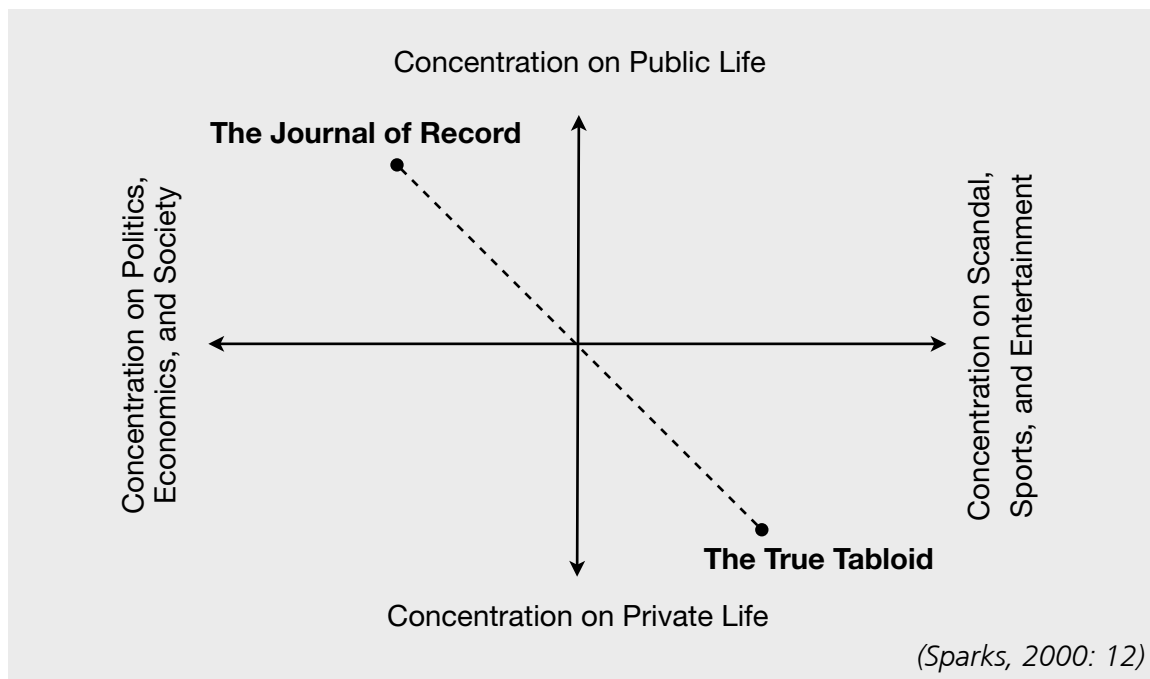


Figure 2: Two Axis of Journalism

Figure 2 presents the different characteristics among the spectrum of newspapers, in which tabloids derived from the commercialization of 'The Press' have a content based on trivia and private news, whereas the quality press promote serious and public news. However, the alternativeness of tabloids and the Popular Press plays a counter public role that provides different forms and ways of debating or discussing common issues. At the same time, they also provide a forum for more people to access political and public affairs.

Ideology and Mass Communication

Media is not only a product but an implement of expression for thoughts, therefore there is a very important discussion about the relationship of ideology and mass communication. How does one define the term 'ideology' and its relationship to societal mass communication? A consequent issue concerns the use of an ideological approach to explore and critique discourse in mass communication. John B. Thompson (1989) adopts a three-stage argument to elaborate the relationship between ideology and mass communication. Thompson (1989: 7) states:

"the concept of ideology can be used to refer to the ways in which meaning services, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical- what I shall call 'relations of domination'."

He explain further what the definition of the ideology says,

"Ideology, broadly speaking, is *meaning in the service of power*. Hence the study of ideology requires us to investigate the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds, from everyday linguistic utterances to complex images and texts; it requires us to investigate the social contexts within which symbolic forms are employed and deployed; and it calls upon us to ask whether, and if so how, the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms serves, in specific contexts, to establish and sustain relations of domination."

(Thompson, 1989: 7)

Thompson offers a wide ranging analysis of the development of mass communication, which he treats as a fundamental constitutive feature of modern societies. He outlines a 'tripartite approach' to the analysis of mass communication in his account of the subject. The tripartite approach includes three dimensions in methodology, social-historical analysis, formal or discursive analysis and (re)interpretation. This approach is also called 'depth-hermeneutical framework'. In the first stage, social-historical analysis is concerned with the social and historical conditions of the production, circulation and reception of symbolic forms. The second stage of formal or discursive analysis is to study symbolic forms as complex symbolic constructions which display an articulated structure. The final stage is called 'interpretation'. It is concerned with the creative explication of what is said or represented by a symbolic form and the creative construction of possible meaning.

Furthermore, Van Dijk (2006) uses the term 'manipulation' to explain how the power interacts within the discourses in the coverage. Van Dijk (2006) argues that:

'manipulation not only involves power, but specifically abuse of power, that is, domination. In other words, manipulation implies the exercise of a form of illegitimate influence by means of discourse: manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interests of the manipulated.'

Expressed another way, manipulation is not only 'wrong' because it violates conversational maxims or other norms and rules of conversation. Van Dijk uses the example of Tony Blair legitimating the war against Iraq to demonstrate his argument. Van Dijk concludes this research by defining discursive manipulation as a form of power abuse or domination; and at the cognitive dimension, he points out the means of mind control

of manipulation. Finally Van Dijk focuses on the usual polarized structures of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation expressing ideology conflicts.

Briefly, the research of ideology is firstly recognized as the relationship of domination and secondly, we need to know how it uses symbolic form to serve or sustain the ideology. Then, the methodology of depth-hermeneutical approach is to:

‘use social-historical analysis and formal or discursive analysis to shed light on the social conditions and structural features of a symbolic form, and it seeks to interpret a symbolic form in this light, to explicate and elaborate what it says, what it represents, what it is about’

(Thompson, 1989:22)

Summary

Comparing the popular sphere with the original public sphere, there is a quite a different and changeable definition and function in contemporary society. For example, in Habermas (1995), publicity and publicness have the same meaning. By contrast, Splichal (2001) separates the meaning of public, publicness, publicity, public sphere and public opinion from the idea of a single universal concept. Splichal believes, nowadays, the public in mass media society already became ‘imaginative public’ and ‘new public’ (Splichal 2001: 29). Overall, ‘The Public’ has three levels of meaning, which are collective behavior, controversy and communication. ‘The Public’ is not only a concept but an action of collective wills and opinion, as well as a constantly developing process of controversy and communication.

However, media entertainment heavily influences all the forms of the public sphere and causes many criticisms, chief of which is that the deliberations of ‘The People’ are reduced to the merest trivia. Undeniably, media entertainment also provides a less strictly formatted approach for the masses to access serious issues. Media entertainment offers cognitive maps of reality and provokes debates about social values and identities. Media entertainment helps to integrate creatively both entertaining and reasoning perspectives in reaching for a joint solution. The Popular Press, consequently, is excited about playing a prominent role in bringing the functions and attentions of ordinary people and public affairs closer together. As a result, the public sphere of tabloids and the Popular Press represents an alternative approach from the bourgeois press for the ordinary people to interact in the genuine public sphere.

From a historical perspective, the alternativeness of the popular media originates from the rise of the commercialization of the media. In the marketplace, media owners need a diversity of audience for their businesses ranging from the intellectual and the elite to the popular masses. The popular media is, therefore, a micro and progressive process, which the popular masses can use to negotiate with the authorities.

From a cultural perspective, the recognition of common interests promotes more attentions to access messages. Even politicians need to use the approach of cultural recognition for their politics to appeal to ordinary people. Meanwhile, entertaining political activities are becoming a vital element in political affairs.

From the audience perspective, the popular media leads to public participation with serious issues and provokes public debates and dissents which relate to their needs of daily life. Through dissent or discussion, the popular media also raises the consciousness of ordinary people to address serious and significant issues.

The popular media has the potential more than any other bourgeois media to be accessible in any space-time continuum and thus make possible Habermas' idea of the universal public sphere a reality.

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3

China's Public and Social Order

Introduction

The aim of chapter 3 is to conceptualise 'The Public' in China's history and its transformation and impact on contemporary China. There are three sections in chapter 3. The first section introduces five definitions of 'The Public' from different periods and, how the concept of 'The Public' is understood and applied practically in society. For example, the different degrees of 'The Public' in civil society, people society and popular society. Furthermore, in contemporary China, 'The Public' is influenced not only by Confucianism, but also Communism and Consumerism. Those have changed the boundary between 'The Public' and 'The Private' such as in the value of relationships and the autonomy of the individual. However, this section also presents several examples of hope in modern China about how the use of 'The Popular' to define 'The Public' and form a civil society.

The second section demonstrates why the priority of sentiment and reason is relevant in Chinese society rather than the rule of law in China's history. It goes on to show how this element is now presented in the tabloids and official discourse which differs from the concept of 'rational thinking'.

The final section looks at another element that impacts on the current China's public. This is the invisible rule (hidden road). This section explores its definitions and its influences on society. It is also related to the issue of corruption and anti-corruption as some think the invisible rule culture is the cause.

China's Public and Its Transformation

'The Public' is generally 'Gong' in Chinese. 'The Public' sometimes can be applied to 'The People', 'The Authority' or the 'Civil Society'. When 'The Public' refers to 'The People' 'Gongmin' is often used giving rise to 'Gongmin shehui' being defined as 'The Civil Society'. Similar to the debates of 'The Public', 'The Popular' and 'The People' in the West, there are also many discussions of Civil Society, Popular Society and People Society in China. The Popular Society is defined as 'Minjian shehui' in Chinese, with The People Society being 'Shimin shehui'. However these definitions are still controversial.

The moral and cultural dimension in China's Public is defined in terms of moral being 'Dao de' in Chinese, which has emphasis on sentiment rather than rule of law. But the translation of sentiment is 'Qinq' or 'Ren qing' in Chinese. The next section will discuss further how these concepts are used and developed.

The Transformation of China's Public in History

Rowe (1990) says the Chinese word '*gong*', like the Western 'Public', has always been seen in the simplest form as the opposite of 'private'. As with 'Public', the earliest usage of '*gong*' seems to have conveyed the sense of 'collective' or 'communal'. Additionally, its basic definition is 'share equally by all'.

*Gong*¹ (The Public) is an ancient concept from Confucian values. Although *gong*'s meaning has changed in contemporary China, from a historic perspective, we can discover the context of *gong* in the Chinese mindset. In terms of China's Public, Chen J (2003) traces the concept of *gong* from Chinese history, society and political affairs dividing it into five categories.

First is the most ancient use of *gong* meaning the government, the authority, the state or public affairs. By contrast, 'The Private' is referred to being the civilians, the popular masses or the common folk.

In the second, *gong* represents general interests, or the whole, unity and the notion of altruism. By contrast, 'The Private' is viewed, in the negative sense, as selfishness, self-interests or ego-centrism.

¹ See Glossary for an alphabetic list of Chinese terms used in this text

In the third, *gong* means 'the Gods' or the justice of nature rather than common interests. *Gong* commends great virtue while 'The Private' is viewed only as personal desires.

The fourth category although *gong* is still viewed as the general interests and unity, the concept comes from the collection of private individuals; i.e. the individual private citizen is the legitimate basis of *Gong*, 'The Public'. 'The Private' is not a negative term in that sense.

Fifth, *gong* is the areas of common affairs in political, patriarchal and social life. In this sense, 'The Private' means personal interests.

According to Chen (2003), the crucial thought in China is that 'The Public' is viewed as a kind of morality, rather than as an idea of communication in society. 'The Public' and 'The Private' are always on opposite sides. The former is commended while, in sharp contrast, the latter is abused. *Gong*, 'The Public', in the Chinese context is not an idea of communication but only a moral code.

Philosophers naturally base an understanding of a foreign culture and society on the concepts of their own culture and society. Although many scholars have sought to explain the relative circumstances for the Western concept of 'public sphere' in Chinese history, Chinese reformers in the early Twentieth Century adopted the terms 'civil society' and 'public sphere', and the concept of *gongmin* [citizen] from European political thought. Ma (2006) further explains the definition of *Shimin* ['The Public' or 'The People'] and *Gongmin shehui* [civil society], which can be an appropriate translation for these terms and necessary for Chinese intellectuals' search for a democratic China. '*Shimin*' is an ancient Chinese word for town-people or urban residents and originally did not have any particular political implications. According to Wang (1991), people are '*shimin*' in the private sphere and become '*gongmin*' when they enter the public sphere.

Minjian shehui is also an ancient Chinese term. This phrase indicates a popular society separated from the space of official control (Ma, 2006). The popular society is the world of ordinary people in which people live their familiar life style and pursue their respective interests (Liang, 2001). In addition, Liang argues that popular society may be the only concept we can find in the traditional vocabulary that is very close to the concept of civil society (Liang, 2001: 67).

By contrast, some Chinese scholars such as Xiao Gongqin advocate:

'new authoritarianism and expresses doubts about a civil society in China today. Xiao says in China's history there was no such concept as society independent from the state because China's traditional patriarchal clan system and its underdeveloped market economy created a social sphere with a strong patriarchal nature. Moreover, as the state political power grew weak with corruption, civil society, is parallel with secret society, expanded abnormally'.

(Xiao cited in Ma, 2006: 27)

In the context of a state-society relation in China, Ma (2006) emphasizes China, unlike many Asian countries has ceased using Confucian values to integrate society. China's modernization movement and communist revolution have, since the May 4th Movement in 1919, explicitly rejected many Confucian values and Chinese culture has been profoundly changed by the embrace of Western ideas and lifestyles *(Ma 2006: 28)*.

Nevertheless it is important to determine the level of influence Western ideas have exerted in contemporary Chinese society. The following discussions demonstrate the impact global capitalism has had on China's 'public sphere'.

The Public Sphere and The Private Sphere in Contemporary China

The introduction of the individual and society in historical and contemporary Communist China is based on Confucian values and the complex Chinese concept of '*Guanxixue*'. Furthermore how the change in the relationship between the private and public space has caused disjunction between the public and private sphere in contemporary China is explained.

Liang Shuming and Fei Xiaotong have argued that to understand the individual and society in China, from the Confucianism viewpoint *(Stockman, 2000: 72-80)*, Chinese society is neither individual-based nor society-based but rather relationship-based. In Western society, the phrase is the 'organizational mode of association [*tuantigeju*]' *(Xiaotong, [1947] 1992: 71)*. The individuals make up organizations as members. The boundaries of organizations, the definitions of who is and who is not a member are very clear. By contrast, Xiaotong argues Chinese society is constructed according to a 'differential mode of association [*chaxugeju*]' *(Xiaotong, [1947] 1992: 71)* in which Fei, according to Stockman *(2000:73)* said 'there are no fixed groups with the defined memberships but myriads of over-abundant networks of relationships.' Furthermore, 'the morality of differential relationships is particularistic: one's obligations to others depend on the specific nature of the relationship and the network in which it is embedded.' Stockman *(2000:73)* Therefore

while modern western society is governed by law, traditional Chinese rural society is governed by ritual. Rituals are 'publicly recognized behavioral norms' (Xiaotong, [1947] 1992: 96), which govern the action of people bound by particularistic relationships.

Stockman (2000) defines *guanxixue* as the explosion in academic discussion in The Nineteen Eighties to The Nineteen Nineties. *Guanxixue* also reflects the public and the private relationship in the contemporary Chinese context. *Guanxixue* means 'relationships' or 'connections', and can be used to refer to relationships between people and groups as well as between processes and ideas. *Guanxixue* appears to be ubiquitous in business relationships, and its use is often interpreted as unethical or corrupt by those who use it. Gold (1985) interpreted the rise of *guanxixue* instrumentalism as the reassertion of traditional cultural patterns of interaction stimulated by specific social conditions. In particular as Gold explains:

'The Culture Revolution period was seen as the origin of *guanxixue*. The penetration of the state into all aspects of personal and private life and the control by the state over the allocation of all scarce resources had resulted in continual search for irregular channels, especially contacts with cadres who might be prepared to bend the rules.'

(Gold cited in Stockman, 2000: 86)

However, the attitudes among many enterprise managers to *guanxixue* have changed. Guthrie (1998) found managers in branches of the economy where competition had become open and depersonalized were less likely to see *guanxi* as relevant to their business, and emphasized impersonal aspects such as price and quality instead. Guthrie (1998) suggests that, in the sphere of economic transactions, the extension of a legal-rational order will gradually make *guanxi* less significant.

By contrast, from the perspective of relationship and society, Yan (2003) using an anthropological approach analyses the transformation of private lives in China's rural villages over a half century of Communist rule in China (1949-1999). Yan argues that in the age of collectivization, the state tried to promote collectivism and to shift the loyalty of villagers from the family to the collectives and, ultimately, to the state. Although the state opened up a new social space and created the social conditions necessary for the development of individuality, participation in public life was always strictly controlled by the party-state. Yan says:

'The power of rural youth derived by and large from the top-down impact of collectivization, the marriage law, state policy, and political campaigns, rather than from a bottom-top, spontaneous movement in which individuals fought and sacrificed in order to gain their.....As a result, young villagers' pursuit of individual rights in the domestic sphere was not always accompanied by an equal effort to gain autonomy and independence in the public sphere.'

(Yan, 2003: 232)

Furthermore, the individual has to respect the framework of official ideology and fulfill socialist morality in their social life. However, when collectivism quickly collapsed and the state withdrew traditional values and socialist morality from many aspects of social life, the villagers faced a moral and ideological vacuum in the post-collective era. In the end, instead of commodity production and the value of the capitalism, the younger generations were left only with the value of ego-centered consumerism. The moral code of consumerism based on emotion, intimacy and the individual leads to a rational personal desire in younger generation.

According to Yan's research (2003), local government and village cadres in the post-collective era, became increasingly predatory and exploitative in order to extract ever increasing resources from villagers to support the ever-expanding bureaucratic system and to meet their personal desires. Nevertheless, the state remained hostile to any organized social force, even after it withdrew its political and economic support of public life at the local level. As a result, the younger generation's sense of duty and obligation to the community and to other people, as equal individuals, continued to shrink in both the public and private spheres, leaving only an increasingly cynical mind-set. In other words, individuals have no thought of citizenship, but place absolute emphasis on individual interests and desires. This disjunction continues in the public sphere and private sphere in contemporary China.

The organization of '*danwei*' is another approach to determine the relationship between the public and the private spheres in contemporary China's society. Bray (2005: 3) defines *danwei* as the:

'phenomenon is the most typical and most comprehensive expression of the many unique features that have been formed over many years as a result of China's economic and political practices.'

In China everyone calls the social organization in which they are employed– whether it be a factory, shop, school, hospital, research institute, or party organ, by the generic term *danwei*. Bray continues:

'In China the *danwei* not only provides members of society with economic reward for their work, in addition, through the provision of housing, free medical care, child care centers, kindergartens, dining halls, bathing houses, service companies, and collective enterprise to employ the children of staff, the *danwei* provides its members with a complete social guarantee and welfare services.'

(Bray, 2005: 3-4)

Danwei also takes on a wide range of political, judicial, civil and social functions. In other words, *danwei* has become the principal source of identity for urban residents and promotes collectivized rather than individualized subjects.

Following the economy reform, some Chinese scholars believed they would see the start of a gradual transition from the person of the work unit to the social person. That is, they sought to contrast the modern individualized forms of identity with the old collectivized forms underpinned by the *danwei* system in the rise of the modern individual in urban China and the dispersal of the *danwei*. However, Bray employs two approaches to analyse the reform of the *danwei*, the labor management system and housing development which present the individual not only as not emancipated but also stranded in 'bureaucratic capitalism' and community services.

The labor management system operates in state-owned *danwei* enterprises where labourers could be hired and fired according to enterprise needs. Moreover, Bray argues:

'The communist cadres of old being metamorphosed into a powerful class of bureaucratic managers who control the resources of state-owned *danwei* and the manner in which these resources are distributed among an increasingly individuated and atomized workplace.'

(Bray, 2005: 164)

Housing development has since the decline of *danwei* transformed into 'community building', which requires defining in a Chinese context. There are two existing systems of urban governance, the territory of the Street Office and the territory of the Residents' Committee. Bray explains:

'According to this usage, community was not associated with natural social groupings or those formed by common identity, but rather was seen to correlate to existing grassroots administrative units demarcated by the government.'

(Bray, 2005: 182)

Therefore, the *danwei* system just changes to a new formation but still affects urban China.

Briefly, if the significance of particular relationships has faded away in contemporary China, the autonomy of the individual is not only stranded by the adoption of capitalism, but is also controlled by the official governance of spatiality.

The Public and The Popular in China

Whether or not the arguments between 'The Public' and private confirm the economic and capital influence, there was a degree of hope in modern China of support for 'The Popular' to frame the public sphere and form a civil society. The hope was an 'educated' aspect of popular culture education, which represented the masses.

Madsen (1993) contends moral and cultural dimensions should be emphasized in discussions of the usage of public sphere and civil community from Habermas' point of view. Madsen sees media as a symbolic media and a memories objective which have to be subjectively appropriated. Individuals have to interpret and share these meanings in a process that is not just cognitive but emotional, aesthetic, and moral. The process of interpreting common symbols, asking what they mean for people today, arguing about them, putting them into new words, portraying them in imagery and performance creates moral communities. This moral strength is an important factor of the Polish Solidarity movement in the early Nineteen Eighties but was not appropriate to a nascent union movement in China (Madsen, 1993).

However, Brownell states 'one problem with Habermas' public sphere concept is that it neglects the importance of ritual and symbols, which are very important in the Chinese political process' (Brownell, 1999: 209). Brownell believes by paying more attention to culture, this kind of focus should help us understand the distinctiveness of a Chinese public sphere and avoid the criticism that we are imposing a Western model on a Chinese context.

To explain the distinct relationships existing between popular culture and the public in China's history, three aspects are discussed. These aspects of popular culture are enlightenment, resistance and autonomy.

The Aspect of Enlightenment

At the beginning of the development of education, popular culture was enlightenment. Enlightenment was the people's culture in the beginning of The Twentieth Century in Chinese history.

Li (2001) studied the evaluation of people and people's culture in modern China. Li proposed that to modernise China in the Nineteen Hundreds the intellectuals recognised the need to 'enlighten' the great majority of the illiterate Chinese 'masses'. The means they used to enlighten the people were generally practised by intellectuals of the subsequent period. In the Nineteen Thirties the academic and aesthetic appreciation of folk culture was replaced by militant calls to mobilise a mass culture to engage in ideological campaigns against imperialism and feudalism.

Initially, the intellectuals committed to the task of enlightening the masses carried out their work with elaborate arguments and subtle skills, for example, disseminating notices and pamphlets in local dialects (Li 2001: 34-35). In addition, more than a hundred newspapers in local dialects were published in the first decade of The Twentieth Century.

Literacy schools, including half-day schools, night schools, and romanization schools², were established to offer quick and cheap training for the illiterate. The teachers of enlightenment understood the limits of written materials on their contemporary circumstances, so they used oral and visual transmissions. Opera and local tunes were declared and used as the most efficient vehicles to enlighten the illiterate masses.

During the early Twentieth Century, popular culture was related to the enlightenment of lower classes with the aim of modernising the nation as an entity.

The Aspect of Resistance

The relationship between political discourse and popular culture is one of resistance. The purpose of the resistance is to oppose the hegemonic discourse. Resistance is a free, unrestricted symbol, beyond the state's control in the public sphere.

Renwick and Cao (2003) through the paired approaches of cultural identity and local determination examine the action of popular culture and its aspect of resistance. One form of cultural identity inherent in popular culture is semiotic guerilla warfare, which includes the youth subculture of rock music such as Xie Chengqiang's (1990) release '*What's the nineties gonna bring?*'; feminism and women's writing such as Ma Zhaongxing's (1988) '*I Wish I Was a Wolf*'; commentaries such as He Bochuan's (1988) '*In the Hills of China*'; and poetry, art and television series.

Another form combining both local determination and cultural identity consists of the extra-national opposition discourses involving non-Han challenges, the sense of Southern Chineseness and the identificatory differentiation drawn between coastal and interior cultures. An example of a non-Han challenge is the search of the Uighur Muslim nationalists for an independent state of East Turkestan. The discourse of the southern Chinese identity is based on the increasing inference that the people of the South are synonymous with Chinese, which challenges the mythological essentialism. The resistance discourse of the coastal and interior cultures is due to the complex psychological dispositions that have existed since the era of Western imperialism, which created the coastal 'enclave' populations. Communist propaganda portrayed the interior culture as authentic Chinese and the coastal enclave culture as 'westernised Chinese as suspect' and (Renwick & Cao 2003: 73-75).

According to these studies both cultural identity and local determination deconstruct the state's unity, and therefore one aspect of popular culture is resistance in public.

² See Glossary – Romanisation schools.

The Aspect of Autonomy

Popular culture from the viewpoints of the economic sphere and the civic society is autonomous, i.e. if popular culture is equated to social capital and the people, it can be viewed an independent site for autonomy.

Some of China's scholars (*Deng, 2005*) analyze the idea of civil society and develop a practicable concept to apply to China's circumstances. On the one hand, they introduce Western theories and reflect whether they are applicable the history and development of civic society in China. On the other hand, they seek China's solution and whether any societal characteristic are China specific. Deng (*2005*) views the economic sphere as a 'private sphere' or 'non-public sphere'. In this sense, Deng contends the public sphere belongs to 'the authority', whereas the economic sphere and civic society belong to the ordinary people. Deng and Jing define Chinese civil society in this way:

'It is a private sphere where members of society engage in economic and social activities following the rule of contract and voluntary principle as well as based on autonomous governance, and it is also a non-governmental public sphere for participating in policy discussions and decision-making.'

(Deng & Jing, 1992: 6)

Wakeman (*1993*) points out the use of the idea of civil society in East Europe to break away the state's supervision and to create in a 'bottom-up' process a form of social life independent from the state.

Notwithstanding these arguments, Rowe (*1990*) discovered, in an analysis of the late Qing and early Republican periods, an autonomous public sphere did disappear in Twentieth Century China. Due to the relative under development of institutions of the formal representative government, at local levels, the formal institutionalisation of corporate self-governing bodies throughout The Twentieth Century local autonomy movement might have caused the collapse of the autonomous public sphere. However, any categories of popular consciousness are not easily erased. The Chinese idiom of a 'publicness' outside the institutions of bureaucratic administration has been historically well-developed. Rowe (*1990: 326*) contends

'such phenomena as the explicit maintenance of a tripartite legal division of the economy into 'state', 'collective', and 'private' sectors seem to suggest a survival of an articulated intermediary ground between state and society more pronounced than that in the contemporary West.'

Popular culture not only adopts a moral and cultural discourse to appeal to the public [people], but its capital is economic and provokes the private sphere to break away the state's control. Consequently, popular culture may be viewed as an autonomous civic society.

Sentiment and Reason in The Chinese Context

The central question of this research is why? notions of 'sentiment' and 'reason', as opposed to the 'rational', are present in society in China and whether they have an impact on its public sphere. China's traditional culture and its political system hold the keys to the answer. Some Chinese scholars use the naturally developed Chinese Culture to explain the behaviour of contemporary Chinese people. Hence, in this section, focus will be on the notions of 'sentiment' and 'reason' in Chinese Culture and their area of activity. These characteristics will also be explored in the context of the cultural dimension and their representation in the political discourse for public affairs and news coverage in popular newspapers.

The Nature of Chinese Social Culture

Chinese are the most obedient people in the world (*Sun, 1983*), which is one of the reasons why autocracy can last such a long time in China. The historian, Sun Longji (1983), in his writing draws a comparison between Chinese and western culture³. Sun points out The Chinese People put stability and unification in politics as their top priority because harmony is a more important value than diversity. The government uses stability and unification as a legitimated excuse to suppress the needs for diversification from the public. Due to this, Chinese people are unlike the populaces of the Western societies who place emphasis on individual subjectivity and the organization of legal interest groups to fight for their beliefs and causes. This is the reason why there is no human rights mind-set in China. The government can easily deprive its people of the most basic freedom. Sun argues there is no concept of citizenship in China, just folk.

However, Sun (1983) points out that common people use alternative ways to resist authority. It is *yang feng yin wei*, the 'outwardly compliant but inwardly unsubmitive' way. Chinese people do not violate the law directly, but they usually follow their own judgment in different situation. The law is only a superficial regulation whereas personal judgment is the most important means in some certain circumstances. The Chinese usually apply the so-called 'negative resistance'. The consequence is that people do not abide by the law and do not believe the legal system. In other words, even though the rule of law is reasonable, if there is no penalty, people do not obey it. Chinese are generally 'more outwardly compliant but inwardly unsubmitive' than obedient.

Besides Sun, Chen K. H. illustrated the structure within China's social order:

³ The original version of this book was a photocopy in 1983 and widely available in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China for several years.

'There are three principles, *qing* (sentiment), *li* (reason) and *fa* (legality) at work. Within the three, *fa* is the third and the last resort. That means when legal means are adopted, people do not think it is an activation of civil right, but a punishment system at work, a weapon of the governing violence. This mindset is still operating in contemporary daily life, partly because no one could trust the legal system due to the fact that it has been the apparatus for the authoritarian regime to control the population.'

(Chen K. H., 2003: 887)

Chen explains the paradox that when social conduct is sensible and reasonable, but illegal, it will not be challenged. So if social conduct is challenged on just a legal basis, when the conduct is sensible and reasonable, then the people will not accept the challenge.

This section is conducted according to the arguments of Sun (1983) and Chen (2003) in order to review Chinese social order and popular attitude to law and the legal system. The first argument is the double standard of popular attitudes and the second one is the priority of social order. Although their arguments come from Chinese traditional culture, it still provides a basic explanation through which to demonstrate the contemporary situation, that happened in political discourse from the authorities and news coverage, in popular newspapers in China within the next section.

The Notion of Sentiment in China's Tabloids and Official Discourse

As this 'sensible' and 'reasonable' mindset is common in China, it provides an opportunity for tabloids to develop. Due to the 'one system of two strategies', the Party Press is responsible for propaganda purposes while the Popular Press appeals to public interests. Tabloids' sensible and trivial characteristics not only meet human interests but also fit China's social operation.

Levy (2002) and Zhao (2002) have analyzed the discourse of China's tabloids. Levy illustrates the presentation of news of corruption in tabloids which is quite stylized, exaggerated, crude, and prurient. First, the tabloids reinforce the significance of the issue and evoke powerful emotions [ranging from righteous anger to shameless envy]. Levy contends:

'In some ways the stories in the tabloids maybe continue the Maoist tradition of character assassination against privileged people. Only now the stories are produced for commercial rather than political reasons. Second, the tabloid stories usually focus on corrupt individuals who have been arrested by heroic investigators and police, thus conveying the message that the system works.'

(Levy 2002: 44)

According to the Zhao (2002: 112) study, 'the tabloids are a means of social communication and a potential forum for popular expression.' Although political persuasion is not the tabloids primary objective, they are socially embedded. Behind the bizarre and apparent deviations from the norm are consensual views about the social world and taken-for-granted assumptions about what these norms are or ought to be. Publicly exposed corrupt officials are the subjects of much indignation in tabloid stories. Zhao argues that given the popular resentment against corruption and official anti-corruption campaigns in the late Nineteen Nineties, it is not surprising that tabloids capitalize on a populist 'people versus corrupt officials' theme.'

The Government also uses emotional and moral tactics to educate the public treating them as children. For example, China's president, JinTao Hu, issued a collection of eight Do's and Don'ts⁴, which had more appeal to the public than any legal reform. As the Washington Post reported:

"Hu's fatherly advice, in the form of eight do's and don'ts, was issued on March of 2006 as an antidote to the corruption and cynicism distributing over whole China, a result of the often raw capitalism that has emerged during 25 years of dramatic economic change. Although his [JinTao Hu] aphorisms may sound simplistic to Western ears, such as 'Work hard, don't be lazy' and 'Be honest, not profit-mongering', Chinese analysts said they are a response to a deep-seated desire among people here for a moral compass to guide them through the unsettling transformation."

(Washington Post, 23/03/2006)

In addition, China's political discourse repeatedly refers to the idea of China as subject to hostile external and internal predators (Neil & Cao, 2003). This theme lies at the centre of modern Chinese political communication and is understood in complex patterns of symbolic terms, allusions and metaphors acting as linguistic and textualized codes. The Government uses these tactics to construct and strengthen political identity. Ironically, although the Government's propaganda purpose may differ from the tabloids' coverage, the government's tactics coincide with tabloids' access to popularity.

This section has reviewed the research of Levy (2002) and Zhao (2002) to examine how news coverage uses a sentimental approach to appeal to their readers and even has been used as a means of communication for popular expression. This tabloid tale of corruption news provides a simple explanation to agitate the public's emotions and attention. Nevertheless, the political discourse also uses the similar approach to persuade people. This sentimental and appealing discourse has become a characteristic of Chinese popular communication. The next section will discuss the issue of the invisible rule and corruption to further demonstrate how order without law works.

⁴ See Glossary – JinTao Hu's eight morals

The Invisible Rule and China's Society

In contrast to the above discussions on the cultural and historical backgrounds to China's Popular Press, this section focuses on the social context and issues in China's contemporary society.

A core issue in the discourse of China's contemporary society is the idea of the invisible rule (meta-rule), which is linguistically defined as invisible, unseen, hidden or disguised. The phrase 'invisible rule' has become a proper approach to account for social phenomena and problems such as corruption, inequality, and violence in contemporary China. In the following discourse the definition of the *invisible rule* will be introduced. How the invisible rule has an impact on China's society is explained and finally a discussion of how the issues of corruption and cynicism reflect the presence of *the invisible rule* in society.

The Function and Controversy of The Invisible Rule

Wu (2004a, 2004b) argues that these 'invisible rules' have operated in Chinese society for thousands of years. He analyzes the ancient history of several dynasties and concludes there are five key implications of the invisible rules:

- i) They are the apparent and informal rules underpinning formal regulation that restrict individual's behavior in certain circumstances;
- ii) They stem from social interaction and effectively reduce conflicts and the ensuing penalties;
- iii) They define the penalties for infractions of social behavior;
- iv) They are in opposition to the formal rules of justice rules but since they violate communist social ideology and legitimate rights they must remain invisible although everyone recognizes them;
- v) Society deems them more important than formal regulations as they provide benefits unavailable under the latter.

Official jargon, similar to 'spin' in the Western sense, is therefore, often viewed as a tactic of camouflage. No one takes official jargon seriously. Nevertheless, officials have to voice this jargon, often to protect their own position and benefits. Wu (2004a) maintains the most serious problem of the invisible rule is that it leads to legitimate violence and flagrant violations of the formal rules. Nevertheless, because abuse of the formal rules to derive huge benefits is a common practice, obeisance to the invisible rules has become sufficiently widespread for the invisible rules to become the 'true rules'. Consequently,

individuals who have the power to use excessive violence possess the right to define the invisible rules. Ironically, since the invisible rules take precedence over the formal rules, the dynamics of society are more efficient.

Wu (2004a: 13) defines the invisible rules as 'the second rank of equality'⁵ to explain how invisible rules work. He tells a story of a post office in the Qing Dynast (1644-1912). The forage for the post office's horses was collected regularly from the public, i.e. farmers. There were many complaints from the elders and the village leaders because of two kinds of inequity: first, the scales were inaccurate, so civilians needed to provide more forage than they should and second, the postmaster, or the aides of the county leader, charged the farmers extra money for going to the farms to collect the forage. However, according to the law of the Qing Dynast, the government of the county should provide all the financial needs of the post office. In other words, the government should pay the villagers for the forage [Wu's 'first rank of equality']. Ironically, the farmers did not expect any payments from the government [Wu's 'second rank of equality.']. The farmers' anger was due to the greed of the officials not only for using inaccurate scales but also for asking for the extra payment. The farmers would have been content to provide the forage to the post office for free.

Sun (2007) argues the idea of the invisible rule is so significant that it, instead of the official rule, currently dominates state and society. Sun's argument explains why corruption in the government is increasing and cannot be curbed efficiently. For example, Sun (2007: 3) says there was serious corruption in Lanzhou County with more than seventy officials, including the county leader as well as the Party leader, which only became known at the inauguration of the new Party leader. Sun explains the revelation only occurred because the officials were disunited; i.e. had they followed the invisible rules, the revelation would not have occurred.

Effectively official forms of 'communication', i.e. meetings, discussions and debates, do not take place in formal or public realms, or in the private sphere, but in back-rooms, and deals are confirmed 'under the table'. The public, in this Chinese context, is shaped on the one hand by the reasons of the authority, which are never viewed seriously by ordinary people or even the officials themselves and, on the other, is formed by individual emotions or desires. The invisible rules have a crucial impact on what ordinary people think about the public in their daily lives.

⁵ Here, the second rank of equality was the invisible rule. In other words, the villagers provided their forage for free. The first rank of equality was that the public official should pay them, but it was merely a formal regulation.

Corruption and Anti-Corruption

The issues of corruption and anti-corruption are popular discourses and political activities in China. Although, China's market reforms have resulted in a substantial improvement in the living standard of most of the urban population, the reform has also generated a marked increase in income inequality as well as endemic corruption on a large scale. A common saying goes, 'If every official in China is taken out and shot, you may kill some innocent ones; if every other official is taken out and shot, you'd be letting too many off the hook.' (Yu, 2006: 229) Currently in China, privilege is a major category for corruption that comes as an ordinary accompaniment to power, in as much as officials retain the privileges of control over China's resources and capital.

Chinese *tanwu* or *fubai* equate to the English term of 'corruption'. Kinkley (2007) uses the discourse of corruption in official and non-official discourse to determine the notion of corruption as a Chinese concept. Kinkley explains the case for *tanwu*:

'The old Mandarin word *tanwu* and its root in classic Chinese, *tan*, both often translated into English as "corruption", were used in the Mao era and still are today ... [However] 'in law cases, *tanwu* gets a more specific definition which is 'crimes of graft and bribery.'

(Kinkley, 2007:172)

Kinkley then explains the difference in definition for *fubai*:

Fubai encompasses virtually every technical and figurative meaning of corruption imaginable. Fubai is like the English "corruption" in its retention of both biological and more figurative social applications.'

(Kinkley, 2007:173)

Kinkley analyzes many novelists' discourses about corruption then argues:

'It is interesting that in China's nonofficial discourse of corruption, and in official discourse, too, which often promote "rule of law" as a utilitarian measure to promote social order and economic growth, violations of law are still often sublimated into the more "important" question of their moral impact on society.'

(Kinkley, 2007:180)

Stafford (2007) contends that three significant phenomena have an impact on the Chinese economy today, deception, corruption and the Chinese ritual economy. Stafford explains (2007:42):

'Deception informs the buying and selling of goods and services in China in a number of interesting ways. Corruption is held to have seriously complicated modern economic life, and to have helped undermine traditional values and ethics. The last one, the ritual economy, may be said to encompass not only traditional patterns of gift-giving during festivals and ritual occasions, but also the reciprocal provision of financial and practical support within networks of kin and friends, and the handing over of direct and indirect bribes as a kind of "tribute" to the powerful.'

(Stafford, 2007: 42)

Stafford illustrates his argument with the words of the Chinese economist He Qinglian:

'The reform process in China has been a fraud, and it is having extremely negative social and economic consequences. The rapid rise in average incomes has largely been the product of transfers of wealth from the public sector into the private hands of 'power-holders and their hangers-on....the marketization of power, a process in which illegal ways of making money are simultaneously the most profitable.'

(He Qinglian cited in Stafford, 2007: 43)

'He analyzes over 75% of money has been spent on the bribes, entertainment, and favors that are necessary to divert the money and to cover it up.'

(He Qinglian cited in Stafford, 2007: 44)

The act of cultivating 'favour' relationships has become a popular phenomenon between the public and public officials, but there are opposing opinions about it. Stafford quotes Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, an anthropologist:

'The morality which is found among ordinary people has the capacity to "trickle up", undermining the state, transforming China into a more rather than a less ethical place, and creating the potential for a Chinese civil society.'

(Mayfair Mei-hui Yang cited in Stafford, 2007: 44)

By contrast, as an economist, Stafford argues that:

'corruption at the highest levels has the capacity to "trickle down" to the masses, undermining the ethical foundation of all social relationships, and destroying the potential for a Chinese civil society'

(Stafford, 2007: 44).

The popular attitudes towards the issue of corruption are contradictory. Yu (2008) surveyed 623 respondents in various cities in China to measure their opinions of Chinese corruption. The result suggests most respondents have lost their faith and confidence in eradicating corruption. 'They see the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), party members and government officials as the pit of corruption as well as the source of corruption' (Yu 2008: 240). While there are various punishments for corruption including Party discipline, demotion, stripping of Party positions and Party work, monetary fines, return of funds, and jail terms or the death penalty they are not effective. Yu explains:

'These punishments do not seem to work very effectively since corruption is not contained or curtailed significantly. Party discipline is no more than a slap on the wrist. Even when it is a slap on the face, some corrupt officials couldn't care less.'

(Yu, 2008: 241)

Most of Yu's respondents think the most effective way to curtail corruption is by judicial punishment with an emphasis on capital punishment [the death penalty]. The second choice is using the media to make corrupt individuals known to the public. Some respondents believe an independent media is a more effective method to reveal corruption.

For anti-corruption and social stability, there is a new political slogan now in China's Ruling Party, 'harmony society.' Smyth and Qian mention the Hu-Wen notion⁶ of a harmonious society:

'which places emphasis on reducing income inequality, creating more jobs, improving access to education and improving social protection, is as a direct appeal to those who concerned about corruption and redistribution and thus an attempt to ensure political and social stability.'

(Smyth & Qian, 2008: 3-4)

According to Smyth and Qian:

'while many have benefited from the marketization process there are also the aggrieved, such as those laid-off as part of China's state-owned enterprise restructuring, who have become increasingly vocal in reminding the state of its socialist claim to legitimacy and of promises of egalitarianism made during the Maoist past.'

(Smyth & Qian, 2008: 1)

Smyth and Qian also point out:

'There is a positive correlation between perceptions that corruption is a problem and holding left-wing beliefs, which is robust to the inclusion of control for personal characteristics of the respondent including his or her ideology and the locale in which he or her live.'

(Smyth & Qian, 2008: 3)

Briefly, this section reviewed the discussions of the invisible rule in China which is derived from Chinese traditional culture, however it is also an important category in contemporary China. Particularly when people talk about corrupt officials and the news coverage of corruption, the invisible rule is one of crucial elements such as suggested in Sun's (2007) research. Nevertheless, corruption is regarded as *tanwu* in China which is also linked to the ritual economy such as gift-giving and tribute. It is order with law or even violation of the law but very important in the moral and social order. Moreover, the other controversial issue is the method of anti-corruption must appeal and bring harmony to society insuring social stability. In other words, the invisible rule and moral issues impact not only on the social order but also in the news coverage and people's interpretation of public affairs.

⁶ See Glossary - Hu-Wen notion .

Summary

The idea of 'The Public' is viewed as a kind of morality, rather than as an ideal of communication in China's society. After the introduction of economic reforms in China, the morality of 'The Public' dissipated and was increasingly replaced by ego-centered consumerism. This disjunction still continues in the public sphere and private sphere in contemporary China. In addition, official governance still exists, particularly in urban China. However, there is some evidence that 'The Popular' also arouses a public and is effective in the cultural and moral dimensions of China's society and history. These popular notions are enlightenment for ordinary people, autonomy in economy and resistance to the control of the state authority.

On the other hand, social order and traditional culture play crucial roles in permitting the dimension of 'sentiment' and 'reason' to be active in the public sphere. These dimensions do not only apply to the coverage of the Popular Press but also appear in political slogans. Emotional appeal is used on 'The Public' and has shaped a Chinese 'public sphere' rather than a rationalised 'Western' version. The causation comes from China's political system, in which the public have difficulty in negotiating with the state authority, and from the traditional Chinese culture, which prioritises 'sentiment' over 'reason' and legality.

Furthermore, the invisible rule is more significant in social interaction than the formal rule. The invisible rules have been used to legitimize violence and flagrant violations of the formal rules. At the same time, the invisible rules have become the true rules, and people or officials use the violation of formal rules to derive huge benefits, which has become a nationwide phenomenon. Therefore, the ordinary people and public officials also depend on the invisible rules to judge the public scandals. The invisible rules crucially affect what ordinary people think about the public services in their daily lives.

The discourse about corruption is a serious issue that is high on the agenda, of both the general public and in coverage by the media. Corruption is a very complex idea and issue in China, which encompasses both cultural and economic elements. However, it has impact on the individual, relationships and even public life. Therefore, corruption is on a large scale that ranges from the pseudo-legitimate, the economic, the official, the people, through to the traditional culture and political struggles that form the so called 'The Public' in everyday life.

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 4

The Popular Press and Its Audience in China

Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce the system and operational aspects of China's press, the reasons for the Popular Press' rapid growth in the newspapers market and the influences of the Popular Press on the general public and their opinions. The scale of China's press and the state-control policy is discussed. China has the biggest newspaper market in the world but most of newspapers are non-profit making and controlled by the state. Economic reform led to changes in the news market and the newspaper industry. Three approaches are reviewed to illustrate how scholars discuss the way in which China's newspapers function.

In the second section, focus is on the Popular Press and its operations. The Popular Press has become the leading papers by sales in newspaper groups due to their coverage and stories meeting the audience's interests. Profits made from advertising and the wide circulation also contribute to this success. So, the reportage strategy of popular newspapers often swings between state ideology and popular tastes. The popular newspapers use sensitive tactics to report hard news, the dissemination of which is completely controlled by the state's Central Propaganda Department.

In the final section, the audience research is discussed as this has become an important tool in the development of popular media. However, the majority of the Popular Press papers are only concerned with making profits for their newspaper groups. In other words, the audience are viewed as consumers rather than citizens. Nevertheless research indicates popular media provokes debates at the grass-root level of the general public.

China's Press System and Characteristics

The numbers of newspapers and their circulations have fluctuated greatly since 1949 (*Lull, 1991*). The fluctuations in newspaper publication can be charted in accord with variations in China's political and economic environment. The low points occurred during the anti-Rightist movement of 1957, the economic depression of the early nineteen sixties, and especially the Cultural Revolution. During these and other periods of social and economic stress, the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] asserts its authority much more forcefully; during the Cultural Revolution, the CCP controlled 84 percent of China's newspapers (*Lull, 1991: 18-19*). The greatest surge in the number of newspaper titles, circulation, and readership took place in the space of a few years following the economic reform of the mid-nineteen seventies. By 1986 nearly 2,200 newspapers (*Lull, 1991:19*), of far greater diversity than previously, were being published in China, and the combined circulations of the national and provincial press [The Party Press] number more than 200 million (*Lull, 1991:19*).

The Transformation of China's Press System

The state established 43 newspaper groups from 1996 to 2005 (*Hu, 2005*). Each newspaper group consisted of a combination of papers, the main varieties being Party Press papers and popular tabloid papers. The growth of the Popular Press and newspaper groups lead to many serious problems. Hu (2005), for example, contends that in some newspaper groups over half their papers were in debt. According to Tang (2005b), there are now 39 press groups and more than 2,000 newspapers in China's newspaper market. These 39 press groups publish 271 newspapers with aggregate circulations accounting for one-third of the press market in China. Each press group, on average, has seven kinds of newspapers, ranging from Party Papers, to evening papers, and specialist papers like financial, publishers, etc.

Since 1949, all media in China have depended on public money and served as Party organs. After the marketization of China's media system, the rapid growth of the Popular Press did not require any public money to support its financial needs; indeed the profits of the Popular Press have become an important financial resource to the newspaper groups. The development of the Popular Press has various forms such as city newspapers, evening newspapers, weekly editions or tabloids and so on. Their formats and agendas differ from the Popular Press or tabloids in the West but some of their characteristics can be used for a comparison and supplement the deficiencies of the public sphere in China.

In comparison with the content of the bourgeois public sphere, the tabloid press drives toward the other extreme of sensationalism, trivialities and the personal sphere. Since the sales of the tabloid press have given the Popular Press the leading position in the press groups, the Popular Press not only affects the general public but also awakens their latent opinions which have been often ignored. This Popular Press is welcomed by the general public as it reveals the serious social problems in the community. Whereas, the tabloid press is influencing the development of a new public sphere, in contrast to the Communist Party Press, it is not so much opposing the state directly as providing a gradually increasing threat to political authority. The most important political authority in the press context is the Central Propaganda Department, which controls the media system [Figure 3].

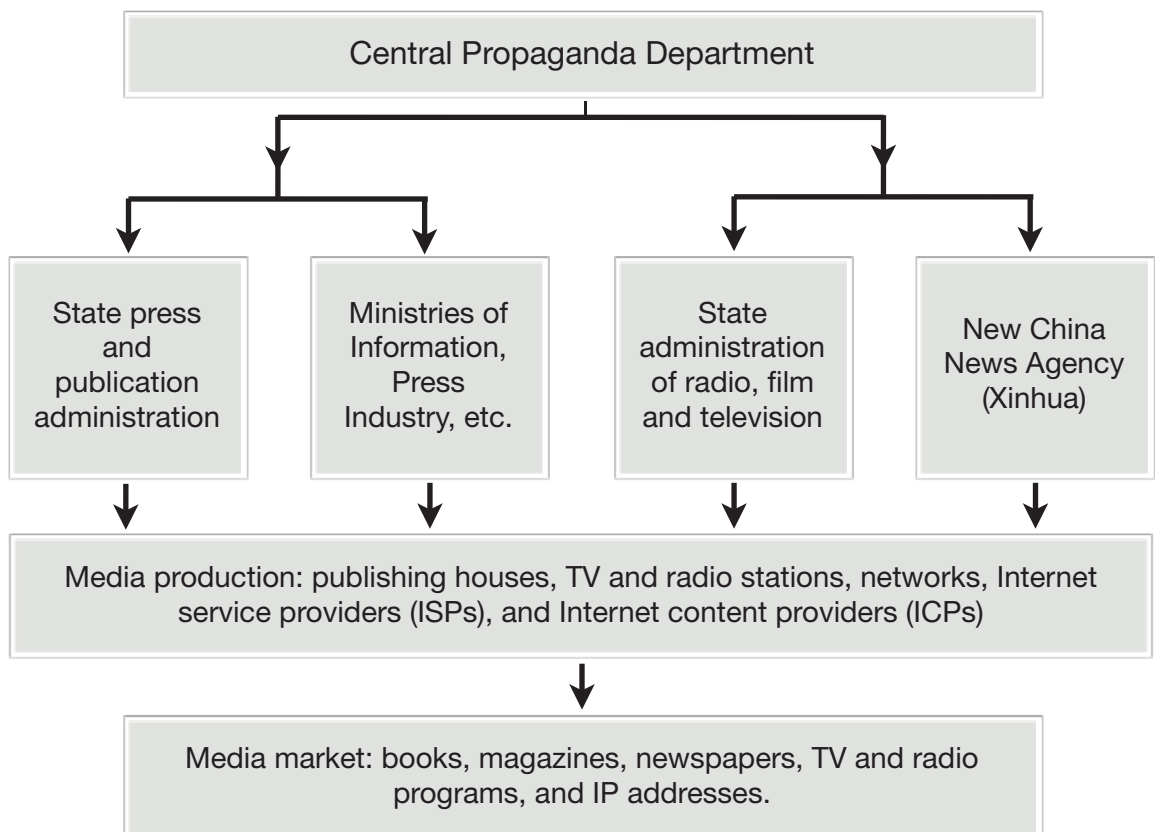


Figure 3: State control of media in China

The CCP has firm organizational control over the Chinese media system through the Party's Central Propaganda Department [CPD]. The Party's Political Bureau and its standing committee oversee the CPD, which is the principal coordinator of the media. The CPD's primary function is to mobilize public opinion behind Party policy and to promote the Party's legitimacy and its official ideologies, including Marxism and Nationalism.

Latham (2007) defines the different categories of newspapers in contemporary China. There are eight categories of publications to distinguish between Party organ newspapers and non-party organ newspapers [Table 3].

Categories	Aims	Newspapers
National newspapers	National distribution, but linked to national-level government or Party institution	<i>The People's Daily, The Guangming Daily, The Liberation Daily</i>
Specialised professional newspapers	Professionals, e.g. Engineers, lawyers, doctors, etc.	Legal newspapers, such as:- <i>Legal Evening, Yunnan Legal Daily</i>
Industry newspapers devoted to a particular sector of the economic production	Professionals and technicians in industries e.g.:- electronics, textiles, leather goods, forestry, fishing, etc.	
Evening newspapers	Soft news dealing with cultural and social issues aimed at urban readership.	<i>Beijing Evening News, Yangcheng Evening News</i>
Digest newspapers	Digests of translated foreign news stories that were once restricted viewing, i.e. available only to Party members of a certain rank.	Weekly editions or supplements, e.g. <i>Global Times</i>
Interest-group newspapers	Produced under the auspices of special-interest organisations such as the Communist Youth League or the Women's Federation.	Papers like the <i>Beijing Youth News</i> , have become nationally popular general readership newspapers
Lifestyle papers	Theme newspapers focusing on different lifestyle issues.	Television weekly, or for entertainment, music, sports, fashion, food and cookery etc.
Military papers	The services of the Armed Forces produce newspapers aimed at military personnel.	

Table 3 : Categories of Newspapers in Contemporary China

In addition, due to market-driven competition, newspapers' structures have undergone a major revolution. Market newspapers (i.e. the Popular Press) are developing very quickly, as opposed to the stagnation of the Party newspapers. Appealing to most audiences'

interests, these market newspapers choose the sensationalism of tabloid tales to make profits and place an emphasis on investigative journalism in contrast to the Party newspapers. Consequently, the circulations of the market newspapers have become leaders of the newspaper groups to which they belong. Different debates exist regarding these arguments.

Three Academic Approaches to China's Press Studies

According to the existing arena of China's press studies, these are divided into the political economic approach, the institutional approach, and history and documentary approach. These approaches are used to discuss the reality and operation of China's press system.

The first approach is the political economic perspective of Winfield and Peng (2005), Akhavan-Majid (2004), Chen (2000); and Chen and Guo (1998). They argue that the media reforms in the press groups permit huge profits to be gained from advertising and marketing. This approach uses economic statistics to analyze the unprecedented achievements of the new Popular Press and then examines how the press uses this advantage to continue their reforms. For example, Chen (2000) suggests China's press follows the principle of maximizing profits to promote further innovations in the system. The papers will print items infringing CCP ideology to test the Party line and the Party's response. However, Winfield and Peng (2005) point out that China's media system is moving from totalitarianism to market authoritarianism. They argue China's political system remains essentially intact and persists while the economic system has been changed. This inevitably results in a press system still shaped by an authoritarian system, yet enticed by a vigorous market economy. Winfield and Peng suggest the government has made adapted and diversified its control in a number of alternative ways including political and ideological control, economics, institutional, legal and administrative. Consequently, the idea of using Western theories and experiences to explain media reform in China is inherently difficult.

Sun (2006) and Zhao (1998, 2002) use the institution analysis approach. This approach argues these new, popular newspapers' information is terse but abundant and their agenda are more diverse than traditional Party newspapers. For instance, Zhao (1998) analyses newspapers for the market, in Beijing. Almost all the major national Party and government organs, including *People Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *Economic Daily*, and *Worker's Daily* and even *Beijing Daily*, are rarely available on the streets. These are official newspapers subscribed to with public money and for consumption in offices, classrooms, and factory workshops. By contrast the best sellers at the street vendors are *China*

Television News, the Evening papers, street tabloids, and weekend editions. Zhao illustrates the strategies of the 'street papers' in attracting readers. They write political and economic news from a personal angle and 'soften' hard news reports. The broad popularity of the evening newspapers can also be attributed to their attempts to address the concerns of city residents and to voice their complaints against bureaucracies, in particular the utilities organizations. Fundamentally, the popular papers do their utmost to appeal to most potential readers.

Huang (2001), Rosen (2000) and Zhao (2000) use the history and documentary analysis approach. On the one hand, the approach explains that while the market oriented papers have increased in popularity they have formally retained the authoritative voice of the ruling power (Huang, 2001). Huang also argues that all media reforms have seemed to reflect the Chinese authorities' intention to set up a 'one system two strategies' model to save the country's huge yet problematic Party and government organs of the press. That is, to save major Party and government propaganda oriented papers by establishing market oriented subsidiaries within them. On the other hand, the approach also explains how Party papers have adopted the characteristics of the Popular Press to survive. For example, Rosen (2000) analyzed the controversial reportage of the *Beijing Youth Daily* to demonstrate that the paper gained success by pursuing stories that had elicited wide public interests and raised important questions about the future role of the state's key institutions.

In summary, China's press system runs a 'one system two strategies' model. The Party Press depends on public organ's subscription and supplements and plays the main propaganda role and delivers governmental voices to the workplace. By contrast, the market press depends on street or retail sales. The main function of a popular paper is to devote more profits to its particular press group and should, therefore, make efforts to appeal to mass interests. Nevertheless a Popular Press newspaper within a press group with a Party organ is still controlled by government censorship. As Latham says:

'Chinese newspapers found themselves increasingly operating in the narrowly defined area between market forces on one hand and propaganda responsibilities to the Party on the other ... The bottom line from the point of view of the market was to sell more newspapers and to keep the readers satisfied so that they came back to buy another one the next day. From the point of view of government propaganda, however, the main concern was to tell people what the Party felt they needed to know, which was not necessarily the same as what the people themselves thought they wanted to know. [Therefore] 'newspapers face the dilemma of how to fulfill the expectations that the Party has of them while also keeping their readers happy.'

(Latham, 2007: 116)

The Growth of The Popular Press

The growth of the Popular Press is an undeniable trend in the market place and provokes the emergence of both the commercial and leisure cultures. In the context of media reform and the aims of Popular Press in China, The development and influences on China's media market is examined through two approaches; structure research and then text analysis.

Zhao (1998:127) explains that about one-third of newspapers in 1992 were totally dependent on commercial revenue. The other two-thirds still received government subsidies, which were generally rather small and growing smaller.

The Structure of The Popular Press

From the perspective of structure analysis, Wu (2000) explains that China's press is one head with many mouths, that is, decentralization, socialization and marketization. Wu says:

'[The] Chinese press is undergoing change from a nationally concentrated structure to a locally and ministerially fragmented structure; from a monolithic structure in which the party-state enjoyed the monopoly to a more pluralist structure involving both the state and social organizations; and from a structure in which the party organs dominated to one in which they must struggle to compete with the non-party-state media for survival.'

(Wu, 2000: 61)

That is, trivial, popular and marketing are the new formats of the Popular Press differing with the old official organs.

Moreover, Pan (2000) presented an account of how journalists improvise reform activities in news production. Pan's analysis shows that the social and institutional space opened up by the reform discourse remains limited and fragile. In this space, journalists must be able to link their activities to the official ideological principles. Whenever such linkage fails, journalists must be able to modify their practices and to justify their modifications. Improvisation thus represents a unique mode of interaction between individuals' actions and the institutional locale of these actions. Meanwhile, journalists' improvised activities also help deconstruct and reconstruct China's journalism institution.

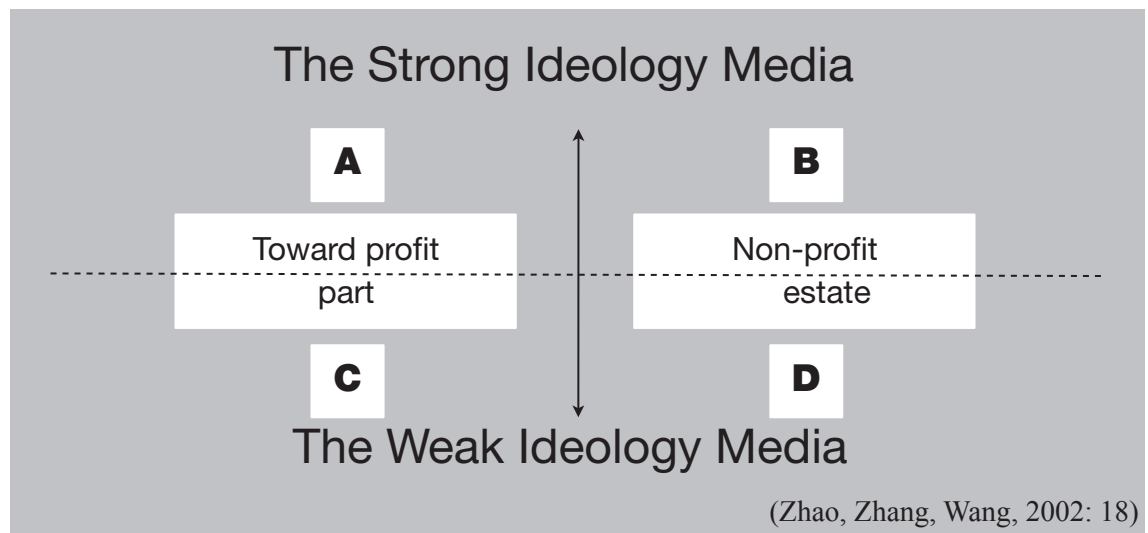


Figure 4: 'One System Two Strategies' System in One News Group

In the media's 'One system and Two strategies', the state completely dominates -'B'-media organs with strong ideology but which are not seeking to make a profit, such as the political or hard news coverage in Party organs. The state supports -'B'- wholly, while allowing other investors and channels to develop the other three types.

Party organs, which are strong on ideology but are moving towards profitability -'A'- produce soft news and entertainment programs.

Media, which are weak in ideology and are moving towards profitability, are the focus of the market economy -'C'- media such as the popular newspapers, street tabloids, and the weekly supplements.

The final quadrant of -'D'- media weak in ideology but not-making a profit is any coverage that does not have any influence on state ideology. This is principally, China's media run binary system.

China's newspaper spectrum is, in reality, extremely complicated since several newspaper groups are often distributing their products in the same city or province; an added complication is that their ownership is controlled by different public authorities and organs. Each paper in a newspaper group has a different mission, from public propaganda to public interests. According to state ideology and the rule of profits, there need to be different parts in one media enterprise as set out in *Figure 4*.

The Text of The Popular Press

From the perspective of the text analysis, Zhao (1998: 130) illustrates an example that *Qianjiang Evening News* published in Hangzhou. The paper gained reader popularity and received high evaluations in media circles for its policy of "encouraging the newspaper to participate in running the newspaper." The paper became an active originator in

community events, adding a new twist to the Leninist notion of the newspaper as a collective organiser and propagandist. The paper sought medical treatments for sick children, created voluntary service teams to restore public utilities following a major storm or invited public officials to hold office hours in the newsroom to solve problems for concerned citizens on the spot. The paper also asked readers to participate as amateur journalists by providing tips and writing stories. Readers could become a 'reporter for a day' and even plan story assignments.

The other example concerns the weekly editions. The rapid development of weekend of week editions did not begin until the early Nineteen Nineties with the rise of commercialism. Zhao (1998: 133-135) says especially of the major Party and government organs, the purpose of a weekend edition is not only to keep readers loyal to the main paper or to increase revenue but also to set up a pilot project for market oriented reform. The contents of the weekend editions are usually more interesting than their daily editions, with more critical and analytical pieces focusing on controversial social issues.

In short, the discourse of the Party Press cannot appeal to mass interests as much as the Popular Press. Moreover, a different social power has intervened since the Popular Press need to make profits. Zhao (1998) believes the flourishing of tabloids and weekend editions and their distribution through private networks poses a serious challenge to the political and moral codes of Party journalism.

Chinese Popular Press and Ideological Ambiguities

As the state authorities still remains fundamentally interventionist, the Popular Press often uses the indirect approach to meet the twin needs of ideology and the market. On the one hand, the Popular Press' development depends on the promotion of the state, while on the other, it conducts sensitive approaches to test the Party line and gain maximum profits in the market.

The State and The Popular Press

Zha (1995) uses a weekly paper, *Cultural Weekend*, to demonstrate how the tabloids are transforming culture. Zha (1995: 107) says

"in their pursuit of the average reader, many papers are testing the new boundaries the government has staked out. The average reader is apparently tired of '*hard news*'- the kind of stories found in the official print media that endlessly relate about Party congresses, production rates, and ideological education but remain silent about political oppression and abuses of power.

Once-dominant organs - such as *People Daily* and *Guangming Daily* – are still delivered to the offices of all state enterprises nationwide but few people look to them for interesting coverage of popular events. They cannot compete with the papers sold at the newsstands.”

Ideological Ambiguities in The Popular Press

Although the Popular Press is owned by the authority, the popular papers sometimes elect to cover some sensitive topics but use specific tactics to report these stories to appeal to more readers. The relevant news of corruption combined with popular thoughts is an example of the contradictory mindset.

Pei (2006) argues that corruption is now assuming forms normally associated with the decay of China’s regime. Corruption involving large numbers of officials used to be rare. According to regional data, large-scale corruption rings account for 30-60 percent of all the cases of graft uncovered by authorities. In some of the worst instances, entire provincial, municipal, and county governments were found to be tainted.

For example, in Heilongjiang Province, a corruption scandal involved more than 400 local officials, including the former governor, the former organizational chief of the Party’s provincial committee, a vice governor, the chief prosecutor, the president of the provincial high court, and eight of the province’s 13 party bosses. According to official reports, in Shenyang [the capital of Liaoning Province], Fuzhou (the capital of Fujian Province), and more than 30 other counties and prefectures, groups of senior local officials, including party chiefs and mayors, have been on the payroll of organized gangs involved in murder, extortion, gambling, and prostitution.

This type of ‘sensitive’ story, which in meeting the Party line is politically correct also appeal to the general public’s interests, is a favorite among the Popular Press and tabloids.

Levy (2002) analyses the coverage of corruption in popular media and argues the message on the significance of corruption is mixed. On the one hand, the broad and spectacular coverage, ranging from rather minor issues to cases involving more than 1 billion RMD, reinforces the significance of the issue and evokes powerful emotions about the subject. From the popularity of those lurid stories, people are prone to think the worst about the rich and powerful and to harbour intense emotions. However, according to Levy most discourse about corruption starts from the assumption that the system does not work and does not usually lead to a conclusion that the system can or should be fundamentally changed. When talking about corruption, Levy confers that most interviewees focused on

how ordinary people like themselves could survive within, and if possible benefit from, an inevitably corrupt system (Levy, 2002: 44-45).

Zhao (2002: 129) contends that the coverage of tabloids makes sense of the social world in a highly ideological way, in the sense that the meanings embodied in them serve to establish and sustain relations of domination. Though corrupt officials as individuals are condemned, the economically privileged as a social group are celebrated and their lifestyles are admired.

However, Zhao (2002: 131) thinks some street tabloid or Popular Press do reflect popular concerns and incorporate fragments of popular consciousness. That is, they contain a mixed and uneven bag of "residual," "dominant," and "emergent" forms of consciousness specific to the ideological landscape in post-socialist China (Zhao, 2002: 132-133).

Briefly, the popular press not only appeals to readers with sensitive coverage but also meets the political correctness of the Party line. Ironically, the treatment of corruption officials as celebrities encourages people not only to admire their lifestyle but also to desire the same opportunity and approach to be wealthy.

To Frame The Audience

While newspaper market is very complex it is also competitive in contemporary China. Despite the ideological control of the authorities, most newspapers depend on the state for financial needs. As the newspaper market is extremely competitive, newspapers need to be sold at the lowest price to appeal to their readers and some even send gifts to their customers to encourage good sales (Zhu, 2007). The competitiveness in the market has led to annual subscriptions declining to as little as 20 RMD, as in Kunming. Consequently, many newspaper groups have to seek other forms of income and pay less attention to the quality of their journalists' coverage.

Knowledge of target readership is essential for press management. Yu (2003) conducted a survey of newsstands and readers to discover which aspects and characteristics of newspapers and their readers are necessary for high levels of sales in Beijing. The five most important characteristics of the newsstand and the paper were: being at hand for daily use, and for the paper, efficiency, legibility, cost and the content reflected reality. According to Yu's survey, male readers of 30 to 39 years old are the main customers at newsstands. Blue collar workers form half of all customers at newsstands, while white

collars form about one-fourth. The main target readership of these newspapers is working class or lower middle class, the blue collars, who are the most active readers in Beijing.

However, Yu's research focuses on the audience's consumption behavior and scale rather than how popular media coverage has an impact on the audience. Tang's research (2005a) represents a different perspective on audience research in China in seeking an answer to the issue of does the commercialization of the Popular Press having an impact on public opinion?

In contrast, Tang (2005a) in a survey of media consumption discovered media plays an increasing role in promoting both political activism and efficacy from 1993 to 2000. The media served to promote political stability by discouraging open challenges to the regime and by encouraging intra-system participation. Tang (2005a: 191) concludes that China's authoritarian political system clearly has a significant role in manipulating public opinion and in curbing mass political behavior. However, popular dissatisfaction with the cost of market reform was growing in China as the world moved toward democratization (Tang 2005b: 192). Furthermore, voicing public opinion at the grassroots level was surprisingly common and the state in fact reduced its efforts to control public opinion and behavior at that level.

In summary, although the Popular Press has gained an advantage from the media reform, the newspaper market is too competitive for survival to the extent that some newspaper groups have accumulated sizeable debts. Coupled with this the target audience of the Popular Press has also changed from public officials to blue collar workers and lower middle class. Tang (2005a) argues that the Popular Press provokes debates at the grassroots level and reduces the control of the state.

Summary

Although representatives of the Party and the Popular Press exist in the same newspaper groups, their functions and aims are totally different and contrasting. The former is supported by the state and serves as propaganda for the state authorities in its role as an official organ, whereas the latter is financially independent and appeals to a mass audience.

The media's structural mode of China's newspapers relating to form, process and transformation have been discussed above. After commercialization and marketization of the media market, China's reform of journalism is rapidly changing towards multidimensional social change activities. Journalistic practices lead to the loosening of the tight hierarchy that existed in China's press system. Meanwhile, the rise of the popular market press has also helped to develop a new mediated public sphere, which differs from the public sphere that has been dominated by the Party newspapers in the past. The focus of the popular market press on private life's has been widely criticized for sensation, trivialization and tabloidization. However, they have overtaken the Party newspapers in circulation. The Popular Press meets public interests needs and uses resources from various levels of society not just direct funding from central government such as is the case of the Xinhua News Agency. Therefore, through these popular newspapers, the definition of a representative public is parallel to the transformation from political authority to common people.

Due to media and journalistic reform both the agenda and content of the public sphere is diverse and changeable. The most important aspect of the Popular Press is that it leans towards the general public rather than the public authority. The public agenda can, as a result of this reform, compete with the government agenda on equal terms.

Popular dissatisfaction with the cost of market reform was growing in China, as the world moved toward democratization. Although different arguments exist concerning the impact of the popular market press, both reactionary or liberal, the popularity of Popular Press provokes more public debates than the conservative coverage in the Party Press.

Media reform has created a platform for the Popular Press. The coverage is a mixture of trivial and moral news that is of interest to the mass audience of the general public which ensures that the Popular Press is financially independent of state support. The Popular Press has, consequently, become a new sphere for civic society at work, which also challenges the Party journalism in practice and coverage. The key coverage of corruption reveals how the Popular Press turns reflections of the general public's thoughts and common interests into high levels of sales. As a result, the Popular Press deconstructs the state's discourse and homogeneity. The Popular Press is an integration of news and popular culture also providing a negotiating site for multiple forces.

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 5

Research Methods

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explain the approaches used to examine the arguments and why they are meaningful and effective to this research. Overall, three main methods are employed; archival material, news analysis of several newspapers and focus groups of audiences. The archival materials provide the background information of this study such as previous research, China's media system and China's press organization. The main research methods are news analysis, focus groups and research of cultural analysis.

The main questions of the research are how the public sphere in China differs from the Western approach and whether the Popular Press can make a convincing public sphere in contemporary China. To fulfill these two main questions, the methods of using focus groups of the readership to answer the first question, and employing news analysis of several newspapers, that range from Party Press through to the Popular Press addresses the second question. For the focus group research two contrasting cities were selected: the capital city of China, Beijing, and a provincial capital in west China, Kunming. Beijing is a metropolitan city with a population of more than 15 million whereas Kunming has only 3 million residents. Although these two cities are different in size, the characteristics of the coverage of the Popular Press are quite similar.

The Qualitative Approach

Qualitative approaches to cultural examination include examination of texts, participant observation, case studies, life histories, oral history, and focus group, etc. Two main research methods are used being of the qualitative approach: news analysis and focus groups. News analysis is used to examine the different meanings of coverage in sensitive or hard news events and provides a more adequate approach than the quantitative approach of content analysis for examining different level of meanings in coverage. The interview of the focus groups exposes the subliminal thoughts of the general public and how news coverage has an impact on everyday life plus how the audiences re-explain the news, in particular regard to political and public affairs, outlining how it relates to their life condition.

The two approaches are combined to examine the arguments: what is the public sphere in contemporary China and whether there are differences between industrialized cities in the East and rural capitals in the West. As China is a huge country with a population of 1.33 billion⁷, The two different cities selected in which to do news analysis, audience surveys and make a comparison are Beijing and Kunming. Beijing is China's capital city and home to 15 million [of whom 12 million are 'registered' residents and 3 million are temporary residents]⁸. Kunming, is a regional capital of the predominantly rural south-western province of Yunnan, with an estimated population of 3 million.

News Analysis

There are several dimensions of news analysis. According to Van Dijk (1988), media discourses and news reports should be accounted for in their own right, as particular types of language use or text and as specific kinds of socio-cultural practice. Van Dijk (1988) uses a qualitative study to make a comparison with international coverage in different countries. He explains that qualitative analysis, based on the theory of news discourse structures and processing, provides a more adequate approach to the study of news than the classical content analysis.

To realize how the Popular Press shapes a new 'public' sphere in contemporary China, the framework of discourse analysis in structural analysis and contextual analysis is used. Van Dijk (1991) explains that discourse analysis specifically aims to show how the cognitive, social, historical, cultural, or political contexts of language use and communication

⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>

⁸ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-08/21/content_6035187.htm

impinge on the contents, meanings, structures, or strategies of text or dialogue. Van Dijk also suggests discourse analysis is an integral part of and contributes to the structures of these contexts. The idea of structural analysis is to make a distinction between different levels and dimensions of analysis (*Van Dijk, 1991: 45-46*). For instance, due to the use of different layouts and printing type, and different sentence structures and word choice, the style of a popular tabloid will differ from that of a quality newspaper, producing a different social-cultural context to reach the intended reading public. Contextual analysis is used to examine the actual process of decoding, interpretation, storage, and representation in memory, and in the role of previous knowledge and beliefs of the readers in this process of understanding (*Van Dijk, 1991: 47-48*).

Ideology analysis is also used to examine how the media serves the power holders and how the powerful or dominant class use news coverage for self-representation (and also for providing negative views of others) in public affairs. Ideology analysis is used for three news events in Kunming. The methodology of ideology (*Thompson, 1989*) includes social-historical analysis, formal or discursive analysis and interpretation or reinterpretation.

Focus Groups

To survey how the general public understand and decode sensitive news or headline news in everyday life, focus groups were held surveying their opinions and attitudes.

Morrison (1998: 155-156) defines the research method for focus groups:

"With the 'natural' situation it is designed to study or understand, and in many cases it is only with quite strong, even deliberately designed 'interference', such as raising arousal levels, that 'normal' states can be observed."

Morrison continues (1988:172)

"the focus group method is not participant observation, but the 'natural' use of language in the focus groups makes them a powerful tool for the examination of issues, and in particular the development of survey instruments ... the benefit of focus groups for the survey researcher is that not only is one in possession of data to assist triangulation, but that they provide the opportunity to understand how people address the world, and by extension, how they understand it."

Thus not only do focus groups allow the incorporation of 'natural language' into the survey instrument but they also allow insights into the social world in which the questionnaire is to be delivered.

In structuring the focus groups the aspects of China's transforming society are considered to select the distinctive characteristic of the groups; the work status of 'white collar' [professionals and administrative employees] and 'blue collar' [largely manual laborers]. The distinction between the two 'classes' is particularly pertinent since the economic reform has generated an increasingly serious poverty gap, which is the main cause for much of China's social conflicts. The reappearance of a wealth based class structure represents an uneven societal development.

Beyond Functionalism

Additionally to supplement the news analysis and focus group research methods, the approach of media anthropology is used to examine the media culture. The approach of media anthropology enables a complete engagement with the symbolic construction of reality and the fundamental importance of symbolic structures, myth, and ritual in everyday life, which Coman and Rothenbuhler explain:

'To the study of media, ethnology brings an attention to cultural difference, a commitment to close observation and recording the provision of 'thick' descriptive detail designed to reveal the contexts that give actions meanings to a community, reflexive engagement with the voices of one's host, and attention to the contiguity of what is being described to broader aspects of social process.'

(Coman & Rothenbuhler, 2005: 2)

In this research, the debates in the conceptual sphere are used to examine the concept of 'public' in Western democracies and China. The process of debate has several meanings and layers. The outer debates of 'The Public' in the Western democracies and China are based on different cultural context, but the internal debates in Chinese context include historical perspectives and political change. The changeable environment leads to 'The Public' representing a complex and ubiquitous social order in contemporary China. According to the literature analysis it also continually presents the debates of 'The Public' in different areas. The popular public in this study have managed to create space in which to have a dialogue with the official public in contemporary China.

The culture and political condition affect the cognition of the public. Therefore, the study also explores how 'The Public' presents a dynamic process of its own definition.

Research Design

The marketization of the Media in China has produced a differentiated press, which includes a sensational Popular Press. If we look at China, the official press resembles most closely the 'refeudalized' public sphere where only the powerful speak and justify their policies. The Popular Press, on the other hand, might have a more critical, public dimension. This research will investigate whether the Popular Press, with their stress on emotion and sensation, in fact constitute at least the beginnings of a Chinese public sphere analogous to the popular public spheres as identified by Western authors critical of Habermas.

The Hypotheses

Research questions were derived from the following hypotheses, which in turn follow from the above theoretical considerations:

1. China's Popular Press can shape a new and true 'public' by its emotional and sensational approach to communication with the general public.
2. The emotional and sensational public sphere in the Popular Press is more effective in provoking and reflecting public opinion and debates than the 'rational public sphere' of the Party Press.
3. In China, the abstract or moral and cultural dimensions of the Habermasian public sphere, to some extent, are considered to outweigh the rational legal systems, and are therefore considered to be more practical in many instances.

The contemporary situation of the press in China is characterized by a division between the Party Press and the Popular Press. These have quite different roles and purposes. We may represent the differences thus:

Party Press: propaganda role → legal system → rational discourse → to meet the authority's purpose

Popular Press: oriented-circulation → moral judgment → emotional → discourse → to meet the mass public interests

Any attempt to relate this press system to that described in the classical account of the public sphere, brings out distinctive differences. One of the arguments of the public in

the West is legality and the law system. Cultural, feminist media or postmodern studies provide alternative approaches to accessing 'The Public'. Nieminen (1996) has drawn an interesting comparison between Habermas and Williams' approaches. Nieminen pointed out, that for Habermas the key point is the inseparability of democracy and communication, whereas for Williams, historical development is characteristic of the evolution of a common culture. Furthermore, Habermas conceives of communication as the realm of the creation of meanings, but by contrast Williams thinks the creation of meanings takes place before the act of communication. Nieminen (1996) concluded these two different concepts into ideal models of journalism: 'editorial based' for Habermas, and 'source-based' for Williams. According to these debates, one of the characteristics of China's Popular Press is its ability to draw on a wider range of news resources than the Party Press. Although China's Popular Press is still an official organ, commercial imperatives are much more important for these newspapers than the dissemination of official propaganda. The different patterns of interpretation are illustrated in *Figure 6*.

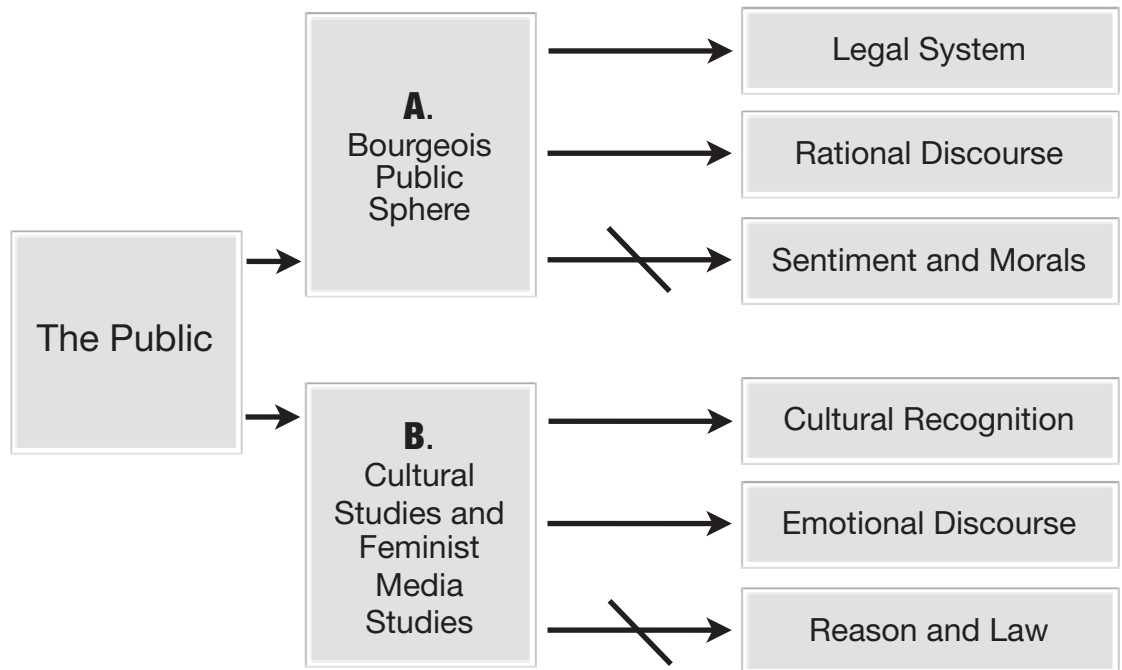


Figure 5: 'The Public' in Bourgeois Public Sphere and Cultural Studies in The West

The situation in China is totally different to the Western theory, as illustrated in *Figure 5*. The sentiment and emotion of the Popular Press are specifically suited to the reality of China's society. On the one hand, the tactics of the Popular Press can use a circuitous method to report sensitive issues, rather than offering direct criticism, which may lead to jail sentences for reporters or editors. On the other hand, this content is also in line with the moral and emotional perspectives of the general public. The Popular Press, rather than Party newspapers are viewed by members of 'The Public' as representing the views of the public in China.

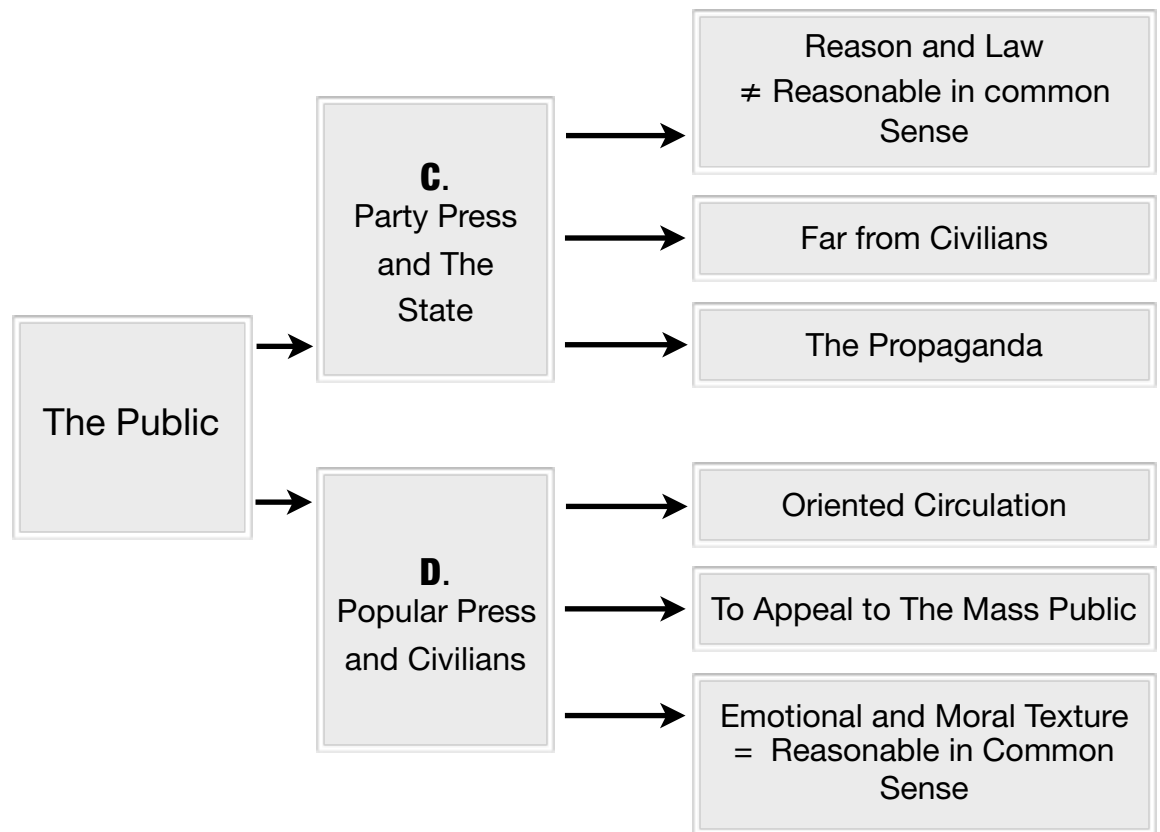


Figure 6: 'The Public' in The Party Press and The Popular Press in Chinese Society

Research Questions

Following from these hypotheses, three sets of research questions have been designed to rationalise the following concerns:

Set A

- What is 'The Public' in China?
- What is the thinking or idea of legality system and the authority of reason in Chinese history and traditional culture?
- What are the different approaches of reason between China and Western societies?

Set B

- What are the differences between the Popular Press and the Party Press when reporting on the same issues?
- What is the texture of popular journalism in the Popular Press?
- How do the ordinary people think about the news coverage in the Popular Press?
- Does the news coverage in the Popular Press provoke public debates?

Set C

- Does the coverage of the Popular Press shape an emancipation of democracy and reflect 'The Public'? (Does this coverage lead to an emancipation of democracy as well as reflect the public?)
- Can the news coverage in the Popular Press make a public sphere for the ordinary people?

The Fieldwork Design

There are two aspects to demonstrate the hypotheses. One is text analysis; the other is audience's dialogue. In order to explain and discuss the differences, this research selects limited number of news events from newspapers in Beijing and Kunming that people view as being sensitive news.

In other words, if we examine the texts, we could see that Popular Press cover different stories and cover them in different ways. Hence, according to the above hypotheses, this research is conducted using some breaking news or controversial news events to highlight the different ways between the party newspapers and popular newspapers such as land levy, traffic accident, corruption, mine disaster or earthquake and so on. Through this comparison, it shows the spectrum of newspapers in China with different news resources, discourse, report timing, and genre.

Furthermore, if we talk to the people in Beijing and Kunming, we find that they use these press stories to reflect upon the nature of society and matters of public interest, although these reflections do not correspond to the rational critical approach that Habermas says characterizes the bourgeois public sphere. In other words, people have used this to reflect these news stories with the ideas of invisible rule, sentimental thinking, or order without law. However, these dialogues also reflect public interests and present the different ways between party newspapers and popular newspapers. That is, party newspapers' public sphere is closer to the authorities and popular newspapers' public sphere is appealing to people.

Besides, Beijing is the Metropolitan Capital of China. It is the significant symbol in looking for the differences of the news coverage between the Party Papers and Popular Papers. However, Kunming although it is a small regional capital in a remote area, its populace and educational demography are more similar to most common cities in China. Therefore, these two places could represent the requirements of this research's targets.

Rethinking Class and Popular Press Audiences in China

Where does class consciousness come from? How does class analysis still remain a significant point of the study of popular media as opposed to discourses reflecting gender, ethnicity or race in China's society? According to Weberian class analysis, classes are always a matter of power claims, with its relative control in reality being constantly in tension with other power claims. The study of class formation helps to illuminate the continuity and changes of such power claims. Thus, the focus of this section will demonstrate how the marketing capital affects the reading experiences of the Popular Press audiences in the transformation of China's society. That is, through media consumption, the voicing of class particularly at grassroots level has become the cost of media marketization in contemporary China.

Max Weber treated stratification as a phenomenon closely linked to the distribution of, and struggle for, power. Weber distinguished three types of social formation relevant to the study of stratification: class, status groups and parties (*Littlejohn, 1972*). In Weber's arguments, 'classes' appear in the context of market situations and the basic categories are property holders and non-property holders and may also be distinguished by source or amount of income. By contrast, status groups belong to the sphere of social honor and are distinguished first by varying degrees of prestige. A status group is a number of people for whom some life chances are determined by the social honor accorded them. Weber contends a party has an explicit programme and a staff of officials to ensure continuous implementation of the programme, whereas 'classes' and 'status groups' have neither.

Weber's definitions of social formations are designed to delineate the situation of individuals rather than to construct elements of a model of a total society. Weber defines class and status situations:

We may speak of class when

- 1) a number of people have in common a specific casual component of their life chances, in so far as
- 2) the component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and
- 3) it is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour markets.

(Weber, 1948: 181)

A simplified statement of Weber's contribution to the study of stratification is that he showed that it manifests itself in three main dimensions, class, status and power, with the strata in these dimensions in a given society needing not necessarily to coincide.

The focus groups are divided into white collar and blue collar classes in the field work, as particularly, after the Cultural Revolution there is now a clear social stratification in contemporary China,. The different discussions of class between Marx and Weber (*Giddens, 1973*) are that Weber, differs from Marxian theory due to him viewing the 'political' as being secondary and a derivate. Marx greatly exaggerates the significance of economic relationships within the infrastructure of social organization. This was due to it failing to recognize the historical part played by status affiliations, that were created as bases of group formation through processes which were not directly dependent upon the class relationship. Marx claims the state provides a cohering framework for the class structure inherent in the capitalist mode of production. Marx points out:

The state is the instrument of class domination, and hence the most of its organizational characteristics are contingent upon the capitalist system of class relationships, and the state is a coordinating agency which is responsible for the overall administrative operations of the society within which a relationship of class domination pertains in the 'separated' economic sphere.

(Marx cited in Giddens 1973: 51)

By contrast, the idea of class and strata have a unique meaning in China. For example, class is a political issue relating to the differences of one's political position and attitude even involving the political struggle (*Li, 2006*). The term, stratum, is more like the differences in economy rather than in politics. After the economic reform, strata have become the sign of economic differences or gaps in society. In other words, class is based on the Party or the state's decision but the stratum is the most important issue in contemporary China. In Li's survey, people respond to issues of the class more carefully than to questions on strata. Li also says people are angered by those who get economic benefits by either a particular right or personal networks.

Lu and his colleagues (*2004*) conducted a survey to analyze the social mobility in contemporary China. Two important time periods were chosen to analyze the change of China's social stratus. One is 1949 when the Communist party became the ruling party in China; the other is 1978, when the 11th National Congress announced a reform policy in economics.

In 1949, class was defined by politics, family and occupation. The main function of the class label (*Lee C. K., 2006*) is to provoke political movement, to define one's life condition, and social position. This system is designed, operated and supported by the state authorities, or different administration departments. The system was called 'the struggle of class'. At the end of nineteen seventies, while the state announced to cessation of 'the struggle of class', ironically, commercial interests and private class society were elements of the official discourse of class. Lee (*2006*) thinks, 'bring class back in' is a very important issue in the transformation of the working class in a pre-capitalist country. Before 1978,

there was no clear relationship or difference between occupation and social economic position in China. When industrial growth rapidly occurred, the gaps and differences in social economic positions became serious and led to many conflicts in contemporary China's society (Li and Chen, 2004).

After 1978, Li and Chen (2004) analyzed social stratification during the development of marketization, at which time the managers gained the authoritative, dominant positions in large commercial institutions and government organizations. They controlled the resources and enforced their power which made the poverty gap more serious.

A survey of the social stratification divides contemporary China into ten strata, those are:

The managers of the bureaucratic state	2 . 1 %
Managers	1 . 6 %
The owner of private enterprise	1 . 0 %
The specialist	4 . 6 %
General staff	7 . 2 %
Personal business	7 . 1 %
The commercial service	1 1 . 2 %
Industry workers	1 7 . 5 %
Agricultural workers or farmers	4 2 . 9 %
Laid-off workers, unemployed people	4 . 8 %

(Lu, 2004: 13)

Table 4: Ten Social Strata in Contemporary China

More than 70% China's population is low income, manual workers or no income unemployed people [Table 4]. Sun (2003) uses the term 'cleavage' to discuss the serious problem in Chinese Society since the Nineteen Nineties. Indeed, the sharp cleavage between the rich and the poor has a serious impact on contemporary China causing large numbers of people to be laid-off or unemployed, leading to inequality in the development between the urban and rural areas.

Sun (2006) points out that three problems led to the gap between the rich and the poor. Most wealth flows to individual by illegal methods. These illegal methods rapidly resulted in most of the national wealth being controlled by a tiny percentage of the populace. Tax policies cannot adjust this problem and indeed sometimes makes the situation worse.

At the moment, the biggest and most important resources are still controlled by the state authorities. Individuals who have close links to state organizations can get executive positions through which they can control the redistribution of property or resources. The powerful elite group has an impact on the process of prioritizing public policies including the interests of large private commercial enterprises and monopolistic departments in government. The way this elite group operates is through networking and corruption.

Sun (2004: 119-125) further explains the characteristics of the new social order is based on power and injustice. The outcome of the new social order is the collapse of trust in contemporary China's society. For example, in the past, the basis of Chinese was trust with familiar friends but nowadays due to the egoism inherent in capitalist systems, familiar friends have become potentially the most dangerous people through cheating or backstabbing. People therefore conclude that other than themselves there is no one to trust. The trust crisis also leads to a chaos condition in Chinese society. For instance, the powerful class can easily tease or bully powerless people in this 'no justice' and 'no rule' society. Since basic trust and rule are absent, people cannot use the idea of market competition to reach their aims. The only way is to fight their competitors with violence. As a result, bullying, violence and monopoly shape the characteristics of contemporary Chinese society. Public officers of local government behave like 'gangsters' making many administrative rules about punishments to enforce their power but also making profits from these. Due to this the credibility of the state authorities fully disappears and trust in authority collapses.

Murdock (2000) in addressing the significance of class analysis, argues that the rapid rise of marketization and liberalization in China, India and Southeast Asia has led to a notable expansion in both business ownership and in occupations linked to the management and servicing of commercial enterprise. This emerging stratum is often called the 'new' middle class or the 'new' rich to distinguish it from the traditional middle class composed of independent professionals and state bureaucrats. However, the expanded middle classes are the pioneers of the new consumer system, and in market societies class analysis remains central to understanding contemporary change.

In summary, after the initial economic reform social stratification has solidified in China. the lines of the stratification have become blurred. Since the Popular Press has a higher position, compared to the Party Press, in the media market, laid-off workers, immigrant workers and workers in private enterprises have become the main consumers

at the street newsstands. Although the Popular Press permits the audience to dream of better standards of living; the audience also discovers that any relation in the news coverage to their everyday experiences is nonexistence or absence. The true meaning of reading experiences for audiences is not what they read but what they do not read. Market forces transformed China's media from being the mouthpiece of the state authorities to that of speaking out for the needs of the general public. Therefore, the coverage of the Popular Press not only defines the struggle of the classes with different discourses but also the societal action against the powerful elite.

Reflection On The Research Process

The Research Process

This research beginning in 2005, first made a pilot research study based on a piece of dramatic news, 'the Dingzhou event', in Hebei, China⁹. The incident happened in mid 2005 and lasted until the end of the year. To investigate this event, the first step of the research was to start with text analysis of the Dingzhou event that featured in ten newspapers collected from Party Press, Popular Press, and evening press. The analysis shows how a political dominant power impacts on a young, progressive tabloid, the *Beijing News*. This event not only reflects the political power flowing through different media but also presents the very competitive and fast growing media market in Beijing. As a result, the new and young Popular Press tried to test the boundaries of truth and party line to provoke public debates and establish its credibility to the mass audience of the general public.

My research concern is how 'The Public' is identified in China's society or the distinction between the bureaucratic state and the civilians. Hence, eight focus groups of readers were organised to investigate their opinions on political coverage or public events. To start with, I read the Popular Press of Beijing and Kunming and selected some headline news for discussion within the focus groups. Focus groups were organized in these two cities, consisting of two groups of white collar participants and two of blue collar workers [in each city], making sixty participants in total [thirty-three readers in Beijing and twenty-seven readers in Kunming]. Each focus group with six to nine people lasted one and half hours on average.

⁹ See Glossary Dingzhou

Later, dozens of news events were collected to select meaningful examples from which to make comparisons and examine how the dominant political power acts. Those events included acts of corruption, disasters, riots, etc. The coverage of these events was then discussed within the focus groups. My perception was that the manner in which the participants responded to these sensitive or public affairs revealed the attitude or their thinking relating to the imagination of 'The Public.'

To be a Researcher: My Position

The challenge starting my research was in approaching an unfamiliar society with questions. The questions have three different levels of meaning:

The first is the issue of my social context with this study. As my research employs a qualitative and critical approach, my first step was to immerse myself in the social context. The position of a researcher is a critical point as I needed to maintain a neutral position. Although China and Taiwan share the same language and traditional culture, their social context and political environments are at extreme opposite ends. The superior aspect to my research was the lack a language barrier, which would have otherwise restricted my research. There is however a contradiction in speaking the language of the research audience. Whereas the researcher can benefit from 'local' social connections and networking, immersion into society may produce a biased viewpoint. Furthermore, while the social context gives a researcher either or both meta-knowledge and meta-structure; immersion in the social context may restrict the thinking of a researcher. Sensitive news events are a restricted area in contemporary China. The ability to promote both self-censorship and the limit of meta-knowledge are superior qualities I bring to this research.

A second challenge was how to identify my research questions. The central research question is what is 'The Public' in China? However, is it a real question? How is it possible to have a dialogue between Western theory and the Chinese context? In the Chinese context, will the dialogue have a meaningful result to forward the discussion of 'The Public' in academia? In Chinese traditional culture, there has been a lengthy discussion of 'The Public' but it is limited to the moral dimension in ancient Chinese history. The problem is not a 'contemporary' question in China's society. The coverage of the Popular Papers was used to examine 'The Public' in China, from which the space to conduct a dialogue with 'The Public' research in the West was created.

The third challenge was to bring my 'natural attitude' into the field in China. Having set up my research questions they were temporarily put away, and my 'natural attitude' taken to the field studies in Beijing and Kunming. I stayed with people who represented

my target audience that were members of the general public. Their daily life with friends, and their relatives was experienced. I was immersed in their general daily life as much as was possible. In due course meaningful news events chosen from dozens of possible news events were collected to conduct a comparison between the different newspapers. Initially dozens of news events were thought to be wanted to conduct the comparison but only four were found in Beijing and three in Kunming that were useful for such comparisons.

To be a researcher, during the course of this thesis, starting from the hypotheses, research structure, design, field work through to the analysis of data and results, my central concern was to maintain a reflective attitude towards my research and to its contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 6

News Coverage by Beijing Press

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to compare the coverage of the same news event by Beijing's Party and Popular newspapers. Four news events were chosen which happened between 2005 and 2007 in order to examine differences in genre and news resources of the coverage. The genre were categorized as straight news, on-the-spot news, investigative, news analysis, direct review, relevant review and picture. The news resources were categorized as the general public, officials, law courts, government or experts and the Xinhua News agency.

Significant news events in China are invariably linked to the impact of economic development of the country on the maximising of profits and social welfare. The four chosen events were:

- (i) land acquisition for economic development, the Dinghzou Incident (2005);
- (ii) land acquisition for redevelopment in Chongqing (2007);
- (iii) the collapse of a tunnel of Beijing subway line 10 (2007) and
- (iv) mine disasters in Shanxi (2006).

The only event to occur in Beijing was the collapse of a subway tunnel. The land acquisition in Chongqing gained nationwide attention as the story of the 'hardest nail house' unlike the Dinghzou Incident and the mine disasters, which for political and commercial reasons gained only sporadic media coverage. These four cases present a variety of complicated conditions for coverage which result in a clear line being defined between the Party Press and the Popular Press.

For the coverage comparison ten newspapers were chosen [Table 5].

	China Communist Party	Central Propaganda Department	Beijing Government	Beijing Communist Party	Central Ministry of Justice	Communist Youth League
PARTY PRESS						
People's Daily	X					
Guangming Daily		X				
Beijing Daily			X			
China Youth Daily ¹						X
Legal Daily ²					X	
POPULAR PRESS						
Beijing Times	X					
Beijing News ³		X				
Beijing Evening			X			
Beijing Youth Daily ⁴				X		
Legal Evening				X		

1 - Publishes a weekly edition of an 'experimental' title for critical articles called 'The Freezing Point'.

2 - Nationwide public organ.

3 - The most rapid developing popular newspaper in Beijing.

4 - The first of China's newspapers to be quoted on Hong Kong Stock Exchange in 2004.

Table 5: Ownership of Beijing Newspapers Selected for Coverage Comparison

Five newspapers belong to the category of the Party Press, in that as China Communist Party [CCP] organs they represent official mainstream media. The other five newspapers belong to the category of the Popular Press as they either appeal to mass audiences or fringe audiences. These papers were also chosen because they represent the mix of party and Popular Press titles, which is characteristic of China's Press Groups and for added interest two popular papers belonging to the same group.

An important characteristic in the selection process was to avoid titles focusing on specific topics and over specialization. The legal papers, while normally focusing entirely on legal matters and interpretations of the law, are included because their coverage gave the general details of the case studies. However, *China Economic Times* which did conduct its

own investigations and provided expert opinion on the Dinghzou Incident is excluded from the analysis because the content is a specialist publication focusing on economic coverage.

In the analysis of the coverage, the ownership relationships between the 'mother' Party Press papers and the 'daughter' Popular Press papers is crucial [see Table 5]. The 'mother' papers of the *Beijing Times* and the *Beijing News* are the *People's Daily* and the *Guangming Daily*, respectively. Both 'mother' papers are CCP central organs (i.e. official Party Press papers). The parentage of the *Beijing News* is more complex than a simple 'mother-daughter' relationship for two reasons. First, *Beijing News* is the result of a joint corporate strategy by the *Guangming Daily* and the South Press Group to create a market-driven title (which subsequently experienced the most rapid sales development of all Beijing's papers). Secondly, *Guangming Daily* is owned by the CCP's Central Propaganda Department.

The other three Popular Press titles the *Beijing Evening*, the *Beijing Youth Daily* and the *Legal Evening* are owned by Beijing government and official institutions.

Although the media market in Beijing is highly competitive, political interference is frequent in sensitive news. The primary aim of the comparative exercise was to examine the degree to which ownership, politics and economics restricted coverage. The secondary aim was to assess whether the Popular Press used more resources than the Party Press in news acquisition and coverage. The final aim, which appears in the concluding section of this chapter, concerns whether there exists in China's Party and Popular Press any patterns of reporting genres and resources.

Social Unrest – Dingzhou Incident 11 June 2005

Coverage of the sensitive news of the Dingzhou Incident had the most serious outcome as it caused the journalistic staff of a Popular Press paper, the *Beijing News*, to walk out in protest at the oppressive response from the authorities. This case study shows how the Popular Press use tabloid tactics, such as individuality, emotion and dramatic pictures to report hard and sensitive news in a manner appealing to the general public rather than conduct critical or rational discourse and analysis of the event. This is a strategy, which is inherently provocative to the Chinese authorities as the coverage and pictures of the *Beijing News* focused on the authorities' use of intimidation and violence of civilians and farmers to achieve economic development. The case study also provides evidence that the process of economic change is preceding the end of communist political control, particularly in the mass media (*Sparks, 1998*). The Popular Press occasionally tests the CCP's party line as it seeks to gain more freedom of coverage not only to become the voice of the general public, reflecting opinion and demands for social justice but also to increase the Popular Press' commercial benefits. The case study also shows that the Party Press, such as the *People's Daily*, in facing the same tug-of-war between ideology and profits (*Liu, 1998*) have become more progressive in the competitive media market. Nevertheless the Party Press continues to play a conservative and propaganda role while sensitive news events happen in an environment where the priorities of politics and social issues have unequal weighting.

The Event

Central government, in line with the national policy of economic development, planned to build a power station in Hebei province. The villagers of Dingzhou believed the compensation payments for the land acquisition process were too low. The villagers protested to the local authorities and also conducted a mass protest over a number of days at the site where the plant was to be built. On the morning of 11th June, 2005, the villagers were attacked by 200-300 masked and armed vigilantes who were intent on removing them from the site of the planned power station. Six villagers died and dozens were injured.

The *Beijing News* broke the news with dramatic photographs [Figures 7a and 7b] on the 13th of June. Six months later, the local officials were sentenced and the construction of the electronics factory was suspended. In the meantime, the CCP's Central Propaganda Department removed the editor-in-chief and two other senior editors from their posts at the *Beijing News* which resulted in several hundred of the paper's journalists walking out in protest [for further details see the Introduction].



Figure 7a: Vigilantes weapons



Figure 7b: The Dingzhou Incident in progress

Figures 7a and 7b: Beijing News Photographs of Dingzhou Incident, Published 13th June 2005

The Beijing newspapers employed a variety of genre for coverage and resources to report the Dingzhou Incident [Table 6]. The analysis of the press reports of the Incident cover the period, 13th June to 17th November, from the day the *Beijing News* broke the news to the day after the local public officials of Hebei province and the vigilantes were sentenced by the court.

	PARTY PRESS					POPULAR PRESS				
Press Group ¹	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	F	F
Newspaper	People's Daily	Guangming Daily	Beijing Daily	China Youth Daily	Legal Daily	Beijing Times	Beijing News	Beijing Evening	Beijing Youth Daily	Legal Evening
13/06/2005							A16: (i) Spot coverage + 2 pictures (ii) spot news			
14/06/2005		Relevant review					A22: Spot news + 2 pictures			
15/06/2005							A21: Investigate news			
16/06/2005							A22: Investigate news			
17/06/2005					Spot coverage		A22: spot news			
19/06/2005							A12: Xinhua News		Review, Xinhua News	
20/06/2005	Xinhua News									
21/06/2005					News Analysis					
10/07/2005				Review Xinhua News	Xinhua News		A11: Xinhua News		Xinhua News	
21/07/2005					Xinhua News		A25: Xinhua News		Xinhua News	
16/12/2005				Courts			A1: Headline picture A24: Xinhua News			A26: Courts + 1 picture
17/12/2005	Legal News									

1- matching letters denote ownership by the same press group

Table 6: Beijing Newspaper Coverage, 13 June to 17 December 2005, of The Dingzhou Incident

The Popular Press Coverage

Beijing News broke the news of the Dingzhou Incident with exclusive coverage on the 13th of June and during the first four days was the only one to report the event. On the same date, *Beijing News'* journalists interviewed the injured villagers who also provided the photographs which the paper published.

During these interviews it transpired that an earlier assault had occurred on 20th of April, conducted by 20 vigilantes, one of whom the villagers had captured and imprisoned in a cave.

On the 14th June, the *Beijing News* reported that the Mayor and Party Secretary of Dingzhou had been removed from office, and a new Mayor had visited the injured villagers in the hospital. The Dingzhou villagers refused police requests to evacuate their farmland until they had received reasonable compensation. They also refused to hand over their hostage to the police. *Beijing News* reported the villagers realized this behavior was improper, but stressed the villagers did not have any choice and had treated the hostage well, giving him rice and meat at every meal. Once the *Beijing News* had reported the incident, the Local Public Officials determined to settle the issue quickly.

On June 15th, the new Local Party Secretary visited the injured villagers. He said he was willing to help them and also thanked the *Beijing News* for maintaining its daily coverage.

On June 16th, the Government sent coroners to Dingzhou. The Government promised to help villagers with the wheat harvest and also with financial aid. The Government's response inferred that because of the coverage by the *Beijing News*, all the villagers' requests had been fulfilled.

During these four days of coverage, there was not one instance of a critical review of the incident, nor of the causes. The only critical coverage was the views of the villagers who were interviewed in the on-the-spot interviews.

Xinhua released the official news story eight days after the incident occurred, on the 19th of June. After this release, the *Beijing News* published the official reports until the end of the story in November.

With the exception of the *Beijing News*, the Popular Press either avoided the event altogether (*Beijing Times*, *Beijing Evening*) or waited until Xinhua released the official story (*Beijing Youth Daily*, *Legal Evening*).

The coverage by the *Beijing Youth Daily*, which has been hailed as a market success (Rosen, 2000; Zhao, 1998) is interesting. The paper has introduced a series of management reforms since the early Nineteen Eighties and since 1992 has produced a successful entertainment-oriented weekend edition. The paper is proud of its news values and news selection which are different from those of Party newspapers. Despite this street sales accounting for half of its circulation. So, while the paper is capable of competing with the other Popular Press titles with sensational headlines and story appeal, in the instance of the Dingzhou Incident, the *Beijing Youth Daily* relied on Xinhua as a news resource and was as conservative as the other official papers. The *Legal Evening* published a press release from the court the day after the sentences were made which may only have been due to *Legal Evening* being in the same press group as the *Beijing Youth Daily*.

The Party Press Coverage

Of the five Party Press papers in the sample, the *Beijing Daily* alone did not provide any coverage of the Dingzhou Incident (for which reason the 'daughter' paper the *Beijing Evening* did not provide any) and is consequently omitted from the comparative analysis. The other four kept their coverage to a minimum.

Guangming Daily and People's Daily

Guangming Daily is the *Beijing News'* mother paper. However, during the course of the coverage of the event, *Guangming Daily* did not once provide any direct coverage. The paper's sole offering, on the second day of the *Beijing News'* coverage was a discussion between experts and academic professors on the need to find a balance between economic development and farmers' properties. *Guangming Daily* presents itself as an intellectual paper, so its coverage is based on intellectuals' and experts' opinions. The report of the discussion is close to a relevant review but is sufficiently removed from what happened at Dingzhou to be obscure. However, *Guangming Daily* is also the property of the CCP's Central Propaganda Department which would not permit their mouthpiece to report on a story with such negative connotations for the CCP's management of economic development and society.

Likewise the *People's Daily* is the main organ of the CCP and serves as the national representative of the government. The two occasions that the paper provides coverage, the resources are official: Xinhua and the law court. The paper makes no attempt to write a review or conduct interview of opinions. The *People's Daily's* coverage is straight, hard and formal.

Legal Daily

Legal Daily was the only Party Press reporting this event before Xinhua news agency released the official news. The *Legal Daily* is good at judiciary news and often discusses legal precedents. It was the third paper to report the news and did conduct some interviews in the village though the amount of its coverage is far less than the first two newspapers. However, *Legal Daily* focused on the problems that occur when the government expropriates land for economic development.

China Youth Daily

China Youth Daily published a review, based on news from Xinhua, and an article on the press release from the local court in Dingzhou. Its format of coverage is Party organ press. However, this newspaper group has its own website, which reports more critical and sensational news than those in the paper edition. In the electronic database, there is coverage citing other papers' reporting on the Dingzhou Incident, such as the *Beijing News*, and the *Hong Kong Sun Daily*. The coverage is more critical but only shown on the website.

People's Daily and The Beijing News

People's Daily and *The Beijing News* are at the opposite ends of the spectrum in journalism. The former is the epitome of the formal Party Press, while the latter is the epitome of the Popular Press, a genuine city tabloid. The *People's Daily's* coverage merely gave an account of the event and the timing of its coverage was even later than that of the other Party Press newspapers. The *People's Daily* waited for Central government to make a decision on allowing the news to be published and then for Xinhua to release the official version of the story on the 18th of June, before publishing its first coverage on the 20th of June. Once Xinhua had released the official version all the papers, Party and Popular, published Xinhua's version.

The *People's Daily* emphasized how the government paid a lot of attention to the Dingzhou Incident and was efficiently dealing with the problems. The coverage did not include any opinions from the general public, any pictures, reviews or on-the-spot coverage. By contrast, the *Beijing News* used a lot of first-hand material and interviews to account for the causes and process of the Incident. Only after Xinhua released the official version did the *Beijing News* cease employing first-hand material.

Private Property in Land Acquisition

-“The Hardest Nail House in China”

This news event began in 2004 but it was not until the dramatic picture [Figure 8a] was widely circulated on the Internet that South Metropolitan press group in 2007 published the news story. The story, as other newspapers followed South Metropolitan's lead, rapidly gained nationwide attention and became front page news in the Popular Press. The coverage of the Popular Press was competitive and reflected both popular opinion and demands. By contrast, the more conservative Party Press provided little coverage of this high profile issue.

A comparison of the level of coverage between the Party Press and the Popular Press shows a clear and significant line between them. The only Party Press newspaper to approach the level of the Popular Press' coverage was the *China Youth Daily*. This paper deliberately used its weekly supplementary, the *Freezing Point*, as a platform to report this event fairly comprehensively over a period of five days. But *China Youth Daily* only began its coverage 6-10 days after the Popular Press in Beijing had begun their coverage. *China Youth Daily*, seems to have taken the role, which the *Legal Daily* took in the Dingzhou Incident as the sole representative of the Party Press being active in providing coverage. A key difference in the 'Nail House' coverage compared to the Dingzhou Incident is that Xinhua news did not at any time take precedence, indeed there was no political interference in the coverage.

The coverage of this event shows not only the high degree of competition in Beijing's media market [in the context of the Popular Press], but also the power of commercial media to appeal to the mass audience, through emotive and sensitive strategies, when there is no political interference [see Table 7]. The tabloids of the Popular Press also paid attention to the mass audience by providing daily updates of the fight the owners were having with both the land developer and the local public officials. Initially the owners were anonymous until the general public, through the efforts of the Popular Press, began to view them as heroes. Once the 'heroic' images were accomplished the owners were named: Yang Wu and Wu Ping [see Figure 8b]

	PARTY PRESS					POPULAR PRESS				
Press Group ¹	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	F	F
Newspaper	People's Daily	Guangming Daily	Beijing Daily	China Youth Daily	Legal Daily	Beijing Times	Beijing News	Beijing Evening	Beijing Youth Daily	Legal Evening
18/03/2007							A11: straight news + 1 picture		A1: straight news + 1 picture B2: Straight news + 1 picture	
20/03/2007					Page 4: straight news + 1 picture				B2: straight news	
21/03/2007							A2: review		A4:review	
22/03/2007							A25: interview + 1 picture	Page 20: spot news + 3 pictures	A23: spot news + 1 picture	A23: spot news + 1 picture
23/03/2007					Page 5: straight news + 3 pictures		A23: (i) straight news + 2 pictures (ii) public official news (iii) 2 interviews	Page 20: spot news + 1 picture	A1: spot news + 1 picture A3: Investigative news + 1 picture	A27: spot news + 2 pictures
24/03/2007						Page 11: (i) spot news + 1 picture (ii) expert interview	A18: (i) straight news (ii) 2 interviews	Page 7: (i) spot news (ii) news analysis from Xinhua, (iii) relative news (iv) readers' response	A1: straight news B2: straight news + 1 picture	A12: spot news
25/03/2007						Page 7: spot news + 1 picture	A11: (i) 2 interviews (ii) straight news + 1 picture			A10: spot news

1- matching letters denote ownership by the same press group

26/03/2007		Page 9: review					A15:straight news		A4: review	A27: (i) spot news (ii) interviews with experts, official, developer, owner, + 3 pictures
27/03/2007	Page 10: official news + 1 picture						A3: review A18: interview			
28/03/2007				Page of Freezing point: Investigative news + 3 pictures			A20: Interview A23: Investigative news + 1 picture	Page 18: straight news	A1: straight news B2: interview + 1 picture	A2: relative review
29/03/2007		Page 3: relative official news		Page 2: review			A22: public official news			
31/03/2007				Page 1: straight news + 1 picture	Page 1: court news		A17: Straight news (court)			
01/04/2007				Page 1: straight news			A14: Straight news			
02/04/2007				Page 2: interview + 1 picture	Page 1: experts' forum					
03/04/2007	Page 4: relative news Page 10: straight news + 3 pictures			Page 7: Spot news + 1 picture	Page 1: Spot news + 1 picture	Page 1: Headline picture	A1: Headline picture A2: Review A20: Xinhua news Spot news + 1 picture,	Page 1: subordinate headline + 1 picture Page 20: spot news + 3 pictures news analysis from Legal Daily	A1: Xinhua news + 1 picture A2: Xinhua news	A26: Xinhua news + 1 picture
04/04/2007							2 Xinhua news + 1 picture			
09/04/2007							A14: review (the authority report)			
09/11/2007							A82: Interview + 1 picture			

Table 7: Beijing Newspaper Coverage, March 18 to November 9 2007, of The 'Hardest Nail House' in Chongqing



Figure 8a: the 'Nail House' :source Chongqing Morning

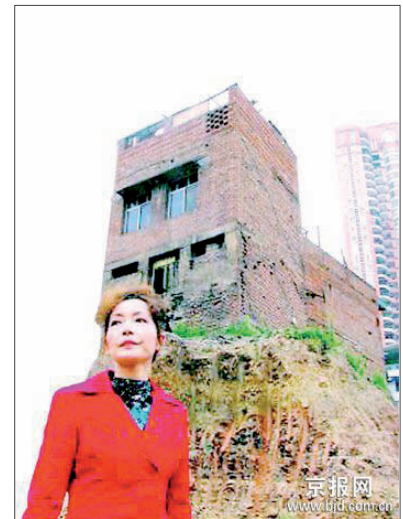


Figure 8b: Wu Ping and the 'Nail House'
source South Metropolitan Daily

The Story of The Hardest 'Nail House' in China

The phrase 'nail house' was reputedly coined by Chinese land developers to refer to properties of owners who for one reason or another do not agree to comply with the land developers' compensation to vacate their properties. "The house is called a dingzihu or "nail house", which is a pun on the Chinese phrase for troublemakers who stick up like nails and refuse to bow down."¹⁰

In early March 2007, a curious netizen [a person actively involved in online communities] photographed Yang Wu's house, which is in SouthWest China, [Chongqing, Sichuan] and circulated the picture on the Internet. The image soon ignited heated debates. Netizens called it as 'the hardest nail house' in China and with great rapidity Yang's house became the most famous 'nail house' in China.

Yang's house was scheduled to be removed in 2004. Although the other 280 residents in the neighborhood agreed to either the cash or relocation compensation offers of the land developer, Yang Wu and Wu Ping refused both on the grounds that neither offer was acceptable.

Despite having their water and electricity cut off the pair continued to live in their two-storey home for a further two years. Land-developers in previous disputes only had to

¹⁰<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/a-chinese-mans-home-is-his-castle-kung-fu-master-keeps-bailiffs-at-bay-in-the-siege-of-chongqing-442550.html>

wait to wear down the resistance of the nail house owners since few owners have the resources or the stubbornness to resist as long as Yang Wu and Wu Ping.

There was some media speculation that the couple had to have had backing to support their campaign. The land developer claimed the couple had asked for 20 million Yuan as compensation. Wu Ping denied this and told the media that their request was in the legal and acceptable sphere.

Soaring urbanization and rural development in China has led to the emergence of conflicts between residents of older style properties farmers and the combined forces of land developers and the government. Farmers and many city dwellers often receive meager compensation in return for the expropriation of their land. Yang Wu and Wu Ping's lengthy and ultimately successful resistance brought hope to others facing the same circumstances.

The timing of the exposure of the story was also fortunate. On March 19th 2007, the National People's Congress [NPC] passed a new 'property law' which was seen as a historic breakthrough. The law, for the first time in modern China, protected private property to an equal degree as public and collective property. As a result 'the Hardest Nail House' was seen as an early test for the new property law [which became effective in October 2007].

However, on 23rd of March 2007, the local housing administration bureau in Chongqing received a local court order granting permission to forcibly demolish the house. Since Wang Yu and Wu Ping were still living there, their resistance continued.

Finally the house was demolished on 2nd of April because Wang Yu and Wu Ping had agreed to move into another apartment elsewhere in Chongqing after reportedly reaching a deal with the authorities.

The Popular Press Coverage

Wu Ping became a heroine in the coverage of popular newspapers, in part due to the daily news conference, she held to fulfill the demands of the media. The following analysis shows that the Popular Press coverage was very different from the coverage strategy of the Dingzhou Incident. The coverage of the 'nail house' event in the Popular Press was more active, dramatic and direct.

Beijing Youth Daily

On March 18th, 2007, *Beijing Youth Daily* was the first of the two Popular Press papers to report this news event in Beijing. In its initial coverage the paper reported the 'un-named' owner had explained, just prior to a court hearing in Chongqing, that they had not asked for a huge compensation from the land developer. This was 'straight news' coverage, sourced from the *Chongqing Morning* newspaper and was a balanced report between the owner and the developer. Unlike the dramatic emotive picture of the 'Nail House' (Figure 8a), the details of the owner's and land developer's viewpoints were factual and formal.

On March 23rd, 2007, as the news spread quickly, *Beijing Youth Daily's* own journalists investigated and pointed out more critical points: there had, for example, been 40 attempts to reach a settlement between the owner and the land developer, and the owner's announcement that he would die with the demolition of the nail house. This coverage, in comparing other demonstrations of resistance to land developers, placed emphasis on the rational debates between the owner and the developer, particularly, in which the owner can illustrate the laws protecting their own rights.

The next day, 24th of March, *Beijing Youth Daily* provided a review of the history of the nail house and attempted to bring up to date the key points of the disagreements between the two sides. The content was still based on the rational discourse of opposite arguments. Over the following days the degree of coverage faded to a review which requested the conflict should be concluded as soon as possible and an interview with the owner who hoped to have a talk with the Mayor of Chongqing. The final coverage reverted to adopting Xinhua news.

Beijing News

The *Beijing News* also started reporting the 'nail house' story on 18th of March and like *Beijing Youth Daily* acquired the story from the *Chongqing Morning*. However, *Beijing News* chose to focus on Wu Ping arguments with the authorities and the land developer and her claim that the authorities did not give her a chance to state her rights until she protested. On 22nd of March, *Beijing News* interviewed Wu Ping with the headline: 'There are too few people like me!' to indicate Wu Ping did not have any powerful network of backers emphasizing,

'the only thing which I depend on is the law... I insist my own faith and do not fear to face any challenge... I studied law by myself so I refuse to compromise which I think this is right.'

The mention of faith and the refusal to compromise are not wholly positive to her image nevertheless *Beijing News* succeeds in creating the heroic image with the next quotes:

‘I am not a wicked person, by contrast, if there are many people like me, the justice and truth will be very much better in our society... I do these things which are not merely for my own benefits and rights, I also fight for other people’s rights and future.’

However, the next day, on March, *Beijing News* released a balance article considering the authorities’ and the land developer’s responses to the owners’ statement. On 24th of March, the same balanced coverage was presented; but because the court had ordered the demolition of the nail house, and Yang’s threat to die in the demolition, it seemed *Beijing News* was waiting for something to happen. On 25th of March, the balanced coverage presenting the owner and the authorities continues, while pointing out the owner had asked for too much compensation for an agreement. However, by then Wu Ping’s daily news conferences had attracted news teams from around the nation. On 26th of March, the local authorities backed away from demolishing the nail house as there still too many controversial unresolved aspects. On 27th of March, a review emphasized the importance and relevance of the story for the general public and the protection of their property and to have a clear compensation list and rules of protection. The article also suggested the authorities and land developers should not demolish any property before an agreement.

On March 28th, *Beijing News* published an investigative article seeking the inside stories behind the land developer and the owner’s wife, Wu Ping. There was a change in strategy, away from balanced coverage of facts to one that appealed to the aspirations of the audience. The article suggested that there were mysterious backgrounds to both the land developer’s contacts with the authorities and the owner’s past which both parties denied. However, while neither party had dark mysterious pasts, *Beijing News* did publish an interview with Wu Ping, on 3rd of April, explaining her negotiating and media experience over the previous few years.¹¹ For the next three days, *Beijing News* published straight news and court news-releases until the day the nail house was demolished.

On 3rd of April, *Beijing News* reviewed the whole process of the hardest nail house in China and recorded the nail house as it was ‘dug out’ by the excavator. On the 3rd of April, *Beijing News* used Xinhua news for the first time. Finally, when Wu Ping was elected on 9th of November as a heroine in the fight for property protection, *Beijing News* conducted one last in depth interview with Wu Ping.

¹¹ See Glossary - Wu Ping for further details

In essence the strategy behind the coverage of Wu Ping was to create a mirror of society allowing the paper to criticize the network of authorities which benefit from land development and would like to ruin the landmark property law. *Beijing News's* coverage was the most comprehensive reportage of the 'nail house' story in Beijing.

Beijing Evening, Legal Evening and Beijing Times

Beijing Evening began its coverage [22nd March] five days after *Beijing Youth Daily* and *Beijing News*, and maintained coverage for three days. The *Beijing Evening* chose to employ on-the-spot news and interviews to push the drama of the story and the emotive discourse. The paper promoted Wang Yu and Wu Ping as famous celebrities and popular heroes of the Internet and mass media. At the same time, *Beijing Evening* managed a fine balancing act as they also promoted the responsible actions by the government and the land developer [i.e. they had respected the owners' wishes and not demolished the house] in compliance with the new property law. The coverage also stressed the importance of the individual's right to own property.

Legal Evening began its coverage on the same day as *Beijing Evening* and used almost exactly the same strategy for the same duration, switching from on-the-spot news to the formal Xinhua news to report on the demolition. *Beijing Times* produced the least coverage, for only two days, and started almost a week after the first coverage of the *Beijing Youth Daily* and *Beijing News*..

The Party Press Coverage

There was no surprise in the Party Press coverage of the 'Nail House' story. The primary responsibility for the Party Press remains the promotion of CCP propaganda. Since the 'Nail House' story had the potential of reflecting badly on the CCP and central government, the Party Press by and large followed the lead of Xinhua [i.e. as Xinhua did not release an official version, the Party Press remained largely mute.]

China Youth Daily and Legal Daily

The two most active of the Party Press were *China Youth Daily* and *Legal Daily*. These two papers provided a mixed coverage of investigative, on-the-spot coverage and straight news from official sources.

China Youth Daily, as in the previous case study, used its weekly edition the *Freezing Point*, as a platform to publish investigative coverage to present the general public's views and criticisms, and to review the story. *China Youth Daily's* main criticism is of the lack of crisis management among Chongqing's public officials and their slow response to the media. The paper balances this criticism by explaining the owners of the 'nail house' have acquired good skills and tactics to deal with the media, which is the reason that this news event gained widespread international media coverage. Using the *Freezing Point* enabled *China Youth Daily* to conduct interviews of the public opinion, an inherently tabloid tactic. However, in the review that followed the investigative article, *China Youth Daily* criticized the extent of the media coverage.

It transpired as a result of the overwhelming media and Internet coverage, in the interview article on 2nd of April, the Chongqing authorities admitted faulty responsibility in cutting off the electricity and water of the 'nail house' before the owners had reached an agreement with the land developer. The following day *China Youth Daily* released a survey of netizens, which indicated that approximately 50% of the respondents said it was a legal right to protect private property.

Legal Daily's coverage began on 20th of March, the earliest of the Party Press, but its coverage was exclusively sourced from public officials, official expert opinions and court news releases.

People's Daily, Guangming Daily and Beijing Daily

Beijing Daily did not provide any coverage of the event. This paper is the official organ of Beijing government and is only concerned with news events within Beijing or what the government deems important to its readers.

Evidence of the clear distinction between Party Press following the CCP line and the Popular Press occurs in the coverage by the *People's Daily* and the *Guangming Daily*. Both papers relied on official news and relative news, which skirted any direct discussion of the issue. More importantly, the *People's Daily* published an article in which the Mayor of Chongqing said the authorities had the ability to manage with the situation [in direct contrast to not only the coverage of the Popular Press, but also the *Freezing Point*.] After the 'nail house' was demolished the *People's Daily* published an official article while the *Guangming Daily* expressed the desire that the authorities would conciliate in the protests of the general public in such situations.

In summary, most of the Popular Press sided with the 'nail house' owners and viewed them as heroes protecting private property against land developers and local authorities. By contrast, the Party Press used official news to stress the authorities would deal with this protest carefully.

Subway Disaster

The disaster of Beijing subway line 10 happened in a highly visible location in NorthWest Beijing next to the large industrial and computer technology site of Zhongguan. Thousands of people worked nearby or passed the construction site of subway line 10 every day. However, the coverage of this event by the Party papers belonging to Beijing government organizations was far less than any other papers in either category. This case shows that strict censorship wielded, by government and institutions with political power, is still effective at all levels in the media.

Interestingly the balance of coverage in this case study between the Party and Popular Press [the Popular Press coverage is usually more extensive] is reversed by the Beijing government owned Press Group pairing of the Party Press *Beijing Daily* and the Popular Press *Beijing Evening*. Both these papers sourced most of their news from Xinhua. The Beijing Communist owned pairing of the Party Press *Beijing Youth Daily* and the Popular Press, *Legal Evening* also provide limited coverage.

By contrast the ownerships of the Popular Press *Beijing News* and *Beijing Times* are Central Government institutions. Consequently these two papers were given 'free rein' to compete with each other in their coverage and critical reportage of the disaster. Ownership, and particularly political ownership, clearly has an impact on coverage.

The Evening Collapse of Beijing Subway Tunnel

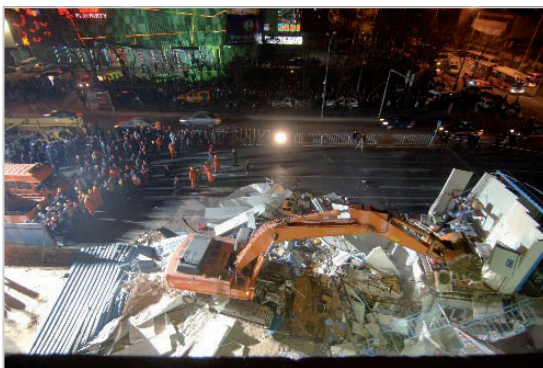


Figure 9a: source Xinhua News Agency



Figure 9b: source Beijing News

Figures 9a and 9b: The Evening Collapse of Beijing Subway Tunnel

A Beijing subway tunnel being built for the 2008 Olympics collapsed in the morning of March 28th 2007, burying and killing six workers. The contractor, according to rescuers, tried to conceal the collapse from the authorities by sealing off the site and confiscating the workers' mobile phones.

The construction company forced employees to surrender their mobile phones, so that nobody could report the disaster. The construction company locked the gate, sealed off the site and ordered everyone to keep quiet. When the police noticed a crowd gathering, they were told that nothing was wrong. For almost eight hours, the Beijing subway disaster was concealed, until finally a laborer managed to call a relative of one of the victims in distant Henan province, who told the local police. They then notified the Beijing police force. The cover-up was so extensive that it delayed the rescue effort. Rescuers recovered the first body after 50 hours of digging. The last body was found eventually on May 10th.

The tunnel collapsed during an intense construction campaign to build four new subway lines in time for the 2008 Olympics. At least three other stretches of subway tunnels had collapsed in the previous 18 months as Beijing scrambled to finish its Olympic transit projects. Two people were killed in one collapse at another subway location the previous June.

	PARTY PRESS					POPULAR PRESS				
Press Group ¹	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	F	F
Newspaper	People's Daily	Guangming Daily	Beijing Daily	China Youth Daily	Legal Daily	Beijing Times	Beijing News	Beijing Evening	Beijing Youth Daily	Legal Evening
29/03/2007	Page 5: straight news from Xinhua	Page 1: straight news				A1: headline picture A3: spot news, 1 picture A4: Spot news, 2 pictures	A1: headline picture A15: a. Spot news, 3 pictures b. insight story	Page 3: S t r a i g h t news	A19: Straight news, 1 picture	A1: subordinate headline(news index) A20: spot news, 1 picture
30/03/2007	Page 5: straight news	Page 7: straight news	Spot news			A3: Spot news, 1 picture A4: investigative news, 1 picture A6: Spot news, 1 picture	A1: headline picture A12: a. public official news, 2 pictures b. news analysis A13: a. spot news b. straight news c. feature, 2 pictures A14: a. interview, 1 picture b. straight news			
31/03/2007	Page 5: straight news from Xinhua	Page 4: straight news	Page 5: straight news from public official, Xinhua	Straight news		A1: 1 subordinate headline A4: 2 pictures, Xinhua news, 3 spot news, news analysis, 2 official news, relative news, expert interview	A9: a. spot news, 1 picture b. public official news c. investigative news, 1 picture	Page 4: Xinhua news	A1: Xinhua news A8: Xinhua news	A1: subordinate headline(news index) A10: Xinhua news

1- matching letters denote ownership by the same press group

01/04/2007	Page 2: Spot news from Xinhua	Page 1: straight news	Page 2: straight news from experts			A1: 1 subordinate headline A6: spot news, official news, expert interview, 2 pictures	A4: a. straight news, 2 pictures b. straight news (insurance) c. straight news (relatives of workers) d. straight news (ordinary people)		A1: Xinhua news A6: Public official news	A1: subordinate headline(news index) A9: Xinhua news
02/04/2007	Page 2: straight news from public official	Page 5: straight news from Xinhua	Page 7: 1 picture		Page 7: 1 picture	A6: Spot news, 1 picture	A8: a. spot news, 1 picture b. interview relatives, 1 picture c. interview expert	Page 8: S t r a i g h t news	A1: Xinhua news	
03/04/2007	Page 5: straight news from public official	Page 5: straight news				A10: Straight news	A13: a. Xinhua public official news	Page 8: S t r a i g h t news	A10: Straight news	A21: straight news
21/04/2007	Page 2: relative news from Xinhua					A2: Relative official news			A1: Public official news A3: a. public official news from Xinhua b. Xinhua news	
09/05/2007	Page 7: straight news from Xinhua	Public official news						Page 5: Official news	A1: Public official news A2: Public official news	A4: official news
10/05/2007	Page 5: straight news from Xinhua						A3: review A13: a. Xinhua public official news			

Table 8: Beijing Newspaper Coverage, 29th March to 10th May 2007, of The Beijing Subway Collapse

The Popular Press Coverage

The two most active Popular Press papers, *Beijing News* and *Beijing Times* employed the genre of on-the-spot coverage and investigative news to maintain the drama and to reveal the inside story [see Table 8]. The other three Popular Press papers provided meager coverage due to the overt political nature of their owners.

Beijing Times

Beijing Times had on-the-spot news from March 29th to April 2nd, for four days. It reported the detail provided by workers and witnesses. The coverage put together the whole process including the details of the contractor's failed attempt to seal off the disaster. There was neither analysis nor any statement from officials and authorities.

On March 30th, *Beijing Times* continued to report from the construction site, revealing that after 30 hours of digging no bodies had been recovered. The coverage focused on the workers and the emotions of victims' relatives. The buried workers mostly came from Sichuan; Sichuanese are very straight and hard working people. The paper also reported that their living conditions were also harsh. Although the reportage guessed at the cause of the collapse, there was still not any news from the authorities on the third day after the disaster.

On March 31st, the first victim, Li Peng, was found. *Beijing Times* started to use Xinhua news, which said the relevant authorities were working hard on the disaster. However, the paper then reported that the relevant authorities had been unaware which company was in charge of the construction site. Furthermore, the paper then revealed how the authorities had been informed of the disaster. The worker who had made the phone call to Henan had called a relative of Li Peng, saying that Li Peng might be dead. Li Peng's relative had called the local Henan police who informed the Beijing police. The on-the-spot news provided by *Beijing Times* produced new angles to the story compared to Xinhua's straight and official news.

On April 1st, three more bodies were found. The paper reported on experts' analyses of the surrounding geology which had caused the collapse and was now hindering the rescue attempt. This was also day the CCP party leader of Beijing went to the tunnel, five days after the collapse occurred. On April 2nd, 110 hours after the collapse the fifth body was found; the sixth was never recovered. On April 3rd, the paper reported that the rescue operation had ceased and the tunnel construction would restart.

On April 21st, the relative official news release stated that a new rule forbade any organization from concealing a disaster. The highest fine would be 500 RMB to the company concerned.

Overall, the coverage in *Beijing Times* was mostly on-the-spot news, interviewing and investigative news by journalists rather than using Xinhua or official news.

Beijing News

Compared with the emotive coverage of *Beijing Times*, *Beijing News* chose to report relevant details, such as on March 29th, the Mayor of Beijing went to the site to take command of the rescue operation of the buried workers. *Beijing News* also reported the detail of the disaster and the workers' memories of their escape from the tunnel and their opinions as to the cause of the collapse being the tunnel floor was like a pond. The following day, *Beijing News* focused on the development and plan of the rescue operation rather than criticizing the construction company or the authorities. A journalist even went to the tunnel with a rescuer to look at the scene of the collapse.

Simultaneous to this coverage on March 30th, *Beijing News* interviewed the relatives of the missing workers who were waiting at the site. Among those interviewed were the parents of Li Peng who also worked at the construction site. Li's father even had tried to rescue his son with other workers. *Beijing News* coverage included the details of the attempted concealment of the collapse and the phone call to Henan, but in contrast to the *Beijing Times'* coverage, *Beijing News* included how Li's parents had felt, their anger and despair, during the initial 24 hours of the emergency. The paper's coverage continued to focus on the rescue operation until it was called off on April 3rd, although there was still one missing worker, because the tunnel collapsed again. *Beijing News* also discussed the insurance problems of the deaths on the victims' relatives. In a review published on May 10th when the last body was found, *Beijing News* suggested that similar disasters would not be concealed in the future if the media supervised the public affairs. The paper was emphasizing the function of media on the effectiveness of the rescue operation.

Beijing News and *Beijing Times* were the only papers to report the details of the disaster and to reveal how dramatic the process was from the moment of the collapse to the arrival of the Beijing police.

Beijing Youth Daily, Beijing Evening and Legal Evening

These three papers basically followed the official line, using Xinhua News directly and almost none of the tactics common to the Popular Press. As explained in the introductory paragraph to this section on the Subway Disaster, all three of these Popular Press papers are owned by either Beijing Government or Beijing Communist Party organizations. Although there is no concrete evidence, of the ownership organizations requiring their papers to follow the official line, there is the change in *Legal Evening's* coverage. *Legal Evening* provided on-the-spot news on the 29th, then nothing on the 30th, and then Xinhua sourced news on the 31st and thereafter either Xinhua or official news.

The Party Press Coverage

Similar to the different stances taken by the Popular Press, the Party Press displayed a variety of attitudes towards reporting the disaster.

The *People's Daily* is the organ of the CCP while the *Beijing Daily* is the organ of Beijing Government. Both papers needed to reveal the attitude of officialdom, in the context of the 'official line', on a daily basis. To do otherwise would have been a failure of their responsibilities. The other three Party Papers' coverage reflected the relevance of the disaster to their ownership organizations and their responsibilities.

People's Daily

People's Daily, as a central propaganda newspaper and mouthpiece for CCP, reported this news event every day with most of the coverage being straight news sourced from Xinhua. The paper did not interview any workers at the construction site or any relatives of the victims, nor did it analyze the cause of the collapse or reveal that the contractor had tried to conceal the collapse from the state authorities. In other words, any dramatic and sensitive contents did not appear in *People's Daily*.

Beijing Daily

Unusually, *Beijing Daily* released the on the spot news of the disaster before its Popular 'daughter' paper, *Beijing Evening*. It also reported this news event in the following days. Also, the extent of Beijing Daily's coverage was the same as *Beijing Evening's*. On March 29th, the paper stressed the Mayor of Beijing going to the site and how numerous officials

discussed how to rescue the buried workers. On March 30th and 31st, the coverage was the same with that of the *People's Daily* stressing the official process of the rescue.

On April 1st, the coverage concerned the CCP party leader of Beijing going to see the collapse and said it was very important to have a safe environment in construction sites. On April 2nd, the reports were from Xinhua News agency as well only how many bodies were found everyday. For Beijing Daily it would seem neither the fatalities nor the cause of the collapse were important.

Guangming Daily, in providing a steady stream of official news, seemed to be going through the motions, whereas *China Youth Daily* [one article] and *Legal Daily* [no articles] provided as little as possible although the disaster happened in Beijing and caused multiple deaths.

Briefly, the interesting phenomenon of this case is the mix of Party and Popular papers that reported the event: *Beijing News* and *Beijing Times* [the Popular], *People Daily* and *Beijing Daily* [the Party]. The first two do not belong to local government and so have more space to report this dramatic story to attract their readers compared with the other three Popular Papers which only use official straight news because of ownership affiliations. The other two papers are organs of CCP institutions and need to take their propaganda responsibilities seriously.

In essence, the coverage of the tunnel collapse reveals more deliberated political control on different media organs than compared to the previous two case studies. In other words, media belonging to local government cannot criticize or supervise its own organization. By contrast, the outside media which are owned by higher level government institutions such as Central Government or other provincial governments can report and trace the event. Papers belonging to local organs cannot provide critical coverage as any criticism involves their own organs. This logic does not apply to papers belonging to organs in other provinces. However, except for this element of political interference, the popular newspapers *Beijing Times* and *Beijing News* competed with each other very seriously.

Mine Disasters

In 2006 the BBC described China's coal mines as "among the most dangerous in the world - more than 5,000 deaths are reported every year in fires, floods and explosions".¹² The Chinese government responded by closing down small privately owned coal mines in a concerted attempt to improve safety. Nevertheless China's State Administration of Coal Mine Safety [<http://www.chinasafety.gov.cn/newpage/>] [SACMS] reported 167 mine disasters with 1270 fatalities in China in 2007¹³. Possibly due to the high number of disasters and fatalities a great many go unreported. Explosion cases were chosen to examine the way how the media deal with these disasters.

Date	Fatalities	Date	Fatalities	Date	Fatalities	Date	Fatalities
12.Jan	13	23.Apr	8	26.Jul	8	2.Nov	9
14.Feb	4	30.Apr	14	3.Aug	8	13.Nov	7
27.Feb	4	5.May	28	28.Aug	5	29.Nov	5
15.Mar	3	3.Jun	13	5.Sep	3	3.Dec	7
18.Mar	21	24.Jun	9	19.Sep	18	5.Dec	3
26.Mar	14	5.Jul	9	22.Oct	13	5.Dec	105
28.Mar	26	14.Jul	5	27.Oct	5	8.Dec	3
31.Mar	4	22.Jul	11	1.Nov	5	11.Dec	5
	89		96		65		144

Data Resources: <http://www.chinasafety.gov.cn> and media coverage

Table 9: Coal Mine Disasters in Shanxi, China (2007)

A Series of Mine Disasters in Shanxi and China

Shanxi Province [not to be confused with neighboring Shaanxi Province,] located in North-Eastern China and quite close to Beijing, is colloquially known as the 'kingdom of coal' with reputed reserves of 261 billion tonnes or one-third of the nation's total¹⁴. There is a direct correlation between the number of mines and the number of accidents, and Shanxi province has the most coal mines, [counted in hundreds], in China. Shanxi is also gaining a reputation for the increasing frequency of coal mine explosions. The United States Mine Rescue Association [USMRA] catalogues reports of coal mine rescues around the world.

¹² BBC, 30th April 2006 (Retrieved 31.03.2009 from) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4959254.stm>

¹³ <http://www.chinasafety.gov.cn/newpage/> Please note this is a Chinese language site.

¹⁴ <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/ProvinceView/203606.htm>

USMRA claims that four coal mine explosions killed 74 coal miners in March, 2007¹⁵. China's SACMS catalogued five disasters causing 68 fatalities for the same month in 2007 [see Table 9]. The discrepancy is probably due to the willingness [or unwillingness] of coal mine owners to report the disasters, as the fatalities are often the result of owners breaking safety regulations. Nevertheless SACMS' website contends that Shanxi Province accounted for 14.9% of the nation's coal mine disasters in 2007 and 28.5% of the fatalities (Table 9).

In this case study two mine disasters in Shanxi were selected, the Linfen and Pu County mine disasters. The Linfen mine disaster happened on March 28th, and Pu County [located in Linfen as well] was on May 5th. These two disasters caused 54 fatalities between them. Comparing these coal mine disasters with the Dingzhou Incident and the Beijing Subway disasters, the scale and the number of fatalities are more serious but the media coverage they attract is far less.

A series of mine disasters from November 5th to 26th were also collected [Table 10]. These four events led to 115 fatalities.

	POPULAR PRESS
Newspaper	Beijing News
06/11/2006	A16: Xinhua news from official and workers + 1 picture
07/11/2006	A20: Xinhua news
08/11 /2006	A18: official news
09/11 /2006	
10/11 /2006	A26: Xinhua news from official
11/11 /2006	
12/11 /2006	
13/11 /2006	A16: Xinhua news
14/11 /2006	A19: Xinhua news from official + 1 picture
15/11 /2006	A22: Xinhua news from official
16/11 /2006	A21: Xinhua news from official + 1 picture
23/11 /2006	A19: official news
25/11 /2006	A17: Xinhua news
28/11 /2006	A1: Headline picture from Xinhua A2: review A20: a. straight news from Xinhua, b. review from Xinhua + 1 picture c. Official from Xinhua d. news insight from Xinhua

Table 10: Beijing News Coverage, 6th November to 28th November 2006, of The Shanxi Mine Disasters on 5th, 7th, 12th and 26th November 2006.

¹⁵ <http://www.usmra.com/chinatable.htm>

While a series of coal mine disasters would seem to be newsworthy in the extreme, Beijing News provided coverage [see Table 10] based solely on Xinhua news; unlike any of the previous case studies. Hence no investigative reporting was conducted to provide analysis of the disaster. While it is unusual for the Popular Press to ignore major disasters, mine disasters in China occur all too frequently. Consequently newspaper editors and readers become bored by the details.



Figures 10a and 10b: Rescue Operations at Shanxi Mine Disaster
source: Xinhua News Agency

Both China and the global audiences are becoming used to the frequency of the coal mine disasters in China, as well as the loss of life. On average, thirteen miners are killed every single day down the coal pits (*Associated Press, 2007*). Although China's government, through SACMS, has launched an ongoing safety campaign and keeps calling for more to be done, the increasing demand for energy and fuel [prior to the global economic meltdown in 2009], meant that owners and local officials often ignored safety issues in the pursuit of profits.

The Linfen Coal Mine Disaster, March 28

Mining operations at the Linfen mine were illegal because their safety certifications had expired. When the gas explosion occurred there were 106 miners at the pit head. The safety certificates stipulated that 29 miners could work safely at any one time. The explosion caused 26 fatalities. For details of the media coverage of the Linfen disaster see Table 11.

	PARTY PRESS					POPULAR PRESS				
Press Group ¹	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	F	F
Newspaper	People's Daily	Guangming Daily	Beijing Daily	China Youth Daily	Legal Daily	Beijing Times	Beijing News	Beijing Evening	Beijing Youth Daily	Legal Evening
29/03/2007	Page 2: Xinhua news from official					Page 2: Xinhua news from official	A24: straight news from Xinhua	Page 18: straight news		
30/03/2007					Page 3: relative official news				A1: Xinhua news, 1 picture	
31/03/2007	Page 5: Xinhua news from official		Page 3: straight news					Page 18: official news	B2: relative investigative news from Hunan students in mine factory	
16/04/2007				Page 3: relative investigative news from Hunan students in mine factory						

1- matching letters denote ownership by the same press group

Table 11: Beijing newspaper coverage, 29th March to 16th April 2007, of the Linfen County Mine Disaster 28th March 2007

	PARTY PRESS					POPULAR PRESS				
Press Group ¹	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	F	F
Newspaper	People's Daily	Guangming Daily	Beijing Daily	China Youth Daily	Legal Daily	Beijing Times	Beijing News	Beijing Evening	Beijing Youth Daily	Legal Evening
06/05/2007			Page 4: Xinhua news				A10: straight news from Xinhua	Page 5: Xinhua news		A10: Xinhua news
07/05/2007	Page 2: spot news from Xinhua		Page 4: Xinhua news				A10: a. official news, spot news from Xinhua b. interview workers	Page 5: Xinhua news	A 1: Xinhua news, 1 picture A 5: a. Spot news from Xinhua, 1 picture b. official news	A10: Xinhua news
08/05/2007	Page 6: straight news from Xinhua, 1 picture		Page 11: Xinhua news, 1 picture	Page 4: Xinhua news, 1 picture			A15: straight news from Xinhua			A23: official straight news
09/05/2007	Page 2: official news								A3: 2 straight news, 2 pictures from Xinhua, CCTV, Shanxi evening	
10/05/2007			Page 2: relative official news			Page 2: relative official news				A23: relative official news
11/05/2007	Page 5: 4 official news, expert interview, comments from cyber, 2 charts, 1 picture	Page 4: relative official news		Page 4: relative official news Page 7: relative review	Page 1: relative official news					A26: official straight news
12/05/2007	straight news from Xinhua				Page 1: court news		A15: official news	Page 6: Xinhua relative news	A2: Straight news	A12: Xinhua news
18/05/2007				Page 2: review						

1 - matching letters denote ownership by the same press group

Table 12: Beijing Newspaper Coverage, 6th-18th May 2007, of The Pu County, Shanxi Mine Disaster 5th May 2007

The Pu County Coal Mine Disaster, May 5

According to Xinhua news, mining operations at the Pu County coal mine had been formally suspended by SACMS on April 29 in order to improve the working conditions. The mine manager disobeyed the suspension ruling and, on May 4, asked miners entering the site to work at the pit head. The mine's safety certificates stipulated a maximum of 44 miners could work safely in the pit at any one time. When the gas explosion occurred there were 125 workers underground. Over the next two days 28 bodies were found but 61 remained unaccounted for. According to Xinhua, the main cause of the gas explosion was long working shifts in an unventilated pit led to the mass accumulation of gas, which ultimately led to the explosion.

For the Pu County Disaster see *Table 12*.

The Popular Press Coverage

The *Legal Evening* alone of the Popular Press did not provide any coverage of the Linfen disaster. But, whereas the other four in the Popular Press category did report the event, they all relied on Xinhua sourced news. There were no further reports or interviews in the Popular Press. The reliance was on straight news and most of the coverage was like a short message providing the fundamental elements of information news, such as the 6 W's¹⁶ using 100-200 words to report the news. For example, *Beijing News* says of the Linfen disaster:

'The mine explosion happened in 28 March there are 7 bodies found again. There were 19 deaths in the first day already, therefore, the total died numbers are 26. The rescue activity in the scene has ended now, and the authorities started to deal with the following administration problems. The causes of the explosion still wait for further investigation....'

Because all the Popular newspapers used the same resource, Xinhua, the contents of their reports mention the same basic information, rather than conducting on-the-spot and investigative journalism to provide further analysis.

The Popular Press did not question the local officials, the owners of the mine factory, the regulation of safety, the working environment of the mine workers and how the owners of the mines and indeed the relatives cope with fatalities.

¹⁶ The 6 W's of journalism reporting – what, where, when ,why, how, who

The Party Press Coverage

The coverage of mine disasters in the Party Press and Popular Press are almost the same content since both categories use Xinhua news. The sole difference is that the coverage by the Party Press begins later than the Popular Press

For example, in the context of reporting the Linfen mine disaster, the three Popular Press papers use Xinhua news on the first day, but of the Party Press only *People's Daily* provided coverage on the first day. However, *People's Daily* did not provide first day coverage for the Pu County mine disaster. In a comparison of Party Press coverage between the Linfen and Pu disasters, the latter received a great deal more attention [See Tables 11 and 12]. More importantly, *People's Daily* released an article reflecting the critical views of experts and opinions of netizens from the paper's website. This coverage is a bit more progressive than the usual coverage of straight or official news.

The most interesting aspect of the coal mine disaster coverage occurred in an unusual method of investigative coverage presented in many newspapers, such as *China Youth Daily* and *Beijing Youth Daily*. This was an investigative research project conducted by Hunan students at Hunan Province coal mines. Their academic report on the harsh working conditions for miners underground included photographs. These two newspapers, one Party Press and the other Popular Press, used the student's research report instead their own journalists conducting investigative research.

Interestingly, although neither of these papers gave space to the Shanxi mine disasters, the student's report, accompanied by their photographs, was placed on a major editorial page under a large headline. However neither newspaper made any attempt to either investigate or trace what had actually happened in the coal mines. The impression was that the newspapers had used the students' report as a propaganda device to cover the real problems. *Beijing Youth Daily*, as a Popular Press newspaper, did publish a Xinhua news release on the Shanxi Disaster but *China Youth Daily* only published the Hunan's student's report.

Overall, mine disasters do not receive sufficient attention from either category of 'The Press. This is clearly an instance of news fatigue. Coal mine explosions in Shanxi occur on weekly and monthly basis, while coal mine fatalities occur daily, nationwide. SACMS contends that the majority, two-thirds, of the disasters occur in small coal mines which comprise 90% of China's coal mining operations. The counter argument is that disasters at large coal mines lead to bigger numbers of fatalities. Indeed two disasters at large coal mines have proved the frailty of SACMS's argument. The worst disaster occurred at Linfen, in December 2007, causing 115 fatalities. More recently at the TunLan mine, one of the most modern, safety conscious facilities in China, with an annual coal production of 5 million tones, a gas explosion occurred on 22, February 2009. There were 74 fatalities and

114 injured. The Party Press waited three days before reporting the disaster.¹⁷

A clear cause of 'news fatigue' is the frequency of the event, which in this case concerns mine disasters. A high frequency results in a loss of both individual and societal sympathy for the victims. The evidence of the news fatigue existing among Beijing's Press and audience is that the most progressive of the Popular Papers, the *Beijing News*, chose to rely on Xinhua news releases to inform the general public of coal mine disasters. This pattern of news coverage is different from the other three case studies as there is almost no political interference or media competition, just news fatigue. Audiences experience fatigue from being inundated by an endless stream of facts and updates which seldom differ. Consequently there are no in-depth stories for the audience to access, although a symptom of news fatigue is arguably that the mass audiences are not interested in these events. So, too many mine disasters have lost people's attention including both editors and readers.

Conclusion

There are two dimensions to this conclusion. The first is the spectrum of China's newspapers focusing on the genres and news resources, which are employed to provide news coverage. The second is the flow of political and economic power (i.e. interference) in the media market.

The Spectrum of Contemporary China's Press

According to the above analysis, the spectrum of these papers is presented (Table 13) and an attempt to induce individual characteristics is made. This elementary comparative analysis does indicate essential differences between the Tabloid [Popular] and Official [Party] Papers. Moreover, the progressive Popular Tabloids embed their readerships in a different manner to the Party and Official Papers.

The characteristics of the pattern overlap, especially among the Party [Official and Critical Official] Papers is that they depend on either total funding from an official organ's subscription, or a fifty-fifty mix of subscription and retail. By contrast the Popular Press is market-driven and depends wholly on retail sales. This dependence is expressed not only in the genres of their coverage but also in their news resources – a key characteristic exclusive to the Popular Press being on-the-spot coverage.

¹⁷ http://english.ntdtv.com/ntdtv_en/145/8072.html

Category	Funding Sources by Percentage	Genres	News Resources
Party Newspaper	100% Subscription (Government subsidies)	Serious and formal news, official review	Government and Xinhua News Agency, Party organ or expert
Official Newspaper	50% Subscription 50% Retail	Official news, critical review	Government and Xinhua News Agency, Party organ
Critical Official Paper	50% Subscription 50% Retail	Official news, investigative news, critical review	Ordinary people, Government and Xinhua News Agency
Popular Newspaper	100% Retail	Spot news, investigative news, straight news	Ordinary people, Government and Xinhua News Agency

Table 13: The Spectrum of Newspapers

Furthermore, as the Party Press is heavily dependent on government support in the form of finance and official resources, it follows the Party Line. Consequently the genres, which the Party Press uses to meet its agenda is authoritative and strict and abides by the CCP limitations on coverage. As the Official Press relies, partly on retail sales they are permitted to provide critical reviews, which appeal to their audiences. Nevertheless, the Official Press still follows the CCP's propaganda policy. The third pattern, is the 'Critical Official Press' is more progressive than the Official Press. The Critical Official Press, by virtue of specialist knowledge, has a separate agenda concerning news coverage and depth of discussion, such as '*Freezing Point*' section of China Youth Daily. The Critical Official Press does not follow the public organ step-by-step to report news; however, it does not use on spot reporting for dramatic stories.

The last pattern is the Popular Paper or the Progressive Tabloid. The Popular Paper uses tabloid tactics to report serious news. These tactics include populism, big headlines, individual tales, short news items and dramatic pictures. The most important aspect is that all tabloids depend on street sales. Hence, the Popular Paper places great importance in communicating with the general public who form its audience. Therefore, the front page story needs to be eye-catching as it is the crucial selling point.

The Competitiveness and The Exception

The Popular Press papers, just like the Party Press, are subject to political and economic constraints. The broad overall political constraint is the CCP's ideology concerning the function of The Press to promote positive news about Communism. The more focused constraint that is pertinent to each individual paper is the matter of ownership and the viewpoint of that organ. The four case studies in this chapter represent typical examples of situations and constraints facing the media environment. Those papers representing state authorities still remain in the organ's sphere of power with regard to the context of sensitive issues. By contrast, the Popular Press exists in a highly competitive media market, so while paying great attention to the commercial aspects of journalism they must also take into consideration their social responsibilities. That is while the fundamental morality is based on the commercial needs, occasionally political power will be dominant. Morality and responsibility can, if they are effective, swap over their position of priority in the media coverage. Otherwise they are equally important.

In the first case study, the Dingzhou Incident, the *Beijing News* often tried to push the limits of the Party line to get more attention from the audiences and to create its own credibility. Breaking the news of Dingzhou did not initially get any response however the paper continued coverage for four consecutive days. The dramatic pictures, the big headlines and the astonishing unfolding of news from Dingzhou were definitely shock factors. The moment that Xinhua News released the official version *Beijing News* and all the other papers from both categories followed its lead. The paradox of the Dingzhou Incident and the *Beijing News'* coverage pertains to the involvement of the rights of the individual as a member of the general public. The impression is that because the authorities were forced to send the local (Dingzhou) public officials to jail for their involvement in the event, the editor-in-chief of *Beijing News* was punished for promoting the story. This case shows the politically fraught media environment that sensitive news can create.

The subject of the second case study, the demolition of the 'Hardest Nail House' had been an ongoing process for more than two years before an Internet picture was widely circulated. This story became the domain of the Popular Press. The gap between the Party Press coverage and the Popular Press is huge. Aggregate coverage in the Popular Press amounted to 42 days whereas the Party Press managed 15 days. This discrepancy applied not only to the general categories but also to papers within the same press group. *Beijing News* provided coverage for 15 days, whereas its 'mother' newspaper, *Guangming Daily* only reported it on 2 days.

The third case study provides evidence of the link between location of the event and the location of the organ that owns the paper. Despite the disaster occurring in the immediate locality of Beijing, any paper owned by Beijing authorities provided minimalist coverage. The circumstances of the nearness of the 2008 Olympic Games, the high visibility of the accident site and the errors of the municipal authorities ensured that Beijing government would be embarrassed. Coverage of those papers owned by Beijing institutions lagged far behind the other newspapers. The expectation that the Popular Papers always outperform the Party Press was bucked by the *Beijing Daily* providing more coverage than its 'daughter' paper, *Beijing Evening*. However, on the whole, the Popular Press outperformed the Party Press. In essence, politically based censorship comes from many levels of government, ranging from central through to the local authorities. This case study shows that consideration of politics can be more important than other concepts such as competition, responsibility or morality.

The last case study indicates that, bizarrely, mine disasters of a scale, in terms of fatalities, far in excess of either the Dingzhou Incident or the Beijing Subway collapse attract considerably less media attention. Indeed the media coverage is based almost entirely on Xinhua News releases. This phenomenon is due solely to the high level of frequency of mine disasters in China, where approximately 13 miners are killed every day underground, in the pits. This is a clear case of news fatigue. Mine disasters, for all their drama and loss of life, are such a common occurrence that the audience is no longer interested in the litany of the casualty figures, the reasons and the lack of official reaction. The newsworthiness of mine disasters suffers from audience fatigue, editorial fatigue and therefore total news fatigue. In the context of press coverage, the Party Press must promote the propaganda that the Government is well aware of the problem and is managing the solutions. Xinhua is the official government agency tasked with providing the official responses to all news worthy events. The reason that the Popular Press also rely on Xinhua is slightly more complex. The Party Press naturally publishes Xinhua news releases. In order to fulfill their societal responsibilities, the Popular Press needs to inform the general public of the mine disasters but in the full awareness that the mine disasters will not increase their readership and hence their commercial revenue.

It is not possible to delineate the flow of political and economic constraints active in China's media, within a single case study or to define it as a simple rule. Only through different examples is it possible to map the environment and conditions of China's Press based media. The next chapter aims to determine whether any difference in the patterns of news coverage, the genres and the news resources, occurs in a smaller provincial urban environment such as Kunming, compared to a major urban city that is the national capital such as Beijing.

CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER 7

News Coverage by Kunming Press

Introduction

Kunming¹ is the capital city of Yunnan Province in south western China. The contrast to Beijing is not simply the size of population, 3 million in Kunming compared to 15-20 million in Beijing, but also in ethnicities. Yunnan Province is recognized as having the most diverse ethnic population in China with 25 recognized ethnic minorities living within the borders². While the media market in Kunming is smaller than Beijing's, the market that has emerged since the economic reforms of the mid 1970s and 1980s may be characterized as two distinct sections; nationally available newspapers with national agendas and provincially available newspapers with a predominantly local agenda. Each section of Kunming's media market is further subdivided. The national agenda newspapers are either those representing Central Government or Chinese Communist Party [CPC] institutions (*for examples see Table 5*) or progressive popular newspapers such as Guangzhou's South Metropolitan Daily and Southern Weekly [also known as Southern Weekend]. The local agenda newspapers in Kunming like their national agenda counterparts either represent Government or CPC institutions or are owned by institutions with a distinctly local flavor or are edited jointly by two press groups (see Table 14).

The aim of this chapter is to compare the coverage of the same news event by Kunming's Party and Popular newspapers [similar to the comparative exercise conducted in the previous chapter on Beijing]. Three news events were chosen which happened between 2006 and 2007 to examine differences in genre and news resources for the coverage. The genre and the news resources were categorized in the same way as for the Beijing comparison. Genre was divided into: straight news, on-the-spot news, investigative, news analysis, direct review, relevant review and picture. The news resources were divided into the general public, officials, law courts, Government or experts and the Xinhua News Agency.

In the Beijing comparison the topics chosen linked directly to economic development and social unrest: land acquisition and industrial accidents. Just one of the news stories

¹ See Glossary – Kunming for more general details concerning the city.

² See Glossary – Kunming, Ethnic populations

occurred in Beijing [Local News]. The other three [all with characteristics of National News] occurred in the provinces of Central and North Eastern China. For the Kunming comparative analysis the three topics were chosen are totally different from the Beijing topics, one of which holds the top rank in socio-economic news agenda at both National and Local levels – corruption.

The three selected news-stories are therefore:

- i) the story of Hu Xing – an official in Kunming involved in bribery and corruption on a grand scale;
- ii) a traffic accident in Dong Feng Square [downtown Kunming] and
- iii) the natural disaster of an earthquake in the tea growing district of Pu'er [within the borders of Yunnan Province].

These three cases present a variety of complicated conditions for coverage which result in a clear line being defined between the Party Press and the Popular Press.

Two prominent Party Papers and four Popular Papers from Kunming's media market wereselected [Table 14].

	Yunnan Provincial Government	Kunming City Government	Yunnan Disabled People Association	South Metropolitan Newspaper
PARTY PRESS				
Yunnan Daily	X			
Kunming Daily		X		
POPULAR PRESS				
Spring City Evening	X			
City Times		X		
Living News			X	
Yunnan Info Daily				X

Table 14: Ownership of Kunming Newspapers Selected for Coverage Comparison

Due to the nature of the scandal surrounding Hu Xing, a Kunming official derided nationally as China's most corrupt official, the story gained coverage in the National Press, initially from progressive Popular Papers, as well as press releases from official sources and the Xinhua News Agency. Prior to the release of the official version from Xinhua, Kunming's Local Papers relied on a few nationally available newspapers for their coverage. For this reason coverage is included of the Hu Xing story from resources available in Kunming, specifically: *China Youth Daily*, *Legal Daily*, *South Metropolitan Daily*, *Southern Weekly* and the Xinhua News Agency.

Bribery and Corruption

Former deputy director of Yunnan Provincial Transport Department, Hu Xing, who was extradited from Singapore, was sentenced to life in prison for corruption in August this year.

Hu was convicted of abusing his authority to take more than 40 million yuan (5.3 million U.S. dollars) in bribes, including an apartment valued at 247,980 yuan. He fled abroad using a fake passport in January, and was arrested in Singapore on Feb. 18. ³

Corruption was traditionally a 'red secret' in China's media before the economic and media reforms of the last quarter of the Twentieth Century. Revelations of secret corruption was a good selling point in the era of strict political control. Since the economic reforms 'corruption' remains a sensitive and restricted topic to the CPC and Government because of the negative image it gives to Communism and the Party. Due to the socio-economic problems involved in a rapidly burgeoning economy with few clear controls, corruption is indelibly associated with an increasing poverty gap and social dissatisfaction, particularly, when public officials and their networks are involved.

Corruption in China is largely the result of 'the invisible rule' of society taking precedence over the formal rule. As explained earlier, (see Chapter 3), officialdom, at least individual officials, have used the violation of the formal rules to derive huge benefits in what is a nationwide phenomenon. The scale of the problem of corruption is displayed in a recent article by the Asia Times⁴. This claims to have gained statistics for 2003-2007, from the Supreme People's Procuratorate. The institution over the five year period had handled more than 170,000 corruption cases involving just over 200,000 officials, of whom nearly 7% were officials at a senior level.

The Asia Times article defines a major bribe as involving sums of 100,000 RMB [about USD \$15,000] or embezzling public funds of over 1 million RMB. Major corruption cases comprised 46.8% of all corruption cases in 2003, but by 2008 had risen to 62%.

The most lucrative form of widely practiced corruption that attracts the most senior CPC officials is that of land redevelopment within the local authorities' jurisdiction. The sums involved in land corruption deals are, however, immense. In 2006, Chen Liangyu who was CPC Politbureau member and a former Communist Party Chief in Shanghai, was publicly

³ <http://english.cri.cn/2946/2007/11/28/189@299081.htm> Please note the source for this article is Xinhua.

⁴ <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/KC26Ad01.html>

disgraced in a scandal concerning 25 billion RMB (\$US3.65 billion). A sizeable part of the money involved land deals, for the benefit of himself and the Shanghai Communist Party elite. Chen Liangyu was sent for trial in March 2008 and received an 18 year jail sentence. At the beginning of 2007, the central police authorities sought information on the whereabouts of person, named as Hu Xing, on suspicion of involvement in a serious economic crime. The poster produced by the police authorities stated that Hu Xing spoke with a Kunming accent, was born in Hebei province and gave physical details (See Figures 11a and 11b). The poster did not, however, mention what Hu Xing's work was [i.e. how he became involved in the crime].



Figures 11a and 11b: Police 'Wanted' Posters of Hu Xing. Source: Living News

Hu Xing had been a Deputy Director of the Yunnan Provincial Transport Department. He had fled to Singapore, from where he was extradited to China in February 2007. Hu Xing was charged for taking more than 40 million RMB [\$US5.2 million U.S. Dollars] in bribes and keeping a mistress. However, prosecution documents claimed that when Hu Xing had been working for the City Planning Department in Kunming in the late nineteen nineties he had received over 50 million RMB [USD\$6.5 million] in bribes as far back as 1995, when he was working for the city planning section of Kunming City, capital of Yunnan Province. Hu Xing was allegedly the first suspected high level public official to be extradited from abroad.

Hu Xing fled abroad on 31st January 2007, the day before the police authorities produced the poster for public use. The coverage in *Living News* is greater than any of the other sample newspapers in Kunming. *Living News* identified Hu Xing by telephoning the government offices until one person confirmed the suspect was the Deputy Director of the Yunnan Provincial Transport Department. During the three month period between Hu Xing's flight abroad and his arrest in Singapore and subsequent extradition on 29th April 2007, neither the police nor the local authorities in Yunnan held any press conferences to explain either the crime or the progress of the investigation.

	PARTY PRESS		POPULAR PRESS			
Press Group ¹	A	B	A	B	C	D
Newspaper	Yunnan Daily	Kunming Daily	Spring City Evening	City Times	Living News	Yunnan Info Daily
30/01/2007						A1: picture, straight news from the authorities
31/01/2007		A1: official news, picture			A1: Picture, headline, chart A16: picture, chart, break news	
01/02/2007			Straight news			A6: straight news from reporter
02/02/2007			Investigative news			
03/02/2007				A1: relative sub-headline A2: relative office news A5: relative straight news	A1: sub-headline A12: straight news from reporter and South Metro	
04/02/2007		A2: straight news				
06/02/2007					A4: investigative news from South Metro, picture	
08/02/2007					A1: headline news, picture A5: straight news from Xinhua A6: straight news, investigative news from South Metro, South weekend, 1 picture A7: investigative news from South Metro, review from South weekend, 1 picture	A6: straight news from Xinhua
09/02/2007			Investigative news, news analysis, picture			

1- matching letters denote ownership by the same press group

10/02/2007				A2: 2 relative official news		
15/02/2007					A7: investigative news from Legal Daily	B7: investigative news from Legal Daily
20/03/2007					A1: sub-headline A4: investigative news from reporter, 1 picture A6: interview friends, relatives 1 picture	
21/03/2007					A1: sub-headline A6: spot news in court, picture	A5: spot news in court, interview, 2 pictures
07/04/2007					A1: headline news A4: straight news from court, 2 picture	
13/04/2007			News review			
29/04/2007	Straight news from the authorities Straight news	A1: straight news A2: straight news from the authorities		A1: sub-headline	A1: headline news, picture A25: Straight news from reporter, China Youth Daily, picture A26: investigative news from China Youth Daily, picture A28-29: investigative news from China Youth Daily, picture A30-31: investigative news from China Youth Daily, picture A32: interview Hu's mother from reporter, 1 picture	A6-7: investigative news from China Youth Daily, 3 pictures
30/04/2007		A4: relative review, relative straight news, relative interview two official,	News review		A3: relative straight news from Xinhua, picture	
21/06/2007					A18: relative news from Outlook weekly	

02/07/2007	2: relative official news					
06/07/2007					A1: headline A11: straight news	
07/07/2007	Straight news	A3: straight news in court	Straight news 2 Spot news in court, 2 picture 3 Investigative news	A1: headline A24: straight news, spot news in court, investigative news, 2 pictures	A1: headline A4: straight news from Xinhua, China court website and reporter, picture	A1: headline news, 2 pictures
09/07/2007			News review			
25/07/2007		A1: sub-headline A5: spot news in court	Spot news in court	A8: straight news, spot news in court		A1: relative straight news
26/07/2007		A5: spot news in court	Straight news, feature	A13: straight news, spot news in court	A1: relative headline news, picture A25: relative investigative news from reporter, picture A26-27: relative straight news, interview, investigative news, 4 pictures	
03/08/2007	2: Relative official news	A4: investigative news		A1: sub-headline		
08/08/2007						A1: headline news
09/08/2007	2: Straight news from the court	A1: sub-headline A8: spot news in court, news analysis, straight news, chart, 2 pictures	Straight news from the court Spot news in court, picture	A1: headline news, 1 picture from xinhua A6: 4 straight news, a feature, 2 pictures A7: interview the judge, 2 pictures, 1 straight news A8: 2 straight news, 2 pictures	A1: headline news, picture from Xinhua A6: straight news, spot news, 1 picture from the court A7: straight news from the court, interview 2 experts, 1 picture	A1: headline news, 1 picture A9: spot news from the court, 1 picture
10/08/2007						A1: sub-headline news A16: interview lawyer, 3 pictures
14/08/2007		A1: relative straight news, review				
20/08/2007	3: relative official news					

29/08/2007		A4: spot news in court	Spot news in court	A6: straight news	A4: straight news from the court, a feature, 1 picture	
13/09/2007				A3: straight news A12: straight news		
14/09/2007			Straight news			
21/09/2007		A1: relative straight news, 1 picture A2: review		A4: relative straight news, 1 picture		
25/09/2007	4: relative official news					
30/09/2007				A26: relative straight news, 1 picture		
01/10/2007					A8: straight news	
31/10/2007					A3: straight news from the court	
05/11/2007						A2: investigative news, picture, news analysis
06/11/2007						
17/11/2007					A6: relative investigative news from reporter	
25/12/2007		A2: relative straight news				
27/12/2007	Relative official news		Relative official news Straight news		A4: straight news from authorities	B107: I feature, news analysis, picture
28/12/2007		A4: relative official news				

Table 15: Kunming Newspaper Coverage, 31st January to 28th December, 2007 of Hu Xing Corruption Scandal

During that period prior to Hu Xing's arrest, *Living News* and *Yunnan Info Daily* were the only newspapers which provided the space to investigate the crime. The resources the two papers used were contrasting; *Yunnan Info Daily* relied on straight news from a variety of official sources, whereas *Living News* used investigative coverage from *South Metropolitan Daily* and *Southern Weekend* (Table 15).

In this case study, the analysis of news coverage presents the dimensions of the corruption coverage within the Party Papers and the Popular Papers. The news analysis of the investigation of the crime is divided into three sections:

- (i) National [non-Kunming] Press;
- (ii) Kunming Popular Press and
- (iii) Kunming Party Press.

The first section is further split into three subsections

- (a) *South Metropolitan Daily* and *Southern Weekly*;
- (b) *China Youth Daily* and *Legal Daily*, and
- (c) Xinhua News Agency.

The reason for these subsections is that they represent the prime news resources for the local Kunming Press. This creates the interesting aspect of the news coverage that news institutions not based in Kunming released more detail about this news event than their local counterparts.

South Metropolitan Daily and *Southern Weekly*, both hailing from Guangzhou, are the most city based progressive Popular Press newspapers in China. *China Youth Daily* (CYD) belongs to a central CPC institution, the Communist Youth League and has a good reputation for news reporting, especially in its weekly edition the '*Freezing Point*'. *Legal Daily* (LD) on the other hand is focused on legal issues and by virtue of representing the Central Ministry of Justice is a nationally available newspaper. Both *China Youth Daily* and *Legal Daily* are Party Press newspapers. The Xinhua News Agency is the organ representing CPC and all central institutions, especially the Central Propaganda Department.

South Metropolitan Daily and Southern Weekly

Initially, when the news broke Hu Xing's crime was unclear as the police authorities had not made a clear explanation. *Living News* first article identified that Hu Xing's crime was related to bribes concerning the advertising billboards along Gaohai highway, since 2001. All subsequent coverage by *Living News*, until Xinhua released the official version, was based directly on news from other papers including *South Metropolitan Daily* and *Southern Weekly*. *Living News* cited *South Metropolitan Daily's* contention that the

official secrecy surrounding the crime Hu Xing had committed was more intense than when Li Jiating, Kunming's former Governor had been involved in a corruption scandal in 2001.⁵ All documents relating to Hu Xing have been classified as secret. An additional aspect to Hu's crime was that while he was the deputy mayor of Kunming he oversaw construction and city planning and was instrumental in the granting of the licenses to the property developers, for which he was suspected of receiving bribes. *Living News* used the headline 'A salary of millions did not touch Hu Xing's heart' inferring Hu did not think he was paid enough.

South Metropolitan Daily discovered that many of Hu Xing's colleagues and subordinates were involved in his crime. The newspaper explained that although planning regulations forbade the redevelopment of central Kunming, Hu Xing broke the regulations. Hu arranged for his brother to buy a parcel of land in the city centre at a fraction of its value for redevelopment. In order to keep his brother's involvement a secret, Hu asked his subordinates to send messages saying that a relative of the Governor of Yunnan wanted to develop this plot of land. Hu's brother's company received a licence to construct a building on the site, which is now known as 'Golden Sunshine' and is the most expensive and luxurious building in Kunming.

South Metropolitan Daily investigated the causes of corruption. The paper explained that due to the rapid increase in property values, the income of the Local Government mostly comes from land development. Therefore, crimes of corruption, involving public officials, almost always involve land development. The paper concluded that the corrupt activities of the public officials in land development only make the problem of spiralling land prices worse because ultimately the general public, the property buyers, are the ones who suffer as they have to pay much higher prices for accommodation.

South Metropolitan Daily further explained the complexity of political and economic environment in the context of land development. Essentially local authorities are guided by Central State or Provincial Authorities on planning regulations and are thus the planning authority in their locality. However, the property developers are aware that demand for properties in city centres is higher than the supply and they need to gain construction licences from local public officials. Consequently, planning regulations in city centres provide increased opportunities for public officials to accept bribes in return for either under-priced land or construction permits.

In summary, the investigative coverage of *South Metropolitan Daily* emphasized the causes of corruption in local and state authorities and problems legally, politically and economically. The newspaper also explained that future anti-corruption measures will

⁵ http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200109/28/eng20010928_81230.html

focus on land development, because there are there both economic problems and also possible social unrest created by this type of corruption.

China Youth Daily and Legal Daily

China Youth Daily and *Legal Daily* are subscription newspapers [i.e. readers cannot buy them at street news-stands]. The vast majority of their subscribers are public offices. There are two pieces of coverage in *Living News* [and other newspapers in the sample] from *Legal Daily* and *China Youth Daily*. The first article refers to the routes of flight of corrupt Yunnan officials; and that 84 officials suspected of corruption have fled overseas. The second article is *China Youth Daily's* investigative coverage of Hu Xing's arrest in Singapore and extradition to China. Almost all newspapers used *China Youth Daily's* coverage at the same time.

The coverage of *Legal Daily* on 15 February, 2007 explains how police authorities attempt to apprehend and arrest suspects when they flee abroad. The coverage of *China Youth Daily* on 29 April, 2007 reports the details of Hu Xing's arrest and return from Singapore. The headline is '*Corruption giant, Hu Xing, is arrested in Singapore*'. The special coverage deliberately exposes the bravery of the police officers in the dangerous process of arresting and extraditing Hu Xing. The style of the coverage is similar to a drama documentary film.

The *China Youth Daily* news story has three parts, beginning with the facts of Hu Xing's crime, followed by his dramatic flight and ending with the police officers' heroic achievements in Singapore.

The first part is according to a media conference held in Yunnan, at which new details about the crime emerged. Hu Xing used his power to give his relatives great benefits in land development, has a mistress and a son by the mistress and had provided the mistress with properties in Kunming and another city. At the media conference it transpires that the Disciplinary Committee of Yunnan had decided to take away Hu Xing's CPC and administrative positions. The first step of the investigation and sentence of Hu Xing is therefore taken by the CPC administration and not in a court of law or by the Procuratorate⁶.

The new details relating to Hu Xing's flight to Singapore involve his co-conspirators. Hu's subordinate, Zheng Hua, was arrested and Hu's younger brother, Hu Bing was censored by the Procurator. Hu Bing decided to flee abroad. Hu Bing's younger brother, Hu Bo,

⁶ See Glossary - Procuratorate

who had immigrated to Canada several years earlier, returned to Kunming with a forged passport for Hu Bing and the brothers fled abroad together. The narrative of *China Youth Daily* is like a suspense movie, *'a suspect is being arrested by the police, at that moment, he just plans to give Hu Xing bribes in the parking place. Hu Xing hides himself in a dark corner and see the whole process, suddenly, he understands he is in trouble.'* The coverage uses a lot of narrative sentences and dialogues. For example, when Hu Xing's mistress, Ms Lou, returned from Hong Kong, Jiang Ping, a police officer, arrested her in ShenZhen.

'He runs quickly when Lou is coming, and arrests her at the barrier' the article states. At the moment of the arrest, Jiang asks Lou directly *'Did you see him?'* Lou says *'No, I read the news of [Hu Bing] wanted in Hong Kong's newspaper and was very scared. So, I decided to come back.'*

The most dramatic coverage is the reportage of how Jiang, in Singapore, persuades Hu to come back to China with him. Jiang, for example, recalls the final moments and a key phone call in Singapore.

At the last moment, Jiang calls Hu's room number and says

'Are you Hu Xing?' Hu: *'Who are you?'*

Jiang: *'I am the police leader of Yunnan.'*

Hu: *'Oh! I know you.'*

Jiang: *'Singapore police surround you now and the police of Yunnan are outside with them. I am the representative of the party leader in Yunnan. Haven't you called the party leader in Yunnan just a moment ago?'*

Hu keeps silence.

Jiang: *'I know your room number is 1750 in Florence hotel. I know you are collecting your package now. Do not move. I warn you. Otherwise, you will be in trouble.'*

Hu is terrified. He has no idea about how seriously the police are monitoring him. *'I do not plan to flee away I am just collecting my books.'*

Jiang: *'If you leave the room, I will arrest you as you use the fake passport. According to the Law of Singapore, you will be punished by cane then sent to the police of China.'*

Hu continually keeps silence.

Jiang: *'If you would like to talk with me, the crime for which you fled abroad won't be punished.'*

'I feel Hu almost crashed down in spirit.'

The article presented Jiang as a representative of the state authorities and that it was due to his hard work and the intelligence to negotiate with Hu Xing that enabled him to catch him abroad in a dangerous situation.

All the newspapers in the analysis use this news story from *China Youth Daily* on 29 April 2007. This coverage occurs more than two months after Hu Xing's arrest in Singapore. This story is released now rather than a reportage of Hu Xing's first appearance in court, even so this story does not question the right to prejudge this crime. Moreover, the style of the article is similar to the tabloids using such tactics as individuality, entertainment and the dramatic tales.

Xinhua News Agency and Local Papers

The news resources for Xinhua and consequently for the local Kunming papers are mostly official news and straight news from the court. For example, on 30 April 2007 (the day after coverage of Hu's arrest and extradition), Xinhua released a piece of official news, which explained the four conditions which result in public officials who break the rules being dismissed or punished by prison. First, a riot happens due to an official's irresponsibility; second, illegal overseas visits; third, the officer takes bribes from others; fourth, they have any outside business interests.

Coverage in the local newspapers after 29 April used the official news releases from the court. However, Hu Xing's trial lasts for just seven hours on 6 July 2007. The court then takes a further month to assess the punishment that Hu has incurred. The Central Ministry of Justice judges deliver their ruling on Hu's punishment in the space of twenty minutes on 8 August 2007. The Judges argue that Hu Xing's corruption involves the biggest sum of money the history of corruption in China, which would warrant the death sentence. But because Hu Xing surrendered voluntarily to the police and returned the money from the bribes, the Judges commute Hu Xing's death sentence to 18 years imprisonment.

The coverage Xinhua's in releases, and therefore of the local newspapers, does not go into the detail about the process of the court judgement and their investigation, or even question the reasonableness of Hu Xing's punishment.

In summary, three approaches explain the representation of this corruption event in three news resources. First, *South Metropolitan Daily* represents the dual problems inherent with economic development. Although Central State Authorities want to stabilize the inflationary disorder of economic development, local officials authorise city planning projects in collaboration with property developers in return for substantial bribes. Since

local government finances need, even depend on, revenue from land development deals, this field has become the most serious corruption problem within Government. Second, *China Youth Daily* focuses on the efforts of the Government and police officers to ensure justice was applied. The coverage not only represents the context of whole event but also coincides with society's feelings and expectations. Third there is the representation by Xinhua and the local papers. They normally represent the 'objective truth' and the authorities' standing. In other words, these three dimensions construct the picture of this news event in unison and positively present the efforts of the State Authorities to punish corrupt officials.

The Popular Press Coverage

Living News and Yunnan Info Daily

Living News, out of all Kunming's Popular Press, is the paper which provides the most coverage of Hu Xin's corruption. *Living News* focuses on this event from the beginning through to the end. Although the paper's main news source is Xinhua, the paper does use *South Metropolitan Daily* and *China Youth Daily* for reporting sensitive issues. *Living News* sought an alternative perspective to the story using human interest stories. The paper interviewed Hu Xin's family and his mother for private stories relating to Hu Xing. This is a typical tactic of tabloids.

Yunnan Info Daily's coverage is not much less than *Living News*. *Yunnan Info Daily* has a similar background with *Living News* in that they do not belong to an official organ and both are substantially independent. *Yunnan Info Daily* also reported the news from the beginning. Like *Living News*, *Yunnan Info Daily* carried out on-the-spot reporting of news at the court but did not conduct interviews with Hu's family.

Spring City Evening and City Times

The extent and pattern of the coverage of *Spring City Evening*⁷ and *City Times*, reflects their ownership with Yunnan Provincial Government and Kunming City Government, respectively. Prior to Hu admitting his crime the coverage from both papers was scant, but

⁷ The databases of archived news of both Spring City Evening and Yunnan Info Daily are not complete, but still clearly show the differences between the popular press and party press in Kunming as with the press in Beijing.

after 7 July their coverage became extensive with most being related to releases issued from the court.

The two days that defined the news coverage of Hu Xing's corruption were 29 April and 7 July, 2007. On 7 July, the day Hu Xin admitted his guilt, all the newspapers (Party Press and Popular Press) released this news event. Indeed from 7 July onwards most papers provided daily coverage with many using their own reporters rather than outside news sources like Xinhua.

The Party Press Coverage

Kunming Daily and Yunnan Daily

There are two main Party Papers, *Yunnan Daily* and *Kunming Daily*. *Kunming Daily* paid more attention to this event than *Yunnan Daily*. The coverage in *Kunming Daily* is similar to its daughter Popular Paper, *City Times*. Although most of its coverage is straight news or official news at the beginning, after the court hearing proceedings on 7 July, the paper also frequently uses on-the-spot reporting of news from the court. As this criminal event happened in Kunming City, the Party Organ of Kunming City has more coverage than its Popular Paper. This situation is very similar with the subway disaster event in Beijing. The space devoted to coverage in *Beijing Daily* was greater than its subordinate paper, *Beijing Evening*. Both of them, *Kunming Daily* and *Beijing Daily*, represent the standing of Local Authorities in the news event that happened within their city. *Yunnan Daily* keeps to the line of the Authorities, just using straight news, making no attempt to do any further analysis or reporting.

Briefly, from this case study, the independent Popular Papers, *Living News* and *Yunnan Info Daily* explored this sensitive event more aggressively than other papers representing Party Organs, although they also used other news resources such as *China Youth Daily*, *South Metropolitan Daily*, etc.. The local newspapers did not report this event by conducting their own investigations at the beginning, but chose to instead directly publish outside newspapers reports. Nevertheless, this corruption news event was a very important and eye-catching event in Kunming. The presentation of the Popular Papers reflects not only the importance of Hu Xin's story in a Kunming context, but also the need to maintain the Party Line when publishing sensitive news. Therefore, they use other news resources to report the crime until the Authorities, through Xinhua, release the official version of the news. Once the news is officially in the open, the papers expand their coverage using a mixture of on-the-spot news reporting and official news issued from the court.

Traffic Accident

The traffic accident in the city centre Dong Feng Square, in Kunming on 25 February 2006, is essentially a piece of trivial news. Dong Feng Square is however located in a busy central shopping area, and therefore, there were many witnesses. . The accident caused four deaths and dozens of injured, many of whom were local people. The driver who caused the accident was a government employee with 22 years of driving experience. At his trial he claimed diminished responsibility as he was mentally ill and was allowed to leave the court, unpunished. The process of the investigation and the trial were sufficiently controversial to turn a piece of trivial news into a major news event.

Three approaches that the papers employed to provide coverage have been selected in order to map the press reportage of the event. The three approaches are: breaking news from eye-witnesses, the narrative of victims and public officials' descriptions. The first two have an element of human interest and are emotionally evocative while the third provides the viewpoint of the Local Authorities. The local newspapers had conflicting tasks to manage. On the one hand they had to look after their credibility and the general public's emotions while on the other they needed to meet the requirements of the Local Government.



Figures 12a and 12b: Dong Feng Square Traffic Accident. Source: Living News

The Breaking News from Witness

The accident occurred at approximately 19.50 in the evening of 25 February 2006. There was a great many people present in the square and on adjoining streets or waiting for a bus.

	PARTY PRESS		POPULAR PRESS			
Press Group ¹	A	B	A	B	C	D
Newspaper	Yunnan Daily	Kunming Daily	Spring City Evening	City Times	Living News	Yunnan Info Daily
26/02/2006	A1: straight official news		Headline, spot news, interview, 6 pictures		A1: headline, 3 picture A3: 2 spot news, 3 interviews, 1 picture A4: 7 pictures	
27/02/2006	A1: straight official news		Interview injured people, picture		A1: headline A2: 2 official news, 1 spot news, 1 interview, 2 pictures	
01/03/2006					A13: official news	
06/03/2006					A12: official news	
04/04/2006					A17: official news	
08/06/2006			Interview injured people, picture			
12/06/2006					A5: relative official news	
26/07/2006				A1: headline A12: straight news, interview, 1 picture	A1: headline, 1 picture A18: 1 straight news, 1 investigative news, 1 review, 2 pictures	Straight news, investigative news, interview injured people, picture
27/07/2006		A1: headline, 1 picture A6: spot news from the court. 2 pictures	Official news	A1: headline, 1 picture A9: spot news from the court, 1 picture A10: spot news from the court, 1 picture A11: spot news from the court, 1 picture	A1: headline, 1 picture A4: spot news in court, 2 pictures A7: 1 interview, straight news, investigative news, 1 picture A8-9: investigative news, 5 pictures A10: 8 pictures	2 Investigative news, picture, spot news from the court, critical review
16/08/2006				A1: headline	A1: headline A10: straight news, 1 picture	
01/12/2006					A17: straight news	
02/12/2006		A3: straight news from the court			A14: straight news from the court, 1 picture	
30/12/2006			Straight news from the court			

Table 16: Kunming Newspaper Coverage, 26th February to 30th December 2006 of Traffic Accident in Dong Feng Square

The key witness, Mr. Zhang, said a black car drove past him as he walked beside the Beijing Road going to the railway station. Suddenly, he realized two women, four to five metres behind him, had been knocked to the ground by the car. But the black car did not stop but instead went faster. Mr. Zhang shouted at the car to stop: 'You've crashed into walking people. Stop, Stop!' Mr Zhang was about to call the police when he heard the sound of a crash as the car collided with the stone sculpture in the square. After the collision, there were many injured people around the square. One victim lay on the ground behind the car and there were two more bodies of victims on the ground between the car and the stone sculpture. The fatalities shocked the many witnesses around the square as the examples show:

'How horrible! The car drove very fast towards the bus stop and crashed into many people, one person was hit and thrown into the air. So many people were shocked and shouting in fear.'

(Mr. Zhang)

'There were many people standing on the bus stop and some rode bicycles beside the road. The car crashed into the side road suddenly. Many people had no idea what's wrong with it and were thrown to the ground or into the air immediately.'

(anonymous witness)

'The male driver sat there without moving and his female friend next to him crying loudly. A man opened the door to have a look then closed it. The police took the driver and his female friend away later.'

(anonymous witness)

Later, journalists soon went to the square and saw the haste of the rescue operation.

'The police cars became the rescue cars and were busy driving the injured victims from the square to the hospital. Hundreds of people worked there in haste. ...Many public officials also come to the place to direct the rescue works in a hurry.'

The newspapers, from these different perspectives, reconstructed the sequence of events for the incident from the witnesses: The newspapers were able to recreate the incident from the beginning. These vivid pictures (*Figures 12a and 12b*) and the eye-witness accounts cause the readers recall the incident [even if they were not there].

However, the approach of eye-witness descriptions uses a lot of publication space to illustrate what happened rather than investigating the driver who caused so many deaths and injuries. The public officials held a media conference immediately after the crash, but they only emphasized the efficiency of the action to rescue the injured and made a promise to investigate this event. There were many questions unanswered at the conference and in the coverage – e.g. Who took the driver away? What happened at the police station the driver was taken to?

The Narrative of The Victims

The narratives of the victims do not provide any investigation of the incident, but do provide more detail of the event and the condition of the injured through pictures and descriptions. They also provoke the sympathy of the readers. For example: *'a seven-year-old girl cried loudly because her aunt was knocked to the ground and lost a lot of blood in the accident. She [the 7 year old girl] cannot imagine her aunt's promise to buy a pretty dress for her is the aunt's last words in her life or that their separation is forever.'* This is the leading sentence in the coverage.

There are many victims' stories in all the newspapers and they all present a tragic side to the accident: *'the most serious injured victim lost her intelligence and can not recognize her six-year-old daughter. She just sits on the wheelchair with her bare head and senseless eyes.'* In the accompanying photograph, her daughter sits next to her and looks so helpless. The other female victim comes from a remote and poor village. *'Her broken leg and pelvis and numbers of injuries means she does not even have the energy to feed herself. She is her parents hope and expects to improve their poor life but this accident throws her life into disorder.'* Although there are no questions about the official investigation of this accident at the beginning of their coverage, the newspapers used these emotional and evocative stories to embed the accident in the readers' minds and to look for a justice. Sooner or later [after five months] the driver was due be sentenced in court.

Crucially, these tragic stories allowed the newspapers to negotiate with the Judge for space in the court for newspapers. Instead of writing any reviews of, or conducting investigation into, the Local Government, the papers concentrated on the narratives of the victims. For example on 26 July 2007, the day the driver sentenced for the first time, *Living News* used a lot of column space to describe the emotional and evocative stories of the victims, recalling their memories from five months earlier.

After the court found the driver not guilty because he was mentally ill, the newspapers published the responses of the relatives of the victims immediately. On 27 July 2006, the coverage also included the attitudes of the driver's colleagues and the victims towards the judgment. The relatives of the victims said: *'we do believe there is a big problem of this claim.'* The lawyer explained: *'this is a crime of manslaughter. [The penalty for] disturbing public safety should be a sentence of death.'*

The headline of the coverage was a direct quote from the parents of the youngest victim, a 16 year old, outside the court: *'What's wrong with it? We wait 151 days for justice and get the opposite result.'* The coverage also published many different portraits of victims

with their stories. The judgment that the driver was mentally ill caused an additional blow to the loss suffered by the victims' relations. There is another page publishing dramatic pictures of the victims, a big portrait of a young girl shows her with tears in her eyes. Other small portraits have different people in tears. The editor gave this page a shock headline: *'Sadness, Justice.'* The journalist wrote: *'I explore and visit the different victims and their families and find this tragic hurt still exist in their minds. They do believe the justice of the law will come true....'*

These narratives of the victims not only appealed to the sympathy of the readers but also helped in the fight to overturn the release of the driver. However, all the questions concerning the driver and this judgment were still not answered.

The Public Officials' Descriptions

The Local Government held a media conference very soon after the accident at about 12:50 on 26 February 2006. The Mayor of Kunming City apologized and expressed his sympathy to all the victims and their relatives, and then promised to find the truth of what had happened and to punish the suspected driver.

On 6 March 2006, the police authority announced the suspected driver had been arrested.

On 4 April 2006, the court accused the suspected driver for the crime of disturbing public safety.

Then on 26 July 2006, there was a dramatic shift in the official line, in that the suspected driver had on two prior occasions been declared mentally ill. This revelation became the crucial point in the sentencing by the court. The press coverage followed the process of the debates in the court. The driver worked in the public office for many years and was trusted by many high level officials. The driver insisted that he had no personal conflicts but felt someone was following him and could not sleep. The reason for his lack of sleep was that his 'boss' had asked him to borrow a large amount of money from friends, which he could not afford to do. The driver said he was afraid the 'boss' would punish him so he had decided to commit a major crime to fight with his 'boss'. Since 2005, the driver had felt someone was always following him, and for that reason the car accident happened. He even emphasized the plan to crash into more people to make the biggest accident at that moment.

The most interesting aspect of the driver's testimony is the reducing of the seriousness of the crime to being just a traffic accident not a disturbance of public safety. The driver

clearly points out his crime is not a big crime but a small one. Finally he said: *'I am innocent though feel sorry for causing offense to these victims. But someone put poison on my house, I am also a victim.'* This coverage presented the last minutes of the court.

On 1 December 2006, the court again found the driver was mentally ill and set him free. The press coverage no longer represented the questions from the relatives of the victims or their comments. The coverage only presents straight news. Almost after nine months after the accident occurred, this incident was still controversial because there had been so many witnesses.

In summary, although this event left many questions unanswered, the victims were powerless and had no further avenues to challenge the Authorities. This event led to many victims, including the suspected driver, who had said he was *'also a victim.'* This may explain why the newspapers did not criticise him continually. The different approaches of the coverage explored this news event presenting the struggles that the journalists, the victims and the suspected driver had with the Local Authorities. The court legitimized this controversial event, but it also was abused by the power of the Authorities as many people did not accept the lack of a conviction. This case illustrates the powerlessness of the general public and the impossibility of disagreeing with powerful Authorities although there were so many witnesses. The argument of the Authorities may be summed up as the truth must be retrieved rather than witnessed.

The Popular Press Coverage

Living News and Yunnan Info Daily

Living News reported about this accident from the first day. There was initially a piece of what seemed local trivial news mentioning that several people suffered injuries. *Living News* then conducted the on-the-spot interviews with witnesses to trace back the whole incident. The Paper sided with the victims and their relatives. For example, on the first day, the major headline was '26 people hit by a car'. The Paper then continually reported the tragedies and suffering of the people in this traffic incident with many pictures to express and touch the emotional feeling within its readership. The first days' on-the-spot interviews are an exception because this accident was 'sensitive' news for the Authorities. Consequently *Living News* used many official resources before the first court hearing on 27 July.

Yunnan Info Daily also devoted a large amount of space to trace this event. The paper even had a headline asking: 'Can a madman drive for officials in Government?' as a criticism of the outcome of the court. On the other hand, *Yunnan Info Daily* also used the tactic of highly emotive human interest stories, similar to *Living News*. *Yunnan Info Daily*, for example, told the story of a 22 year victim who was in coma for 22 days. *Yunnan Info Daily* even asked the driver many questions about the absurd process that occurred at the first hearing of the court.

City Times and Spring City Evening

Spring City Evening's coverage begins on the first day with on-the-spot reporting of the news and photographs. As the archived databases available of news is incomplete for this publication further comparison with the other papers in this sample is not possible. The coverage by *City Times* is notable for its greater use of on-the-spot news, although the extent of its coverage is less than those of either *Living News* or *Yunnan Info Daily*.

In other words, Kunming's Popular Papers which belong to Official Organs (i.e. *Spring City Evening* and *City Times*) provided less coverage than their competitors. Nevertheless these two papers release a news notice of the court hearing the day before; whereas the Party newspapers only reported on the first hearing, the day after.

The Party Press Coverage

Kunming Daily and Yunnan Daily

As Party Papers, their coverage reflects their ownership by Party Organs and rely on straight news to explain the news event. Neither paper conducts any investigations or interviews the witnesses, victims or relatives. While many local people were victims of the accident, the Party Papers still followed the accepted reportage strategy of using official news resources, as the *Kunming Daily*, or like the *Yunnan Daily* did.

Briefly, in their coverage of this local news event, the Popular newspapers try to emphasise the unfairness of the Legal System on the general public. Also, the Popular newspapers such as *Living News* and *Yunnan Info Daily* pay more attention to the victims and the ordinary people. The Popular Papers also used many photo images of victims and injured people to highlight the event and to bring into question the unreasonableness or unfairness of the lack of a criminal conviction. The coverage of this local news event emphasises the different positions the Popular Papers and Party Papers take in covering sensitive events.

	PARTY PRESS		POPULAR PRESS			
Press Group ¹	A	B	A	B	C	D
Newspaper	Yunnan Daily	Kunming Daily	Spring City Evening	City Times	Living News	Yunnan Info Daily
04/06/2007	1: straight news, 1 picture 2: 2 spot news, 1 straight news, 1 picture	A1: headline news, 1 picture from Xinhua A2: straight news, 1 picture		A1: headline, picture A2: picture, chart, 4 straight news, spot news A4: 5 pictures, straight news, spot news A5: 4 pictures, interview	A1: headline news, picture A3: spot news from Xinhua, 1 picture A4: spot news, picture A5: spot news, 2 pictures A6: 6 spot pictures	
05/06/2007	1: 4 official news, 1 picture 2: spot news, straight news, official news, 1 picture	A3: official news, 1 picture, spot news and relative news		A3: picture, 5 official news, news analysis A4: picture, 6 straight news A5: picture, spot news from Xinhua news A6: picture, 3 spot news from Xinhua news	A1: headline picture A25: news story A26-27: investigative news, interview, straight news, pictures A28: spot pictures	
06/06/2007	1: spot news, 1 picture 2: 1 spot news, 1 official news, 7 straight news, 1 picture	A1: official news A4: spot news, 1 picture		A1: headline, A7: picture, spot news	A1: headline A3-4: spot news, straight news, pictures	
07/06/2007	1: spot news, 1 picture 2: spot news, 1 picture 3: 4 official news, straight news	A1: headline, spot news from Xinhua, a feature A4: straight news, spot news		A1: headline, picture A3: picture, spot news from Xinhua, interview	A1: headline picture A3: spot news from Xinhua, picture A6: straight news, picture	
08/06/2007	1: official news 3: special report, 1 picture, 2 official news, 3 straight news	A1: headline A2: official news A4: 2 spot news, 1 picture		A1: headline picture A9: 2 pictures, spot news, 2 straight news	A10: straight news	
09/06/2007	1: 3 official news 2: special report, 1 picture, 2 official news					
10/06/2007	2: special report, 1 picture, 1 official news, 3 straight news	A2: spot news, 1 picture				
11/06/2007	2: special report, 1 picture, 4 straight news	A3: 2 spot news, 1 picture				

12/06/2007	1: special news, 1 picture					
13/06/2007	1: 3 official news, 1 straight news 2: 2 official news, 2 straight news, spot news, 2 picture					
14/06/2007	1: 2 official news, 1 straight news, 1 picture					
15/08/2007					A17: straight news	
19/08/2007					A4: straight news A11: straight news	
24/08/2007					A19: straight news	
29/08/2007					A19: straight news, picture	

Table 17: Kunming Newspaper Coverage, 4th June to 29th August 2007 of Pu'er Earthquake

Earthquake

The city of Pu'er in Southern Yunnan is recovering from an earthquake yesterday that registered 6.4 on the Richter Scale. Three people died, more than 300 were injured and 120,000 have been evacuated after their homes collapsed or suffered damage from the quake, according to a press release by the Red Cross Society of China.⁸

This earthquake happened in the early morning of 3rd June 2007 while many people were still asleep. Most of the houses collapsed in this rural area, communication networks broke down with water and power supplies also affected. The region surrounding Pu'er City is famous as a tea growing region in Yunnan Province.

The timing of this earthquake provided the press coverage with a 'weird' but unique opportunity to break one of the most taboo conventions in China. Newspaper headlines including the figures 6.4 have been banned in China since the political incident of using the People's Liberation Army to end the peaceful protest in Tiananmen Square on 4.6.1989 [the American Date format is 6.4.1989]. The first opportunity for press coverage of this particular 6.4 magnitude earthquake on 3rd June, 2007 occurred the following day – 4th June, 2007 [4.6.2007]. Some of the Press, particularly the Popular and progressive newspapers such as *South Metropolitan Daily*, *Living News*, and *Yunnan Information Daily* used '6.4' in their front page headlines for the first time in eighteen years. These headlines were a distinct embarrassment to China's Government.

This news event has double significance, on the one hand it is the coincidental timing with the Tiananmen Square Incident anniversary; on the other hand, it happens in a commercial city famed for its tea trade. I analyzed the coverage of this news event at two levels to look for the use of power as well as the conflict between political and commercial perspectives. The coverage of this natural disaster was a distinct contrast to the coverage of the man-made disaster of Dong Feng Square. The coverage of the aftermath of the earthquake emphasized the happiness of the survivors and the harmony of the society in pulling together to overcome the disaster. The coverage implied the Government Authorities made a huge effort to help the victims of the earthquake.

⁸ <http://www.gokunming.com/en/blog/item/292/>



Figures 13a and 13b: Pu'er Earthquake Source: Living News

Atmosphere of Social Harmony After The Earthquake

On 4 June, 2007, the headline of the Living News was 'Villagers rescue a couple from collapsed wall using their hands.' The subtitle is 'There are many touching stories in the scene of quake.' The journalist went to the scene and many villagers said 'we should make efforts by ourselves instead of waiting for Government's rescue as we can not give the Authorities any burden.' The coverage presents how the victims behaved. Another piece of news said 'There are many tents located in the central square of the city under the strong sunshine with doctors busy curing people in the temporary rescue center tents. Although victims need emergency medical attention, they do not fight with each other to ask for attention first they even let others go first with civility.' The coverage tried to map the harmony amongst the victims in the quake disaster.

Other touching stories in this tragic event are told by the survivors. For example, a collapsed wall buried a five-year-old boy. His parents and neighbors used their hands to dig him out; but unfortunately it was too late, the child had died. The report said, 'His father cries and shouts out his nickname loudly, however, it still can not bring him back. Forever this small boy can not see his father again.' Another case was luckier because the grandmother was rescued by her ten-year-old granddaughter, who also used her hands to dig her grandmother out. 'Grandma! Grandma!' this little girl cries out and keeps digging through the dust to find her grandma.... This grandmother tells her story again and again how wonderful and intelligent that her granddaughter saved her life.' Another lucky grandmother told her story, 'My son is a dutiful child. He carried me on his back and ran out while the quake shook. My son saved my life.' These families' stories came from the tents where victims were asked to recall the scene of the earthquake. The coverage

presents intimate feelings from humans in family settings and the need for urgency. The coverage also presents the harmonious atmosphere within families and the villages.

Four days after the earthquake the entrance examinations for university were due and many of the examinees had been affected by the disaster. Therefore, the headlines of the coverage gave calming messages: *'The voices of reading [sounding] like a recital spread out from the tents'* or, *'The rights of the examinees will not be affected by the quake.'* This coverage, again, was aimed at maintaining a sense of harmony at the scene of the quake. Students remained calm and kept up their studies not being put off from attending the examination. Indeed, education officials arranged an temporary emergency location, at which 679 examinees attended the entrance examination on 7 June 2007.

Overall, the coverage from the area of the disaster presents an atmosphere of orderliness, happiness and civilization. The impression is not one of a disaster causing a great deal of infrastructural damage, death and injury. The coverage is a model of propaganda. As the area of quake is rural, most houses are structurally very weak and damaged easily by any earthquake. However, the coverage did not question the safety of the construction of either residential housing or public buildings. There were at least three high schools and three primary schools in the area, all of which collapsed in the quake. This sort of coverage is typical for disasters in contemporary China.

The Narratives of The Authorities

According to the straight news release by Xinhua News Agency on the day after the quake, luminaries of the Central State Authority such as President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and Vice-Premier Hui Liangyu had asked Yunnan Provincial Government to take responsibility in making every effort to help all the survivors return to their normal lives as soon as possible. Moreover, the Governor of Yunnan Province told the people in the quake area that the Local Authorities had to ensure everyone had food and accommodation.

The Governor said: *'All brothers! The quake is a natural disaster. We will make every effort to battle with it and rescue all the victims. The Government will help you to rebuild your collapsed houses. The aims of the more than twenty [high ranking public officials] leaders in Yunnan Local Government [who have] come here to do favors for you....'*

Earthquakes are a frequent occurrence in China⁹. The earthquake at Pu'er was quite minor, in terms of fatalities, building damage and homelessness. A recent quake on May

⁹ See <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/regional/world/china/seismicity.php> for a map of seismic activity in China 1900-2006)

12, 2008 in the Sichuan Province of China killed approximately 75,000, destroyed at least 500,000 properties and left about 5 million people homeless¹⁰. The rapid response from the Central Authorities was quite unusual for a minor quake. Three days after the quake, the Premier of the State Council, Wen Jiabao, visited Pu'er. He not only visited the homeless survivors that were living in tents but also taught a class of students in a temporary classroom. The headline of the coverage was *'The Premier writes down seven words "keep your indomitable back straight" on the blackboard.'* Two large photographs show the Premier smiling and holding a baby in his hands within a tent, and also with his shirt-sleeves rolled-up to teach in the temporary classroom. The messages of these pictures are to show the Central Authorities deep concern for the victims and the Authorities efforts to help them. The coverage also revealed the survivors' response to the visits. For example, a report told of a visit to a tent with three elders in by the Premier. The Premier asked them *'did the Government give you food? Aren't you hungry during this time?'* *'Yes, yes, we have rice and water everyday...'* an elder replied. After the visit this elder told the journalist, *'when I hold the Premier's hand, I feel a so warm heart.'*

Moreover, the coverage focuses on the Premier teaching the students from Xin Ping Primary School, which had most of their buildings collapse. It was the most seriously damaged school in the quake. He encouraged those students to overcome the challenge of the disaster with a two minute long talk. He gave them these words *'will, faith, and courage'*. Then the coverage related, *'The Premier holds these children sending courage to them.'* These vivid dialogues and coverage present the image of a socially responsible Government but do not reflect or question the safety of public buildings. The earthquake fortunately happened in the early morning rather than during the class time, otherwise, a great many students might have been hurt.

Since Pu'er is a tea growing region in Yunnan with a nationwide and international reputation, the quake also damaged the tea plantations as well as production plants. Some of the coverage focused on the effect of the quake on the economy of the region. Interestingly, just prior to the quake, the price of Pu'er tea was falling. June is the month that the summer tea is picked in Pu'er. Tea growers, producers and traders all took advantage of the press coverage as an alternative form of advertising to promote Pu'er tea and to stimulate the market.

In summary, the narrative of the authorities aims to show that the Government responded both promptly and responsibly to the earthquake and managed to maintain the harmonious aspect of society. The coverage is a carbon-copy of the prototype propaganda model in China, which ignores any controversial issues while focusing on only positive aspects. This earthquake did not cause serious damage or a huge number of

¹⁰ <http://www.drgeorgepc.com/Earthquake2008ChinaSichuan.html>

fatalities, unlike the Chengdu earthquake in 2008 (*see footnote 10*) Consequently the rescue and recovery operations conducted by the Central Authorities did not face too much of a challenge to their efficiency. Nevertheless, Premier Wen Jiabao does seem to take advantage of the press coverage during his visit not only to promote the efficient and caring response by the Central Authorities but also his own brand of Populist Politics.

The Popular Press Coverage

Living News and City Times

The pattern of *Living News*' coverage (*Table 17*) was to devote a lot of space to reporting this earthquake in the first four days; during which time most of the coverage came from on-the-spot news reports and interviews, with lots of pictures. After the Premier's visit, most of the news is sourced from the Xinhua News Agency. Moreover, although *Living News* continues to report the earthquake, the focus is on the relief donations from business organizations. This coverage of the donations continues until the end of August.

The pattern of coverage in *City Times* is similar, but less extensive, to *Living News*. Major differences exist mainly in the use of 'interviews'. It could be argued that as *City Times* is based in Kunming, the paper could not afford to send reporters to Pu'er to interview the survivors. On the other hand this disparity between the use of the interview technique may reflect a difference in the agenda for the two newspapers.

It is not possible to include the coverage of *Yunnan Info Daily* and *Spring City Evening*, as their archived databases of reports (*see footnote 7*) were not sufficient and incomplete.

The Party Press Coverage

Kunming Daily and Yunnan Daily

Yunnan Daily earthquake coverage releases are even more prolific than the Popular Press. It traces the daily Official news on scene and makes several special reports to emphasise how the Officials, the police, the troops or Local Party Leaders work hard. Other straight news focuses on the donations from the private or semi-official enterprises. The report on *Yunnan Daily* repeats about the rescue work from the Government, the Party, and the Authorities that was done well. Also covered are the donations and support that comes from different social organizations. It is apparent, the earthquake coverage in *Yunnan Daily* is such it reads like a [self promoting] Government working report rather than true news coverage.

Kunming Daily's coverage was daily and while it continues beyond *City Times'* daily coverage it was not as long as *Living News'* coverage. *Kunming Daily* which relies on Official news and releases, from Xinhua, also included donation news in their continuation of the coverage after the Premier's visit. In a comparison with the Popular Press, the coverage in *Kunming Daily* is not as detailed; nevertheless the coverage is sufficiently extensive to be considered remarkable for the Party Press. One explanation is that as this event proved to be good propaganda material in promoting positive values it was not deemed to be 'sensitive' news; so *Kunming Daily* was duty bound to continue with its coverage [and the promotion of the Central Authorities.]

In summary, as this earthquake was not a major disaster and proved to be good propaganda [i.e. was not deemed to be sensitive news,] the Popular Press and Party Press release almost the same coverage content, for example the Premier's visit and the relief donations. Prior to the Premier's visit the Popular Press provide on-the-spot news reports and interviews; but after the Premier's visit both categories of newspapers use the news releases from Xinhua. The argument for this across the board act of control [censorship] may be that the Central Authorities had no wish for any of the Popular Press to interfere with the propagandist strategy by raising such issues as public building regulations in the public sphere.

Conclusion

The majority of arguments about China's media contend that the Central State Authorities remain, at best, a basic form of interference while the media market has developed commercially. Newspapers, in the three case studies, are shown to have a dual challenge. They not only need to maintain their credibility with their audience [which is directly linked to sales and profitability], but they also need to promote the position of the Authorities. Indeed, both the newspapers and the authorities coincidentally use the same tactics of human interest stories to appeal to the emotions of the general public and divert their attention from more serious problems to a simple emotional narrative.

The analysis of these case studies has found that, as the State Authorities are pre-eminent in providing both the political infrastructure and any press coverage information which always gives Public Officials a positive image. For example, in the case of Hu Xing's corruption, the coverage gives Jiang Ping, the police officer, the image of a hero. The coverage uses Jiang's self narrative to explore the process of his actions in Singapore. A similar example in the case of the Pu'er Earthquake occurs when the Premier, Wen Jiabao, asked the students to have 'will and faith' to overcome the natural disaster. The purpose of including Wen Jiabao's encouragement and smile is to deflect any attention away from questioning the Government's administration. This type of manipulation comes from the domination of the State Authorities and the negation of 'others', i.e. absence of fact, or as in the traffic accident the absence of a criminal conviction. The balance of power between the State Authorities and the general public is seriously unequal and uneven.

Further more, the ideological 'mind control' means the approach of the emotional discourse and discursive manipulation dominates this analysis. The truth is mapped by many individual stories and characters. Stories appealing to the readers' emotions are a typical discourse approach within the coverage of all the newspapers. For instance, the victims' self-rescue stories from the earthquake showing their bravery, fortitude and communal behavior, in the face of a disaster, appeals to the reader's emotions. The same applies to the story of the students overcoming the earthquake's interruption in order to attend the university entrance examination as usual. The coverage does not allow disorder to mar the atmosphere of the scene. However, when the coverage of a disaster, like the traffic accident, includes a lot of images of the dead and injured at the scene, this is manipulative. The ideological mind control is not always effective, but the strategy of the coverage being manipulative or emotionally evocative, has the same aim; to gain more sympathy from their readers. The narratives of the individuals involved in all these stories serve a single purpose. No one knows the truth of the whole story because only through compiling these individual and fragmented stories can an image of the truth be possibly achieved.

Finally, in the social aspects of the coverage, the 'other' is negative in appearance within the coverage but is actually the ally of the Power or Authority. In other words, the 'other' equates to absence. The most obvious case is in the traffic event. Although the coverage and the driver's testimony in court portray him as a criminally minded social misfit, the Judge defines him as a mentally ill patient and sets him free instead of sentencing him to death. Basically, there are many questions regarding the driver's provocation left unanswered. A key aspect is how a professional driver who has a history of mental illness can be in Government Service for more than twenty years? Even in the case of Hu Xing, who is portrayed to be a 'Giant Corruption' in the history of corruption within contemporary China's; yet, the process of Hu's sentence took such a short time, and the emphasis on justice was more about the CPC Administration penalizing him than a formal legislative Court of Law. Hu's story meets the anti-crime and anti-corruption propaganda purposes of the Central State Authorities' in most of the coverage. The State Authorities always confer severe punishment on an individual involved in a 'non-event'. The problem is that a 'non-event' is empty and has strong negative connotations for the general public, who in the context of the press coverage are the readers.

In brief, ideology in China's newspapers is the dominant force but is fragmented. The State Authorities have absolute power over information in the continuous battle with absent but negative 'others'. The truth is manipulated through many trivial and fragmented stories. This is the opposite of the straight coverage of Public Institutions and Officials, which is only factual, positive and vivid. Therefore the truth pervades the discourse in the general public's mind.

This discourse about the validity of truth is reflected in the comparative analysis of the Party and Popular Papers, their news resources and genres. In all instances the Popular Press use a greater variety of resources and genre than the Party Press. This is particularly the case when the newspapers are covering events, which the state authorities may deem to be sensitive.

The reaction of Popular Papers [when not constrained by State Organ ownership] to sensitive events is a balancing act. The initial response is to begin extensive coverage as soon as possible, before the Central Authorities have time to deliberate on the Official version which will be released through Xinhua. The timing of Xinhua's release of the Official version is crucial to all stories, but especially the sensitive ones. Prior to the Xinhua release the Popular Press will use tabloid tactics of on-the-spot news reports and interviews to promote their angle on the story. However, the moment Xinhua releases the Official version the Popular Press must begin to balance their coverage with the Authorities' viewpoint and from that point onwards in the coverage of the event will use both Official news and Xinhua releases.

Not all sensitive news events trigger the 'balancing act' in the coverage. There are instances when the event is deemed uninteresting due to frequency, e.g. coal mine disasters, or ownership constraints enforce disinterest. On these occasions the Popular Press will fulfil their social responsibility of informing the general public by providing coverage based almost exclusively on Xinhua released news and Official sources. Therefore, the use of Official news and Xinhua releases in compiling coverage may be viewed as a 'safe' approach in certain political and economic conditions.

CHAPTER 8

CHAPTER 8

The Popular Public in Beijing

Introduction

China's administrative divisions recognize three categories of cities; municipalities, prefecture-level cities and county-level cities. While Beijing is both a municipality and the administrative capital of China, the population of circa 15 million makes it the second largest municipality after Shanghai's population of circa 17 million. Beijing, like many cities with ancient historical roots is a city of contrasts. It combines the architecture and design of Imperial Feudal China with the modern infrastructures of transport, communications and utilities necessary to support a burgeoning population. Population counts in Chinese cities are based on permanent residents, those who hold 'hukou' residential permits [户籍], and temporary residents. A survey in 2006 by the Beijing Statistics Bureau estimated there were approximately 4 million temporary residents, the majority of whom were migrant workers¹¹. While it is expected that a few migrant workers will integrate into Beijing Society (*Rida 2007*) the majority live in the unstable and harsh conditions of the rural areas of Beijing.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the Popular Public in Beijing through their reading experiences. There are four focus groups in the interview programme in which an aggregate of 33 people participated. Their interests and their backgrounds are quite diverse., therefore they were divided into groups of white collar workers, [for example, teachers, public officials, administrative workers in a foreign company] and blue collar workers [e.g. cleaner, manual laborer, immigrant laborer]. There were two groups of 'white collar' workers [henceforth WCW] and two groups of 'blue collar' workers [henceforth BCW].

The format of each focus group starts with a question about their reading habits, followed by questions concerning some important news events to observe their responses and interactions, and finally encouragement to talk about their own stories or events that they are interested in.

¹¹ <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/xw/t240941.htm>

This chapter discusses two aspects, first, how participants respond to sensitive or headline coverage in Popular Papers such as societal violent events, natural disasters, and riots. These questions sometimes conflict with the participants' reading interests when explaining their reading habits at the beginning of the group sessions. On the other hand, some participants remained silent, while others changed their minds and voiced their comments and opinions on these sensitive or headline reports. Second, according to the analysis of the participants' dialogues, the participants' inter-group conflicts, controversies and reactions were discussed. As all the participants came from different occupations and positions of responsibility [or otherwise], they paid attention to different perspectives. The WCW participants proved to be more critical than their conservative counterparts in the BCW groups in some circumstances.

The Popular and Public Affairs in Beijing

The media market in Beijing is competitive. There are, if all the local papers are included, dozens of newspapers in Beijing. Almost every administrative institution, Central Government, Local Government, Central Chinese Communist Party Organs and Local CCP Organs have their own newspaper group or newspaper. As explained earlier [*in Chapters 2 and 3*] the print media have, since the economic reforms of the nineteen seventies and the media reforms of the nineteen nineties, split along economic lines. The Official Organs of the CCP, the Party Press are represented by the 'broadsheet' papers which form one group are dependent on State subsidies. The other group known as the 'Popular' Press, which are represented by the 'tabloids' depend on the revenue from street sales and advertising. There are also special interest media, for social interests such as entertainment, sports as well as business and military papers [*see Table 18*]. While the Party Press titles are the most dominant, the Popular Press titles are the most profitable.

The focus of the Popular newspapers is on local trivial news, as seen in Beijing Evening News or Beijing Youth Daily, but some Popular newspapers do publish investigative news and critical reviews to attract their audiences. The dilemma facing the Popular Papers is whether to report 'hard news' using the same line as the Government [which will not add to their sales] or from a different perspective which their readers demand. Therefore, a discussion of how people read 'hard news' published in Popular Papers is much more significant than their reading of soft coverage.

TITLE	MEDIA	ORIENTATION	SPECIAL INTEREST
Beijing Daily	newspaper	Party Press	Beijing Government
Beijing Evening	newspaper	Popular Press	Local News
Beijing Morning	newspaper	Popular Press	Local News
Beijing News	newspaper	Popular Press	Local Paper
Beijing Times	newspaper	Popular Press	Local Paper
Beijing Review	magazine	Party Press	English Weekly
Beijing Youth Daily	newspaper	Popular Press	Beijing Party Organ
Cankao Xiaoxi	newspaper	Party Press	International News
China Daily	newspaper	Party Press	English Paper
Global Times	newspaper	-	International News
Guangming Daily	newspaper	Party Press	Education Department Organ
People's Daily	newspaper	Party Press	Central Government Organ
Worker's Daily	newspaper	Party Press	The All-China Federation of Trade Unions organ
Legal Daily	newspaper	Party Press	Legal Department Organ
China Youth Daily	newspaper	Party Press	Central Party Organ
Business Beijing	magazine	Party Press	Business
Economic Observer	newspaper	Party Press	Business
China Economic Times	newspaper	Party Press	Finance
Beijing Star Daily	newspaper	Popular Press	Entertainment
Beijing This Month	magazine	Party Press	Business in English
Titan Sports Weekly	newspaper	Popular Press	Sports
Peoples Liberation Army Daily	newspaper	Party Press	Military

Table 18: Cross-section of Beijing Print Media

This chapter presents how the general public responds to reading news coverage in Popular Papers, particularly in the context of hard and sensitive news reports. However,

most of the participants at the start of the focus groups described their reading experiences as mainly involving only trivia and soft news, for example consumer news, traffic news, lifestyles or official news. Some participants were very careful and did not want to answer any questions. Sensitive issues seemed to pose a problem for some of the participants, as they either avoided such topics or stated they had no comments to make. This was only slightly different from their response to questions about hard news topics. They either claimed to have no ideas about the hard news or did not know about particular items of hard news. The ability to speak freely about feelings and thoughts, a condition taken for granted in Western democracies, is not a habit to which the majority of the Public in China are accustomed.

The selected participants for the Beijing focus groups were split into two categories; white collar [professional and executive administrative staff] and blue collar [unqualified, manual laborers and secretarial administrative staff]. Each category was further split into two focus groups: 'S' and 'T' were white collar and 'U' and 'V' were blue collar [Tables 19a, 19b, 19c and 19d]. In the text the participants are referred to using an abbreviated format of their entries in the tables: Code, Age, Occupation and Gender.

Name	Occupation	Age	Gender
S-1	Accounting	27	Female
S-2	High School Teacher	30	Male
S-3	High School Teacher	29	Female
S-4	Public Official in Beijing Government	27	Female
S-5	Engineer in Foreign Mobile Phone Company	28	Male
S-6	Staff in Foreign Insurance Company	31	Male
S-7	Engineer in Foreign Electric Company	26	Female
S-8	Customer Service in Foreign Internet Company	24	Female

Table 19a

Location:

Sculpting Timeout Coffee Shop

Group Title: S

Social grouping:

'White Collar' Workers (WCW)

Date: 21, April, 2007

Time and duration:

10.00, 1.5 hours

Name	Occupation	Age	Gender
T-1	Technology Researcher in Semi-Government Unit	40	Male
T-2	Accountant	43	Female
T-3	Professor	42	Male
T-4	Retired Professor from Central Party School	65	Female
T-5	Retired Railway General Engineer	65	Male

T-6	Administration Staff in a University	32	Female
T-7	PhD Student in Peking University	26	Male
T-8	IT Engineer	24	Male

Table 19b Location: Sculpting Timeout Coffee Shop
Group Title: T Social grouping: 'White Collar' Workers (WCW)
Date: 7, May, 2007 Time and duration: 19.30, 2.0 hours

Name	Occupation	Age	Gender
U-1	Cleaner	40	Male
U-2	Cleaner	47	Male
U-3	Worker in Boiler Unit	41	Male
U-4	Worker	45	Female
U-5	Worker	54	Female
U-6	Cleaner	43	Female
U-7	Worker	50	Female
U-8	Worker	52	Female

Table 19c Location: China Youth College for Political Science
Group Title: U Social grouping: 'Blue Collar' Workers (BCW)
Date: 27, May, 2007 Time and duration: 10.00, 1.5 hours

Name	Occupation	Age	Gender
V-1	Staff in Private Company	27	Female
V-2	Newspaper Vendor	24	Female
V-3	Sales	24	Male
V-4	Telephone Vendor	23	Male
V-5	Vendor	21	Male
V-6	Cleaner	33	Male
V-7	Worker in Moving Company	32	Male
V-8	Security Guard	30	Male
V-9	Worker in Warehouse	24	Male

Table 19d Location: China Youth College for Political Science
Group Title: V Social grouping: 'Blue Collar' Workers (BCW)
Date: 27, May, 2007 Time and duration: 15.00, 2.0 hours

Table 19 (a, b, c, d): Focus Groups and Participants in Beijing

Since the idea of journalism in China is of Party Journalism as opposed to critical and for profit journalism, there is an apparent contradiction between newspapers acting

faithfully as the CCP's mouthpiece and the more open obligations and responsibilities of newspapers acting as newsmakers and representing 'The Public'. Womack (1986) conducted a survey of Beijing newspaper readers in 1982. In this research, Womack defined Beijing as an urban area with a comparatively wealthy and well-educated population. Therefore, had provincial comparative data been available there would have been a skew in occupational representation. Nevertheless, as Womack (1986:34) reports,

"Beijing's political status probably means that there is a more than average interest in national affairs and politics generally ... [thus] this survey's results relating to political interest and perhaps also to credibility may not be typical for the rest of China."

With its outcomes, Womack's survey shows that the intellectuals give more credit to newspaper propaganda. More than 90% of the readers with a college education believe that newspapers are 'credible' or 'fairly credible'. Since, the intellectuals work as Government cadres and in teaching faculties they represent the majority of the readers of newspapers. However, Womack's survey also shows that most young people and poorly educated workers and peasants 'do not know' how to judge the credibility of newspapers since they do not read them and therefore do not have a sense of how to make a judgment. The failure of the newspapers to fully earn the trust of the readers is the result of three causes: news items do not always reflect reality; coverage is often biased and readers sometimes only want to read positive news stories.

Furthermore, almost one-third of those surveyed believed that newspapers did not sufficiently 'echo the People's Voice', which affected the newspapers' credibility. This applies in particular to three Party Papers, People's Daily, Worker's Daily and China Youth Daily. For example, in People's Daily readers' survey,

"The results are more than 50% regarded 'comprehensive propaganda of the Party's policies' as the greatest strength while near 40% considered 'not enough reflection of people's demands'"

(Womack, 1986: 112-113)

Womack (1986:113) concludes with the suggestion that:

'In any case, a paper cannot win over its readers before it can truly, comprehensively, objectively, and fairly mirror reality by seeking truth from the facts ... only when readers believe that what newspapers carry are real people, true stories, and facts can newspapers be acceptable and raise the effectiveness of propaganda.'

Womack's survey was conducted in Beijing in 1982, at which time the economic reforms of the mid-nineteen seventies were not yet fully effective, and crucially before the media reforms of the mid-nineteen eighties. The Press in Womack's study was almost wholly Party Press, as the Popular Press had not fully formed in the early nineteen eighties. Nevertheless, while the political and economic environment has completely changed already in the intervening years, the essential role requirements of the print media has not changed. In this environment the issues of concern are what Beijing readers think about newspapers, their involvement in political and public affairs coverage and whether, as a result of reading newspapers, their attitudes change. A more specific issue is why they do, or do not, pay attention to the particular items of sensitive and hard news. The topics under discussion in the focus groups range from National to Beijing Local News, but, Beijing's readers are not only concerned about National affairs, they also care about their personal rights.

Disaster coverage

The role of journalism in a Communist perspective is 'to promote the ideology, and strengthen the power, of the Communist Party' (Lauk, 2005:176) in its attempts to develop society. Events that undermine the work of the Communist Party or reflect badly on the Government's policies therefore require careful consideration before being released to the Press. This is particularly relevant to 'breaking news' of events involving Government policy and society – coverage of disasters, such as coal mine collapses, factory explosions, collapsing subways and riots over land adoption. As Lauk (2005:176) explains in the context of Soviet Russia's communism "only good news was news and anything else was unimportant and even undesirable. In the news, facts were always interpreted according to Party directives."

The same holds true for the CCP in China as indicated by an editorial, 'No news allowed', in the New York Times in 2006:

'News has always been a tough nut for Communist dictators. It happens unexpectedly, giving bureaucrats precious little time to prepare the correct ideological explanation; it often undermines whatever propaganda line the state is pushing, and if it happens to involve embarrassing events like riots, strikes, accidents or outbreaks of disease, it can make the party bosses look less than perfect.

The Soviet Union dealt with the problem with the infamous Article 70 of the penal code, which basically defined anything the state didn't want people to hear as "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda." Now China proposes to take the art of censorship a step higher with a bill that would severely fine news media outlets if they report on "sudden incidents"

without prior authorization. "Sudden incidents" sounds awfully similar to what most of the world knows better as "breaking news," and in most countries it's considered a core function of the news media.....

The draft law says that newspapers, magazines, Web sites and television stations would face fines up to \$12,500 each time they published information about a sudden incident "without authorization." It is, of course, a horrible idea that strips away any pretense China might have of political openness or modernity.....'

(New York Times, 4 July 2006)

The delays in disaster coverage in China's media are the responsibility of the Xinhua News Agency, which is the Communist Party's Organ responsible for vetting the State's media responses to all news coverage including disasters. Only with Xinhua's approval do the newspapers begin their coverage.

The responses of the participants, especially the differences between the two categories in the focus groups, to the issues of breaking news and disaster coverage are of particular interest. An assumption that WCW participants should have more social contexts to be interested in and understand disaster coverage is, in the context of China's Society, inherently false. The responses of the BCW participants focus groups 'S' and 'T' indicated they were either not interested in disaster coverage or distrust the media content. Indeed, most of these two groups stated clearly at the start of the sessions that the focus of their reading was in newspapers helpful to their work. T-3 (42, Professor, male), for example, only read the Guangming Daily, and since most political coverage is sourced directly from the Authorities, did 'not read any political news.' T-4 (65, Retired professor, female) got the most useful information from the Chinese Clipping Newspaper.

Nevertheless, breaking news of disasters does exist and the participants' responses are illuminating about the tactics of the Xinhua Agency and the newspapers: for example 'once the authorities intervene in the news event, all coverage will be adopted from Xinhua News Agency, even though journalists go to the scene to interview' and 'the sensational coverage in newspapers is just designed to catch readers' eyes.'

The participants' responses to the question concerning what kinds of news interested them were potentially frustrating: 'I am numb with those issues', 'I do not read about anything I have little concern about', and 'too many social problems cause us to be insensitive,' 'Newspapers only love to report those fantastic things such as how many people die.' These cameo responses repeated in the 'T' group whenever they were asked about any coverage or event in Beijing,

"Before dawn on 11 June, 2 to 300 camouflaged persons of unclear status attacked residents of the village of Shengyou in Dingzhou County, Hebei who were resisting a local mafia, leaving at least six dead and dozens injured. On June 13, the Hebei provincial Party Committee dismissed Dingzhou's former Party Secretary and Mayor. The PRC media didn't dare promptly report this serious event despite repeated broadcasts of live video footage by overseas media, showing how sensitive it was."¹²

The incident, referred to as the Dingzhou Event, which occurred on 6 November 2005 is a prime example of serious news coverage in the *Beijing News* [Popular Press newspaper] receiving little or no attention from 'The Public' in Beijing.

S-6 (31, *Administrative, male*), a participant of a WCW group said, 'it seems [to be] causing a serious impact...but if the story is reported that means it has been very serious and has a clear truth already, the authorities cannot cover it.'

S-2 (30, *School teacher, male*) said, 'I have seen some pictures but too many similar news makes me insensitive...for example, in my school, the pay is also very low.'

In the other WCW group, there was no response or comment about the Dingzhou Event, other than from T-1: 'I know it a little but did not read deliberately.' These indifferent responses may be due to two factors. First, Dingzhou County is approximately three hundred kilometers distant from Beijing and furthermore the incident did not directly affect the participant's daily lives. However the second factor also applies to the next disaster the focus groups discussed.

"The Suzhou Street section of Beijing's No. 10 subway line, which is currently under construction, collapsed on March 28, but local media report that the foreman of the construction team tried to conceal the accident."¹³

An accident during the construction of a subway line, in Beijing, for the 2008 Olympic Games, occurred on 28 March 2007, in which six construction workers were killed. Spatially and temporally, the accident was close to the participants of the focus groups. Yet, ironically, the participants in the WCW groups 'S' and 'T' did not display any concern nor wished to discuss the event other than an incidental comment by S-4 (27, *Government official, female*): 'I just went to have a look the scene ... on the way to back home.'

However, in contrast to the WCW groups, disaster coverage causes a heated discussion within the BCW groups, 'U' and 'V'. They know and understand the regulations and work conditions concerning the 'working class' much better than the participants in the 'white collar' groups. The participants in 'U' and 'V' groups demonstrated they had immersed

¹² <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2005/06/liang-jing-the-warning-sounded-by-the-dingzhou-event/>

¹³ <http://www.chinacsr.com/en/2007/04/02/1195-beijing-subway-contractor-concealed-accident/>

themselves in the popular coverage, even in those stories criticised by the WCW groups, 'S' and 'T' as too dramatic to believe. Regarding the accident on the Beijing subway, they analyse the causes of the event which do not appear in newspapers.

U-8 (52, *Worker, female*): 'there is a rule that the construction company cannot have too many accidents to lead to death. The number of the deaths has a strict restriction...that is the reason the builder does not allow the collapse of the subway construction to be reported.'

Interviewer: 'How do you know it? Did the coverage discuss about this?'

U-8: 'Of course not, I hear it from friends and those who are working in the construction company.'

The BCW participants have strong feelings and sympathise with the misery of the workers in such disasters. As U-7 and U-8 explained the validity of disaster reporting has improved over the years 'Actually those news stories are truer now than before they report.' However, while the validity has improved, the background coverage remains insufficient. Most coverage reports the disasters at the time of occurrence, but do not reflect on or point out the problems and responsibilities of the Administration.

V-7 (32, *Worker, male*) said, 'the works in this construction have been transferred to many different companies several times. That's the main reason that they have to cover this incident at the last minute'

Implying that the Authorities in charge of the subway construction were not initially certain of the identity of the construction company responsible.

From the perspective of the participants, most of the coverage did not report the whole story as there are too many unspoken reasons, particularly those that could have dealt with criticism of the Administration and the Authorities.

On April 18, 2007, a serious accident occurred at the Qinghe Special Steel Corporation Mill in the city of Tieling, in Liaoning province.

"... a horrific accident in which more than 25 tonnes of molten steel engulfed a room where workers were changing shift, killing at least 32, state media said on Thursday.

An industrial ladle was moving into the pouring position at the plant in the northeastern province of Liaoning when it sheared off an iron rail, spewing out its 1,500 degrees Celsius [2,730 °F] contents.

"The liquid metal engulfed the room, bursting through the door and windows and burying the workers," the China Daily said of Wednesday's tragedy"¹⁴

The event was spatially distant [a 1000 kilometres away] but temporally close to the focus groups.

U-1 (40, *Cleaner, male*): 'it is very serious tragedy but the coverage did not fully represent it. You see, how sadness so many families involved. It is the administration problems.'

Although the participants in the 'BCW groups, 'U' and 'V', stated their preferred reading were short articles on health and lifestyles, the disaster in Tieling provoked both discussion and criticism from them such as: 'Newspaper only report the accident but did not discuss the problems.', 'after I read coverage, it is still not enough I always think so. No consequence, no punishment...', 'irresponsibility of the administrator? or, neglect his duty? They never discuss about the reasons behind the accident.'

As disasters invariably involve manual workers, the events are closely related to the livelihoods of the BCW groups, whose responses are in direct contrast to the indifference displayed by the WCW groups. The BCW groups do not think the stories are 'too bloody' or designed to simply catch the reader's attention, which the WCW groups say. However, these news reports do not currently reveal any of the wider and deeper causes, especially, the responsibilities of the Government and the Administrations.

Mine disasters are the most frequent 'breaking news' events in contemporary China. Statistics produced by China's State Administration of Work Safety for 2005 define the scale of the problem facing the coal mining industry of 3,341 accidents causing the deaths of 5,986 coal miners¹⁵.

Ironically, mine disasters receive as little attention from newspapers and readers as any other form of disaster. Moreover, as the participants of the WCW focus groups spoke about mine disasters, the consensus was of having nothing to say about them. A popular response is: 'too many similar events lead to people feel bored, so far.' Indeed, coverage of mine disasters follows the same pattern of straight factual content in many newspapers. In contrast S-5 (28, *Engineer, male*) confirmed a piece of news about a mine story that some undergraduate students investigated in which they interviewed the working conditions of coal miners for their graduation thesis. He said, 'the content is like a story, appealing to me how they interact with mine workers and their life stories.' He added, 'if the coverage only concerned the legal problems, it would be too hard to

¹⁴ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUKPEK2919420070419>

¹⁵ China Labour Bulletin <http://www.clb.org.hk/en/node/19316>

digest.’ Other than S-5’s comments, the other young participants in this WCW focus group kept silent.

On the other hand, the mine disasters caused a heated debate in the ‘blue collar’ groups.

U-8 (52, *Worker, female*): ‘The profit of the mine owners is definitely huge. They have a lavish life but the condition of the workers is so severe....The mine disaster coverage always report how many people die and do not analyse why it happens again and again ... the state authorities have to take the responsibilities.’

U-8 owns her property in Beijing and works in university. She is much braver than the others to criticise the Authorities. She believes people say the profits of mine owner are greater than the punishment fine. She also believes that if an accident happens, the mine owners give compensation to the family of the dead workers, and the accident will be ignored.

U-4 (45, *Worker, female*): ‘the coverage should teach the general public how to protect own rights from harm. If the owners of mine just spend a little money to cover the disasters then everyone accept that, it is difficult to change the condition.’

Clearly, the BCW participants would like to discuss and present their dissatisfaction rather than to keep a distance. This is a ‘class’ perspective, as different classes have contrasting life needs and experiences. Whether an individual is WCW or BCW, they do not trust the Authorities. The main difference is the WCW representatives do not have liking for reading sensational news stories of disasters as they are too distant from their own life experiences. BCW participants, however, do pay more attention to disasters and sympathise with the families of the victims.

Property Coverage

In March 2007 at the National People’s Congress [NPC] session, the Chinese Government Authorities adopted an important piece of legislation, the Property Law, to protect private property from the controversial land tax. This was the first piece of legislation in a Communist country which covered an individual’s right to own assets. It was also a landmark law that boosted the protection of private property right during the rapid economic development of contemporary China.

Most of the participants in both focus groups were concerned about the costs of both living and property. The inflation which has accompanied China’s economic development threatens everyone. Many people cannot afford to buy accommodation in Beijing. Therefore stories of property and development were topical issues at the time the focus

groups were held. Unlike the events of disasters which did not directly affect the participants' daily lives, the property problem is closely related to the general public's rights and interests. How the general public read this kind of coverage? Do they pay more attentions and concentration on relevant news? Will the coverage get their readers to connect the public world?

"CHONGQING -- A Chinese couple's battle to stop developers from razing their home has finally come to an end with a negotiated agreement that nevertheless saw demolition of their house in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality begin on Monday evening [3 April 2007].

Their former 219-square-meter house has been dubbed the "nail house" because [sic the owners were as hard as nails in refusing to let it be] ... hammered down. The duo have been fighting off bulldozers there since 2004, when developers pleaded with them and another 280 households to make way for a shopping mall."¹⁶

This story gained nationwide attention. However, the overall opinion of most people to this story is that it is unusual for a major story to focus on members of the public fighting development.

U-2 (47, *Cleaner, male*): 'Do not just mention the hardest nail house, there are so many not too hard enough nail houses existing around Beijing. They are still helpless.' Indeed, too many similar cases lead to many people becoming insensitive to the issue or having no comment on it. The WCW groups were aware of the events in Chongqing, but their greater concerns are the needs of their daily lives, for example, the rapid increases in the price of property in Beijing.

'Most new communities have no one live in but the sales always say this property has sold out...The rich people buy many new properties for investment. We have no property but cannot afford it depending on our average salary. This is the administration problem of the authorities.'

The participants relate how many new buildings have no lights at night, which is evidence that no one has bought and moved in but property promotions claim the building has sold out of properties. The WCW in 'S' group agree on the reason: 'The purpose of the advertising news is to raise the price and cheat the customers.' The response from the BCW group 'U' is similar: 'Even-though there are economic cheap houses built by the government [lower prices for the lower income citizens], we workers still cannot afford it.' V-9 (24, *Worker, male*) agrees with the sentiment, 'The price of property is too high to us. It is useless to worry about this problem because we have no ability to resolve this difficulty.'

¹⁶ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-04/03/content_842221.htm

In the other WCW group, T-1 (40, *Technology researcher, male*) discussed the Chongqing event

T-1 (40, *Technology researcher, male*): 'in the beginning, I am very angry at the nail house as it is the last one not moving out. However, I send my sympathy to them and support them after reading all the coverage.'

He admits he was shocked by this coverage. The dramatic pictures of the nail house [see Chapter 6] also caught his attention. However, except for T-1's comments, and T-7's (26, *PhD student, male*) criticism of the authorities: '... media play a crucial role in this event and push the Authorities to improve the policy,' the others in the group do not respond but focus on their own experiences.

They gave other examples of how the authorities' attitudes towards land development had negatively affected daily life. T-4 (65, *Retired professor, female*) emphasized she knew the directives and rules of the Party very well and stated the controversial tax was against the rules.

T-4 (65, *Retired professor, female*): 'for example, near the Beijing airport, the government levy the farmer's land and only give the family only three units of accommodation. But, they are farmers how could they live for, if they have no farm? ...'

T-2 (43, *Accountant, female*): 'Rebuilding or improving the city is a right direction but the problem is the compensation too low to the land owner or farmer. It is quit difficult that they merely depend on a few thousands RMB monthly to survive in central Beijing, not mention to buy a property. However, most of them are forced to moving out Beijing and live in a far area now.'

Hence, the event of the 'hardest nail house' should cause a change in policy. The tale was a classic story of class and political struggles. T-2 is sympathetic to the owners facing the media, the Authorities, and the developer alone. 'It is very hard and stressful! If it is not the most difficulty to them, there is no reason to put self in this kind of situation, no water, no electricity.' The mistreatment, by the Authorities, of the Public's rights attracts well deserved sympathy. However, there were some different opinions among the participants to the role of the media in this property event. T-3, had worked with the Government to demolish the nail house, so his opinions were different.

T-3 (42, *Professor, male*): 'in my opinion, the property act leads to the hardest nail house become a hot issue. Otherwise, this problem has happening for two years. Actually I have many experiences to negotiate with different nail houses. I had been the leader of the department in government to demolish the nail houses. Some owners of nail houses break their promise against the agreement we have made before. They still stay there for asking more money or compensation.the demolition policy is reasonable and fair to everyone. If there is no property act, the hardest nail house could not have brave to do this kind of protest.'

T-3 argues the 'hardest nail house' could have had so much attention around China because it was an alternative propaganda of the Government. By contrast, is the perspective of T-7 (26, *PhD student, male*) who thinks the most important power is the influence of the Internet. He believes that because the pictures of the 'hardest nail house' had been widely circulated on websites, the newspapers had no reason to ignore the event.

In other words, the rapid increases in the price of property or the property demolition policy led to the difficulties that both the WCW and BCW have in affording to buy a property. Although the owner of the hardest nail house is the winner in the conflict and wins good compensation in the end, the pessimistic atmosphere relating to property remains. The function of the media was vital to the 'hardest nail house' event. The media provoked heated discussions and clearly delineated the sequence of events. There was so much competition among the media to present the story that many Popular Papers used large spaces to reveal the whole process and to side with the owner. It was a really unusual media event.

Almost 18 months later, 19 November 2008, a major protest over violations of property rights took place in Beijing.

"Large-scale protests broke out on November 19 in front of the Beijing Municipal Government. Over 1,000 people gathered onsite to strike for their rights ... the protesting crowd was composed of citizens ... [amongst other two other groups] whose homes were demolished with no reasonable compensation. The three groups joined their protests together as the Beijing Municipal Government is not dealing with any of their situations."¹⁷

The protesters accused public officials of ignoring their property rights for a long time although they were cheated by land developers. Apparently, the consciousness of protecting personal rights is beginning to rise within the general public.

Sensational and Trivial Stories

Sensational stories[sometimes referred as 'Bloody'] and trivial stories, such as crime stories or articles about inflation fill the Popular Papers on a daily basis because these stories relate to concerns in people's everyday life. There was a huge difference in the interest in, and response to, these categories of stories between the WCW and BCW groups.

¹⁷ <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/china/protests-china-schemes-beijing-7485.html>

In the WCW focus groups, while no one was interested in discussing the contents of the stories – like the official coverage in the Party Press they want to keep their distance, they were willing to pass criticism on the formats.

S-5: (28, Engineer, male) 'One of my friends who work in newspaper, according to his observation, a page of Beijing Evening only reports people's missing, dead or similar bloody coverage ... They are only interested in how many people are dead in accidents everyday.'

A common response to the sensational stories was in the vein of 'Those kinds of coverage just want to catch the audiences' attention.' A prime example of this type of story was of a poor and ill couple jumping to their deaths in a river in Hubei province. They left behind a seven year old boy. *Beijing News* used a headline and a large photo to report their suicide. S-6 is critical of the way the media publish photos.

S-6 (31, Administrative, male): 'They should be more considerations to prevent suffering to the persons involved if they publish their photos.'
'This coverage of this suicide couple exactly reveals some serious problems, of course, such as the problem of their economic condition and the responsibility of local government. I reflect on this event for a while but it is beyond my ability to do any thing.'

By contrast,

S-2 (30, School teacher, male) argues the newspapers just focus on whatever attract more people's attention and benefits the paper: 'Newspapers always only consider their circulation rather than responsibility. I have no any good impression of newspapers.'

The same issue does not provoke any debates in the other WCW focus group.

T-3 (42, Professor, male) thinks this is not a typical case. 'It is complex problem depending on individual condition.' He does not agree with media revealing this news event.

T-3 (42, Professor, male): 'We do not exactly know the problem inside the wall, hence some coverage looks like quit objective while we read it and then we are angry at these events. But some coverage are not objective, we do not need to angry at this if they put some petty things in a serious and significant position.... It is just helpless to the civilians' benefits, nothing else.'

However, T-3 did initially say at the start of the focus group that he never read political articles and went on to clarify why.

T-3 (42, Professor, male): 'Because all political coverage is the same coverage from the authorities, every newspaper uses the same report. If there is breaking news, I would like to read South Weekend. Its coverage is investigative news, and inside analysis.'

Compared with WCW comments on trivial news, BCW groups were deeply concerned with many of the trivial topics, which are significant influences in their day-to-day lives, for example, the problems with inflation and salaries.

U-1 (40, Cleaner, male): 'I like to read Beijing Evening because their coverage reveals many different things ... Beijing Evening has no international news, no political news but is full of trivial news which surrounds our daily life. Particularly, the price of commodities is my main concern.'

The topic of fake foods and contaminated products, are also an important issue in people's lives.

U-5 (54, Worker, female): 'Previously, the coverage reports Pu'er tea is a good for health and has superior quality which price grow up fast but sooner they say Pu'er tea is trash.'

U-1 (40, Cleaner, male): 'Now, the coverage again says, banana is not a good food which causes cancer. I cannot understand why they do such coverage. I think banana is very helpful for health.'

Some of this group also emphasize they would like to read newspapers which report more international and hard news, nevertheless throughout all the discussions, the needs of daily life are still a topical issue for the participants in 'U' group.

Most of the participants in the BCW 'V' group are young migrant workers and their comments on 'bloody' news concerned the rights of laborers. Their biggest concern is not being paid their salaries. **V-6** (33, Cleaner, male) is a victim of these schemes. 'I had worked in a construction site for five months. I did not know the boss before. After I finished my work, the boss only gave me 200 RMB and asked me to get away.'

V-6 (33, Cleaner, male): 'There are too many cases of those people who are well-behaved and industrious but cannot get their salaries in the end.'

V-5 (21, Vendor, male): 'The coverage is very similar to individual events of defaulting salaries. There is no further details. Particularly, they only report serious cases and ignore normal ones.'

Interviewer: 'Lately, there was a tragic news event. A worker, Wang Binyu (王斌余) kills his boss because of defaulting on his salary for too long a time. Wang finally is charged death penalty by the jury. How do you think about this news event?'

V-1 (27, Worker, female): 'Beijing Evening reveals this case. Wang's boss defaulted his salary of about 170 thousands RMD. He spent big money to accuse his boss but still it was useless. He is very poor for many years. Eventually, he kills his boss.'

V-5 (21, Vendor, male): 'I am not well aware of this event but there is a similar case. A worker was defaulted by his boss about 60 thousand RMD. However, the worker lost another 60 thousand RMD, after he accused his boss.'

V-3 (24, Sales, male) thinks the most important help the newspapers can provide to workers is a legal enquiry service. He explains that the *Da He* newspaper in his hometown

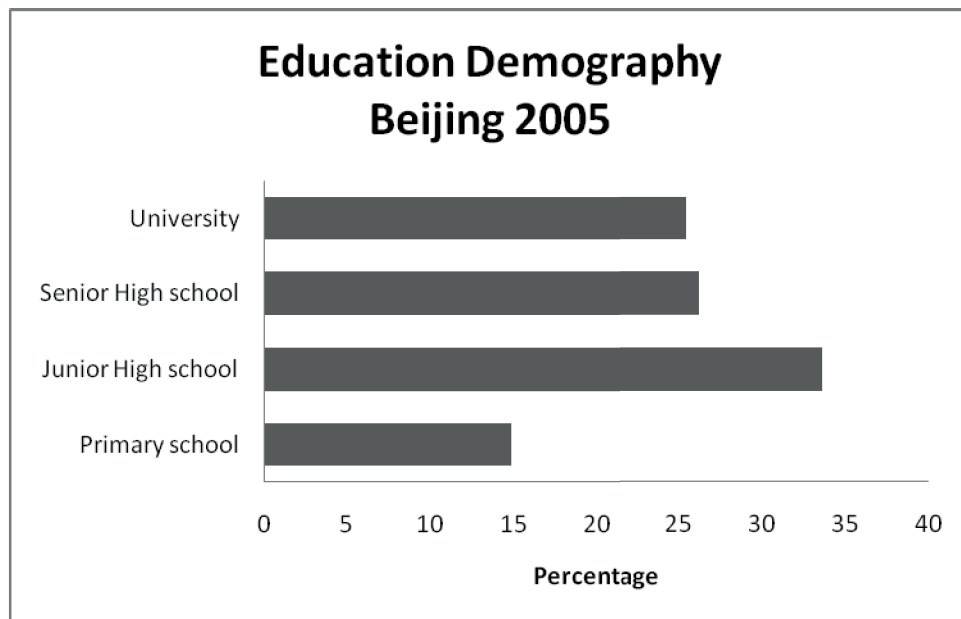
in Henan Province publishes a column of legal services available to the general public. Legal experts, for example, provide their mobile phone numbers. V-3 believed lawyers like to give workers a helping hand on Workers' Rights.

The BCW focus groups discussed these controversial news events in peaceful tones, taking care over their responses, although these events were closely related to their rights. They did not present a negative attitude by saying the coverage was too 'sensational' or had any complaints about the style of coverage. By way of contrast, the WCW focus groups, did not feel these 'bloody' and trivial news events had any serious impact on their daily lives. They were critical of the validity of these trivial news events, but did not display any emotion. The BCW groups did, however, feel positive about the credibility of newspaper coverage. Inflating prices and salary problems are an important issue to them and as a result present a different critical view compared to the WCW groups.

The next section discusses the differences of between the two categories of the focus groups, explaining the source of their inner conflicts and how they negotiate with the Authorities.

The People and Class Discrimination in Beijing

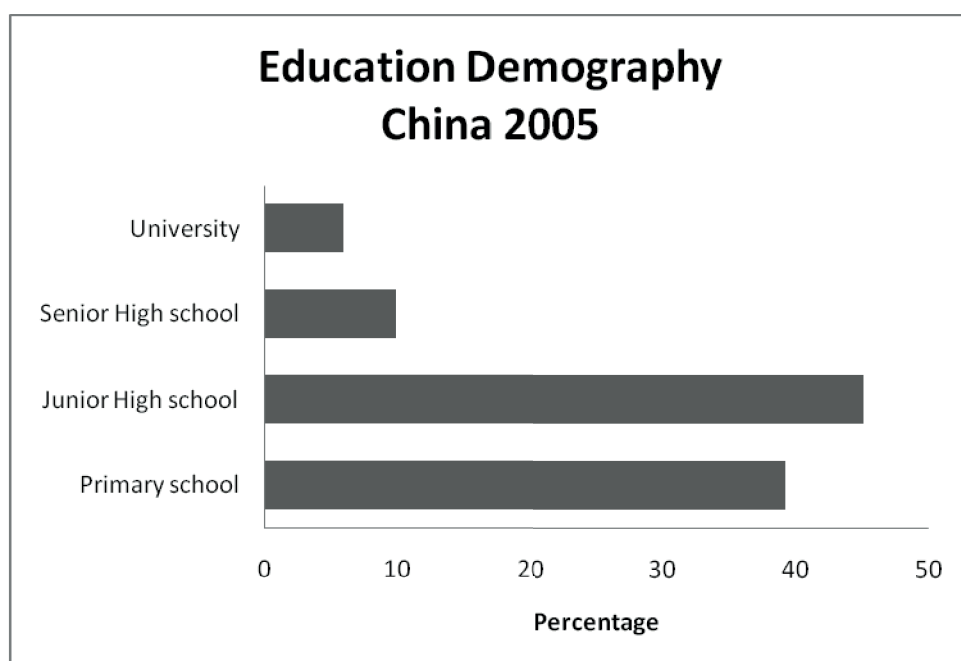
According to the Beijing Bureau of Statistics, the estimated population of Beijing is between 15 and 20 million, of whom 20-25% are temporary residents, [migrant workers from China's rural provinces]. The largest ethnic grouping is the Han, who make up approximately 95% of the Beijing population. There are nine recognized ethnic minorities who in order by population [ranging from 250,000 Manchu to 3000 Tibetans] are Manchu, Hui, Mongol, Korean, Tujia, Zhuang, Miao, Uyghur and Tibetan. As Beijing is the capital of China, the level of education is superior compared to other cities in China. There is evidence of a direct correlation between [tertiary] education and wealth in China. Therefore, the education structure in Beijing is not typical for China [see Figures 14 and 15]. Although the numbers of students attending university in Beijing are close to those attending Senior High School this does not reflect the national education system.



(National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2005 Population Census)

Figure 14: Education Census in Beijing (2005)

University education in China represents few of the number of students who attend Junior High Schools.



(National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2005 Population Census)

Figure 15: Education Demography in China (2005)

Aiming to present different perspectives in responses to hard news coverage and reading experiences, focus groups were divided by class – the WCW [white collar workers] and the BCW [blue collar workers]. This section discusses participants' attitudes and interactions in the focus groups' environment. There were 33 participants: 16 WCW and 17 BCW; the focus groups were uniform, either WCW or BCW. In WCW groups, some participants were working in foreign companies. They were more confident in criticizing the Authorities

than anyone else in other occupations. They were also working in conditions of potential conflict, an international company and a transforming circumstance [i.e. within a combination of the restrictive practices of Central Administration and the liberal policies of global competition]. In BCW groups, Beijing citizens were more critical than immigrant laborers. Nevertheless, even the attitudes of immigrant laborers were much more conservative than their peers. Beijing has many working opportunities for unskilled workers such as servants and building workers and consequently immigrant laborers form a sizeable proportion of the total population [circa 20-25%]. They are the lowest paid class in society. The Gross Domestic Product per person in China for 2008 was estimated at USD\$6,100¹⁸. The basic legal monthly salary of a cleaner is 640RMB [at current exchange rates is approximately USD\$92] which equates to less than 20% of the GDP per person.

However, although the immigrant laborers from other provinces live in harsh conditions, they do not have any ideas about, or are not sufficiently confident in their rights, to comment on public affairs or even to criticize the authorities. It is an intriguing phenomenon that the lowest paid class is the most loyal group to the Authorities and the Party. They do not display any doubt in government policies or the prevailing social problems. While they did not wish to comment on social problems, some of the laborers were pessimistic about their living and working conditions. However, because these laborers have no skills, qualifications or opportunities to seek alternative employment, the only option is to tolerate the current condition imposed by the Party bureaucracy. By including the topic of 'indifference' of the WCW and BCW groups, the 'Popular Public' in the Popular Papers was explored in Beijing.

Indifference

Sun (2007: 15) illustrates the attitude of indifference using statistics from an online survey on how people think about 'reform'. There were four choices of answers: 'very exciting' [44% of the respondents]; 'mild disapprobation' [34%]; 'some conflicts' [13%]; 'no comment' [9%]. More than half [56%] of the sample expressed disapproval in one form or another. Further analysis revealed that those respondents who chose 'very exciting' were mostly Public Officials, Party Leaders and administrators in large companies [representative of WCW]; 'mild disapprobation' was chosen by specialists and professional workers [also representative of WCW]; 'no comment' was chosen mostly by general workers in companies, in private small companies, shopkeepers, farmers and labours [representative of BCW]; 'some conflicts' was chosen by retired people, farmers and labourers [representative of BCW]. Sun points out these statistics representing the general indifferent attitude of the general public to 'reform'.

¹⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>

The clear conclusion from the survey is that while the issue of reform is a public policy, only public officials feel excited about it. The issue of interest is why most of the population are indifferent to public policies and issues. In the study, many participants spoke about their disappointment or disapproval of the Authorities and the media. The attitude is both popular and infectious; however, the underlying reasons are complex.

In the focus groups, most of the participants used strongly negative descriptions to express their thoughts on the Popular Press, such as 'I do not care', 'I feel apathy' or 'Whatever the coverage said, I totally did not believe it.' The majority of readers' shared the same reasons: 'the Authorities control the News', 'the Popular Press serves the interests of specific groups.' The participants tended to reinforce their arguments and opinions when asked about controversial or tragic news. There were, for example, two young WCWs talking about their first impressions and why they did not believe the media coverage. S-2 (30, School teacher, male) said newspapers never gave him any good impressions. On the one hand, the newspapers always use 'blood' and sensational methods to catch readers' attention. On the other hand, when there is a newsworthy problem, coverage is blocked by China's Government.

S-2 (30, School teacher, male): 'For example, one of my friends went to court with a semi-official Chinese literature and art alliance. After the verdict was announced, the alliance released the news to newspapers. In the meantime, my friend also wanted to release news, but the Press rejected his request and said the alliance did not allow them to publish his story. The other friend told me that, when he studied journalism in university, his teacher said the most important thing is the discipline while you work in media, in terms of the truth, it is far behind the discipline.'

He used his experiences to explain how the Government blocked news and the individual had a struggle with the Authority and its adherents. The other WCW, S-5 (28, Engineer, male) working in an international mobile phone company, did not appreciate the opinion of experts in the Press as they did not represent the general public: 'To general public, realities and actions are the most important things.' Because newspapers seldom interview the general public, they often use the opinions of experts. S-5 (28, Engineer, male) said 'These opinions of experts don't represent public opinions most of the time..... Their opinions are not from us general public.' So, the general public makes judgments using their 'common sense' rather than on opinions from experts in the press. S-2 (30, School teacher, male) stressed his agreement, explaining the use of 'common sense' :

S-2 (30, School teacher, male): 'For example, there was a controversy between the fresh milk and the canned milk. All arguments from the experts are just to protect different interests groups and serve their benefits in business. Therefore, to me, I know this issue but am apathetic.'

To keep the official coverage at a distance is quite a usual phenomenon within the general public. Similarly, U-3 (41, Worker, male), said, he was not concerned about own

rights at all, as his boss [Party] was always right; it was not worth it, whatever U-3's concern or complaint. U-3 said, 'I had complained about something but after several years, nothing changes.' At the beginning of the group session, he said he was only interested in sports coverage, by the end of the session he spoke his mind. Indeed, some participants spoke what they thought while others sought to follow the consensus. They were repeatedly advised that 'There are no right or wrong answers to all the questions.' Despite repeating this advice several times, particularly in BCW groups, some participants still sought the correct answer.

The indifference to serious news or public affairs was present in both WCW and BCW groups. Their indifference comes from distrust of the authorities and the media but does not mean they are unconcerned about public affairs. Indeed, they expressed a care for their rights and a hope that something changes.

In the next section of discussions, some participants relate their personal experiences in negotiating with the authorities and media. They prefer to act rather than to do nothing.

Champion

Many participants may have difficulties in affording to buy a property but how do they think about their own rights? Hopeless, cynical, angry...these emotions are repeated often in the focus groups.

U-3 (41, *Worker, male*) a BCW: 'I have no any comment to my right as whatever I say, there is no space for my opinion. The leader of my unit control whole thing and is always right....So only sport coverage attracts me.'

This is quite typical of the responses among both WCW and BCW groups. However, the economic development gives the WCWs more potential to looking for other successful opportunities rather than depending on the network of the Authorities. Hence, they are more sensitive to their own rights.

S-6 (31, *Administrative, male*), WCW, working in a foreign company could not understand the attitude of the Public Official in Beijing Government.

S-6 (31, *Administrative, male*): 'I pay tax, they should serve the people but they just view you as the second class person, sometimes they behave very rude and always have no efficiency whatever you ask or need any help with.'

As he works in an international company and needs to apply for permission to manage the business. His negative experiences come from when he contacted the department which authorizes commercial and industrial services. S-5 (28, *Engineer, male*) also worked in an international company.

S-5 (28, *Engineer, male*): 'Many people admire that we work in an international company. In fact, any money we earn is from our hard-working and we have to pay full tax comparative to those people who make their own business via having a network with the Government. They can escape from paying tax easily.'

These are some examples how they act to negotiate with the Media or the Government.

S-2 (30, *School teacher, male*): 'I had called the *Beijing Youth Daily* as the content of a textbook had some wrong descriptions but they said they are not brave enough to deal with this kind of sensitive issues.'

He goes on to talk about his experience in negotiating with the Government.

S-2 (30, *School teacher, male*): 'One of my relatives bought a box of fruit. He felt this fruit was bad after having it, and called many different departments in Government just before the Lunar New Year. His phone call was transferred to many different departments and the relative called more than ten times, unfortunately, his efforts are useless as no one replies.'

Indeed, their actions are closely related to their daily needs. For example, S-6 (31, *Administrative, male*), WCW, works in a foreign company and has a similar description.

S-6 (31, *Administrative, male*): 'I had called the Beijing News several times concerning a transportation problem. The situation is if the taxi drives from the Capital Airport to our company at the San Yan Bridge, the location is quite near the City Center but still has not reached the central area so the fare charged always has a controversy. Our customers have been blamed by the taxi drivers several times and I set my hopes on the newspaper reflecting this controversy. It was also useless.'

However, their reactions are quite different to riots and social conflicts in rural China. The WCW participants conduct themselves with civil behaviour to reflect their opinions or protect their personal rights. Maybe the responses of the Media or the Government are not efficient or even ineffective. However, these approaches are not the same as depending on the so-called 'to have the network with someone important' in public affairs. Again, as with the crisis of faith that the general public has for the legal system, they use their common sense and experiences with which to make their judgements.

In the context of the BCW groups discussing their rights, the story of a worker's wife in Sichuan, Xiong Deming (熊德民) is recounted.

Xiong Deming's husband was owed his salary, by his boss, for a long time until Premier Wen Jiabao's visited their home and helped to have the salary paid. Ironically, many people who had the same 'salary' problems thought Xiong Deming had a particular 'social network' which involved the Premier moving to her house to live and waiting to help. Finally, Xiong and her husband had to flee their home county.

Xu Jilin (2006: 182-184) discusses this cynical story in his book, *'Back to the public space'*. He argues, Xiong had a fortunate chance to tell her husband's salary problem to the Premier and, thus, solved the problem successfully. Subsequently, Xiong became a symbolic character in China and was elected as a 'hero of economy' by China Central TV in 2005. Moreover, a factory invited her to be an administrator. However, her only skill was to keep pigs. All the honors placed on her came from the Media and the power of the Authorities. Xu said it is fake justice that Xiong became a rights protection hero. Xu argues the behavior of a hero should originate from personal awareness and enlightenment rather than by totalitarian 'public justice'.

This characterization of Xiong was similar to the creation of Comrade Lei Feng, the arch propaganda model of Mao Zedong and the CCP in 1963. This form of justice, applied directly from the power at the top of social hierarchy to those at bottom, like Xiong, is only given by the Authorities. Members of the general public have great difficulty in getting it. The controversy of property and social wealth has two aspects: one is that people in these categories conduct public practices to act with Media and the Government; the other is the combination of the Media and the Authorities to shape a symbol for rights protection. However, this kind of rights protection character is too distant from the daily lives of the general public. Xu therefore said, 'this is the champion of the Authorities' power rather than the general public's rights.'

In other words, in this case of Xiong Deming, the meaning of 'the champion' applies to whoever is networking on behalf of the Authorities. Ironically, the aim of their 'champion' is to network with the Public Officials. For the general public, they do believe in making their purpose come true by networking with whoever has the ability. By contrast, the WCWs use an open and direct approach to the champion. Although they talk about their failed experiences, the activities of the champion reveal their expectations.

Conservation and Reservation

This section aims to analyze the variety of attitudes amongst differing work positions and class, when the participants talk about their experiences of reading newspapers. They were divided into two directions, conservation and reservation. Due to China's society being in transformation, the transparency, fairness and impartiality of the legal system are still held in suspicion by the general public within China. For certain, some participants support the stand of the Authorities such as university teachers, public officials, and immigrant laborers whereas others like the young WCWs and the working Beijing Citizens, do not support the Authorities. The aim of this analysis is to make the complicated and subtle 'Popular Public' in Beijing more distinct and clarified.

In the context of conservation, there are those people who do not harbor any doubts or challenges about the responsibilities of the Authorities; they say their reading habits focus on formal and official coverage in the Media. Their criticism of the coverage is mainly of the trivial or crime news. However, they agree political coverage is very important to the general public. For instance, T-4 (65, Retired professor, female) read a rather conservative paper but admitted it was insufficient. T-3 (42, Professor, male), teaches at university and was a Public Official. He said at the beginning of the session, he read Party Papers.

Interviewer: 'Which newspaper do you do you like the most or read in everyday life?'

T-4: 'I read *Chinese Clipping* newspaper because it reorganizes all useful messages, for example, health coverage, good manner, ethics and morality and so on. Of course, I admit it is not sufficient, as *Chinese Clipping* newspaper has no political coverage or important international events, it even intentionally avoids touching national policy.'

T-3: '*Reference Daily* (參考消息) is my favorite paper. Because it is published by *Xinhua News Agency* and has a lot of international coverage, we could not read this in Party Papers. Besides, I love to read *Guangming Daily* and *WenHui Daily* (文匯報) as both of them belong to the Bureau of Education they are the traditional papers of intellectuals.'

T-3 admits China's newspapers are opinion-based rather than report-based, and due to the needs of social development, increasingly daily news reports are necessary for the general public. In response to the question, 'if a breaking news event happens, which papers would you read?' T-3 replied, 'Basically, I do not read political coverage but I like *South Weekend* for its investigative coverage.' There is a huge chasm between the *Guangming Daily* and *South Weekend* as far as their content, position and format. So, eventually, T-3 did admit to his very different reading habits.

Furthermore, although some blue collars workers complained that the Government does not treat them well enough, they still hope the Government will favor them. Because BCWs have no opportunities for improving their living standards, their only option is to depend on the support of Government policy to improve their living conditions. V-9 (24, *Worker, male*) said, 'For those educational, and medical problems, all of them depend on the national policy rather than my individual opinion. My opinion is not any effect upon the problems.' V-1 (27, *Worker, female*) said, 'I agree with the Mayor of Guangzhou speech, the property problem is not the general public's business, by contrast, it is the Government's business.' Apparently, most people were aware that political affairs are the general public's affairs and the general public's business is the political official's business. The political and public affairs are not distant from people's daily lives, but in their daily lives.

In the context of reservation, are those people dissatisfied and disappointed with the Legal System and Media coverage? They are in particular, young WCWs and independent business professionals. They cannot understand the inefficient bureaucracy of the Government and suspect the credibility of the Media.

T-2 (43, *Accountant, female*) said, 'I do hope the media in China is like Hong Kong's newspapers. To trace the problems such as why these Public Officials have the ability to buy a luxury mansion while depending on their limited salaries? Why Public Officials can afford the expence of some fancy places? China's Media lacks this kind of scrutiny.'

Other than T-2's hope, the rest of the group is pessimistic towards the function of the Media coverage.

S-6 (31, *Administrative, male*), said, 'Owing to "One Party" controls the State, Media does not have a space to keep its independence.'

S-8 (24, *Customer service, female*), said, 'It is very difficult that the Media has the ability to supervise the State. Because of "One Party" controlled, media the only choice is to stand with the State together.'

T-7 (26, *PhD student, male*), said, 'Overall, China's Media opinion-is toward coverage. Due to the Government dominating the direction of the opinions toward that which the Government wants, therefore, the coverage is published or the issue is addressed by the Media. In other words, the coverage actually is not controlled by audiences but by the Government. Hence, it is impossible that the so called "the freedom of the press" comes true in China.'

In summary, the conservation group does not challenge the Authorities, but is aware of political coverage having an impact on their daily life. By contrast, the reservation group does not trust the Authorities and is also suspicious of Media coverage. This group does believe that whatever the Media reports, the power of the Authorities always interferes in the newsroom.

Conclusion

There are many different dimensions to the 'Popular Public' in Beijing. The most impressive is the indifference, which most participants displayed while talking about some headline coverage or topical issues in the newspapers. Some WCW participants distrusted Media coverage, and therefore they were also indifferent to hard news and public coverage. Some BCW participants read coverage as gossip and expressed an interest in what lay behind the coverage and what the coverage did not reveal.

Three aspects are explained to conclude the 'Popular Public' in Beijing, they are: popular issue, popular attitude and popular expectation.

First, in the context of popular issues, the WCWs were not interested in the sensitive coverage. Some WCW participants were not sensitive or sympathetic towards the victims of disasters, such as the mine disasters. In contrast, the BCW participants did display more feelings to these disasters as many colleagues or family relatives do similar dangerous work. Initially, some BCW participants also did not trust the Legal System or the Officials, but they were willing to talk about the disasters' coverage. Lastly, both groups were concerned about their personal interests or rights except for those unskilled manual workers who did not have the social resources such as cleaner, boiler worker and so on.

The dramatic pictures of the 'hardest nail house', provoked debates. Under pressure from the social atmosphere and public opinion, the land developers and the Officials made a commitment to compensate the owner of the property. The participants not only liked to show empathy with this event but also any cases that were close to their daily lives. Since the rapid expansion of economic development in China, the controversy of land development has become a major issue as many developers and officials made huge profits from land deals while the poor and even the WCWs have problems in owning property. Ironically, while some participants did not trust the Authorities others admire or rely on those who network with Officials to help them solve their problems.

Second, popular attitude is quite extreme in this metropolitan city. Due to Beijing being the location of Central State, there are huge numbers of Public Officials serving in Central Government or Party Organs. By way of contrast there are a large number of workers of foreign companies and much of the remaining working population work as unskilled manual laborers or are immigrant workers. Overall, the Public Officials and the immigrant laborers are more conservative than professionals or people who work in foreign companies. The former two even expressed dissatisfaction with the Government but still support it. The latter two were fundamentally disappointed in the Legal System. Although some WCW participants expressed their disappointment in the Media coverage

and the Authorities, their actions to negotiate with the institution or organ are more aggressive than the BCWs. The indifference of WCWs is just an excuse. So, the WCWs still have expectations from the Media and the Authorities.

Third, with popular expectation, most participants agreed the Media should take more responsibility in public affairs. However, there are many varied details. To the position of the Public Officials, they hoped the Media would purify their coverage and spend more attention on positive aspects. The attention of the BCW was focused on the needs of their daily lives and trivial news. The coverage is entertaining, informing and referenced to their life style. However, BCW participants, except for the immigrant laborers who were too busy making a living, were the most critical of the Media coverage. As far as the WCWs, who expressed hopelessness about media reform, they are the social group which has the ability and knowledge to challenge the Authorities.

To sum up, the 'Popular Public' in Beijing is a process of struggle. There are different powers struggling with each other in the coverage and formation of opinions. Due to the complicated bureaucratic system and the massive number of newspapers circulating in Beijing, the commercial benefits and political controls exist together in parallel. Popular Papers do not fulfill all the different expectations in Beijing. While the Popular Press has the most progressive and the most conservative appeal, and has provided a platform for public debates, the general public expects a lot more.

Beijing is a metropolitan city and the Capital of China. The experiences of the participants in the focus groups may not be typical for China as a whole. There are many limitations and conditions in such a big city. In the next chapter, Kunming's readers present their more localized opinions and feelings toward public affairs and political events in this much smaller Provincial Regional Capital City in Southwest China.

CHAPTER 9

CHAPTER 9

The Popular Public in Kunming

Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the reading experiences of the general public in Kunming and to map the 'Popular Public' through their discussions. There are four focus groups with 27 participants. In general, they were asked about their reading habits at the beginning of the first session, then introduced to some topical issues in Kunming and then allowed to discuss or present their emotive responses and comments freely. The topical issues were of local origin, such as the corrupt behavior of Hu Xing and the earthquake disaster in Pu'er. Afterwards, some participants wanted to move on to events or coverage which concerned them.

This chapter is divided into two main parts. One part is the dialogue of the focus groups and represent what they think about public affairs concerning corruption, crime and emotive and interesting stories. Most of the participants comment directly on the coverage but some apparently criticize these events with heightened emotion. The second part is related to the interaction between the participants in the separate focus groups. As the occupations and working status within the groups were disparate the discussions occasionally became heated and provocative causing either steadfast viewpoints or changes of attitude.

The various occupations of the participants were split into two social class groups; university educated, professional careerists in two white collar worker (**WCW**) groups and skilled, manual laborers into two blue collar worker (**BCW**) groups. Their diverse backgrounds represent the general public's reading experiences, opinions and comments of Popular Media in Kunming.

The Popular and Public Affairs in Kunming

Although the Popular Press and the competitive market of Popular Papers developed rapidly in contemporary China, print media coverage of public and political affairs is still restricted in a manner that guarantees the Authorities always get most attention. Due to the political conditions imposed on the Media, the presentation of 'hard' news is a significant strategy. The Popular Press uses different tactics to negotiate with the political powers and to criticize public affairs, i.e. the hard news. The essence of criticism of 'hard' news is more attractive to researchers and important in contemporary China's society than that in soft news, which Fiske (1989) argues is as important. This is a unique characteristic of China's Media, and one of the aims of this research is to determine whether the Popular Press' use of tabloid and sensational methods can work effectively in hard news. Also, the Authorities sometimes conduct the same tactics in propaganda news to appeal the masses.

Compared to Beijing the number of main-stream papers available to the general public in Kunming is much smaller, (see the corresponding Table 18 in Chapter 8) but still consists of the two main protagonists of this research study, the Party Press and the Popular Press.

Title	Orientation
Kunming Daily	Party Press
Yunnan Daily	Party Press
Global Times	International News
South Weekend	Progressive Paper
Spring City Evening News	Popular Press
City Times	Popular Press
Living News	Popular Press

Table 20: Cross-section of Kunming newspapers

This section, shows how the participants of the focus groups (Tables 21, a-d) think about public affairs and popular stories in Popular Press. Most of the participants read the Popular Press in their leisure time; such as *Spring City Evening*, *City Times*, or *Living News*. Those who regularly read the Party Papers do so, because they need to know the latest Government Policy announcements. Party Press readers come from both focus groups, nevertheless the majority preferred to maintain a distance from the Official coverage by the Party Press.

Name	Occupation	Age	Gender
W-1	Retired Superintendent	76	Male
W-2	Retired General Manager in Power Factory	67	Male
W-3	Teacher	24	Female
W-4	Air Transportation Manager	39	Female
W-5	Air Transportation Manager	36	Female
W-6	Doctor	36	Female
W-7	Public Official in Local Government	38	Male
W-8	PhD Student	24	Male
W-9	Local Tour Guide	29	Male

Table 21a Location: Meeting Room 13F at *Yunnan Daily*
Group Title: W Social grouping: 'WCW' workers (WCW)
Date: 21, July, 2007 Time and duration: 14.30, 2.0 hours

Name	Occupation	Age	Gender
X-1	Teacher in College	43	Female
X-2	Supt (Superintendent)	43	Male
X-3	Lawyer	33	Male
X-4	Doctor	42	Male
X-5	Doctor	43	Female
X-6	Doctor	41	Female

Table 21b Location: Meeting Room 13F at *Yunnan Daily*
Group Title: X Social grouping: 'WCW' workers (WCW)
Date: 28, July, 2007 Time and duration: 15:00, 2.0 hours

Name	Occupation	Age	Gender
Y-1	Sales	27	Male
Y-2	Hairdresser	23	Male
Y-3	News Stand Worker	45	Female
Y-4	Housewife	27	Female
Y-5	Retired Street Vendor	50	Male
Y-6	Taxi Driver	50	Female

Table 21c Location: Meeting Room 13F at *Yunnan Daily*
Group Title: Y Social grouping: 'BCW' workers (BCW)
Date: 20, July, 2007 Time and duration: 14.30, 2.0 hours

are highly critical, while others read these corruption stories with mixed emotions – anger at the corruption, jollity at the shenanigans.

“The Ministry of Public Security has launched a nationwide manhunt for Hu Xing, deputy chief of the Yunnan Provincial Communications Department. Hu allegedly embezzled a large amount of money while serving as Deputy Mayor of Kunming from 2001 to 2004.”¹⁹

This was evident in discussion of the coverage of Hu Xing’s corruption in Kunming, a topical issue but in which the Media coverage received low credibility. The response from W-7 (38, *Public official, Male*) was typical of the answers representing the mechanism of ‘invisible rules’, violation of legitimacy and back room politics. W-7, a political official, did not believe this coverage and guessed there must be something obscure.

W-7 (38, *Public official, Male*): ‘I won’t read the coverage of breaking news at the beginning because all coverage is far behind what is happening. For example, in the beginning, I was curious about how Hu Xing’s corruption was shielded as there must be someone behind him....however, the coverage still did not reveal how much money he grifted every time or details of his extradition from Singapore. We know a lot of similar cases which never have been exposed to the Public.’

Apparently, most people are tacitly well aware of how the ‘invisible rules’ work, in particular that there are huge benefits to be gained through these ‘invisible rules’ instead of formal regulation. The groups of BCW workers always hinted at a satirical message through their attitudes when we discussed the coverage of corruption. Being from the underprivileged sector of society, they hardly derive any benefit from the ‘invisible rules’ that are defined by the elite. Z-1 (32, *News vendor, Male*), whose education ended after junior high school, made his fortune in the stock market. He is an advocate of liberalism, and stressed that his success had depended on his own ability while others used ‘invisible rules’ to obtain bribes.

Interviewer: Why is the Hu Xing incident reported widely?

Z-1 (32, *News vendor, Male*): ‘We general public never know it. The answer is only in the mind of upper Authority. The Official’s corruption is a confirmed and deep-rooted problem in China. In my opinion, it is the result of political struggle, something very ordinary. If anyone has ‘a little’ common sense in our society, he definitely would “network” with the County’s Head or the Party’s Leader. How “glorious” that is! A typical Chinese sadness....’.

Interviewer: Did you see any Media criticism of the Bureaucracy?

Z-1 (32, *News vendor, Male*): ‘Whatever the critiques they are useless!The Press criticized these problems in the Government of course, but those political officials just turned a deaf ear to them and take no heed of these critiques. As I said, if one of my relatives was a head of a County or a Province, he could do anything, any business, and there would be no problems at all... These things disgust me! I can trade freely in the stock markets. However, I still need to find ways to protect my own rights.

¹⁹ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-02/09/content_805381.htm 9.02.2007 (Accessed 14.03.2009)

Z-1 was very angry when he told me his thoughts on Authority and Officials. The same emotions appeared in when other BCW participants talked about corruption. Their anger explained their suffering in China's Society. The evidence is in the responses of two BCWs whose satirical attitudes revealed their dissatisfaction. Because Hu Xing was a formal Transport Official in Kunming, he used 'informal' tactics such as asking his younger brother to bid for parcels of land which had building restrictions so gaining huge benefits. His activities led to many complaints. Y-5 (50, Retired street vendor, Male) said 'This is the negative and dark side of our Society, that is, if someone has a particular relation, ironically, it seems a kind of honor of his.' Indeed, this is the result of the 'invisible rule': the power holder defines the rules, which excludes the BCWs. So corruption, such as a specific case like this, cannot be seriously solved. Ironically, the Authority now appeals for a 'Harmonious Society'. U-1 (a 40-year-old cleaner in Beijing) used this slogan, and scoffing at the Authorities, saying all corrupt Officials would be 'harmonized, harmonized, harmonized!'

Wedeman (2005:93-116) concludes Chinese-style anticorruption campaigns are

'unlikely to deter corruption. In large part, the lack of an effective deterrent is the result of the low rates of detection apparent during periods of routine policing and the relatively limited increases in detection rates observed during the four major campaigns conducted during the 1980s and 1990s. Based on the fact that less than 1% of Officials are investigated by the Procuratorate and only 0.5% of Officials are charged with corruption each year.'

Therefore, Wedeman says, the fear of anticorruption campaigns may deter cadres from accepting relatively 'modest' bribes but is unlikely to deter them from accepting large bribes.

The belief that Authority controls the Media, leads to the realization that journalists also have to abide by the 'invisible rules' to keep their jobs. One regulation of the 'invisible rules' is that a person has to pay a heavy penalty when a rule is broken; somehow the BCW participants were in sympathy with the journalists and even forgave them for their reports.

Z-1 (32, News vendor, Male): 'According to my observations, if the headline news is the "Official stands down for his corruption", newspapers are sold out very soon on that day. This is because this kind of [corruption] news is always blocked by Authority. However, one of my friends working on a magazine said he knows this kind of coverage is a good sales story, but if we report this story, our magazine will be closed down by the Authorities sooner or later.'

Y-6 (50, Taxi driver, Female): 'Yes, the Media is very important. The Media addresses some problems and informs the Public. However, some journalists are afraid of losing their job doing so. We can only depend on the individual journalist's sense of justice.'

Some participants, on the one hand, criticized corruption news angrily and did not believe any coverage, as they thought there must be conspiracies. On the other hand, they used their 'common sense' to judge how the 'invisible rule' was exercised. For example,

X-3 (33, *Lawyer, Male*): 'Basically, we want to know what happens about the corruption and how much money was involved. In terms of its result and process, I do not care about that as there are too many similar cases with the same stories and situations. Whatever the roles of police and what the suspect did, the justice just runs it with an often used and Official procedure. Some people even think if the corrupt Official is sentenced to death, its reason must not relate to how much money he embezzled (but for other political reasons) ...So far, for me, I read this coverage but have my own explanations and idea.'

According to Sun (2007), the 'invisible rule' as an alternative to the formal rules practically operates society. The systematic use of the 'invisible rule' has destroyed the formal rule and become the cause of illegal activities. Sun uses the term, 'mafia' to explain how much worse the situation would become in society while the alternative rule is so disordered. As a result, the powerful elite, like the Authorities, become increasingly arbitrary and impolite. They even use violence to bully powerless people, e.g., the Authorities tear down civilians' houses by force, or the Authorities collaborate with the boss of a mine to exploit workers. Sun (2007) contends the 'invisible rule' is now the cause of a series of never ending violent acts.

The evidence come from the WCWs in Kunming while they discuss the Hu Xing corruption event. W-1 (76, *Retired Police, Male*), a former Superintendent, said the most important thing is objective coverage and the truth, but before any judicial investigation the newspapers should not report too much in case they influence the sentence. But W-1 does think the punishments are always too light for corrupt Officials, such as in the Shanxi Brick Factory case:

"A group of fathers from Henan province recently ventured to the brick kilns in Shanxi Province to rescue their children, who were abducted and illegally forced to work as slaves..."²⁰

Only the factory boss and his henchman were punished. W-1 (76, *Retired Police, Male*): 'There must have been cover from the Government behind it.' Some WCWs have more knowledge to judge the cases. X-3 (33, *Lawyer, Male*) thought that while most media maintain reportage on corruption events until the sentence is passed, it is not the real ending of the legal procedure. Newspapers rarely investigate what happens as a consequence, as W-3 (24, *Teacher, Female*) explained, 'the consequence of the crime is always a mystery.'

²⁰ http://www.danwei.org/internet/the_slave_children_and_the_int.php 18.June.2007 (Accessed 14.03.2009)

Due to the mystery, some participants viewed the coverage as 'gossip' rather than a serious issue. They speculated what the truth was with a scornful tone and without emotion, such as emphasizing how many mistresses a corrupt official has or how luxurious is his lifestyle. For instance, two doctors(W-6 & X-4) think the corruption news is a topical issue; their patients always tell them the most up-to-date news and gossip.

W-6 (36, Doctor, Female) said, 'I am curious how many mistresses Hu Xing has? The newspaper did not report about this part but most people believe the number is more than he admits.'
'I read this coverage as it is a hot topic and I need new news while chatting with friends.'

In other words, if she cannot catch the up-to-date news, it means she regarded as odd.

*"Mr. Li Jiating 52 million RMB ... [charged with] asking for and taking bribes while governing Yunnan"*²¹

Besides, a BCW participant had worked as a servant in the house of Kunming's former Governor, Li Jiating who was sentenced to prison for accepting bribes. Z-3 (47, Unemployed, Female) relates an interesting story of what she had seen in Li Jiating's house. Z-3 said Li hired six servants in his house. One day, he dismissed them all as he could not afford to hire them.

Z-3 (47, Unemployed, Female) 'After a fortnight, I heard of his corruption news from the Media. I am astonished the coverage did not report his private life, particularly the women problems.'
'Even his son's private life was awful!'

Moreover, she emphasizes the luxury of Li's private life. 'The members of his family are only consists of four but they spent two thousand RMB in one day.' Her tone and face mixes speculation, desirability, and observation all together. She is angry and keen to share her experiences with the others while they discuss Hu Xing, though most of her talk is problematic.

Hence, when newspapers report a corrupt event, it means the event really happened, but the general public does not really know what exactly happened. Consequent to the lack of detail, imaginations embellish the reality. In other words, a serious case of corruption in Kunming will inevitably, due to the lack of detailed information, become a topical issue. Although many participants show their disbelief and resentment at corruption news, this is an issue affecting everyone for which reason they all pay the issue a lot of attention. The criteria of their judgments are a mixture of 'common sense', daily experiences and scorn.

²¹ <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2007/01/chinas-filthiest-50-rich-list-ye-kuangzhengs-blog/> 23.01.2007 (Accessed 14.03.2009)

Crime Stories

Crime stories happen everywhere all the time. Crimes news like routine news stories does not get too much attention from the general public. But when the crime relates to the authorities, there will be different versions of the coverage. One version is the coverage will be censored quickly and disappear from the Media or will become Official News. The other situation is whichever Media reports the crime, doubts and questions will remain as some details will be restricted. The arbitrariness of censorship is widespread as this report by the BBC shows:

‘Censorship has been an everyday feature of news reporting in China for as long as the Chinese Communist Party has been in power. But this wide range of so-called sensitive stories shows that, in China, any story on any subject at any time can still fall foul of the censor’s red pen.’²²

There is a vivid story that exhibits the conflict between the censorship of the Authorities and the general public, which came to light during the BCW focus group, ‘Y. The participants spontaneously began talking about a traffic accident, which occurred in Dongfeng Square, downtown central Kunming, in 2006. Most Media coverage did not report the details of why the saloon car crashed into the crowd or why the driver immediately disappeared. After the accident, the Authorities sought a ‘scapegoat’ and identified a man suffering from mental illness as the driver. Shortly afterwards, the ‘scapegoat’ was released.

Y-6 (50, *Taxi driver, Female*) based her comments on her experiences. She said ‘What a silly thing! It was incredible, because this guy actually worked as a driver in Government institution. If he was not qualified, it would have been impossible to work there for more than twenty years..... If this accident happened to us, general public, we could not escape the sentence so easily.’

Y-5 (50, *Retired street vendor, Male*) stresses the inequality between the Authorities and general public. He said ‘The Authorities would seal off our property, if we were responsible.’

Y-3 (45, *News Kiosk, Female*) said:

‘I heard little about the details of this news. I knew little about it. In my memory, some customers said the coverage was not true. Many people were angry because the suspect was not sentenced.’

The overall impression was that the participants felt the coverage of the accident in the Press was unclear. Y-6 told this story to persuade the others to her viewpoint.

²² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/7171648.stm> 06.01.2008 (Accessed 14.03.2009)

The 'W' group of WCW participants also mention and discuss this traffic accident. They felt this accident revealed the inequality between powerless lower echelons of society and the absolute power of the Authorities. The participants were far from apathetic, expressing their feelings strongly and these discussions showed their concerns with public affairs, especially when the story was close to their daily lives.

W-6 (36, Doctor, Female): Last year, there was a very serious traffic accident but the news was blocked in the end. On the first day, all newspapers reported this news event ardently, however, on the second and the third days, all news almost disappeared, because the suspect has already been identified as a mental patient.

W-5 (36, Executive, Female): Once they identified he was mentally ill, then he was released. Like nothing had happened.

This story caused W-7 (38, Public official, Male) working in the forestry department to speak out on a similar case that also happened last year. The story is that the forest on Xi Mountain in Kunming tragically caught fire. W-7 said 'It was a big joke! This kind of "political" fire is always blamed on a mentally sick person by the authority.' Ironically, for this accident, the Kunming Government passed a law very quickly on how to deal with the mentally ill arsonist.

Then, W-5 (36, Executive, Female) concluded 'Regarding efficiency, the Government was not slow. Just sometimes they did not want to do something efficiently.' Clearly the participants did care about and had strong opinions on public affairs.

In comparison with the BCW focus groups who talked about the crime in detail, the WCW focus groups paid more attention to the attitude of the Authorities and the justice in the procedure.

However, in the other WCW focus group, 'X', the discussion reflected the gap existing between the thinking of the Authorities and the general public. In this focus group, the participants were mainly lawyers, police officers and doctors. In direct contrast to other views:

X-2 (43, Police, Male) said: 'the coverage quite presents the whole story of the traffic accident in Dongfeng Square, only there is no coverage while the relatives of victims burn incense sticks at the scene though from the perspective of the Government, the most important thing is to maintain a harmonious and stable society.'

His comments lead to the voicing of different opinions. The first defense came from the lawyer.

X-3 (33, Lawyer, Male): 'as many people have strong comments on the Government originally, the Authority of course would not like too much coverage on this controversial accident. However, why send the suspect to

make mental examination and release him from the prison. To us, the most important thing is the process.'

Interviewer: 'Is there any coverage discussing about why a mental ill patient can drive for the Government department?'

X-3: (33, Lawyer, Male) 'Who is brave enough to discuss it? Although people have strong comments on it and the Media also devotes big space to report this story everyday at that moment, it still will fade from people's memories after a long time.'

X-4: (42, Doctor, Male) 'Indeed, I almost forgot this story if you did not mention it.' 'The controversial event always is censored by the Authorities and released as the same content as the mouthpiece of the propaganda department.'

X-3: (33, Lawyer, Male) 'If this event happens abroad, the Media will very soon interview the mental health expert. Once the expert can reasonably explain it, people will accept the result, otherwise no one stands for it.' 'But the thing happens in China, so it must have causes and benefits to the Government while the Justice sends the suspect for a mental examination. In this condition, it is impossible to expect any coverage to have discussions about it.'

X-4: (42, Doctor, Male) 'This story left a big question but no one resolved it.'

A comparison between the stories of this traffic accident and the following murder story, is interesting for two reasons. First, whereas the details of the traffic accident are obscure those of the murder are clear and evident. Secondly, the participants took the coverage of this crime [the murder] to be an example that the Media could make a clear report and analysis if the Government does not intervene.

*"Ma Jiajue, a senior [undergraduate] at Yunnan University, in SouthWestern China, ... [who in 2003] hacked four of his room-mates to death in their dorm room ... He was executed in June 2004."*²³

This crime astonished all the participants and quickly became a topical issue in the Media. The coverage not only traced the causes but also pushed Yunnan University into making a new policy to pay more attention to the psychological state of the students. The doctor (W-6) emphasized that the coverage of this story involved many elements of psychology and environment whereas the story of the traffic accident had none. X-3 (33, Lawyer, Male) argued that however the Law and the Media dealt with the murderer, Ma Jiajue, they would not negatively affect the Authorities. As a result, the Media had space to explore

²³http://www.howardwfrench.com/archives/2005/11/25/campus_life_proves_difficult_for_chinas_little_emperors_pampered_at_home_students_rebel_against_squalid_dorms_and_limits_on/
Nov 25. 2005 blog by Howard W. French (who) is an associate professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism (Accessed 14.03.2009)

the whole story deeply and freely, and the Authorities' reputation increased because the murderer was sent to prison.

The participants were asked if they would read the *Yunnan Daily* and *Kunming Daily* if they wanted to know either the policies or the intentions of the Authorities? X-3 (33, *Lawyer, Male*) gave a quick negative response and the doctor (X-4) said 'I rather watch a TV programme than read that stuff.' X-2 (43, *Police, Male*) did not reply to the question.

In brief, the participants seriously read the story of the murder as such events impacted on their lives whereas they treated stories of corruption with scorn. The unequal provision of justice in corruption cases gave rise to strong comments and anger. But some differences became clear between the BCWs and WCWs, when the two WCWs groups extended their reading experiences to other similar examples such as the arson of the forest on Xi Mountain and the murder story with the BCWs complaining only of a feeling of helplessness. On the other hand, all the participants were well aware of the red-pen [of the Authorities' Censorship]. They re-explained these stories with distrust of the Authorities. Although there is sufficient negativity in the participants' responses to create the impression the Authorities have neither value nor credibility in their minds, the Authorities do acquire an enhanced reputation in some of the coverage. The following paragraph discusses the changes and struggles going on in the audience's minds.

Hero and Touching Stories

Human interest stories, compared with crime stories, appeal to the audience's aspirations, leaving warm and positive feelings. There are, however, those who view these stories as another kind of propaganda device as some coverage is designed to be emotive for political purposes. The following four stories provided an interesting contrast: the story of Luo Yingzhen (羅映珍), the coverage of the Pu'er Earthquake, the story of Auntie He (何大媽), and the story of Dong Cunrui (董存瑞).

The touching story of devotion of Luo Yingzhen came from one of the BCW groups. Y-3 (45, *News Kiosk, Female*) told how she loves this kind of heroic story.

"Luo Yingzhen, 29, writes regularly in her diary about her husband Luo Jinyong, 34, a former police officer who ... suffered severe head injuries during a fight with three drug dealers in Yongde on Oct 1, 2005. As a result he was left in a coma."²⁴

²⁴http://www.china.org.cn/living_in_china/life_in_pictures/2008-02/28/content_11034830.htm 28.02.2008 (Accessed 14.03.2009)

Although Luo's husband was injured in 2005, it was not until early 2007 that the *Spring City Evening* newspaper released the story of Luo Yingzhen's devotion. Luo, at the youthful age of 27, had cared for her husband for two years without any help from the Authorities. Luo's selfless and ever hopeful attitude makes her a role model for other young women. Luo soon became a female hero and many young female undergraduates wrote of their respect for her.

Although this story did not discuss why the Government never gave Luo any help for two years until after her story was reported, the love story of Luo and her husband touched many female readers' hearts. By contrast, the male participants said they did not notice the story.

Y-5 (50, Retd street vendor, Male) said, 'I think because people's behaviors are in disorder and too much bad news confuses people now, we need a hero like in the age of Mao Zedong which we grew up at that age. The purpose of this coverage can be used to electrify people.'

A similar story was the coverage of the Pu'er Earthquake.

*"A strong earthquake hit a tea-making city in SouthWest China early on Sunday, killing at least two people, injuring 200, causing houses to collapse and damaging roads, Xinhua News Agency and a Local Official said ... The earthquake shook the City of Pu'er and the surrounding area in mountainous Yunnan Province in the early morning."*²⁵

Almost all participants in BCWs group confirm they had read the earthquake coverage. They argue that it is very important to prevent chaos and disorder in contemporary China, so a natural disaster enables the Government to show they can maintain the stability of Society. Although no one actually related to the coverage of the earthquake report, they generally confirmed the content of the coverage. Y-5 (50, Retd street vendor, Male), however, had a different opinion: 'aiming to prove the greatness of our Socialist Country, the earthquake coverage is certainly [the Government's] propaganda device.' In the other BCWs group:

Z-6 (20, Masseuse, Female): 'I come from very remote county which is full of drug problems even until now it still has a big population of drug abusers. So, the most appealing story to me is the hero seizing drug prisoners. Unfortunately, most heroes are only noticed and reported after they have passed away.'

This is a similar attitude to the need of having a hero in a time of chaos. The 'hero story' is a crucial element in tabloid newspapers.

²⁵ <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/tag/puer/> 2.06.2007 (Accessed 14.03.2009)

'Hero stories', which appeal to the audience's emotions, are an ideal means for the Government to direct societal instead of political reform. Z-1 (32, *News vendor, Male*) told the story from CCTV [China Central TV], which used the story of Auntie He in order to educate the general public about the pitfalls of investing a lot of money in the stock market.

Auntie He bought shares of the Nan Ping company at 18 RMB each, which then dropped in value to 2 cents. The media called upon the Government and their audience to find a solution for Auntie He. Z-1 (32, *News vendor, Male*), however, did not feel the whole story had been told:

Z-1 (32, *News vendor, Male*): 'the inside story is this company made a false financial report attempting to pretend that its business achievements were well, but the government did not make any efforts to correct or punish it.'

Z-1 emphasizes that no one knows what the owner of the Nan Ping company did afterwards although such facts are very important to all investors as they lost a lot of money. Z-1's conclusion is that false coverage is detrimental to both the Media and the Government aim of gaining the Public's trust. If the Public always doubts whatever the Media or the Government say, the Public will use their own judgments. Auntie He's story suggests that emotive designs, while appealing to the Public's aspirations are not always successful, and may even evoke a strongly negative reaction.

Dong Cunrui (董存瑞) and Lei Feng (雷锋) were role models created by the CCP in the Nineteen Fifties and Nineteen Sixties.

Dong Cunrui

"In 1948, during the Chinese Civil War, the Nationalists held a defensive position on a bridge that blocked the PLA advance. Dong Cunrui was sent to blow up the fortifications, but when he reached the bridge he discovered that there was no place to affix the explosives. To fulfill his mission, he held the pack of explosives against the bridge until they detonated, making him an instant martyr and hero.

That's the version that's been accepted for more than half a century. However, in an article in Popular Cinema last summer, director Guo Wei told a different story when he discussed the making of the 1955 film 'Dong Cunrui'. At the time, he said, no one was certain what Dong Cunrui's final actions were:

*No one personally witnessed the scene in which he lifted the bundle of explosives; it was entirely a conjecture after the fact based on clues. Dong Cunrui had no frame at the time, and there was no place to put explosives on the underside of the bridge. After the war, they unearthed the bottoms of the socks his wife had made, so military experts believed that Dong Cunrui very likely held up the explosives to blow the bridge."*²⁶

²⁶ http://www.danwei.org/scholarship_and_education/dong_cunrui.php 16.04.2007 (Accessed 14.03.2009)

Lei Feng

"Lei Feng was a soldier of the People's Liberation Army of the People's Republic of China. He was characterised as a selfless and modest person who was devoted to Chairman Mao Zedong and the people of China. In the posthumous "Learn from Comrade Lei Feng" campaign, begun by Mao in 1963, the youth of the country were indoctrinated to follow Lei Feng's example."²⁷

Hero stories, e.g. Dong's selfless bravery and Lei's selfless devotion, caused a degree of positive reminiscences among the BCW groups because there are too few people like either role model in contemporary China. Nevertheless hero stories have influenced some individuals' societal behavior. Y-6 (50, *Taxi driver, Female*) explained he's a volunteer worker, helping the disabled to exercise. Y-6 was very proud of being a volunteer and indeed the Media suggests more people should help the disabled to exercise in this manner.

Z-3 (47, *Unemployed, Female*) told how a friend had been an anonymous hero in the Media when he saved an elderly person's life in an incident at the Public Library in Kunming. These participants agreed society needs a Lei Feng role model. Still the appropriateness of role models from half a century ago in contemporary society is controversial.

Z-1 (32, *News vendor, Male*) asked the rest of the group if they believed Lei Feng ever existed and was hugely surprised when everyone agreed. Z-1 believed Lei Feng had existed: 'Maybe Lei did some good things but impossible to be God like doing everything the best. It is just the apotheosis of Lei Feng.'

Interviewer: 'Is it maybe the Official that selects a hero to electrify people and encourages the People to learn from this hero how to sacrifice themselves for the State or Society?'

Z-1: (32, *News vendor, Male*) 'Recently, the Media revealed the story of Dong Cunrui(董存瑞) in a film, who bombed a fort in the North Korean War. We do not exactly know what the process was as only his shoes were found after the bomb. But in the coverage, it reports at the last minute Dong said, Comrades Go! Ironically, in this emergent time, who can know for sure what he shouts and did. All things come from imagination after the event.'

Z-2: (47, *Taxi Driver, Male*) 'there is a picture of the coverage!' Obviously, Z-2 does believes this story is true.

Z-1: (32, *News vendor, Male*) 'Impossible! Where does the picture come from during such urgent and dangerous conditions of war? The editor said "Comrades Go!" comes from other stories, so it is false not true.'

²⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lai_Feng (Accessed 14.03.2009)

Interviewer: 'Does the editor want to describe a more attractive story therefore, he use this method to enhance its drama?'

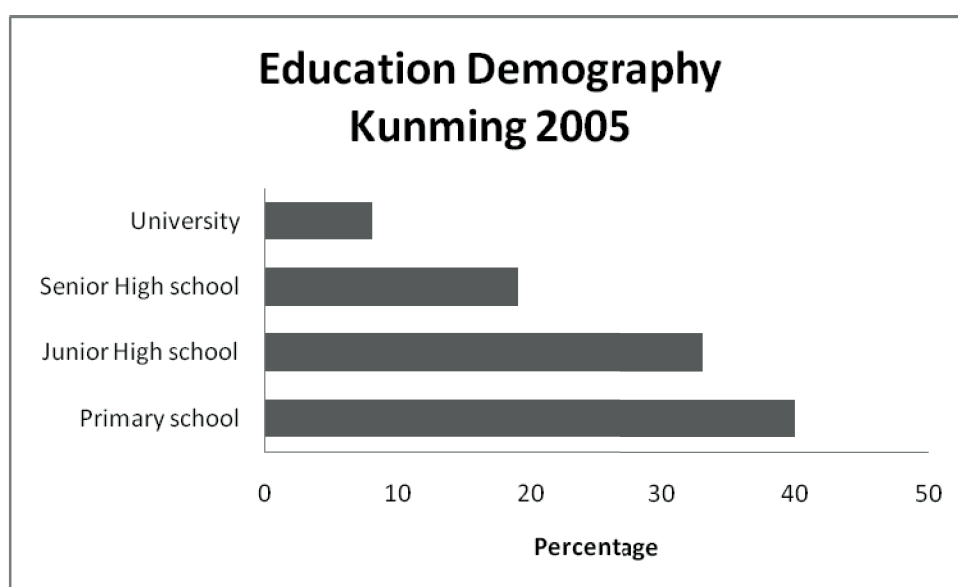
Z-3: (47, Unemployed, Female) 'the Authorities like to purify a hero of that era.' 'I think our society has changed too much from before. Even in the age of the Cultural Revolution, while everybody went out in the military struggle, to fight with each other, we did not need to close our doors, because no one went to steal anything.'

Others response to her comment coincidentally: 'Of course! There was nothing at home in that era. What stuff was worthy to be stolen?'

Crucially a dichotomy exists between reminiscing about the good old days and the difficulty in adjusting to the social environment of free-market socialism. Some sections of society need both the emotive stories of unimportant people as well as the role models of the hero symbol to guide their ethical and moral behavior. However, the moment society sees 'hero story' as nothing but a propaganda device, the hero no longer truly exists. Whereas some people are aware of the inherent falseness of the stories of Dong Conrui and Lei Feng and refuse to accept their existence, others still base their aspirations on such stories. The outcome of this dichotomy is that while the Public needs heroes such as Dong Conrui and Lei Feng to be role models in their daily lives, neither the Authorities nor the CCP gain any benefit from the creation of role models because of the inherent distrust of propaganda. In the following section, the key conditions are illustrated, which cause these social conflicts within the general public.

The People and Class Discrimination in Kunming

Yunnan is a remote mountainous province in the SouthWest of China with a population of 44.5 million. Kunming is the provincial capital with an urban population of 3 million and a further 3 million in the surrounding rural environs. The population of Kunming reflects the ethnic diversity, for which Yunnan is renowned. Although the Han are the ethnic majority [86.5%], there are 24 recognized ethnic minorities that comprise the rest of the population²⁸. Kunming Authorities promote increasing the population of ethnic minorities. According to a population census in 2005 compared to Beijing, less importance was placed on completing either higher secondary or tertiary education. Kunming's education demographic is however similar to the wider National demographics (see Figures 16, 17 and 18).



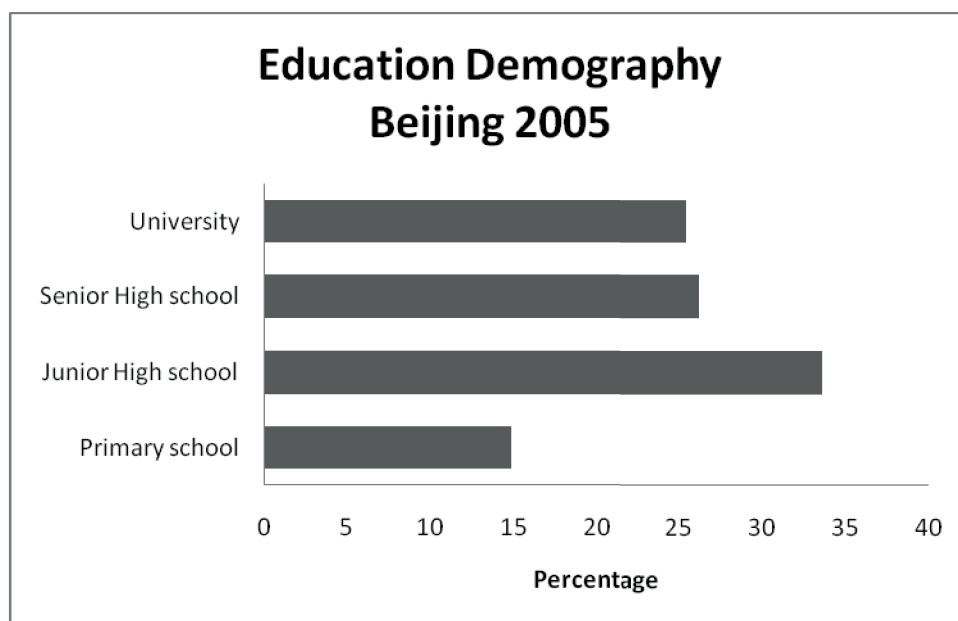
(National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2005 population census)

Figure 16 : Education Demography in Kunming 2005

The following paragraph focuses on how the participants interacted and conflicted with each other. Three approaches to examine these differences were conducted these are; personal experiences, quarrel and silence, and resistance and silence.

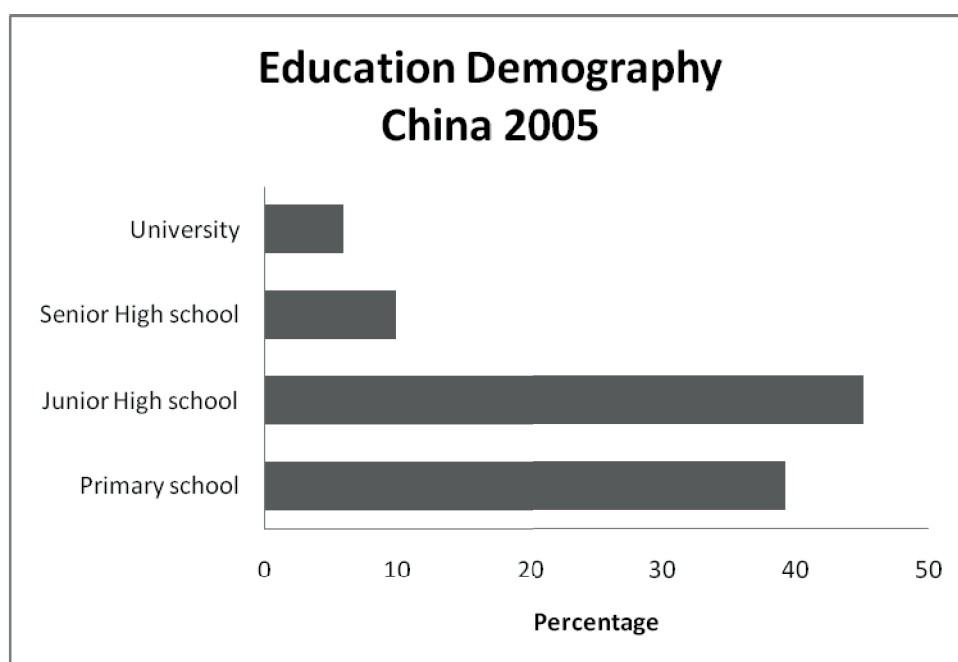
Class in China's Society was originally determined by political position and the Authorities rather than economic status. Owing to the economic reforms and the opening up of the economy, societal conflicts are becoming more prevalent and serious between urban and rural populations, between the Authorities and the general public as well as between the rich and the poor. This discussion, appempts to reveal the needs of different classes along with their comments on their everyday life and the Popular Media.

²⁸ See Glossary – Kunming for more details on the city and ethnic minorities



(National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2005 population census)

Figure 17 : Education Demography in Beijing 2005



(National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2005 population census)

Figure 18 : Education Demography in China 2005

Personal Experiences

The concept that the Public is an idea of public affairs, public opinion or community has developed only recently in contemporary China. Nevertheless, individuals are becoming accustomed to basing their criticisms of public affairs on their personal life experiences. They are also very sensitive to the issues of fairness, legitimacy, and reasonableness. For instance, there had been a piece of Official coverage reporting workers' salaries increasing ten times every year. The overall response of the focus groups was disbelief. W-2 (67, *Retired Executive, Male*) said 'this coverage must be absolutely false. I cannot understand why they reveal this news with almost all newspapers ranging from Party Papers through to Popular Papers reporting the same things.' The 'W' focus group, of WCWs, discussed this coverage eagerly because they were all in agreement with W-2.

Interviewer: 'which Government department revealed this piece of news?'

W-3 (24, *Teacher, Female*): 'all of them'.

W-2 (67, *Retired Executive, Male*): 'Every Party Paper or tabloid all reported it.'

W-5 (36, *Executive, Female*): 'They could calculate the result of salary increase by using average numbers.'

W-2 (67, *Retired Executive, Male*): 'For stability, there is a policy of a certain ratio of increasing salaries which are controlled by the Authorities. In other words, it is impossible that the Authorities allowed salaries to dramatically increase. This news comes from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. But, the truth is totally different.'

The Official coverage is removed from reality. This is true particularly for retired people whose pensions are fixed by policy and as a consequence do not share or enjoy the benefits of the economic development. The other problem is that due to inflationary pressure, pensioners cannot afford to pay the increasing prices. The next questions that were asked concerned the role of the Media in such Official coverage and the Media's perspective of what was necessary to fulfill political control and readers' needs.

Interviewer: 'Has any of the Media interviewed the general public for their opinions?'

W-5 (36, *Executive, Female*): 'They never do any investigation.'

W-4 (39, *Executive, Female*): 'This Official coverage is revealed by the television, then the newspapers copy the news from the television. Almost all news is copied from each other. It is a common phenomenon.'

W-1 (76, *Retired Police, Male*): 'Indeed, even when I went shopping, a street vendor said "your salaries increased, so we should raise the price of food and vegetables as well."''

The general public is well aware of social justice along with their personal rights and are very sensitive to them. This Public is based on the interaction between news coverage and the daily experiences of the readers. The most important element is discussing social discourse that is critical of the Authorities as an outcome of reading the media coverage. Furthermore, the general public analyzes where false coverage comes from and the problems that exist in the Media.

Interviewer: 'Probably, the Authorities just use it as an excuse to release the pressures from inflation.'

W-5 (36, *Executive, Female*): 'Maybe the Authorities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, know nothing about it and are just conducting the reporting of statistics from its subordinate department.'

W-2 (67, *Retired Executive, Male*): 'I do believe that the Leaders' salaries have increased 10 times in the Government and the Party. But, I absolutely do not believe the increase of basic workers' salaries.'

W-7 (38, *Public official, Male*): The reason is they count it by averaging numbers. From the perspective of the whole society, it may be true because there is a big income gap between working for a domestic company and for an international company. In fact, there are many differences between different occupations. The Authorities change the concept of salary increases to put forward a false explanation. They only reveal good news but ignore the dark side.... it never happens in our Country that Public Officials make wrong decisions or say something wrong that is then be criticized by newspapers. It may have happened on a small scale like in a Local Community or City but never on a big scale like Nationally.

W-7 is working in Local Government and knows the operation of the Government which cannot be revealed by Official coverage. As a result, his conclusion answers all dimensions for the causes in this false coverage. First, the calculation of average salaries is biased, but the Authorities only like to reveal positive news. Second, the idea that the Media should take responsibility to supervise the Authorities is still deficient.

Unlike WCWs who view judgments of Official coverage as hopeless, the BCWs are such a powerless societal group that they depend on social welfare. Some BCWs inform the Authorities and the Media of their their aspirations and awareness of social problems. In the 'Z' BCW focus group, the three unemployed laborers complained at their unfair treatment with their lowest level of benefits but have no ideas as to how they need to adjust to their current situation.

Two laid-off female workers (Z-4 & Z-5) said 'there is a big gap between the salaries of Public Officials and laborers. Only Public Officials salaries raise every year, we workers never get any benefits. Those Public Officials are like Americans, we workers are Chinese. We are the lowest class in this society with merely 300 RMB pension per month.'

They even emphasize that no media coverage displayed concern for workers' conditions and income problems. Later, a laid-off worker (Z-3) admitted,

'in my memory, Spring City Evening revealed a piece of news last year. But, it said that workers' salaries will raise by 80 RMB per month, until now there is still not any progress. With the exception of workers' salaries, the price-hike is on everything.'

Disbelief in the Authorities is revealed in different ways. WCWs have more knowledge with which to criticize and judge both Official coverage and public affairs. In contrast, BCWs are angry at their unfair treatment but still depend on the support from the Government. Hence, they increase their suffering and reveal the overall hopelessness of BCWs situation. However, in group 'Z', there were two participants with different experiences. Z-2 (47, *Taxi driver, Male*) said he was a public bus driver but the working conditions were too awful, with long working hours and a low salary. Z-2 decided to quit to become a taxi driver. However, aiming to prevent the transfer of bus drivers to taxi or private chauffeur companies, the Government ruled that a bus driver's driving license becomes invalid when he stops driving buses for living. Consequently, former bus drivers had to pay another fee to the driving school to get a new license. Z-2 said he did not care about the ruling so created his new career. Compared to the pessimism of laid off workers, the taxi driver was optimistic about the future. He was even proud to be a volunteer at the disabled games held in Kunming.

Z-2 (47, *Taxi driver, Male*): 'I drive many disabled athletes everyday from the hotels to the stadium. It's my honor to make the effort. Particularly, when I read the coverage, that the volunteers contributions are a big favor that makes the Games successful.'

In BCWs focus group 'Z', Z-1 (32, *News vendor, Male*), also depends on his own efforts to be a success in the stock market. He maintains his doubts while talking about the Authorities and the Media. He enjoyed having his own business.

Z-1 (32, *News vendor, Male*): 'To the Chinese, the stock market is currently heaven in China. I can invest in or out of the stock market by freely using my own decisions. I do not like having any contact with the Government. Those Bureaucrats disgust me.'

He was seeking a liberalized market but there are too many restrictions in the Media's stock market coverage. He said, 'the rights of investors still depend on themselves, I never believe the reporting of the Media.'

Overall, the general public does not basically believe the Authorities and the Media. WCWs work in Government or professional positions. They have the ability and knowledge to discuss or analyze the coverage and policies. However, these WCWs are a

small social group in Kunming and are not the major group that is threatened by the legitimate violence. By way of contrast, although the BCWs are the major group in Kunming, they are also the ones that are most threatened by the power of the Authorities. The BCWs are sensitive to unfair treatment as expressed by Z-5 'Those Public Officials are like Americans, we workers are Chinese', but most have no solution for it, so they still inform the Authorities of their aspirations. The dependence of the BCWs on the Authorities to answer to their aspirations, could be the reason why the BCWs like emotive stories and 'hero stories'.

Clearly, the discussions and coverage of the public affairs as presented by the Media cannot completely fulfill the need of the general public. But, people are becoming involved in public affairs by reading newspapers. The participants of the focus groups desired coverage which differed from common sense and life experiences providing relief to the absence of coverage for events that did occur.

Controversy

Controversy often arises from two situations: opposite viewpoints and different classes. The former can occur within a group of different occupations whereas the latter occurs in groups of different social or religious classes. Conflicts of interest can occur between different occupations and different classes. However, controversial events also reveal different perspectives of Media reports, so it was helpful that the audiences had various news sources to reference. In the past, Official coverage published controversial events from a single unified viewpoint – the CCP's.

Y-5 (50, *Retired street vendor, Male*) argued the Media should focus more on people's rights and needs. Y-5 told of a controversial news issue, the coverage of which paid more attention to the concerns of the general public. The issue was the enduring conflict between the street vendors and Kunming's municipal security guards (城管)²⁹. The source of the friction was the way the security guards treated the vendors. The Media coverage historically sided with the security guards and criticized the street vendors.

Y-5 (50, *Retired street vendor, Male*): from time to time administerers of the Law cannot blame the general public. To be honest, China's general public is the most obedient in the world. These quarrels or activities are down to the unfair treatment of the street vendors. The recalcitrant vendors are not always wrong. Fortunately, the Media started to recently report the situation thus providing some coverage of the vendors' standing.

²⁹ See: Glossary – City Guards

In any city street vendors are almost the lowest class. Most of them are immigrant laborers and do not have any work skills to in order to get jobs in the city. The security guards' work is controversial because they do the work of the Official police force. The rules for security guards are like the 'invisible rules' that use informal power to manage public affairs. In this instance the public affair is the businesses of the street vendors. In the WCW focus group 'X', the issue also causes a major quarrel between X-3 (33, *Lawyer, Male*) and X-2 (43, *Police, Male*). *Spring City Evening* had published a dramatic photo of the conflict, on the front of page, in which the street vendors were fighting with the security guards against a background of flames in Central Kunming. This was a solitary instance of a well documented conflict. In January 2008, in Hubei Province, the general manager of a local architecture company drove through where a beating of street vendors was being administered by security guards. The general manager got out of his car to take photographs with his mobile phone. The security guards found his actions offensive and beat him up so seriously that he later died. Twenty-four of the security guards were charged with his death.

Interviewer: 'where do the conflicts of city security guards and street vendors come from?'

X-2 (43, Police, Male): 'From the perspective of the Government, the aim of city security guards is to reorganize the city order. From the perspective of street vendors, they want to make living. However, from the perspective of the law, the street vendors are illegal. The business of the street vendors seriously impacts on the legal market.'

Interviewer: 'Did any coverage report about these problems?'

X-2 (43, Police, Male): Yes, but the coverage is very shallow, it simplifies the problem only revealing the city security guards beat the general public again. However, the city security guards do many difficult things. Their work is very hard and important. There is not any deep investigation in the Media....The Media just focuses on how city security guards beat people up but ignores also there are many city security guards hurt. Actually, city security guards have been getting difficulties managing the street vendors, so they always call the police officials to deal with the situation.'

X-1 (43, Teacher, Female): 'On the view of street vendors, the journalists are now standing on their side.'

Apparently, X-2, the police official, disagreed with the coverage which sided with the street vendors. By contrast, Y-5 (50, *Retired street vendor, Male*) appreciated the Media was starting to pay attention to the situation of the street vendors. This discussion of the phenomenon presents the impression that the Popular Papers are trying to increase their credibility with the general public rather seek it from the Government. The position of X-3 (33, *Lawyer, Male*) was directly opposite to X-2's, the police official. X-3 (33, *Lawyer, Male*) said, 'There 99% people are very kind. No one means to go against the law.' He thought street vendors are the most disfavored sector in society; if they cannot have small

stands on the street how can they make living? Moreover, to be a street vendors is positive work. It is much better than being a thief or a gangster.' In X-3's opinion, the Government should not ban the vendors' stands instead they should provide a dedicated area for them.

Afterwards, X-2 (43, Police, Male) and X-3 (33, Lawyer, Male) had a serious quarrel again when talking about the controversy of traffic police causing the police to break the driving codes. Their standpoints are opposite to each other. X-2 (43, Police, Male) persisted with the idea that the police should protect the dignity of the Law and strictly administer the law when someone breaks the Law, whereas X-3 (33, Lawyer, Male) emphasized that to be the Governor of a Country, it is very important to forgive innocent people and take the utmost care of the populace's needs. X-3 (33, Lawyer, Male) said, 'because social conflicts and controversy do not originate from a single case, many cases must accumulate over a long period of time.' X-3 (33, Lawyer, Male) wanted to protect the rights of civilians. X-2 (43, Police, Male) thought 'the most important aspect is the dignity of the law. However, it is the Popular Media, which makes public affairs controversial.'

On one hand, the Media reveals controversial events which have multiple dimensions to the truth that not only comes from the Authorities, but also reflects the opinions of the general public. As the participants said, 'the journalists are viewed as siding with the street vendors.' Moreover, Y-5 (50, Retired street vendor, Male) said, that their aspirations and thoughts are eventually reported. The controversy makes the coverage closer to the scene. On the other hand, controversy enables the needs of the lower echelons of society to be presented in the public discourse. The Public is not defined by the powerful elite but through the diverse aspects of different social classes.

Resistance and Expectation

During the process of the discussions, most participants did not care about revealing their distrust and disgust for news coverage. Yet, although they did not believe it, they still have expectations from the Media. The consensus of opinion was that the role of the Media should be to supervise the Government, and publish more articles concerning the lower echelons of society. Many WCWs said they only read *South Weekend* (南方周末) and *Global Times* (環球時報). *South Weekend* provides investigative coverage and inside stories; *Global Times* provides important international coverage. These two newspapers have no local trivial news or community coverage compared with the Local Popular Papers. In other words, they have no Official coverage or straight coverage from the Authorities.

W-2 (67, *Retired Executive, Male*) who had managed an electronic factory said, at the beginning of the focus group session, he did not totally believe the Media coverage. Still he confirmed he believed two reviews in the Popular Press, because finally they spoke out about the complaints of general public.

W-2 (67, *Retired Executive, Male*): 'There were only two comments I agree with that we read in newspapers. They speak out about the thinking of the general public. One was about the Dian Lake and the pollution there along with its administration problems; and the other was the pay rises of the working class. The commentary did not believe the pay rises were as much as the Government said.'

The first comment explained the waste and corruption of the authority.

W-1 (76, *Retired Police, Male*) also said: 'It is a big problem that the Dian Lake clean up needs so much money, but we see no effect. In the newspapers there is no scrutiny of this Government. It almost cost thousands of millions of RMB, too awful!'

The next comment revealed the serious social problems occurring in the process of marketization. The problems of inflation were frequently mentioned during the focus group sessions, particularly by retired participants and laid-off workers. They always told about their hard life and their expectations that the Popular Press would fight for their rights. For example, Z-3 (47, *Unemployed, Female*) repeatedly told about her meager unemployment benefit of only three hundred RMB per month. 'How could I bring up my child,' she said. So when she read the corruption coverage, it made her extremely angry.

There was also evidence of an attitude change to Official coverage. Although most participants said they did not believe the media; never read Party Papers and did not have any interests in Official news, this did not mean they do not care about Official news or policy news. Policy, Law and public affairs, all have a major impact on the general public, particularly people who work in the Government. For example, W-7 (38, *Public official, Male*) said, 'I won't read newspapers while important breaking news is beginning to happen.' But, he thought the Party Papers had changed their style so that political coverage is closer to the general public's everyday life.

W-7 (38, *Public official, Male*): 'In the past, most coverage reported our Leader visits abroad, meets which country's president and so on. Now, coverage focuses on domestic affairs such as our Leader visits some place giving a budget for a bridge or for other beneficences.' [He adds], 'if *Spring City Evening* reveals a message who will invest one billion?, it is still a question. However, if Party Papers say where we will have any infrastructure, this coverage is must true.'

In other words, the Public Official still confirms the significance of Official coverage. Even the Official coverage is also very important to the general public.

The opposite example comes from X-2 (43, *Police, Male*) and W-1 (76, *Retired Police, Male*). X-2 (43, *Police, Male*) also criticized news coverage for not doing enough investigative journalism. But his viewpoint was that Media coverage causes the general public to treat both the Authorities and the Law with less respect than ever. W-1 (76, *Retired Policeman, Male*), by contrast, said 'we know Media coverage must be influenced by the Authorities but at the least, coverage should not misinterpret the truth ... Media should supervise the Government's works.' The different perspectives of their expectations of the coverage present the idea that news coverage has already changed. People have learned to scrutinize media coverage and expect the Media to scrutinize the Authorities.

Price et al. (2002) contend dissent and disagreement contributes to the generation of a rationale. Through the focus groups and the discussions, the image of the Public was increasingly genuine and clear. The fact that the participants criticized the notion that the sense of Public defined by the Authority has little to do with general public did not mean that they did not care about the true sense of the Public. From their reading experiences, people gained the awareness to make judgments of political and public events, which they said came from their common sense.

Conclusion

The most impressive aspect of the Popular Public in Kunming is their ability to criticize the Government. They never pretended or hid their negative attitudes to the Authorities and media report. They gave the impression that in their view, that since the economic reforms, the political control has become looser than ever before. Consequently Popular Papers play a vital role in the Media Market. There are three dimensions to the Popular Public in Kunming: popular issues, popular attitude, and popular expectation.

First, popular issues are topical issues or headline news in Popular Papers. Corruption events only involve Public Officials, and generally high level Officials, because the general public has little access to, or nothing to tempt them into corruption. Since the Official [Party] Press will not reveal the inside stories of corrupt [Party] Officials the general public has to use 'common sense' to judge corruption stories. Stories of corruption always provoke heated debates and are also good selling points for Popular Papers. However, corruption news is too sensitive for the Media as only the Party Press allows space for corruption coverage. As a result, the public view corruption news as gossip and jokes; particularly since the notion that networking with the Government leads to good benefits has become a common phenomenon in contemporary China. Furthermore corruption concerning land-holding, while the gap between the land-owners and non-land owners is widening, just makes people angry. By contrast, crime stories are close to everyday daily life for many of the public, this enables people to use their life experiences to easily make judgments. So, although crime stories may not be published on the front pages, they impact on people's daily life. Human interest stories and the 'hero stories' have more appeal to the BCWs than the WCWs. The hero symbol produced by the Authorities is still effective among the mass population of China.

Second, popular attitude is a complex process. The Public, especially the WCWs, have no faith in the Legal system and the Government, in aspects such as Official coverage, the jury system or the procedure of making laws. The reason for their distrust is based on the process of coverage of controversial events; all events or issues are eventually reported but only from one viewpoint, with one perspective being that of the Government. However, controversy does not fade away but continues to exist in societal memory. Ironically, through controversy, the truth will be clearer, more than ever. The authorities employ an informal rule to deal with formal affairs, so the general public has to use an invisible mindset to clarify what the Authorities are actually doing.

Finally, the existence of popular expectation has two faces. WCWs expect Media coverage to have the ability and right to scrutinize the work of politicians and Government; also because WCWs have meta-knowledge and education to clarify the context of the Media

coverage, they use rational thinking to make judgments. BCWs, because of their powerless status, expect Media coverage to pay more attention to their welfare and to improving their situation. Basically, while people say they do not believe or are unconcerned about Media coverage, they are concerned about the function of Media coverage.

Overall, the Popular Public in Kunming is embodied by a process of debate. The Popular Public has more emotion in Kunming than in Beijing especially in their willingness to criticize the public affairs. The Popular Public, through criticism and controversy reveals a variety of perspectives which cannot be represented in the Official Party coverage. Popular Papers provide an alternative approach to make the debates more active than ever before.

CHAPTER 10

CHAPTER 10

Analysing The Public Sphere in China

Introduction

The aims of this research are to look for the 'public sphere' in China's Popular Media. My initial argument is whether Habermas' 'bourgeois public sphere', which is characteristic of Western society, can be extended to China. China's society differs from Western democracies in two fundamental ways.

First, the political system remains 'Communist' with a single Party controlling all the media.

Second, the rule of law, understood as a central element in Western democratic culture, has a subordinate place in Chinese Culture since the ideas of 'sentiment' and 'reason' are central to any discussion of the public sphere.

This argument is examined through a study of the readership of Popular Press and news coverage analysis in dozens of Party and Popular newspapers including those in Beijing and Kunming. I sought how the Popular Press engages with the general public, how the general public read and judge media messages, and crucially whether the Popular Press could employ an indirect approach and work to constitute an 'imaginary' public sphere in China.

The character '*Gong*', which essentially defines the opposite of 'private', has had a variety of definitions throughout China's history (see Rowe 1990 and the section titled '*China's public and its transformation*' in Chapter 3 of this thesis). This means the concept of the public sphere has been historically quite controversial. To trace the transformation of the public sphere, the differences between 'The Public' and 'The Private' need to be clearly identified and defined. In general, "The Public" refers to the Government, the Authorities or the Public Official rather than public interests. As Communism does not permit the concept of the individual outside the State and the relationship with the State, the private sphere is more difficult to define. In essence, the Chinese 'self' is defined by different relationships dependent on the specificity of the relationship and network in which it is embedded. After the triumph of the Chinese Communist Party, in 1949, '*guanxi*' became the most important element by which people identified themselves; but the term also refers to corruption in business relationships. That is, the patriarchal nature

of communist administration and '*guanxi*' not only made it impossible for social groups outside the government system to participate in the public sphere but also caused the individual to withdraw their responsibility from public affairs. Moreover, 'The Private' is also controlled by the Government system, the former monopolistic '*danwei*', which has been transformed into a system of 'community' activities. Concurrent with the decline of '*danwei*', the idea of collectivism has collapsed and social groups are banned. The issue of the absent 'public sphere' in contemporary China has gained increasing importance since the economic reforms and marketization of the nineteen nineties. The issues that formed the basis of this research were threefold. The first was to define China's public sphere in society and second, to identify the origin. Third whether China's society, in which the abstracted and cultural dimensions of the public sphere are considered to outweigh the rational legal systems, could develop and shape an effective public sphere in the context of mass communication.

The hypothesis of this research is that China's Popular Press use an emotional and sensational approach to shape a new public sphere which differs from the Government 'public sphere'. This emotional and sensational 'public sphere' is more effective in provoking public debates.

In this chapter, three approaches are used to discuss the initial findings and contribution to knowledge. The first approach examines the Popular Media and the ambiguity of Popular news, which is based on my textural analysis of Popular news in the Party and Popular newspapers in Beijing and Kunming. The second approach examines how the 'popular public sphere' resists the Government, based on news analysis *versus* reading experiences. This approach relies on the idea that, not having an independent public space, the 'popular public sphere' only exists in the invisible and imaginative space. The last approach examines the presence of China's public sphere in Popular journalism based dialogue analysis of discussions in eight focus groups in Beijing and Kunming. The use of two contrasting social groups in two contrasting cities, white collar (**WCW**) and blue collar (**BCW**) workers in Beijing, [a large Metropolitan Capital City] and Kunming [a remote Provincial Capital], enabled comparative analysis of the 'public sphere' and the participants' image of the 'public sphere' through reading of public affairs in China.

The Popular Media and Its Ambiguous Popularity

Although many clear lines exist between the Party Press and Popular Press in general knowledge, this research displays their differences specifically with news genre and news resources to portray the more certain and apparent aspects. From this perspective, this research has found the contrasts in the hard coverage of serious and sensitive news events which is vividly contrasting between the Party Press and popular press when reporting the same news events. I draw conclusions to these contrasts in two dimensions: external comparison and internal comparison. The external are visible examples of the methods used by the Party and Popular Press in coverage of the same event. The internal is a comparison of the coverage, of Party and Popular Press, when meeting a variety of political and economic conditions, and specifically examines the conditions in hard news events.

The external elements compared in this study are: news timing [when the event is released], and by which resources; the range of voices in a news event; coverage formats in newspapers representing an event; narrative [how newspapers trace and tell the news story in text]; and graphics [the number of pictures printed on a page]. Initially, these are the basic external elements which enable a clear comparison between the Party Press and Popular Press.

In the context of sensitive news events, such as the 6.11 Dingzhou [Chapter 6, Figures 7a and 7b] event, the 'hardest nail house' [Chapter 6, Figures 8a and 8b] and the traffic accident in Kunming [Chapter 7, Figures 12a and 12b], the Popular Press reliance on dramatic pictures is not the only difference. In this news coverage, headline pictures of violence, carnage or drama are more powerful, sensational and emotive than text descriptions. Second, the news resources of the Popular Press, for example, the viewpoints of ordinary people, the person involved and witnesses, are more numerous than the Party Press which relies on the Xinhua news agency, the Party and government officials, and government authorities. Third, news types are also more diverse in Popular Press. They employ investigative news, news analysis, reviews and interviews. By contrast, the Party newspapers follow the Party line and Party viewpoint. Fourthly, the news narrative in the Popular Press is more 'tabloid', broader and more sensational. For instance, the Popular Press in the coverage of the Subway collapse (see Chapter 6), traced the causes and the socio-economic problems involved through the survivors and relatives of the victims. Furthermore, the Popular Press used the descriptions of the witness or victims to criticise the authorities rather than writing critical reviews. Finally, the Popular Press even used photos, on their own, to express the voices of the ordinary people such as the traffic accident in Kunming in *Living News* and the 6.11 Dingzhou event in *Beijing News*.

Except for the apparent differences between the Party Press and Popular Press, there are many internal contrasts within the Popular Press. From these internal contrasts, this study has found more meaningful differences between the conditions of the news events rather than merely the differences between the coverage in the Party Press and Popular Press.

This research discovered four types of reporting in the coverage of popular newspapers of the events in Beijing and Kunming:

- i) The Strict Censorship in Sensitive News Events;
- ii) The Normal Competitive Gap between The Party Press and The Popular Press
- iii) The Political Intervention In Sensitive News Events; and
- iv) The Disasters' Paradox.

The Strict Censorship in Sensitive News Events

Strict censorship was applied to the coverage of the 6.11 Dingzhou event. *Beijing News* was the first paper to release the news of the incident, doing so with dramatic pictures. In this occurrence the editorial office of *Beijing News* was to face serious punishment from the government authorities. *Beijing News* conducted its own investigation for four days before Xinhua news agency released the official news. This news event shows how the authorities censor the sensitive news. Once Xinhua, the mouthpiece of the government, has expressed the government's standing and the format of the coverage, all the newspapers have to follow the Party line to use the same news resources. However, the strategy of *Beijing News* was only to use pictures and interviews instead of critical reviews or news analysis. Moreover, the source of the dramatic pictures was a witness of the event, and important for the news story and *Beijing News'* credibility in the eyes of the paper's audience. However, the paper's strategy, in the view of the central authorities, contravened government 'guidelines'. Afterwards, the chief editor was removed by the authorities and many staff walked out.

The Normal Competitive Gap Between The Party Press and The Popular Press

A gap exists between the coverage of the Popular and the Party Press. The key aspect of the gap is 'competition' based on two key, interrelated, factors; representing the voice of the public and maintaining audience credibility. The 'Hardest Nail House' and the traffic accident in Kunming are representative of the Popular Press's coverage. Censorship was not applied to 'The Hardest Nail House' because China's landmark Property Act, which for the first time protected private property rights, was in the process of being formally

discussed and adopted into law. The Popular Press maintained on-the-spot coverage of interviews and witness reports and photographs throughout the event [at least from the moment the netizen uploaded the image to the Internet] (*Chapter 6, Figure 8a*). The coverage of the Popular Press was, by the amount of space provided for daily coverage, highly competitive and brought into the arena all the major players – the public represented by the owners; the detested *guanxi* [corruption] of the land developer and the local Party officials in the government. The traffic accident in central Kunming provided the Popular Press with conditions allowing them compete with one another. The Popular Press in this coverage represented the negative feelings of the public, the survivors and the relatives of the victims towards the authorities' [mis]management of the arrest, trial and release of the accused.

Political Intervention In Sensitive News Events

Political intervention, unlike centrally controlled censorship, depends on 'ownership' of the Press. Political intervention means that sensitive news stories do not receive press coverage in popular newspapers that would otherwise excel in doing so. The subway disaster in Beijing and the Hu Xing's corruption in Kunming are the examples of political intervention. In the context of the subway collapse in Beijing, newspapers owned by Beijing Government institutions and Beijing Party Organs such as *Beijing Times*, *Beijing Evening*, and *Beijing Youth Daily* did not provide full coverage. The clear reason for this politically motivated intervention was the nearness of the Olympic Games for which the subway was being built. A disaster of this scale would have sent negative messages of Beijing government's abilities. The two newspapers which did provide full coverage, *Beijing News* and *Beijing Times* are both owned by Central Government Institutions, which were not obligated to intervene. *Beijing News* and *Beijing Times* were thus able to conduct the sort of competitive the market expected. A similar situation occurred in Kunming with the story of Hu Xing's corruption. For all that the story was of nationwide interest, one particular newspaper in Kunming avoided giving full in-depth coverage. *City Times*, owned by Kunming Local Government, was not permitted to send negative messages of the local authorities for whom Hu Xing had worked. Consequently the independently owned newspapers, *Living News* and *Yunnan Info Daily*, were able to provide large space to provide coverage. Once Hu Xing's case went to court and he admitted his crime then all the newspapers, including *City Times*, provided broad coverage.

The Disasters' Paradox

Disasters, whether they are natural like an earthquake, industrial or societal provide eye-catching headlines, which are a major tactic in the Popular newspapers' marketing strategies. The CCP and Central Government views most societal and industrial disasters as sensitive events for their inherent characteristic of revealing the failings of the CCP, Central and Local Government and the greed of Party Officials. By contrast natural disasters are not sensitive news and can be used to promote the Communist ideology and the ability of the CCP and government to manage.

The earthquake in Pu'er is a case in point. Although the earthquake caused extensive structural damage, leaving thousand homeless, only two people died. Nevertheless, many Kunming newspapers provided much coverage typical of the Popular Press style, consisting of on-the-spot news and interviews. The quantity of coverage was partly due to the visit to the scene, by China's Prime Minister; although during the visit the papers all had to use Xinhua's official coverage. Afterwards, most of the news came from companies' donations to the disaster area.

Yet, there is an extreme paradox concerning news coverage of mine disasters in China. Although mine disasters cause the deaths of thousands of China's miners every year the newspapers only go through the motions of providing officially sourced details. This reaction by the papers is a prime example of 'news fatigue' of a tragic event that occurs on a daily basis. The 'news fatigue' applies not only to the editorial offices of the papers but also to the papers' readers. Consequently, unless the numbers of miners killed is counted in hundreds, most newspapers [including the Popular Press] will use Xinhua News Agency's official version, which only requires a small space. News fatigue is a novel development of news reporting strategy in China's media.

The Popular Papers existence relies on their ability to balance the opposing ideologies of the 'free' market economies on one hand and abiding by the Party Line on the other. For commercial reasons, the Popular Press will test the Party Line to attract more consumer attention, but they will also ignore an event which will not increase sales or is not permitted by political conditions. Therefore, 'The Popular' in Popular Press is ambiguous depending on political conditions and commercial necessities. The Popular Press considers its readers' market as much more important than most other considerations.

The Comparisons of News Coverage Between Beijing and Kunming

Beijing is the metropolitan capital at the centre of the political life in China and Kunming is the regional capital of a remote province. Although these two cities are very different in the scale of their media market, the political and commercial interests in their reporting strategies are quite similar. The similarities are for example, the Party Papers and Official Papers in these two cities play the same role as a mouthpiece of the Government and strictly follow the Party Line. The major news resources come from authority controlled sources. Usually, the Party Papers' news coverage is more limited than the Popular Papers in terms of the proportion of coverage for the same news event. However, once the Government requires the Party Papers to do more work on the official news coverage, their news coverage is proportionally greater than the Popular Papers. This can be seen in the coverage of the subway collapse in Beijing Daily and the coverage of Pu'er earthquake in Yunnan Daily.

Conversely because of the different characters of these two cities, there are some differences in Popular Papers reporting strategies. Compared to the strict political intervention in Beijing News when reporting the Dingzhou event, the Popular Papers in Kunming devote more space to criticize the local authorities. This can be seen particularly in the newspapers outside the ownership of the Kunming authorities, such as Living News and Yunnan Info Daily, when reporting Hu Xing's corruption news and traffic accident news.

The following section will discuss in more detail the findings on the comparisons of news coverage and readers' responses between Beijing and Kunming.

News Analysis Versus Readers' Experiences

As 'the public sphere' is not an idea of communication in China, the issue is whether a Popular Public Sphere is formed through reading the popular coverage in newspapers. Here, the 'Public' refers to the general public rather than the Government or the Authorities' public in contemporary China. This is a case of analysing the *Minjian shehui* [popular society] reading of newspapers to find out if the *Shimin shehui* [public or people's society] is being formed and what the differences are to re-define the idea of the public sphere. Four news analyses were conducted in Beijing for this research. Like the above discussions, they represent different patterns of news strategy and conditions. However, although the analyses represent the differences between the Party Papers and Popular Papers, the audiences also have their own viewpoints to clarify the differences.

This section discusses how the process of 'the public sphere' formed and how it related to the concept of China's Public which was influenced by the transformation of the 'Gong' [the Public], the growth of capitalist bureaucracy and the rise of the grass-root voices among the population. First, this subsection will compare the news and dialogue analyses to examine slumps in coverage and the causes for them. For instance, mine disasters are very frequent in China, and editorial output is low because of the news fatigue of the audience. Second, to look at how conflicts and controversies between the news coverage and the audiences' expectations have an impact on the process of popular public sphere being formed. A prime example of this is the use of the 'hero' model in stories like the 'nail house.' While the reading public understands the 'heroic image' and the 'nail house' received large acclaim nationwide, the audiences have very different explanations about their understanding of this news event.

Reading News, Reading Differences

The sensitive news events have different levels of censorship. The reading experiences show the differences between the Government Public Sphere and Popular Public Sphere. However, as there is no space for the Independent Popular Public Sphere in society, this empty as well as controversial space has become a very complicated mindset to shape the Invisible Popular Public Sphere.

The Findings of Beijing's Public Sphere

Apparently, although there are many protests and problems in the process of official appropriation of private land for development, neither the 6.11 Dingzhou event in Hebei nor the 'Hardest Nail House' in Chongqing (*see Chapter 6 for both events*) received either much attention or positive responses from the participants in the Beijing focus groups. Land appropriation has been a major problem for a long time as compensation is very low and the right of the farmers or villagers were not protected properly when China's economic market reform began. The collectivist system collapsed and was replaced by a bureaucracy of capitalism. As the idea of society independent of the state did not exist people had to resort to their own approaches to protect their rights, which was happened at such events as the 6.11 Dingzhou event and the 'Hardest Nail House' event. Both stories revealed the divergence between the Government Public Policy and Private Rights.

Although the participants of the focus groups expressed unfairness at the levels of compensation for the villagers and many people's relatives have had similar experiences, they had not read about Dingzhou because of the censorship imposed on the coverage. However, some of the white collars workers (WCW) viewed this kind of protest news coverage and dramatic photos as the sort of news which newspapers know is good for sales. At the same time, the WCWs are very much concerned with their own rights. The rise of property price means that many people cannot afford to own their property. Therefore, although some WCWs criticise how newspapers use a sensational approach to report the social problems, the group share similar views about the property prices and sales in the property news. For example, they do not believe the coverage of the success of the property development boom. They believe that a more reliable method of analysing the over supply of expensive properties is the counting of lights within the windows of blocks of flats at night. Moreover, they also blame the Authorities who should take all the responsibility.

Obviously, as there is no trust in the Legal System, people always question the Government and news coverage, and would like to have their own explanations. However, young WCWs do not sympathise with those whose property is appropriated. By contrast, elderly WCWs criticise the authorities and blame the market reforms for damaging the rights of the general public. This elderly subgroup of WCWs also yearns for the old Communist days.

Due to the influences of China's traditional patriarchal clan system and the Communist collectivism system, the Public Sphere did not exist in China's society and the individual's Private Sphere was fragmented and disordered. Moreover, although the *danwei* enterprise system collapsed, the structure was transferred to 'community action, which now correlates to the existing grassroots administrative units demarcated by the

Government. The Public Sphere is, therefore, still limited by the Government Public Sphere. There is no space for independent social groups. Hence, no individual has the obligation to take responsibility for the society social groups. For these reasons most participants in focus groups were indifferent to public affairs and protest activities, particularly in the WCWs.

With the disaster news coverage, WCWs also paid little attention to the subway and mine disaster events. By contrast, older BCWs paid more attention and expressed their sympathy to the victims of these disasters as they may have had similar experiences. Although *Beijing News* and *Beijing Times* report the Beijing subway disaster event largely everyday, many WCWs are not aware of the event. A female public official even says she had walked to the scene to see something incredible but irrelevant to her life experience. Young WCWs shrink from public affairs. BCWs blame the accident on the evils of the construction company, the government's irresponsibility and media's ignoring of the deep issues. Interestingly, the majority of the victims in disaster events are BCWs. They are also the powerless groups in China's society. BCWs use their experiences and thinking to judge disaster news events, particularly in the older BCWs groups, which are more critical than the younger groups. Young BCWs are more liberal and have no idea how to judge public affairs. They are much more concerned with their own interests in the news such as sports, consumer affairs or entertainment.

Popular discourses and events are frequently withdrawn from the public space because of censorship and the dominance of the Government Public Sphere. Young WCWs are indifferent to public affairs, though they take action to protect their own rights. Older WCWs are also dissatisfied with the unfair system and the bureaucracy but while some think of good old cadres, others want a more progressive revolution. Compared with WCWs, old BCWs do show most concern with the disaster and protest news events. They are almost the main readership to this kind of coverage. The media reform policy has enlightened the voice of the grassroots level. With young BCWs, most young immigrant labourers also keep silent about public affairs and will not discuss the stories outside the news coverage. They have neither the knowledge nor experience to criticise and are not used to being openly critical.

The general feeling, except for some young BCWs, is the groups distrust the Government and Official News, and even all the media coverage. When discussing news events, the participants wanted to talk about what happened that was not fully reported by media and the problems of the news coverage. In other words, although the Government Public Sphere dominates sensitive news coverage and society, people shape their popular public sphere by referencing newspapers to fulfil the empty public sphere through an invisible approach. Apart from the Government Public Sphere, the Popular Public Sphere combines with the Private Sphere to form an imaginative and abstracted public sphere which is more reliable in the minds of ordinary people.

The Findings of Kunming's Public Sphere

There are three news events in Kunming's news analysis, Hu Xing's corruption, the Dongfeng Square traffic accident and the Pu'er earthquake. The first two events are two pieces of localized news that happened in Kunming while the third occurred in Yunnan province. Hu Xing's corruption was a major event that gained nationwide attention. The Dongfeng Square traffic accident was a small but serious event which killed and injured local people. Kunming's public sphere was, therefore, very critical of these news events.

As Chinese society is neither individual-based nor society-based but rather relationship-based, '*guanxi*' [connections, or relationships] has been interpreted as unethical or corrupt by those in contemporary China. Moreover, all aspects of personal and private life have been controlled by the state concerning the allocation of all scarce resources since the Cultural Revolution. This is the origin of '*guanxi*.' For this reason, the participants of focus groups in Kunming do not initially believe the corruption news coverage because they believed there was someone else involved. The purpose of exposing a suspect is to hide the other more important people involved. Even, the political slogan, a harmonious society, is an excuse to ensure corrupt officials do not receive a prison sentence. This is the general thinking of ordinary people.

However, during the rapid growth of the economy, many independent entrepreneurs preferred to use the legal-rational order rather than '*guanxi*.' Therefore, some participants of the focus groups emphasize their hate for connections and are proud of running their businesses by their abilities. Their response reveals that '*guanxi*' has less significance in business activities. There is autonomy in the economic sphere. The similar situation is present in the popular newspapers in Kunming. As *Living News* and *Yunnan Info Daily* are independent newspapers and do not belong to any official organs, their coverage on Hu Xing corruption is much larger and more detailed than other popular newspapers though the news censorship still keeps a basic flow of interruptions. The coverage of *Living News* and *Yunnan Info Daily* in the Dongfeng Square traffic incident has the same characteristics which contrast with the popular newspapers of official organs. The Hu Xing event was highly sensitive and most initial coverage was quite conservative until Hu's extradition from Singapore. The news coverage of the Dongfeng Square traffic accident developed in the opposite way to the Hu Xing case. Many newspapers reported the accident as they did not know either the background of or causes behind the suspect's actions. The editorial at the beginning uses general common sense to deal with this news. However, once the work and health backgrounds of the suspect were exposed, the event became a highly sensitive news issue, on which only the independently owned *Living News* and *Yunnan Info Daily* maintained coverage.

Unlike the sensitive news events, there was no censorship of the Pu'er earthquake's news coverage and all newspapers reported broadly. In discussing the earthquake most of participants had no comments to make on the event. Some BCWs were reminded not only of their own rural villages which had also been hit by earthquakes but also that most of social benefit aid was stolen by Local Officials, which the Media did not report. The Government Public Sphere focuses on the achievements of Officials rather than the needs of the Ordinary People. The Ordinary People believe their lives suffer due to the corruption of Local Officials.

Most participants in Kunming including both WCWs and BCWs are critical of the authorities and question the abilities of the government. The two 'class' groups also concur over the issue of Popular Papers representing the need of the ordinary people. The evidence comes from independently owned Popular Papers and local issues which have a serious impact on people's daily life. Notwithstanding, the most critical groups are the laid-off labourers and retired officials, who do not get any social benefits from the economic growth, yet find that their rights have been hurt by the bureaucracy system.

The Controversies in The Popular Public Sphere

From indifference to champion, and from controversy to coincidence, the popular public sphere is multidimensional and cannot be defined in a single way. For the reality of the political condition, the traditional culture of patriarchal administration causes a topdown domination of the public sphere. Since the nineteen eighties, there have been two opposing arguments concerning China's market reform. The first is the reform should be more progressive [such as adopting Hong-Kong's media system which, largely, supervises the public officials]; the second is that collectivism should be brought back to protect the powerless 'marginalised' echelons of the political system. The factors on which arguments occur concerning these contrasting topics are occupation, age, and the social network.

Generally, almost all different groups and classes are not satisfied with the Authorities but the reasons are quite diverse. For example, the political slogans of a harmonious society are to reduce income inequality, create more jobs, improve access to education and so on. However, BCWs thinks of 'harmony' as camouflage for corruption and harmonisation of illegal activities in the Government. Even, the purpose of this policy just strengthens the control of the authorities. These thoughts are the opposite of the aim of these slogans. In other words, most of the crises facing the legitimate system come from the distrust of the ordinary people. Also, although BCWs criticise the irresponsibility of the Government, some of them were still charmed by the propaganda hero stories aimed at encouraging people to sacrifice self interests and devote their lives to the public needs.

This contradictory mindset happens in BCWs. Particularly, the immigrant labourers, who are the most powerless and exploited group in the economic development and yet also the most obedient group. In young WCWs in Beijing, most participants keep silent or concur with the official coverage.

By contrast, WCWs also distrust and keep a distance from the news coverage and political affairs but still take actions to negotiate with Media or Government departments when their rights have been harmed. WCWs are more critical on the legal rights they cannot practice. Compared with BCWs, popular public sphere in WCWs varies in the extremes between standing by the government and standing by the ordinary people. For example, a police official supports the legitimate system, which should be respected for punishing those who break the law. A lawyer criticises the law for harming rather than protecting the populace. A retired professor thinks the Government should have responsibility to take care of the needs of the poor and return to the days of collectivism age when everyone was equal. By contrast, a professional accountant emphasises the Government should be more open and visible to ordinary people and should not have such powerful rights without supervision. These controversies also show that although the transformation of China's society is facing a variety of new challenges, the old bureaucratic machinery is still required to operate society. This is the dilemma and the cause of much controversy in China's society.

Briefly, although the government public sphere still dominates society and media coverage, the controversies of popular public sphere and multi-opinions have come as result of the economic reforms and the rise of popular newspapers.

China's Public Sphere in Popular Media

The essence of China's public sphere as represented in popular journalism is a complex concept. It can be argued that there are three ideas:

- i) The mindset of sentiment, reason and invisible rules - how Chinese Culture and moral code have an impact on public affairs;
- ii) The comparison of region and 'class' - what differences exist between major metropolitan cities and remote capitals and between 'classes' in the context of viewing 'the public sphere';
- iii) The genuine public sphere in China's condition - according to the responses of the ordinary people This research concludes how a dynamic public sphere works in China's society.

The Mindset of Sentiment, Reason and Invisible Rules

The main argument of this research examine whether China's Popular Press can make a convincing public sphere other than the Party or the Official Press. There are at least two dimensions that can explain this argument. One is Chinese traditional cultures which are the mindset of sentiment and reason, as well as the invisible rules; the other is the newspapers' structure in China's political environment.

In the context of China's cultural factors of the people's sensible and reasonable mindset, the legal system does not really affect everyday life. The general people are selective in obeying the law but most of the time they do not know how to protect their own rights. They perceive a conduct is legitimate depending on their sentiment and reason. For example, in an incident before the main 6.11 Dingzhou Event, the villagers captured and incarcerated a raider with the aim of finding out who the raiders were, or whom they represented. The villagers, although admitting they were acting illegally, refused to hand the raider over to the police. In other words, the villagers used sentiment to justify the legality of their act. The tabloid newspapers often use moral sanctities instead of legal discussions because the former can provoke ordinary peoples' emotion and interests. Coincidentally, China's legal system often rules by individual case not by legality, and the sensible consideration is often beyond the law. Therefore, the tabloids' individual tales are more welcome among the ordinary people and more convincing than the Official Press.

Another similar example is the hero stories. In Hu Xin's corruption coverage, the main story of this event comes from the police officer Jiang Ping who tracked Hu to Singapore. Jiang Ping is representative of the authorities. Jiang's heroic story, instead of Hu Xin's sentence, became the most important evidence; even more important than Hu Xin's hearing as Hu did not offer a defence to the charges. The other hero is, Luo Yingzhen, whose spouse, a police officer, was seriously injured during his duties and lay in a coma for several years. These stories did not discuss the problems of the government system and management but used the heroes to enforce the positive image of the authorities. Heroes appear in many news stories, such as Wu Ping in the coverage of the 'Hardest Nail House'. However, Wu was the people's hero fighting the authorities. These are human interest stories, which appeal to the audiences' craving for heroes.

The invisible rule is also a visible element to present how China's people and popular newspapers portray the legal system and public affairs. The evidence comes from the news event of the traffic accident in Kunming. Most popular newspapers were highly critical of the identity of the suspect, believing that somebody other than a mentally ill person had caused the accident. The headlines reflected the newspapers' views: 'How can

a mad man be a driver for the government for 20 years?' or 'How could this happen?' with pictures of the victims' relatives. In this indirect way the newspapers were able to criticize the government and not believe the sentence of the court.

In the hierarchy of China's press, the Party Press is the Party mouthpiece. Moreover, the Party press' finance totally depends on government support and subscription. On the other hand, all popular newspapers have to make money independently and as a result become the people's mouthpiece. They have to create their own values in the market and to experiment in appealing to mass interests. The Party Press and tabloids bases are very different. The trajectory they are following leads to the division into two opposing extremes. The Party Press fulfills the Government's policy and the Popular Press conducts indirect approaches of sentiment and reason, as well as using the invisible rule to report sensitive news and to maximize profits both politically and commercially.

In this research, the evidence of Popular Papers presents their functions of autonomy, enlightenment, and resistance. The function of autonomy shows in *Living News* and *Yunnan Info Daily's* coverage of the Hu Xing and Dongfeng Square stories. These two independent newspapers are more critical and investigate thoroughly to expose the news stories. The function of enlightenment particularly works in grassroots level audiences as popular newspapers use appealing stories to approach the audiences. Therefore, some BCWs in Beijing and Kunming then are more critical and aggressive. The function of resistance [against the authorities] is exemplified by *Beijing News* which reported the 6.11 Dingzhou Event, to challenge the local authorities, and Beijing subway disaster.

However, the patriarchal system of government still influences the press system, but works only variably on the Popular Press. Sometimes popular publications are forced to follow the official news. Most of the time, it is a genuine power to report the truth and provoke the public's needs in China. That is the reason the Popular Press is a true public sphere rather than the Official Press.

How The Public Sphere is Defined in Audiences' Reading Experiences

- The Comparison of Region and 'Class'

Beijing and Kunming are cities of immense contrast. Beijing is a metropolis with a population of 16-20 million and the administrative capital of the nation; Kunming has a population of 6 million and is the capital of the largely rural Yunnan province in the Southwest. However, in the context of education demography, Beijing's population is unrepresentative of the national average whereas Kunming is more representative of the other China's regions. As Beijing has more of the privileged elite and immigrant rural workers, it is an epitome of China's social reality. Here, through the comparison of news coverage, readers' responses, as well as the comparison of regions and 'classes' of workers, the public sphere is defined by the reading and everyday life experiences, political restrictions and social atmosphere.

White Collar Workers (WCWs): Beijing and Kunming

Many WCWs in Beijing work in international companies whereas in Kunming WCWs do more localised works; nevertheless their attitudes to sensitive coverage are inherently similar. Most WCWs maintain a distance from any coverage even when the disaster happened in their everyday environment, such as the Beijing subway disaster. The reasons behind this indifference are very complex, including *'all news contents are the same, as the authorities block the news, so I never read any political news.'* Alternatively *'newspapers only use the opinions of experts and they represent different interests groups. Hence their opinions cannot reflect the ordinary people's thinking.'* As well as *'we do not exactly know the problems inside the wall. So, some coverage looks objective but really is not.'* Thus *'owing to one party controls, media cannot have a space to keep its independence.'* Beijing's WCWs present their dissatisfactions to the coverage and the authorities by their knowledge. Their judgements also present the inability to do anything even though some people do try. For example, WCWs in Beijing detest the inefficient bureaucracy of the Government. *'I pay taxes to the government but these public officials just view us as the secondary people, they are very rude and always inefficient.'* One WCW even phoned the newspapers to correct something wrong in a textbook. *'As this issue is too sensitive to report, Beijing Youth Daily did not reply to me.'* The other example is to still send your hopes to newspapers. *'I do hope our newspapers can like Hong Kong's newspaper to trace the public officials why they can buy luxury house depending on their low salaries.'*

Apparently, WCWs in Beijing though indifferent to some disasters events are still very concerned about public affairs which involve their lives and rights.

For Kunming's WCW, the similar response is *'I won't read the coverage of breaking news, as all coverage is far behind what is happening.'* In Kunming, WCWs, as do their counterparts in Beijing, use the invisible rule to judge sensitive news events. *'If someone be sentenced to death as corrupt, it must not because how much money he corrupt, it is political reason instead.'* Essentially, people do not trust the legal system, and they do not believe the public coverage in newspapers. Therefore, they use the invisible rule to explain the reason behind the coverage. However, public affairs are very important to people's everyday life. They still hope the newspapers can supervise the works of the authorities. *'Media should supervise the Government's works, though we know it must be influenced by the authorities.'*

Briefly, WCW have more background knowledge to judge the news coverage even if they do not believe it or are indifferent to the disaster events. The political and public affairs affect people's living and WCWs do pay attention and are greatly concerned about them.

Blue Collar Workers (BCWs): Beijing and Kunming

The structure of BCWs in Beijing is quite complex as some people are Beijing citizens, but most of them are immigrant rural labourers which is the marginal section of society. The immigrant labourers are very careful in formulating responses to any critical issues. In Kunming, many people in BCWs are unemployed workers since the national 'danwei' enterprise collapsed. These unemployed labourers are very critical of the Government.

In Beijing, unlike the indifference of WCWs to the disaster events, BCWs are very aware of these issues as they have similar experiences with those workers who were injured in the disasters. For example, the issue of Beijing subway disaster leads to many discussions in Beijing BCW's groups. However, they pay more attention to the gossip stories behind the news, such as the workers' harsh working conditions. Beijing BCWs are brave to question the Authorities' responsibilities, *'The mine owner's profits are definitely huge but the workers' conditions are so severe. Brave to say, the authorities should take the main responsibilities but all coverage just report how many workers die in mine disasters.'* By contrast, BCWs who come from other provinces are more conservative or have no abilities to criticise the coverage and the Government such as *'I am not concerned about personal rights, as whatever I say is useless.'*

In Kunming, BCWs like human interest stories or something which the newspapers do not report. For example, in Hu Xing's corruption event, the responses of BCWs are more interested in his lavish life-style and the similar story of the ex-head of Yunnan province, Li Jiating, who was charged with fraud on a major scale and was sent to prison. *'Li's family members are only four in number but they spend two thousands RMB in one day*

for living expenses. My need is merely three hundred RMB a month,' or, 'we ordinary people will never know the truth of Hu Xing's incident. In my mind, it is the result of political struggle.' Because of the mystery, people view the coverage as gossip rather than a serious issue. The way they view the Hu story is also a prime example that people use the mindset of sentiment and reason to explain sensitive stories. *'Hu Xing is willing to come back to facing sentence because he wants to protect his little brother.'* This BCW points out a reasonable truth to Hu Xing's arrest. With corruption the truth is, BCWs do believe that as most officials use networks to make large amounts of money, all corrupt activities will, therefore, be harmonised rather than exposed.

In short, compared with WCWs, BCWs are more sympathetic to the people who suffered in disaster events, but, they usually use common sense or living experiences to judge the truth and are concerned about whatever the inside stories concealed which the newspapers did not reveal.

Overall, the attitudes of the ordinary people to newspapers can be concluded as four elements in their reading process and experiences. First, people are indifferent to the political and sensitive coverage. Most people do not know, or have no comments on, the coverage even which happens around them, even serious situations when they are unrelated to their work or everyday living. Second, people do believe if something such as corruption is exposed, there must still someone else concealed behind the exposure. Moreover, the person involved cannot have a sufficiently strong background to cover it, otherwise they would not be reported. Third, people prefer to pay attention to anything that cannot be exposed. The participants talk about the gossip behind news stories. They even believe that is the gossip holds more truth than the coverage of the newspapers. Fourthly, when something happens in the news which harms people's rights, the participants particularly the WCWs are concern about that deeply. They even take action to negotiate with the authorities or confirm the coverage or the comments from the Popular Papers.

In other words, in the current political environment and newspapers' system, the ordinary people are indifferent to political or public coverage. However, because of the influences of the invisible rules, people do believe there must be something behind the news that cannot be exposed. Therefore, people like to talk about the gossip stories which are not reported but spread out in society from other approaches. These human interest stories are compatible with the mindset of sentiment and reason in China's culture. Nevertheless, people are still concerned about their own rights whenever they are harmed or something unfair happens. In the mean time, 'the public sphere' has been defined through the processes of the interference, the negotiations and the controversies in their reading experiences.

The Genuine Public Sphere in China's Condition

From the idea of dialogue analysis and news analysis, the public sphere is a paradoxical concept in China. Although there are no ideas of communication, controversy and collective behavior in China's traditional public sphere, the rise of popular newspapers has become an area for public debate. People do not believe political coverage because they do not believe the authorities who control the media, because they do expect popular newspapers to report or reflect their opinions. This thesis concludes that there are three dimensions of what 'the Public Sphere' means for the ordinary people when they read the Popular Press in China's. Here, it is the dynamic process that is more important in realizing China's Public Sphere.

1) Disengagement:

The headlines of the newspapers are not always linked to ordinary people. People doubt and keep a distance from the coverage, or even treat it as a joke, a cliché. The official 'public sphere' is not welcomed by the general public at all. This disconnection refers to "invisible rules" and statements such as *'the authority must block the coverage'*, *'media serves the government'* or *'the opinions of the experts are for the specific interests groups in the press.'* Because of this presupposition, people do not believe the press and feel apathy towards the coverage, in particular on political and public affairs. Whatever the coverage said, therefore, people always read between the lines.

The responses of the audiences coincide with the results of news analysis. There are many sensitive news events that have the same situations of censorship. The most evident is the 6.11 Dingzhou event. As Xinhua news agency releases the official news, all newspapers report this news event and use Xinhua news, even *Beijing News* which reports an exclusive of this event on the first day. Also conducted the villagers' interviews and took photos in the first four days of the reports. According to the Xinhua News, all news resources come from the authorities and officials rather than the villagers and the ordinary people at the scene. Similar conditions are very well known within China while sensitive news events happen; media reports must follow the official news, such as Xinhua when the news agency releases the official coverage. For example, in the coverage of Beijing's subway disaster event, except for *Beijing News* and *Beijing Times*, all the other newspapers in Beijing use Xinhua News to reducing their political risk.

In Kunming, the corruption coverage is also a clear example. There are many different news resources reporting Hu Xing's corruption. Compared with other news resources, the official news and Xinhua news emphasise the standing of the authorities and how to

regulate and punish the officials involved in corruption. The official straight news and Xinhua news do not describe the details of Hu Xing's crime or the causes. Similarly, the central government organs, *China Youth Daily* and *Legal Daily*, deliberately portrayed how corrupt officials fled China to go overseas and the hero story of the police officer who brought Hu Xing back from Singapore. The story of Hu Xing's arrest almost represented the standing of the Government and convinced of the effects and efficiency of the Authorities in anti-corruption instead of the hearing in the court. By contrast, at the beginning of the exposure of Hu Xing's crime, *South Metro Newspaper* and *South Weekly* also released their investigative news which traced the causes of the corruption and showed that all Hu Xing's documents had been marked secret in the Government files. Except for this coverage of *South Metro Newspaper* and *South Weekly*, almost all continuing coverage in Kunming used Xinhua official news or the straight news in the court.

Also, WCWs do not believe the news concerning properties or the average increase in salaries in the official news. In Beijing, people think the property coverage only benefits the land developers. In Kunming, the response to the salaries' rise is that the coverage is false. They only believe the high ranking officials' salaries rise rather than the ordinary people's salaries. In other words, from the disaster report to corruption coverage, from the commercial property news to the salary policy analysis, most participants in focus groups do not believe the coverage and suspect the news credibility.

Therefore, this disconnection on the one hand causes news censorship which ensures people keep a distance from the media and doubt its credibility; on the other hand people also distrust the authorities, as the capitalism oriented bureaucracy leads to social inequality and laid-off workers. Besides, this disconnection also causes WCWs' indifference to the public affairs and political coverage.

2) Reengagement:

Undeniably, people negotiate with political power with distrust, but they also use common sense and experience to map the picture of the news event. They share their ethics with other people and so frame a Public Sphere in their minds. In this alternative approach, the Public Sphere has been reconnected. For instance, although most of them said they were indifferent to political affairs and did not believe any coverage, they still either criticized very clearly or agreed when the coverage coordinated with people's comments. They were also very willing to share their experiences with others and to use their moral code of common sense to trace the truth, such as the stories of the Kunming traffic accident and the 'political' fire on Xi Mountain. It reveals people do care and have strong opinions about coverage rather than being indifferent.

The evidence comes from the many cases in the focus groups. For instance, in the case of the Dongfeng Square traffic incident, in Kunming, which caused many victims and serious injured people; most participants in the focus groups did not believe the suspect driver was mentally ill and did not believe the suspect was the actual driver. Two independent newspapers, *Living News* and *Yunnan Info Daily*, question many suspicious points which represented the suspicions of the ordinary people. In a WCWs group, they automatically mentioned about a similar case in which the suspect also has been defined as a mentally ill patient by the court in the Xi Mountain fire accident. That is, although people say they either do not believe media, or are indifferent to the coverage, they are still concerned about the issue of public affairs. The WCWs are critical of the political aspect of the fire on Xi Mountain whereas the Media only reported the effort of the fire fighters. Afterwards, the focus group participants said that the Government quickly passed a law on how to deal with the mentally ill arsonist which represents the Government can still be efficient if they need to be.

The coverage of land appropriation in Beijing is also a clear example. When discussing the issue in the context of the hardest nail house in Chongqing and the 6.11 Dingzhou Event in Hebei, the participants in Beijing told of many similar stories happening around them. They suggested not to mention the 'Hardest Nail House' as other 'hard' nail houses are all around Beijing City. Land appropriation conflicts happen throughout China because people have no rights or are not allowed to negotiate with the authorities and the land developers. It is not that people do not care about this issue just that they are unable to do anything. For example, a retired professor in Beijing emphasised this inability with her observation that the authorities appropriated a farm and gave the farmer three units of accommodation in compensation, but the farmers now do not have a farm to make a living. An accountant thinks the problem is the compensation is too low compared to the property prices, especially in central Beijing. Plainly, people are concerned about social justice and equality, as well as their own rights. All these issues are public affairs. Hence, the indifference of people for public affairs is superficial as they do care about them. In this perspective, they are reconnecting with the public and political affairs.

In the WCW focus group in Kunming, a participant talked about two reviews representing the voice of the ordinary people. One was about the administration problem of the pollution of the Dian Lake in Kunming; and the other was the pay rises of non-professionals. The participant did not believe the pay rises were as much as the government said. Meanwhile, another participant concurred with this issue talking about his experiences in daily life that even food kiosks in the street want to charge him more as the government said the salaries had risen. From the perspective of this case, the WCWs deliberately read the coverage 'between the lines', on the understanding that the media reflects the true voice of the ordinary people.

Although media coverage sometimes uses the official news, they also report on many important issues and events which have an impact on the people's daily life. This reconnection indicates the issues of public affairs are very significant to the ordinary people who are concerned about these issues when they have the opportunities to voice them.

3) The Genuine Public Sphere:

The coverage of the Popular Press sometimes approaches the appetites of ordinary people, though some sensitive issues are quickly blocked by the Authorities. However, the popular press does manage to catch their readers' eyes and provoke their debates. Compared to the stuffy coverage of the political news or events in the Party Press, people expect journalists to speak for their needs or opinions e.g. they did not like the experts' opinions. They also calculate deliberately what issues do not get reported in the newspapers and are fully knowledgeable of the culture of the 'invisible rule'. The evidence in the discussion of the corruption coverage showed that they did not believe the authorities dealt with corruption problems seriously and there must have been a conspiracy or scandal behind it.

It is quite a popular phenomenon that people use the mindset of the invisible rule to judge sensitive coverage and keep their suspicions of the Media. In the coverage of corruption, participants in the focus groups think the authorities want to hide someone or something behind it. Then, they refer to their common sense and observation in daily life to clarify what the truth is. Alternatively, according to people's experiences and observations, the truth of the sensitive events will not come out in the period of the event but it will be exposed some time later. By contrast, the coverage of the Pu'er earthquake is not a sensitive event and the news papers provide much space devoted to the coverage. Some WCWs participants in Kunming think advertising or propaganda lies behind the coverage; but some BCWs also recall their own experiences in which the victims did not get relief aid because of corrupt local officials. Ironically, stuffy and positive news brings the opposite effects to those that the Government desire, because people refer to their everyday reasoning and senses to criticize the truth. In the meantime, their 'Public Sphere' has been kindled through controversy and disagreement.

People would rather have a controversy to explain the coverage than to read it simply under China's political conditions and cultural elements. Therefore, the genuine public sphere is a dynamic process rather than a fixed term. In this process, there are many elements involved such as the feelings of reason, suspicion, argument, sensation, anger and so on. This controversial process defines the Public Sphere. The genuine public sphere is neither a rational space, which is fundamental in the West, nor a sensational space in

China. The genuine public sphere is a continuing and interactive process in which popular public through communication form a true public sphere. The genuine public sphere is not only sensational but also rational. In this perspective, the genuine public sphere is the practice of an idea of communication.

Overall, this research has proven that popular newspapers conduct a tabloid approach to report sensitive news events which differs with the Party publications. Although most people do not believe most news coverage and the emotional approach of popular newspapers, this kind of news coverage definitely represents the grassroots of society and enlightens them. However, as there is no space for individual and social groups outside the bureaucracy system, it is a question of whether the public sphere and civil society exist in China. Hence, the abstracted mindsets affect China's public deeply and form a dynamic communication process on the popular public sphere. Differing with Habermas' public sphere, China's popular public sphere is full of emotional controversies and imaginary invisible rules. From the considerations of the political reality and cultural dimension in China, this popular public sphere is more practical and effective in making a public society visible.

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 11

Conclusions

The Aims of This Study

The main concern of this study is whether the Habermas' 'bourgeois' public sphere characteristic of Western society can be extended to China. There are three hypotheses to fulfill this main concern. First, China's Popular Press can shape a new and true 'public sphere' by its emotional and sensational approach to communication with ordinary people. Second, the emotional and sensational public sphere in the Popular Press is more effective in provoking and reflecting public opinion and debates than the 'rational public sphere' of the Party press. Third, in China, the abstract or moral and cultural dimensions of the Habermas' public sphere, to some extent, are considered to outweigh the rational legal systems, and are therefore more practical in many cases.

Moreover, this research addresses eight questions to test these three hypotheses:

1. What is 'the public sphere' in China?
2. What is the idea of the legality of the system and the authority of reason in Chinese history and traditional culture?
3. What are the different approaches of reason between China's and Western societies?
4. What are the differences between the Popular Press and the Party Press when reporting on the same issues?
5. What is the texture of popular journalism in the Popular Press?
6. Does the coverage of the Popular Press definitely provoke different debates from the Party Press?
7. Does the coverage of the Popular Press shape an emancipation of democracy and reflect the public?
8. Can 'the public sphere' supplement the theory of cultural sphere and revise the explanation of bourgeois public sphere?

The originality of this research, draws on two aspects to describe them, one is China's political environment; the other is China's cultural dimension. The latter could give the

reason for why the Popular Press using a sensational and an emotional approach can provoke and appeal to audiences thus forming a new public sphere. The thesis reviewed the debates of Habermas' public sphere; then contrasted these debates with the characteristics of China's public sphere; used secondary materials to portray the environment of China's media system; analyzed the news comparison and dialogues of the focus groups in Beijing and Kunming and finally reached the conclusions in the research findings.

The Controversies of The Habermasian Public Sphere

Habermas (1989) study argued that a 'bourgeois public sphere' came into being in the eighteenth century. This consisted of privileged private citizens who debated public affairs in a free, rational and disinterested way through personal interaction and debate in the press, and reached a consensus that influenced government. The ideal of Habermas' public sphere meets many challenges in the mass media society.

The first challenge is the usage of the public sphere. For example, the public sphere has various forms and definitions, such as public opinion, the crowd or the mass; second most surveys of public opinion are influenced by legitimization pressure and have been far from the genuine public sphere. Hence, this study concludes three levels of meanings about the definition of the public sphere, which are collective behavior, controversy and communication. That the public sphere is not only an idea but an action of collective wills and opinion, moreover, it is a constant process of controversy and communication.

The next challenge is the impact of media entertainment on the rational public sphere. Curran (2000) points out several functions of media entertainment.

These are for example;-

- they could offer cognitive maps of reality;
- could link up with debates about social values or identities;
- are also vehicles of debate about certain 'political' issues,

The most important function is in how disempowered groups are able to register their opposition to dominant structures and ideologies.

Therefore, the tabloid stories represent an alternative public sphere under some conditions.

Briefly, as the public sphere is a process of controversy and communication, the rise of the Popular Media is the arena that has more potential and accessibility to practice and make possible the Habermasian public sphere than any other bourgeois media at present.

The Characteristics of China's Public Sphere

With the definition of the public sphere in China, there are two aspects to discuss about the characteristics of China's public sphere in this study. One is the transforming definition of the character, 'Gong' [public], in China's history. The other one is the development and limitation of the public sphere in China's current society. The first one is from the perspective of the traditional culture embedded in the general sense in the ordinary people. The other is influenced by the manipulation of the political administration.

The character of 'Gong' in China is very similar to the public sphere in the West. The 'Gong' is an ancient concept from Confucian values. The crucial thought in China is that 'the public sphere' is viewed as a kind of morality rather than as an idea of communication in society, such as the authorities, public affairs, non-selfishness, and patriarchal and social life which are completely separate from the private sphere. The public and the private are always put on two opposite sides in China's context. Moreover, Liang Shuming and Fei Xiaotong state (*Stockman, 2000*), Chinese society is neither individual-based nor society-based but rather relationship-based. Therefore, modern western society is governed by law whereas traditional Chinese rural society is ruled by ritual. Rituals are 'publicly recognized behavioral norms' which govern the action of people bound by particular relationships.

Since the Communist rule of China, China's social order has experienced a major change under political control. Yan (2003) contends the state tried to promote collectivism and to shift the loyalty of villagers from the family to the collectives and to the state. Although the state opened up a new social space and created the social conditions necessary for the development of individuality, participation in public life was always strictly controlled by the party-state. In the post-collective era, the state remains hostile to any organized social force, even after withdrawing its political and economic support of public life at the local level. As the result, individuals have no thought of civicism or citizenship, but place absolute emphasis on individual interests and desires.

The *danwei* system and the invisible rule also have an impact on public life and thoughts. The state's *danwei* controls all resources which are distributed among an increasingly individualized and atomized workplace. Since *danwei* collapsed, the idea has been transformed into community activities. Hence, the autonomous individual is still questionable. The invisible rule is at the core of the mindset and popular thoughts in China. One significant meaning of the invisible rules is resistance to anything which opposes formal justice rules and violates the main ideology or legitimate rights, so these

invisible rules can only exist in the dark. Nevertheless, they are still recognized by everyone and people put the relevance of formal regulations beneath invisible rules.

In summary, it is not only China's public placing emphasis on rituals and morality but also the political control and invisible rules leading ordinary people to use sensationalisation and suspicions to judge public affairs as well as the authorities instead of by their participation in the process.

The Media System in Contemporary China

The nature of China's media system is an important element for the public development. In the past, all media in China depended on public money and served as the Party Organ. After the marketization of China's media system, the Popular Press developed rapidly and did not need any public money to support its financial needs; indeed the popular press even became an important financial resource for the newspaper groups.

In addition, because of market-driven competition, newspapers' structure has experienced a major revolution. Market newspapers, or the Popular Press, are developing very quickly beyond party newspaper status. Appealing to most audiences' interests, these market newspapers choose sensational and tabloid tales to make profits and put emphasis on investigating journalism that differs from Party Papers. Consequently, the popular press has gained a priority position in the newspaper groups to which they belong. Hence, China's press system runs a 'one system two strategies' model. The Party Press depends on public organ's subscription and supplements, and plays the main propaganda role and delivers governmental voices. By contrast, the market press depends on street or retail sales. The function of the market press is to devote more profits to their own press group. Therefore, the market press should make efforts to appeal mass interests.

Media reform created a site for the Popular Press and while their coverage is trivial and morality focused, their finances are independent and their readership is the masses. Therefore, the Popular Press becomes a new sphere for civic society at work.

The Findings of This Study

Research Approaches of This Study

According to the literature review and analysis (*see Chapters 2 and 3*), two main research methods of news analysis and dialogue analysis of focus groups were used to examine the research hypotheses and questions.

The coverage from seven news events was collected, four cases reported in ten newspapers in Beijing; three cases reported in six newspapers in Kunming - to make comparisons between the Party newspapers and popular newspapers. In Beijing, the news events are the 6.11 Dingzhou Event in Hebei, the 'Hardest Nail House' in Chongqing, the Subway Disaster in Beijing, and the series of mine disasters in Shanxi. In Kunming, the news events are the Hu Xing's corruption event, the Traffic Accident in Dongfeng Square, and the Pu'er Earthquake.

Additionally, eight focus groups with sixty participants in total were organized. Four groups and thirty-three participants were in Beijing and four groups and twenty-seven participants were in Kunming. The purpose was to examine how the idea of 'the Public' formed through reading newspapers. The focus groups were divided by region and working status – professional or white collar workers (WCWs) and non-professional and manual labourers or blue collar workers (BCWs). Every group spent at least ninety minutes discussing different news events.

The purposes of news analysis of different news events in the Party Papers and popular newspapers was to demonstrate whether Popular Papers use a sensational and an emotional approach to appeal to their audiences and what difference of reporting strategy exist between the Party Press and Popular Press. The aims of the focus groups were to examine whether news coverage of Popular Papers could provoke the debates of the ordinary people and shape a new Public Sphere which differs from the Government Public Sphere in the Party Organs.

Research Findings of This Study

According to the results of the field work, there are several significant findings in this study they are separated into three sections. First, from the news analysis, the findings fulfil the research questions of Popular Papers' characteristics and where they differ with the Party Papers. Second, from the survey of focus groups, the results answer whether the Popular Press can provoke public debates and form a new Public Sphere. Finally, from cross analysis of texts and dialogues, the results infer to the implication of the existence of the Public Sphere in China, and supplement the theory of the cultural sphere and revise the explanation of bourgeois public sphere.

The Findings of The News Analysis

From the news analysis in Beijing and Kunming, this study has discovered four dimensions of news patterns and conditions. These findings also define the different characteristics of the coverage of the same news events in the Party Papers and Popular Papers. The findings also show the texture journalism presented in the Popular Press in China. The characteristics are essentially the strict censorship of sensitive news events; the common contrast between the Party Press and Popular Press; the typical political intervention in sensitive news event and the news fatigue in newspapers.

First, in the strict censorship environment, although the Popular Press first releases sensitive news with dramatic photos, once Xinhua news agency reports this event, all the newspapers use Xinhua news directly. Moreover, the editors or journalists in Popular Papers who report sensitive news from the outset will be punished by the Authorities. Second, the common contrast condition is that Party Papers always publish the Official News from the Authorities and use straight news instead of investigative news. By contrast, Popular Papers not only publish the Official News but also release different investigative news, interview the ordinary people and other relative characters at the scene. The spaces of news coverage and news resources are very different between the Party organs and popular papers. Next, the condition of typical political intervention is that those local papers which belong to Local Government cannot report sensitive events occurring in their locality [within the jurisdiction of the institution that owns them]; only newspapers that are either owned by non-governmental institutions or are located outside the region can report local sensitive news. Lastly, the condition of news fatigue is pertinent to the frequency and regularity of mine disasters in China; even popular publications have no interests in reporting mine disasters unless the death toll is significantly horrendous, and so use Xinhua news directly.

The Findings of The Focus Groups

Popular Papers provide more detail in their coverage as they have more news resources than the Party Papers, but the focus groups reveal how the general public thinks about sensitive news coverage in Popular Papers. The results of focus groups in Beijing and Kunming suggest there are three aspects, popular issues, popular attitudes and popular expectations.

As the ordinary people have no faith in either the Legal System or the media coverage, they often criticise the coverage of popular issues which they deem are controlled by the Authorities or other interests groups. The most important reason is the ordinary people never know what is happening exactly inside the stories. Some WCWs are indifferent to sensitive news, dramatic photos and stories whereas BCWs pay more attention to these stories as they are in 'powerless' societal groups and have similar situations with the victims in land appropriation, disasters, or other incidents. However, BCWs also are more easily attracted by propaganda of emotionally evocative and heroic stories. By contrast, although people do not believe media coverage, they are still deeply concerned about public affairs which have an impact on their rights in everyday life. Therefore, Popular Papers provide more spaces for public debates particularly at the grassroots level.

Popular attitudes are a complex process when discussing sensitive news. In Beijing, although some WCWs do not believe the coverage and are disappointed by the authorities, others took action to negotiate with media and government through formal approaches about the public affairs which concern them. By contrast, BCWs have neither the ability nor the social capital to take the same course of action. Under some conditions, the conservatism of Public Officials is mirrored by the sentiments of immigrant labourers. In Kunming, there are also shared attitudes with people in Beijing, but they are more critical when discussing local sensitive news events. In other words, people use their life experiences and common senses to judge sensitive news when coverage is banned by the Authorities.

The idea of popular expectation is controversial, since people hope Media can supervise the Government but some WCWs do not like the sensational approach conducted by the Popular Media, which essentially is how Popular Papers appeal to audiences. Nevertheless WCWs and BCWs do expect media coverage to represent them.

China's Public Sphere and The Popular Media

According to the findings from the focus groups, the relationship between China's public sphere and the Popular Media is a significant process. This process is summarized in three subjects; disconnection, reconnection, and the genuine public, that demonstrates China's Public Sphere exists.

The meaning of disconnection is people are always suspicious of government actions and therefore do not believe media coverage. In particular, where sensitive news happens, people think there must have something hidden behind the coverage. Because of censorship, people question media credibility, except for when formal policy is announced by official news. However, people's indifference to media does not equate to their concern about public affairs. Despite this, some people still criticized or agreed with news coverage when the coverage concurred with people's comments. When as a result they have to take action to negotiate with media and government, the public reconnects with the Popular Media.

People would prefer to have a controversy to explain the coverage deliberately than to read it simply under China's political conditions and cultural elements. Therefore, the genuine public sphere is a dynamic process rather than a fixed term. In this process, there are many elements involved such as the feelings of reason, suspicion, quarrelling, sensation, anger and so on. This controversial process defines the public sphere as a reality.

In summary, this study has proved the Popular Press uses sensational and emotional approaches to appeal to ordinary people. The Popular Press forms a news public sphere which differs from the rational public sphere of the Government Party Press. This Popular Public Sphere provokes more debates within the general public sphere, particularly at the grassroots level. Although this study cannot examine whether the sensational and emotional approach is convincing to the ordinary people, the abstracted dimension of public sphere in China has been proven to be quite practical and outweighs the rational Legal System.

Research Limitations and Future Research That Could Be Done

The public sphere is a dynamic process in contemporary China. In this research, evidence is provided to discuss how a dynamic public sphere works through people's responses to the hard news coverage by China's culture and political reality and how popular press use these elements to develop their news strategy to appeal to the mass audiences. As for whether the controversy and disagreement of the public sphere in reading experiences could result in efficient communication and negotiation with the authorities in the future, is beyond the research parameters. This research has neither the time nor the space to discuss how China's public sphere has the opportunities to define an effective public sphere which can affect the Authorities.

For this reason, the suggestion for future research could be to develop the idea of what the ordinary people's attitudes are to the Legal System and under which conditions public opinions work. Furthermore the comparative approach towards regions and social groups would greatly benefit from a broader 'exhaustive' research program to include urban and rural areas in each of China's 22 provinces. Such an 'exhaustive' research program would better reflect the trends of public opinion and the formation of the popular public sphere throughout the nation.

Since China's Media is beginning to depend on audience orientation rather than the Authorities' orientation, both public opinion and the interests of the audience are also becoming important. The Internet has significantly affected the development of public opinion forums and has become an efficient tool in influencing many news events. Research of public opinion is a key issue to the continued transformation and development of China's society.

APPENDICES

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GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

Chinese vocabulary and phrases:

Danwei – 單位- a place of employment or more specifically a state-owned enterprise

fa - legality (at work)

Gong , like the Western 'public', has always been seen most simply as the opposite of 'private'. Also as with 'public', the earliest usage of '*gong*' seem to have conveyed the sense of 'collective' or 'communal'. In addition, its basic definition, 'share in equally by all'.

gongmin shehui (civil society)

gongmin (citizen); individuals in the public sphere (see *shimin*)

guanxi – networks, connection and relationships. At its most basic, *guanxi* describes a *personal connection* between two people in which one is able to prevail upon another to perform a favor or service, or be prevailed upon.

guanxixue – 'the art of *guanxi*' involves the exchange of favours and gifts.

li - reason

minjian shehui -popular society or the people

qing - sentiment

shimin shehui - private sphere

shimin' urban residents; individuals in the private sphere (see *gongmin*) and it originally had no particular political implications. According to Wang (1991), he believes that people are '*shimin*' in the private and become '*gongmin*' when they enter the public sphere.

tanwu or *fubai* corruption'.

yang feng yin wei 'outwardly compliant but inwardly unsubmissive

Confucius – K'ung-fu-tzu – (551-479BCE) Chinese thinker and philosopher

Confucian values - Confucius' principles gained wide acceptance primarily because of their basis in common Chinese tradition and belief. He championed strong familial loyalty, worship of ancestors, respect of elders by their children (and, according to later interpreters, of husbands by their wives), and the family as a basis for an ideal government. He expressed the well-known principle, *"Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself"*.

CPC – Communist Party of China (aka CCP- Chinese Communist Party) – the world's largest political party with 70 million members (approximately 5% of China's population). Although the People's Republic of China's constitution does not recognise the CCP as a governing institution the CCP's control of state organs and the legislature effectively means the CCP is the supreme authority and political power.

Hu-Wen notion – The ideas or political slogans of Hu Jintao (China's President) and Wen Jiabao (China's Premier).

JinTao Hu's 8 morals

"In the March of 2006, Hu Jintao released the Eight Do's and Don'ts as the moral codes to be followed by Chinese. It has been widely regarded as one of Hu Jintao's ideological solutions to the moral problems in modern China. However, the codes are somehow different as compared with his predecessors' jobs, namely, Jiang Zemin's Three Represents, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and Mao Zedong Thought, which is generally an informal tradition for each Communist Party of China leader to observe to make theoretical contributions to and further elaborations on socialism."

<http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/8034248.html>

JinTao Hu's 8 Morals

- Love, do not harm the motherland.
- Serve, don't deserve the people.
- Uphold science; don't be ignorant and unenlightened.
- Work hard; don't be lazy and hate work.
- Be united and help each other; don't gain benefits at the expense of others.
- Be honest and trustworthy, not profit-mongering at the expense of your values.
- Be disciplined and law-abiding instead of chaotic and lawless.
- Know plain living and hard struggle, do not wallow in luxuries and pleasures.

<http://bbs.chinadaily.com.cn/viewthread.php?tid=507865&extra=page%3D1>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/22/AR2006032202042.html>

Mao Zeding – Mao Zedong, Mao Tse-Tung (1893-1976)

Maoist – the Thoughts of Mao Zedong, is a variation of Marxism based on the theories of Mao Zedong, which the Chinese Communist Party (see CPC) followed till Zedong's death in 1976

Research Cities:

Beijing – <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beijing>

Beijing is China's second largest city, after Shanghai. Beijing is a major transportation hub, with dozens of railways, roads and motorways passing through the city. It is also the focal point of many international flights to China. Beijing is recognised as the political, educational and cultural centre of the People's Republic of China, while Shanghai and Hong-Kong predominate in economic fields. The city hosted the 2008 Olympic Games.

Few cities in the world besides Beijing have served as the political and cultural centre of an area as immense as China for so long. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes it as, "One of the world's great cities," and declares that the city has been an integral part of China's history for centuries, and there is scarcely a major building of any age in Beijing that doesn't have at least some national historical significance. Beijing is renowned for its opulent palaces, temples, and huge stone walls and gates. Its art treasures and universities have long made the city a centre of culture and art in China.

Population in Beijing – based on residency of more than 6 months 17 million; or on permanent residence 12.04 million in Beijing Municipality.

Ethnic groups in Beijing, 2000 census

Nationality	Population	Percentage of Population
Han	12983696	95.69%
Manchu	250286	1.84%
Hui	235837	1.74%
Mongols	37464	0.28%
Koreans	20369	0.15%
Tujia	8372	0.062%
Zhuang	7322	0.054%
Miao	5291	0.039%
Uyghur	3129	0.023%
Tibetan	2920	0.022%

Kunming –

Kunming (昆明) is the capital of Yunnan province in Southwest China. Kunming is often called the "Spring City" or "City of Eternal Spring" (春城).

Kunming is the political, economic, communications and cultural center of Yunnan, and is the seat of the provincial government. It is also home to several universities, museums, galleries and other important economic, cultural, and educational institutions. The headquarters of many of Yunnan's large businesses are in Kunming as well.

From 2005 to 2010, the city of Kunming plans to nearly double in size, in terms of both population (to eight million people) and area, and it hopes to be one of the trade, transport, financial and cultural centers of SE Asia. Kunming's transport links to Southeast Asia and elsewhere, particularly its air links, are steadily expanding, with direct routes already existing to all major Chinese cities, most major Southeast Asian cities and some major cities in Japan and South Korea.

Kunming is the focal point of Yunnan minority culture. 25 ethnic minorities live in Yunnan. This is nearly half of the total number of ethnic minorities in China, and ethnic minorities make up about a third of the total provincial population.

There is a strong migration from the countryside.

Of the more than five million people registered as residents in Kunming last year, more than four million were Han. The Yi were the most prominent minority in the city, with more than 400,000 residents. The least-represented ethnic minority in Kunming were the 75 Dulong people living in the city.

Ethnic populations (as of 2006):[\[10\]](#)

- [Han](#) (汉族): 4,383,500
- [Yi](#) (彝族): 400,200
- [Hui](#) (回族): 149,000
- [Bai](#) (白族): 73,200
- [Miao](#) (苗族): 46,100
- [Lisu](#) (傈僳族): 17,700

- [Zhuang](#) (壮族): 14,000
- [Dai](#) (傣族): 13,200
- [Hani](#) (哈尼族): 11,000
- [Naxi](#) (纳西族): 8,400
- [Manchu](#) (满族): 4,800
- [Bouyei](#) (布依族): 3,400
- [Mongol](#) (蒙古族): 2,500
- [Lahu](#) (拉祜族): 1,700
- [Tibetan](#) (藏族): 1,500
- [Yao](#) (瑶族): 1,100
- [Jingpo](#) (景颇族): 1,100
- [Va](#) (佤族): 1,000
- [Blang](#) (布朗族): 441
- [Primi](#) (普米族): 421
- [Sui](#) (水族): 294
- [Achang](#) (阿昌族): 263
- [Nu](#) (怒族): 156
- [Jino](#) (基诺族): 135
- [Derung](#) (独龙族): 75

Romanization – romanization of Chinese uses Latin letters to write Chinese; Pinyin;

Romanization Schools – romanized Chinese was used to reduce the rates of illiteracy among the rural communities.