

Gender, Place and Inequality: A Case Study of Media Institutions in a Tier-4 Chinese City

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Certificate of original authorship

I, Shan Huang declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
CHAPTER 1 RESEARCH AIMS, QUESTIONS, AND SCOPE: AN INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2 GENDER, MEDIA IN THE P CITY: BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY.....	9
2.1 REFORM OF THE MEDIA SYSTEM AND ITS IMPACT ON LOCAL MEDIA..	9
2.2 MEDIA, GENDER AND ‘SCALE OF PLACE’	15
2.3 DEFINING THE ‘LOCAL’ AND LOCATING SITE OF FIELDWORK	16
2.4 RESEARCH APPROACHES AND METHODS.....	29
CHAPTER 3 WOMEN JOURNALISTS, GENDERED MEDIA, AND SPATIAL INEQUALITY: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	40
PART ONE: MEDIA AND GENDER.....	41
1. <i>The media’s representations of women</i>	42
2. <i>Institutional perspectives of gender inequality in media workplaces</i>	46
1) Sexist recruitment processes	47
2) Woman-unfriendly salary systems and job contracts	48
3) Gender discrimination in job arrangements	49
4) The ‘glass ceiling’ in promotions	50
5) Gender policy in the workplace	51
6) Unions and NGOs for woman journalists	53
3. <i>Cultural obstacles</i>	54
1) Family and children responsibilities	55
2) Age discrimination and physical appearance.....	57
3) Sexual harassment.....	59
4) Professional identity and gender consciousness	61
4. <i>Summary of Part One</i>	64
PART TWO: GENDER INEQUALITY AND SPATIAL INEQUALITY IN CHINA.	65
1. <i>A brief history of feminism and the feminist movement in China</i>	65
2. <i>Maintaining social stability: the party-state’s censorship of feminism issues</i>	73
3. <i>Spatial inequality in China</i>	76
4. <i>Summary of Part Two</i>	79
CHAPTER 4 GENDER INEQUALITY, WOMEN AND LOCAL MEDIA: AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE.....	81
4.1 MEDIA COMMERCIALISATION AND GENDER IMPLICATIONS IN THE LOCAL MEDIA	82
4.1.1 <i>Soft news</i>	85
4.1.2 <i>Reform in the employment system</i>	97
4.1.3 <i>Female journalists engage in promoting advertising activities</i>	102

4.2 GENDER PROBLEMS AND STEREOTYPE IN LOCAL MEDIA ORGANISATIONS.....	109
4.2.1 <i>Gender bias in recruitment</i>	109
4.2.2 <i>Job rank and work arrangement</i>	113
4.2.3 <i>Gender policy and women’s associations</i>	116
4.3 MUNICIPAL NEWSPAPER’S ANNUAL MATCHMAKING FAIR.....	119
4.3.1 <i>State intervention in love life</i>	119
4.3.2 <i>Using the newspaper’s brand to make a profit</i>	121
4.3.3 <i>Gender norms: setting up the standards of the ‘ideal wife’</i>	124
4.4 CONCLUSION	131
CHAPTER 5 GENDER AWARENESS, AGENCY AND WOMEN MEDIA PROFESSIONALS: AN ACCOUNT OF FOUR INDIVIDUALS.....	133
5.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	133
5.2 WY’S VIEW ON THE FEMALE ANCHOR OCCUPATION AS THE ‘RICE BOWL OF YOUTH’	138
5.3 MX’S ‘GLASS CEILING’ AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE.....	143
5.4 WLL: THE ONLY FEMALE DEPUTY DIRECTOR IN THE HISTORY OF THE LOCAL TELEVISION STATION	152
5.5 LS’S DILEMMA BETWEEN STAYING IN BEIJING AND BACK TO HER HOMETOWN.....	157
5.6 CONCLUSION	163
CHAPTER 6 #METOO IN CHINA: THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTING GENDER RELATIONS IN LOCAL AND METROPOLITAN MEDIA.....	166
6.1 BACKGROUND OF THE #METOO IN CHINA	167
6.2 ANALYTICAL APPROACH.....	174
6.3 COMPARE NEWS CASES.....	177
6.3.1 <i>International news: 2018.5.26. Morgan Freeman accused of sexual harassment</i>	177
6.3.2 <i>National news: 2018.7.11. Professor of Sun Yat-Sen University accused of sexual harassment of his students</i>	183
6.3.3 <i>Local news: 2018.7.26. a woman accused been sexual harassed by a male journalist of Dahe Daily</i>	189
6.4 CONCLUSION	199
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION	202
7.1 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS	202
7.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD.....	206
7.3 FINAL REMARKS	209
REFERENCES.....	211
APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL EMAIL	251
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	254

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 The geographical location of Henan Province in China	21
Figure 2.2 Photos of Chinese journalists' protests for unpaid salaries happened in Qiqihar City Television (left), and <i>Daqing City Daily</i> newspaper (right).	25
Figure 4.1 The plastic advertising billboard in front of the <i>P City Daily</i> newspaper station with the daily newspapers posted in another side	91
Figure 4.2 The advertising promoting plastic surgery business appeared in PTV channel of the same clinic.....	91
Figure 4.3 A news article called 'Teach you how to express love on the Chinese Valentine's Day' in the <i>P City Evening</i> paper on 6 August 2019	93
Figure 4.4 A news article called 'What should men and women pay attention to when dating?' in the <i>P City Evening</i> paper on 10 May 2019	94
Figure 6.1 Zhu's Weibo account retweet of the online article accused sexual harassment	191

Abstract

China's transition from socialism to a market economy has important implications for gender equality. Existing research indicates that as an integral part of society, the role of media, especially visual mass media, is crucial in the reflecting and shaping of gender relations. But so far, there has been little attention paid to how the inequalities between big and small cities and between developed and less developed regions manifest in media practices and operations, and there is an even more conspicuous absence of research on how spatial inequality has shaped gender practices in the media. Consequently, it is not clear from existing research whether local media institutions in less developed regions do better or worse in producing gender-related news compared to their counterparts in the developed coastal metropolitan areas and regions in China. This study is concerned with the relationship between gender, media and spatial inequality in China. This thesis pursues this conceptual agenda by reporting on an extensive case study of a municipal-level television station and a newspaper in an inland Chinese province. More specifically, it asks how gender relations have changed in reform-era China through the prism of media institutions, media content, and media practices. I first explore the extent that Chinese local media institutions participate in reshaping gender relations and how female media practitioners negotiate their gendered roles and expectations on daily basis. I then analyse the content of Chinese local media coverage of gender issues in order to generate a more comprehensive assessment of the level of gender-awareness in Chinese media at local levels. This study also contributes to the discussion of the conditions of female media workers in Chinese media workplaces, especially those in less developed small media institutions. The study integrates media content analysis with institutional analysis, and uses a range of research methods, including

participant observation, semi-structured interviews, individual case studies, and discourse analysis. ■