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**Reproduction of Social Structure:  
A Comparative Study on Two  
Groups of Expatriate Minority  
Newspaper in Hong Kong**

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## **Reproduction of Social Structure: A Comparative Study on Two Groups of Expatriate Minority Newspaper in Hong Kong**

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### **Abstract**

Minority newspapers carry specific characteristics and functions to the minority groups. While the mainstream media are criticized for reproducing the existing social structure, this study adopt both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine whether minority language newspapers of two groups of expatriate in Hong Kong are reproducing their social and economic statuses. In the result, the interest-community newspapers of Filipino and Indonesian domestic helpers tend to confine to their own communities in terms of news sources, news coverage, and topics of concern, and have limit coverage on political and economic topics of the mainstream society and a lack of cosmopolitan perspectives. The capitalist-migrant newspapers of Japanese and Korean business owners and professionals have better integration in the larger society by having extensive coverage on news in Hong Kong, better access to mainstream media sources, more in-depth analyses and more cosmopolitan perspectives which help to facilitate their participation in social debate. These support the hypothesis that the minority newspapers are reproducing the social structure that defines their social and economic status. However, there are findings that the relatively small news coverage on mainstream society of the interest-community newspapers does not necessarily mean refraining from social debate. The fact that they carry more in-depth analyses on topics of their concern may indicate a formation of counter-publics in which the less privileged social class is able to get participate in discussion and possibility of constructing counter-narratives in relation to the mainstream society that they have no access and representation.

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## Introduction

The rapid growth of community and minority media in the industrialized countries during 1970s and 80s began to bring attention to an area that has been neglected by communication studies (Browne, 2002). However, it is still an area derived no significant attention in Hong Kong despite the vital media scene that they have produced. In this paper, I use the term 'minority' media to refer to ethnic newspaper produced by and for the ethnic and linguistic minorities themselves (Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach, 2011) and to highlight simultaneously their nonmainstream and marginal status.

Minority newspapers deserve a close study for they do not run according to common journalism logic and practices. They target at specific groups instead of appealing to mass society; they differ from the linear communication path by having consumers participate as producers; and they bear particular implications on the social and cultural status of their production and consumption communities and their peculiar relationship with the mainstream culture. It is based on these understandings that I query whether minority newspapers may function in reproduction of social structure as it is suggested in mainstream press.

Social reality is reconstructed by the reproduction of dominant ideology in news report, as well as through the social routines in news gathering which determine news selection and focus of attention in mainstream news production; public norms and dominant values are reinforced by the repetitive reproduction of definitions of deviance and deviation (van Dijk, 1988). It would be plausible if one applies these ideas to minority media, as minority groups are vulnerable to the nature of social structure in the larger society. Therefore, is it possible that minority newspapers are reproducing the existing reality and social structure? This is the research question that this paper sets out to explore.

## Two Groups of Expatriate Minority Newspaper in Hong Kong

I am going to focus the question on two groups of locally produced minority newspaper in Hong Kong. They belong to two expatriate groups which can be clearly divided by their economic and social status. The first group is the Japanese and Korean communities who are mostly managers, administrators and professionals.<sup>1</sup> They have higher education and enjoy better acceptance in the society due to cultural proximity and continuous cultural exchange in East Asia. The second group is the Filipino and Indonesian who are mostly female domestic helpers.<sup>2</sup> They come to work in Hong Kong alone, with a median monthly income of about one ninth of the pervious group.<sup>3</sup> Both groups rely on their own newspapers for information and communication due to their general incompetency in English and Chinese, the two official languages in Hong Kong.

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<sup>1</sup> The statistics in this paper are based on the Thematic Report: Ethnic Minority of the 2006 Population By-census of the Hong Kong government. The population of Japanese and Korean working as managers, administrators and professionals are 57.7% and 58.4% respectively.

<sup>2</sup> 96% and 98.8% of Filipino and Indonesian are elementary worker respectively.

<sup>3</sup> The median monthly income of Japanese and Korean are \$30,000 and \$25,000; that of Filipino and Indonesian are \$3,370 and \$3,320.

*Research Method*

Ethnographic research and in-depth interviews are conducted in the first part, so as to provide understandings on the nature of the newspapers through their organization structures, production processes and distribution channels. From which I derive the conceptual understanding of them as Capitalist-migrant newspaper and Interest-community newspaper. Content analysis on newspaper content is conducted in the second part, aiming at gaining insights into their representations and manifestations. Methodology and results are to be reported in the latter part of this paper.

*Capitalist-migrant newspaper and Interest-community newspaper*

Capitalist-migrant newspapers<sup>1</sup> refer to those of the Japanese and Korean who are best to be considered as a new capitalist class of migrant (Ong, 1999), given their relatively high economic and social status and ease of mobility. Their weekly newspapers are operated by small business organizations, and are mainly supported by sponsors and advertisement from within the community. Since community members in general have good access to the Internet for information of their home countries, the newspapers are mostly supplement on local and regional news in their languages. Their newspapers are distributed widely and enjoy good visibility in mainstream society.<sup>2</sup>

Interest-community newspapers<sup>3</sup> refer to the Filipino and Indonesian magazine-like semi-monthly newspapers which target primarily on domestic helpers. They are published by formal businesses and compete for advertisement. Domestic helpers rely greatly on these free newspapers for leisure reading and information, for they have limited resources and exposure to outside world when they have to live in with their employers six days a week. The newspapers are characterized by their participation culture<sup>4</sup> and their extensive reports on activities of various local workers and religious associations. In spite of the large circulation,<sup>5</sup> they are distributed within segregated enclaves and remain largely unknown to the mainstream society.<sup>6</sup>

Part two of this study is a content analysis on these newspapers which are of great differences in social background, to see if the same social structure is reproduced.

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<sup>1</sup> As of the research in 2010, there are one Japanese newspaper and two Korean newspapers in Hong Kong.

<sup>2</sup> They are widely distributed in hotels, universities, Central Library, Hong Kong International Airport, and Japanese and Korean supermarkets and restaurants frequent by mass public.

<sup>3</sup> As of the research on 2010, there are three Filipino and three Indonesian newspapers in Hong Kong, all are published twice per month.

<sup>4</sup> These newspapers encourage inputs from readers, and have fan clubs, pen clubs and charity groups formed around them.

<sup>5</sup> The circulation is estimated to be over 400,000 copies per month according to practitioners.

<sup>6</sup> They are mainly distributed on weekends in specific areas and shops where most domestic workers have social gatherings in holidays.

## **Reproduction of Social Structure in Minority newspapers**

Before proceeding to content analysis, it is significant to theorize the idea of reproduction of social structure in minority newspapers. Minority newspaper tends to have a peculiar relationship with the mainstream society with its dual role in maintaining 'a balance of assimilationist-pluralist functions' (Riggins, 1992). It provides minority communities with a platform for their own representation and negotiation with the larger society instead of being segregated in enclaves. To break the confinement of the existing social status, that is, the social or physical segregation which are commonly encountered by migrant communities (Rex, 1986; Wacquant, 1996), two general tasks of minority press should be observed. Firstly, the task to inform and to be informed; so that, secondly, to be able to participate in social debates in the larger society for possibility of integration or negotiation.

The first task of 'to inform and to be informed' is important for migrant communities to move out of the confinement of their communities. Minority newspaper is to 'provide for the exchange of information and cultural products across these communities of identity' (Husband, 2000). On one hand, they have 'to be informed' by the larger society for the minorities to know what is out there and what they are entitled in the larger society. On the other hand, they have 'to inform' larger society of their concerns and claims (Deuze, 2006), to demythologize the ethnic stereotype or romanticization by the mainstream media.

The second task of the minority newspaper is to participate in the larger society for social debate, in the hope to proceed to fairer and more equal footings. The questions of minorities can always be considered as political questions first (Cormack, 1998). Minority media are considered as means of empowerment (Rodriguez, 2001; Jankowski, 2002). It invokes the idea of citizenship in face of 'ethnic hegemony' by stressing on the 'right to be understood' (Husband, 1994, 2000), and the politics of equal recognition that are essential to the democratic society (Taylor, 1994). Active participation in social debate in the larger society, therefore, is the second measure that can help to expand their collective power (Alia & Bull, 2005) and to restructure the social order.

To frame the same ideas in reversal, not able to move out of the confinement of ethnic enclaves and not to participate in the social debate of the larger society are conceptualize as measures that reproduce existing social structure in the minority newspapers.

## **Content Analysis**

Based on the above conceptualization, the first hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 1:* Minority newspapers tend to reproduce the existing social structure, firstly, by conforming to ethnic confinement, which can be understood as a voluntary form of social segregation; and secondly, by restraining from participating in social debate in the larger society, which restricts their social mobility and capacity for integration. Six indicators are introduced for measurement. On conformity to ethnic confinement:

1. News sources are limited to that of the ethnic community
2. News coverage are limited to community issues



3. Content focus primarily on existing class concerns

On restraining from participation in social debate:

4. Lack of coverage on local political and economic issues
5. Absence of in-depth analysis
6. Focuses of attention are limited on immediate locality rather than cosmopolitan concerns

However, we must take into consideration the significant differences between the two expatriate groups in terms of economic and social status. Japanese and Korean enjoy far better integration and reception in the larger society; therefore, a second hypothesis is introduced.

*Hypothesis 2:* The capitalist-migrant newspaper will have lesser or insignificant manifestations of the above tendencies than the interest-community newspaper.

For data collection, online edition of two minority newspapers are selected. They are the Japanese *Hong Kong Post*, which generates 389 pieces of news in the 26 issues in 2011, and the Filipino *The Sun*, which generates 303 pieces of news in the 40 issues from mid 2010 to the end of 2011. It results in a total of 692 pieces of news for the analysis.

## Result and Analysis

In the following, the results of the six indicators are reported and analysed as indications for *Hypothesis 1*, and to be followed with a discussion on the implication for *Hypothesis 2*.

For the first indicator, whether news sources are limited to that of the ethnic community, *Hong Kong Post* uses far more outside sources than *The Sun*. *Hong Kong Post* has more than half of its content provided by outside sources (52.4% ,  $p < .001$ ) while *The Sun* rely mainly on its own editorial team and very few of its content is provided by outside sources (3.3%,  $p < .001$ ). (See Figures 1) *Hong Kong Post* also quotes far more mainstream media sources in its text (68.4%,  $p < .001$ ) than *The Sun* (5%,  $p < .001$ ). (See Figure 2)

The second indicator investigates whether the news covers only community issues. *The Sun* (96%,  $p < .001$ ) tends to focus significantly on ethnic community issues. *Hong Kong Post*, on the contrary, concerns significantly on the mainstream society (77.4%,  $p < .001$ ). (See Figure 3)

The third indicator examines if the newspaper content focus primarily on their respective class concerns, and both newspapers seem to be the case (see Figure 4). *Hong Kong Post* stresses significantly on economic and finance topics (98.1%,  $p < .001$ ); this is related to the career and economic status of the Japanese and Korean population. *The Sun* does not put too much concern on economic but focuses mainly on legal and law (82.9%,  $p < .001$ ) and society and policy topics (74.4%,  $p < .001$ ); which are of more relevance to their concerns on the rights of labour and right of abode in Hong Kong.

The fourth indicator examines the extent of coverage on political and economic topics of the Hong Kong society which may facilitate their participation in social debate. *Hong Kong Post* covers significantly on that of the mainstream society

(97.6%,  $p < .01$ ) while *The Sun* is largely limited to those of concern to the ethnic community (82.2%,  $p < .001$ ). (See Figure 5)

The fifth indicator measures if the newspapers provide in-depth analysis in serious news coverage. *Hong Kong Post* (mean=.87, when minimum=0, maximum=1) leads *The Sun* (mean=.75) in general. (See Figure 6) However, if we count only the news concerning mainstream society in both newspaper, it is surprising that *The Sun* (mean=.83) has more in-depth analysis on the topics of their concerns than *Hong Kong Post* (mean=.53). (See Figure 7) Although the sample is relatively small, the result is important for it does not support the hypothesis that the Filipinos are totally restrained from the social debate in the mainstream society. We will come back to this point in the discussion.

The last indicator examines whether the newspaper has its attention more on local issues or more on cosmopolitan issues; *Hong Kong Post* has more international perspectives and coverage than *The Sun*. (See Figure 8) For news topics on politic, economic, legal and society, both newspapers put their main emphases on Hong Kong; *The Sun* is even with higher percentage (*HK Post*: 60.3%, *The Sun*: 74.5%,  $p < .001$ ). However, *Hong Kong Post* covers more on the surrounding regions and cities outside Hong Kong while *The Sun* concerns little besides of Hong Kong and its home country (18.2% and 2.4% respectively,  $p < .001$ ).

## Conclusion and Discussion

According to the result, the hypothesis that minority newspapers tend to reproduce the existing social structure is generally supported. The Filipino newspaper, *The Sun*, conforms to the existing ethnic confinement by limiting their news sources and topics of concern to their communities and social class issues. There is a lack of facilitation for their participation in the social debate in the Hong Kong society due to limited coverage on political and economic topics of the mainstream society and a lack of cosmopolitan perspectives. In accordance with the second hypothesis, the Japanese capitalist-migrant newspaper shows great differences in these orientations; has better access to mainstream media sources, more cosmopolitan perspectives, and wider coverage on serious topics of the mainstream society. It suits the social background of the Japanese and Korean expatriates who are better integrated into the society and have greater social and physical mobility.

However, one idea worth thinking is: does this voluntary social confinement, or segregation, of the Filipino and Indonesian domestic helpers involve any possibility of active agency? Is it a deliberate effort to construct a separate venue that is dedicated to the communities' own discussion and construction of narratives?

Hong Kong has been criticized as a semi-ethnocracy with distinctive social hierarchy (Sautman, 2004). Ethnicity has been used as criterion for denying the substantive rights of certain group of people through processes of exclusion and discrimination (Husband, 1994). Despite the same expatriate status of the two communities, they are entitled to different rights as resident. Filipino and Indonesian domestic workers are denied of the right to citizenship and family reunion; while most of the other expatriates and their families are entitled to citizenship after staying for seven years. Since most Filipinos are only workers here alone with families back home, they are not easily indentified with the local society and may stay largely in

reciprocal exclusionary from the mass society. However, this does not necessary translated into restraining from social debate in the mainstream society.

Like apartheid, social segregation does not necessarily result in indifference, but rather a heightened sense of active engagement through problematization of the issues. As discussed, news of the mainstream society covered in *The Sun* is those of direct relevant to the ethnic community and it has more in-depth analysis of them than *Hong Kong Post*. Social segregation of domestic helpers does not mean a lack of active participation and discussion. The interest-community newspapers, therefore, can be best understood as the public sphericules organized around common interest and affinity (Gitlin, 1998), that enable the construction and organization of counter-narratives of the minorities for their negotiation with the dominant society over topics of their concerns. And the so-called ‘reproduction of social structure’ can be understood as the cultural strategies of ethnic minority groups for the creation of counter-publics for their own participation and representation, and for the formation of counter-narratives in relation to the mainstream society where they do not have equal access and participation.

Figure 1. News Source of Content

Newspaper		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative
<i>Hong Kong Post</i>	Outside	204	52.4	52.4	52.4
	Editorial	185	47.6	47.6	100.0
	Total	389	100.0	100.0	
<i>The Sun</i>	Outside	10	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Editorial	293	96.7	96.7	100.0
	Total	303	100.0	100.0	

\* Pearson Chi-Square  $p < .001$

Figure 2. Outside news sources quoted in content

Newspaper		No. of Source	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<i>Hong Kong Post</i>	Valid	0	122	31.4	31.6	31.6
		1	233	59.9	60.4	92.0
		2	19	4.9	4.9	96.9
		3	7	1.8	1.8	98.7
		4	2	.5	.5	99.2
		5	2	.5	.5	99.7
		6	1	.3	.3	100.0
		Total		386	99.2	100.0
	Missing System		3	.8		
	Total		389	100.0		
<i>The Sun</i>	Valid	0	288	95.0	95.0	95.0
		1	12	4.0	4.0	99.0
		2	3	1.0	1.0	100.0
		Total		303	100.0	100.0

Figure 3. Community Concerned

		<i>Hong Kong Post</i>	<i>The Sun</i>	Total
Mainstream society	Count	301	12	313
	% within newspaper	77.4%	4.0%	45.2%
Minority community	Count	88	291	379
	% within newspaper	22.6%	96.0%	54.8%
Total	Count	389	303	692
	% within newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 4. Topic of Concern

Newspaper		Topic				Total
		Politics	Economic, Finance, business	Legal, Law	Society, Policy, Social	
<i>Hong Kong Post</i>	Count	25	106	14	64	209
	% within topic	45.5%	98.1%	17.1%	25.6%	42.2%
<i>The Sun</i>	Count	30	2	68	186	286
	% within topic	54.5%	1.9%	82.9%	74.4%	57.8%
Total	Count	55	108	82	250	495
	% within topic	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

\* Pearson Chi-Square  $p < .001$

Figure 5. Political and Economic news on Mainstream Society

Community concerned			News Topics		Total
			Political & economic	Social & policy	
Mainstream society	<i>Hong Kong Post</i>	Count	124	56	180
		% within news topic	97.6%	86.2%	93.8%
	<i>The Sun</i>	Count	3	9	12
		% within news topic	2.4%	13.8%	6.3%
Total		Count	127	65	192
		% within news topic	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Ethnic community	<i>Hong Kong Post</i>	Count	21	8	29
		% within news topic	17.8%	4.3%	9.6%
	<i>The Sun</i>	Count	97	177	274
		% within news topic	82.2%	95.7%	90.4%
Total		Count	118	185	303
		% within news topic	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

\* Pearson Chi-Square for mainstream society  $p < .01$ , for ethnic community  $p < .001$

Figure 6. In-depth New Analysis on Serious News Coverage

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Hong Kong	209	.8708	.33621	.0232	.8250	.9167	.00	1.00
The Sun	286	.7587	.42860	.0253	.7089	.8086	.00	1.00
Total	495	.8061	.39578	.0177	.7711	.8410	.00	1.00

\* ANOVA  $p < .005$

Figure 7. In-depth New Analysis on Mainstream Society

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Hong Kong Post	301	.5382	.49937	.02878	.4816	.5948	.00	1.00
The Sun	12	.8333	.38925	.11237	.5860	1.0807	.00	1.00
Total	313	.5495	.49834	.02817	.4941	.6049	.00	1.00

\* ANOVA  $p < .05$

Figure 8. Countries in News Coverage

		Newspaper		Total
		Hong Kong Post	The Sun	
Hong Kong & Home country	Count	171	279	450
	% within newspaper	81.8%	97.6%	90.9%
International	Count	38	7	45
	% within newspaper	18.2%	2.4%	9.1%
Total	Count	209	286	495
	% within newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

\* Pearson Chi-Square  $p < .001$

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