Abstract

This dissertation investigates China's journalism award institution and its practice from the perspective of social control. It makes a central argument that the party-state enacts social control over news people by manufacturing journalism awards within the institutional framework of state corporatism. State corporatism explains the top-down control over official journalism awards, characterized by the strong vertical interactions (between peak organizations and their local members) on the one hand, and the weak or even lack of horizontal interactions (among local professional organizations at the same levels) on the other.

The argument is elaborated as six dimensions: institutionalization, historical icon, opportunity structure, gatekeeping, ritual, and professional elites. Chapter 2 traces the history in which journalism awards were established as a formal institution of professional honor at the turn of the 1980s, alongside social transformation from the Maoist to post-Mao era. The clampdown on the democracy movement in 1989 marked a watershed, witnessing the tightening of control. Chapter 3 investigates how certain journalists were iconized as journalism awards. By placing these icons back into the historical contexts, the chapter uncovers the vicissitudes of their living and posthumous reputations, and their posthumous images constructed by the collective memory. Present-day news people neither identify uncritically with officially designated icons nor accept official professional interpellations at face value. Chapter 4 shows that official journalism awards have invented a set of institutional mechanisms to shape and manage the opportunities of professional honors, resulting in a particularistic type of opportunity structure. Chapter 5 performs a preliminary analysis of the gatekeeping practice. The judges sitting on the award committees are typically power-oriented and produce symbolic orders of honor that satisfy the propaganda authorities. Chapter 6 examines the ritual of official and non-official award ceremonies. Chapter 7 paints a quantitative portrait of the Changjiang & Taofen Award winners. Chapter 8 summarizes four basic social-control functions of journalism awards: indexing, purification, demonstration effect, and co-optation. It also reflects on three sets of relations revolving around journalism awards, to wit,
press control and honorary control, journalism awards and journalistic excellence, and journalism award and media marketization.

In sum, official journalism awards in China represent a state-corporatist model of professional honors, distinctive sharply from such professional-community models as the Nobel Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, and the Academy Award.