

Convergence and Divergence: A Comparative
Study of the Chinese and Australian Press
Representations of Olympic-Related Activities,
1990-2004

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Abstract

The thesis combines quantitative and qualitative analysis to compare selected Chinese and Australian press representations of Olympic-related events and issues. It focuses on *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* for Australia, and *The People's Daily*, *China Daily* and Xinhua News Agency for China, over the period 1990 to 2004. The press systems converge on the Olympics but diverge in the way they frame news and express cultural and ideological values. Content analysis shows that the Chinese press referred more to economic improvements and social development, following the work of the Communist Party of China in the Games bidding and preparations. In contrast, the Australian press emphasised political issues, especially in criticisms of China's human rights record. It treated Olympic-related issues as more complex and intense, and harder to resolve, presenting more diverse social actors and perspectives. Building on content analysis, discourse analysis of news language and values, and cultural values and philosophies, shows how such differences relate to the roles of the press in a liberal-democratic and a transitional authoritarian society. The news values in the Australian coverage included not only journalistic independence but also drama and controversy, providing a seemingly diversified picture of China's involvement in the Olympics but sometimes stereotypical descriptions. The Chinese coverage reflected the news values of following official policy, respecting authority, and advocating social stability. It avoided controversy in order to provide positive representations of Olympic-related activities domestically, and develop China's new open image internationally. While the study confirms the official role of the Chinese press as a voice of "the people" and a tool of the Party, it shows the complexity of this dual role and the specific discursive strategies used to maintain it in changing circumstances. In particular, following the failure of China's first bid in 1993 to host the Olympics, focused on the country's advantages, the official press and publicity adopted a "low-key" strategy in the bid and preparations for the 2008 Games. This strategy sought to counter political criticisms, including human rights debates, by re-framing them ideologically in terms of myths of progress, the people and the Olympic spirit.

Certification

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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Signature

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Abbreviations

AOC	Australian Olympic Committee
ATHOC	The Athens 2004 Organizing Committee
BOBICO	Beijing Olympic Games Bid Committee
BOCOG	The Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the 2008 Olympic Games
<i>CD</i>	<i>China Daily</i>
CPC	The Communist Party of China
IAAF	International Amateur Athletic Federation
IOC	International Olympic Committee
<i>PD</i>	<i>The People's Daily</i>
SOBL	The Sydney Olympics 2000 Bid Limited
SOCOG	Sydney Organising Committee for the 2000 Olympic Games
<i>SMH</i>	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>
<i>TA</i>	<i>The Australian</i>
Xinhua	Xinhua News Agency

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