



Engendering Media Freedom

Media Freedom Insights
Series 4 Publication No. 1

New Naratif

**ENGENDERING MEDIA FREEDOM:
RE-CONCEPTUALISING NEWSMAKING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Media Freedom Insights Series No. 4 Publication No. 1

PUBLICATION YEAR 2023

AUTHOR Wai Liang Tham , with help from Thet Wai and Bonni Rambatan

EDITORS

Thum Ping Tjin

The Research Department

ART DIRECTOR Ellena Ekarahendy

GRAPHIC DESIGNER Mufqi Hutomo

ILLUSTRATOR Erin Dwi Azmi

FUNDING

The Media Freedom in Southeast Asia Research Project is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, Grant No. 2020-08984.

PUBLISHER

New Naratif is a movement for democracy, freedom of information and freedom of expression in Southeast Asia. We aim to make Southeast Asians proud of our region, our shared culture, and our shared history. We fight for the dignity and freedom of the Southeast Asian people by building a community of people across the region to imagine and articulate a better Southeast Asia.

MEDIA FREEDOM INSIGHTS is New Naratif's collection of reports dedicated to the fight for media freedom in Southeast Asia. The series takes an approach that centres media workers at the heart of the region's media landscape. The reports housed by the series cover a range of topics, from the challenges faced by media workers in Southeast Asia, to their aspirations for a freer media space, to potential pathways for collective action.

This research report, excluding its illustrations, is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

All illustrations are property of their respective illustrators.

Please cite this report as: Tham, Wai Liang. 2022. Engendering media freedom: Re-conceptualising newsmaking in Southeast Asia. Media Freedom Insights. Series 4, Publication 1. New Naratif.



Introduction

The overt repression of media workers in Southeast Asia (SEA) remains widespread. Although significant attention is being paid to killings and arrests,¹ this emphasis remains too narrow because it overlooks the everyday challenges to media workers in highlighting the more overt cases of harm. For us, media freedom needs a holistic approach. It means engaging with the subtle, lived experiences of its workers: from their daily workplace dynamics to job insecurity, all in a climate of routine repression and economic difficulty. Based on the proposals in our manifesto for media freedom, [Making the World We Want](#), we interrogate the key theme of *marginalised and gendered experiences*.

Our insights from Series No. 4 aim to *re-conceptualise* regional newsmaking through a gendered lens. Our working assumption is that the curtailment of media freedom, which is a crucial indicator of freedom of expression (FoE) in SEA, threatens the work of newsmakers, whether freelancers or permanent staff, working across newspapers, television, radio, and new media, among others. A gendered approach is about understanding women's experiences and capturing the spectrum of gendered identities and experiences in their regional diversity. Throughout our research, we continue to ask a key question that emerged from our previous [Media Freedom Insights](#): “What does media freedom mean and look like to you?”

Answering this question means being critical of the research process. Besides platforming regional scholars, we engage in *research as activism*. Instead of simply applying a theoretical framework, we are more interested in making this process emancipatory in the sense of getting marginalised voices heard—and if there is a political outcome, so much the better. The key is partly to first *recognise* the existence of injustice in its various forms, which can be manifested as structural discrimination and exclusion (Hänel, 2020). In short, recognition is necessary to lay the groundwork for political change. In this effort, the general ethos of feminist methodologies is relevant since we emphasise creating knowledge that is more inclusive and less systematically biased towards elite views, grounded in our positionality (or how we are enmeshed in

1 At the 2022 Southeast Asia Regional Conference, several regional organisations—[CamboJA](#) (Cambodia), [AJI](#) (Indonesia), [Geramm](#), [CIJ](#) (both Malaysia), [AJTL](#) (Timor-Leste), and the [NUJP](#) (Philippines)—are working to document abuses against journalists in the region, in continuation of the now-defunct Southeast Asian Press Alliance's (SEAPA's) work. Other organisations, such as the Committee to Protect Journalists, maintain a [comprehensive database](#) cataloguing various attacks on the press.

ever-shifting networks) to foster dialogue among those developing the picture from different social positions (Sprague, 2016).

The right to research, which involves gaining strategic knowledge, is essential for democratic citizenship (Appadurai, 2013, p. 269). By speaking to our research participants across SEA, we hope to build knowledge from the ground-up while also bringing the public for community peer review sessions under our [Media Freedom Network](#). Our analyses will be released quarterly between June and December 2023, following inputs from our reviewers. We hope this process will also help make connections and share resources to engender a deeper democracy beyond just the ballot box.

In short, we aim to answer four broad questions.



How does gender mediate
the newsmaking process in
Southeast Asia?

Are the emergent themes from our
interviews shared across the region
or specific to certain countries?

How do various aspects of gender
intersect with and influence FoE?

How can we bring together the
public, including readers such
as yourself, to participate in this
process and help create change?

In our write-up below, we will set out to try to begin
the long process of finding answers.

Table of Contents

01

Introduction

08

Literature Review

- 09 'Freedom of Expression'
- 10 'Media'
- 11 'Southeast Asia'
- 13 'Gender'
- 16 Our Focus
- 17 Sub-themes
 - 18 No. 1: Systemic and structural factors
 - 21 No. 2: Working lives
 - 23 No. 3: Representations
 - 25 No. 4: Educations and journalism training
 - 27 No. 5: Digital transformations

30

Methodology, or a Research Manifesto

- 31 Problematizing objectivity, emphasising subjectivity
- 33 Ethics
- 34 Stages
 - 34 Stage 1: Data gathering and analysis
 - 34 Stage 2: Analysis
 - 35 Stage 3: Community peer review

38

Conclusion, or What Happens Next?

41

References



Literature Review

We plan to investigate the intersections between gender and FoE in SEA’s media landscape. Before proceeding, it is helpful to unpack what these terms mean to us.

‘Freedom of Expression’

We generally consider FoE from a rights-based perspective. In Malaysia, laws, policies, and tactics have been deployed to restrict FoE despite constitutional safeguards (*Rights in Reverse*, 2021). In Myanmar,² citizens struggle to maintain digital protection against the junta’s draft Cyber Security Law (Simpson, 2022). Because the exercise of democratic rights and duties includes understanding data (Teo, 2019), FoE cannot be studied independently of access to information. Freedom House explains the link this way.

“Free speech and expression is the lifeblood of democracy, facilitating open debate, the proper consideration of diverse interests and perspectives, and the negotiation and compromise necessary for consensual policy decisions.”

(Freedom of Expression, n.d.)

Democracy is, therefore, *not just* going to the ballot box. It is an inclusive worldview structured around sharing, deliberation, and debate, so we are both egalitarian and sceptical (Rafael, 2022). Therefore, the fragmentation of our capacity for attention has serious implications (Williams, 2018) because digitisation can “frustrate and even erode the human will at individual and collective levels” (Ibid, p. 89).

2 “Burma” and “Myanmar” are generally used interchangeably, although this decision is dependent upon one’s political stance, particularly regarding the military regime. Given that the junta introduced the former British colony’s current name, the denial of this change can be read as an expression of anti-junta sentiment. We are in sympathy with the resistance towards it in the ongoing civil war, but given that its citizens—“Myanmar nationals” or “Burmese”—do use the term “Myanmar”, we will do so as well.

'Media'

We limit our scope to newsmaking here. Even then, technical definitions of the news are arbitrary. The [Cambridge Dictionary](#) defines news simply as “information or reports about recent events”.³ However, an analysis of news requires the “notion of media news involving the whole discourse, including its physical shape” (Van Dijk, 1988, p. 4). Newsmaking can be considered a form of storytelling because an “event must become a 'story' before it can become a *communicative event*” (Hall, 1997, p. 52).⁴

However, even while storytelling creates communities, links narrators and listeners, liberates, creates agency, or restores damaged sensibilities (Yao, 2022), such exchanges may also be destructive, for example, in new media extremism in Myanmar (Simpson, 2022). And the institutions of newsmaking themselves have long been recognised (or suspected) as being beholden to various interests, meaning there is no actual objectivity (McKenzie, 2004).

If “the medium is the message”, then studying the *form* of media may be as significant as the *content* (McLuhan, 2003, p. 9, 226–27). What distinguishes the work of broadcasters and print media workers, and why are they regulated differently (*Malaysia Draft Media Council Act*, 2020)? Does new media actually break down the barriers of existing societal structures (Loh & Chin, 2023)? These are important questions because of the blurred lines between traditional and digital newsmaking today.

For us, the most important aspect for us is the lived, legislated reality of media workers. For example, independent Malaysian freelancers or those working for multiple press outlets are sometimes not considered working journalists (*Malaysia Draft Media Council Act*, 2020). To investigate the newsmaking ecosystem, we will therefore speak to media workers in broadcasting, print, or online media platforms—sites such as The Conversation (to use a non-SEA example) could count, but not social media sites, blogs, or the like. However, we recognise that in some cases, it can be difficult to separate the news from “clickbait”, given that many newsrooms engage in such practices.

3 The irony of using the term “report”, which as opposed to stories, “are not supposed to be trying to make a point but rather to recount past, present or future events in a more-or-less non-evaluative way” (Peterson, 2001, p. 205), when such work can be very much a subjective process in practice.

4 Handbooks such as [Online Journalism and Storytelling](#) for SEA’s media practitioners may be useful resources.

'Southeast Asia'

Regions are believed to consist of a geographical space sharing certain qualities: a vague definition at best (Harvey, 2001). Even today, given its diversity and complexity, SEA is still often poorly represented. For example, Reporters without Borders (n.d.) subsumes it within the Asia-Pacific region, which is characterised by “absolute and autocratic control of information [sic]”, despite the immense gulf in media freedom between Timor-Leste and Myanmar, for instance.

We are determined to further understand SEA’s nuances, but what does it look like as a region? Historical Eurocentric representations reduced it to extensions of other “civilizations” (e.g., “Greater India”, “Indochina”), or sometimes completely invented details altogether (*Imagined Geographies*, n.d.). Membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is not a sufficient criterion: the association acquired members only gradually and still excludes Timor-Leste. Historically, its conception was shaped by academic scholarship, which in turn imposed a misleading commonality upon distinct countries and cultures and tied to American Cold War-era ambitions (Anderson, 2016). Even within the region, various imaginaries existed. In maritime Southeast Asia alone, we already have the Malay World, Melayu Raya, Indonesia Raya, Maphilindo, and Nanyang (Show, 2020).

If there is a loose regional *cultural* similarity, SEA may be characterised by movement and fluidity, whether in terms of language, religion, migration, or ideas (Frydenlund et al., 2022). However, if there is a *political* similarity, this might be its peoples’ longstanding struggles against authoritarian regimes. Among ASEAN’s member states, a community’s marginalisation—whether in terms of ethnicity, ableness, religion, *et cetera*—is tied to how the “promotion of human rights has never been a common platform in their economic development” (Al Khanif & Khoo, 2022, p. 2). Some regimes, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, can be defined as hegemonic⁵ and are characterised by a:

5 Our working definition of hegemony is as follows. It sets the parameters of what is (im) possible, marginalising non-conforming beliefs in the process (Scott, 1985) by “winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural” (Hall, qtd in Hebdige, 1998, p. 661). While deviating from the established ideology may be “impractical, dangerous or both”, radicalism can still take root, if not in behaviour then in terms of one’s beliefs and interpretations (Scott, 1985, p. 320–02)

“[...] set of diffuse relationships both in the public and private spheres, where power is never totally concentrated on a single person or group [...] and without legal or moral accountability to the public.”

(Heryanto & Mandal, 2003, p. 14)

The tendency towards authoritarianism is not an inherent cultural trait but resulted from how decolonisation and the Cold War were interlinked processes (Watson, 2021), which in turn suggests how “authoritarianism” and “democracy” are not mutually exclusive and polar opposites (Heryanto & Mandal, 2003). Therefore, we are committed to decolonisation⁶ by recognising SEA’s complexity and to avoid reducing it to crude stereotypes.



⁶ Our working definition of “decolonisation” comes from Tharaphi Than (2021): “the process of getting rid of all colonial practices and traditions rooted in the academy”, within which colonialism and coloniality persist.

'Gender'

A short primer (with Thet Wai and Bonni Rambatan)

Our current distinction between sex and gender, as understood in their biological and social senses, respectively, appears traceable to a distinction made in an academic psychology journal article from 1945 (Cameron, 2016). However, until now, both concepts remain conceptually fraught, subject to reductionist and inaccurate claims (Lockhart, 2022). Then again, science, in general, cannot be separated from social or worldly aspects, given “the relativism, the relations, the relativity on which the sciences have always thrived” (Latour, 1999, p. 17), and even in supposedly empirical scientific work, stereotypical gender roles have significantly shaped the scientific discourse on sexual reproduction (Martin, 1991).

In this vein, the sex/gender distinction, just as the biological/social distinction, are intertwined. Even the current definition of “gender” from UN Women appears too static.

"[...] the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men."

(UN Women, n.d.)

This definition is still premised upon the assumption of a binary separation between “men/boys” and “women/girls”. Moreover, while it is important to recognise gender roles as cultural constructs, a more radical understanding is the notion of gender performativity. To begin, there is no particular gender identity existing before the fact. Judith Butler argues that the process of performing gendered acts constitutes our respective gendered identities (Butler, 1997). Gender identities are not biologically determined and are also predicated upon the maintenance of heteronormativity (ibid.). Through this formulation,

Butler builds on the work of more radical feminist theorists who had started defining gender in more nuanced ways, such as in its relation to sexuality.

"[...] sex inequality takes the form of gender; moving as a relation between people, it takes the form of sexuality. Gender emerges as the congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women"

(MacKinnon, 1987, pp. 6-7, emphasis ours).

For our purposes, it helps to think of sexuality as one's orientation. There is notable fluidity in terms of gender and sexuality in SEA, whether in their historical or contemporary contexts (see for example Bong, 2011, p. 40-41). Queerness – used here as a more encompassing and fluid term than assigning the various, constantly shifting, and sometimes divisive identities (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual/ aromantic) – has been significantly policed and exploited in SEA, while being arguably positioned as central to the colonising mission and contemporary economic exploitation (Lim, 2013).

Although seemingly progressive steps—such as the repeal of Section 377A in Singapore criminalising homosexuality—discussions of queerness in regional contexts are still reduced to the “familiar [read: hegemonic] Western political agenda for all sexual minorities: from oppression to liberation, from backwater invisibility to defined, modern sexual identity”, co-opting existing terms (e.g., *kathoey* and *bakla*) in the process (p. 98). However, applying contemporary theoretical frameworks to label and analyse indigenous genders tends to be a flawed approach, since contemporary frameworks tend to be anachronistic without indigeneity—and spirituality—informed approaches.

Looking at the contemporary landscape, various discourses on gender, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and gender inclusivity have emerged within SEA. However, It is necessary for us to remain critical rather than celebratory. For all its advantages, taking a gender relations approach can still:

“[...] simultaneously suppress natural similarities between the sexes and exacerbate the differences, [...] into mutually exclusive categories of women and men, based on mutually exclusive traits of masculinity and femininity [...]”

(Kabeer, 1994, p. 56).

Therefore, a gendered discussion is necessarily political—in our parallel research project into regional democratic participation, we will discuss feminism in more detail. Understanding the regional connotations of gender can help us to unpack the discourses on democracy, specifically in its relation to gender rights. However, our history of colonisation has obscured such linkages.

For example, Myanmar’s history has been seen through a gender-neutral lens (Than, 2021), and only *one* study analysed the discourse of colonialism, modernity, and nationalism in late-colonial Burma in the context of gender (Ikeya, 2006). Crucially, this discussion is entangled with feminism, particularly in terms of how it raised questions about the invisibility of women, both in public and private spheres (Ibid.; [Feminism in Asia, FES](#)), as manifested in their struggles to engage in decision-making, gain education and political representation in politics. We are wary of how conservative ideologies can co-opt feminist movements, and so our research is also informed by the approach of decolonial feminism:

“[...] a feminism that offers a multidimensional analysis of oppression and refuses to divide race, sexuality, and class into mutually exclusive categories”

(Vergès, 2021, p. 43).⁷

7 Feminism takes on a variety of forms, which speaks to the diversity of approaches and conceptualisations at play. Take for example new materialist feminism, where scholars such as Rosi Braidotti and Karen Barad somewhat build upon the feminisms of Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, and others, while tackling the materiality of gender within epistemological and physical systems. Although these discussions are beyond the scope of our current research, we would like to leave these here as additional points of reference.

Our focus

In the context of the news, which is both a product and a process, the centrality of gender is frequently unacknowledged (Skidmore, 1998). Gender should be viewed as a variable, given the centrality of established notions of (masculine-coded) “professionalism” (de Bruin, 2000). While there is significant research on the intersection between newsmaking (especially journalism) and gender, the overwhelming focus is on female participation and representation, which further entrenches a male-female binary, hence overlooking the fluidity and performativity of gender.

From our internal discussions, we highlight the experiences of individuals of marginalised genders and sexualities. Therefore, it is not just about understanding women’s work experiences but of participants with as diverse a range of *sexual orientations and gender identities* as possible. For example, we may ask queer newsmakers about their involvement in the media or about female journalists about the particular challenges brought about by caring duties, assuming that participants can be found.

Sub-themes

Based on a preliminary literature review, conversations with subject matter experts and internal reflections, we have outlined five key sub-themes that will shape our interviews. Some of them may be very broad, while others are more narrow, but we will ask questions pertaining to each sub-theme. However, the analyses may lead to the emergence of separate sub-themes, thus allowing us to gather further insights from the region.



No. 1:

Systemic and structural factors

How do systemic and structural factors (e.g., through institutions, political repression, ideologies, and economic systems) intersect with and normalise cultural views related to what gender is, gender roles, and related discourses? How have these been historically buttressed by (pseudo)science and intersect with other constructs such as race (Gilbert, 2021)? Can we ask if workers, even those within state-run media, espouse minor forms of counter-conduct, perhaps akin to “weapons of the weak” or “commonplace forms of resistance” (Scott, 1985, p. xvi)?

Capital and neoliberalism are key areas of analysis. Feminist and gender-sensitive studies of journalism are increasingly concerned with the changing patterns of news media ownership, especially regarding its growing concentration, conglomeration, and integration within local, national, and global contexts (for example, Carter et al., 1998). There is a gendered aspect to this discussion: the news has mainly been under men’s ownership and has catered to their interests for decades, thus excluding women’s interests and voices (Byerly, 2013b).

Feminist media activists have since explored issues of ownership, management, and representation while demanding increased access to jobs in reporting and editorial roles within newsmaking. However, such neoliberal coding of “women’s rights” has eschewed “revolutionary aspirations” in exchange for “an equal share of the privileges granted to white men by white supremacy” (Vergès, 2021, p. 34).

In fact, the evolution of women's relationships to journalism in the context of global feminism from the 1970s onwards coincides with neoliberal political and economic policies, thus creating a deeply gendered era of globalisation and restructured media industries (Byerly, 2013a). Feminism becomes co-opted by neoliberalism, which “seeks to alter behaviour by working through the agency of the individual” and “reconceptualizing everyone as essentially a capitalist competing with other capitalists” (Rafael, 2022, pp. 27–28).

Neoliberal values are not solely economic in nature but also constitute a political ideology (Saraswati, 2021). It has the capacity to weaken democratic participation, reducing it to simply the continued existence of elections (Heryanto & Mandal, 2003).⁸ Such conditions are perfectly compatible with political repression and have been deeply linked with the Cold War’s dynamics (Watson, 2021). In this context, adopting civilisational (or western) feminism is not enough.

“The betrayals of Western feminism are its own deterrent, as are its heartless desire to integrate into the capitalist world and take its place in the world of predatory men and its obsession with the sexuality of racialized men and the victimisation of racialized women.”

(Vergès, 2021, p. 27)

8 For further discussion, Teo S. Marasigan suggests Wendy Brown's chapter in Agamben, G., et al. (2011), *Democracy in What State?*, published by Columbia University Press, or her 2015 book, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, published by Zone Books.

Turning directly to SEA, understanding power is less simple than it seems. Sonia Randhawa's (2022) study of Malay-language newsrooms from the 1980s–90s provides useful insights into hegemony, specifically in the context of Malaysian authoritarianism and neoliberalism. State authority is not completely entrenched in a top-down manner but may be thought of as being legitimised by institutions such as the news. Even censorship operates paradoxically—women working on political content experienced *less censorship* than those on the supposed margins because they are expected to know *how* to write (Randhawa, personal communication).

Other times, self-censorship may be performed (in Judith Butler's sense of the term) less out of fear of the state but out of uncertainty about audience reactions and identities—for example, in Singaporean television production (Fong, 2022). Finally, in the Philippines, publishers balanced obeisance to the authorities and the exercise of press freedom, but under the Marcos Sr regime, the politicisation of female writers who had emerged from the “safe zones” (art, book reviews, fashion etc.) saw them being subsequently targeted and removed from their positions (Briscoe, 2019).





No. 2: Working lives

Systems and structures directly impinge upon the lived experiences of media workers in the workplace. Specific social practices, embodied in (in)formal conventions and rules, are sustained by the people within organisations. Much of this literature apparently focuses on *female* (and even then, presumably heteronormative women) experiences, so a broader range of gendered experiences remains little studied. However, the current prospects remain dispiriting, especially when access to work is even limited by legislation.

In Malaysia, a significant proportion of trans individuals were rejected from work on the grounds of gender, linked in turn to their inability to be legally recognised as such (*I don't want to change myself*, 2022). Even if there is no legislation in place, (in)visibility is a crucial consideration in finding and recruiting participants – for example, a nonbinary journalist may be effectively “invisible” if their organisation is not informed on the spectrum and nuances of gender.

From our Series 1 and 2 insights, we identified various cases of harm – sexual harassment, whether verbal or otherwise, a lack of redress mechanisms for gender-based violence, ageism, various reprisals, pay gaps, differential promotion opportunities, and confinement to or exclusion from certain beats. These findings are in line with how

women continue to be restricted by stereotypical beats and face more job insecurity, lower wages, and gender discrimination globally (*Inside the News*, 2015). It is also important to point out that such harassment must first be understood as a concept and that survivors must be granted the recognition to speak out and be recognised accordingly (Hänel, 2020). These effects may be related to how journalism—and perhaps newsmaking in general—is conceptualised in terms of power relations (de Bruin, 2000). Day-to-day newsroom culture remains defined in predominantly male terms. Despite a dramatic increase in the number of women securing jobs in journalism, middle-class men continue to dominate positions of power (Carter et al., 1998). This “feminisation” of media is not necessarily emancipatory because it can be “combined with low status, low salaries, and precarious work conditions” (Djerf-Pierre, 2020, p. 153).

Women's marginalisation in media employment is not only concerning from the perspective of inequality but also because it encourages harassment and sexism, which may affect their self-esteem as employees (Skidmore, 1998). A Hong Kong study argues that structural inequalities in journalism and family-work tensions exist for women journalists where the diversity of lived experiences depends on various factors (e.g., supervisors, class, age, and workplace competition) (Tsui and Lee, 2011).

While female reporters differ from males in terms of how they cover certain topics, a clear gendered distinction disappears among female editors, who are more likely to internalise “malestream” values, coupled with observations of how “women were uncomfortable with acknowledging or recognising discrimination” even where it exists (Randhawa, 2022, p. 45). Having women in positions of authority in newsmaking is insufficient for effecting institutional change, as seen in their small impact on newspaper editorial boards (Shor et al., 2015). However, we need to be careful about operationalising gender as a theoretical category to avoid essentialising gender roles in the newsroom (Skidmore, 1998).





No. 3:

Representations

Representations have at least two meanings to us: (1) one can be politically or organisationally represented, or (2) be represented in “text” itself.

Regarding the first meaning, representation is a two-part problem for women. Both *quantitative* and *qualitative* representation are important for addressing “the stereotypic and often subordinating, belittling, and demeaning ways in which [women] are portrayed” (Shor et al., 2015, p. 978). While sections such as “women’s pages” functioned primarily to construct an ideal woman, they also narrowed down the spectrum of identities, including queer ones, that could be depicted (Randhawa, personal communication). Meanwhile, female editors working on the malestream pages may feature more women, but this may not result from a conscious need to increase representation or feminist perspectives: sometimes, it is just because they were not blind to women’s presence and issues (ibid.).

As for the second meaning, it is helpful to consider media outputs (whether written, televised, or live-streamed) as cultural texts. Because our interactions with the world are always mediated, texts do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they carry a particular authority and fundamentally shape our everyday discourse (Said, 1975). In newsmaking, the dictum to “write for your audience” betrays many implicit assumptions. The

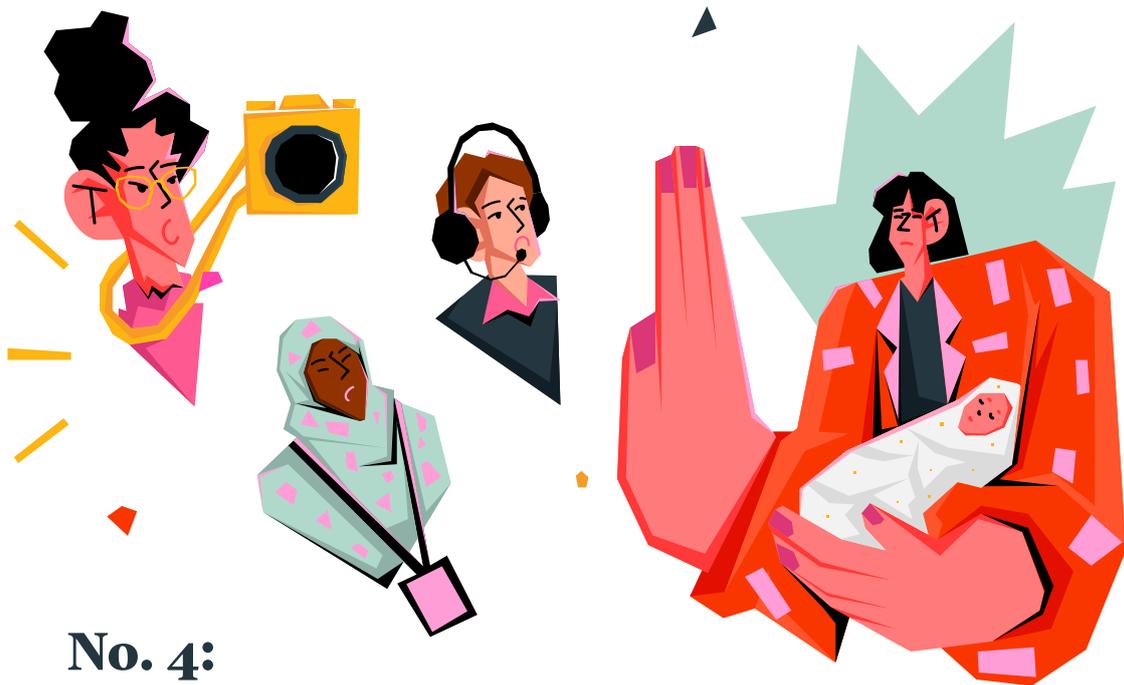
general audience is imagined, constructed, and segmented, as seen in the distinctions made between “malestream” leader and religion pages versus the “women’s pages” in the Malay-language press (Randhawa, 2022). This means that different media re-presentations must be generated accordingly.

The implications of such *re*-presentations of subjects, particularly for those of marginalised genders, are particularly important.⁹ For instance, they may cause shifts from external to internal constraints on one’s expression. So instead of being subject to the discourses of institutions and subject matter experts, subjects end up self-policing according to these constructed norms (Gauntlett, 2008, p. 126).

Despite increasing cognisance of their influence, the [Inside the News report](#) (2015) still highlighted the persistence of media representations: “In South Asia, women are more likely to be depicted in the media as ‘victims’, while in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, they are depicted as ‘family figures’ (p. 11).” And even the appearance of female reporters in the Philippine media workforce resulted in their objectification “as tragic heroines and martyrs for a cause”, which sometimes led to some workers performing these assigned roles at the expense of effecting systemic and structural change (Magsanoc, 2019, pp. 344–45). This may align with a popular trope of the reporter as an activist-idealist, although it has been problematised in novels from elsewhere in SEA, such as Bernice Chauly’s (2017) *Once We Were There*.



9 Spivak’s deconstruction of political representation as a form of portraiture (qtd in Landry and MacLean, 1996) informs our discussion of re-presentation.



No. 4: Education and journalism training

Historically, the provision of training for journalists has been uneven. Western women journalists in the early and mid-twentieth century seldom received training because employers viewed this as a futile effort – they were accused of treating journalism merely as an opportunity for seeing life or of eventually quitting for the sake of domesticity (Steiner, 1998). Regionally, the mostly male journalists of the Malay-language presses learned on the job (Randhawa, personal communication), and professional academic training was only introduced later.

In Universiti Sains Malaysia’s journalism programme, “Western, English-speaking countries” were “repeatedly referenced as a source of expertise on ethics” (Randhawa, 2022, p. 69). A personal account of this programme’s early years suggests what a journalist’s job was considered to entail. Students were drilled into producing a campus newspaper, with late nights, deadlines, and various duties from the editorial level downwards, tied to an ethos of integrating knowledge about social injustice, polarisation, and how “the media, which was largely controlled by the ruling parties, evaded their role as the voice of the masses, and

propagated for the benefit of the dominant groups”: so in short, students were informed about “what a true journalist should be, and of [their] responsibilities to society as educated young persons” (Tei, 2021, pp. 168–70).

Regardless of these ideals, the “objectivity” and “impartiality” demanded of journalists fall short of being objective or impartial because they remain anchored within a male-oriented construction of knowledge, reportage and “news”, which in turn produces a patriarchal framework for professionalisation (Chambers et al., 2004).

More problematically, a reverse trend – *deprofessionalisation* – is occurring in journalism schools, where “labor market instability, diminishing autonomy, and intensifying commercial pressures” are coded as “fundamental aspects of what it means to be a contemporary journalist” (Besbris & Petre, 2020, pp. 1540). Here, we suggest that a dependency on search engine optimisation (SEO) increasingly orients such training and that we should ask what this means for gendered experiences. For example, do objectifying perspectives get amplified because they appear more on search engines? This consideration is closely tied to our last sub-theme below.





No. 5: Digital transformations

Technology is affecting traditional institutional dynamics through new practices, such as a reliance on content farms, allowing editors to gain influence at the expense of journalists (Shor et al., 2015). Despite mass redundancies in traditional media outlets and their precarious nature of employment worldwide, niche markets have emerged in the so-called “developing world”.

In Indonesia, journalists writing about women and minority rights enable gender activism, fostering an unprecedented open exchange of ideas within networked, non-hierarchical digital architecture (Winarnita et al., 2020). Despite apparent negative effects on the traditional newspaper business (Shor et al., 2015, pp. 978–79), these media still maintain their existing advantages partly because of their existing access to resources (Randhawa, personal communication).

Although the ability of emergent new media platforms to enable activism and progressive values has been noted, they are very much governed by the logic of neoliberalism and the “attention economy”. For example, feminist movements on social media appear emancipatory, but ultimately the nature of these platforms means that neoliberal values are internalised in the process of activism (Saraswati, 2021). The effects of the attention economy are also very salient. Despite the reduction of traditional gatekeepers, the resultant proliferation of content and algorithmic decision-making suggests that we may effectively see less today than several decades ago (Randhawa, personal communication).

We also need to point out the segregating nature of algorithms in building upon and enforcing existing power structures—after all, algorithms are also a way of seeing and rationalising the world.¹⁰ But more than that, “[t]he more antagonistic the worldviews that are produced and circulated [...] the more attention will be rewarded” (Rambatan & Johanssen, 2022, p. 39).

Therefore, despite the more progressive perspectives being disseminated online—incidentally, this is one of New Naratif’s broader tasks—algorithms still appear to favour content that further oppresses, harasses, objectifies, or silences the experiences of marginalised genders. Also, consider how even within SEA, different demographics can be targeted in a specific fashion, where a poor trans woman living in a village in Brunei will be fed different content from a white lesbian expatriate in Bangkok.

Related is the (perhaps unintentional) capacity of the internet to reduce our capacity to pay attention, with crucial implications for democracy. One manifestation is the rise of authoritarianism. A key example is the *conscious* manipulation of online content through the “architects of networked disinformation” in the Philippines, which—curiously for us—employed diverse practitioners of marginalised genders and sexualities within these problematic disinformation networks (Ong & Cabañes, 2018). Elsewhere, authoritarian laws ostensibly meant to fight “fake news” in several mainland Southeast Asian regimes became entrenched and have been exercised in various ways (Sombatpoonsiri & Luong, 2022).

¹⁰ Much has been written about this topic: see Beer (2017) for an introductory discussion.

Corresponding with our observations of rising online and offline violence against media workers, Posetti et al. (2021) suggest the following characteristics of disinformation in gendered online violence:

-  disinformation tactics are routinely deployed in targeted multiplatform online attacks against women journalists;
-  reporting on disinformation and intertwined issues such as digital conspiracy and far-right extremism triggers heightened attacks; and
-  misogynistic abuse, harassment and threats are levied against women journalists to undercut public trust in critical journalism in particular, and facts in general.



Methodology, or a Research Manifesto

Problematizing objectivity, emphasizing subjectivity¹¹

As a platform for democracy and grassroots change in Southeast Asia, our research reflects our politics and advocacy. It is deeply integrated with our concurrent research into democratic participation. It aims to foster wider networks and engagement among regional media workers, empowering them to navigate and resist political, social, or cultural challenges. For this reason, we need to problematise how “objectivity”, despite its ideals, is sometimes problematic.

We make no claims to objectivity—it’s more honest of us this way. Instead, we necessarily choose sides, as Eduardo Galeano once did, writing how “I did not want to write an objective work – neither wanted to nor could” (1987, p. xv). However, because we may be engaged in yet another re-presentation, we make no claims to expertise or to speak for everyone. Any research process is, therefore, always a work in progress.

To some degree, objectivity became tied to a relatively recent dependency on statistics.¹² However, qualitative analyses still have much to offer. It is not just about numbers versus words – instead, qualitative studies use “within-case analysis to make inferences about individual cases” (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012, p. 2).¹³ Learning from our experiences with previous research, we now immerse ourselves in the uniqueness of our interviews with research participants rather than reduce them to large data sets.

Instead of applying a single conceptual or theoretical framework, we prefer to let these stories speak for themselves, as long as we verify them accordingly. Most importantly, we maintain the transparency of the research process and constantly reflect upon our assumptions, biases and simplifications, which we hope to accomplish by constantly

11 A good introduction to positionality, subjectivity, and reflexivity by St Louis and Barton (2002) can be found here: <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/832/1808>

12 Objectivity became closely associated with quantitative analysis from the eighteenth century onwards (De Bruyn, 2004, p. 135). Statistics then became entangled with positivist philosophy from the nineteenth century (Hacking, 1990, p. 78), and the authority of numerical data has seemingly been entrenched since (McClure, 1999, p. Part III).

13 Qualitative studies are rooted in logic and set theory, thus also (if not always noticeably) drawing on mathematical foundations as much as quantitative studies do (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012, p. 2).

speaking to our research participants as co-creators of knowledge. It also means avoiding strictly delineating between the researcher and those being researched. Objectivity is also concerned about maintaining a distance or balance—or at least producing the illusion of such—but it may actually lead to false equivalence. Because “all knowledge is situated knowledge” (Moya, 2011, p. 80), we emphasise our subjectivity. Subjectivity in itself “does not undermine research”, but “a lack of reflexivity does” (Teo, 2019, p. 287).

Keeping all this in mind, we set out from a position of wanting to effect change – for this reason, research means taking a political stance. For now, change primarily takes place through discourse. However, because discourse can be marginalised through silencing, whether by omission or dismissal (Alatas, 2021, p. 204), we emphasise certain ways of seeing and narrating neglected aspects of media work while providing a platform for activism and collaboration.

As scholar-activists, we sometimes have “to make difficult professional, ethical, and political choices and having to live with the consequences” (Pulido, 2008, p. 362). Our positionality is key: we are cognisant about producing knowledge reflecting our Southeast Asian context. In our commitment to decolonisation, and with that a sensitivity towards overlooked conditions and factors, it will be, to quote Paula Moya:

“[...] up to us to translate our concerns in a way that might challenge them [mainstream Euro-American scholars] enough to break through their intellectual complacency as well as their (often unconscious) sense of racial, gender, and/or geographic superiority.”

(Moya, 2011, p. 84)

Ethics

Glasius et al. (2018), drawing from their lived research experiences, suggest a useful [open-access checklist](#) for conducting fieldwork in the authoritarian field. They stress being open about research, operating according to contextual constraints (whether political or otherwise), and balancing the need for anonymity against credibility while also considering the need for greater transparency in research. Note, too, that harm may take the form of triggering research participants when they relieve their stories, which suggests the importance of privacy and trauma-informed perspectives – more guidelines on ethical research can be found [here](#) from Boilevin et al. (2018).

Taking a cue from these reflections, we ask if telling stories does more harm than good. Individuals of marginalised genders and sexualities may be more concerned about protecting themselves than necessarily having their stories told (and inviting a conservative backlash in the process). For this reason, we are particularly concerned about privacy. And because our participants are sometimes drawn from our friends and peers, various entanglements can “complicate the investigator-informant relationship” (Yao, 2022, p. 5).

We only engage in the controlled sharing of information. Participation is voluntary, and consent can be withdrawn at any time prior to peer reviews. We make a distinction here between anonymity and confidentiality—although our research design means that participants cannot be anonymous (i.e., their identities are known to researchers), instead, their details can be kept confidential (i.e., we will take steps to protect their identities from being discovered by others).



Stages

Stage 1: Data gathering and analysis

We are already in the process of speaking to newsmakers of marginalised genders and sexualities in SEA about their lived experiences. A periodically updated information sheet for participants can be found [here](#). We adopt a broadly ethnographic approach through our in-depth (but mostly online) semi-structured interviews, with a target of reaching at least 30 research participants. Since formal interviews are less effective at “capturing a wide range of people’s experiences” (Teo, 2019, p. 283), each interview broadly interrogates these five key sub-themes identified from our literature review above, which we anticipate will lead to further areas of analysis.

- ◆ systemic and structural factors
 - working lives
 - ▲ representations
 - ◀ education and training, and
 - ◆ digital transformations

Interviews are initially recorded but are deleted following transcription. All published data will be anonymised and only made publicly available with participants’ consent.

Stage 2: Analysis

Our transcripts from the interviews are analysed for emergent themes and written up into a draft discussion/findings. In some cases, we rely on translations, bearing in mind how translation itself is yet another representation (Tymoczko, 2006). We will also refer to subject matter experts for advice while remaining cognisant that discourse, experts, and institutions have often acted to contain various groups (Gauntlett, 2008, p. 126).

While aiming to speak to generate insights about SEA, we can only provide a cursory sketch. Even detailing a single locality takes staggering work. For a single paper on subnational authoritarianism in Papua alone, Tapsell (2015) drew insights from 22 local media workers. In comparison, our limited scope prevents us from drawing conclusions even about a single country. Instead, we centre on emergent themes or cross-national commonalities as our units of analysis (Gerring, 2004).¹⁴

We will divide this series into separate publications to be released quarterly to avoid the illusion of homogeneity while also being careful about how we consider grouping countries together. In this exercise, we rely more on shared themes rather than contentious forms of identity or geography.

Stage 3: Community peer review

We want to hear your thoughts on our research through our participatory, community peer-reviewed process. It may also generate actionable jumping-off points to further democratise newsmaking from a gendered perspective.

A draft of each publication will be made available to interested—and preferably diverse—participants, and several online focus group discussions (FGDs) will be held, following which we may revise or adjust our analysis accordingly.¹⁵ For security and confidentiality, anonymous written feedback is welcome.

These FGDs will be conducted together with our Civic Participation department and tied to our [Media Freedom in Southeast Asia Project](#). Although primarily conducted in English, we also aim to have several sessions in Bahasa Indonesia and potentially other regional languages, in person and online.

14 National borders—and by extension nation-states—are inadequate as units of analysis, especially since they can be intolerant of internal, cultural, or linguistic diversity. The results are internal coloniality in Myanmar (Than, 2021), or the creation of “irregular migrants” through artificial colonial and national borders between Malaysia and the Philippines (Somiah, 2021), among others.

15 James C. Scott relied upon feedback from the villagers of the unnamed village in Kedah where he conducted his fieldwork, who were responsible for significant “insightful criticisms, corrections, and suggestions of issues” (Scott, 1985, p. xix).

Besides simply reviewing our findings, we would also like to use these discussions to generate practical outcomes. Provisionally, we hope to design a handbook of strategies and resources that can be used by media workers based on the FGDs. An example of what we hope to achieve is a document akin to the “Buku Merah”, but tailored according to the field. You will be compensated for your time. Real names or identifying information will not be required during the sessions, although we will need these for paperwork.

Do join us by signing up for updates through the Media Freedom Network’s monthly newsletter, linked [here](#), or by writing to **research@newnaratif.com**. We will be in touch with you with more information before too long.



"... we engage in research as activism. Instead of simply applying a theoretical framework, we are more interested in making this process emancipatory in the sense of getting marginalised voices heard—and if there is a political outcome, so much the better."



Conclusion,
or What Happens Next?

Keeping these themes in mind and understanding that media freedom is an ongoing process, we will be releasing three analyses in this series over the next three quarters, with concluding remarks to be published in February 2024. We invite you to become either community peer reviewers or even research participants.

At the end of this exercise, we hope to generate not only a very preliminary overview of different degrees of media freedom regionally but also to generate spaces for your own further research, discussion, and activism. We look forward to having you as part of the process. And in all this, we stress that studying gender is conceptually fraught and deeply intersectional, which we hope to keep in mind over the next year.

For further information, please contact:

wailiang.tham@newnaratif.com

Wai Liang Tham
Principal researcher



References

- Al Khanif, & Khoo, Y. H. (Eds.). (2022). *Marginalisation and Human Rights in Southeast Asia* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Alatas, S. F. (2021). Silencing as Method: The Case of Malay Studies. In J. Jammes & V. T. King (Eds.), *Fieldwork and the Self: Changing Research Styles in Southeast Asia* (pp. 199–214). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-2438-4_10
- Anderson, B. (2016). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.
- Appadurai, A. (2013). *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. Verso.
- Barker, C. (2004). *The Sage dictionary of cultural studies*. Sage Publications. _
- Beer, D. (2017) *The social power of algorithms, Information, Communication & Society*, 20(1), 1–13.
- Besbris, M., and Petre, C. (2020). Professionalizing Contingency: How Journalism Schools Adapt to Deprofessionalization. *Social Forces*, 98(4): 1524–47.
- Boilevin et al. (2018, August 9). *Research 101: A Manifesto for Ethical Research in the Downtown Eastside*. <https://ethics.research.ubc.ca/sites/ore.ubc.ca/files/documents/Manifesto%20for%20Ethical%20Research%20in%20the%20DTES.pdf>
- Bong, S. A. (2011). Beyond Queer: An Epistemology of Bi Choice, *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(1), 39–63, doi: 10.1080/15299716.2011.545304
- Briscoe, L. A. (2019). Women Writers: Banned or Banished. In Ma. Ceres P. Doyo (Ed.), *Press freedom under siege reportage that challenged the Marcos dictatorship* (pp. 193–4). UP Diliman Press.
- Butler, J. (1997) *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford University Press.
- Byerly, C. M. (2013a). Factors Affecting the Status of Women Journalists: A Structural Analysis. In C. M. Byerly (Ed.), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism* (pp. 11–23). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137273246_2
- Byerly, C. M. (2013b). Introduction. In C. M. Byerly (Ed.), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism* (pp. 1–10). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137273246_1
- Cameron, D. (2016, December 15). A brief history of ‘gender’. *language: a feminist guide*.
- Carter, C., Branston, G., & Allan, S. (1998). Introduction. In S. Allan, G. Branston, & C. Carter (Eds.), *News, Gender and Power*. Routledge.
- Chambers, D., Steiner, L., & Fleming, C. (2004). *Women and Journalism*. Routledge.
- Chauly, B. (2018). *Once We Were There*. Epigram.
- De Bruin, M. (2000). Gender, organizational and professional identities in journalism. *Journalism*, 1(2), 217–238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146488490000100205>
- De Bruyn, F. (2004). From Georgic Poetry to Statistics and Graphs: Eighteenth-Century Representations and the "State" of British Society. *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 17(1), 107–139. <https://doi.org/10.1353/yale.2004.0003>
- Djerf-Pierre, M. (2020). Explaining gender equality in news content: Modernisation and a gendered media field. In M. Djerf-Pierre & M. Edström (Eds.), *Comparing Gender and Media Equality Across the Globe: A Cross-National Study of the Qualities, Causes, and Consequences of Gender Equality in and through the News Media* (pp. 147–190). Nordicom.
- Fong, S.Y. (2022). *Performing Fear in Television Production: Practices of an Illiberal Democracy*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Freedom of Expression*. (n.d.). Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/issues/freedom-expression>
- Frydenlund, S., Jalil, A. A., Somiah, V., & Than, T. (2022, August 17). Movement: In,

Between, and Beyond Myanmar and Malaysia. Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Summer School, Universiti Malaya.

- Galeano, E. (1987). *Memory of Fire Vol. 1: Genesis*. Pantheon.
- Gauntlett, D. (2008). *Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for? *The American Political Science Review*, 98(2), 341-354. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4145316>
- Gilbert, S. F. (2021). Systemic racism, systemic sexism, and the embryological enterprise. *Developmental Biology*, 473, 97-104. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ydbio.2021.02.001>
- Gladius, M., Lange, M. d., Bartman, J., Dalmasso, E., Lv, A., DelSordi, A., Michaelsen, M., & Ruijgrok, K. (2018). *Research, Ethics and Risk in the Authoritarian Field*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goertz, G., & Mahoney, J. (2012). *A tale of two cultures : qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences*. Princeton University Press.
- Hacking, I. (1990). *The Taming of Chance*. Cambridge UP.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage/The Open University.
- Hänel, H. (2020). Hermeneutical Injustice, (Self-)Recognition, and Academia. *Hypatia*, 35(2), 336-354. doi:10.1017/hyp.2020.3
- Harvey, D. (2001). *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*. Routledge.
- Hebdige, D. (1998). From Culture to Hegemony. In R. C. D. R. Schleifer (Ed.), *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (4 ed., pp. 655-662). Pearson.
- Heryanto, A., & Mandal, S. K. (Eds.). (2003). *Challenging Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Comparing Indonesia and Malaysia*. Routledge.
- "I don't want to change myself": Anti-LGBT Conversion Practices, Discrimination, and Violence in Malaysia. (2022). Human Rights Watch and Justice for Sisters.
- Ikeya, C. (2006). "Gender, History and Modernity: Representing Women in Twentieth Century Colonial Burma" [dissertation] http://pds21.egloos.com/pds/201211/26/71/CI_dissertationpartone.pdf
- Imagined Geographies*. (n.d.). Yale-NUS. <https://historicalmaps.yale-nus.edu.sg/pages/mapjourneys/imagined-geographies>
- Inside the News: Challenges and Aspirations of Women Journalists in Asia and the Pacific*. (2015). UNESCO Bangkok Office and UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
- Kabeer, N. (1994). *Reversed realities: gender hierarchies in development thought*. Verso.
- Landry, D., & MacLean, G. M. (1996). Introduction. In D. Landry & G. M. MacLean (Eds.), *The Spivak reader : selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (pp. 1-13). Routledge. _
- Latour, B. (1991). *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Harvard University Press.
- Lim, E.-B. (2013). *Brown Boys and Rice Queens: Spellbinding Performance in the Asias*. New York University Press.
- Lockhart, J.W. (2022, August 17). *What sex-difference science misses about the messy reality of sex*. Psyche. <https://psyche.co/ideas/what-sex-difference-science-misses-about-the-messy-reality-of-sex>.
- Loh, B. Y. H., & Chin, J. (2023). Introduction. In B. Y. H. Loh & J. Chin (Eds.), *New Media in the Margins: Lived Realities and Experiences from the Malaysian Peripheries*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Magsanoc, L.J. (2019). Women in Media: “We are not freaks”. In Ma Ceres P. Doyo (Ed.), *Press freedom under siege reportage that challenged the Marcos dictatorship* (pp. 344-5). UP Diliman Press.
- Martin, E. (1991). The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed A Romance Based On Stereotypical Male-Female Roles. *Signs* 16, no. 3, 485-501.
- Malaysia: Draft Media Council Act (July 2020)*. (2020). Article 19.
- MacKinnon, C. A. (1987). *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Harvard University Press.
- McClure, K. M. (1999). Figuring Authority: Statistics, Liberal Narrative, and the Vanishing Subject. *Theory & Event*, 3. muse.jhu.edu/article/32542
- McKenzie, D. F. (2004). *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*. Cambridge University Press.
- McLuhan, M. (2003). *Understanding Media*. Routledge.
- Moya, P. M. L. (2011). Who We Are and From Where We Speak. *Transmodernity: A Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1(2), 79-94.
- Ong, J. C., & Cabañes, J. V. A. (2018). *Architects of Networked Disinformation: Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines* (Communication Department Faculty Publication Series, Issue.
- Peterson, M.A. (2001). Getting to the Story: Unwriteable Discourse and Interpretive Practice in American Journalism. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 74(4), 201-211.
- Posetti, J., Shabbir, N., Maynard, D., Bontcheva, K., & Aboulez, N. (2021). *The Chilling: global trends in online violence against women journalists*.
- Primandari, F. F. (2022). *Beyond the Absence of Killings and Arrests: Exploring “Media Safety” in the Context of Southeast Asia*. Media Freedom Insights Series, No. 2. New. Naratif.
- Primandari, F. F., Hassan, S., & Melasandy, S. (2021). *Envisioning Media Freedom and Independence: Narratives from Southeast Asia*. Media Freedom Insights Series, No. 1. New Naratif.
- Pulido, L. (2008). FAQs: Frequently (Un)Asked Questions about Being a Scholar Activist. In *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship* (pp. 341-366). University of California Press. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1525/9780520916173-017>
- Rafael, V.L. (2022). *The Sovereign Trickster: Death and Laughter in the Age of Duterte*. Duke University Press.
- Rambatan B., & Johanssen, J. (2022). *Event Horizon: Sexuality, Politics, Online Culture, and the Limits of Capitalism*. John Hunt Publishing.
- Randhawa, S. (2022). *Writing Women: The Women’s Pages of the Malay-Language Press (1987-1998)*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Randhawa, S. (2022, August 10). Personal communication (interview).
- Reporters Without Borders. (n.d.). *Asia - Pacific: Absolute and autocratic control of information*. <https://rsf.org/en/region/asia-pacific>
- Rights in Reverse: One year under the Perikatan Nasional government in Malaysia*. (2021).Article 19 and CIVICUS.
- Said, E. W. (1975). The Text, the World, the Critic [research-article]. *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 8(2), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1314778>
- Saraswati, L. A. (2021). *Pain Generation: Social Media, Feminist Activism, and the Neoliberal Selfie*. NYU Press.
- Scott, J.C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press.
- Shor, E., van de Rijt, A., Miltsov, A., Kulkarni, V., & Skiena, S. (2015). A Paper Ceiling:

- Explaining the Persistent Underrepresentation of Women in Printed News. *American Sociological Review*, 80(5), 960-984. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122415596999>
- Show, Y. X. (2020). Introduction. In Y. X. Show and G. P. Ngoi (Ed.), *Revisiting Malaya: Uncovering Historical and Political Thoughts in Nusantara* (pp. 1-14). SIRD.
- Simpson, A. (2022). A Digital Coup Under Military Rule in Myanmar: New Online Avenues for Repression. *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, 33. <https://kyotoreview.org/issue-33/a-digital-coup-under-military-rule-in-myanmar/>
- Skidmore, P. (1998). Gender and the Agenda: News reporting of child sexual abuse. In S. Allan, G. Branston, & C. Carter (Eds.), *News, Gender and Power*. Routledge.
- Sombatpoonsiri, J., and Luong, D. N. A. (2022). *Justifying Digital Repression via "Fighting Fake News": A Study of Four Southeast Asian Autocracies*. Project Syndicate. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/TRSI_22.pdf
- Somiah, V. (2021). *Irregular Migrants and the Sea at the Borders of Sabah, Malaysia: Pelagic Alliance*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sprague, J. (2016). *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- St. Louis, K. & Calabrese Barton, A. (2002). Tales from the science education crypt: A critical reflection of positionality, subjectivity, and reflexivity in research. *Forum*, 3(3), Art. 19. Retrieved from <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/832/1808>
- Steiner, L. (1998). Stories of Quitting. *American Journalism*, 15(3), 89-116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.1998.10731989>
- Tapsell, R. (2015). The Media and Subnational Authoritarianism in Papua. *South East Asia Research*, 23(3), 319-334. <https://doi.org/10.5367/sear.2015.0274>
- Tei, S. C.-S. (2021). *Unspoken*. Clarity Publishing.
- Teo, Y. Y. (2019). *This Is What Inequality Looks Like*. Ethos Books.
- Than, T. (2021). "Commentary: Tharaphi Than, Why Does Area Studies Need Decolonization?" *Critical Asian Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.52698/XPTS4931>
- Tsui, C. Y. S., & Lee, F. L. F. (2012). Trajectories of Women Journalists' Careers in Hong Kong. *Journalism Studies*, 13(3), 370-385. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2011.592360>
- Tymoczko, M. (2006). Translation: Ethics, Ideology, Action. *The Massachusetts Review*, 47(3), 442-461. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25091110>
- UN Women. (n.d.). *Gender mainstreaming: Concepts and definitions*. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1988). *News As Discourse* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Vergès, F. (2021). *A Decolonial Feminism*. Pluto Press.
- Watson, J. K. (2021). *Cold War Reckonings: Authoritarianism and the Genres of Decolonization*. Duke UP.
- Williams, J. (2018). *Stand out of our Light: Freedom and Resistance in the Attention Economy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Winarnita, M., Bahfen, N., Mintarsih, A. R., Height, G., & Byrne, J. (2022). Gendered Digital Citizenship: How Indonesian Female Journalists Participate in Gender Activism. *Journalism Practice*, 16(4), 621-636. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1808856>
- Yao, S. (2022). *Doing Lifework in Malaysia*. Palgrave Macmillan.

media
freedom



Engendering Media Freedom

Media Freedom Insights
Series 4 Publication No. 1

New Naratif
newnaratif.com/mediafreedom

