

**Authorization, rationalization, and
moral evaluation:
Legitimizing acupuncture in
Hong Kong's newspapers**

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Acupuncture

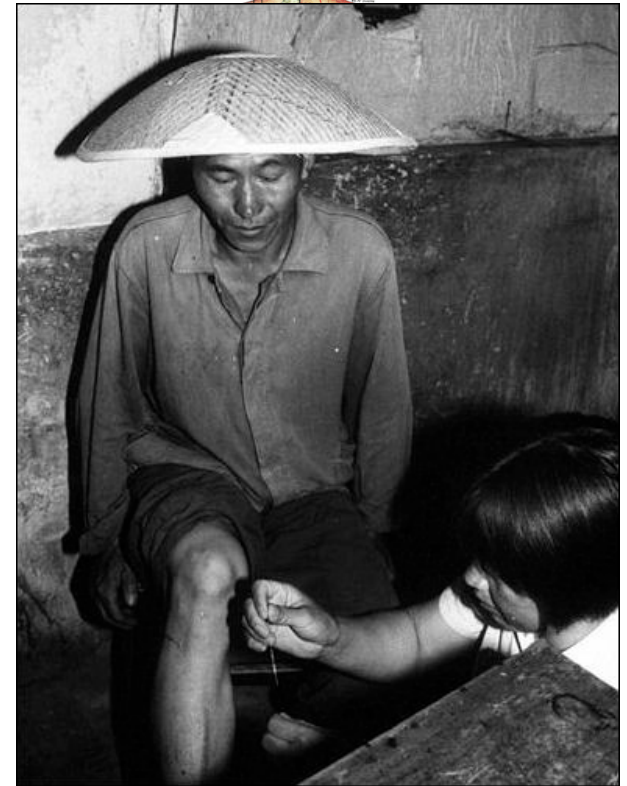
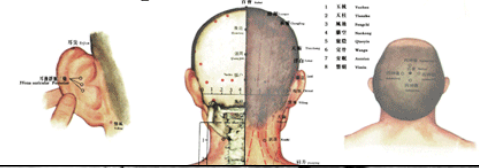
History

- A widely used therapeutic technique of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM).
- Estimated to have existed for more than 2,500 years
- Involves the insertion of fine needles into subcutaneous connective tissue and muscle at certain points in a human body's surface
- Often accompanied by moxibustion

Present

- Non-modern, non-scientific
- Regarded as “complementary” to conventional medicine
- Reformulated by the CPC & granted equal status to biomedicine in mainland China

鍼灸穴位掛圖 Acupuncture Wall Chart



Acupuncture in Hong Kong

- British colony & Important part of Cultural China
- Before the handover, TCM
 - Not allowed during Japanese occupation in 1940s
 - Not as a formal part of HK's healthcare system
 - Non-mainstream, unpopular, illegitimate

A survey in Kwan Tong, Kowloon , in 1972, only 1.7% of sampled residents had consulted an acupuncturist in the past three years (Lee, 1980)

Acupuncture in Hong Kong

- After the handover, TCM
 - became officially professionalized after the passing of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance in 1999
 - the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong
 - University education programs
 - More than two thousand TCM practitioners were granted formal recognition in 2002
 - Gaining popularity, but legitimized?

A household survey in 2007, around 61.7% of the Hong Kong population consulted a TCM practitioner at some time (Chung et al., 2011).

Legitimizing Acupuncture

Legitimacy is “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574).

- Legitimacy refers to the voluntary compliance with the authority of certain institutions, the medical institution of TCM (e.g. acupuncture)
- Objective:
 - To investigate how knowledge and practice on acupuncture gain their legitimacy through media discourse
 - To reveal the process and strategies of legitimizing acupuncture through Hong Kong’s news media

Media discourse & Legitimacy

- Media coverage on acupuncture in Hong Kong as a discursive practice
 - delimits “a field of objects” for knowledge and practice related to acupuncture,
 - defines “a legitimate perspective” for the agents who provide and receive acupuncture as a treatment, and
 - fixes the “norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories” on the treatment

Research Questions

- What are the major discourses related to the legitimation of acupuncture constructed and represented in major newspapers in post-1997 Hong Kong?
- How do the news stories evaluate acupuncture?
- How do they justify it?
- Who are the major power players selected by the newspapers to endorse the legitimacy of acupuncture?
- Are there any competing discourses? If yes, what are they and how should they be interpreted?

Method

- Two major Chinese language newspapers

M
• E
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59
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Apple Daily



Kong.

Method

- Sample time:
 - (1) between 1 June 2001 and 31 May 2003
 - (2) between 1 June 2011 and 31 May 2013
- WiseNews electronic news database
 - Keyword: the Chinese character of acupuncture, 針灸
 - in both the “title” and “content” sections
- In total, 666 stories were found and collected

Table 1: Number of stories on acupuncture published by the two newspapers in Hong Kong

	2001-2003	2011-2013
Ming Pao	145	154
Apple Daily	121	246
Total N=	266	400

Method

- Discourse analysis PRIOR to content analysis
- Three dominant legitimation discourses:
 - Authorization
 - Rationalization
 - Moral Evaluation
- Nine variables – quantifiable schemata
 - Group 1: Background information
 - Group 2: Specific information for the three discourses

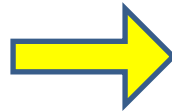
Method

- Background information:
 - (1) whether acupuncture was the main subject covered in the news; and
 - (2) the place(s) where the news mainly occurred, whether it was in Hong Kong, mainland China or other countries or regions

Method

Authorization:

- news section
- primary news sources



The particular section of the newspaper where the story was published: local news, health news section, supplement or commentary section, etc.

who talked about acupuncture: medical professionals, ordinary acupuncture receivers, or celebrity receivers;

Method

Rationalization:

- Acu purpose
- Acu effectiveness
- If Acu the only medical treatment
- If Acu mechanism explained



Acupuncture used under

• Beneficial effects

- Yes
- No: reported with other TCM
- No: reported with other TCM and biomedicine

- Yes
- No

Method

Moral Evaluation:

- The overall tone of the reporting on acupuncture



Positive
Neutral
Negative

Table 2: General outline of stories on acupuncture in Hong Kong's newspapers

	2001-2003	2011-2013
<i>Acupuncture as main reporting subject¹</i>		
Yes	23.7%	20.3%
No	76.3	79.8
<i>Place of news²</i>		
Hong Kong	77.1%	83.8%
Mainland China	15.0	5.0
Other places	7.9	11.3
Total N=	266	400

1. Acupuncture as main reporting subject: $\chi^2 = 1.11$, $df = 1$, $p = n.s.$

2. Place of news: $\chi^2 = 20.56$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$

Table 3: Legitimizing acupuncture through
AUTHORIZATION

	2001-2003	2011-2013
<i>News section¹</i>		
Local News	22.6%	18.0%
Entertainment/Sports/Education	21.8	16.0
Health/Medical News	14.3	22.3
Supplement/Advertorial	6.8	12.0
Commentary/Op-Ed	4.9	8.8
All others	29.7	23.0
Total N=	266	400

Note:

1. News section: $\chi^2 = 20.44$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$

Table 3: Legitimizing acupuncture through
AUTHORIZATION

	2001-2003	2011-2013
<i>Primary source²</i>		
Medical professionals	29.7%	36.5
Celebrity acupuncture receiver	14.3	16.5
Ordinary acupuncture receiver	6.8	16.8
Other	49.2	30.3
Total N=	266	400

Note:

2. Primary source: $\chi^2 = 30.40$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$

Table 4: Legitimizing acupuncture through
RATIONALIZATION

	2001-2003	2011-2013
<i>Purpose of acupuncture¹</i>		
Common use	21.1%	34.0%
Peripheral use	18.0	14.5
Illness treatment	9.0	16.5
Mixed purposes	9.4	6.8
Other	2.3	2.0
Inapplicable	40.2	26.3
Total N=	266	400

Note:

1. Purpose of acupuncture: $\chi^2 = 28.45$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$

Table 4: Legitimizing acupuncture through
RATIONALIZATION

	2001-2003	2011-2013
<i>Effectiveness of acupuncture²</i>		
Beneficial effect	19.5%	15.8%
Effective but with limitations	13.2	22.3
No effect	2.6	6.0
No effect and lead to bad results	2.3	8.0
Not mentioned	62.4	47.5
Inapplicable	--	0.5
Total N=	266	400

Note:

2. Effectiveness of acupuncture: $\chi^2 = 29.53$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$

Table 4: Legitimizing acupuncture through
RATIONALIZATION

	2001-2003	2011-2013
<i>If acupuncture was the only medical treatment reported³</i>		
Yes	27.4%	24.3%
No: reported with other TCM	16.9	17.3
No: reported with other TCM and biomedicine	15.8	20.3
No: reported with biomedicine	11.3	19.8
Inapplicable	28.6	18.5
Total N=	266	400

Note:

3. If acupuncture was the only medical treatment reported: $\chi^2 = 16.57$, $df = 4$, $p < .005$

Table 4: Legitimizing acupuncture through
RATIONALIZATION

	2001-2003	2011-2013
<i>If the mechanism of acupuncture explained⁴</i>		
Yes	1.5%	10.0%
No	98.5	89.5
Inapplicable	--	0.5
Total N=	266	400

Note:

4. If the mechanism of acupuncture explained: $\chi^2 = 20.18$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$

Table 5: Legitimizing acupuncture through
MORAL EVALUATION

	2001-2003	2011-2013
<i>Tone of reporting acupuncture</i>		
Positive	25.2%	32.3%
Negative	4.9	12.0
Neutral	44.4	36.5
Inapplicable	25.6	19.3
Total N=	266	400

$\chi^2 = 16.95, df = 3, p < .001$

Table 6: Tone of reporting across news sections

	Positive		Negative		Neutral	
	01-03	11-13	01-03	11-13	01-03	11-13
Health/Medical News	14.9%	43.4%	15.4%	18.8%	14.4%	14.4%
Entertainment/Sports/Education News	28.4	15.5	--	4.2	28.0	25.3
Hong Kong News	14.9	11.6	76.9	31.3	16.9	13.7
Supplement/Advertorial	9.0	9.3	--	4.2	6.8	13.7
Commentary/Op-Ed	7.5	8.5	--	6.3	4.2	10.3
Others	25.4	11.6	7.7	35.4	29.7	22.6
Total N =	67	129	13	48	118	146

Conclusion

- The three legitimation forms or discursive strategies— authorization, rationalization, and moral evaluation— mutually disclose a complex process of producing legitimacy for acupuncture through news narratives.
 - First, more intended to attribute and associate acupuncture with medical and health authorities.
 - Second, intended to contain more discourses on instrumental rationalization and provide substantive reasons for the readers to accept the treatment.
 - Third, the moral evaluation tended to be (1) more visible when positively evaluating it in the medical and health news section, (2) more dispersed when conveying negative messages, and (3) more disguised with neutrality when actually trying to be persuasive.