

A Rhetorical History of Legalization of Sex Reassignment Surgery in Taiwan: 'Transing-Nationalism' and Its Discursive Formation as the Case

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Abstract : This essay aims to examine how the discursive formation of the 'transing-nationalism' (which is extended and slightly modified from 'homonationalism') had been constructed in the Taiwanese news media before the legalization of 'sex reassignment surgery (SRS)' in 1988. Samples for rhetorical analysis were selected from two mainstream newspapers, including China Times, and United Daily. The time frame for sample selection is from August 1953 (when the first transgender case was reported) to 1988, while the SRS was legalized in Taiwan. To enhance understanding of media representation as contextualized-based, the author refers to the representative of spatial rhetoric Mikhail Bakhtin for his late study on 'emergence' and 'visualization of time' in Bildungsroman; thereby categorizing the media discourse of transgender into two critical period: (1) transgender as 'misrecognized' and 'included' into the rhetoric of modern medical space; (2) transgender as 'institutionalized' into discourse of protection and salvation by the reified sympathy of nation-state. These two periods and relevant spatial rhetoric were of no immediate concern on the vital interest of transgender individuals; therefore constructed the imagery of transgender for the service of nationalism rather than gender consciousness or human right rhetoric. Based on the research findings, this essay concludes that 'queer multiplicity' should be regarded as not only the guideline for the amendment of the gendered policies and laws but the rhetorical resources for the mobilization of transgender movement in Taiwan from now on.

Keywords : Bakhtin, legalization, rhetoric, sex reassignment surgery, transgender, transing-nationalism

Conference Title : ICPLS 2019 : International Conference on Public Law Studies

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : January 30-31, 2019