

## US media over-represent contributors to policy making, study finds

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American media in effort to highlight a diverse set of voices in covering politics generally over-represent the amount of people who contribute to policy making when compared with journalists in South Korea.

A University of Kansas researcher made the findings as part of a recent study that examined how [government officials](#) were treated in front-page [news coverage](#) between the two free-press nations. The article by Jiso Yoon, a KU assistant professor of political science, and co-author Amber Boydstum, an assistant professor of political science at the University of California, Davis, appeared in the *Journal of Public Policy*, a Cambridge University Press publication.

The study found that while in 2008 the New York Times tended to over-represent the amount of people involved in the policy-making process, in Korea, governmental actors especially in the executive branch dominated front-page news in the Hankyoreh Daily.

"We attribute this finding, in part to journalistic operating procedures in Korea, where reporters are institutionally and socially incentivized to maintain tighter relations with the government bodies they cover," the researchers said.

Yoon said the study helps shed light on the idea that freedom of the press itself might not be sufficient to allow for pluralistic perspectives to contribute to media [coverage](#) in a democracy. Coverage of government operations in both papers made up the most coverage of front pages in

2008. In the Hankyoreh Daily, 33 percent of stories focused on the government, while in the Times it was 27 percent.

How journalists operate also matters, especially when considering where journalists are housed and the diverse amount of voices that contribute to political news coverage, Yoon said.

"Between media systems linked by freedom of the press, journalistic operating procedures such as beat reporting and, of key relevance here, reporters' incentive-driven relationships with government officials can yield considerable variance in the nature of the news produced above and beyond the role of events and politics topical to each country," Yoon and Boydstum said.

Yoon said the study likely demonstrated that at both ends of the spectrum a source's relationship with a reporter appears to be the best indicator for getting news coverage.

Among stories about policy making, in Korea members of the office of the president or executive ministries led front-page stories 49 percent of the time compared to 24 percent in the Times.

Also, the researchers found the divide in Korea is more clear as far as featuring the president or executive branch in news stories and giving less representation to the minority party or citizen groups. While the Times did give the most coverage to the presidency or executive branch in political stories, the discrepancy was much more evenly spread among other groups.

This could mean American media while seeking out a diverse set of voices in the political process they are giving more coverage to people not involved in the policymaking. However, this also could function to help expand debate in a democracy, Yoon said.

"Our results suggest that the U.S. print media maintains internal pluralism relative to Korea, giving voice to a more diverse array of viewpoints," Yoon and Boydstum said. "

For future research, the authors suggested a closer look of journalistic operating procedures with political communication and public policy research.

**More information:** [journals.cambridge.org/action/ ...  
Id=S0143814X14000051](https://journals.cambridge.org/action/...Id=S0143814X14000051)

Provided by University of Kansas

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