



Book Review of Courts and Judges on Trial: Analysing and Managing the Discourses of Disapproval

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Pamela D. Schulz (2010). *Courts and Judges on Trial, Analysing and Managing the Discourses of Disapproval*. Lit Verlag, dr. W. Hopf, Berlin. ISBN 978-3-643-10621-6.

The misinterpretations of being ‘watchdog’ raise the role of media in influencing not only the court proceedings but also setting an agenda to the judgments. Pameela Schulz has wondered why it is so. She has done a study and gave a worthy result in the form of a book titled ‘Courts and Judges on Trial’: Analyzing and managing the discourses of disapproval. The book is an interesting one which deals media’s discussion on judicial proceedings in a different angle. Her study focuses on the relation between media’s voice and the judgments from the Australian courts. Being a fourth estate of democracy, media fails to provide fair comment on the judiciary, defense and law and misuse their powers on creating public opinion. Media often tend to criticize judicial proceedings which may change the entire case.

Media appears as if they symbolize public opinion in an unbiased state. But they represent a virtual public opinion. In order to increase their TRP’s (Television Rating Point) and revenue, they are liable to provide controversial issues or change issues to controversial. The main issue Schulz has focused was how the negative public opinion is formed by the media, which affects the judgment. The author also tells about how media treat the courts as mines of great stories. Every controversial story helps the media to raise their revenue. So the media continuously watch court reporting as overly sensationalized issues. Every news outlet delivers the headline more sensational than the actual news.

The author has done a content analysis of various newspapers and news magazines in Australia and studied how the news reports the impact on the judges. The Judges are being criticized on their decisions and behaviors, beyond the sense of subjection uttered in the aggravation of judges confronting media assessment which they believe they cannot answer, lays incommensurable understanding of what is exactly in stake. The author has also recorded some politicians’ interview to analyze and ascertain their views and their input into public debate over justice which might be impacting upon community concerns.

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The language used by the media and politicians are found disturbing in the discourse of disapproval of the law. The author suggests that the media could use a fine language which doesn't represent a court official as an 'offender'. She took various news outlets both print and electronic media and opinions from court officials in Australia. Many of those news outlets have a headline which indicates patterns of discourse of demand, disrespect and mainly has the suggestions which devolves the powers of courts. The whole book is a worthy work on public opinion and judicial proceedings. The whole six chapters provide the readers a clear cut idea about this problem. In chapter six, the author has provided a basic toolkit for discourse analysis as communication management.

Courts and Judges have become a major form of infotainment and provide a dramatic backdrop of stories that sell newspapers and attract advertising. A Judge sentenced one offender: *hang him, not leave him alive*. But the offender survived because of one reason; the misplacement of a comma. Especially on dealing a case a media could be cautious on their language so that the negative public opinion can be brought to an end. Not only negative public opinion, in some cases the entire judgment is changed. In order to control this, the author suggests integrated communication planning for courts and courtroom television programs which are followed England and Wales. This can be a good solution for court officials so the courts will not be mines of controversy anymore.

This book reveals the extent to which the courts in today's democracy are being harassed by media driven politics and how this affects public opinion of courts and their outcomes. It can be in Australia or elsewhere. It says how the language of the judiciary, justice system and politicians influences the public. This book is a good guide for both media persons, journalists, faculty and students of journalism, mass communication, criminology, law, sociology and judges.