

## **Investigating In-group–Out-group bias in media portrayal of Hong Kong protests through Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis**

---

### **Background**

Currently, the Hong Kong extradition bill protests stand as one of the most controversial issues on the global stage, being one of the most violent, high-profile demonstrations of the 21st century. According to the Straits Times (2019), many Hong Kong citizens see the bill as a pro-China move by the Hong Kong legislature, which challenges the sovereignty of Hong Kong, even as a Special Administrative Region (SAR), which has angered many Hong Kongians, especially fresh graduates and those of the more youthful generation, who have taken it to the streets to express said sentiments. The extent of protesters' actions and countermeasures taken by governments have raised eyebrows concerning human rights issues and the influence of China over Hong Kong's domestic affairs (Welle, 2019). Regardless, it has received large media coverage from news agencies both domestically and internationally. Needless to say, this issue has drawn the attention of many world leaders and nations. Particularly, the US had passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019 (H.R.3289), which reaffirms "Hong Kong's status under U.S. law and imposes sanctions on those responsible for human rights violations in Hong Kong" despite the issue being of no direct relevance to America. In response, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that "the US has been disregarding facts and distorting truth," and such an act "is also in serious violation of international law and basic norms governing international relations". Withstanding longstanding tensions, US-China relations are becoming increasingly tense.

Much of this information is disseminated via the media, particularly news and social media. With rapidly increasing attention being paid to these protests, news coverage also increases exponentially. However, with many countries having varying takes on the issue, particularly the US, China and Hong Kong, their respective political agendas are imposed upon the media representation of the same series of events. Through the implicit or explicit expression of certain biases, the media is used to illustrate a common view on the state of matters; one that fosters a collective "Us" against "Them" mindset (Van Dijk, 2014). But even intrastate media sources may have differing ideological slants based on their respective editors' and journalists' personal biases (Golez & Karapandza, 2019). Therefore, with the blurring lines between fact and opinion, readers may find it hard to differentiate between the two.

## **Rationale**

This study aims to examine the stances taken by various news sources in accordance with their editorial leanings through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) combined with In-group–Out-group Bias (IOB) as a secondary analytical lens.

The power wielded by the news is undeniable. However, in the modern day, news outlets' outreach has been exponentially expanded by widespread use of social media as a means of sharing and receiving information. With 3.8 Billion users worldwide, its annual user growth rate stands at 9.2% (Hootsuite, 2020). In March 2011, large news outlets including The Times, Guardian and BBC had received a 10.29%, 8.61% and 8.54% increase in traffic from articles shared on Facebook respectively (Newman, 2011). Despite its influence, news outlets rarely present facts as they are; journalists often include a personal slant in their reporting to add more 'flavour', to better 'captivate' and 'entertain' readers to appeal to a greater audience (Teo, 2002). Because of biased news reporting, people form ill-informed impressions of people or events, which, on a macro-level, can lead to significant outcomes. For instance, a study found that the inherent reporting bias in popular American news outlet Fox News effected a persuasion rate of 7.9% on the US Senate elections, which "indicate[s] sizable persuasive effects of the media" (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007). Therefore, it is important to neutralise these drawbacks through CDA of these broadsheets to understand the extent of the manifestation of underlying political slants in published articles.

Specific to the Hong Kong protests, the issue is extremely polarised in terms of the state and peoples' interests, as well as external pressure. Furthermore, protesters have been getting increasingly violent, even going on arson sprees against mainland-linked buildings and stores (SCMP, 2019). Withstanding such high stakes and the highly emotion-driven nature of the issue, biases in domestic reporting of the government's actions, riots, brutality and all other related issues will have a huge sway on protesters' sentiments towards the government and therefore affecting their actions. Foreign reporting on the issue will influence external parties' view of it. Whether the police violence is justified or condemned lies in how said third-parties view the issue. Therefore, whether action will be taken by the public and state bodies also lies in the hands of media portrayal of these events.

To examine the various stances manifested through media discourse, we shall adopt CDA to assess cardinal trends across broadsheets. We believe it will bear fruit as similar work has been previously conducted, where "in an analysis of the media accounts of the "riots" during a minority festival, the responsibility of the authorities and especially of the police in such violence may be systematically de-emphasized by

defocusing... that is, by leaving agency and responsibility implicit” (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 359). By identifying liberal or conservative slants in each broadsheet, hopefully their respective subscribers will recognise that they may be seeing the issue from a one-sided perspective and correct their impressions by diversifying their sources of information. Ultimately, readers will be more acute in their discernment between facts and opinions and form informed opinions of the matter.

## **Literature Review**

As this study analyses corpora compiled from news articles, it will use CDA as its primary research framework (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, Roger & Trew, 1977). CDA is the “qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities”, premised on the assumption that our choice of words are always purposeful, conscious or unconscious (Mullet, 2018, p.166). It stems from critical linguistics – a subsection of discourse analysis that explains the reason and means behind certain discourses. A “critical approach to discourse analysis” places more concentration on data-based reasoning focused on the issue in question (Teo, 2000). Despite being a relatively new field of study, it has gained increasing popularity in analysing large texts and has various applications in semantic analysis, drama scripts, news articles, speeches etcetera. Furthermore, it produces empirical, quantitative results that insofar as explains socio-political trends and characteristics, fleshing out the tightly-knitted relationship between discourse structure and “power and dominance in society” (Van Dijk, 2015). Van Dijk (2015) also states that those in power can (and do) manipulate the flow and interpretation of information through passive control via media representation. It is done not only by content filtration, but also subliminal details like “meaning, choice or form” and lexical preferences. Therefore, it is necessary to critically analyse political discourse, particularly media discourse, on key issues to unveil ideological overtones hidden between the lines.

To streamline the scope of study, we employ IOB, a means of political discourse, as a secondary analytical framework. IOB states that in-group members are often favoured over out-group members because of the formation of cultural groups which causes respective members of each group to form an identity (Akert, Aronson & Wilson, 2010). Proponents of this theory state that members of an in-group would strive for a positive self-concept, that is, positive distinctiveness. Hence, strategies are adopted especially by low-status members in pursuit of positive distinctiveness. One such strategy is Social Competition, where an in-group seeks positive distinctiveness via direct competition with an out-group on a common value dimension in the form of in-group favouritism (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Simply put, people often seek social validation by comparing

their cultural groups to others on common, existing criteria in an inherently biased manner. One way in which IOB manifests itself is through Confirmation Bias (CB). CB refers to the looking for, interpretation and recording of information in a manner that systematically impedes the possibility of a hypothesis being rejected (Grosjean & Oswald, 2004). Ergo, CB leads to readers favouring content that supports their view rather than proposing an opposing one. In the context of IOB, in-group members will favour content that supports the general view of the in-group and that which denounces the out-groups' views. Conversely, content which does not follow the general in-group attitude is often overlooked or rejected. For example, Oxford researchers found that German voters in the Federal Elections 2013 favoured content that was attitude-consistent, governed by the principle of CB (Donsbach, Johnson, Knobloch-Westerwick, Mothes & Westerwick, 2015). As seen, to appeal to readers' pre-existing sentiments, news outlets are likely to push out content that confirms their view to attract readers seeking validation rather than the plain truth.

## **Scope of Research**

### Hypothesis

In-group–Out-group Bias is present in mainstream media representation of the Hong Kong protests in China and Hong Kong, which take advantage of Confirmation Bias in a bid to appeal to readers and bolster their respective ideological stances.

### Research Parameters

To verify the aforementioned hypothesis, this study will adopt two sub-questions:

- i. How differently do conservative and liberal Hong Kong news sources portray the protests in their broadsheets?
- ii. How differently do Hong Kong and Chinese news sources portray the protests in their broadsheets and is there an obvious presence of IOB?

## **Methodology**

### Research Framework

This study adopts an inductive CDA of general corpus properties. Hence, it will “let the corpus suggest patterns” for a corpus-driven statistical analysis (Ooi, 2010). This approach was chosen over a deductive approach because it provides empirical backing with clear directions, allowing us to draw formerly unconsidered conclusions that better explain the phenomenon in question. For every corpus compared, they will be compared by their N-gram pattern and predominant semantic domains respectively (as detailed in ‘Quantitative Methods’ subsection below). The software used to facilitate said analysis will be Wmatrix (Rayson, 2018).

To study the differences in portrayal between conservative and liberal Hong Kong media, the news sources chosen to represent each ideology are The Standard and South China Morning Post (SCMP) respectively – the two most popular English newspapers in Hong Kong. 20 news articles regarding the protests from June 2019 to February 2020 will be chosen from each outlet, with an equal number of articles focusing on police and protester violence, forming two distinct corpora (Bednarek, 2006).

To study the differences in portrayal between Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong media, the former shall be represented by a 40-article corpus, drawing 20 articles from People's Daily and China Daily each; under each broadsheet, a selection process similar that referenced above shall be utilised. As all these news sources are state-owned, they will not vary much in political stance hence an intrastate comparison of news reporting is not required. To represent Hong Kong media, a 40-article corpus will be compiled by combining both corpora from the previous sub-study.

### Quantitative Methods

Often, authors have recurring tendencies in their choice of words. These include not just the tendency to use a specific word or phrase, but also its synonyms and others that share similar semantics. For this study, Wmatrix's preinstalled tagging system will be used to semantically-tag said words to classify them under their respective semantic domains. From the uniform distribution, their Keyness values will be derived and 10 key N-grams will be compared in terms of their Keyness (i.e. Log-Likelihood (LL)) value, followed by a Keyword-In-Context (KWIC) analysis. The standard of statistical significance is  $LL \geq 6.63$ .

Next, we must determine the overall tone of the corpus; that is, what is the overarching semantic domain of the article. Ultimately, this will qualitatively determine whether the corpus is biased. For this study, the uniform distribution of semantic tags will be derived. From it, its LL value will be derived and compared akin to that applied in the analysis of N-grams as aforementioned. Thereafter, the top 5 semantic domains in terms of Keyness value shall be tested for significance of difference by calculating the Log-Ratio (LR); where the greater the LR, the more significant the results are (Hardie, 2014).

## **Results & Analysis**

### Research Question 1

How differently do conservative and liberal Hong Kong news sources portray the protests in their broadsheets?

Hong Kong Broadsheets		
N-gram	LL Value	
	The Standard (Conservative)	SCMP (Liberal)
Vandalised/Vandalized	37.38	18.42
Force	15.36	101.19
Terrorism	21.5	5.22
Injured	5.84	50.95
Extradition	61.93	3.26
Carrie_Lam	56.07	7.62
Ordinance	56.07	7.62
Government	30.5	10.68
Radical	38.92	42.9
Condemned	16.13	18.54

From the table, we can draw several inferences. Firstly, ‘Vandalism’ and ‘Terrorism’, which suggests aggression on the protesters’ part, is intentionally used more frequently by the conservative corpus than its liberal counterpart, whereas the opposite is observed for ‘Force’ and ‘Injured’, which is often used in reference to the police’s use of violence or coercion and the resultant harm done to protesters. Through the emphasis on the violence used by the opposing party, each corpus highlights to readers that the opponent is uncivil and unethical, resorting to brute force as a means of driving their goal. Hence, it becomes apparent that the conservative and liberal media are propagating the state’s and the protesters’ causes respectively.

Secondly, the conservative corpus intentionally uses ‘Extradition’ and ‘Carrie\_Lam’ more frequently. This suggests that the conservative corpus largely regards the protests as a political issue rather than a social one, because it implicitly attributes the protests – and its aftermaths – to the political causes by placing heavier emphasis on political figures and issues, being Director Lam and the extradition bill respectively. Conversely, one can infer that the liberal corpus shifts its focus away from the political roots of the issue, and focuses more on the protests and their inherent problem; viewing the protests through a social lens rather than a political one. A similar pattern is observed for ‘Ordinance’ and ‘Government’ – terms that point towards the state and the political

aspect of matters. Therefore, one can infer that the conservative corpus understates the social impact of the issue, whereas its liberal counterpart places greater emphasis on it.

Lastly, and most interestingly, 'Radical' and 'Condemned' have similar Uniform Distribution and LL values for both corpora. This may suggest that neither corpus tries to downplay the protesters' untamed and unethical means of protest, nor the negative reactions of third-parties towards their actions. While this is expected for the conservative corpus, which we hypothesised would paint protesters' in a negative light, the same cannot be said for the liberal corpus. This suggests that the liberal corpus, despite its political slant, tries to adopt a balanced approach towards the issue by pointing out the wrongfulness in protesters' actions as well.

Hereinbelow are extracts from a KWIC analysis of each corpus:

*Extract 1.1a - 'protesters' from Hong Kong Conservative corpus*

havior of some **radical** Hong Kong  
ing the suppression of Hong Kong  
wooden sticks and helmets , the  
leased to disperse protesters .  
sters . **Raw violence stuns world**  
The Liaison Office said : " The  
ndwagon to **condemn** the Hong Kong  
old an RTHK call-in program that  
. This should have **pacified** the  
re when he was being **attacked by**

protesters  
protesters  
protesters  
Protesters  
Protesters  
protesters  
protesters  
protesters  
protesters  
protesters

**violates** the bottom line of the O  
, before showcasing their firepow  
**clash** with police armed with shie  
**charge** at police a second time ,  
were widely condemned after a mob  
**tore down their so-called peacefu**  
. One netizen wrote : " As they a  
**had gone too far** on Tuesday night  
. But the clashes on June 12 and  
, and that he 'd acted to protect

*Extract 1.1b - 'protesters' from Hong Kong Liberal corpus*

he <b>extreme violence</b> used by some	protesters	against police was <b>deeply regrett</b>
files in recent days , as <b>radical</b>	protesters	<b>have stepped up their violence</b> an
es The stand-off between <b>radical</b>	protesters	<b>barricaded</b> inside Hong Kong Polyt
r to Britain Liu Xiaoming blamed	protesters	<b>for unleashing black terror</b> and u
oon Bay riot police chased after	protesters	and sprayed them at close range .
ng . Officers were seen subduing	protesters	and taking them away at several f
. Im not scared . I support the	protesters	, Lam said , adding that he had t
, where <b>intense clashes between</b>	protesters	and police previously erupted , a
the evening , <b>tensions flared as</b>	protesters	<b>blocked roads</b> , prompting riot po
station to the campus . <b>Radical</b>	protesters	first put up bricks to slow the p
ty . As of November 24 , <b>radical</b>	protesters	<b>had caused extensive damage</b> to 85
of the East Rail line by <b>radical</b>	protesters	<b>for hindering work</b> . It also expe
g people in the area . <b>Hard-core</b>	protesters	set up barricades on roads and du
esman said it <b>strongly condemned</b>	protesters	<b>outrageous attacks on officers</b> wi
a group of activists to <b>support</b>	protesters	, and arrested four people . Poli
force necessary to stop <b>radical</b>	protesters	who had thrown smoke bombs . The

As mentioned, terms that suggest disapproval of protesters' actions and cause, such as 'radical', are recurring terms in both corpora. In fact, they appear more frequently in the liberal corpus, which includes other similar adjectives like 'hard-core'. The conservative corpus tends to stress the extent of protesters' brutality, using terms like 'raw violence' and 'attacked' to describe their aggression. Such is seen in the liberal corpus too, which used 'extreme violence' to describe their behaviour, but less often. However, despite such similarities, both corpora differ in their reporting of reactions to the protests. The conservative corpus only reported negative reactions, such as 'The Liaisons Office' claiming 'protesters tore down their so-called peacefu[l, rational and non-violent masks]'. It added the protesters' 'raw violence stuns world', and that '[mainland netizens also jumped on the ba]ndwagon to condemn' protesters. Although the liberal corpus did publish adverse reactions, it also included positive reactions, reporting that several parties, like a supposed 'Lam' and 'a group of activists', 'support' the protesters. Cumulatively, we can conclude that while the conservative corpus denounce the protesters however possible, its liberal counterpart reports events, and their aftereffects, as candidly as possible.



*Extract 1.2a - 'Police' from Hong Kong Conservative corpus*

g expressed full confidence in the money . " Protesters charge at the oke covering the training ground , of weapons in recent clashes with xtremely dangerous tools to attack , and our sympathy to the injured ople " used lethal weapons against repeated use of excessive force by s already working on reviewing how t protests . Pro-Beijing camp says shment lawmakers have defended the akers said they firmly support the emocracy lawmakers of smearing the

police and the SAR government in controlli  
police , throwing bricks and objects at th  
police successfully disperse protesters an  
police . " Radical demonstrators have repe  
police , which already constitutes a serio  
police , " Yang said . He reiterated that  
police , including a " powerful shooting  
police and the outright banning of some pr  
police handled protests . " It 's not beca  
police shooting justified Pro-establishmen  
police over the shooting of a student , sa  
police to put an end to the chaos , and ur  
police in saying that they attempted to mu

*Extract 1.2b - 'Police' from Hong Kong Liberal corpus*

to surrender as he was worried how  
ramming into a group of officers ,  
eapons and warned them not to test  
rounds and is a standard weapon of  
r capability . He said he believed  
ands hit streets in bid to relieve  
ng Polytechnic University and riot  
met by rounds of tear gas fired by  
their families . In a statement ,  
Shortly after 4pm , dozens of riot  
rs . About 45 minutes later , riot  
omers . Over in Kowloon Bay , riot  
no vandalism or damage of shops .  
targeting their colleagues . Riot  
ity had witnessed truly outrageous  
d heavy police presence . The huge  
hurling petrol bombs and bricks .  
attacked by mob with petrol bombs  
on the roof of campus buildings .  
il unrest , rang in the new year .  
an illegal assembly . By 9.45pm ,  
d march in Tsim Sha Tsui Hong Kong

police would treat him . Another protester  
police responded by firing a live round .  
police . If we have to respond , I believe  
Police Tactical Unit and Airport Security  
police had not unleashed the full force of  
police siege About 40 injured activists we  
police threatening mass arrests continued  
police guarding several entrances . In the  
police said they used minimum force to dis  
police charged into the mall , rushing up  
police on the ground floor fired pepper sp  
police rushed into the Telford Plaza mall  
Police are now openly clamping down on pea  
police wrongly intercepted a masked plain-  
police brutality on Christmas Eve , dismis  
police presence is worrying , she said . S  
Police have responded by firing more than  
Police laid siege to Hong Kong Polytechnic  
Police fired a large quantity of tear gas  
Police fired tear gas and deployed at leas  
police again fired tear gas as radicals th  
police have defended firing tear gas into

Each corpus paints the police in very different lights. The conservative corpus tries to invoke sympathy for the police while instigating censure against the protesters. This is achieved through explicit depiction, with the use of '...used lethal weapons against police' and '...dangerous tools to attack police' to highlight the protesters' excessive aggression and therein prompt readers to be sympathetic to the 'injured police', who are on the receiving end of such violence. Moreover, although in one instance it acknowledges that the police uses 'excessive force', it largely glorifies the police by reporting affirmative opinions of their actions, such as '...expressed full confidence in the police', 'Pro-Beijing camp says police shooting justified', ' [lawm]akers said they firmly support the police to put an end to the chaos' and many more. Per contra, the liberal corpus asserts that the police are intimidating and ruthless, placing heavy emphasis on the extreme brutality exacted by the police. This is evidenced in the repeated mention of police armed violence and how the police leverages it to coerce citizens into obedience. Furthermore, it uses phrases such as 'laid siege' and '...truly outrageous police brutality' to implicitly accentuate the extensive use of force by the police. It also uses accounts of citizens 'worried how police would treat' them and how citizens found that 'the huge police presence is worrying' to juxtapose the expectation that the police should be ensuring citizens feel safe, with reality. Hence, we can deduce that unlike their stances on the protesters, both corpora convey strongly opposing views of the police brutality used to suppress protests.

Hong Kong Broadsheets			
Rank	The Standard (Conservative)		
	USAS Semantic Domain	LL Value	Log-Ratio
1	Law and Order	484.2	3.24
2	Violent/Angry	335.84	3.42
3	Speech: Communicative	280.4	2.31
4	Politics	132.67	1.79
5	Speech Acts	86.81	1.2
Rank	SCMP (Liberal)		
	USAS Semantic Domain	LL Value	Log-Ratio
1	Law and Order	958.68	3.1
2	Violent/Angry	733.65	3.37
3	Warfare, Defence and the Army; Weapons	495.25	2.38
4	Vehicles and Transport on Land	391.36	2.63
5	Speech: Communicative	314.39	1.81

Evidently, both 'Law and Order' and 'Violent/Angry' are key themes that undertone both corpora, with the conservative corpus having slightly greater Log-Ratios in both semantic domains than the liberal corpus, possibly due to its tendency to emphasise the illegality of the protests, as well as the aggression employed by protesters. However, the third and fourth most common themes in the liberal corpus relate to the military and their tools with relatively high Log-Ratios. Such a trend is not present in the conservative corpus. This suggests that the liberal corpus places a much larger emphasis on police actions and the subversive means they employ than its conservative counterpart. Rather, the theme of 'Politics' ranks fourth in terms of semantic domains in the conservative corpus and not in the liberal corpus. This reinstates that, through its careful choice of words and context, the conservative corpus prefers to frame the protests as a political issue; consequently drawing attention away from the social impacts involved.

Furthermore, 'Speech: Communicative' ranks higher in semantic domains for the conservative corpus, and also has a greater Log-Ratio – 2.31 to 1.81 – than its liberal counterpart. This domain encapsulates neutral words that indicate the author quoted

words by various parties. This suggests that the conservative corpus has a greater tendency to report events based on opinions by key figures rather than based on the facts of the events themselves. Moreover, 'Speech Acts', which encapsulates connotative words that reference sentiments expressed by various parties, ranks fifth in domains present in the conservative corpus. This implies that the conservative corpus frequently adds its own interpretation of sentiments expressed by various parties in its reporting. Cumulatively, one might infer that the conservative corpus tends to publish opinion-driven, rather than fact-driven, broadsheets, which are limited in reliability.

### Research Question 2

How differently do Hong Kong and Chinese news sources portray the protests in their broadsheets and is there an obvious presence of IOB?

Hong Kong v. Chinese Broadsheets		
N-gram	LL Value	
	SCMP & The Standard	China Daily & People's Daily
Unlawful	62.5	147.35
Illegal	70.7	160.29
Law	45.27	296.49
Violence	189.07	515.71
Attacks	39.02	137.77
Riots	41.07	58.78
Injured	53.43	122.3
Offenders	2.19	47.35
Condemned	32.51	53.38
Extreme	13.59	34.02

From the table, we can draw several inferences. Firstly, the Chinese corpus places a large emphasis on the unlawfulness of protesters' actions. This is evidenced by the extreme overuse of 'unlawful', 'illegal' and 'law' relative to the Hong Kong corpus. This implies that the Chinese corpus asserts the view that protesters' actions are done in the name of aggrievement rather than salvation. As the law is a construct that one would associate with morality, fairness and justice, by repeatedly stressing the point that the protesters are violating said law, this corpus fundamentally undermines the inherent ethical basis for the protests by deeming them as unjust and ungrounded. In short, the



Chinese corpus rejects the protesters' view that they are fighting for justice by reinstating that they are violating domestic law, hence averring that their cause could never be justified.

Furthermore, the Chinese corpus reminds readers of the brutality involved in the riots. This is evidenced by the much higher frequency of occurrence of words associated with aggression, such as 'violence', 'attacks', 'injured' and even 'riots' itself. Although we are unable to tell which party these words refer to solely based on these figures, it is evident that the Chinese corpus has a tendency to use more sensationalistic words. This reaffirms that the Chinese corpus aims to invoke strong feelings in readers towards the Hong Kong protests, and to a much larger extent than its Hong Kong counterpart. Hence, the notions of aggression and violence that many readers of the Chinese corpus may already have is further amplified and paints the whole issue in a negative light regardless of who those words refer to.

Lastly, there is a significantly higher usage of words that deem the offenders defiant or deviant. The words 'offenders' and 'extreme' describe the protesters and their actions respectively, whereas 'condemned' describes the reactions towards said actions. 'Offenders' implies that these protesters are violating norms and uprooting social order, rather than fighting for their civil rights and freedom; that they are innately vile and depraved in nature. 'Extreme' implies that the protesters are going too far, and are not normal, which implicitly stratifies protesters from what one would consider a supposed normal person. Moreover, it labels their actions as unnecessary and radical, which sharply contrasts the basis for the protest to begin with. Including 'condemned' further reinforces these connotations, as it portrays the protester's actions as unsupported and misaligned with public norms and opinions. Hence, it plays to the bandwagon effect, which subtly influences readers to follow the herein stated views.

Hereinbelow are extracts from a KWIC analysis of the Chinese corpus:

### Extract 2.1 - 'protesters' from Chinese corpus

condemns extreme acts of radical	protesters	The government of China's Hong K
warning does not work . Radical	protesters	have been repeatedly organizing u
targets HK MTR stations Riotous	protesters	wreaked havoc on the streets of H
, after he collided with fleeing	protesters	, who also terrorized passersby f
s deep-rooted problems . Radical	protesters	disrupt operations at Hong Kong a
ended . A large group of radical	protesters	charged security cordon lines , d
. At around 5:30 p.m. , violent	protesters	committed destructive acts extens
violence Hundreds of black-clad	protesters	clashed with riot police in Hong
until midnight . Well-organized	protesters	assaulted officers with bricks ,
the demonstration , some radical	protesters	illegally blocked roads in Tsim S
ng district . A group of radical	protesters	illegally cut off traffic , siege
and villagers . Several radical	protesters	also sieged the Yuen Long police
nciple . -- On July 21 , radical	protesters	besieged and attacked the Liaison
one especially ugly encounter ,	protesters	screamed at a passenger carrying
gers were verbally abused by the	protesters ,	while a reporter from the China
cil of the HKSAR . " The violent	protesters	have broken many law items , incl
Ng said that acts of the illegal	protesters	have been damaging Hong Kong 's l
t officers wont tolerate violent	protesters	, not to mention that the protest
e sees it , arson and attacks by	protesters	should not be tolerated in any co
, violence continued . Extremist	protesters	surrounded police headquarters an
the demonstration , some radical	protesters	illegally blocked roads in Tsim S
ng district . A group of radical	protesters	illegally cut off traffic , siege
e word riot in categorizing some	protesters	unlawful actions is a blatant att

The most obvious trend is the word 'radical' preceding almost every listed occurrence of the word 'protesters'. This clearly shows how the Chinese corpus vilifies the protesters by constantly highlighting the extremity and wrongfulness of their actions. Furthermore, radicalism is often associated with terrorism, which could also imply that the protesters' actions are akin to that of a terrorist, which then fleshes out the immorality of their actions and draws ties between them and the negative associations with the idea of terrorism in the public's eyes. Furthermore, the corpus states that protesters 'wrecked havoc', 'committed destructive acts', 'assaulted' and 'besieged', among other acts of aggression. While the harm done by protesters is undeniable, the use of such descriptors not only exaggerates the extent of the protesters' actions, but also suggests that the protesters are extremely vicious and, as aforementioned, radical. Moreover, 'illegally' frequently follows 'protesters', with one instance stating that they 'should not be tolerated'. This plays on readers' virtues and morality, as standing on the side of the protesters would imply one supports acts that erode society's principles, as reflected by

the law, and disrupt social order. Hence, readers are more likely to perceive the protesters' actions as, as a whole, unjust, which paints the protests in a negative light.

*Extract 2.2 - 'Police' from Chinese corpus*

at has lasted for three days , the  
ged people among the rioters , the  
em , he added . Stressing that the  
on Sunday rioters set a Hong Kong  
versity ( PolyU ) in Kowloon . The  
outside the PolyU and attacked the  
ies and provoked clashes with riot  
rol bombs and attack the Hong Kong  
ome internet users applauded armed  
gional Crime Headquarters said the  
threw bricks and gasoline bombs at  
cals repeatedly mounted attacks on  
olice officers . They clashed with  
d their line of defense and forced  
ed the LegCo building and assailed  
illegally cut off traffic , sieged  
bs . A violent radical attacks the  
n office but were thwarted by riot  
words to insult and provoke the  
g the recent riots , the Hong Kong  
nd great restraint . The Hong Kong  
measures of force . He praised the  
ty should express gratitude to the  
oundless accusation of so-called "  
tarted badgering and attacking the  
Iso pointing laser beams at them .  
 . They have deliberately attacked

police have been seeking peaceful resoluti  
police did not arrest them immediately , b  
police will spare no effort to bring offen  
police vehicle on fire with petrol bombs a  
police armored vehicle was attacked with p  
police with lethal weapons . A member of t  
police by swearing at them . As of 10:30pm  
police with offensive weapons , some inter  
police for being brave and skillful in bat  
police fired the shot as his life was in d  
police , who responded with tear gas , pep  
police . They surrounded Hong Kong police  
police , with some attempting to rob offic  
police to use appropriate force to dispers  
police with toxic chemical powder . They e  
police vehicles , smashed car windows and  
police with a slingshot in Sheung Wan , so  
police . -- On Aug. 3 and on Aug. 5 , blac  
police , ruined police vehicles and starte  
Police Force has honored their duties and  
police have been a pillar in safeguarding  
police for their hardworking and firm atti  
police for their wholehearted devotion and  
police brutality " . " They were trying to  
police supporters . A dozen riot police of  
Police condemned the violence . After repe  
police , besieged police stations , sabota

Contrary to their characterisation of protesters, the police are portrayed as just and heroic. Stating that 'the police will spare no effort' and 'the Hong Kong Police Force has honored their duties' implies that the police are vigilant in the face of adversity, that is the protests. While this implies that the police are fervent in enforcing justice, this image is a one-sided portrayal that fails to consider all actions taken by the police. Instead, it emphasises and exaggerates the dedication of the police towards peacekeeping and suppressing the supposedly unjust riots. Furthermore, 'internet users applauded armed



police for being brave and skillful’ and ‘he praised the police for their hardworking and firm...’ further bolsters this effect. As above, it plays on the bandwagon effect but here it shows that the general public opinion of the police actions are wholly positive, and therefore implores one to stand on the side of the popular opinion. Moreover, terms that indicate brutality against the police, such as ‘assailed’, ‘repeatedly mounted attacks on’ and more, are used to invoke sympathy for the police. As protesters are often portrayed as violent and aggressive, this shows how far they go to hurt the police, who are deemed as altruistic and the just force here. This plays to one’s pathos and ethos, as one would feel bad for the police who are being assaulted brutally even though they are merely keeping social order. Hence, one might detest the protesters while taking the side of the police, as the converse would go against their moral and emotional compass.

Hong Kong v. Chinese Broadsheets			
Rank	SCMP & The Standard (Hong Kong)		
	USAS Semantic Domain	LL Value	Log-Ratio
1	Law and Order	1393.67	3.14
2	Violent/Angry	1027.57	3.38
3	Speech: Communicative	567.12	1.98
4	Warfare, Defence and the Army; Weapons	544.44	2.21
5	Politics	379.05	1.71
Rank	China Daily & People’s Daily (Chinese)		
	USAS Semantic Domain	LL Value	Log-Ratio
1	Law and Order	2492.08	3.71
2	Violent/Angry	2043.56	4.01
3	Crime	487.58	3.76
4	Politics	451.46	1.84
5	Vehicles and Transport on Land	371.38	2.37

From this table, we can draw several inferences. Firstly, the Chinese corpus has a much greater reporting slant. The Log-Ratio for the top two categories of each corpus, namely ‘Law and Order’ and ‘Violent/Angry’, are much higher in the Chinese corpus than its Hong Kong counterpart. The former shows how the Chinese corpus places a



much greater emphasis on the legality and morality of the protesters' actions, and prompts readers to consider its fairness and whether it is justified. While this effect can be said for both corpora, its prominence in the Chinese corpus is significantly larger. It also promotes the view that 'order' must be kept in Hong Kong, which is the role assumed by the police — implying that the protesters are its disruptors. The overuse of 'violent/angry' words relative to its Hong Kong counterpart might imply that the Chinese corpus engages in emotional reporting to a larger extent. These words incite spiteful sentiments and apathy towards the protesters' cause and actions, and invoke a hostile perception of the issue as a whole.

Moreover, the Chinese corpus places a larger emphasis on reporting on underlying elements of the protests rather than the events of the protests. The 3rd most common semantic domain in the China corpus being 'Crime', whereas that of the Hong Kong corpus is 'Speech: Communicative'. This implies that the Chinese corpus has a much larger tendency to reinforce the notion that acts committed by the protesters are immoral and illegal in nature, rather than reporting said actions in a neutral manner. The lack of communicative language also indicates that there is more input by the journalists themselves rather than quotes from external parties, which may imply a greater personal slant in the reporting of the Chinese corpus. Furthermore, by associating protesters with criminals, it deters readers from supporting protesters' cause as criminals are often deemed as negative examples in society. Hence, regardless of whether their cause is objectively justified, many readers will take the opposite side to dissociate themselves from this perception.

## **Discussion**

Evidently, ideological slants are present in all the above corpora, with the Chinese, Conservative and Liberal Hong Kong corpora having decreasing levels of pro-police sentiments, along with increasing levels of pro-protester sentiments. This is unsurprising as the Chinese government has a strong pro-police stance in line with its One China policy, which conservative Hong Kong citizens support. However, liberal Hong Kong citizens believe otherwise. Due to the clear inter- and intra-state polarisation on this issue, there is a clear and significant demand for media reporting on both sides of the aisle.

Through the aforementioned slants, The Standard and SCMP provide conservative and liberal viewpoints, respectively, on the issue for readers of the corresponding ideological stance to read. These views conform to the identity of their respective "cultural groups", which shows a clear confirmation bias, and an IOB where those on the opposite end of the political spectrum are the "out-group". This is even more evident when comparing

the Chinese and Hong Kong corpora. As most Chinese have strong nationalistic sentiments, the state media appeals to said emotions and classifies the protesters as the “out-group”, fleshing out the inherent IOB present in their reporting. This reaffirms the status quo, which is clear evidence of IOB at play.

Granted, these results may be as expected. However, through this study, we have empirical, quantitative evidence to support our pre-existing notions, hence providing a more critical and objective approach towards the analysis of the media portrayal of the Hong Kong riots. By fleshing out these inherent reporting biases, we better understand the extent of bias in each news source’s reporting, and would therefore learn that we should take whatever we read with a pinch of salt, and diversify our news sources especially pertaining to such a contentious issue.

*Word Count (excl. title and references): 4752*

## References

1. Hermesauto. (2019, October 23). Hong Kong extradition Bill officially killed, but move unlikely to end unrest. Retrieved from <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/hong-kong-legislature-officially-kills-controversial-extradition-bill-after-months-of>
2. Deutsche Welle. (2019, January 12). China accuses UN human rights chief of inflaming Hong Kong unrest: Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/china-accuses-un-human-rights-chief-of-inflaming-hong-kong-unrest/a-51486730>
3. H., C. (2019, October 16). H.R.3289 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3289>
4. People’s Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2019, November 28). Retrieved from <http://www.chinaembassy.org.sg/eng/jrzg/t1719774.htm>
5. Van Dijk, T. A. (2014). The Mass Media Today. Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13183222.1995.11008592>
6. Golez, B., & Karapandza, R. (2019). Home-Country Media Slant and Equity Prices. SSRN Electronic Journal. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3396726
7. Carter, J., & Chaffey, D. (2020, April 8). Global social media research summary 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/>

8. Newman (2011, September). Mainstream media and the distribution of news in the age of .... Retrieved April 12, 2020, from <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:94164da6-9150-4938-8996-badfdef6b507>
9. Teo, P. (2002). Striking a Balance for Sustainable Tourism: Implications of the Discourse on Globalisation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10(6), 459–474. doi: 10.1080/09669580208667182
10. DellaVigna, S., & Kaplan, E. (2007). The Political Impact of Media Bias.
11. SCMP Reporters (2019, October 21). Rampaging mobs in Hong Kong launch arson attacks on shops and MTR stations. Retrieved from <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3033793/rampaging-mob-stages-arson-spree-hong-kong-setting-mainland>
12. Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). What is CDA (Handbook of Discourse Analysis).. Retrieved April 13, 2020, from <https://is.cuni.cz/studium/predmety/index.php?do=download&did=100284&kod=JMM65>
13. Fowler, Roger; Bob Hodge, Gunther Kress, Tony Trew (1979). *Language and Control*. Routledge. ISBN 978-0-7100-0288-4.
14. Mullet, D. R. (2018). A General Critical Discourse Analysis Framework for Educational Research - Dianna R. Mullet, 2018. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1932202X18758260?journalCode=joac> p. 116-142.
15. Teo, P. (2000). Racism in the News. *Discourse and Society* 11(4), doi: 10.1177/0957926500011001002
16. Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., & Akert, R. (2010). *Social psychology. 7th ed.* Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
17. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict". In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (eds.). *The social psychology of intergroup relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole. pp. 33–47.
18. Oswald, M. E., & Grosjean, S. (2004). Confirmation Bias. *Cognitive Illusions: A Handbook on Fallacies and Biases in Thinking, Judgement and Memory*.
19. Knobloch-Westerwick, S., Mothes, C., Johnson, B. K., Westerwick, A., & Donsbach, W. (2015). Political Online Information Searching in Germany and the United States: Confirmation Bias, Source Credibility, and Attitude Impacts. *Journal of Communication*, 65(3), 489–511. doi: 10.1111/jcom.12154
20. Ooi, V. (2010). Retrieved February 12, 2020, from <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellooibv>
21. Rayson, P. (2018). Retrieved from <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix/>
22. Bednarek, M. (2006) *Evaluation in Media Discourse* - Bloomsbury Publishing. Retrieved April 13, 2020, from <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/evaluation-in-media-discourse-9780826491268/>
23. Hardie, A. (2014, April 28) Log Ratio – an informal introduction. Retrieved from <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/conference/fac-arts/english/icame-35/index.aspx>
24. Rapoza, K. (2020, January 03). Latest Data Shows Protests Sucking The Life Out Of Hong Kong Economy. Retrieved August 09, 2020, from

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2020/01/03/latest-data-shows-protests-sucking-the-life-out-of-hong-kong-economy/>