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“Same, same but different”: Representations of Chinese mainland and Hong Kong people in the press in post-1997 Hong Kong

Abstract

After Hong Kong’s return to Chinese Sovereignty in 1997, the terms “mainlander” and “Hongkonger” have been widely used by English-language media in Hong Kong to differentiate between people from the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong. This study examines representations of Chinese mainlanders and Hongkongers in a 17.4-million-token corpus containing 30,279 articles published between 1998 and 2019 by the South China Morning Post, a leading English-language newspaper in Hong Kong. By comparing and analyzing the collocational behavior of the noun lemmas mainlander and Hongkonger, the study identifies the salient topoi, or stereotypical characterizations, associated with the two groups. Hong Kong locals and mainland migrants/visitors are of the same ethnicity but nevertheless culturally and socially different. The analysis demonstrates how the “othering” of, or sometimes even explicit discrimination against mainlanders has served as part of the process through which the distinctive “Hongkongers’ identity” is constructed by Hong Kong’s English language newspaper of record.

Keywords: Hong Kong discourse, Chinese discourse, topos, topoi, Hong Kong identity, Chinese identity

1 Introduction

Since the return of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China in 1997, the terms “mainlander” and “Hongkonger” have been increasingly used in the English-language media in Hong Kong to refer to people from the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, respectively. Many Hongkongers used to be mainlanders themselves. Today, over 90 per cent of Hong Kong’s 7.3 million population are either migrants from the Chinese mainland or their descendants (Census and Statistics Department, 2017). The use of specific terms to distinguish between Chinese mainland and Hong Kong people, as reported in Hong Kong’s local media, is that Hongkongers “are trying to differentiate ourselves from mainlanders – not just the people are different, but also our cultural spirit and political identity” (Lam, 2014). As Hongkongers seek to articulate the local identity, mainlanders in Hong Kong have been subjected to increasing bias, exclusion and stigmatization (Chen and Flowerdew, 2019; Flowerdew, Li and Tran, 2002). Recent surveys have shown that 72.5% of the newly arrived mainland migrants reported being victims to discrimination, while many found social integration extremely difficult (Hong Kong Association of Community Organizations, 2016; Ng, 2015).

It has been argued that the identity of one social group is often defined in relation to a different “Other” (Hall, 1996). In the discourse on immigrants and migration, in particular, strategies of positive self-representation and negative other-representation can be used for legitimizing discrimination against people of different ethnicity, skin color, religion or national origin (e.g., Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Rojo and van Dijk, 1997; van Dijk, 1997; Wodak and Reisigl, 2010). The divide between Hongkongers and mainlanders is remarkable because both groups share the same ethnicity. When racial difference is absent, how do Hongkongers differentiate themselves from their mainland brethren? Is the construction of Hongkongers’ distinctive identity related to the “othering” or even discrimination against the mainland people? This paper looks into the them/us divide between Hong Kong and mainland people, through examining the use of the terms *Hongkonger* and *mainlander* in the press in post-1997 Hong Kong. We chose to analyze the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), an English-language broadsheet newspaper, which has been regarded as Hong Kong’s newspaper of record and has received the highest credibility score among paid newspapers in Hong Kong (Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey, 2019). We collected the news

articles containing either or both lemmas *Hongkonger* and *mainlander* that have been published between 1998 and 2019 by the SCMP. In total, the corpus consists of 30,279 articles and 17.4 million tokens, with the lemmas *Hongkonger* and *mainlander* occurring 22,336 and 16,832 times, respectively. We used corpus tools to analyze and compare the collocational behavior of the two lemmas. The following questions are answered:

- 1) What are the most salient collocation patterns of the lemmas *Hongkonger* and *mainlander* in news articles published by the SCMP (1998-2019)?
- 2) What does the collocational behavior of the lemmas *Hongkonger* and *mainlander* reveal about the stereotypical representation of Chinese mainland and Hong Kong people in the SCMP?

By comparing representations of mainland and Hong Kong Chinese in the SCMP, this study reveals discursive strategies, as realized by means of positive and negative topoi, used in the press in Hong Kong for constructing and reinforcing the negative “them” and positive “us” stereotypes, and we call for more attention to the profound impact the Hong Kong media’s persistent prejudice against mainlanders may have on the over 60,000 mainland migrants to Hong Kong annually. In so doing, this study contributes to the literature on discourse and identity construction in Hong Kong (Chen and Flowerdew, 2019; Flowerdew, 1997; 2004a; 2004b; 2012) and discriminatory discourse directed towards migrants (e.g., Flowerdew et al., 2002; Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Rojo and van Dijk, 1997; van Dijk, 1997; Wodak and Reisigl, 2010). The rest of this paper first considers the wider socio-political background of Hong Kong (section 2) and previous studies which use corpora to assist the investigation of the discursive representation of social actors (section 3). It then describes the research design (section 4) and reports the results of data analysis (section 5), which is followed by a discussion of major findings and conclusions (section 6).

2 Hong Kong: The wider socio-cultural background

Hong Kong is a city located on the southern coast of China, a Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China and a former British colony from 1841 to 1997. Hong Kong was populated by a few thousand indigenous settlers when it became a British colony in 1841. The colonial government adopted an open-border policy for

over a hundred years, during which time Hong Kong's population substantially increased from mainland migration, many of whom were refugees fleeing from domestic social upheavals, natural disasters and economic difficulties. Following the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the colonial government tightened border control. Nevertheless, thousands of mainland migrants continued to enter, both legally and illegally, and the Hong Kong government generally accepted any mainland migrants who managed to arrive. Since 1980, however, mainland migrants without valid documents were all repatriated, and no more than 150 mainland migrants are allowed per day to enter Hong Kong, a system that continues today. Almost all the quota of 150 people has been given to mainlanders who migrated for purposes of family reunion as the spouses or children of Hong Kong residents (Choi and Fong, 2017; Law and Lee, 2006,). Additionally, since 2003, another batch of around 10,000 highly skilled mainland talent and professionals has been admitted each year to work in Hong Kong.

Tracing the over 150-year history of mainland migration to Hong Kong, negative local perception towards mainland migrants, and sometimes mainlanders in general, is a more recent phenomenon. Until the 1970s, many Hongkongers remained empathetic towards the newly arrived mainland migrants, who were often refugees from rural areas (Choi and Fong, 2017). For a long period of time, the Hong Kong government had also generally welcomed unskilled mainland migrants, many of whom became the major source of cheap labor that contributed to Hong Kong's industrial boom in the 1960s (Choi and Fong, 2017; Law and Lee, 2006). Some of the early migrants have managed to move up the social ladder, among whom is Li Ka Shing, who started in Hong Kong as a plastic flower salesman, and ultimately became a billionaire industrialist and Hong Kong's richest man. Others, especially entrepreneurs who fled from Shanghai due to the Sino-Japanese war during World War II, came to Hong Kong with great wealth and advanced business management skills. These elite entrepreneurs brought capital that accounted for about 40% of the national income of Hong Kong between 1947 and 1955, upgraded the Hong Kong textile industry to one of the most modern in the world by 1966, and made the city the second largest clothing export country by 1971 (Nishida, 1990; Wong, 1988). Immigrant investors from Fujian and Guangdong (two provinces on the southeast coast of China) also contributed to the 1960s economic boom (Schenk, 2001).

However, the 1980s witnessed a gradual change of local attitudes towards mainland migrants (Choi and Fong, 2017; Law and Lee, 2006). Because of the Open Door policy and economic reform of China in late 1970s, Hong Kong began to move its labor-intensive manufactory businesses to the Chinese mainland, taking advantage of the cheap labor there, and transform into a knowledge-based economy. As the demand for unskilled workers shrank, the Hong Kong government became reluctant to accept more mainland migrants, which has led to the introduction of a strict repatriation policy in 1980 (Law and Lee, 2006). Further, since the 1980s, Hong Kong has been plagued by a widening wealth gap and a high population density. As many of the migrants who arrived after 1980 are unskilled (wives and non-adult children of Hong Kong men), this breeds resentment in some quarters in Hong Kong that the migrants had come to take advantage of Hong Kong's social resources. Increasingly, mainland migrants were perceived as “welfare stealers”, “not up to Hong Kong standards” and a “burden” on Hong Kong (Bosco, 2005, p.507; Choi and Fong, p.11; Law and Lee, 2006, 238). They were later labelled “new immigrants” and often experienced economic and social difficulties in addition to the lack of support from the government (Bosco, 2005; Siu, 2008).

After reunification with the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region with a high degree of autonomy. However, in post-1997 Hong Kong, negative sentiments towards mainland people seem to have grown only stronger, leading to bitter social divisions in recent years (Chen and Flowerdew, 2019; Feng, 2017; Flowerdew et al, 2002). Several factors might have contributed to why Hongkongers have continued to perceive their fellow citizens in the mainland in a negative way. First, despite China's rapid economic growth, the income gap between Hong Kong and most mainland cities remains significant, and mainland migrants have continued to be viewed as “rural relatives” who come to compete for social resources with the locals. Second, an ease of travel policy after 1997 has brought millions of mainland visitors each year for sightseeing and shopping in Hong Kong. These mainland tourists have been accused by angry local citizens of overcrowding the city, causing shortage of certain daily necessities, and pushing up prices. Third, although the post-1997 Hong Kong is allowed to maintain social, economic and political systems different from those in the Chinese mainland, fear have always existed that Hong Kong will be made “just another mainland city”. Local resistance against the perceived

“mainlandization”, via increasingly violent protests over recent years, has sometimes fueled resentment towards even ordinary mainland people (Chen and Flowerdew, 2019). As the tension between Hongkongers and mainlanders heightened, newly arrived mainland migrants have to suffer greater difficulties in integration (Ng, 2015). This paper seeks to reveal the role mainstream newspapers in Hong Kong played in the construction of an “us versus them” mindset in post-1997 Hong Kong, using corpus linguistic techniques as an assistance. The next section briefly considers previous studies adopting a similar approach.

3 Analyzing discursive representations of social actors using corpus techniques

Over the last two decades, corpora and corpus techniques, which allow researchers to quantitatively investigate selected language features in a substantial amount of data, have been widely applied to analyzing discourse (Flowerdew, 1997, 2004a; Hardt-Mautner, 1995). Linguistic evidence mined from a large corpus may help reveal the existence of certain discourses or ideologies, something which would not have emerged from a manual analysis of a small number of texts (Baker, 2006). As corpus linguistics focuses on frequency data and statistical differences, it might also help discourse analysts reduce researcher bias and enhance the validity and reliability of findings (Anthony and Baker, 2015; Hardt-Mautner, 1995).

Many scholars have shown how corpus techniques can be applied to analyzing the representation of social actors in public discourse, for example Mautner’s (2007) examination of *elderly* in the Bank of English, Baker et al.’s (2008) study of *refugee*, *asylum seeker*, *immigrant*, and *migrant* in the UK press, and Pearce’s (2008) analysis of *man* and *woman* in the British National Corpus. Collocation and concordance analyses are among the corpus linguistic methods frequently used to identify social information about a given group of people. Collocation refers to the repeating patterns of co-occurring lexical choices in a collection of texts (Sinclair, 1991; Stubbs, 1996). The frequent collocates of a word can arguably point to salient meanings and ideologies associated with that word (Stubbs, 1996). For example, Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) found that in UK newspapers, the words *refugee* and *immigrant* often co-occur with words carrying negative connotations, such as *illegal*, *caught*, and *detained*, thereby revealing the implicit negative stance taken in their representation. The frequent use of

collocations, such as *illegal immigrants*, in public discourse may shape the way in which relevant social groups are perceived. As suggested by Stubbs (1996: 92), “if particular lexical and grammatical choices are regularly made, and if people and things are repeatedly talked about in certain ways, then it is plausible that this will affect how they are thought about”.

To enable a more robust, detailed and in-depth investigation of collocations, it is often necessary that the collocates are examined in their context of use, through a concordance analysis or even a close reading of the whole text. A concordance shows a given word in its textual environment (Sinclair, 1991). Stubbs (1994: 212) has stressed the importance to “combine the analysis of large-scale patterns across long texts with the detailed study of concordance lines”, as it provides qualitative textual evidence in addition to the quantitative corpus enquiries. Mautner (2007: 60), for example, found through concordance analysis that when the lemma *elderly* collocates with *resident* as in *an elderly resident*, the phrase is often used to represent elderly people as victims to crimes, which foregrounds their vulnerability. In this study, we use methods of collocation analysis, concordance analysis, and where necessary, a close reading of the whole text in our investigation of representations of Hongkongers and mainlanders in the SCMP. The next section details the data collection process and methods of analysis.

4 Data and methods

4.1 The SCMP Corpus

To examine representations of mainland and Hong Kong Chinese in the SCMP, we collected all news articles containing the lemma *mainlander* or *Hongkonger* that were published between 1998 and 2019 by the newspaper via *WiseNews*, an online searchable database which contains full-text articles from the SCMP since 1998. The search has resulted in a collection of 30,279 articles. After necessary text editing and data cleaning, the texts were then uploaded to the online corpus manager platform, Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). The Sketch Engine has been frequently used in recent discourse studies for collocation and concordance analysis (e.g., Baker et al., 2013; Mautner and Learmonth, 2019; Partington et al., 2013; Pearce, 2008). The final corpus contains a total of 17,436,186 tokens, with the noun lemmas *mainlander* and *Hongkonger* occurring 16,832 and 22,336 times, respectively.

4.2 Data analysis

After creating the corpus on the platform, we retrieved salient collocational and grammatical patterns associated with the lemmas *mainlander* and *Hongkonger*. Based on calculations using a logDice score, the Sketch Engine produced a summary (“Word Sketch”) of how a target word collocates with other words in different grammatical relations (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). For example, in the SCMP Corpus, it was found that the lemmas *mainlander* and *Hongkonger* are most often used in the following grammatical relations:

- verbs with *mainlander/Hongkonger* as object;
- verbs with *mainlander/Hongkonger* as subject;
- modifiers of *mainlander/Hongkonger*;
- Adjective predicates of *mainlander/Hongkonger*;
- prepositional phrases;
- *mainlander/Hongkonger*’s ...

The Sketch Engine further allowed us to compare the collocational behavior of *mainlander* and *Hongkonger* in each grammatical relation (“Word Sketch Difference”), based on difference in terms of typicality score (logDice) (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). This function helps shed some light on the difference in lexical choices made in the discursive representation of two entities (Pearce, 2008). The “Word Sketch Difference” categorizes the collocates of *mainlander* and *Hongkonger* into three groups:

- 1) **Collocates of *mainlander***: words cooccurring more frequently with the lemma *mainlander* no less than two typicality points ahead of *Hongkonger*;
- 2) **Collocates of *Hongkonger***: words cooccurring more frequently with the lemma *Hongkonger* no less than two typicality points ahead of *mainlander*;
- 3) **Shared collocates**: words cooccurring with both *mainlander* and *Hongkonger*, with no significant difference in terms of typicality score (difference within ± 2 typicality points).

An example of the categorization of collocates in the grammatical relation “verbs with *mainlander/Hongkonger* as object” can be found in Table 1.

Table 1 Example: verbs with *mainlander/Hongkonger* as object

Collocates of <i>mainlander</i>			Shared collocates				Collocates of <i>Hongkonger</i>			
collocate	F	TS	collocate	F (m)	TS (m)	F (H)	TS (H)	collocate	F	TS
<i>allow</i>	477	10.5	<i>be</i>	553	7.3	718	7.6	<i>urge</i>	191	9.5
<i>arrest</i>	217	9.9	<i>include</i>	106	7.8	107	7.7	<i>kill</i>	102	8.8
<i>jail</i>	49	8.2	<i>help</i>	77	8.1	130	8.6	<i>ask</i>	90	8.3
<i>hire</i>	41	7.8	<i>give</i>	59	6.9	104	7.6	<i>concern</i>	55	7.8
<i>recruit</i>	35	7.7	<i>encourage</i>	48	7.8	102	8.6	<i>know</i>	51	7.5
<i>stop</i>	32	7.4	<i>see</i>	50	6.7	64	6.9	<i>remind</i>	48	7.9
<i>prevent</i>	30	7.3	<i>find</i>	41	6.7	61	7.2	<i>strand</i>	42	7.8
<i>charge</i>	28	7.3	<i>expect</i>	64	7.7	37	6.7	<i>survey</i>	37	7.5
<i>smuggle</i>	27	7.4	<i>make</i>	22	4.9	76	6.6	<i>poll</i>	34	7.4
<i>bar</i>	26	7.4	<i>involve</i>	49	7.6	46	7.3	<i>advise</i>	31	7.2

Notes:

- 1) F= total frequency of the lemma
- 2) TS= typicality score (LogDice) of the lemma
- 3) (m) = mainlander; (H)= Hongkonger
- 4) Shared collocates are ranked by the combined frequencies of F(m) and F(H).

In Table 1, the verbs “patterning more strongly with *mainlander*” are more likely to have the lemma *mainlander* as object (e.g., *allow mainlanders, arrest mainlanders*). The verbs “patterning more strongly with *Hongkonger*” are more likely to have the lemma *Hongkonger* as object (e.g., *urge Hongkongers, Hongkongers are killed*). The “shared” verbs pattern with both *mainlander* and *Hongkonger*, with no significant difference in saliency (e.g., *include mainlanders/Hongkongers, help mainlanders/Hongkongers*).

In the next step of analysis, which is an analysis of the collocates’ context of use, we focused primarily on the collocates patterning more strongly with *mainlander* and *Hongkonger*, respectively, rather than the shared collocates, as the central concern of this study is to identify differences in the representation of Hongkongers and mainlanders. We probed into the concordance lines of the collocates in search for their meaning. Where necessary, we read the whole news articles in which the collocates are used. For example, we found through textual analysis that the collocation *pregnant mainlander* is almost always used to describe mainland mothers who come to give birth in Hong Kong’s hospitals. Our analysis pointed to several topoi that are frequently associated with the lemmas *mainlander* and *Hongkonger*, which will be shown in the following results section. Topos/Topoi, according to Wodak (2001: 74), “can be described as parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or

inferable premises” (Wodak, 2001: 74). Put another way, they can be characterized as stereotypical or ready-made characterizations.

5 Results

Before looking at the collocational behavior of *mainlander* and *Hongkonger*, it is worth noting that in the grammatical relation “X and/or Y” (e.g. *mainlanders and foreigners*), the two lemmas themselves are found to be the most frequent collocates of each other. Table 2 shows the noun collocates ($F \geq 10$) in the string *mainlander/Hongkongers and/or + Noun*.

Table 2 *mainlander/Hongkongers and/or + Noun* ($F \geq 10$)

Mainlander and/or...	Hongkonger and/or...
<i>Hongkonger</i> (262)	<i>mainlander</i> (262)
<i>(Hong Kong) resident</i> (70)	<i>(mainland) tourist</i> (48)
<i>(Hong Kong) local</i> (66)	<i>(mainland) visitor</i> (43)
<i>(Hong Kong) people</i> (59)	<i>(mainland) people</i> (41)
<i>(Hong Kong) man</i> (40)	<i>government</i> (32)
<i>foreigner</i> (51)	<i>Beijing</i> (26)
<i>Taiwanese</i> (26)	<i>foreigner</i> (21)
<i>(Hong Kong) woman</i> (17)	<i>(mainland) Chinese</i> (19)
<i>expatriate</i> (14)	<i>Singaporean</i> (16)
<i>(Hong Kong) citizen</i> (13)	<i>(mainland) woman</i> (12)
	<i>(mainland) man</i> (10)

As can be seen from Table 2, in the string “X and/or Y”, the lemma *mainlander* collocates most strongly with nouns referring to Hongkongers, as in *mainlanders and Hongkongers/Hong Kong residents/locals/Hong Kong people*. Similarly, the lemma *Hongkonger* is used most frequently with nouns referring to mainlanders, as in *Hongkongers and mainlanders/mainland tourists/mainland visitors /mainland people*. This indicates that in the SCMP, the identity of the two groups is constructed in close relation to each other. The constant contrasts made between mainlanders and Hongkongers, in fact, show the inseparable link between the two, as will be further demonstrated in the rest of this section.

As mentioned in the previous section, the lemmas *mainlander/Hongkonger* are found to be most frequently used in four types of grammatical relations: 1) verbs with *mainlander/Hongkonger* as object, 2) verbs with *mainlander/Hongkonger* as subject, 3) modifiers/adjective predicates of *mainlander/Hongkonger*, and 4) *mainlander/*

Hongkonger patterning with nouns in prepositional phrases (... *off/for/from/by/against/on mainlander/Hongkonger*) and possessive structures (*mainlander/Hongkonger's* ...). Due to space limitations, we present in Table 3 an overview of the collocates patterning with *mainlander* and *Hongkonger* and with frequencies over 20. In the data analysis, we may refer to collocates with frequencies less than 20 but greater than 5. A complete list of collocates ($F \geq 5$) of *mainlander* and *Hongkonger* is provided in the Appendix.

Table 3 Collocates of *mainlander/Hongkonger* ($F \geq 20$)

Verbs with X as object				Verbs with X as subject			
mainlander	F	Hongkonger	F	mainlander	F	Hongkonger	F
allow	477	urge	191	visit	280	think	99
arrest	217	<i>kill</i>	102	<u>come</u>	214	love	72
jail	49	ask	90	<i>buy</i>	185	support	50
<u>hire</u>	41	concern	55	account	90	<i>eat</i>	30
<u>recruit</u>	35	know	51	<u>arrive</u>	76	<u>donate</u>	26
stop	32	remind	48	<u>claim</u>	61	<i>throw</i>	24
prevent	30	<i>strand</i>	42	<u>flock</u>	44	expect	22
charge	28	survey	37	<i>trade</i>	42	care	20
smuggle	27	poll	34	<u>enter</u>	41	sign	20
bar	26	advise	31	<i>invest</i>	37	struggle	20
suspect	20	worry	25	commit	33	understand	20
<u>admit</u>	20	interview	23	<u>settle</u>	32		
		<i>injury</i>	23	<i>drive</i>	24		
		inspire	22	overstay	20		
		satisfy	22	<i>snap</i>	20		
		benefit	20				
Modifiers/Adjective predicates of X				Noun collocates of X (X's ...; ... <i>off/for/from/by/against/on X</i>)			
mainlander	F	Hongkonger	F	mainlander	F	Hongkonger	F
<i>wealthy</i>	196	aware	40	<u>influx</u>	163	majority	100
<u>pregnant</u>	192	happy	34	<u>million</u>	141	<i>life</i>	65
<i>rich</i>	140	<i>dead</i>	28	restriction	53	half	50
<i>affluent</i>	58	<u>native</u>	28	<u>scheme</u>	39	view	44
<u>former</u>	42	<u>typical</u>	28	<u>quota</u>	26	concern	34
<u>talented</u>	36	<i>old</i>	27	discrimination	23	heart	30
<u>eligible</u>	34	proud	26	<i>spending</i>	21	mind	29
<u>individual</u>	27	<u>true</u>	26	<u>flood</u>	20	third	29
<i>cash-rich</i>	21	<u>local</u>	25			attitude	25
		<u>overseas</u>	20			confidence	24
						<i>death</i>	24
						two-third	24
						freedom	23
						love	21
						awareness	20
						<u>identity</u>	20
						<u>memory</u>	20
						<u>sense</u>	20

As revealed by the concordance analysis of the collocates of *mainlander* and *Hongkonger*, several topoi appeared to be frequently associated with the two lemmas, which are shown in Table 3.

Topoi about mainlanders

- 1) Mainlanders as a threat (**boldface**)
- 2) Mainlanders as an influx (underlined)
- 3) Mainlanders as the newly rich (*italics*)

Topoi about Hongkongers

- 1) Hongkongers as the appraiser (**boldface**)
- 2) Hongkongers as having a unique identity (underlined),
- 3) Hongkongers' health/safety/life (*italics*)
- 4) Hongkongers having the moral high ground (enclosed)

The topoi offer evidence of the “us versus them” mindset constructed in the SCMP in post-1997 Hong Kong. The rest of the results section analyzes each topoi listed above with more examples, starting from the representation of mainlanders as “them” in the SCMP.

Them

Mainlanders as a threat

One of the most salient topoi relating to the representation of Chinese mainland people in the SCMP is “mainlanders as a threat”, which foregrounds problems brought by mainland immigrants and visitors to Hong Kong and to other regions around the world, such as *the issue of mainlanders settling in Hong Kong*, *the problem of mainlanders committing crimes in Hong Kong*, and *authorities in Seattle arrested 12 mainlanders*. Most notably, in the grammatical relation “verbs with *X* as object”, many actions of mainlanders highlight their illegality (see underlined words in Table 4). By contrast, the lemma *Hongkonger* seldom serves as the actor of unlawful or criminal actions, but Hongkongers are more often represented as victims of crimes/violence, as in *Hongkongers are killed/hurt/injured/shot/duped* (see double underlined words in Table 4).

Table 4 Verbs collocates of *mainlander/Hongkonger*

Verbs with <i>mainlander</i> as object	Verbs with <i>Hongkonger</i> as object
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<p><i>allow, arrest, jail, hire, recruit, stop, prevent, charge, smuggle, bar, suspect, admit, deter, restrict, blame, beat, employ, pay, discourage, permit, appoint, hate, sentence, accept, defeat, import, push, regard, view, seize</i></p>	<p><i>urge, kill, ask, concern, know, remind, strand, survey, poll, advise, worry, interview, injure, inspire, satisfy, benefit, deprive, deny, reassure, unite, dissatisfy, face, disappoint, assure, shoot, cause, dupe, thank, shock, join, anger, pick, praise, understand, diagnose, place, expose, betray, criticise, owe, challenge, consult, hurt, promise</i></p>
<p>Verbs with <i>mainlander</i> as subject</p> <p><i>visit, come, buy, account, arrive, claim, flock, trade, enter, invest, commit, settle, drive, overstay, snap, flood, dominate, represent, hit, obtain, carry, push, catch, purchase, shun, bring, sneak, shop, manage, refuse, send, beat, save, swamp, board, qualify, shift, steal, contribute, pass, replace</i></p>	<p>Verbs with <i>Hongkonger</i> as subject</p> <p><i>think, love, support, eat, donate, throw, expect, care, struggle, understand, sign, die, welcome, oppose, fear, realise, experience, deserve, age, elect, develop, identify, protest, speak, appreciate, celebrate, wear, endure, ignore, raise, live, produce, remember, treat, value, cherish, treasure, wake, adopt, back, recognise, worry, report, generate, retire, vote, stand, agree, urge, avoid, depend, dump, marry, queue, read, register, survive, voice, reject, write, acquire, adapt, breathe, cast, hate, intend, participate, place, relocate, rely, score, wave, argue, demand, describe, reflect, talk</i></p>

Notes:

In Tables 4-9:

- 1) Lemmas are ordered by frequency;
- 2) Due to space limitations, word frequencies are not shown in Tables 4-9. Readers may refer to the Appendix for the frequencies and typicality scores (LogDice) of the lemmas;
- 3) Lemmas of 20+ frequency are highlighted in bold.

As shown in Table 4, compared with Hongkongers, mainlanders are more often represented as subjected to actions of the criminal justice system (*arrest, jail, seize, sentence, charge, suspect*), actions showing prevention or denial (*ban, bar, curb, deter, prevent, stop, restrict, discourage*), actions showing negative attitudes towards mainlanders (*blame, hate*), and actions implying mainlanders' illegal status (*smuggle*). Many of those verbs collocate exclusively with *mainlander* and not with *Hongkonger*, such as *charge, sentence, seize, deter, restrict, blame, hate, and smuggle*. In addition, in the grammatical relation “verbs with *X* as subject”, the lemma *mainlander* collocates more strongly with actions of a criminal nature, such as *mainlanders commit/steal*. Hongkongers, by comparison, are frequently shown to fall victim to crimes committed by mainlanders. The following extracts demonstrate the typical ways in which the SCMP frames the threat associated with mainland migrants (Extract 1), mainland visitors (Extract 2), and mainlanders in general (Extract 3). Other differences that can

be observed from Table 4 (e.g. *Hongkonger* serves more often as the subject of mental and verbal activities) will be discussed later in this paper.

Extract 1

10 Illegal Mainlanders Held

A complaint by a security guard led police to **arrest 10 mainlanders whose travel documents had expired**. The five men and five women were rounded up in a flat in Shau Kei Wan Main Street East at about 12.20am. (2007-09-19)

Extract 2

The arrest, according to police sources, **is typical of many around Hong Kong** in recent weeks and, in their view, highlights **the danger** surrounding the government's decision to allow more and more mainlanders to cross the border. "We don't have time to do scientific analysis but from the reports we see every day, and from court appearances of those arrested persons, we think that **this increase in crime is linked to the change of the travelling policy**," Chief Inspector Liu said. (2003-10-26)

Extract 3

An audacious gang of thieves who allegedly used an innocent-looking young girl to steal a HK\$36 million diamond necklace from a jewellery store display cabinet has left police grappling with a probe involving a child. The Dickensian-style robbery **has shocked some Hongkongers**, although **the use of children to commit crime is not uncommon on the mainland**. (2015-01-25)

As shown in Extracts 1-3, in the corpus, the "threat collocations" were mainly used to describe mainland migrants or tourists who committed crimes in Hong Kong, including illegal work, prostitution, scam, theft, burglary, robbery, kidnapping, homicide, smuggling, begging, and bad tourist behavior. Extract 1 is taken from a news article entitled "10 Illegal Mainlanders Held", which describes the arrest of mainland migrants who overstayed their visas. As shown in Extract 1, in the SCMP, mainland people who enter or work in Hong Kong illegally are sometimes labelled *illegal mainlanders*. Other similar labels include *illegal mainland immigrants*, *illegal Chinese immigrants*, and *illegal mainland workers*. Although expressions such as "illegal immigrants" can be found in today's public discourse (Hoops and Braitman, 2019), it is not commonplace that the word *illegal* was used to directly modify demonyms, i.e., words identifying people from a particular place, as in the phrase *illegal mainlanders*. In fact, many have argued that the term *illegal immigrants* is inappropriate as no human being is illegal, only their actions are (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Hoops and Braitman, 2019). In this sense, the label *illegal mainlanders* seems also inappropriate, as it delegitimizes not only those involved in illegal activities, but the whole group of people, i.e., the mainlanders.

In addition to highlighting the illegality of mainland migrants, the SCMP also frequently describes mainlanders who visit Hong Kong as tourists as linked to “danger” and “increase in crime”. Extract 2 is quoted from a news article published shortly after the introduction of the Individual Visit Scheme in Hong Kong in 2003, which, as mentioned previously in this paper, has brought millions of mainland tourists to the city annually. In Extract 2, the arrest of a mainland tourist for alleged robbery is described as “typical” of “many” cases around Hong Kong after the adoption of the Scheme, which is believed to “[highlight] the danger surrounding the government’s decision to allow more and more mainlanders to cross the border”. In Extract 3, the “more mainlanders means more crime” stereotype is further reinforced, as a criminal case involving the use of children to commit crime is described as having “shocked some Hongkongers”, but “not uncommon on the mainland”. In addition to foregrounding danger brought by mainlanders to Hong Kong, the SCMP also frequently reports crackdown on mainland immigrants attempting to enter other countries illegally, and crimes committed by mainland tourists when they travel abroad. By frequently associating mainlanders with unlawful behavior or even directly labelling them as “illegal”, the SCMP constructs an image of Chinese mainland people as being especially prone to crime and posing serious threat to Hong Kong.

Mainlanders as floods

Given the increasingly more convenient transportation between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong after 1997, it is not surprising that *mainlander* frequently patterns with words describing their visit to Hong Kong (*arrival, arrive, come, enter, entry, settle, visit*) and the relevant travel policy (*application, eligible, procedure, qualify, quota, requirement, scheme, system, visa*). However, the SCMP also foregrounds actions of mainland migrants who either enter Hong Kong illegally (*sneak, smuggle, overstay, enter/settle illegally*) or via taking advantage of the immigration system (*child, expectant, pregnant*). In the representation of mainland migrants and visitors, a topos emerges as salient: their number. Of the collocates relating to travel and migration, many involve some forms of quantification, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Collocates of *mainlander* related to travel and migration

<p>Entry (general) <i>visit(v), come, arrive, enter, settle, entry, visit(n), arrival</i></p>
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Policy and Application

restriction, claim, quota, scheme, talented, eligible, admit, application, visa, obtain, permit(n), permit(v), rule, arrangement, accept, procedure, requirement, import, policy, system, qualify, skilled

Quantity

influx, million, flock, flood (n), flood (v), flow, crowd, horde, swamp, gang, inflow

Illegality and Abuse of system

pregnant, smuggle, overstay, sneak, illegal, child, expectant, smuggling

As can be seen from Table 5, water-based metaphors, such as *flood/flow/inflow/influx of mainlanders* and *swamped by mainlanders* were often employed by the SCMP to describe mainland migrants and visitors. Other emotionally charged quantity collocations include *gangs/hordes/crowds of mainlanders*. Previous studies have shown that the representation of immigrants as floods may give rise to negative perception of the group, as the metaphor compares immigrants to a natural disaster which is chaotic, overwhelming, abnormal and therefore must be stopped (Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Strom and Alcock, 2017; Wodak and Reisigl, 2000). Our analysis of the SCMP corpus also suggests that the “quantity collocations” often carry negative connotations. Some representative examples are given below:

Extract 4

The SAR government has only limited resources. [...] when **large numbers of mainlanders come here and act impolitely, it disrupts our otherwise disciplined society**. If the administration does not **control the influx of mainlanders, our limited resources could all be used up**. (2012-03-13)

Extract 5

The **large numbers of mainlanders coming here are causing problems for Hong Kong citizens**. Their presence has caused some **public anger**. **The city cannot cope with such large numbers anymore**. (2012-10-16)

Extract 6

Nearly 4,000 Hong Kong residents migrated elsewhere in the first half this year – an increase of 8.3 per cent compared with the same period last year [...] One citizen moving to Canada with her family said **she no longer saw Hong Kong as her home with so many mainlanders coming to live**. (2013-08-17)

As shown in Extracts 4-6, quantity collocations are used to emphasize the considerable extent of “problems” that mainland migrants and visitors may cause. Extract 4 indicates that the “large numbers of mainlanders” who “come here and act impolitely” will

“[disrupt] our otherwise disciplined society” and deplete “our limited resources” if they are not controlled. In Extract 5, the “large numbers of mainlanders” is represented as “causing problems for Hong Kong citizens” and “[causing] public anger”, as the city “cannot cope with such large numbers anymore”. In Extract 6, the reason why Hong Kong residents immigrate elsewhere is attributed to the invasion of mainlanders into the local communities, to the extent that Hongkongers “no longer saw Hong Kong as [their] home with so many mainlanders coming to live”. The topos “mainlanders as floods” revealed in these examples does not simply describe the spatial proximation of mainland visitors and migrants, but mainlanders are represented as a problematic, overwhelming and alien “the other”, who not only bring social burden, but also encroach upon “our” cultural identity and make Hong Kong no longer “our home”. By representing mainlanders as dangerous floods, the SCMP legitimizes the view that their arrival should be stopped. This can be evidenced by the collocational behavior of the string *influx of mainlanders*, which is one of the most frequently used n-grams containing *mainlander* (F=163). Almost all actions with *influx of mainlanders* as the subject signal resistance to the group, such as *curb/stem/halt/fear/control/tackle/stop/slow/prevent/handle the influx of mainlanders*.

Mainlanders as the newly rich

Another central topos emerging from the data is “mainlanders as the newly rich”. Although in the 1990s mainlanders were still viewed as “poor relatives” (Ma and Fung, 1999), in recent years, with China growing into the world’s second largest economy, millions of mainlanders visited Hong Kong for shopping and investment. This may explain why a large number of collocates of *mainlander* are about activities of mainland shoppers and investors, such as *mainlanders buy/invest/purchase/shop/snap up/trade, the affluence/spending power/ wealth of mainlanders, and investment/purchase/spending/trading by mainlanders*. It is especially worth noting that in the grammatical relation “modifiers of X”, of the modifiers of *mainlander*, many are used to describe their wealth (see underlined words in Table 6).

Table 6 Modifiers of *mainlander*

wealthy, pregnant, rich, affluent, former, talented, individual, cash-rich, urban, cashed-up, big-spending, well-off, rural, illegal, top, expectant, well-to-do, skilled

As can be seen from Table 6, compared with Hongkongers, mainlanders are more often described by their wealth as shoppers or investors (*affluent, big-spending, cashed-up, cash-rich, rich, wealthy, well-off, well-to-do*) and their eligibility as migrants (*expectant, former, illegal, pregnant, skilled, talented*). It is worth noting that the “wealth collocations” foreground mainlanders’ cultural values and personal attributes as much as their spending power, as shown by Extracts 7-9:

Extract 7

Owning a large, white, luxury yacht, or a “gin palace” as they are known colloquially, to entertain friends and **show off one’s wealth has become de rigueur among wealthy mainlanders - even if they do not know their heads (marine toilets) from their “tales” (ribbons that indicate sail trim).**

Extract 8

Controversial Bulgarian artist Christo once famously said: “All works of art are good for nothing, except to be works of art.” **Tell that to the growing ranks of rich mainlanders who see art as an investment, and a status symbol.** [...] “The highest bidders are always **the locals** because **they can best identify with and relate to the art.**” (2010-09-20)

Extract 9

One of the oldest private clubs in Hong Kong will be putting on classes for dining etiquette for its members. **I wonder why it is necessary now. In a civilised society, the ability to spend money is always expected to be coupled with good social etiquette.** (2012-02-02)

Extract 7 describes “wealthy mainlanders” as keen to “show off one’s wealth” with luxury goods, even though they have little knowledge of what they buy (“they do not know their heads from their ‘tales’”). As shown by Extract 7, in the SCMP, rich mainlanders are very often represented as people who acquire “sudden wealth” but lack the necessary cultural sophistication. The corpus contains many descriptions of wealthy mainlanders “flaunting it” in a somewhat funny manner, such as wearing designer sunglasses “with the price tags still dangling”, buying works of art they do not understand only to “impress people”, and their obsession with ostentatious limousines just because “it’s more extravagant, like you are the president of the United States”. The rich mainlanders who believe money can buy sophistication and social status are often contrasted with the genuinely sophisticated Hongkongers, who, as shown in Extract 8, display more omnivorous cultural tastes than the former (“rich mainlanders

who see art as an investment, and a status symbol [...] the highest bidders are always the locals because they can best identify with and relate to the art”). Similarly, in Extract 9, rich mainlanders are criticized for lacking “good social etiquette” required in “a civilized society” such as Hong Kong. The topos “mainlanders as the newly rich” shows that mainlanders who are no longer “poor relatives” are continued to be evaluated in a negative manner in the SCMP for lacking culture sophistication and social etiquette. In this way, the perceived cultural gap between “them” and “us” is reinforced.

Us

Hongkongers as the appraiser

The most central topos about Hongkongers is “Hongkongers as the appraiser”. As shown in Table 7, an overwhelming number of collocates of *Hongkonger* are used to describe their attitudes (e.g., *happy, love, support, care, satisfaction, concern, worry, anger*) and their mental and verbal activities in general (e.g., *think, view, voice, opinion, expect, wish, understand, aware*). By contrast, no collocate of *mainlander* is used to show mainlanders’ stance, except for *mainlanders refuse*. In fact, *mainlander* serves more often as the object of evaluation, as in *blame/hate/regard/view mainlanders*. This marked difference in the collocational behavior of *Hongkonger* and *mainlander* suggests that in the SCMP, Hongkongers are more often represented as appraisers who make an evaluation or judgment of other entities, and mainland visitors/migrants are typically the appraisees to be evaluated, with their own voice seldom reported.

Table 7 Collocates of *Hongkonger/mainlander* related to their stance

<i>Hongkonger's stance</i>	<i>Mainlander's stance</i>
+Attitude <i>love(v), support(v), support(n), proud, happy, confidence, aspiration, inspire, satisfy, love(n), care, need, trust, welcome, reassure, desire, appreciate, celebrate, assure, satisfaction, value(v), back(v), cherish, treasure, agree, determined, obsessed, enthusiasm, passion, penchant</i>	+Attitude NA
-Attitude <i>concern(n), concern(v), worry, struggle, fear(v), oppose, dissatisfy, protest, angry, disappoint, afraid, endure, fear(n), ignore, shock, anger, pessimistic, split, stressed, avoid, discontent, opposed, reject, complaint, divided, hate</i>	-Attitude <i>refuse</i>
General (mental and verbal) <i>think, view(n), aware, heart, attitude, memory, survey, awareness, mind, interview, expect, sense, sign (up for), understand, realise, sentiment, resonate (with), voice (n), develop (attitude/taste), elect, speak, opinion, perception, remember, treat, recognize, report, expectation, stand, unaware, urge, vote, wish, voice(v), argue, cast (a vote), call, demand, describe, feeling, intend, inquiry, poll, reflect, sensitive, talk, understanding</i>	General (mental and verbal) NA

It was found that the “stance collocations” of *Hongkonger* are most often used for depicting their attitudes towards government policy (e.g., *Hongkongers have voiced their opinions/demand/concerns with the government*), social issues (e.g., *Hongkongers worry about the economy/inflation/climate change*), their preferred life style (e.g., *Hongkongers love travelling around/keeping pets/to enjoy life*), and their values (e.g., *Hongkongers cherish freedom/the right to privacy*). By describing Hongkongers’ shared sentiments, aspirations and concerns, the SCMP underlines attitudinal similarities among “us” and reinforces the solidarity of the group. It is worth noting that when Hongkongers serve as the appraiser, they are nearly always represented as holding negative or even hostile attitudes towards mainlanders, as shown in Extracts 10-12.

Extract 10

Hongkongers have this generally negative perception of a nation of people who speak loudly and spit in public. (2012-03-24)

Extract 11

Many Hongkongers have voiced their objections to the scheme in the past few weeks, **fearing** an increased danger on the city’s roads if mainland drivers are allowed into the

city. They are also **worried** that more pregnant mainland women would be driven here to give birth without registering with hospitals. (2012-03-10)

Extract 12

Unfortunately, **many Hongkongers think of** inconsiderate mainlanders who spit and smoke in public, unscrupulous businesspeople who mix industrial chemicals with food causing deaths and greedy tricksters who cheat tourists in Shenzhen. So **how can people born in Hong Kong proudly consider themselves Chinese?** (2008-11-07)

In Extract 10, Hongkongers are represented as having a “generally negative perception” towards mainlanders who are believed to adopt uncivilized manners (“a nation of people who speak loudly and spit in public”). In Extract 11, mainland tourists brought by the Individual Visit Scheme are represented as triggering “fear” and “worry” on the part of “many Hongkongers”, who “voiced their objections” to the possibility of more visitors. In Extract 12, it is argued that “people born in Hong Kong” will not “proudly consider themselves Chinese”, as “many Hongkongers” perceive mainland people as typically “inconsiderate”, “unscrupulous” and “greedy”. Some other collocations which highlight Hongkongers’ negative stance towards mainlanders are *resentment against mainlanders*, *anti-mainlander demonstration/protests/sentiment*, and *hate/blame mainlanders*. While the SCMP foregrounds Hongkongers’ negative attitudes and feelings towards mainlanders, it opens up much less space for mainlanders, including the mainland migrants who have lived in Hong Kong for many years, to have a voice. This marked difference contributes to the discursive construction of “us” as stance-takers who form a community of shared feelings, and “them” as passive appraisees who evoke mostly unpleasant feelings and are not worth being heard.

Hongkongers as having a unique identity

Another salient topos is “Hongkongers’ as having a unique identity”, which underlines “our” distinctive sense of self, such as *Hongkongers’ identity/sense of belonging*, *the collective memory/spirit/core values of Hongkongers*, and *Hongkongers identify themselves as ...*. It is interesting to note that in the grammatical relation “modifiers of X”, Hongkongers are often described by their uniqueness as a people, as in *a true/real/typical/local/indigenous/proud Hongkonger* (see underlined words in Table 8). By contrast, as we mentioned in the previous subsections, in the same grammatical relation, mainlanders are most frequently described by their wealth and their legitimacy as migrants (e.g., *rich mainlanders*, *illegal mainlanders*, as shown in Table 6).

Table 8 Modifiers of *Hongkonger*

native, typical, old, true, local, overseas, prominent, missing, busy, low-income, real, disabled, middle-aged, proud, adult, fourth-generation, second-generation, ethnic, non-Chinese, adventurous, health-conscious, indigenous, third-generation, well-known, minority

A further concordance analysis of the modifiers listed in Table 8 shows that Hongkongers are not only defined by their connections with Hong Kong through birth (*indigenous/local/native Hongkongers*) and descent (*second-generation/third-generation/fourth-generation/overseas Hongkongers*), but also other more culturally-oriented qualities such as shared personal traits, core values, and a distinctive “Hong Kong” lifestyle, as illustrated by Extracts 13-15:

Extract 13

Mr Cheng is **the very stuff of Hong Kong legend**. He’s got common sense, toughness, determination and a sense of what’s right. Through sheer hard work, talent and ability, he’s overcome enormous challenges and made it to the top. This jovial man with a quiet sense of humour and an easy laugh is **a role model for our society**. He’s **a real Hongkonger**. (2004-12-08)

Extract 14

Like **all true Hongkongers**, he feels the best dim sum is Sunday with the whole family. His favourite item is ha gau (prawn). (2007-08-08)

Extract 15

To categorise people according to race rather than culture is meaningless. [...] Ms Huang, who has spent only two years in Hong Kong, is not [a Hongkonger]. **You simply cannot acquire a culture instantly**. (2006-11-29)

Extract 13 describes what makes a “real Hongkonger”, who is typically characterized by “common sense, toughness, determination and a sense of what’s right” and has the experience of rising above one’s humble origins through “sheer hard work, talent and ability” to achieve success. In the SCMP, the *can-do/indomitable/working spirit of Hongkongers* is often represented as an essential part of the “Hong Kong spirit”, which appears to be a sharp contrast to the “unscrupulous” and “greedy” rich mainlanders who accumulate their wealth through not-so-legitimate ways, and the “lazy” mainland migrants who bring only burden to the city. Extract 14 highlights another aspect of Hongkongers’ identity: their cultural heritage. That is, “all true Hongkongers” are inheritors of the Cantonese tradition of having dim sum (a style of Cantonese cuisine) on Sundays. A related phrase is the *collective memory* of Hongkongers, such as *this*

traditional food/the Mong Kok flower market/Canto-pop is part of our collective memory. The distinctive Hong Kong cultural heritage, associated closely with birth or growth in the city, is represented as something an outsider cannot easily imitate or acquire. For example, in Extract 15, the mainland migrant “Ms Huang” who has “spent only two years in Hong Kong” is considered “not” a genuine Hongkonger, as “you simply cannot acquire a culture instantly”. By underlining Hongkongers’ shared values, distinctive cultural heritage and collective memory, the SCMP accentuates the unique identity of “us”. On the other hand, mainland migrants are represented as holding different values and an alien cultural identity. They are thus excluded from being “true Hongkongers”.

Other topoi about *Hongkonger*

Several other topoi have emerged from our analysis of the collocates of *Hongkonger*, including the following:

- 1) **Hongkongers having the moral high ground**, such as *praise/thank Hongkongers*, *help/donation/assistance from Hongkongers*, and *generosity of Hongkongers*;
- 2) **Hongkongers as being capable**, such as *a prominent/well-known Hongkonger*, and *Hongkongers are good/capable/mature*;
- 3) **Hongkongers’ health/safety**, such as *Hongkongers killed/stranded/injured*, and *the health/safety/well-being of Hongkongers*;
- 4) **Hongkongers’ life**, such as *Hongkongers’ quality/way of life*, *Hongkongers eat*, and *Hongkongers are busy/stressed*.

In terms of the frequency of collocates, the above topoi are not as salient as the topoi “Hongkongers as the appraiser” or “Hongkongers as having a unique identity”. Yet, they show that the SCMP has constructed an overall positive image of Hongkongers. By contrast, mainlanders are associated with topoi that often carry negative connotations (“mainlanders as a threat”, “mainlanders as an influx”, “mainlanders as the newly rich”). The attitudes, lives and health/safety of mainland migrants are consistently under-reported. In addition, compared with Hongkongers, mainlanders in general are seldom portrayed as being helpful or resourceful. Instead, they are more often represented as being less capable and therefore needing help from Hongkongers when the latter are reported as “having the moral high ground” and “being capable”, as shown in Extracts 16-18:

Extract 16

What began as a group of friends **helping out** in flooded Guangxi in 1994 has become a **major charitable foundation for rural mainlanders**. [...] he contacted a few friends and a group of them decided that rather than just coming up with a donation, they would **head to the mainland to give direct help**. (2013-10-07)

Extract 17

Commerce Secretary Greg So Kam-leung yesterday urged Hongkongers to **teach mainlanders manners** instead of pointing accusatory fingers at them. [...] **Hongkongers' good manners were slowly influencing their counterparts from across the border**, he said, and the city should **educate newcomers and persuade them to act in a civilized way**, rather than condemn them for wrongdoing. (2014-04-30)

Extract 18

They want to be more sophisticated, and this is why they want to spend so much time in our shops, Wong says. Actually, **it's an education for them**. (2010-01-04)

Extract 16 describes Hongkongers' generosity in making donations and providing help for "rural mainlanders" in the Chinese mainland who are impoverished or struck by natural disasters ("helping out in flooded Guangxi [...] a major charitable foundation for rural mainlanders. [...] head to the mainland to give direct help"). Extract 17 states that "Hongkongers' good manners were slowly influencing" mainlanders, and that Hongkongers should help "teach mainlanders manners", "educate newcomers", and "persuade them to act in a civilized way". Extract 18 depicts another type of "education": the one that Hong Kong's luxury stores provide for mainland shoppers. It was suggested that the buying experiences in those shops are "an education" for mainlanders who "want to be more sophisticated" by experiencing Hong Kong's modern and westernized fashion culture. In the SCMP, Hongkongers are often represented as people who "help out", "teach", and "educate" the mainlanders, who are less well-off, sophisticated or civilized. These representations often put mainlanders at a lower position and may to some extent contribute to reinforcing the perceived social and cultural differences dividing "them" and "us".

Them versus Us

Lastly, we will briefly look at how the relation between mainlanders and Hongkongers is discursively constructed in the strings *Hongkongers and mainlanders* and *mainlanders and Hongkongers*, which occur frequently in the corpus (combined frequency=217). As noted earlier in this paper, the two lemmas *mainlander* and

Hongkonger are the strongest collocate of each other in the grammatical relation “X and/or Y”. When they are used together in the grammatical relation “X and/or Y”, more than half (54.4%) of the strings highlight conflict between the two groups. Most notably, an overwhelming majority of the strings “Noun + between X and Y” (e.g., *clashes between mainlanders and Hongkongers*) are used to describe tension (see underlined words in Table 9).

Table 9 Noun + *between Hongkongers and mainlanders/mainlanders and Hongkongers*

tension, *conflict*, *relation*, *marriage*, *relationship*, *clash*, *difference*, *dispute*, *argument*, *disagreement*, *ill-feeling*, *war*, *animosity*, *differentiation*, *exchange*, *friction*, *gap*, *row*, *trouble*, *altercation*, *antagonism*, *antipathy*, *chasm*, *competition*, *communication*, *contact*, *disparity*, *discord*, *disharmony*, *division*, *divorce*, *dynamics*, *flashpoint*, *harmony*, *integration*, *issue*, *malaise*, *resemblance*, *rivalry*, *spat*, *union*

The strings “Noun + between X and Y” are most often used to frame the relation between mainlanders and Hongkongers as one involving *tensions* (F=43) and *conflicts* (F=33). Further, the divergence between the two groups is represented as difficult to be reconciled due to their deep-rooted “cultural differences”, as shown in Extracts 19-21:

Extract 19

Be ready for more disharmony between Hongkongers and mainlanders, because the **cultural differences will get deeper**. (2013-02-09)

Extract 20

Although most Hongkongers and mainlanders were ethnically the same, both groups **identified with different values**. (2016-11-12)

Extract 21

The **fundamental values of Hongkongers and mainlanders are different**. (2018-11-30)

Extract 19 highlights that there will be “more disharmony between Hongkongers and mainlanders” as the two groups’ cultural differences “will get deeper” as they come into more contact with each other. Extracts 20 and 21 show that, although Hongkongers and mainlanders “were ethnically the same”, they are different in terms of their “fundamental values”. By repeatedly constructing the relation between Hongkongers and mainlanders as one that is primarily strained and troubled, and by describing the cultural, social and ideological differences between the two groups as substantial and irreconcilable, the SCMP underlines the perceived gap between “them” and “us”.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of the collocational behavior of the lemmas *Hongkonger* and *mainlander* has shed some light on the way the two groups are represented by the SCMP in post-1997 Hong Kong. Mainlanders are typically described as violent, dangerous, rude, and lacking cultural sophistication. They are represented as often arriving via illegal means and in great numbers, posing considerable threat to the Hong Kong people and imposing a heavy burden on the local community. They are shown to be the cultural “other” who will eventually “mainlandize” the local way of life, make Hong Kong “no longer *Our* home”, and endanger the identity of Hongkongers. By contrast, the SCMP’s discursive representation of Hongkongers focuses on their positive attributes, solidarity, and uniqueness. In particular, the SCMP seems to have made “being a Hongkonger” synonymous with “being anti-mainlander”, as Hongkongers are nearly always reported as holding negative or even hostile attitudes towards mainlanders. In addition, the unique Hong Kong identity is shown to be exclusive of any mainland origin, as the local cultural values are described as something the mainland migrants are unable to acquire, even though they have lived in Hong Kong for years. To sum up, the SCMP’s representations of mainlanders and Hongkongers accentuate the perceived differences and conflicts between the two groups. Through the negative “them” and positive “us” representations, the SCMP legitimizes the view that mainlanders are dangerous and unwelcomed outsiders, and that Hongkongers’ identity must exclude any mainland cultural traits.

As shown in our discussion of Hong Kong’s history in Section 2 of this paper, the reason why mainlanders are perceived negatively can be explained by historical factors such as Hong Kong’s economic restructuring in the 1970s and 1980s, the income gap and the different levels of education that were between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong. In post-1997 Hong Kong, however, many of the differences between the two groups appear to have been diminishing, and the SCMP representations do not truly reflect the reality but simply reinforce certain outdated stereotypes. As our analysis shows, one of the most salient topoi relating to the representation of Chinese mainland people in the SCMP is “mainlanders as a threat”, which associates mainlanders with crimes and violence. The crime rate of mainlanders in post-1997 Hong Kong has been

consistently low and kept dropping (Hong Kong Police Force, n.d.). In 2018, the overall crime rate per 100,000 populations in Hong Kong was 728, while that for mainland visitors in Hong Kong was 3.2, and that for other visitors in Hong Kong was 13.3 (Hong Kong Police Force, n.d.). The demographic profile of mainland migrants who arrived after the handover has also been different from the stereotypes constructed by the SCMP. As we have mentioned in Section 2 of this paper, in post-1997 Hong Kong, almost 98% per cent of the 55,000 mainland migrants annually are those who migrated for purposes of family reunion (Choi and Fong, 2017). In addition to those people, Hong Kong has admitted another batch of around 10,000 mainland talent and professionals annually, who are often senior managers, skilled professionals, and technological talent, with high educational attainments and high incomes (The Government of Hong Kong, 2019). Ironically, in the first two decades after the handover, mainland migrants have continued to be portrayed in the SCMP as less civilized and violent. When racial difference is absent, the differentiation between Hongkongers and mainlanders in the SCMP appears to have been largely based on exaggerated cultural differences.

To conclude, our analysis of the use of the lemmas *mainlander* and *Hongkonger* in the SCMP has revealed the discriminatory news discourse directed towards mainlanders and the inseparable link between the construction of Hongkongers' identity and the "othering" of mainlanders. We argue that the discriminatory discourse found in the SCMP may have a significant influence on how ordinary mainland migrants and visitors are perceived in Hong Kong, as the SCMP has been widely regarded as Hong Kong's newspaper of record and the newspaper with the highest credibility (Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey, 2019). It was also worth pointing out that although the SCMP was founded by Australian-born anti-Qing dynasty revolutionary Tse Tsan-tai and British journalist Alfred Cunningham, it was purchased by the Alibaba Group, a mainland company. The shift of ownership did not lead to a shift in the newspapers' attitude towards mainlanders, which seems to suggest that the prejudice against mainlanders has been persistent in Hong Kong's press. While there is absolutely nothing wrong in articulating the local Hong Kong identity, we call for more attention to the detrimental impact of the deep-rooted media prejudice in leading to deepening social division in post-1997 Hong Kong. Finally, we would like to note that although the labels "mainlander" and "Hongkonger" are frequently used by Hong Kong's media, there have never been any clear criteria for distinguishing between Hongkongers and

mainland migrants. For instance, in a recent identity survey (Ng, 2015), 12.1% of the 1,038 participants, who were all mainlanders who had lived in Hong Kong for about four years, identified themselves as Hongkongers. In another survey carried out by the University of Hong Kong (2019), 35.8% of the Hong Kong residents who were surveyed considered themselves of having a mixed identity. None of the demographic factors, such as the place of birth, duration/status of residency, use of language, educational or other backgrounds, could be used to truly separate the so-called “mainlanders” and “Hongkongers”. It is, therefore, impossible to identify who are the self-identified Hongkongers in the SCMP news articles. The identity, “mainlander” or “Hongkonger”, is more at the individual level, and the “mainlanders” portrayed in these news articles are therefore somewhat delusional.

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Appendix: Collocates (F≥5) of *mainlander/Hongkonger*

- 4) Tables on the left show the lemmas (F≥5) cooccurring more frequently with the lemma *mainlander* no less than two typicality points ahead of *Hongkonger*;
- 5) Tables on the right show the lemmas (F≥5) cooccurring more frequently with the lemma *Hongkonger* no less than two typicality points ahead of *mainlander*;
- 6) F= total frequency of the lemma
- 7) TS= typicality score (LogDice) of the lemma

Verb with *mainlander/Hongkonger* as object *mainlander*:

Collocate	F	TS
allow	477	10.5
arrest	217	9.9
jail	49	8.2
hire	41	7.8
recruit	35	7.7
stop	32	7.4
prevent	30	7.3
charge	28	7.3
smuggle	27	7.4
bar	26	7.4
suspect	20	7.0
admit	20	6.9
deter	19	6.9
restrict	18	6.8
blame	18	6.7
beat	14	6.3
employ	13	6.3
pay	12	5.4
discourage	11	6.2
permit	10	6.0
appoint	9	5.8
hate	8	5.7
sentence	8	5.7
accept	8	5.4
defeat	7	5.5
import	7	5.3
push	7	5.3
regard	7	5.3
view	6	5.2
seize	6	5.1

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
urge	191	9.5
kill	102	8.8
ask	90	8.3
concern	55	7.8
know	51	7.5
remind	48	7.9
strand	42	7.8
survey	37	7.5
poll	34	7.4
advise	31	7.2
worry	25	6.9
interview	23	6.8
injure	23	6.3
inspire	22	6.8
satisfy	22	6.8
benefit	20	6.6
deprive	18	6.5
deny	16	6.2
reassure	15	6.3
unite	15	6.3
dissatisfy	13	6.1
face	13	5.4
disappoint	12	6.0
assure	11	5.8
shoot	11	5.8
cause	11	5.4
dupe	10	5.7
thank	10	5.7
shock	9	5.5
join	9	5.0
anger	8	5.4
pick	8	5.3
praise	8	5.3
understand	8	5.1
diagnose	7	5.2
place	7	5.2
expose	7	5.1
betray	6	5.0
criticise	6	5.0
owe	6	5.0

challenge	6	4.9
consult	6	4.9
hurt	6	4.9
promise	6	4.9

**Verb with mainlander/Hongkonger as subject
mainlander:**

Collocate	F	TS
visit	280	9.8
come	214	8.8
buy	185	9.3
account	90	8.4
arrive	76	7.6
claim	61	7.7
flock	44	7.2
trade	42	7.4
enter	41	7.3
invest	37	7.2
commit	33	7.0
settle	32	6.7
drive	24	6.5
overstay	20	6.7
snap	20	6.3
flood	15	5.9
dominate	14	5.8
represent	14	5.7
hit	14	5.6
obtain	13	5.7
carry	13	5.6
push	13	5.6
catch	12	5.5
purchase	11	5.5
shun	11	5.5
bring	11	5.3
sneak	10	5.3
shop	8	5.0
manage	8	4.9
refuse	8	4.9
send	8	4.9
beat	7	4.8
save	7	4.8
swamp	7	4.8
board	6	4.6
qualify	6	4.6
shift	6	4.6
steal	6	4.6
contribute	6	4.5
pass	6	4.5
replace	6	4.5

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
think	99	8.0
love	72	7.7
support	50	7.1
eat	30	6.5
donate	26	6.3
throw	24	6.2
expect	22	5.9
care	20	5.9
struggle	20	5.9
understand	20	5.9
sign	20	5.8
die	18	6.5
welcome	18	5.7
oppose	17	5.7
fear	17	5.6
realise	17	5.6
experience	16	5.6
deserve	15	5.5
age	14	5.4
elect	14	5.4
develop	14	5.3
identify	13	5.3
protest	13	5.3
speak	13	5.2
appreciate	12	5.2
celebrate	12	5.2
wear	12	5.1
endure	11	5.1
ignore	11	5.0
raise	11	4.9
live	10	8.3
produce	10	4.9
remember	10	4.9
treat	10	4.9
value	10	4.9
cherish	9	4.8
treasure	9	4.8
wake	9	4.8
adopt	9	4.7
back	9	4.7
recognise	9	4.7
worry	9	4.7

report	9	4.5
generate	8	4.6
retire	8	4.6
vote	8	4.6
stand	8	4.5
agree	8	4.4
urge	8	4.4
avoid	7	4.4
depend	7	4.4
dump	7	4.4
marry	7	4.4
queue	7	4.4
read	7	4.4
register	7	4.4
survive	7	4.4
voice	7	4.4
reject	7	4.3
write	7	4.3
acquire	6	4.2
adapt	6	4.2
breathe	6	4.2
cast	6	4.2
hate	6	4.2
intend	6	4.2
participate	6	4.2
place	6	4.2
relocate	6	4.2
rely	6	4.2
score	6	4.2
wave	6	4.2
argue	6	4.1
demand	6	4.1
describe	6	4.1
reflect	6	4.1
talk	6	4.1

Verb + with *mainlander/Hongkonger*
mainlander:

Collocate	F	TS
compete	6	8.7
compare	6	6.9

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
resonate	15	10.9
chord	15	10.8
work	6	7.4

Adjective predicate of *mainlander/Hongkonger*
mainlander:

Collocate	F	TS
eligible	34	10.9

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
aware	40	9.9

happy	34	9.7
dead	28	9.7
proud	26	9.7
busy	15	8.8
angry	12	8.6
afraid	11	8.4
good	10	7.2
spoiled	10	5.7
pragmatic	9	8.3
accustomed	9	5.6
overweight	9	8.2
patriotic	8	8.1
pessimistic	8	8.1
unaware	8	8.0
unable	8	7.7
obsessed	8	5.4
split	8	5.4
determined	8	5.3
stressed	8	5.3
selfish	7	7.9
mature	7	7.8
capable	7	7.7
open	7	7.3
renowned	7	5.2
opposed	7	5.1
hungry	6	7.6
sensitive	6	7.6
divided	6	4.9

**Modifier of mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:**

Collocate	F	TS
wealthy	196	10.3
pregnant	192	10.4
rich	140	9.8
affluent	58	8.7
former	42	7.3
talented	36	8.1
individual	27	7.2
cash-rich	21	7.4
urban	17	6.7
cached-up	16	7.0
big-spending	12	6.3
well-off	9	6.1
rural	9	5.8
illegal	8	5.3
top	7	4.8
expectant	6	5.6
well-to-do	6	5.6
skilled	6	5.5

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
native	28	7.0
typical	28	6.6
old	27	6.4
true	26	6.8
local	25	5.4
overseas	20	6.0
prominent	19	6.4
missing	19	5.4
busy	17	6.2
low-income	13	5.9
real	13	5.4
disabled	11	5.6
middle-aged	11	5.6
proud	10	5.5
adult	9	5.4
fourth-generation	9	5.4

second-generation	9	5.4
ethnic	8	5.0
non-Chinese	7	5.0
adventurous	6	4.8
health-conscious	6	4.8
indigenous	6	4.8
third-generation	6	4.8
well-known	6	4.8
minority	6	4.7

Noun + of mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:

Collocate	F	TS
influx	163	10.9
million	141	10.7
flood	20	8.3
affluence	15	8.0
quota	15	7.9
power	15	7.8
entry	14	7.9
wealth	12	7.6
problem	11	7.3
flow	10	7.2
most	10	6.4
arrival	8	7.0
horde	7	6.9
crowd	7	6.8
perception	7	6.8
smuggling	6	6.7
gang	6	6.6
inflow	6	6.6
issue	6	6.3

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
majority	100	10.0
life	65	9.4
half	50	8.7
heart	30	8.4
mind	29	8.4
third	29	8.0
two-third	24	8.1
death	24	8.0
concern	19	7.8
quarter	19	7.6
memory	18	7.7
health	16	7.6
aspiration	14	7.5
attitude	14	7.4
need	14	7.2
value	13	6.9
habit	12	7.2
relative	12	7.2
support	11	6.9
generosity	10	7.0
lifestyle	10	7.0
behalf	10	6.9
family	10	6.9
identity	9	6.8
voice	9	6.8
wife	9	6.8
reach	8	6.6
one-third	7	6.4
well-being	7	6.4
awareness	7	6.3
spirit	7	6.3
freedom	7	6.1
confidence	6	6.2
expectancy	6	6.2

minority	6	6.2
poll	6	6.2
three-quarter	6	6.2
trust	6	6.2
benefit	6	6.1
hand	6	6.1
safety	6	6.1
standard	6	6.0
member	6	5.3
part	6	4.7

mainlander/Hongkonger's + Noun

mainlander:

Collocate	F	TS
power	13	9.4
visit	10	8.7
behaviour	9	9.0
spending	8	8.9
pattern	6	8.7
child	6	8.5
investment	6	8.4

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
view	44	9.8
concern	34	9.6
attitude	25	9.2
confidence	24	9.2
freedom	23	9.2
love	21	9.1
awareness	20	9.0
memory	20	9.0
sense	20	9.0
identity	20	8.9
desire	16	8.7
support	16	8.5
trust	12	8.3
aspiration	11	8.2
fear	11	8.1
health	11	8.1
opinion	11	8.1
satisfaction	10	8.1
sentiment	10	8.1
heart	10	8.0
perception	10	8.0
quality	10	8.0
ability	9	7.7
expectation	8	7.7
wish	8	7.7
lack	8	7.6
level	8	7.6
discontent	7	7.6
penchant	7	7.6
enthusiasm	7	7.5
passion	7	7.5
spirit	7	7.5
English	6	7.4
feeling	6	7.3
understanding	6	7.3
voice	6	7.3

way	6	7.3
need	6	7.1

**Noun + for mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:**

Collocate	F	TS
scheme	39	10.2
quota	26	9.6
visa	14	8.9
permit	12	8.7
tour	12	8.7
rule	10	8.3
attraction	9	8.3
restriction	9	8.3
arrangement	9	8.2
procedure	8	8.1
requirement	8	7.9
hub	7	7.8
policy	7	7.8
system	7	7.8
centre	7	7.6
period	6	7.7

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
call	16	8.1
home	13	8.3
news	12	8.2
option	11	8.1
concern	9	7.8
support	9	7.3
service	8	7.5
handout	7	7.7
benefit	7	7.6
flat	7	7.6
chance	7	7.5
problem	7	7.4
exemption	6	7.4
priority	6	7.3

**Noun + from mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:**

Collocate	F	TS
competition	14	10.0
interest	11	10.0
application	9	9.7

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
support	13	9.5
help	7	9.2
assistance	6	9.9
donation	6	9.8
inquiry	6	9.7
complaint	6	9.3
call	6	8.9

**Noun + by mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:**

Collocate	F	TS
spending	21	10.1
investment	13	9.5
purchase	9	8.9
application	8	8.8
trading	6	8.5

Hongkonger:

N/A

**Noun + against mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:**

Collocate	F	TS
discrimination	23	11.8
protest	9	9.6
resentment	8	10.7

Hongkonger:
N/A

**Noun + among mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:**

N/A

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
awareness	10	9.8
concern	7	9.2
sentiment	6	9.1

**Noun + on mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:**

Collocate	F	TS
restriction	53	11.3
curb	13	10.4
ban	9	8.9
crackdown	6	8.2

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
effect	7	8.6

**Noun + is a mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:**

Collocate	F	TS
buyer	13	10.2
customer	12	10.1
guest	6	9.5
suspect	6	9.4
client	6	9.2
victim	6	9.2

Hongkonger:
N/A

**Noun + towards mainlander/Hongkonger
mainlander:**

Collocate	F	TS
attitude	8	9.7
feeling	6	10.8

Hongkonger:
N/A

mainlander/Hongkonger is a + Noun

mainlander:

N/A

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
people	8	9.2

mainlander/Hongkonger and + Noun

mainlander:

Collocate	F	TS
Hongkonger	262	10.9
resident	70	9.4
local	66	9.8
man	40	8.4
Taiwanese	26	8.6
Asians	7	6.7
Thai	7	6.7
Vietnamese	7	6.7

Hongkonger:

Collocate	F	TS
mainlander	262	10.9
tourist	48	8.9
visitor	43	8.9
government	32	7.3
Beijing	26	7.4
authority	8	6.3
traveller	7	6.5
world	7	6.3