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**When central-peripheral relations intersect with asylum
seeking regime: how media outlets belonging to different
political camps may report on asylum seekers in Hong Kong**

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THESIS
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RESUME / ABSTRACT

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Non-refoulement claimants (or asylum seekers) has become a salient issue in Hong Kong's public debate since early 2016 after a senior official from the Immigration Department claimed that the city's screening mechanism of asylum seekers was being abused. When Hong Kong embroiled into one of its largest conflict between pro-democracy protesters and the HKSAR Government in 2019, how might the portrayal of asylum seekers by media outlets affiliated with different political camps be? This thesis aims to investigate this question by using topic modelling from Natural Language Processing to discover the topics of news articles reporting on asylum seekers in 2019 by printed news media. It is found that ... (to be completed). With the

For my loved ones

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Next,

Chin Man KWAN
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⁸⁶ **List of Abbreviations**

⁸⁷	ASPDMC	the Alliance for the Support of the Patriotic and Democratic Movement
⁸⁸	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
⁸⁹	UN	United Nations
⁹⁰	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
⁹¹	WHO	World Health Organization
⁹²	WTO	World Trade Organization

Preface

The issue of refugees and asylum seekers have ignited a lot of attention and debates in the 21st century, particularly so after the 2015 European refugee crisis. In the academia, a great deal of effort has been contributed to understanding how the public's and/or policy-makers' perceptions towards asylum seekers and

Chapter 1

Introduction

Asylum seekers, refugees and these two groups of vulnerable population's movements across national borders have become some of the most salient issues in the 21st Century, especially after the outbreak of the 2015 Refugee Crisis in Europe. A lot of academic researches have subsequently investigated how politics in the .

Since the transfer of sovereignty from Britain to China in 1997, Hong Kong has witnessed increasing tension with its new sovereign owner. Until July 2020 when the HKSAR¹ Government passed the National Security Law and the subsequent commencement of the large-scale suppression of the opposition camp such as the mass arrest of 53 pro-democracy activists in January 2021 (BBC 2021), protests against the authority of the HKSAR and Beijing Governments had occurred. Apart from the annual July 1 protest since 2003, the two most prominent political movements would be the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the more recent 2019 anti-extradition law protest which created considerable attention from other countries as well.

This thesis thus aims to investigate *how may the framing of asylum seekers in Hong Kong vary by news media outlets associated with different political camps, given each of them has considerably different definition of the city's national identity*. This question is worth prompting for several reasons.

Before moving on, it should be mentioned that I will use the words "asylum seekers", "refugees" and "non-refoulement claimants" interchangeably. It is true that difference exists between the definitions of asylum seekers and refugees². Nevertheless, since the above three terms are generally

¹The full list of the included newspaper outlets is provided in *table 3.1*.

²I would like to thank my friend in Hong Kong helping me gain access to the database, which would otherwise have been extremely difficult.

1. Introduction

119 used to refer to the same group of population in Hong Kong who flee from their own countries
120 to escape from persecution, treating these terms as synonyms in this context should better cover
121 how this group of population is perceived by media outlets in different political camps. In fact,
122 scholars researching on this issue often use the terms I listed without strictly differentiating their
123 meanings (e.g. Vecchio (2014), Ng et al. (2019)).

124 This thesis will proceed as follow. In section 2, I will review the literature on the theories
125 about how the perception of national identity might affect attitudes towards immigration, how
126 each major political camp in Hong Kong generally perceives the national identity of Hong Kong,
127 and how each camp perceives asylum seekers. Section 3 provides an overview of the data collection
128 process and methodology used to answer the research questions. Section 4 presents the result
129 of the analysis, and section 5 concludes the findings as well as mention the implications of this
130 thesis.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

To understand how the different conceptions of the Hong Kong identity may affect attitude towards asylum seekers, it is important to first review the literature on how national identity may affect attitudes towards immigrants and how Chineseness may be articulated on theoretical level, as well as how political camps in Hong Kong may define the city's national identity and the situation of asylum seekers on empirical level.

2.1 Theories

2.1.1 What is national identity?

I will adopt the definition proposed by Greenfeld and Eastwood (2007), which is how an individual relates to a broader societal order called the nation and is central to modern political and social organisations. Lewin-Epstein and Levanon (2005) point out modern nationalism's conception that people with similar cultures (e.g. language, myths, historic territory) should congregate together as the basis of political community called the nation-state. A closely related but not identical concept to nationalism is ethnicity, defined by Varshney (2007) as sense of belonging shared by a group in ancestry, language, history, culture and/or history. Whereas nations have their own territory-based political authority, this is not necessarily the case for ethnic groups.

Greenfeld and Eastwood (2007) also elaborate on some peculiar features of nationalism. For instance, the secular world where nations are located is deemed the most important to human beings and their life. But the more well-known characteristic is that the world is perceived to be divided into distinct communities (i.e. nations) occupying their own territories, and each member of "the people" within a nation is treated as equal to one another. It is also "the people" who

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ultimately control political legitimacy and authority. These features together contribute to two fundamental implications. Socially, the fact that nationals are considered as being equal and that status is achieved instead of ascribed promotes social mobility. Politically, nationalism has made modern (nation-)states “impersonal” (p.261) because whoever holds the government office does not affect whatsoever the nation-state’s existence and legitimacy which ultimately rest in popular sovereignty (Greenfeld and Eastwood 2007). But for cultures that had been existing long before nationalism’s entry into these societies, the constructions of novel national identities may often rebrand pre-existing cultures despite the latter’s internal heterogeneity, of which Chineseness is an example which I will look into later.

Lastly, Greenfeld and Eastwood (2007) propose a typology of nationalism with two criteria. The first one is how the nation-state relates itself to its members, from the individualist end of treating a nation as merely a massive group of individuals to the collectivist end of which individuals are subservient to the nation. The other criterion is the well-known “ethnic” versus “civic” dimension which is extensively studied, including its relation with the perception towards immigrants which I will discuss later. In general, ethnic nationalism defines a nation’s members based on ascriptive and rather objective standards such as descent, language and customs which are largely decided at birth, whereas civic nationalism focuses less on the members’ cultural backgrounds than their voluntary allegiance to a political community and its legal institutions within a political territory (Greenfeld and Eastwood 2007; Lecours 2000; Lewin-Epstein and Levanon 2005; Heath and Tilley 2005).

A note on the ethnic-civic dimension is that these two aspects are not mutually exclusive since Medrano and Koenig (2005) highlight that nationalism in one country can often incorporate both civic and ethnic features, which is quite frequently observed from empirical. Accordingly, scholars often create other dimensions of describing nationalism theoretically. For example, Hjern (1998) proposes to additionally gauge whether identifications with ethnic and civic features of nationalism are high (“multiple national identity”) or low (“pluralist”) at the same time (p. 453). Meanwhile, some scholars prefer more fine-grained categories of citizenship criteria. Medrano (2005) breaks the ethnic and civic dimensions further into five categories while describing the importance of criteria for citizenship perceived by the Spanish population, namely (p.137),

- the civic dimension being broken down into:

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- 183 – Pure republican criteria: Long-term residence, feeling of belonging, and be-
184 ing a citizen of that state
- 185 – Political criteria: Respect for laws and political institutions
- 186 • and the ethnic dimension into:
 - 187 – Territorial criteria: Place of birth
 - 188 – Cultural criteria: Language, religion, customs and traditions and
 - 189 – Descent

190 **2.1.2 Impact of conceptions of national identity on attitudes towards im-** 191 **migrants**

192 Perhaps one of the most prominent consequences of how national identity is perceived by individu-
193 als is their attitudes towards immigrants. This is because national identity simultaneously defines
194 members and outsiders of a nation (Hjerm 1998; Lewin-Epstein and Levanon 2005; Heath and
195 Tilley 2005). For simplicity's sake, I will mainly focus on how tendency towards defining national
196 identity in ethnic and civic terms may be correlated with perceptions towards immigrants.

197 To begin with, although it is generally agreed that characteristics used to demarcate member-
198 ship in a nation can be classified as ethnic- or civic-based on a macro-level, additional categories
199 are often needed to capture the general patterns of how national identity is defined within a coun-
200 try and how such definitions may affect citizen's attitudes towards immigrants. A potential reason
201 for such a need is that although individuals may hold a rather "pure" civic conception of identity
202 mostly devoid of ethnic components, it is quite unlikely that individuals would consider ethnic
203 components as standalone enough for constituting a nation's citizenship without any civic com-
204 ponents. Indeed, empirical evidence from Hjerm (1998), Heath and Tilley (2005) and Medrano
205 (2005) demonstrate that it is very rare for individuals to perceive national identity solely in ethnic
206 terms, since those who attribute importance to ethnic-based components are also likely to do so
207 to civic-based ones simultaneously. Often, scholars may even challenge the ethnic-civic-dimension
208 in classifying the perception of national identity and propose alternative schema. Drawing on the
209 Weberian idea of social closure which measures the number of obstacles imposed by a group for
210 outsiders to join, Medrano (2005) proposes the "postnationalist" versus "credentialist" (p.136)

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dimension which differentiates how restrictive people consider acquiring citizenship to their nation should be. Specifically, postnationalists impose few limits on foreigners to become citizens, whereas credentialists require a long list of criteria being fulfilled. That said, even though there exist multiple and equally valid alternatives for categorising how national identity may be defined, the ethnic-vs-civic dimension is quite broadly applicable to explain the typologies of nationalism in countries with some modifications and thus is a decent starting point.

As for the potential impact of national identity on attitudes towards immigrants, the literature tends to agree that the more an individual holds ethnic-based criteria of membership in a nation, the more likely (s)he will be averse against immigrants (i.e. xenophobic). It seems that the effect of ethnic-based national identity conception on xenophobic attitudes is consistent across different immigration policy regimes differing on the ease of naturalisation and the mode of integration. Hjerm (1998) discovers that despite Germany, Australia and Sweden having considerably different immigration policy regimes, individuals who agree that having both ethnic and civic characteristics are crucial for being a member of their nations are more likely to be xenophobic than others who only use civic components to demarcate nationhood or ascribe little importance to nationalism. Similar findings are observed by Heath and Tilley (2005) in the UK context, as British who place more emphasis on ethnic-based nationhood criteria will be more inclined to approve reducing immigrants inflows and more stringent measures against illegal immigrants. Interestingly, Heath also discovers that after controlling for how national identity is conceived, the extent to which an individual is attached to the nation is no longer significant in affecting his/her attitude towards immigrants.

In some cases, however, the effect of national identity on perceptions towards immigrants may be less due to whether individuals hold ethnic-based definitions of national identity than how many criteria individuals deem to be indispensable for obtaining a nationality. For instance, Medrano (2005) argues that even though there is an association between including ethnic-based (or in his terminology “ethno-biological republican”) (p.148) criteria for obtaining Spanish citizenship and holding negative attitudes towards immigrants, it is ultimately how many criteria a Spanish regards as important for being a Spanish citizen that better predicts attitudes towards immigrants, evidenced by the stronger correlation between these two items found in his study.

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Furthermore, depending on the ethnic composition of a nation-state, not only may different ethnic groups have their own definitions of what constitute to the ethnic and civic components of national identity, but also the relations between perceptions of national identity and attitudes towards immigrants may go into rather unexpected directions. Lewin-Epstein and Levanon (2005) discover that in the Israeli society which can be broadly separated into three ethnic groups (namely, veterans Jews who have lived in Israel for a long time, Olim who are recent Jewish immigrants from former Soviet Union regions, and ethnic Arabs citizens in Israel), there are only moderate similarities in terms of which components should be included into the ethnic and civic dimensions of national identity, as they disagree on whether the ability to speak Hebrew and whether being born in Israel should be labelled as ethnic or civic components. Moreover, contrary to the expectation in the literature, veteran Jews who consider the Israeli nationality as more ethnic-based are actually *less* averse towards immigrants, possibly because they are likely to perceive immigrants as mostly overseas Jews who share the same ethnicity (Lewin-Epstein and Levanon 2005). Nevertheless, the surprising case of Israel is likely to be more due to its specific socio-political context rather the theoretical pitfalls of how ethnic-based conceptions of national identity may be related to xenophobia per se.

2.1.3 Chineseness in Hong Kong

Given over 90% of the population being ethnically Han Chinese by 2016 (Home_Affairs_Department 2018) and also large-scale pro-democracy political movements in the 2010s challenging the authority of the HKSAR and Chinese Governments (particularly the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2019 Anti-Extradition Law Protest), Chineseness indeed occupies a salient position on the discourse of the Hong Kong identity. It is then important to understand what Chineseness may mean in Hong Kong, a city under British colonial rule for over a century until 1997.

Although Chineseness is usually connoted with a homogeneous image of a group of people with the same ethnic origin, place of residence or cultural characteristics (e.g. language, customs etc.), Chun (1996) problematises this conception not least because expressions used to describe different aspects of Chineseness actually contains heterogeneity. For example, despite the contemporary use of Han Chinese to denote ethnic homogeneity, people under the Han empire were anything but ethnically homogeneous. It was not until the 1911 Revolution then China became a nation

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inhabited by the single ethnic group called *Zhonghua Minzu*, and a homogeneous national culture was accordingly invented and legitimised by the state. The efforts to articulate a Chinese national identity continued after the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, as both the Kuomintang (KMT) regime in Taiwan and the PRC (after the Maoist period) extensively used Chinese history, political ideology and/or values to construct their national cultures and identities to claim themselves being the orthodox Chinese nation.

Whereas Chineseness was constructed by Chinese regimes holding political authority in Taiwan and mainland China, Chineseness manifested quite differently in Hong Kong where it was a Chinese society ruled by the British Government before 1997. According to Chun (1996), most inhabitants in Hong Kong had identified as Chinese until the establishment of the PRC in 1949. So (2015) also mentions that before 1949, ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong did not intend to permanently reside in the city and identified with the broader Chinese nation, evidenced by their participation in the anti-colonial Hong Kong-Canton general strikes in the 1920s. When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took power in 1949, however, the identity of ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong started to gradually depart from that on the mainland. As Hong Kong had become the venue to the KMT and the CCP's contest of the Chinese identity in the 1950s, the British Government then attempted to pull Hong Kong away from this nationalist conflict by actively promoting economic transformation from a Chinese entrepot to exported-oriented economy, and the colonial government started to create a new Hong Kong identity to further distance the citizens from Chinese nationalism following the outbreak of leftist riots in the late 1960s (Chun 1996; So 2015).

With intellectuals in Hong Kong paying more and more attention to local instead of Chinese affairs and the huge influx of illegal immigrants from China in the 1970s, the conflict between the old and newly arrived residents eventually led to the rise of a Hongkonger identity (So 2015). By mid-1980s, Hong Kong eventually developed its own culture which was indifferent to politics while also fusing habits from Chinese and Western cultures together (Chun 1996). As the transfer of the city's sovereignty approached in the 1980s, however, the Hong Kong identity became more complicated. On one hand, the investment opportunities in and relocation of factories to mainland China due to the reform and opening up policy helped resurge Chinese nationalism among Hong Kong business elites and working class who married mainland Chinese (So 2015). Meanwhile, the

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uncertainty associated with the transition of sovereignty, especially after the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989, caused the public to be more conscious of values respected in Hong Kong such as the rule of law and civil liberties and thus increased their perceived difference between Hong Kong and China (So 2015; Fong 2017b; Lin and Jackson 2021) .

Amidst the fear of Hong Kong losing its unique after the handover to China in the 1990s, the *One Country, Two Systems* (OCTS) framework which stipulates Hong Kong's autonomy and continuity of the capitalist system for 50 years was accordingly put in place to secure confidence of the public regarding the handover (So 2015; Fong 2017b) . Indeed, the first decade after 1997, So (2015) and Fong (2017b) report that overall more and more Hongkongers identified as Chinese despite Beijing's increasing intervention (more on this later) after the mass protest against Article 23 in 2003, and such sentiment peaked in 2008 when China was the host of that year's Olympic Games. But the Hong Kong identity has once again become prominent since 2009 as Hongkongers become aware of Beijing's increasing political interference and the social disruption brought by the large influx of mainland Chinese, and Fong (2017b) highlights how the Hong Kong identity has emerged in a mentality of resisting against "invaders" from the mainland during the period (p.19).

In short, Chineseness as how closely Hong Kong people identify themselves as members of the Chinese nation have evolved throughout the course of history, and one could argue that following the transferral of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China, the Chineseness of Hong Kong identity has become more and more contested. This phenomenon is best reflected by how each prominent political camp in Hong Kong envisions the Hong Kong identity.

2.2 Empirics

2.2.1 How do different political camps in Hong Kong perceive national identity?

With Hong Kong's major political cleavage being demarcated by the city's relations with Beijing and the pace of democratisation, different political camps may adopt their own vision of what Hong Kong's national identity should be. Indeed, Lecours (2000) highlights the importance of political goals in affecting how political actors with different ideologies on a region's relations with the national government may formulate national identity through the case study of Quebec.

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He argues that the secessionist Parti Quebecois (PQ) is motivated to adopt an ethnic-based nationalism which emphasises on French being the Quebecois' mother tongue because the party needs a more salient cultural marker to convince Quebecois that they are indeed qualitatively different from the Anglophone Canada and thus warrants a separate nation. By contrast, since the autonomist Parti Liberal du Quebec's (PLQ) goal is to demand more political autonomy instead of secession, the party can adopt more civic-based framing of nationalism which does not restrict membership to the Quebecois society exclusively to Francophones while not explicitly relying on ethnic markers to distinguish between Quebecois and Canadians.

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the political goals of the three prominent political camps in Hong Kong regarding the city's political regime and relations with the Beijing Government, namely, the pro-Beijing camp, the pro-Democracy camp and the newly arising localist camp in the 2010s, and how their political goals may affect their articulation of Hong Kong's national identity.

The pro-Beijing camp

As the politically conservative force governing Hong Kong, the pro-Beijing camp's objective can be summarised as legitimising China's sovereignty over the city and protecting the political interests of China. Members of the camp include the HKSAR Government itself, political parties and societal actors who lean towards the Beijing Government etc. Perhaps the most prominent manoeuvre by the pro-Beijing camp to achieve the above objective is counteracting against demands for more rapid democratisation in both the executive and legislative branches to prevent the opposition from gaining control over the political institutions (Ma 2012).

Apart from controlling high-level political institutions in the HKSAR, the pro-Beijing also invests in efforts to foster patriotism towards China in different societal sectors, of which education is one. Bottom up endeavours to instil the Chinese identity into students' minds are organising trips to China as well as pedagogy of pro-China ideologies and Chinese cultures, by pro-Beijing schools and regular schools receiving sponsorship from the Government or pro-Beijing actors, whereas top-down endeavours from the Government mainly revolves around policies on national education such as teaching Putonghua in primary school since 1998, encouraging schools to raise the Chinese flag and sing the Chinese anthem in significant occasions and the failed attempt to

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357 make national education itself a mandatory subject which avoids discussion on sensitive issues
358 in 2012 (Lau 2013; Fong 2017b) . The pro-Beijing camp also sets up support organisations in
359 communities for electoral mobilisation, as Loh (2010) and Fong (2017b) out how the largest pro-
360 Beijing parties in Hong Kong have numerous subsidiaries grassroots organisations which can serve
361 to mobilise for votes during elections under the coordination of the Liaison Office (LOCPG), and
362 Fong (2017a) reports an alleged vote-rigging incident in 2015 during which pro-Beijing-affiliated
363 elderly homes were spotted sending elderlies, often of low cognitive abilities, to cast their votes.

364 With the pro-Beijing camp's goal of securing the ultimate authority and sovereignty of the
365 Beijing Government over the HKSAR, its vision on how the identity of Hong Kong should be
366 is then closely intertwined with the Chinese identity. In other words, pro-Beijing forces view
367 the Chinese and Hong Kong identities as a whole in which Hong Kong is subordinate to the
368 Chinese nation, and identification with the Chinese nation is translated into support towards
369 the incumbent PRC regime, which self-proclaims as the “vanguard of the Chinese people and
370 the Chinese nation” (*Full Text of Constitution of Communist Party of China - Xinhua* 2017)
371 . Indeed, Lin and Jackson (2021) argue that at least during 2012-19, the HKSAR government
372 primarily portrays the Chineseness of Hong Kong citizens in an essentialist and narrow ethnic-
373 based manner which emphasises on the shared biological inheritance from the ancient Peking
374 Man between Hong Kong citizens and mainland Chinese while downplaying other aspects such as
375 values, cultural heritage and lifestyle. For instance, former Chief Executive CY Leung and pro-
376 Beijing politician Ronny Tong claimed that Hong Kong citizens were obliged to identify themselves
377 as Chinese due to their ascribed biological similarities with mainland Chinese. Ethnic markers
378 were also co-mentioned while HKSAR officials were describing the PRC, as former Chief Secretary
379 Matthew Cheung stated that he was proud as “a son of the Chinese” while witnessing the progress
380 made by mainland China (Lin and Jackson 2021) (p.914).

381 This view echoes with that held by the Beijing Government, as Chinese President Xi Jinping
382 once claimed that Hong Kong's fate was closely linked to mainland China, and the city was crucial
383 for achieving the Chinese dream (Lin and Jackson 2021) . In essence, as the ruling government
384 of post-1997 Hong Kong is now under the sovereignty of the PRC, it is likely that the HKSAR
385 Government and its political ally, the pro-Beijing camp, actively promote Chineseness as an ethnic
386 feature that both Hong Kong citizens and mainland Chinese share closely to realign the Hong

2. Literature Review

Kong identity, which is deemed to have developed separately in British Hong Kong (Chun 1996; So 2015), under the umbrella of Chinese so that Beijing could exert more control over the city's ideology. By contrast, civic values are less salient in the official discourse in promoting Chineseness in Hong Kong (except for the value of patriotism which is ultimately another manifestation of the ethnic conception of Chineseness), but are often used by the pro-Democracy camp to portray Hong Kong's distinct (but **not** independent) identity from mainland China.

The pro-Democracy camp (or pan-democrats)

According to Ma (2012), even though several pro-democracy political groups were founded in the 1980s after the commencement of the city's democratisation and elections as well as the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, it was not until the late 1980s when these groups congregated together for better mobilisation power in large-scale political movements, especially during the 1989 Tiananmen Movement when the Alliance for the Support of the Patriotic and Democratic Movement (ASPDMC) was formed to support students protesting for democracy in Beijing. Shortly afterwards, the first pro-democracy party, *the United Democrats of Hong Kong* (the predecessor of the present Democratic Party) was created in 1990 for next year's first direct election in the legislature (Ma 2012). After the handover in 1997, the pro-democracy camp remains as one of the significant political forces in the HKSAR, including the provision of an alternative perception of the Hong Kong identity vis-a-vis the official rhetoric.

Compared to the pro-Beijing camp which considers protecting the interests of the Chinese nation (currently under the PRC regime) as paramount over other concerns, the pro-democracy camp instead prioritises values such as the rule of law and civil liberties which are regarded to be constitutive to the civic elements of Hong Kong's identity (Kwan 2016). This is evidenced by the pro-democracy camp deeming the Article 23 legislation back in 2003 as contravening personal freedom under the pretext of national security and thus openly opposed to and organised the 1 July rally against the law's promulgation (Ma 2012), and the camp also supported the Occupy Central Movement (a precursor to the 2014 Umbrella Movement) to protest against Beijing's proposal of only allowing pre-approved candidates to run for Chief Executive elections in August 2014 as violating democratic principles of universal suffrage (Kwan 2016). It can thus be argued that the pro-Democracy camp puts more importance on protecting the civic values that they

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416 deem crucial for the identity of Hong Kong, even if this means often clashing with the interests
417 of Beijing.

418 When it comes to identifying which nation Hong Kong belongs to, however, it should be note
419 that the pro-democracy camp in general still identify themselves as Chinese, as Kwong (2016)
420 states that especially for the older generation pro-democratic politicians, they are in favour of
421 Hong Kong’s sovereignty being transferred from Britain to China in 1997, and they claim to
422 share affinity with China’s history, culture and ethnicity despite opposing the CCP’s one-party
423 dictatorship. In fact, the identification with the Chinese nation by the pro-democracy camp is well-
424 inscribed in the manifesto of the largest and most historic pro-democracy party, *the Democratic*
425 *Party*, as the very first article clearly claims that “Hong Kong is an indivisible part of China”
426 (*Manifesto 2021*) . The pro-democracy camp’s identification as members of the Chinese nation
427 may very well explain how they contextualise Hong Kong’s democratisation movement and why
428 they do not think Hong Kong identity is independent of the Chinese one. Kwong (2016) mentions
429 that the pro-Democracy camp generally considers Hong Kong’s democratisation as integral to
430 that of mainland China, and the annual candlelight vigil by the ASPDMC is a totem of this
431 mentality since some organisers perceive a democratic China, if realised, might subsequently
432 bring democracy to the city as well.

433 Admittedly, the pro-democracy camp attempted to appeal to localist supporters when the
434 ideology gained huge popularity around the time of the 2016 Legislative Council election, such
435 as calling for the right of self-determination for Hong Kong (Kaeding 2017; Fong 2017b) . Never-
436 theless, this does not mean the pro-democracy camp giving up on caring about political issues in
437 China while relating them to the situation in Hong Kong. Even in the 2021 Tiananmen Massacre
438 candlelight vigil, the ASPDMC stated that Hong Kong people shared “a common fate with those
439 oppressed and deprived of freedom in China”, and the organisation would struggle until both
440 Hong Kong and China became democratic (ASPDMC 2021) .

441 In short, the pro-democracy camp considers civic values in Hong Kong such as the rule of law
442 and civil liberties to be constituting to the distinctiveness of Hong Kong and is averse towards
443 Beijing’s political interventions which often run against these values. Nevertheless, the camp still
444 regards Hong Kong as belonging to the same nation with mainland China and is even willing to
445 help their Chinese compatriots in political movements which advocate freedom and democracy.

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The geographical scope of how wide Hong Kong's political movement to democratisation should concern, then, is partly what makes the localist camp different from the pro-democracy camp even though both favour a democratic regime in Hong Kong.

The localist camp

Broadly speaking, the rise of localism as a third prominent political ideology in the 2010s was due to both the increasing integration with mainland China both politically and socio-economically as well as the perceived incompetence of the pro-Democracy camp to push forward substantive democratisation in Hong Kong. Although the term "localist camp" in reality represents an aggregation of groups which vary considerably in choosing violent or non-violent means of resisting against the Beijing Government, whether Hong Kong should abandon OCTS and pursue independence, and are much less coordinated in their actions compared to the pro-Beijing and pro-democracy camps, organisations belonging to this camp hold strong aversive sentiment against China **both** in terms of the PRC regime and mainland Chinese who are deemed to be depriving the locals of already scarce public resources or disrupting the way of life of ordinary Hong Kong citizens, and they (Kwong 2016) . The first substantive discourse to materialise localism as a political ideology was "Hong Kong as a city-state" published in 2011 by scholar *Chin Wan-kan* which, among many other ideas, advocates separating the integration between Hong Kong and mainland China as well as prioritising the needs of Hongkongers (So 2015) . The following paragraphs will outline how the rise of localism can be treated as a backlash against both long-existing political camps in Hong Kong while also exploring how localists perceive Hong Kong's national identity.

Starting with the so-called "China factor", the localist camp obviously rejects the pro-Beijing camp's (and the Chinese Government) claim that Hong Kong's identity should be treated as one with that of Chinese. Fong (2017b) illustrates how the China factor has facilitated the rise of localism under the framework of "state-building" versus "peripheral" nationalism (p.2), where Hong Kong is attempting to consolidate its unique identity against Beijing's incorporation of the city into the hegemonic national culture. Specifically, after 500,000 Hongkongers had rallied against the Article 23 legislation in 2003, Beijing then started to increase its interventions in

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multiple areas, such as asserting that its authority overrides the city's autonomy, sponsoring pro-Beijing candidates during elections and fostering further economic integration between Hong Kong and China in finance, tourism and trade.(So 2015; Fong 2017b) . In turn, the high proportion of respondents in a 2016 survey identifying themselves as Hongkongese amidst the foundings of more radical localist organisations which aspire to make Hong Kong a separate nation can be evidence of how the PRC's attempts to assimilate Hong Kong into the hegemonic Chinese identity has risen the consciousness of Hong Kong people about their uniqueness vis-a-vis China and thus foster the increasing popularity of localism (Fong 2017b) . Apart from Chin's foundational discourse on localism as mentioned before, overt advocacy of Hong Kong becoming an independent nation from China is often proposed by some localist organisations, most signified by the establishment of the disbanded *Hong Kong National Party* in 2016 by Andy Chan which aimed to build a "Hong Kong Republic" (Kaeding 2017) (p.165). Some organisations even dare openly insult the PRC to challenge its authority and legitimacy, as two former legislators from the self-determination-advocating *Youngspiration* had taken their office oaths by pronouncing "China" derogatorily in 2016, which caused them to be disqualified from their seats shortly afterwards (Kaeding 2017) .

Due to the localist camp's dissociation of Hong Kong with mainland China concerning both Beijing's assimilation and which nation Hong Kong belongs to, they also reject the pro-Democracy camp's idea that political development of Hong Kong should be linked to that of China. In effect, the indifference of the localist camp to China's political situation is largely due to the "transition fatigue" which witnesses increasing dissatisfaction with the traditional pro-democracy camp has started to accumulate due to the lack of substantive progress in democratisation by 2008 (Kwong 2016) (p.63). The Democratic Party's decision to negotiate with the Beijing Government for the political reform package and its subsequent support in May 2010 created profound division within the pro-democracy camp as certain parties believed that more radical measures were needed to fend off Beijing's interference into the city, but the more significant turning point for localism to gain its popularity was the 2014 Umbrella Movement when some youngsters blamed the pro-democracy camp for the Movement's failure (Kwong 2016; Kwan 2016) .

The disagreement between the pro-democracy and localist camp lies less in what kinds of values Hong Kong should uphold (as both camps aim at fighting for democracy and autonomy from Beijing) than whether Hong Kong should involve in China's democratisation. Specifically,

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the pro-democracy camp's insistence on Hong Kong's responsibility to help build democracy in China is met with strong criticism from the localists, who consider that Hong Kong should focus only on its political development since binding Hong Kong's future to a democratic China would hamper the city's own interests (Kwong 2016; Kwan 2016) . Thus, the different conceptions of which nation Hong Kong belongs to between the two camps and how much Hong Kong should dissociate from China have caused both camps to have rather contentious relations, as some pan-democrats also consider the localist camp's hostility towards mainland Chinese as xenophobic (Kwong 2016) .

In short, the localist camp does not just treat the Hong Kong identity as distinctive but ultimately belongs to the Chinese nation like the pro-democracy camp. Instead, Hong Kong is a separate political entity that should avoid close integration with mainland China in order to protect its own interests. This causes the localist camp to become a third force in Hong Kong's political arena in the 2010s confronting against both the pro-Beijing and pro-Democracy camps.

Before moving onto hypothesising how the three camp's different views on Hong Kong's national identity may impact their views on asylum seekers within the city, table 2.1 summarises how they differ on the vision of the Hong-Kong-China relations.

Table 2.1: Comparison of the three camps on key dimensions of Hong-Kong-China relations

	Pro-Beijing camp China	Pro-Democracy camp China	Localist camp Hong Kong
The nation that Hong Kong belongs to			
Attitude towards political development in China	Political ally of the ruling PRC	Opposes one-party rule of the CCP, sympathetic to Chinese people	Indifference, only focuses on Hong Kong's situation
Prioritised political values	Patriotism and nationalism over individual rights	civil liberties, the rule of law and political autonomy	those of the pro-democracy camp plus prioritising Hong Kong's interests
Means of contention	N/A (as an ally of the Government)	Non-violent	Both violent and non-violent
Degree of within-camp coordination	Strong	Moderate	Weak

2.2.2 Asylum seekers in Hong Kong

Hong Kong's policy regime

Regarding the legal framework and policies of assessing asylum claims and refugee recognition, the Hong Kong Government has a strong position of not making the city a destination for refugee resettlement. Although Hong Kong is a signatory of the 1992 United Nations Conventions Against Torture (UNCAT) which requires the Government to temporarily house asylum seekers and process torture-related asylum applications, the city has never signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and thus has no legal obligations to permanently resettle asylum seekers and refugees within its territory (Ng 2020) . This remains true even after the implementation of the Unified Screening Mechanism (USM) in 2014 which made the Government become the sole handler of all the non-refoulement claims, including those which had been previously handled by the UNHCR for refugee status (Ng 2020; *Unified Screening Mechanism Procedures 2021*) . Instead, the Government reiterates its lack of intention of determining individuals' refugee status and allowing refugees to permanently settle in the city, while also claiming that the recognition and resettlement of refugees should still be referred to the UNHCR "in accordance with its mandate" (*Making a Claim for Non-refoulement Protection in Hong Kong 2021*) , even though the UN agency states on its website that it would no longer process new refugee and asylum claims following the implementation of the USM (*Unified Screening Mechanism Procedures 2021*) . Simply put, the official institutions responsible for assessing asylum applications in Hong Kong hardly have intention of making the city a destination of permanent resettlement for individuals fleeing from their countries because of persecutions.

Even if the HKSAR Government is obliged to adjudicate non-refoulement applications as per the UNCAT, the legal and social status of the asylum seekers are quite precarious while awaiting their application results. To begin with, individuals must wait until their visas expire in order to be eligible for non-refoulement applications and then have to report regularly to the Immigration Department (*Unified Screening Mechanism Procedures 2021*) , an arrangement that Ng (2020) considers as the Government's attempt to exclude asylum seekers from the rights granted to legal residents in the city (e.g. working,) and receiving welfare supports through criminalisation. Furthermore, the Immigration Department has the final authority to prosecute the asylum seekers for having illegally overstayed beyond the validity of their visas, and officials frequently call

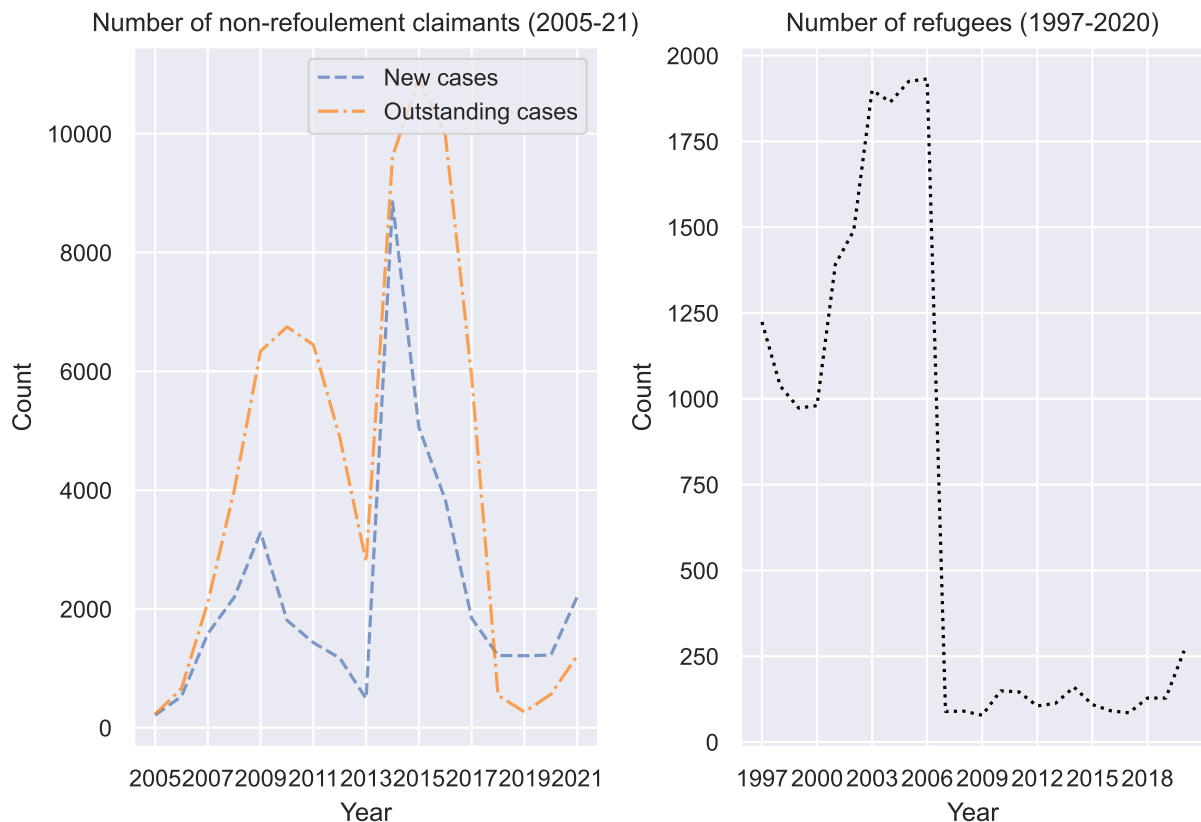


Figure 2.1: Number of non-refoulement claim cases (left) and refugees (right) in Hong Kong

these populations as *illegal immigrants* (often with racial labels) (Ng 2020) . Coupled with the Government's refusal to recognise and resettle refugees in its territory, the institutional framework of asylum seeking in Hong Kong can thus be described as unwelcoming towards those who are fleeing from persecutions in their countries of origin, since these applicants not only have to first become illegal immigrants for eligibility to request non-refoulement, but also they are under the constant threat of being charged for their immigration status.

The HKSAR Government's unwelcoming stance towards asylum seekers and refugees is likely to be one of the major reasons for the low numbers of non-refoulement claims and refugees in the city since 2005. For instance, the left plot in figure 2.1 (*Enforcement / Statistics on Non-refoulement Claim 2021*) shows that the number of *new* non-refoulement claims submitted each year from 2005 to 2021 on average was lower than 4000, and the sudden rise of new applications to around 9000 instances in 2014 was more due to the implementation of the USM requiring the Government to also assess claims previously handled by the UNHCR than the commencement of

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a more liberal asylum-seeking regime (*Enforcement / Statistics on Non-refoulement Claim 2021*) . Likewise, the number of *outstanding* non-refoulement cases by year during the same period generally surpassed that of new cases except from 2018, a few years after the USM had been implemented. By 2018, non-refoulement claimants constituted to a mere 0.2% of Hong Kong's total population of over 7 million, a figure considerably smaller when compared to a total of 3.5 million refugees in Asia as Ng (2020) contrasts. The right plot in figure 2.1 (*Refugee Population by Country or Territory of Asylum - Hong Kong SAR, China / Data 2021*) shows how the number of refugees in Hong Kong has dramatically reduced to no more than 250 persons each year (save for 2020) since 2007 after the Government had closed the last refugee camp hosting Vietnamese who fled from the Vietnam War in the 1970s (Ng 2020) . Lastly, figure 2.2 (*Enforcement / Statistics on Non-refoulement Claim 2021*) indicates the nationalities of non-refoulement claimants, who mostly are from South and Southeast Asia, with a few from Africa as well. One particularly interesting insight from this graph is that despite the frequent racial labelling of non-refoulement claimants as South Asians by some media outlets (Ng et al. 2019) , it is actually **Southeast Asians** who constitute the largest proportion of non-refoulement claimants.

Responses by political camps

Given the extremely small number of non-refoulement claimants, the issue of asylum seeking regime in Hong Kong hadn't gained much attention until early 2016, after a senior Immigration Department official's accusation of the USM being abused during a TV interview in October 2015 and the subsequent propagation of two fabricated WhatsApp audios alleging asylum seekers as perpetrators of robberies and homicides in the New Territories district (Ng et al. 2019) . Soon afterwards, coverage of asylum seekers by newspaper media has increased, with two pro-Beijing newspapers named *The Sun* (which ceased publication in April 2016) and *Oriental Daily* contributing to the largest proportion of articles which depict this group of vulnerable population as a source of social problems (e.g. committing crimes) which warrant stringent measures like detention camps as solutions (Ng et al. 2019) .

Different opinions of how the Government should deal with the asylum seekers in the political debate could also be classified according to political camps at the same time. On one side, echoing with the HKSAR Government's already restrictive policies for assessing non-refoulement

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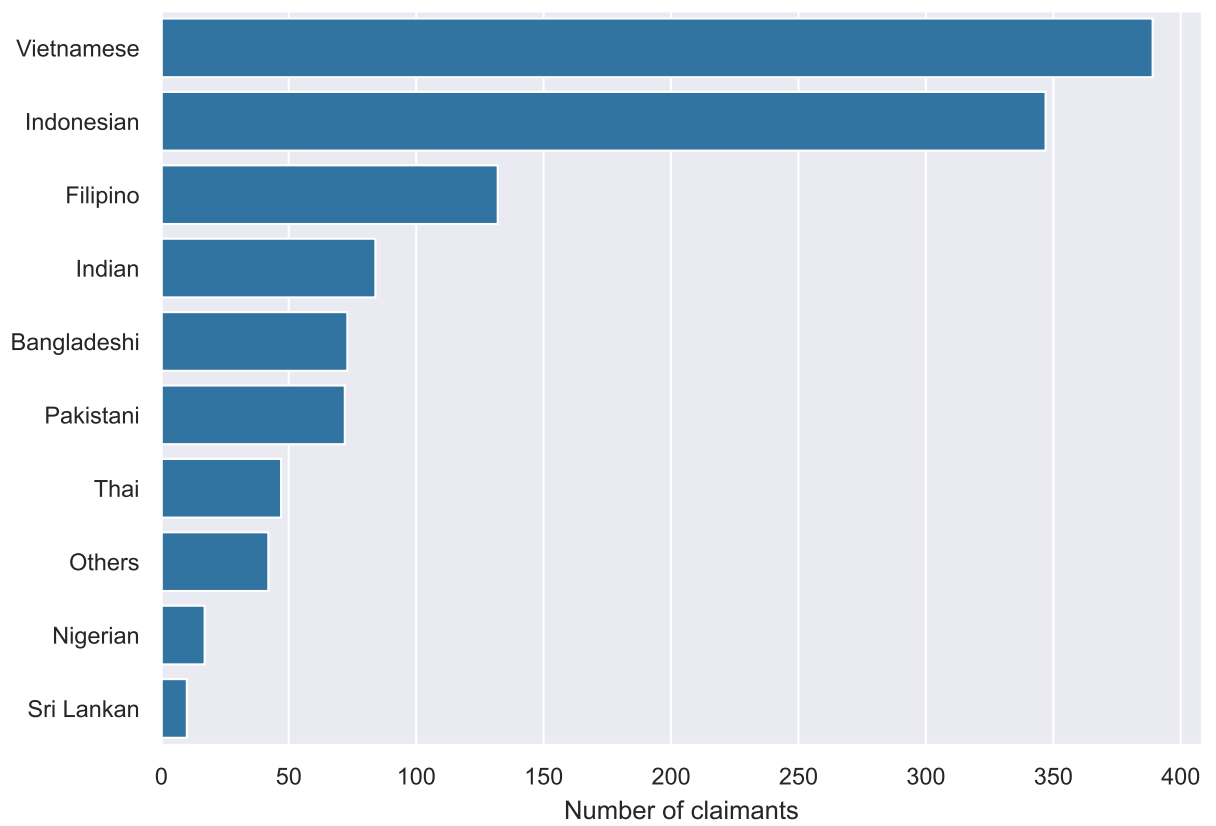


Figure 2.2: Number of non-refoulement claimants by nationality in 2021

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claims, pro-Beijing camp politicians also create narratives that non-refoulement claimants and asylum seekers are anything but genuine in the legislature. For instance, less than a year after asylum seekers had gained salience in public debate, legislator Holden Chow submitted a motion in November 2016 under the banner of “combating bogus refugees” who, among other sins, were working illegally and/or committing crimes while calling for the revision of the USM and carrying out measures against illegal immigrants adopted by other countries (Yuen 2016) . Some pro-Beijing parties also reach out to the public to sway the latter’s opinion, such as the DAB¹ setting up a booth in the ethnic-minority-concentrated Tsim Sha Tsui district to hand out pamphlets about measures against “fake refugees” (Cheung and Grundy 2016) . Perhaps the most dramatic proposal of dealing with the so-called “fake refugee” issue by the pro-Beijing camp was the former Chief Executive *CY Leung*’s suggestion to withdraw from the UNCAT in 2016 so that Hong Kong would not be obliged to assess non-refoulement claims anymore (Ng et al. 2019) . Coupled with the high frequency of pro-Beijing media outlets in pejoratively portraying asylum seekers in Hong Kong as mentioned earlier, the pro-Beijing camp promotes an unwelcoming rhetoric against asylum seekers that is consistent with the Government’s refusal to permanently resettle refugees and asylum seekers.

By contrast, the pro-democracy camp is less hostile towards non-refoulement claimants and even advocates better treatment of these vulnerable individuals. When Holden Chow’s motion was tabled for voting in the legislature in December 2016, it was barely rejected due to the pro-democracy camp’s opposition of Chow’s motion as “hypocrisy and discrimination in disguise” by indiscriminately applying the proposed “draconian measures” on all asylum seekers (Cheng 2016) . Among all pro-democracy legislators, Dr Fernando Cheung was perhaps the most vocal in fighting for better treatments of asylum seekers in Hong Kong, as he met with non-refoulement claimants directly on several occasions while receiving approval from this group of population (Justice Centre Hong Kong 2014; Vision First 2015; Refugee Union 2018) . Indeed, legislator Cheung’s prominent advocacy for the rights of asylum seekers had indirectly caused him to become a victim of political smearing a few months before the 2016 Legislative Council election, as political banners imposing legislator Cheung’s party were seen hanging in streets which maliciously called the legislator “the father of refugees” (Ngo 2016) . It should also be noted that, nevertheless, a

¹The full list of the included newspaper outlets is provided in *table 3.1*.

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more lenient attitude towards asylum seekers does not mean that the pro-democracy camp totally disregards the perceived issue of bogus refugees. Even though legislator Charles Mok condemned Holden Chow's motion against "bogus" refugees was "disturbing", he also attributed the most responsibility of "bogus non-refoulement claims" to the Government due to the latter's inefficiency and lack of knowledge in handling the issue (Cheng 2016) . But in general, the pro-democracy camp supports a more humane treatment towards non-refoulement claimants who are genuinely in need of fleeing from their countries due to prosecution.

Lastly, the localist camp's stance on dealing with asylum seekers is less confrontational than that towards mainland Chinese. As one of the few localist lawmakers who were not disqualified in the oath-taking controversy by December 2016, Dr Cheng Chung-tai's speech on Holden Chow's anti-fake-refugees motion had two points which worth highlighting² (*Hui4yi4 Guo4cheng2 Zheng4shi4 Ji4lu4* 2016) (p.1232-33). Firstly, he shared the pro-democracy camp's view of the main reason for the so-called "bogus refugees" issue being the Government not allocating adequate resources to assess the claimants' applications. But the more intriguing point of view is how he framed Hong Kong's signatory status of the UNCAT as a proof of the city having its own *de-facto* sovereignty from mainland China, and thus he opposed CY Leung's suggestion of withdrawing from the treaty since it would signify Hong Kong's regression in civilisation to the world. Interestingly, the localist camp's reservation of adopting more stringent measures against asylum seekers has drawn smear from some pro-Beijing medias, such as an editorial from the Sun (2016) accused the localists of "remaining silent" on non-refoulement claimants wasting public resources of Hong Kong.

²I would like to thank my friend in Hong Kong helping me gain access to the database, which would otherwise have been extremely difficult.

Chapter 3

Methods

After reviewing both the theories of the impact of national identity on xenophobia as well as how political camps in Hong Kong imagine the city's national identity, how could we know the possible associations between each camp's definition of the city's national identity and its attitude towards asylum seekers who are mainly not ethnic Chinese? This section will discuss the strategy of answering this question.

3.1 Research questions

Based on the aforementioned theories that a stronger emphasis on the ethnic elements of national identity is correlated with a more negative attitude towards immigrants, how each political camp in Hong Kong perceives the city's national identity and asylum seekers and also previous research on this topic (Ng et al. 2019) , two questions could be prompted in the following analysis:

Q₁: In general, what were the most prevalent topics co-mentioned with news reports on asylum seekers in Hong Kong in 2019?

Q₂: How do news media outlets associated with different political ideologies differed on the topics to focus on while reporting on asylum seekers in Hong Kong?

3.2 Data collection

I will study news media reports on asylum seekers and non-refoulement claimants in Hong Kong by local mass media during the year of 2019. Specifically, media publishing in **Chinese** in printed format will be included in the data¹. For the retrieval of the relevant newspaper articles, I will

¹The full list of the included newspaper outlets is provided in *table 3.1*.

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rely on the *WiseNews* database² which can fetch news articles with search keywords published in the Greater China region. While it would have been more ideal to also include online news media into the dataset as Lee (2018) mentions that they have become quite prominent in the 2010s for providing counter-narratives to the mainstream media often co-opted by the Chinese Government, *WiseNews* does not directly provide the texts of online media news article and thus requires additional steps of web scrapping which are, unfortunately, beyond the author’s capacity by the time of writing. That being said, including only the printed news media during 2019 would still cover 16 of the well-known news media with associations to different political camps according to the survey on media credibility by the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK 2020) , not to mention the list asked in the survey is not exhaustive about all the printed media outlets. In other words, just searching for printed news media outlets could still allow me to discover the topics of asylum seekers covered by some of the most widely consumed news media with various perspectives.

Admittedly, including only Chinese-language news media omits how asylum seekers are represented by English-language media in Hong Kong (e.g. the *South China Morning Post*) and thus constitutes to a major limitation of this study. Moreover, due to the fact that I will be using natural language processing (more on this later) to analyse the content and topics of the media reports, my sole focus on textual content of the media reports means discarding graphical and (if also published online) audio-visual materials accompanied in a given news report. Nevertheless, analysing just the textual content of the media reports should still yield a considerable amount of information about the representation of asylum seekers in Hong Kong by media outlets linked to different political camps, since after all a major proportion of the content in news reports are represented textually.

The reason for choosing to collect media reports published in 2019 is because it was when the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment protest first broke out in June and then lasted for several months, a period when one can argue the manifestation of political ideologies should be the most salient for all the political camps. This should indeed be the case for both the pro-democracy camp whose supporters participated in several large-scale protests and sometimes even engaged

²I would like to thank my friend in Hong Kong helping me gain access to the database, which would otherwise have been extremely difficult.

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in numerous violent clashes with the Hong Kong police to oppose a law that would have permitted extradition of fugitives to mainland China, and the pro-Beijing camp whose authority was once again immensely challenged after the 2014 Umbrella Movement. Accordingly, it would be interesting to investigate whether the issue of asylum seekers still remained its salience and was reported in similar manners given the co-occurrence of another arguably more salient political event (i.e. the anti-Extradition Law protests), as compared to when the issue first had become prominent back in 2016. Specifically, analysing newspaper articles in 2019 provides an opportunity to observe whether and how asylum seekers in Hong Kong might be represented by the media in tandem with major political events.

As for classifying which political camps each media outlet belongs to, I will rely on the literature exploring how politics affects Hong Kong’s media outlets, while complementing the categorisation with additional research if needed. To this end, I consulted the articles by Fong (2017a) and Lee (2018) on the development of post-1997 Hong Kong’s media industry, of which they have documented the co-optation of some media outlets in Hong Kong by the Chinese Government (e.g. the major shareholders holding positions in such as Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference) among other phenomena. Building on the concept of “allocative control” (p.11) by Lee (2018) about media outlet owners having the ultimate decision on the personnel and resources at the newsroom’s disposal for reporting news which could lead to self-censorship of the frontline journalists, I will code those media outlets whose owners have been affiliated with the official Chinese and/or Hong Kong Government organisations as belonging to the pro-Beijing camp. As for those media owners with less apparent links with the Chinese or Hong Kong Governments, I will decide the classification according to whether the owners are known to be affiliated with a certain political camp and how a given media outlet is perceived for its political stance. Those outlets without apparent political stances are labelled as “neutral”. *Table 3.1* is the resulting classification scheme. Note that due to the medium of publication of localist news media being almost exclusively online, none of the outlets in that camp was included in the data.

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Table 3.1: Classification of the associated political camp of media outlets in Hong Kong included into the sample, source: Fong (2017a); Lee (2018); author’s own research

Associated political camp	Media outlets
Pro-Beijing camp (directly owned by the Liaison Office or the HKSAR Government)	Wen Wei Po, Hong Kong Government News, Hong Kong Commercial Daily, Ta Kung Pao
Pro-Beijing Camp (owners affiliated with political institutions on mainland China/ HKSAR Government)	Oriental Daily News, Sing Tao Daily, Sing Pao, Headline Daily, Hong Kong Economic Journal, Hong Kong Economic Times, am730, Sky Post, HK01 Newspaper
Pro-Democracy camp	Apple Daily, Kung Kao Po
Localist camp	N/A
Neutral	Metro Daily, Ming Pao Daily News

To search for relevant media reports on WiseNews, I will refer to the keywords used by Ng et al. (2019) which are related to asylum seekers, such as terms directly describing this group of population (e.g. refugees, South Asians) or policies related to asylum seeking in Hong Kong (e.g. non-refoulement claim, immigration paper). Table 3.2 lists all the Chinese terms used for searching the relevant news articles on WiseNews and their meanings in English.

Table 3.2: Translation of the keywords used to search for media reports on WiseNews

Original terms in Chinese pinyin	Literal meaning in English	Notes
mian3 qian3fan3 sheng1qing3	Non-refoulement claim(ant)	
ku4xing2 sheng1qing3	Torture claim(ant)	
fei1fa3 ru4jing4, ren2she2	Illegal immigration, Human snake (alias of illegal immigrants)	Excluded illegal immigration from mainland China
xun2qiu2 bi4hu4	Asylum seeking	Excluded asylum seekers <i>outside of</i> Hong Kong
nan4min2	Refugee	Excluded refugees <i>outside of</i> Hong Kong and Hong Kong activists seeking refuge overseas
nan2ya4	South Asian	Articles about the South Asian region are excluded.
xing2 jie1 zhi3	Immigration paper	Documents issued by the Immigration Department to non-refoulement claimants.

Lastly, while there certainly exist other alternatives for gauging whether the perception of the national identity of Hong Kong in different political camps might affect the attitudes towards asylum seekers, my choice to analyse news media articles is a function of both practical constraints

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as well as this data source’s distinct advantage. Constraint-wise, due to the promulgation of the National Security Law in July 2020 and the HKSAR Government’s repression of the pro-democracy camp, directly interviewing human subjects might not necessarily be a good idea since the author would like to avoid the possibility that their testimonies would be used to identify the respondents’ identities by the authority. As for survey, it would be too resource-intensive for a master-level thesis to reach out to a huge amount of potential respondents for a representative sample. On the contrary, news articles from printed media are not only easy to access via the WiseNews database but also can substantively influence how the public may perceive about certain social issues by being a major disseminator of information (O’Doherty and Lecouteur 2007). Other times, media framing of an issue may be even be referred for policy-making, and continued negative portrayal of marginalised groups in a society may subject them under hostility from the public (Ng et al. 2019).

3.3 Preprocessing

Since my research objective is to identify the topics of news reports on non-refoulement claimants in Hong Kong by media outlets in different political camps in 2019 with thousands of articles in my dataset, it will be extremely time- and resource-consuming to hand code all the articles, and the development and use of manual coding schemes are likely to be influenced by human biases (Laver et al. 2003). Accordingly, I will rely on techniques from natural language processing (NLP), a sub-field of machine learning which can perform scalable text analysis over a large corpus of documents (or in this case news articles). Specifically, I will perform topic modelling which aims to identify groups of words that co-appear often in the corpus of the collected news articles. Here I will briefly mention the process from data preparation to finding the topics of the articles.

In order to transform the news articles into a format that can be understood by computers for further processing, I will first need to perform tokenisation (or separating the texts into words). To this end, the *jieba* module (Junyi 2021) which is specifically designed for segmenting Chinese texts accurately will be useful. As for transforming the tokenised texts into document-term matrix, I will rely on the *sklearn* Pedregosa et al. (2011) module which offers numerous options for creating such matrices depending on the subsequent modelling steps, such as simply counting

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how many times a word appears in a given document (`CountVectorizer`) or the term-frequency inverse-document-frequency (TF-IDF) matrix (`TfidfVectorizer`) which also takes into account of in how many documents a word appears out of all the documents in the corpus. To ensure better topic extraction results, I will also remove stop words, punctuations and hyper-links of the texts while also adding words related to Hong Kong politics (the list is scraped from elgarteo (2021)) and asylum seekers into the dictionary for better tokenisation.

3.4 Modelling

It is also worth discussing what models of topic extraction should be used. In general, there are three models used to find latent topics from textual data, namely, *latent Dirichlet allocation* (LDA), *non-negative matrix factorisation* (NMF) and singular value decomposition (SVD). I will briefly mention the distinct characteristics of each of the three models below.

To begin with, SVD differs from the other models since it aims less to find topics whose content altogether point to a coherent theme than to look for components summarising as much information as possible of the documents, with the first few components usually containing the most proportion of information (Stevens et al. 2012). Indeed, the `scikit-learn` documentation (Pedregosa et al. 2011) states that SVD is essentially a variation of *Principal Component Analysis*, except that SVD can work on sparse matrices (i.e. document-term matrices).

By contrast, LDA, a model based on the Bayes theorem, finds the probability distribution (*beta*) of words in each topic (governed by the prior distribution *eta*) as well as the probability distribution (*theta*) of the topics in each document (governed by the prior distribution *alpha*) after a specific amount of latent topics were specified (Pedregosa et al. 2011; Stevens et al. 2012). Since both *beta* and *theta* are probability distributions, it means that the summed probabilities of each document belonging to the topics and each word belonging to all the topics should both be 1. Moreover, the topics that LDA look for emphasise on coherency rather than how much information could be summarised unlike SVD.

Lastly, NMF also decomposes a corpus of documents but requires that the input matrix contain no negative values (Stevens et al. 2012). Moreover, NMF decomposes the original document-term matrix into two parts, one of word by topic (W) and another of document by topic (H), whose

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product can approximately reconstruct the original matrix instead of modelling W and H in probabilistic terms (Pedregosa et al. 2011).

So which model(s) should be used? The experiment by Stevens et al. (2012) offers some insights on the questions, as they discover that NMF and LDA perform better in finding topics which are semantically coherent than SVD. Since my research objective is finding out how media outlets in different political camps may focus on what topics while reporting on asylum seekers in Hong Kong, it would be better to use LDA and NMF which can extract coherent topics. Again, sklearn offers both the **LatentDirichletAllocation** and NMF classes for implementing these two models.

Questions:

1. How to judge if the inferred models by the algorithms make sense?

- Using both numeric metrics and inspecting the words grouped into each topic to see if they altogether convey a coherent theme
 - Numeric metrics alone may not be enough for judging whether the pre-set number of topics for the model to identify is “good” (e.g. Soltoff (2021)) and sometimes may even not correlate with topic interpretability (Stevens et al. 2012)
 - Potential metrics: the UMASS metric which judges the coherence of a topic by the co-occurrence of the words in each topic over the entire corpus of documents, which can be used to compare performance across different topic models (Stevens et al. 2012)
- Or should I use the decomposed parts of the documents as independent variables and see how well they can predict from which political camp’s media outlets a given article comes from? i.e. this is an extrinsic way of validating the topics generated by seeing how well they can distinguish between media outlets from different political camps

What will be included in the results part:

1. Some exploratory data analysis (e.g. distribution of the length of the news articles, how many entries were published by each outlet and political camp in 2019)

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- 808 2. The first modelling: finding the topics over the entire corpus of news articles in 2019
- 809 • I will try both LDA and NMF first, and then decide which model's results should
- 810 be used for interpretation and further investigation according to their performance on
- 811 the UMASS metric as well as inspecting how the words in each topic actually point
- 812 towards a common theme
- 813 3. Modelling the topics by political camp
- 814 • Anecdotally, the majority of news articles on non-refoulement claimants in Hong Kong
- 815 in 2019 were published by pro-Beijing media outlets (especially Oriental Daily News)
- 816 as Ng et al. (2019) observe during mid-2015 to mid-2016. If at the end there is a huge
- 817 imbalance of newspaper articles being published by pro-Beijing news media, then I
- 818 will binarise the classification of the outlets into either pro-Beijing or non pro-Beijing
- 819 (which encompasses both pro-democracy and neutral media outlets).

Chapter 4

Results

After searching for articles which contain at least one of the keywords and are relevant to asylum seekers residing in Hong Kong, there were in total 1115 articles published in 2019 by 17 newspapers. In this section, I will first explore the data set preliminarily, and then move onto topic modelling with LDA and NMF before choosing which model performs better in finding out coherent topics.

4.1 Exploratory data analysis (EDA)

4.1.1 Number of news articles

Let us first explore how the number of publications of news articles about asylum seekers might differ by newspaper outlets and month. Starting with the number of articles by media outlets in figure 4.1, consistent with the study by Ng et al. (2019), Oriental Daily News continues to be the media outlet covering the most frequently on asylum seekers with 545 (or 48.88%) articles throughout 2019. The second-most frequent publisher Sing Tao Daily by contrast only had 132 entries which was 24.22% of Oriental Daily News. Apple Daily, the then-most prominent pro-democracy printed media, ranked third in the coverage of non-refoulement claimants in 2019. If we look at the number of news articles by political camp, then once again the pattern in 2019 echoes with that observed by Ng et al. (2019) back in 2015-16, namely, the coverage of non-refoulement claimants in Hong Kong were mainly done by pro-Beijing news media, as almost 85% of the news articles on this issue came from pro-Beijing affiliated media outlets. (Question: Should I just lump pro-democracy and neutral outlets into the ‘non-pro-Beijing’ category then?)

Next will be to look at how the number of articles might vary temporally in figure 4.2. Month-wise, January was the month with the highest amount of asylum-seeker-related articles published

4. Results

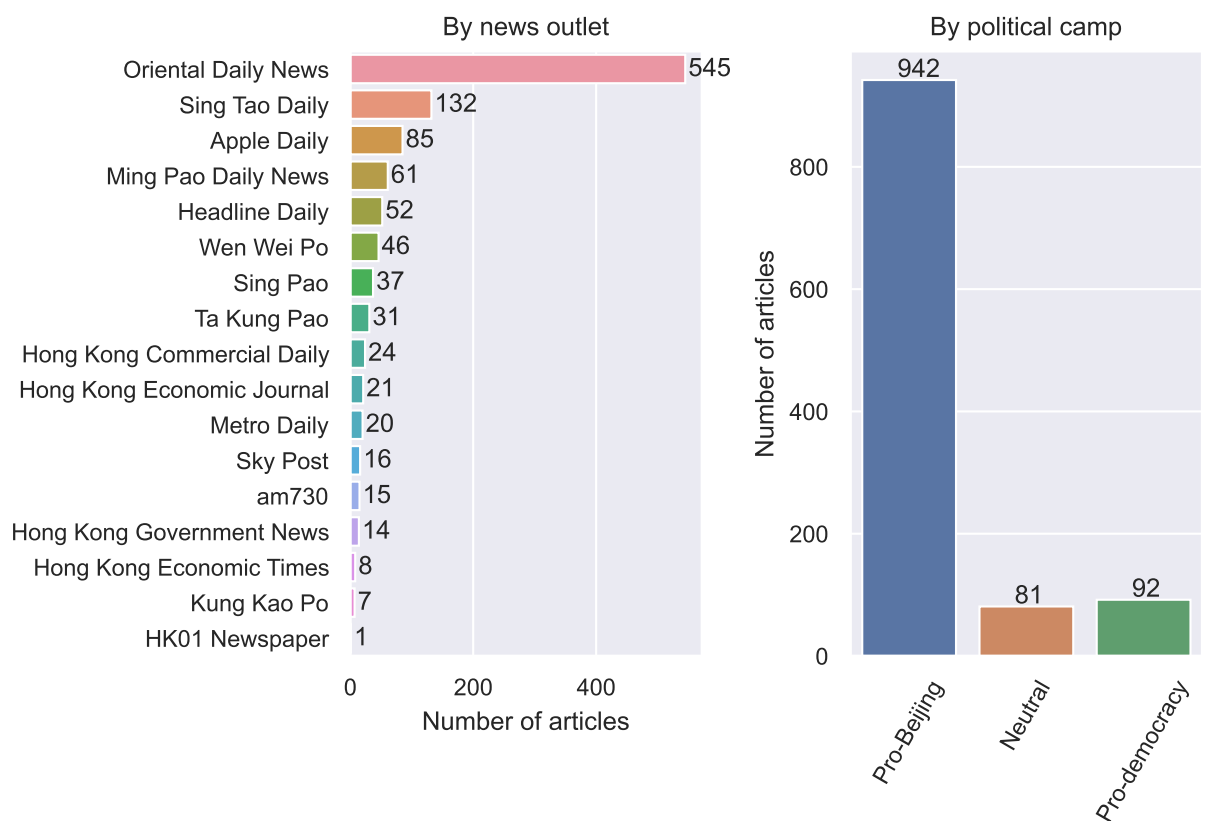


Figure 4.1: News articles on asylum seekers in 2019 by news outlet (left) and political camp (right)

4. Results

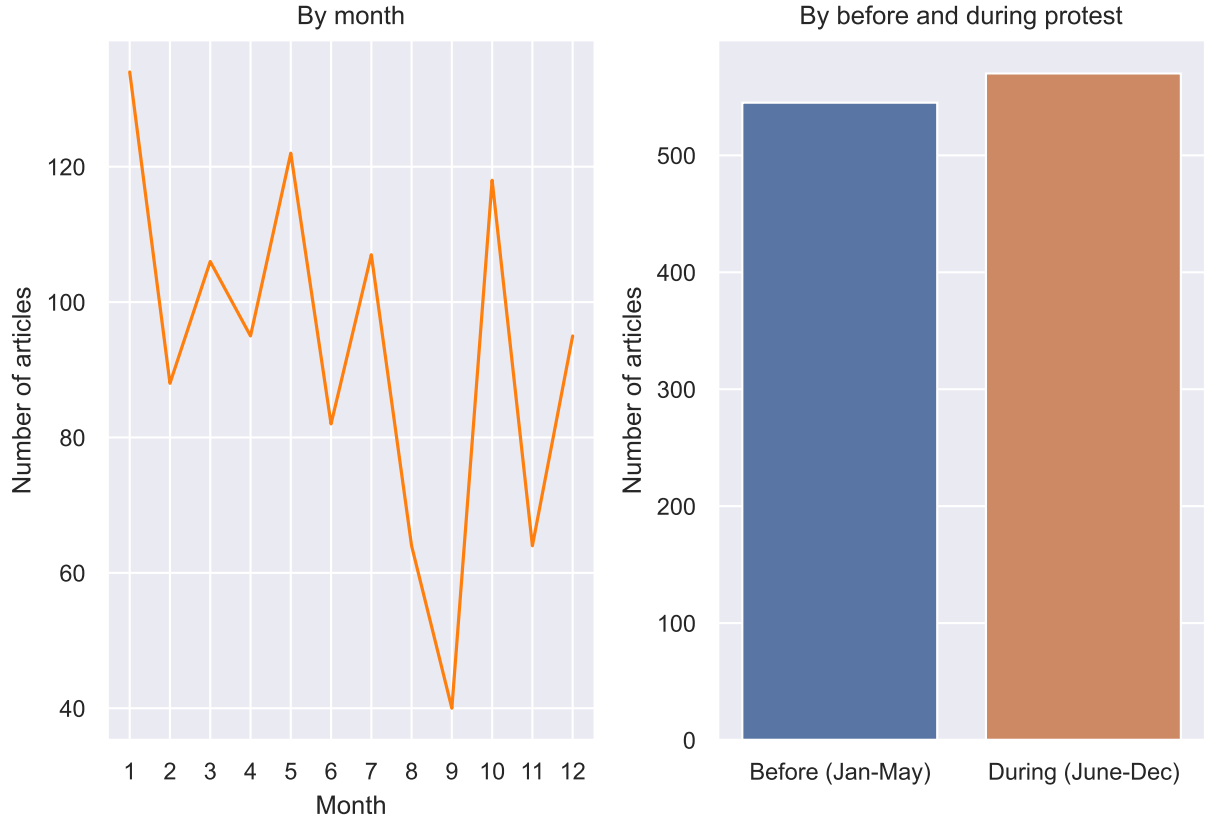


Figure 4.2: Temporal patterns of the publication of news articles about asylum seekers in Hong Kong in 2019

in 2019. Since then, the coverage of asylum seekers decreased from February to April until it bounced back in May. As the Anti-Extradition Law Protest started in June, the number of articles published first rose slightly in July and then dropped drastically in the next two months, until the figure bounced back again in October. If we look at the number of news articles published before and during the anti-extradition law protest since June, then the two periods had similar amounts of publications.

4.1.2 Character lengths of news articles and titles

The next interesting pattern to explore will be the distribution of the word count of each document, which are shown on the histograms in figure 4.3. On the left plot, a large proportion of the news articles have their title's word counts ranging from 10 to 20 Chinese characters long, but there are also articles whose titles have more than 50 characters. On the right of figure 4.3 is the distribution of the word counts of the main texts in the news articles prior to preprocessing.

4. Results

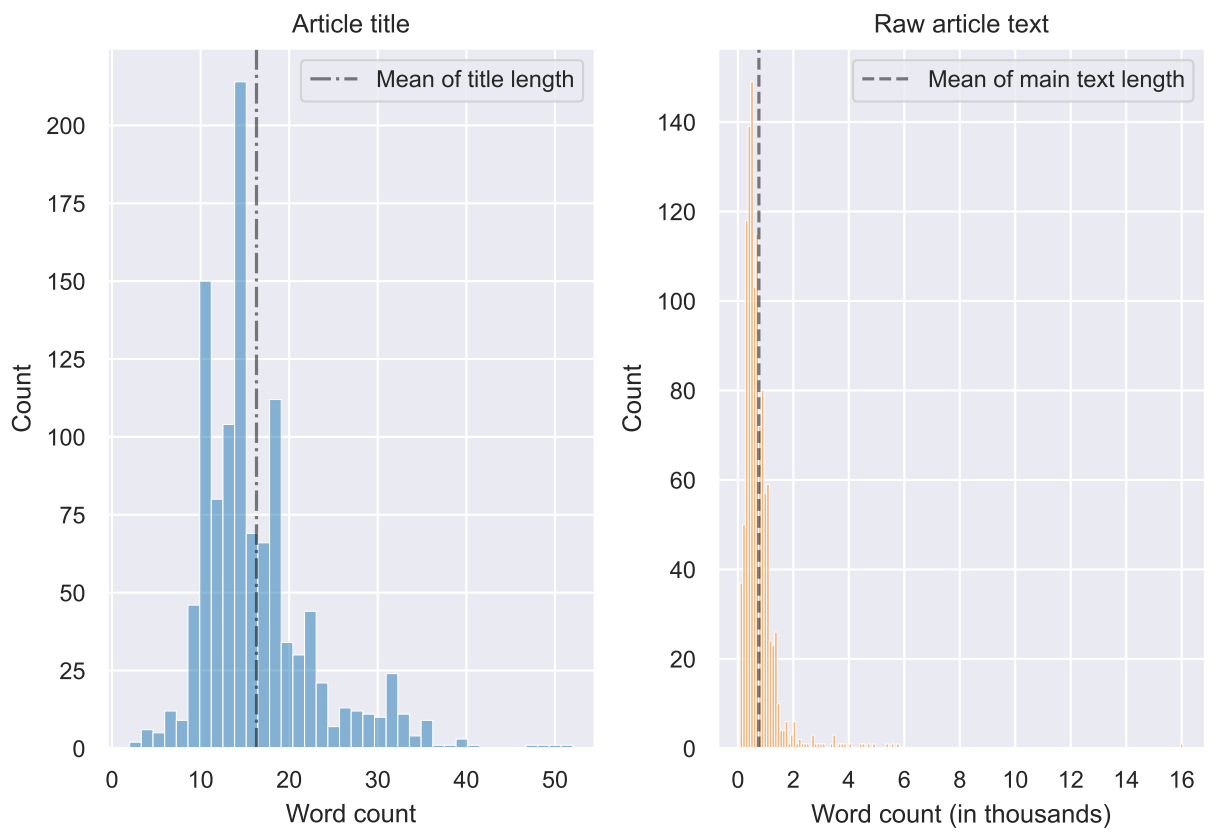


Figure 4.3: Distributions of the word counts of the articles' titles (left) and main texts (right)

4. Results

Table 4.1: Summary statistics of the word counts of the news articles' titles and main texts

	Title	Raw main text
count	1115.000000	1115.0000
mean	16.313901	757.9040
std	6.474098	745.3073
min	2.000000	80.0000
25%	12.000000	417.5000
50%	15.000000	612.0000
75%	19.000000	915.0000
max	52.000000	16051.0000

Most of the news articles in the dataset were less than 2000 characters long, but there was one with around 16000 words in the main text as well. Table 4.1 contains the detailed summary statistics of the lengths of the news articles' titles and main texts.

4.2 The most common words in the news articles

4.3 Topic modelling

After performing the required steps to clean up the textual data, it is time to

860 **Chapter 5**

861 **Conclusion**

862 In sum, `{iheiddown}` offers an easy way to write IHEID-consistent theses, but is enormously
863 extensible and adaptable, allowing students to craft their own dissertations and other documents.

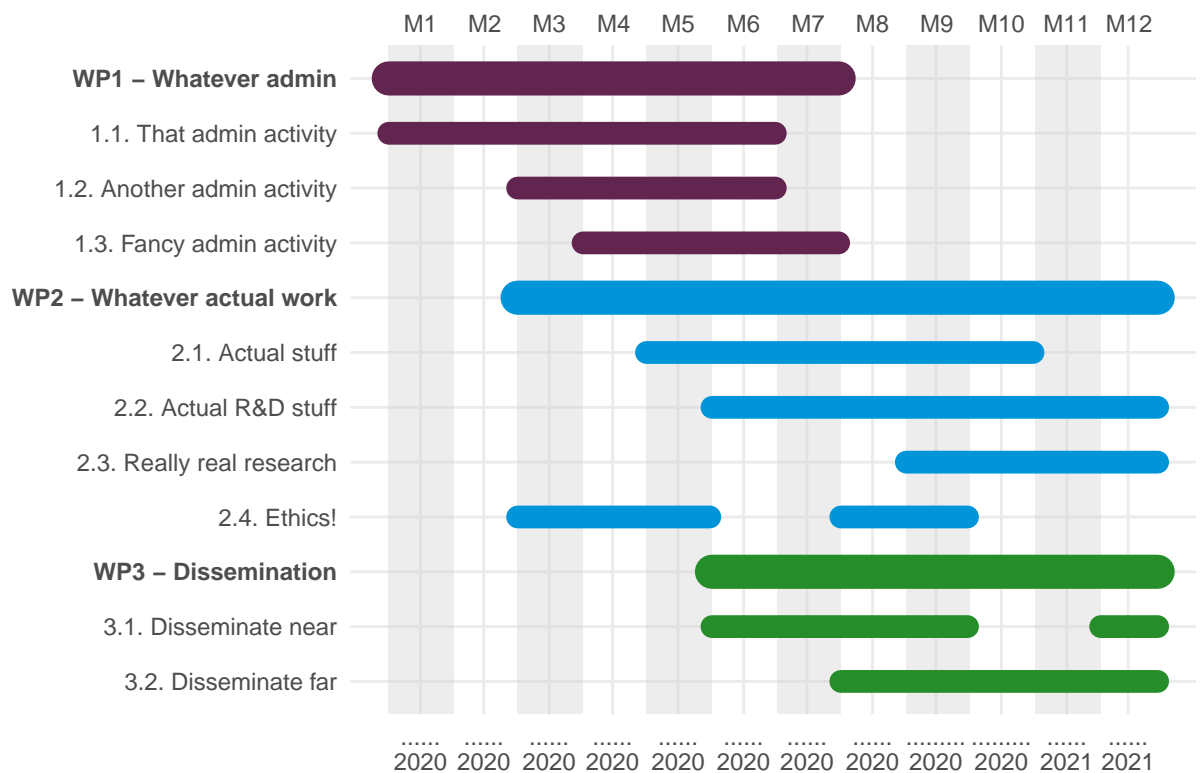
864 **5.1 Using `iheiddown` for proposals**

865 As an example of this, let us consider how one might begin using `iheiddown` from the start of a
866 masters or doctoral dissertation, and not just at the end while ‘writing up’ (a good idea in any
867 case).

868 One feature often requested by supervisors from DDPs and MPTs is the preparation of a
869 plan about how and when the various tasks associated with the project will be completed. Your
870 supervisor may even ask for this to be presented in a table or a Gantt chart.

871 We have covered tables in the previous chapter. Here I want to offer a quick vignette about
872 how you can create a Gantt chart that outlines the temporal progression you expect to make. We
873 will use the `{gantrify}` package to do this.

5. Conclusion



874

5.2 Additional resources

875

876 • *Markdown* Cheatsheet

877 • *RMarkdown*

878 – Reference Guide

879 – Cheatsheet

880 – For newbies

881 • *RStudio IDE*

882 – Official website

883 – Cheatsheet

884 • *dplyr*

885 • *ggplot2*

5. Conclusion

- 886 – Documentation
- 887 – Cheatsheet
- 888 • bookdown

889 **5.3 Anything else?**

890 If you'd like to see examples of other things in this template, please add them as feature requests
891 to the `iheiddown` website. We love to see people using *RMarkdown* for their theses, and are happy
892 to help.

893 **Appendix: The Echoes of the Code**

894 The goal of this appendix is to echo the code you used in your thesis for a greater sense of
895 transparency and replicability of your research. Note that `ref.labels` can be set to any label.
896 Hence, you can filter the code you want replicated in the appendix by setting labels to the desired
897 code chunks in the various chapters. See this excellent resource for more information.

898 This might be particularly useful when you perform model selection to output intermediary
899 steps here instead of in the code to avoid cluttering your report.

Appendix: The Echoes of the Code redux

Add as many appendices as you like.

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917 [for-fake-refugees-to-be-put-in-camp-and-deported/](https://hongkongfp.com/2016/04/11/dab-party-sets-up-in-tsim-sha-tsui-calling-for-fake-refugees-to-be-put-in-camp-and-deported/) (visited on 11/21/2021).
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