

HOW CHINA AND CHINESE PEOPLE ARE VISUALLY REPRESENTED: THE CASE OF A SERIES OF LIBERAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS IN HONG KONG

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The aim of the research is to examine how Mainland China and Chinese people are represented in the visual materials of four sets of Liberal Studies (LS) textbooks in Hong Kong.

Methods. Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, viewing language as a social practice and Teun A. van Dijk's ideological coding categories are integrated to analyse discursive representations (e.g. the embedded hidden power) in the *Hong Kong Today* volumes published by four influential commercial publishers: *Modern*, *Ming Pao*, *Marshall*, and *Aristo*.

Results. The analysis reveals that China and mainland Chinese are negatively portrayed in visual images in four commercial LS textbooks, in which the representations concerning mainland China and mainlanders are all found ideologically biased to highlight their negative characteristics and alienness.

Conclusions. Through the lens of critical discourse analysis, the reasons underpinning China and its people being represented negatively in LS textbooks are traced to the British colonial government's manipulation of educational policies, which tends to distance the Hong Kong students from Chinese nationalism.

Key words: Hong Kong, Liberal Studies, textbooks analysis, critical discourse analysis, visual images



INTRODUCTION

Secondary school Liberal Studies (LS) textbooks in Hong Kong became controversial in 2019, which was the year when many violent street protests arose ignited by the launch of an extradition bill. Many media outlets and netizens suspected the content in the LS textbooks instigated young people to participate in the violence; they claimed multiple LS textbooks contained content biased against mainland China and Chinese people, misleading the younger generation. (Kong, 2020; Liu et al., 2019; Chen, 2020; Jun, 2019; “HKSAR chief executive holds 1st community dialogue,” 2019; “Youth have something to say,” 2020; “Youths are strapped into chariots of violence,” 2020)

LS is one of four core subjects (Liberal Studies, Chinese language, mathematics, and English language) that were introduced to Hong Kong’s secondary schools in 2009. LS covers six modules including *Personal Development and Interpersonal Relations*, *Hong Kong Today*, *Modern China*, *Globalisation*, *Public Health*, *Energy Technology*, and *the Environment*. The aim of this subject is to “broaden students’ knowledge base and enhance students’ social awareness through the study of wide range of issues” (Curriculum Development Council & Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2007, p. 1). Students need to pass the LS course in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education examination to be eligible for university enrolment. However, LS adopts a flexible curriculum design, unlike the other three core subjects, i.e. the Education Bureau (EDB) does not enforce a standardised LS curriculum (Wu, 2020). Teaching materials can be drawn from any social or political affair occurring in Hong Kong (Adrian, 2019). As such, LS teachers and commercial publishers are free to adapt LS teaching guidelines according to their preferences and beliefs.

A search of the literature reveals only one study analysing LS textbooks (Wu, 2020). Wenxi Wu (2020), using critical discourse analysis, found that the LS textbooks (*Modern China* series) were actually a venue for authors with different political positions to negotiate and mediate through the content of the textbooks. In essence, Wu (2020) found the textbooks contain information showing a bias towards mainland China. Triggered by Wu’s study, in our own reading of the same LS textbooks, we found there are many images (cartoons, photos, and QR codes directing readers to access websites containing video materials) in them. As Kawakib Al-Momani, Muhammad A. Badarneh, and Fathi Migdadi (2017) claim, cartoons are not “produced simply for fun and innocent play, [but] are representations of social phenomena and are guided by social and ideological intent” (p. 65). However, Wu’s focus was on text rather than the images. Therefore, the current study aims to enrich the analysis by using Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis to explore another controversial LS textbook, *Hong Kong Today*, with a focus on its visual contents, including the cartoons, photos, and videos. Accordingly, the study aims to answer the following question:

How do the images contained in a Liberal Studies textbook reveal biases about Mainland China and its people?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study adopts critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine discursive representations (e.g. the embedded hidden power) in the *Hong Kong Today* volumes published by four influential commercial publishers: *Modern* edited by Modern Educational Research Society Editorial Committee (2016), *Ming Pao* edited by Chuxian Lai, Minghui Wang, and Huixi Ye (2018), *Marshall* edited by Wengang Bai et al. (2014), and *Aristo* edited by Lifang Wu, Mingle Huang, Tianci Huang, and Ting Mai (2018). CDA sees language as a form of “social practice” (Fairclough, 2015); according to Fairclough (2015), the relationship between language and society is internal and dialectical. Therefore, through CDA those “whose interests are represented, helped, or harmed” can be analysed from texts (Gee, 2011, p. 204). Although there are various approaches to CDA, the present study adopts Fairclough’s three-dimensional conception of discourse (1995, p. 97), i.e. text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. Using CDA as the epistemological underpinning of the research, the present study takes the broader historical, social, and political contexts into its analysis to discover possible power relations. Many textbook analyses have adopted Fairclough’s CDA as their theoretical framework. For example, Jackie F. K. Lee (2019) examined how gender is portrayed in Japanese EFL textbooks in the promotion of “Womenomics.” Lee (2019) found that the depiction of females was still underrepresented, whereas males were portrayed in a wider range of social roles than women. Reni Puspitasari Dwi Lestariyana, Handoyo Puji Widodo, and Urip Sulistiyo (2020), who examined the representation of female characters in two Indonesian English language textbooks, found that gender stereotypes still exist in the textbooks. Similarly, Jackie F. K. Lee and Vahid Mahmoudi-Gahruei (2020) focused on how gender is represented in the English textbooks published by the Iranian Ministry of Education; they showed that the images of males were constructed by the book authors as dominant figures under the influence of Islamic culture while the images of women were limited to family and school contexts.

Other studies have focused on examining how ideological bias is represented in images, especially in news articles and political activities. However, relevant studies adopting CDA to examine visual materials in textbooks are rare. Jiayu Wang (2012) adopted CDA together with visual grammar to examine the five photos of the Dalai Lama published in *the New York Times*. The findings showed that news media can make use of pictures to manipulate ideologies. Al-Momani, Badarneh, and Migdadi (2017) used semantic analysis to examine Jordanian political cartoons used in a parliamentary election campaign. The finding revealed that the political cartoons

had positive ideological implications. Further, Viviane Heberle and Marcos Mogado (2016) integrated the systematic functional linguistics and CDA to examine how Brazilian migrants are visually represented in various news media in a biased way. Some media constructed the immigrants as an out-group who are unwanted and treated as a burden to society, while other media constructed them as victims (ingroup).

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Tracing back reasons why ideological biases are hidden in the visual language in LS textbooks of Hong Kong, a brief historical summary of Hong Kong society and where these commercial LS textbooks are produced and published appears pertinent. As noted by Fairclough (2015), language is socially determined as it is a part of society and the relationship between language and society is internal and dialectical, and therefore “all linguistic phenomena are social” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 56).

Historically, Hong Kong was a British colony from 1841 to 1997. At the beginning of the 20th century, the colonial authorities in Hong Kong were eager to make Hong Kong a platform for cultivating bilingual cultural ambassadors to broaden the Sino-British trade market; therefore, they did not excessively intervene in the Hong Kong school system (Luk, 1991). During that period, Hong Kong’s colonial government allowed the local Chinese, who comprised the majority of the Hong Kong population, to provide basic education in private institutions (i.e. *sishu*), which often adopted a similar curriculum as in mainland China (Luk, 1991). However, by the 1930s, the colonial authorities’ non-interference policy towards Hong Kong’s educational system began to change. There were two major reasons that triggered Hong Kong’s colonial government to review its previous educational policy on the Chinese school curriculum. After World War II, there was a wave of anti-colonial liberation wars on a global scale. Hong Kong, as one of the few remaining colonies, was situated at the forefront of the “storm.” Simultaneously, with the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the “teaching contents imported from China ... inevitably took a left turn” (Luk, 1991, p. 64). The colonial authorities in Hong Kong could not accept Hong Kong as a Communist propaganda hub (Luk, 1991), and they worried that mainland China may bring Chinese nationalism into Hong Kong via educational materials; therefore, the colonial government formed a special committee on Chinese Studies to review the relevant curriculums of subjects such as literature, Chinese Language, and Chinese history in the Chinese private institutions (Luk, 1991). After the committee’s investigation, they claimed: “In the past, Chinese studies in China tended to aim at producing arrogant and bigoted Chinese nationalists. This is not educationally sound and should be strongly discouraged in Hong Kong”. (Education Department, 1953,

p. 95). Instead, the colonial authorities took a series of measures to reinforce “the intimate ties that bind Hong Kong to Great Britain” (Education Department, 1953, p. 1). The contents in the subjects dealing with China were thus adapted to de-nationalise the Chinese school curriculum (Li, 2021). As noted by Bernard Hung-Kay Luk (1991), the colonial authorities in Hong Kong cherry-picked contents for subjects related to Chinese culture and some parts were removed. For example, the contents concerning fostering a sense of patriotism and national identity were absent in the revised national curricular document (Luk, 1991). Accounts about China having been invaded by the West were weakened in history textbooks, whereas the invasion of China by Japan and Russia was highlighted. The colonial state in Hong Kong deleted the “nationalistic theme previously inscribed by the *Kuo Ming Tang* (the Chinese Nationalist Party) in history textbooks, where the ‘West’ was positioned as the enemy to be against” (Wong, 2012, p. 109) and instead, Western modernisation was promoted as a role model to be studied. According to the committee report (1953), Hong Kong children were encouraged to learn about the Western culture to “have a liberal, balanced and international outlook” (Education Department, 1953, p. 19).

In 1952, denationalisation and cultural exclusion were also taught in the creation of a Chinese School Certificate Examination (CSEC) for students graduating from Chinese middle schools (Wong, 2012). CSEC was regarded as a device to disconnect the Chinese school curriculum in Hong Kong from that of mainland China (Cheng, 1954, as cited in Wong, 2012). According to Yulong Li and Xiaojing Liu (2021), only some factual knowledge about China’s landscape, climate and some cities were mentioned in the Chinese Geography curriculum. Chinese cultural elements were seen as a “selective tradition that hindered the creation of Chinese national identity” (Wong, 2012, p. 110). Chinese language learning was limited to only the language itself without political overtones (Li & Xiao, 2020) and the learning of traditional Chinese culture was only for an appreciation of the arts and for a comparative understanding of Western culture (Wong, 2012). Key historic events were eliminated from Chinese history textbooks (Wong, 2012). For example, the war against Japan (i.e. Chinese Civil War and the post-1949 era) was excluded from the history syllabus (Wong, 2012). The nationalist government in Nanjing (the *Kuo Ming Tang*) was highlighted in Chinese history textbooks whereas the People’s Republic of China (The Communist Party of China) was ignored. The May 4th movement, an ideological movement against feudalism and anti-imperialism (Chow, 1980), was simply described as a literary movement despite its importance in the formation of Chinese nationalism (Wong, 2012; Li & Liu, 2021).

Apart from denationalising the implementation of educational policies, the colonial state made use of mass media to distance Hongkong from its motherland culturally. Beginning in the 1960s, the colonial government began to rely on mass entertainment to promote the local

culture, which helped to formulate a distinctive local culture (Ho, 2009). The boom in Hong Kong's film, television and music industries began to portray a modern Hong Kong lifestyle (Yu & Kwan, 2017) and by strong contrast, mainland China was concurrently constructed as a place of chaos, poverty, and backwardness (Ho, 2009). In this way, the mass media tended to emphasise the uniqueness of the Hong Kong identity by underlining the huge difference between Hong Kong and mainland China. Oscar Ho Hing-kay (2009) claims that this unique local identity served as a soft political defence during the Cold War period to prevent communist ideology from entering Hong Kong from the mainland. However, this kind of media propaganda that stigmatised the mainland gradually left an indelible mark on the psyche of many Hong Kong people. Although this bias should have faded with the end of the Cold War, even recently, Hong Kong's mass media has continued to produce a discriminatory discourse against the Chinese mainland, often exaggeratedly criticising the uncivilised behaviour of some mainland visitors (Ho, 2009). In such an atmosphere, a biased discourse against the Chinese mainland has been strengthening (Li & Xiao, 2020) and the Hong Kong public has gradually absorbed the discourse. This discourse has naturally been extended into the LS textbooks, which tend to label and portray China and its people negatively.

Economically, the colonial authorities in Hong Kong began to implement a *laissez-faire* policy after the anti-colonial liberation wave swept the world. The *laissez-faire* policy is related to neoliberalism, referring to the reduction of the government's control over the market (Li & Xiao, 2020). Under this neoliberal policy, Hong Kong has achieved great economic development (Mizuoka, 2014), giving its people a high standard of living. This economic progress generally concealed social conflicts and anti-colonial sentiments caused by the previous colonial system (Cheng, 2014). However, Hong Kong's rapid economic development widened the gap between Hong Kong and the mainland, intensifying the difference between the residents of the two places. After mainland China's reform and opening up in the 1980s, the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong Province attracted Hong Kong's intensive manufacturing industries because of its low labour costs (Cheng, 2014). At the same time, these companies did not continue to develop core technologies and did not create new industrial models, which also threatened the Hong Kong economy and severely affected local employment opportunities and the upward mobility of people's social class (Cheng, 2014). Under the stagnant economic situation and the huge gap between the rich and the poor, many people in Hong Kong mistakenly believe that this situation was caused by the Chinese authorities after Hong Kong's sovereignty return in 1997 (Li & Xiao, 2020). This partly explains why some Hong Kong people have a deep-rooted prejudice against visitors and immigrants from the mainland and believe that they are occupying Hong Kong's resources (Li & Xiao,

2020). The above factors have led to Hong Kong residents' negative attitude towards mainland China.

From a socio-political perspective, after Hong Kong's handover to the PRC, communication between Hong Kong and the mainland became increasingly frequent. The launch of the Individual Visit Scheme in 2003 allowed millions of mainland visitors from 49 mainland cities to visit Hong Kong as individuals rather than in tour groups (Lin et al., 2021). The scheme was originally designed to boost Hong Kong's economy. However, it triggered tensions between mainland visitors and Hong Kong residents. In 2014, nearly 48 million mainland visitors came to Hong Kong and the huge inflow of tourists led to a series of social conflicts between Hong Kong and the mainland (Chan, 2014). Mainland visitors annoyed Hong Kong residents as they are accused of making Hong Kong overcrowded and disturbing social order with their impolite behaviour (Piu-chan et al., 2018).

METHOD

To analyse the images, we used Teun A. van Dijk's (2006) linguistic coding categories, which can be seen as an extension of Fairclough's CDA framework. van Dijk distinguishes his CDA approach from Fairclough's by including the cognition of the users/producers in the analysis. To van Dijk (2006), discourse is seen as a communicative event, including semiotic or multimedia signifiers such as oral and written text, gestures, and images. Because the LS textbooks examined in the present study contain many images and multimedia resources, van Dijk CDA's approach appears suitable as the coding method. Specifically, we used the following two coding principles from van Dijk (2006, 2015) in our analysis: polarisation, in which the underlying "ideologies are polarizing between a positive representation of the in-group and a negative representation of the outgroup" (van Dijk, 2015, p. 73), and categorisation, which emphasises the differences between the positively described self and negatively described others (van Dijk, 2015).

One further code we used is Ebuka Elias Igwebuiké's negative labelling (2018). Igwebuiké (2018, p.7) suggests using labelling to express distinctions in discourse: labelling is a "linguistic process of portraying a particular person or group of people with positive or negative traits." According to Igwebuiké, whether the labels attributed to a certain individual or group are positive or negative depends on the perceived social attitudes associated with them. He particularly emphasised that negative labels are adopted to "condemn" and "attack a group's ideologies" (Igwebuiké, 2018, p. 157).

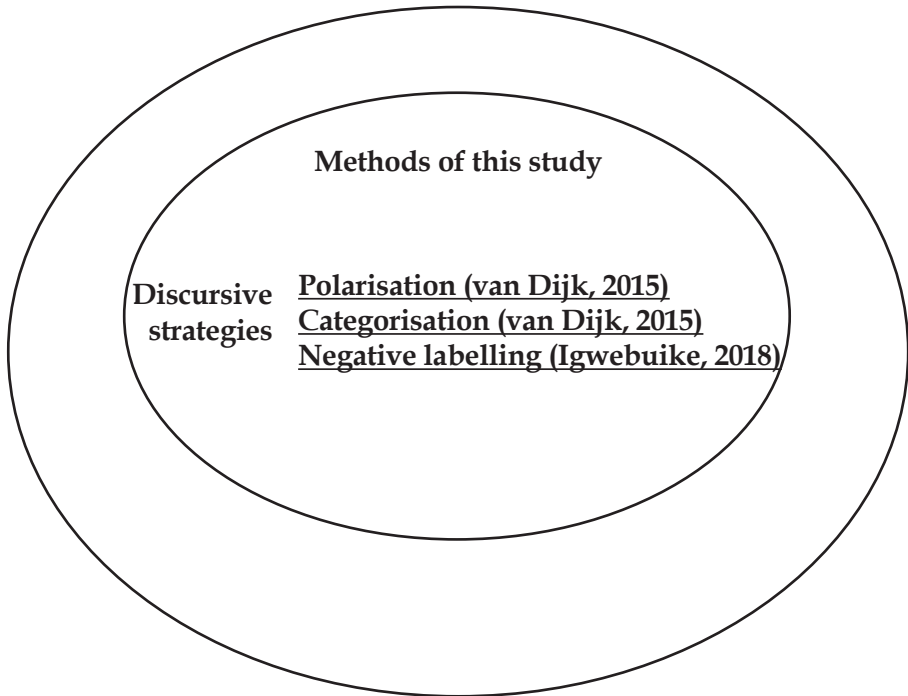


Fig. 1

Theoretical Framework of This Study

Note: *Fairclough's (1995, 2015) CDA as the epistemology of this study.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the present study, the LS series, *Hong Kong Today*, represented by four commercial LS textbooks, was examined; these sets of LS textbooks are all mainstream and are representative of LS textbooks in the Hong Kong market. Each image in all the textbooks was first isolated. Then we independently viewed the photos and coded them according to van Dijk's and Igwebuike's coding schemes. In terms of the coding reliability, both researchers have reached the agreement level of 80%. There have been some disagreements between the two researchers. For example, when the first author was discussing pangolin, the corresponding author was not thinking the picture of pangolin contained biased information. However, after the discussion between both, we reached the agreement that it could be an ideologically biased visual image. We then compared our codes and agreed on six negative labelling images in reference to mainland Chinese or its people, and three polarising images which distanced mainland China and Hong Kong.

NEGATIVE LABELLING

In the *Ming Pao* version of the LS textbook, Mainland Chinese were found to be labelled with an ironic term and two phrases with negative meanings. Under a section called, *the construction of identity*, a cartoon world map appears in which different countries are labelled with more than one keyword to describe their respective characteristics (Lai et al., 2018, p. 195), some of which we found to be labelled negatively. China, for instance, was labelled with three words. One of them was “Qiang Guo,” which means “powerful nation” (a slogan the Chinese government uses to promote and propagate its international image). However, *Qiang Guo* has become an ironic or satirical reference for mainland China and mainlanders among many of the netizens in online forums of Hong Kong and Taiwan (Farrelly et al., 2019). Another two keywords the book uses to label China are “Heixin Shipin” (meaning black heart food or contaminated food) and “Doufuzha Gongcheng” (meaning poor quality construction project). No positive terms concerning China on the map are present. In contrast with how the developed countries are labelled (such as the US representing “democracy and freedom,” and Japan representing “politeness”), China seems deviant through the negative labels.

Elsewhere in the LS textbooks, photos that contained negative labels of mainland China or mainlanders were found. For example, in a chapter that discusses environmental challenges in Hong Kong, the *Ming Pao* LS textbook contains three photos. The first photo shows Hong Kong’s Victoria Harbor blanketed in smog; however, under the image is a caption stating that the carcinogenic polluted air originated from the mainland (Lai et al., 2018, p. 29). Here, without providing any evidence, mainland China is labelled negatively. In the *Aristo* and *Modern* versions of the LS textbooks, China’s environmental issue is also negatively labelled. *Aristo* LS textbook (Wu et al., 2018, p. 231) contains a photo of smog in a Chinese city. It states that China is posing severe threats to surrounding countries due to its air pollution without providing any proof (Wu et al., 2018). The *Modern* version of the LS textbook shows another photo of a polluted place in China without indicting the location and goes on to claim that the water in China is toxic and unsuitable to drink by humans or animals (Modern Editorial Committee, 2016, p. 253).

In addition, in a section discussing Hong Kong’s legislative issues, the *Ming Pao* textbook has a cartoon under the title, *What is the rule of law?* (Lai et al., 2018, p. 129). In the cartoon, a Chinese panda is depicted wearing an old-fashioned Chinese soldier’s hat while holding a red book with a red star on the cover (resembling Chairman Mao Tse-tung’s quotation book during the Chinese Cultural Revolution); on the book cover, there is the line: “Yifa Zhiguo” (to rule the country by law). On the other side of the page, there is another cartoon, showing the statue of the ancient Greek goddess, Themis, blindfolded with a cloth holding a balance symbolising fairness. The con-

trast, or polarisation (see below), here is clear. The goddess is meant to represent fairness juxtaposed against the panda in a Chinese soldier's hat and chairman Mao's red book, portraying the rule of law in China as based on a certain person's idea or a certain group's idea rather than justice and fairness. Thus, the cartoons are clear examples of negative labelling of China. Although it is true that Chinese and Western justice systems are different, displaying the Chinese justice system in such a blatantly negative way only encourages stereotyping.

Another example in the *Ming Pao* version introduces a QR code for student readers to scan (p. 201). At the associated link, an internet song entitled, "Huangchong Tianxia" (the world of locusts), appears on YouTube, the online video sharing platform. Among the Hong Kong populous, the term "locust" is a well-known derogatory reference to mainland Chinese coined by Hong Kong web users who depict mainlanders as exploiting local welfare resources or visitors who have uncivilised behaviour (Sautman & Yan, 2015). According to Barry Victor Sautman and Hairong Yan (2015), the song contains the extreme stereotypical language of mainlanders, describing them as savage. In its defence, the textbook does ask student readers to correct what they may feel is improper about the lyrics; however, the textbook provides no instructions or hints on how student readers should be critical of the lyrics:

Mainlanders cast their greedy eyes on the right of abode in Hong Kong (ROA).
Mainlanders take up Hongkong medical resources and daily necessities.

Mainlanders splash their cash in public ... The mainland is full of fakes and fake food (Lai et al., 2018, p. 201, our translation).

Such content has the potential to reinforce the negative labelling of Chinese mainlanders as welfare-scavenging "locusts." In another example of negative labelling of mainlanders, the *Ming Pao* version uses the term "fox." The textbook has a poster with a sneering fox carrying money and houses, with the caption in simplified Chinese.

An expressway to get a one-way permit for entry to Hong Kong or to get a package to arrange a fake marriage with Hong Kong people. [Once you obtain a Hong Kong ID card], you can live a worry-free life by enjoying Hong Kong's public social welfare, including a counsel estate, quality and affordable medical service, comprehensive social warfare and assistance, and sponsorship for the elderly and the handicapped. (Lai et al., 2018, p. 251, our translation)

One-way permit for entry in the preceding paragraph refers to a visa document issued by the mainland for supporting mainlanders in settling in Hong Kong to reunite with their families. It is notable that the other part of this LS textbook is written in traditional Chinese characters, which is the official written form used in Hong Kong and Macau. Only this poster is written in simplified Chinese characters, which is officially used in Mainland China. This indicates the "target viewers" for this cartoon post are

mainlanders. Interestingly, this cartoon-oriented poster is portraying mainland Chinese in a poor light, attempting to give the impression to readers that mainland Chinese are clever foxes desperate to obtain Hong Kong's social welfare. From the above analysis, these LS textbooks deploy numerous negative labels towards mainland China and its people leading readers to hold negative attitudes towards them.

US-THEM POLARISATION

Us-them categorisation and polarisation are often portrayed in the LS textbooks, meaning the ideological construction of the in-group (us) and the out-group (them) in certain texts is evident via semantic distinctions in the choice of language (van Dijk, 2006). In the present study, the "us" and "them" are respectively Hong Kong people and mainlanders. In the *Marshall* version (Bai et al., 2018, p. 209), there is a cartoon once again showing Goddess Themis standing on top of Hong Kong's high court building trying to defend against a red cloud. In a sample explanation provided by the textbook, it says that Themis is the personalisation of justice representing Hong Kong's judicial system while the red cloud signifies the influence of mainland China. Here, Hong Kong and mainland China in this cartoon align with the us-them polarisation.

The *Modern* version has another cartoon about the "Shuangfei" controversy (Modern Editorial Committee, 2016, p. 136). Shuangfei refers to pregnant women from the mainland giving birth to children in Hong Kong and their children are entitled to the rights of Hong Kong citizens. In the picture, pregnant women (which the textbook marks as Shuangfei women) are queuing to enter Hong Kong at the border and then lining up at a Hong Kong hospital. Following this, their children are born and are given Hong Kong residency and years later they have the right to study in Hong Kong schools. Standing in the corner of the picture is another group of Hong Kong parents protesting the Shuangfei. The cartoon attempts to draw a contrast between mainland Chinese and Hong Kong locals. The cartoon thus highlights the in-group's antagonism and separation from the out-group.

A similar us-them strategy is found in the text of the *Ming Pao* version. In the picture, a pangolin immigration officer is meeting with a crab, and the pangolin officer asks: "Hi Chinese Crab, how is everything going?" The crab replies: "Sorry, I am a Hong Kong crab, not a Chinese crab." The pangolin replies: "After Hong Kong's handover to China, Hong Kong has become a part of China, and you should be a Chinese crab." The crab refutes: "But I'm a Nan hai xi xie" (south sea creek crab), which is a unique Hong Kong species. The pangolin then claims: "But you have to be identified as a Chinese crab due to political factors." The crab rejects this and argues, "I was born in the 1980s, which is the colonial period, and I should be identified as a British-Hong Kong crab" (Lai et al., 2018, p. 178, our trans-

lation). An underlying ideological polarisation exists in the above images where Hong Kong and Chinese national identities are contrasted with the Hong Kong identity highlighted as distinct from the Chinese one. Here, China and mainland Chinese are identified as “them.”

CONCLUSION

The present study adopted CDA to examine how China and mainland Chinese are visually represented in the *Hong Kong series* of four versions of mainstream commercial LS textbooks. Through an analysis of the series *Hong Kong Today*, among the four sets of LS textbooks published by four well-known Hong Kong commercial publishers, this study found that these LS textbooks are ideologically biased towards mainland China. Findings show that ideological biases are coded in visual materials. China and mainland Chinese in most cases are represented in a negative or unfavourable way. All commercial LS textbooks' representations of mainland China and mainlanders highlight their negative characteristics and alienness. Codification of particular ideologies is made by emphasising or de-emphasising the good and bad properties of us-them (van Dijk, 2006, p. 127). Two commonly used discursive strategies are adopted to polarise China and mainland Chinese people.

Negative labels are found to be assigned to China and mainland Chinese. Specifically, China is represented in a poor light, labelled as a country full of fake products and poor construct quality. The ironic term “powerful nation” is found to degrade China's image. In sharp contrast, the UK and the USA are labelled with fancy names such as queen, Harry Potter, and democracy. China is constructed as a “selfish” country, focusing on economic development by sacrificing its environmental protection and destroying surrounding countries or their environments as well. This negative labelling of China is not only represented in text-based language but also detected in the visual language (i.e. cartoons). The power of cartoons in textbooks should not be underestimated as images can demonstrate political stances and strengthen ideologies and power relations (Davies et al., 2008). Cartoons in LS textbooks are ideologically biased, labelling or outlining China in an unfavourable light. Apart from labelling China, some LS textbooks also contain blatant prejudice against mainland Chinese, labelling them “locust” to occupy Hong Kong's social resources. The above case studies provide many overall negative references to mainlanders. China and Chinese national identity are found to be marginalised as an ideological outgroup distinctive from Hong Kong and its local identity. In these LS textbooks, the distinction between ingroup and outgroups is quite straightforward, in which ingroups are Hong Kong and Hong Kongers, whose positive attributes are emphasised, whereas China and mainland Chinese are identified as “them” and described in negative ways. The LS textbooks

repeatedly foreground Hong Kong people's negative attitudes towards mainland Chinese. This present study has only focused on analysing biased visual images published in four commercial publishers in Hong Kong and the number of samples is relatively small. Future studies could expand the sample scale and make the comparison between the government published LS textbooks and commercial LS textbooks. Moreover, corpus techniques can be used in future study as the use of multimodal corpus can make the future study more objective and scientific.

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