

A Project entitled  
*No News is Good News: A Study in Tin Shui Wai*

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## Declaration

I, *He Funan* declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of *Professor CHIU, Wing Kai Stephen*, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

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20.4.2024

## **ABSTRACT**

In the information age, news consumption has undeniably become an indispensable part of our daily lives. However, a worrying trend is emerging in Hong Kong's community journalism landscape. This report explores the widespread problem of too much negative news and the dominance of single-source reporting in Tin Shui Wai. This research shows that media organizations are excessively focused on reporting negative events, covering positive community developments. Negative events are not only amplified and prioritized in coverage, but this negativity bias paints a harsh picture of a community. In addition, reliance on single-source news reporting, especially over-reliance on information provided by the public sector, has led media organizations to question the diversity and reliability of information disseminated to the community. The lack of diverse perspectives may lead to a biased understanding of events, affecting society's perception of the community of the truth, thus giving rise to prejudice.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Research Background**

A proverb says, “No news is good news.” It contains a view on news reporting, which means that most news, at least what the media reports, is bad news; this is a standard reporting mechanism. This proverb reflects the tendency of the news media to prefer negative news about crises, conflicts, and issues when reporting on them. In communities, large and small, this phenomenon is reflected in the mechanisms for reporting and disseminating information.

Most people rely on one or two news organizations for local information in a world where the media monopolizes community information (Hilbig & Riaz, 2023). A single source of information makes it difficult for us to distinguish whether this portrayal of the community is based on neutrality or the stance or operating model of the media organization. This phenomenon of complex and multifaceted media portrayal of communities profoundly shapes public perceptions of communities. At the heart of media portrayals is selectivity, the deliberate choice of which aspects of a community to emphasize and which to ignore (Rodrigo-Ginés et al., 2023). This selective reporting may be driven by various factors, whether external or internal, including the value of the news itself and ideological and commercial interests. This kind of reporting does not report news facts from a neutral position; some facts will be reported while deliberately concealing some facts.

The media will construct narratives about different communities through various reporting mechanisms, and this emphasis on ideological narratives leads to social polarization. This polarization occurs because the media panders to target audiences and reinforces pre-existing beliefs rather than encouraging productive debate between different points of view (Ungar-Sargon, 2023). The media shape public perceptions of current events and politics, driven by ideological and commercial motives. To conform to the commodified system of newspaper production, where sales are essential to a newspaper's survival, even overtly positive articles tend to refer to associations (Devereux et al., 2011). This selective attention and coverage can affect public perception and potentially shame the community. When the media continues to portray certain groups and communities negatively, it contributes to society's fear, distrust, and discrimination against them (Covert, 2016). For example, increased surveillance and policing of communities of color because they are disproportionately portrayed as criminals in media reports (Carvalho, 2022). Likewise, marginalized groups such as homeless people may face increased scrutiny and social exclusion due to biased media portrayals that create a negative image of them (Johnstone et al., 2015). These stereotypes not only shape public attitudes towards groups or communities but also influence policy decisions and resource allocation, perpetuating cycles of inequality and marginalization. In this reporting trend, stigmatization will also appear among the groups and communities depicted, and the public will have

prejudice and negative attitudes toward them. Separating ordinary citizens from the disadvantaged, fixed stereotypes and prejudices are constructed and become a sign of shame.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Tin Shui Wai is the second new town in Yuen Long District and the eighth new town in Hong Kong. Considered a 'third generation' new city still under development (Planning Department, 2019). The early planning concept of Tin Shui Wai New Town was that each small community would be well-equipped, and there would be no need for a separate city center. It was hoped to develop into a "balanced" community that integrates different classes and has industrial areas to provide employment opportunities (Law et al., 2009). As a developed new town, TSW should bring a beautiful and optimistic life to the citizens and provide a better quality of life for the people living there because it is a self-sufficient community for entertainment and work. However, this was not the case, and various tragedies occurred.

TSW experienced a series of tragedies between the 1990s and 2010s, which earned it a bad reputation. In 1999, a man committed suicide by burning charcoal due to financial difficulties; three young children and their mother were also found dead in their apartment (The Government Information Centre, 1999). In 2001, due to an



unhappy marriage, a woman suffocated a young child and then jumped to her death (Wen Wei Po, 2001). In 2002, a woman suffering from postpartum depression and her three-month-old son fell from a height (Hong Kong Apple Daily, 2002). In 2004, a husband killed his wife and twin daughters who immigrated from the mainland and then committed suicide (Oriental Daily News, 2004). The wife reported to the police that her husband abused her and her daughter, but the case was not accepted. In addition to the tragedy, TSW has been widely reported by the media due to the emergence of youth gangs, severe job-housing imbalance, and family problems caused by cross-border marriages. Since 2006, the city has become known as the 'City of Sadness'. This term was coined by Mrs. Carrie Lam, former Director of the Social Welfare Department, on the radio talk show 'Saturday Forum' in 2000 (Hong Kong Apple Daily, 2006).

'City of Sadness' was originally just the title of a 1989 Taiwanese movie. Mrs. Carrie Lam described TSW as a "City of Sadness," creating a labeling effect. Subsequently, the term was later widely misused by the media, who associated this term with social events occurring in TSW, describing this community as a negative place, further linking TSW as a "City of Sadness." There have been movies, books, and songs based on TSW, such as "Night and Fog" and "Besieged City," which depict the hardships many TSW residents face and past tragedies.

Due to the media continuing to exaggerate the various tragedies that have occurred in TSW, most of the creations revolve around the misfortunes and family problems of this urban area, shaping the community into an even sadder city and labeling the 'insider.' Through news coverage, we are told that TSW is a 'notorious town for youth gangs' (Chu, 2005), "'City of Sadness'" (Tsang & Chu, 2010), 'Besieged City' (Feng, 2012), 'deprived community' (Hung & Fung, 2014), a 'government-created, poverty-stricken, migrant community' (Ho, 2012). Rather than stating that TSW is 'bad' in some way, the press casts TSW as the home to strangers 'who have come today and stay tomorrow' (Simmel, 2008). Cotte's (1994) analysis of news coverage points out that by repeating certain types of stories that become meaningful, the meaning attached to the news creates a stigma against the community and its associated population. After years of negative portrayals, TSW was portrayed as a sad and lifeless community, with residents considered gloomy, pessimistic, and depressed.

### **1.3. Research Significant**

To this day, the impression of Tin Shui Wai as a "City of Sadness" persists. Many news reports will also publish much negative coverage, referring to Tin Shui Wai as a microcosm of the lagging development of the Northern New Territories. Moreover, previous studies on the Hong Kong newspaper industry have been relatively macro-level, with topics such as "credibility research (Guo et al., 2010)", "news supervision (Lee et al., 2007)", "newspaper advertising revenue (Chan, 2006)", etc. Fewer studies

have explored or compared newspaper content, especially community studies in the context of Hong Kong. Many scholars examined the mechanism of newspaper reporting in the European context, and most found that media often has a “negative bias,” which means bad news tends to be reported more frequently than good news (Kearns et al., 2013; Liu & Blomley, 2013), studying this contributes to understanding how media bias works. Therefore, this study will analyze news related to Tin Shui Wai, which will help us understand how Tin Shui Wai was framed by the news media and the mechanisms used by the media.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. The Role of Media in Constructing Community**

The media's function in constructing a community's image is multidimensional, going beyond information delivery (Fürsich, 2010). Media types are significant tools for molding perceptions, affecting attitudes, and, ultimately, establishing a community's collective image (Kinder, 1998). Media organizations can enhance awareness and improve understanding of a specific community's distinctive qualities and attributes by composing news coverages and feature articles in which social issues and historical events are constantly covered selectively and subjectively. The representation of communities in media narratives considerably influences public views. Media representations help form perceptions and attitudes about a place through positive news coverage that illustrates a community's vitality and resilience or

negative stereotypes perpetuating stigma and prejudices. According to Fürsich (2010), media representation is an essential instrument for helping audiences perceive and appreciate other communities' intricacies and promoting a greater awareness of cultural, social, and geographical landscapes.

When audiences lack direct knowledge or firsthand experience with a subject, the media becomes their primary source of information, heavily affecting their opinions and attitudes toward various places and concerns (Philo, 2008). As Gamson (1992) and others have demonstrated, the images and narratives propagated by the media significantly impact people's perceptions and interpretations of their surroundings. Media portrayals involve numerous factors in constructing social reality, and they interact to construct a report about a community, including the choice of stories, framing techniques, and the use of resources by media professionals. According to Happer and Philo (2013), while media narratives can inform and draw audiences to a community's present and past, they also have the potential to reinforce popular perceptions and marginalize alternative perspectives. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms media organizations use to construct representations of place is crucial for audiences to view the reputation and development of communities, which forms critical perspectives and deeper engagement with media materials.

## **2.2. Negative Bias**

According to Tuan (1991), language has the power of constructing and deconstructing places in terms of cultural value and meaning. As Jarosz (1992) has suggested, metaphors are powerful ideological tools by which places are identified and represented because they characterize a place in one or a few familiar words that significantly shape and limit how we perceive that place. In addition to using rhetorical devices such as metaphors, catchphrases, and imagery, news handlers frame stories using reasoning devices that draw on causal attributions, consequences, and appeals to principle (Thornton & Shah, 1996). They provide meaning to an unfolding string of subjects and events, connecting them with new or contextualizing information and sources. These powerful—but typically unnoticed—mechanisms affect viewers’ judgments of responsibility and causality.

Anholt and Hildreth (2004) argued that good stories do not have the same power as bad ones, and they further say that the public is not likely to “trade down” from a juicy story to a boring one. In particular, news media plays an influential role in shaping public perceptions through negative depictions of place, characterized by Butler (2020) as a “‘lack of positive features, a smearing of place through the ‘from above’ application of unfavorable imagery, language, or semantic/syntactic choices’”. Research by Kearns et al. (2013) sheds light on how the media operates, pointing out that the media uses unique dominant narratives for different regions and transforms many potentially positive stories into mixed stories.

In general, news media tend to report many sensational crime stories (Jewkes, 1992). These articles grab the attention of the news organization's target consumers and encourage them to purchase the product. Research has shown that the media tends to over-report violent crimes (Chermak, 1995). Less criminal severe incidents are often considered commonplace or not worth worrying about. Journalists have greater discretion in reporting these crimes and typically do not report on them unless there is something particularly newsworthy about them (Chermak, 1995).

Economic pressure is one of the main reasons the media tends to give bad coverage. The need for sales and profits primarily drives newspapers and media outlets. As van Dijk (1998) points out, financial constraints often force journalists to sell stories that suggest controversy or conflict because these articles are newsworthy (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). In order to conform to the commodified newspaper production system where sales are essential to a newspaper's survival, even overtly positive articles tend to reference negative associations (Devereux et al., 2011). These economic pressures shape the narrative landscape of negative coverage.

### **2.3. Quotations in Reporting**

Reliance on news reporting on certain types of easily accessible stories or specific sources of information, such as crime reports from police, can skew reporting in a

negative. There are two primary sorts of quotations. A direct quotation recounts an author's exact words, whereas an indirect quotation is a paraphrase of someone else's words (Masini et al., 2018). It reports on an issue or occurrence based on what an author stated without needing the reporter to quote the author's precise words. In journalism, quotations are frequently debated regarding authority and reliability (van Dijk, 1998). It implies that a reporter may convey his opinion by employing quotes while keeping 'authorship' and avoiding "responsibility" for what is stated. That is, quotes lend legitimacy to reporting, prioritize the topic, and provide readers with multiple perspectives on occurrences (van Dijk, 1998). However, quotations have received little attention for their evaluative impact on news discourse (Bell, 1991). The media's coverage of news items has a significant impact (Bell, 1991). The selection of events, sources, writing style, headlines, and other elements may be ideologically framed. Quotations might then be utilized throughout the framing process. Thus, these considerations lead to the belief that quotes may be strategically employed as a potent tool for journalists to transmit their beliefs (van Dijk, 1998).

The news reporting process is also influenced by the availability of information and the concept of 'newsworthiness.' As Chermak (1995) observed, police and criminal justice system officials act as gatekeepers of criminal information, and the information that police provide or withhold from reporters influences reporting crimes in the news media. From the pool of information provided by criminal justice

gatekeepers, journalists often have wide discretion over which stories to select and cover, and this is where news values come into play in the news production process (Baranauskas, 2020). According to Cere et al. (2015), newsworthiness is based on informal professional criteria journalists use to decide whether an article is worth writing and publishing.

Media attention is not equally distributed among all groups. As observed in other studies (Carragee & Roefs, 2004), strong groups with more social capital make the group and its framework more visible and acquire a higher degree of cultural resonance. continue to dominate as you do so. At the same time, insiders and their frameworks, as the least potent social group in society, are marginalized by their low visibility and low status as sources of information and spokespeople (Liu & Blomley, 2013). Liu and Blomley (2013) pointed out that news media reports will adopt a frame that favors outsiders rather than insiders, treating residents as passive victims, reflecting that the reports reproduce the existing power relationships in society.

The diversity of sources in news media coverage enables the media to play an important part in the "marketplace of ideas" by offering information from many views, diversified content, and room for a broader range of ideas and opinions(Napoli, 1999). Researchers discovered that news sources play an important role in creating



and directing the structure of news coverage, hence restricting these viewpoints reduces the information available to politicians and public( Hansen, 1991). Increased source diversity, on the other hand, provides the public with access to a diverse variety of opinions (BENNETT, 1990) and allows underrepresented voices to participate in news discourse (Voakes et al., 1996). Additionally, studies discovered that source selection influences how readers interpret storylines and the overall tale (Fico & Soffin, 1994). News coverage from a wider range of sources can boost reader trust to the news story (Cozma, 2006). However, Wong et al. (2010) discovered that most the news coverage is present around 80% of a single perspective and point of view in the Hong Kong newspaper industry.

Resource constraints are one factor that affects how news organizations operate and the types of reporting they prioritize, reflecting institutional biases. Newsrooms often adopt strategies to maximize efficiency and minimize costs when they face tight budgets and time pressures. Crime reports are stories people can easily understand and usually have a negative tone. Becomes most commonly used in reporting. A series of studies in the UK have shown how resource constraints affect news reporting, and they found that the 'locality,' quality, and independence of news were affected by ongoing resource constraints (Fenton, 2011; Franklin, 2006). These studies found that mainstream local news relies more heavily on official sources and

public relations and often cites only a few sources, as workloads increase as revenue declines and staff are cut (Davis , 2008).

## **2.4. Framing**

Media plays an essential role in shaping our perception of the world, as negative bias and quotation of exact sources are the specific “framing” they use. An essential aspect of this influence lies in the 'framing' of news reporting, and it is precious to analyze how news reporting is 'framing.' The specific framework in news content gives meaning to events, forms issues, constructs social reality, and even affects collective social values and policy formulation (De Vreese, 2005). News frames are the components journalists knowingly select and employ to communicate information to the public so that complex issues can be more easily consumed (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). According to Entman(1995), framing refers to “selecting and highlighting some elements of reality and suppressing others in a way that constructs a story about a social problem, its causes, its moral nature, and its possible remedies.” When selecting what issues to cover and how to cover them, journalists choose how to ‘package’ stories using “news frames” (Holbert et al., 2005).

De Vreese (2005) divides the dynamic framing process into frame-building and frame-setting. From the news production side, journalists and organizational factors affect news content, causing specific frames to be highlighted, which is "frame

building," typical examples of this are negative bias and quotation of sources. "Frame setting," on the other hand, results from the interaction between news content and the audience. In receiving information, people are unconsciously influenced by the news content and form specific attitudes, evaluations, or behavioral effects toward certain issues, phenomena, or social problems. Mass media, including television, film, print media, and online platforms, often perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices through depictions of specific places (Wilder, 2020). These portrayals can lead to misconceptions, prejudice, and distorted views of different places and the people who reside there. In addition, the media can send outdated messages that further impact a city (Baker, 2007). Avraham and Ketter (2008) note that the media is the very mechanism through which the way we see places is constructed. They argue that if crime is the main topic of news stories about a place, any positive stories will be lost (Avraham & Ketter, 2008).

### **3. Research Question**

The following questions guided the direction of this research:

1. How has the volume and balance of Tin Shui Wai changed over the period?
2. What is the emotive content of stories of news coverage, i.e., what is the content of positive, negative, mixed, and neutral stories?
3. Does newspaper coverage dominated by single sources predominate over coverage from pluralistic sources?

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Content Analysis**

A quantitative research method will be adopted to collect and analyze the data. To explore how Hong Kong newspaper articles used different reporting mechanisms to frame Tin Shui Wai. To examine the structure and elements of news, it is necessary to look explicitly at its content. Thus, the basic methodology for this research is content analysis.

Media content analysis is a distinct branch of content analysis that serves as a well-established research tool, doing an in-depth investigation of communication across various mediums, such as written texts, photographs, audio, and video (Macnamara, 2005). In this strategy, founded on objectivity and methodical examination, parts of a text need to be dissected to identify patterns, themes, and other meanings hidden beneath the surface (Krippendorff, 2018). This provides a methodological lens that can be used to glean insights and draw substantive conclusions from the vast body of news coverage. Content analysis provides a systematic framework for searching for the implicit and explicit layers of meaning that run through human expression; this framework can be used to analyze literature, advertising, social media posts, and news reports (Neuendorf, 2017).

## 4.2. Newspapers and Articles Examined

In this research, newspaper data has been drawn on as data sources. The data utilized all originated from the database built by the research team led by Professor Chiu Wing Kai Stephen, and the data will be taken from the database as the data source for this study after specific agreement and authorization. This research conducted a content analysis of articles from three Hong Kong newspapers. Ming Pao Daily News, Oriental Daily News, and Wen Wei Po were selected as they represent different perspectives and provide continuous data. For the database, the researcher used WiseNews: <https://hkwe6-wiserson-com.ezproxy.eduhk.hk/> to retrieve the newspaper articles, which the databases provide access to content from magazines, newspapers, newswires, and journals published in Hong Kong. Using WiseNews, the researcher used one search item, “天水圍,” and yielded the most relevant results relating to the goal. The following news categories are used as data include “要聞,” “港聞,” “重要新聞,” and “香港新聞,” ensuring a comprehensive representation of relevant content. After retrieving the news from 2003 to 2022, all articles were screened for relevance, resulting in a final sample of 13,746 texts.

The analysis of media framing is based on the population of stories culled from the newspaper analysis inventory. A more comprehensive project might include interviews with the journalists and editors who produce the news stories, but that was

beyond the scope of the current study. Finally, the study examines print media coverage of various levels of Tin Shui Wai.

### **4.3. Research Design and Coding**

Given that the coding process remains ongoing until the report's composition, the analysis will encompass only the years for which coding has been finalized. These include 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2021, and 2022 data. This selection yields a total of 6,341 coverage samples available for examination. The above years will be divided into three periods to examine how trends or patterns evolve within each period, such as 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 divided into the early periods: 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 divided into the middle periods; 2021, and 2022 divided into the late period.

Each coverage was coded and entered into a coding schedule. The coding scheme consisted of columns to record the coverage's code number, title, author, news type (feature, opinion, etc.), "topic," "event," "connotation," and "sources the media quotes from." Following categorizing all the coverage, each piece's content was entered into a database and subsequently analyzed to look for any dominant themes within each coverage issue. Those coverages are coded as the different issues (including Crime, Accident, Suicide, Health Related, Education Related, Transportation Related, Community Facilities, Community Support, Political Issues,

Community Activity, Market, Living Cost or Price Level, Family Issue, Employment and Job, Religion Related, Tin Shui Wai Tragedy, Poverty, Neighbourhood Environment and Location and Other).

#### **4.3.1. Connotation**

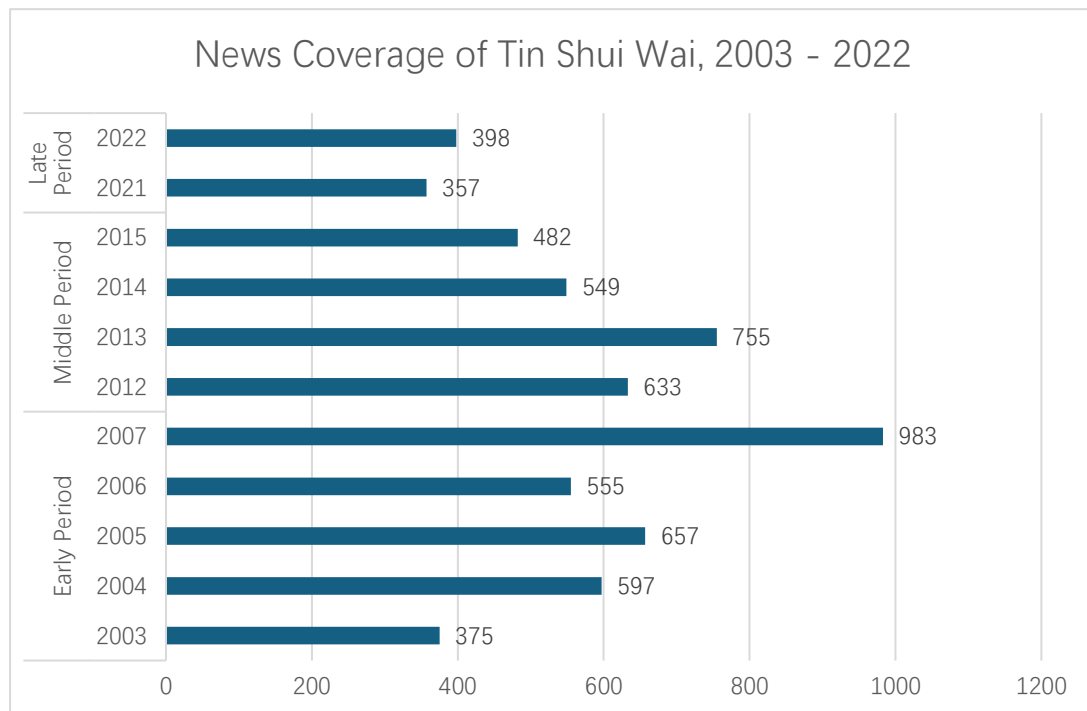
Moreover, each coverage was coded with a connotation (negative, positive, mixed, and neutral) based on its portrayal of Tin Shui Wai, which was determined by the nature of the issue. Positive connotations included those that created a positive perception of Tin Shui Wai, while negative mentions did the opposite. For example, the "Poverty alleviation program to be implemented in Tin Shui Wai to help unemployed people integrate into society" (Oriental Daily News, 2013) was coded as positive. "Mainland man armed with fruit knife robs convenience store clerk" (Oriental Daily News, 2007) was coded as negative.

#### **4.3.2. Sources the Media Quotes From**

"Sources the media quotes from" show which department or group the information, data, or language in the news coverage comes from. When only "police said" appeared in a news report, the sources of media quotes from the coverage were coded as police. Once more than two sources appear in the report, such as "District councilors denounce the action as lacking in deterrence," "A spokesman for the Lands Department said," the coverage will be coded as quoted more than one source.

## 5. Finding and Discussion

### 1. How has the volume and balance of Tin Shui Wai changed over the period?



**Figure 1.** The volume of press coverage of Tin Shui Wai, 2003– 2022

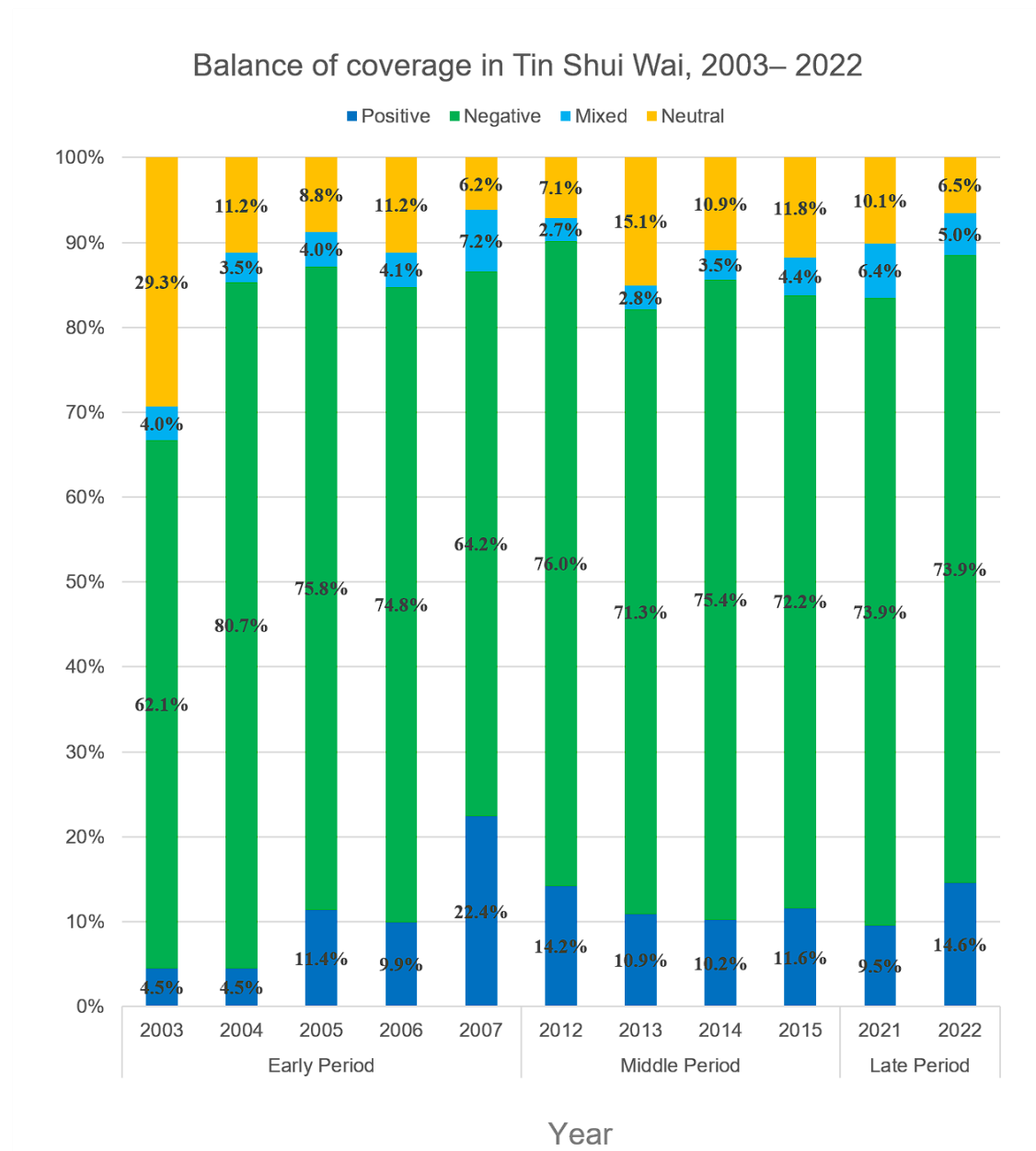
Of all coded years, there were 6341 articles in about the three newspapers, equivalent to almost 48 monthly articles over the entire period. The number of coverages increased in 2003 until a significant surge occurred in 2007, with as many as 983 articles covering Tin Shui Wai. Figure 1 shows the pattern of coverage over time. The rise and peak in coverage in Tin Shui Wai was due to stories related to two issues: suicide and crime. Research shows that when an issue receives more attention, it generates more interest (Djerf-Pierre, 2012).



Therefore, in the early period, there was an increase in reports about Tin Shui Wai after the familicide in 2004, which attracted media attention, from 375 articles in 2003 to 597 articles in 2004, a total increase of 222. It experienced a slight increase in 2005; this may be attributed to the residual impact of the previous year's events. However, 2006 experienced a downturn. It was not until another family killing incident in 200, when the mother of the family pushed her two children into the street and then committed suicide by jumping off a building, that the media again focused on Tin Shui Wai and coverage of Tin Shui Wai reached its peak, with a shocking 983 articles, more than any other year.

During the middle period, Tin Shui Wai shared a peak in coverage in 2013 due to the Chief Executive going to Tin Shui Wai to attend a forum, a public altercation outside the venue, and a subsequent decline. In the late period, the number of coverages appeared relatively low, indicating changes in the public's interest, and newspaper organizations's attention in Tin Shui Wai decreased. After a long period of intensive coverage of Tin Shui Wai from different angles, reporters and the public gradually began to feel tired of this community. It is evident that when astounding events occur, the media will pay more attention to the community, drawing significant attention to it. However, this interest in community coverage is fleeting, with media and public attention peaking on specific topics before fading as other stories emerge (Shih et al., 2008). The decline in community interest is sometimes described as a natural

phenomenon in which public interest in what is going on in a community wanes. This shift in news media attention has been described as issue fatigue (Gurr & Metag, 2021).



**Figure 2.** The balance of press coverage of Tin Shui Wai, 2003– 2022

Figure 2 shows a consistent trend in news coverage over the years, with far more negative than positive news coverage. Negative articles vastly outnumber other

categories each year, with the vast majority of news stories (often over 60%) being negative.

This trend peaked in 2004 when negative articles accounted for 80.7%. In comparison, the proportion of positive news is always the smallest, never rising above 15%, reaching a maximum of 14.6% in 2022. Mixed news articles remain relatively stable but in a smaller proportion, typically between 3% and 7% of the total. Neutral reports varied but were still less common than negative notices, ranging from 6.2% to 29.3% over the years. A study (Arango et al., 2014) of German news magazines confirmed this, finding a significant positive relationship between explicitly negative news covers and sales, suggesting strong consumer demand for negative news.

As can be seen from the Table, negative news coverage has been dominant for many years. Although the total number of articles fluctuates yearly, there is still a significantly higher proportion of negative content than positive, mixed, or neutral content. This pattern shows a consistent trend of negative news coverage. Only a small proportion of news coverage is positive, with negative content significantly outnumbering others. About two-thirds of articles contain negative content, while only about one-tenth are positive.

**2. What is the emotive content of stories of news coverage, i.e., what is the content of positive, negative, mixed, and neutral stories?**

**Negative stories:**

Many stories are defined as framing the Tin Shui Wai as a social problem. In this frame, the Tin Shui Wai is portrayed as plagued by resource redistribution problems and planning mistakes. In this description, Tin Shui Wai is associated with poverty, unemployment, and planning failures; it is not just local problems but symptoms of broader systemic failures. The neighborhood is characterized as “remote areas” and “Unemployed people living in remote areas, Tin Shui Wai is the hardest hit area,” an area often juxtaposed with other communities such as Tuen Mun. This describes the enormous financial and time costs of daily commuting, whether by road or rail, a predicament exacerbated by the lack of adequate employment opportunities in the neighborhood, leaving many people no choice. Tin Shui Wai is far removed from the energetic economic center and has become a microcosm of broader social problems such as unemployment and socio-economic issues. In this framing, “The working people in Tin Shui Wai are classified as working poor” —individuals are still experiencing financial hardship despite being employed, which depicts the economic divide within cities. Faced with poverty and low quality of life, receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme becomes one of the choices; this makes outsiders think that Tin Shui Wai “has always given people the impression that more people are receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme.” Even

though receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme is a solution to livelihood problems caused by community planning failure, this phenomenon has been pointed out as "A fundamental problem in Tin Shui Wai is the emergence of the "welfare dependence effect." Most of the changes these professionals advocate come in the form of provisions of welfare support and career expos to alleviate the socially implicated consequences of poverty: "Young people are unwilling to work across districts. In response to this occupational mismatch, job fairs will be held to help young people find employment in the district." By portraying Tin Shui Wai as a problematic space in need of intervention from social welfare, employment, or public sector personnel, the media further enhances the power of these specific professionals' power concerning the residents of Tin Shui Wai, who are, on the contrary, portrayed as passive victims in need.

Stories about crime occurring in the area or involving people in the area appeared regularly throughout the period; about a quarter of all negative articles were related to crime in the community, with peaks reaching one-fifth. The issue of crime in the community was already prominent in 2003 (62.1%), that is, before the Tin Shui Wai tragedy in 2004. In 2004, a 45-year-old husband beheaded his 31-year-old new immigrant wife and a pair of 6-year-old twin daughters to death, who also died of his injuries in the end. After this incident, the crime issue became the dominant issue in Tin Shui Wai reports in the future. This has been described as a problem of domestic

violence support being insensitive. Murders of other inhabitants of Tin Shui Wai have been recorded on many occasions. Violence, robbery, vandalism, and narcotics are among the other crimes recorded on occasion. These appear occasionally in resident accounts of life and other times as a result of police arrests or raids (for example, of drug traffickers and gambling operators).

### **Positive stories:**

Positive stories were the second most prevalent group of articles. Three themes bring positive stories to Tin Shui Wai. First, community support schemes were positively reported, especially those that provided services to residents. These programs are designed with the community's needs in mind and span from educational support and health services to vocational seeking. Community support programs, including mental health counseling and wellness programs, provide health services. Educational support provides students with academic tutoring and student outreach programs to ensure they have access to opportunities that would otherwise not be available to them. Regular job fairs held by different sectors in Tin Shui Wai generated significant positive connotations. These community support programs often embody a collaborative spirit, involving partnerships between local government, non-profit organizations, businesses, and volunteers.

Second, the ongoing development of facilities has generated positive coverage for Tin Shui Wai. The construction and continuous improvement of the Hong Kong Wetland Park and Tin Sau Bazaar have had a positive impact continually, supporting residents to have more choices in consumption, employment, and entertainment businesses; they are seen as a symbol of Tin Shui Wai's potential for development and transformation. The construction of the Hong Kong Wetland Park has brought a buzz to Tin Shui Wai, attracted tourists and locals, and provided an ecological education center and leisure space. The development of Tin Sau Bazaar provides another story for Tin Shui Wai's positive transformation, which is to promote the regional economy. Markets not only provide residents with a broader range of consumer choices but also help create jobs. In addition, there are dozens of articles with positive connotations of the construction of Tin Shui Wai Community Center at various times to provide services and consultation to residents, “vibrant,” “eye-catching,” and “community-centric.” Tin Shui Wai's ongoing development and improved facilities have significantly reshaped the town's image and generated positive media coverage.

Lastly, positive mentions of Tin Shui Wai are also related to the achievements of individual locals living or working in Tin Shui Wai, including the mutual assistance led by residents. These positive stories involve profiles of local role models describing their experiences growing up in Tin Shui Wai. It often consists of a journey of personal growth, overcoming obstacles, and achieving goals that once

seemed unattainable. Many articles have positive connotations on how the mutual aid groups formed by Tin Shui Wai residents came together to support each other when needed, whether through informal networks or organized volunteer groups, demonstrating their contribution to community employment, empowerment, and psychological counseling. Such a narrative provides a counter-narrative to the often negative and stereotypical image of Tin Shui Wai, with acts of solidarity during difficult times portraying the community's resilience in the face of adversity.

### **Mixed stories:**

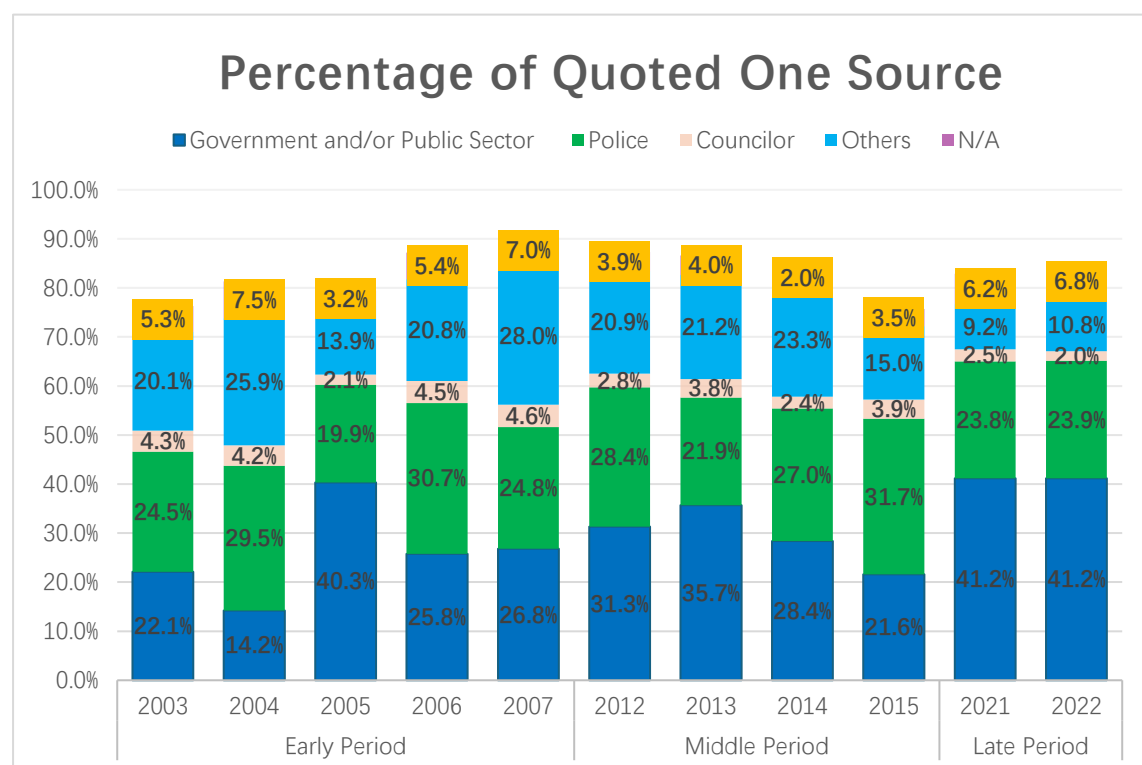
Mixed stories were the smallest group of articles. Constructing infrastructure and providing support programs generated mixed coverage of the Tin Shui Wai. This was primarily because it offered the opportunity to restate the reasons why the change was necessary and to identify the things that the Tin Shui Wai lacked and what the change was going to provide in general terms, such as services, a community center, jobs, health facilities, and essentials that were affordable. Two-fifths of the mixed articles featured a lack of community facilities and support or coping as a theme; several of these coverages mentioned "solidarity" and "assistance" in times of difficulty. Articles mentioned, among others, projects designed to help residents seeking to integrate into society organized by commercial organizations, NGOs, and government departments, especially the grassroots students and unemployed people in the community.



### Neutral stories:

Neutral stories about three-tenths related to political events held by politicians in Tin Shui Wai. These contents include activities held by district councilors to canvass votes in the district. However, these activities do not provide an understanding of Tin Shui Wai. If these activities can offer a detailed impression of Tin Shui Wai and the support programs they provide in Tin Shui Wai, it may generate other types of reports.

### 3. Does newspaper coverage dominated by single sources predominate over coverage from pluralistic sources?



**Figure 3.** Percentage of Quoted one Source in news coverage.

### The Dominance of Official Sources

While there were some similarities among the referenced sources. 'Government and/or Public Sector ' and 'Police' were the most critical source types in the coverage. One notable tendency is the variable but overall increasing involvement of the 'Government and/or Public Sector.' In 2003, the count was 22.1% (n=83), but it climbed significantly to 26.8% (n=250) by 2007. A rebound is projected in 2021, with a count of 41.2% (n=147), and this percentage is expected to remain stable in 2022, with a count of 41.2% (n=164). It draws a path characterized by a strong start in interacting with 'Government and/or Public Sector' sources, a middle-period drop, and a late-period recovery.

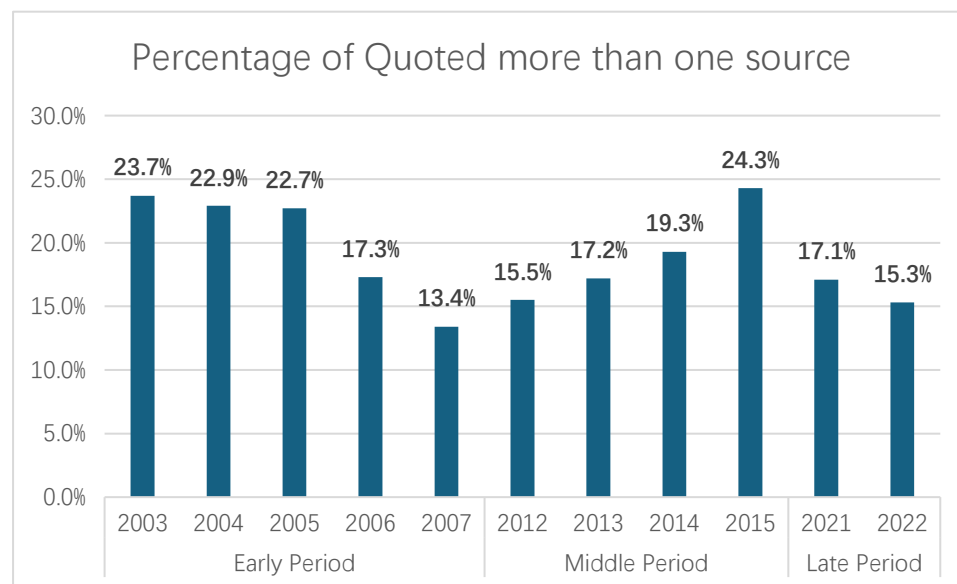
Another major source of reports is the police; its proportion has long been more than 20%; it peaked in 2007 (n=231, 24.8%), followed by a general but irregular decline. This signifies that those two sectors' presence or activity has become more prevalent or dominant over time, and the dominance of the 'Government and/or Public Sector' has been undeniable in recent years. Various factors have been previously linked to this phenomenon, including journalistic practices that regard official elite sources as more reliable (Cottle, 2003) and the widespread adoption of public relations practices by elite organizations (Froehlich & Rüdiger, 2006). Only expressing a single point of view or perspective in most reports means that a large number of news reports may have become an effective channel for public relations promotion of government policies, but the independence of the news media may be greatly compromised. This

may mean that newspapers' role in upholding social justice and satisfying the public's right to know is being challenged.

In the early period, the percentage of sources quoted from "Councilors" was relatively stable. It begins with 4.3% (n=16) in 2003, and was a sudden drop to 2.1% (n=14) in 2005; it then rose to over 4% in 2006 and 2007. In the middle period, it fluctuates from 2.4% (n=13) to 3.9%(n=19). In the late period, it maintained a low percentage for a long time, around 2%. Representing district-level parliament has had a relatively stable but minor presence as a news source, contributing to around 2.1% to 4.6% of the total citations. District councilors are among the prominent people involved in community administration and can bring first-hand information to community development. The media mentioned that district councilors participate in district administration, but this is not enough, and the overall proportion is still slightly low. This situation may result in community governance issues being ignored or underemphasized, making it difficult to understand the needs of community residents. While reports sometimes highlight the presence of these local actors, this coverage is insufficient, resulting in severe gaps in public knowledge and understanding of local governance.

There are 5.3% (n=20) to 7.5% (n=45) of the sources that identified fail to provide credit for the individuals they cited. Generalizations such as "it is believed" and

"sources familiar with the matter say" were employed to obscure their identity. An opaque source is a vital component of news production and a prerequisite for the unrestricted dissemination of information in contemporary democracies (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). While their ideological stance, objectives, and motivations remain obscured by anonymity, any social actor can constitute a confidential source.



**Figure 4.** Percentage of Quoted more than one Source in news coverage.

For the "Quoted more than one source" category, in the early period, the trend began strongly in 2003 with 23.7% (n=89). In 2004, the count increased to 22.9% (n=89) and reached its peak in 2005 with 22.7% (n=149). While the number of quoted sources increases, the proportion decreases marginally, indicating that although the practice of citing several sources was becoming more common, the total number was growing even quicker.

Following this peak, in the middle period, there was a decline in 2006 to 17.3% (n=96). The trend of quoting multiple sources continues to decrease in percentage up to 2007, with 3.4% (n=125). In 2015 with 24.3% (n=117), suggesting a renewed emphasis on multi-source corroboration.

However, in the late period, the trend again turns downward to 17.1% (n=61) by 2021 and remains steady in 2022 with an exact count of 15.3%.

The studies show that workloads rise in response to declining income and personnel reductions, that mainstream local news frequently cites a relatively small number of sources, and that it depends more on official sources and public relations (Davis, 2008). This dependence calls the extent and quality of news coverage into question since a loss in critical journalism and homogenization of viewpoints might result from reliance on a few sources. Bell (1991) observes that journalists employ a comparatively limited array of sources in their daily work, giving preference to authoritative sources while disregarding other perspectives, such as those from more socially disadvantaged backgrounds. This selection bias can prevent significant tales from being communicated, limit the story's scope, and marginalize substantial viewpoints.

Among the samples analyzed, most reports only express a single point of view or perspective (80%), and diversified coverage has a downward trend. This phenomenon provides a possible explanation for consumer behavior in news consumption. This reflects that readers are not resistant to the newspaper's single stance and may even be why they choose to read it. However, each source may have its own bias or agenda, affecting the information it provides. Journalists rely on a range of sources for information, including official spokespersons, academics, and corporate organizations, often involving multiple stakeholders with conflicting interpretations of events, and these sources can be subjective. The impact of this selection is profound, affecting not only which stories are told but also how they are told. Also, this selective representation can distort public perceptions of events, issues, and groups, leading to a distorted understanding of reality.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research investigates and explores the news mechanisms news organizations use when reporting on the community of Tin Shui Wai. Research indicates that two reporting mechanisms- negative bias and source selection bias- have long been present in the news reports in Tin Shui Wai.

Media organizations continually use negativity bias to emphasize bad or negative news in their coverages or to portray events in a negative light. Because these stories

tend to receive more attention, they also turn potentially positive or neutral stories into negatives, creating a stigmatizing crisis for the community. Also, the sources of information in the reports are mainly from a single source, especially official sources. Excessive use of a single source in a news report may present only one side of the story, omitting facts or other details supporting different viewpoints. Therefore, the comprehensive view of the community cannot be seen, resulting in bias or misunderstanding of the community. If media organizations and citizens do not confront and address these phenomena, we will fail to understand the whole truth about the community because of a negative bias in reporting and a lack of alternative voices.

## **7. Limitation**

There were several limitations in conducting the research. Firstly, there needs to be more complete data for the analysis. Due to the discontinuity in the data, there may be omissions when attempting to determine long-term patterns or changes in the portrayal in the media regarding Tin Shui Wai.

Furthermore, this research lacks a comparison with other community media portrayal patterns. The omission of a comparative analysis between Tin Shui Wai and other communities constrains our understanding of the uniqueness or similarity of its media representation.

Lastly, although research has examined how Tin Shui Wai is portrayed in the media, how these representations affect the community is not discussed. This omission fails to consider an essential component of media studies: the impact of media portrayals on the community. Understanding how these representations influence a community's self-perception and the dynamics of its social environment is essential. Without investigating these dimensions, the study leaves significant gaps in understanding the full impact that media narratives may have on lived experiences, identities, and social interactions in Tin Shui Wai.



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