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### **News Media Representations of Immigrants in the Canadian Criminal Justice System**

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# Metropolis British Columbia

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# **METROPOLIS BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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## **Working Paper Series**

### **NEWS MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE CANADIAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

**Wendy Chan**

#### **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

Media representations of immigrants in the criminal justice system significantly influence public opinion about immigration and about crime. As a social institution, the news media plays an important role in shaping public policies like immigration and criminal justice. This paper discusses the findings from a study of newspaper articles on immigrants in the Canadian criminal justice system between 1990 and 2005. A total of 650 articles were collected from two news databases for this study. Research findings indicate that immigrants are primarily portrayed as criminals in the news media. The four dominant images of immigrants and the justice system in the print news media are: 1) immigrants as war criminals; 2) immigrants as organized criminals (gang members/members of smuggling rings/terrorists); 3) immigrants as individual criminals; and 4) illegal immigrants. Crimes of violence involving immigrants as perpetrators and illegal immigration were the two most reported crimes found in the period studied. The dominant media slant in the news stories was either hostile towards immigrants, or concerned about the behavior of immigrants. I argue that the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of immigrants involved in the criminal justice system in Canada's print media reinforces long-standing stereotypes about immigrants and makes it more difficult for immigrants to be seen as legitimate victims of crime.

## **1.0 Introduction**

“A new study debunks fears that Canada's immigration system lets in mostly criminals and layabouts, suggesting immigrants are harder-working and better educated than people born here.” (1994)

“With 19,000 illegals currently running around Canada, surely we have fulfilled our quota,” Reynolds said. (1998)

As the above quotes suggest, media representations of immigrants in Canada have been paradoxical. Indeed, the reaction of Canadians towards immigrants have been mixed. Fleras notes how “expressions of admiration and respect toward model migrants are offset by attitudes of resentment toward those who cheat, lie, or misbehave, with indifference or resignation sandwiched in between” (2010, 2). However, the news media in Canada, like Western media generally, represents immigrants in a primarily negative manner. According to van Dijk (2000), immigration is often represented as a threat, and immigrants are seen as largely passive, except when they commit reprehensible acts. Canadian media scholars concur, pointing out the tendency of news media to rely on racialized stereotypes and assumptions in stories about immigrants. For example, Bradimore and Bauder (2011) examined the portrayal of Tamil refugees who came to BC in 2009 and found that the theme of security rather than human rights was the main focal point of news coverage. Similarly, Hier and Greenberg’s (2002) study of news discourse involving the arrival of Fujian Chinese migrants in 1999 revealed how their landing was problematized and made into a crisis based on ideas of racialized illegality, risks, and criminality. Bauder’s (2008) analysis of representations of farm workers in Ontario found that even more favourable narratives were tempered by negative narratives about the workers as a ‘social problem’. All of these negative and stereotypical constructions of immigrants reinforce the ongoing view that immigrants are a threat to the nation-state. As Henry and Tator (2002) observe, racialized people are generally absent in all areas of print media production. However, when they are represented in the media, they are stereotypically portrayed as violent, dysfunctional, unstable, and irrational. The cumulative effect is the ‘othering’ of immigrants, where ‘we’ (mainstream society) are set apart from ‘them’ (foreigners) and immigrants are positioned as the ‘others’ that require careful ongoing scrutiny and surveillance (Henry and Tator 2002, 46).

Since the news media play a significant role in reflecting and informing public opinion, how they report on issues like immigration in Canada can have a significant impact on the direction of immigration policy reform and development. In the last several decades, the immigration

debate has become much more political in Canada, and the news media have been a key actor in these debates. While there have been many media case studies about immigration in Canada, they have largely been confined to specific events, such as analyzing the coverage of the Just Desserts case, the Tamil migrants, or the Fujian migrants to Canada. There have not been any recent, larger scale studies examining the media treatment of immigrants involved in the criminal justice system. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the news media in representing immigrants and the justice system between 1990 and 2005, and to offer a broader examination of how news stories about immigrants have shaped the current immigration debate in Canada. The two key research questions guiding this study are: 1) How are immigrants involved in the criminal justice system portrayed by mainstream Canadian newspapers?; (2) What are the dominant narratives and thematic frames used by newspapers to construct the image of immigrants involved in the criminal justice system? By analyzing the content of mainstream newspapers across Canada, my aim is to develop an in-depth understanding of the role mainstream papers play in transmitting images, ideas, and symbols about Canada and Canadian society around this issue. Far from being ‘objective’, newspapers’ construction of the news reflects not only their organizational practices, but also the collective belief system and core values of a society (Henry and Tator 2009; Tamang 2011). Mainstream newspapers reinforce what is acceptable and normal while marginalizing or silencing voices of resistance.

The purpose of this study is to add to the growing literature on the topic of news media discourse and the racialization of crime and immigration in Canada. Such a study is important, as it can contribute to helping us think about the ways in which immigrants continue to be constructed by the print media, particularly in regards to a “hot button” issue like crime and criminal justice. Furthermore, it also provides an opportunity to analyze more broadly questions about social inclusion and exclusion, inequality, racialization, and the reproduction of a White hegemony.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Media Representations of Immigrants and Crime

Claims of racial bias in Canada's print media are not new (see Henry and Tator (2002); Jiwani (2009)). Numerous historical and contemporary media studies have demonstrated the ways in which newspapers in Canada have created and reinforced racialized phobias about immigration in the public's imagination. A racist backlash against immigrants in Canada has been taking place for several decades now, spurred by fears, anxieties, and concerns about integration, national identity, and cultural difference (Hier and Greenberg 2002). Sometimes these fears and concerns are expressed against a country of origin, for example, Goodrum, Godo and Hayter's (2011) study of how Canadian news media portrayed China found that news coverage served to reinforce Canadian national identity and often depicted China in a negative manner. Bullock and Jafri's analysis of the representation of Muslim women in Canadian mainstream media noted that "Muslim women are presented as outsiders: as foreign, distant 'others' and as members of a religion (Islam) that does not promote "Canadian" values" (2000, 35). Many other scholars have documented similar findings where racial minority groups in Canada are under-represented, stereotyped, racialized, or problematized (Karim 2000; Mahanti 2001; Murray 2002; Folson 2004; Henry 2010). This phenomenon is not unique to Canada, either. International scholars have found similar trends in how the mainstream news media treats immigrants in their own countries (Benson 2002; Wilcox 2005; van Dijk 2006; Dixon 2008). As Fleras and Kunz note, "there is little doubt that racism informs the representational basis of Canada's mainstream media with respect to position and process as well as outcomes" (2001, 41).

The values and beliefs imparted by the news media have a significant effect on public perception of contemporary issues. They shape and inform public discourses, providing an organizing framework for understanding (Hall 1977; Crespi 1997). van Dijk (2000) observed that, through their representations, newspapers define situations and the 'facts' for their audiences. Within Can-



ada, news discourses about immigrants typically present them as a social and, more recently, a national security, problem. News coverage of immigrants is highly polarized, where ‘good’ immigrants are positively portrayed, ‘bad’ immigrants are scapegoated as representing all that is wrong with the immigration system (Fleras 2010). Good immigrants, we are told, assimilate, get jobs, and stay out of trouble. On the other hand, ‘bad’ immigrants are criminals and ‘illegals’ and abuse Canada’s immigration system. Fleras argues that so long as newspapers remain locked into this binary construction of immigrants and immigration, the potential for building an inclusive society will be compromised (2010, 3).

Many Canadian scholars have also noted that negative coverage of incidents involving immigrants receives more attention in news media than positive stories about immigrants (Mahtani 2009; Tamang 2011). Highlighting the problems immigrants create allows news organizations to claim that the immigration system is dysfunctional or broken, and change is not only desired, but imperative. In the coverage of high-profile immigration events, such as the arrival of boats carrying migrants from China or Sri Lanka, these demands for change to immigration policy and practice were elevated to the level of national outcry (Hier and Greenberg 2002; Bradimore and Bauder 2011). Golash-Boza (2009) argues that perpetuating misinformation and myths about immigrants allows government, corporate elites, and politicians to shape laws and policies around immigration by using immigrants as their scapegoats. Nowhere is this more effective than in media discussions about immigrants involved in crime. Researchers in numerous countries have found that the criminality of immigrants is grossly misrepresented, and national crime statistics simply do not correspond to the claims made about the ‘dangerous’ and ‘criminal’ nature of immigrants (Rumbaut et al. 2006; Hagan 2008; Wortley 2009). Nonetheless, this has been a key strategy used to justify the introduction of punitive crime measures and more restrictive immigration policies (Golash-Boza 2009).

## **2.2 Crime News and the Politics of Immigration**

Generally, representations of crime in newspapers mention stories of interpersonal violence in public places more than many other types of criminal behavior. Crime news also focuses on the individuals involved, usually to the exclusion of any broader context in which to understand the event (Graber 1980). For example, Ericson, Baranek, and Chan's (1991) large-scale study of media outlets in Canada found that there was virtually no attention given to structural-causal explanations of crime. Individualistic accounts of deviance are the dominant frame used in both news and entertainment media (Surette 2007). As Wykes (2001, 1) states:

Crime news . . . is about good and bad, innocent and guilty, heroes and villains, victims and abusers. It is the site of our national conscience and moral codes . . . The continuum of criminality is explored as a measure, mediated through the news, which informs our view of our world, of others and of ourselves.

Where racialized individuals are concerned, crime news has been shown to be one of the most common types of coverage in the press. van Dijk (2000, 38) notes that news about immigrants and ethnic minorities is largely confined to a small range of topics that includes the threat of violence, crime, drugs, and prostitution. A content analysis of television news conducted by Dixon, Azocar, and Casas (2003) in the United States found that African Americans were under-represented as victims and over-represented as perpetrators of crime. Gardikiotis's (2003) examination of minority groups and crime in Greek newspapers revealed the presence of prejudiced discursive practices that reinforced xenophobic frameworks. In Canada, several studies have examined news coverage of Aboriginal people. Harding's (2006) historical study of the representation of aboriginal–non-aboriginal relations in Canada found that there was very little change in terms of how Aboriginal people were represented over the last century and half. Aboriginal people were constructed as a threat to Canadian interests through the use of derogatory labels, stereotypes, and

selective reporting (Harding 2003, 224). Jiwani's (2008) study of how the missing and murdered women from the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver were represented in the media drew attention to the victim-blaming that was prevalent in the news discourse. Many of the victims were poor sex workers and/or Aboriginal, and their "high-risk" lifestyle combined with poor decision-making left them vulnerable for attack (Jiwani 2008). Gilchrist (2010) concurs with these results, noting that her own research uncovered the ongoing use of stereotypes in stories about missing Aboriginal women, as well as the ways in which missing Aboriginal women were seen as less newsworthy than missing White women. After 9/11, the representation of Muslim people in the media also changed significantly. Poynting and Perry (2007) found that the presence of anti-Muslim racism in the news intensified across most Western democracies after 9/11. News coverage of Muslims in Canada and Australia was filled with expressions of anti-Muslim bias and gave 'permission to hate' to those with proclivities towards committing hate crimes against Muslims (Poynting and Perry 2007).

The impact of negatively characterizing minority groups in crime news has been very difficult to demonstrate empirically. Doyle (2006) cautions against making any generalized assumptions about the influences or effects of mass media given the complexity of its production and reception. Nonetheless, many researchers have noted that with regards to crime news, the public's view is heavily shaped by what the media has to say, since most people do not have any direct experience of or knowledge about most crime (Creechan 1992; Altheide 2006). The use of distortion, stereotyping, and over-representation of minority groups serves to heighten public anxieties and fears about immigrants and racialized groups (Chiricos, Eschholz, and Gertz 1997; Dixon 2008). As a result, many members of the public believe that a strong connection exists between immigration and crime, despite evidence to the contrary (Hagan, Levi, and Dinovitzer 2008). One significant consequence of this logic is that, by placing greater emphasis on immigrants and minorities as potential dangers or threats to society, very little attention is paid to the many ways in which racialized individuals are victims of criminal events and suffer mistreatment in the criminal justice system.

The racialization and criminalization of immigrants has made it possible for newspapers to provoke public sympathy for their position and attack the government for not doing enough (Mahtani and Mountz 2002). Case studies in Canada demonstrate how the government has responded with reforms to immigration policy and practice after each successive high-profile story involving immigrants, from the shooting of a police officer by a young, black Jamaican male living illegally in Toronto in 1994 to the arrival of boat migrants in 1999 and 2009. For example, after the police shooting, new rules were brought in to make it easier to deport non-citizens who committed crimes in Canada. Henry and Tator's (2002) in-depth examination of news coverage on the police shooting case highlights the power of the media to generate specific discourses, disseminate facts, and create a moral panic. Indeed, in this particular context, the media was quite influential in shaping attitudes and policies, as well as ensuring the marginalization of a social group (Henry and Tator 2002, 202). Far from being benign, the news media plays a vital role in creating meaning out of incidents involving immigrants.

### **3.0 Methodology and Data Sources**

This study examines the representation and identities of immigrants in the Canadian criminal justice system by critically analyzing news texts. A critical media approach involves recognizing that media messages are not the result of news sources and content alone, but also emerge from the form that news messages assume and the symbolism that is contained within the news story as well (Langer 1998). As Hier and Greenberg observe, "the ideological effects precipitated by news texts are not unilaterally dependent on who says what and what they say, but additionally on the presentational codes (plot, structure, action) used to transform 'happenings out there' into the 'events as they happen'" (2002, 494). As a news topic, 'immigrants in the criminal justice system' is ripe for shaping by the media, as both crime and immigration are of significant public interest, and the public's reliance on the media for information on these topics is also high. As a source of information, newspapers are well placed to shape readers' views and perspectives. Consumers of

news media will actively decode the contents of news stories to make sense of and create meaning from them in a way that resonates with their own life experiences.

Since the aim of this study is to examine the construction of immigrants and crime in newspapers, a thematic approach to the news texts is appropriate. Focusing on the major themes found in the news articles will highlight what types of stories are covered, how they are covered, and the impact they have on issues of social equality and inequality (van Dijk 2001). A thematic mapping of news texts will also reveal the embedded media narratives that can help determine the relationships between individual situations and broader contexts (Hier and Greenberg 2002).

This study involves an examination of newspaper articles gathered from two online newspaper databases (Canadian Newsstand and CBCA Current Events) from 1990 to 2005. The news sources in these two databases included 26 different national (e.g., *Globe and Mail*), local (e.g., *Vancouver Sun*), and community (e.g., *Coquitlam Now*) papers, as well as newswire services (e.g., *Canadian Press Newswire*). Using newspaper databases was chosen in order to obtain a broad range of coverage and perspectives on the stories gathered. This research source offers access to the widest variety of papers and can therefore reflect the diversity of readers targeted, circulation types (although most papers were dailies), geographical locations, and idiomatic positions taken. Since the aim of the study was to determine how immigrants involved with the criminal justice system were represented by the news media, general search terms were used to locate news articles, such as “Canada”, “immigrant”, and “*crim\**”. The asterisk (\*) following “*crim*” expanded the search to include word-ending variations, including terms such as “crime”, “criminal”, and “criminalization”.

After filtering out duplicate articles, the total number of newspaper articles in the sample during the sixteen-year time period was 650. In order to obtain a wide representation of the types of discussions and perspectives published, all types of news articles were included except letters to the editor. These letters were not included because they were often truncated and incomplete and, therefore, did not prove to be useful for analysis. More than half of the articles in the sample were

longer than 450 words, and only a small handful of articles were shorter than 150 words.

Three key events during this period impacted the amount of news coverage on this topic. The first two events, which occurred in Toronto in 1994, involved Jamaican men. The shooting of Toronto police officer Todd Baylis and the robbery and shooting at the Just Desserts café generated thirty-one articles in the sample. Second, the arrival of the Fujian Chinese migrants to BC in 1999 generated 118 articles. However, these articles were included in the sample as long as they adhered to the search criteria. A coding schedule was developed based on the key research questions of this project. Both quantitative and qualitative variables and themes emerging from the data were coded for analysis using the software program NVivo.

## **4.0 Research Findings**

### **4.1 Overview of Newspaper Articles about Immigrants and Refugees**

Given the large number of articles analyzed in this study, a general overview of the sample will help to contextualize the discussion that follows. As mentioned earlier, the sample was drawn from a sixteen-year period. A breakdown of the number of articles by year demonstrates that there is no clear pattern with regards to the quantity of reporting on immigrants involved in the criminal justice system. Instead, the number of stories appears to be driven by immigration-related events that took place during this period.

*Year and number of articles in sample*

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of articles</b>
1990	24
1991	29
1992	41
1993	12
1994	80
1995	48
1996	40
1997	33
1998	30
1999	65
2000	48
2001	56
2002	30
2003	39
2004	36
2005	39
Total	650

Although there was a very wide range of newspapers in the sample, a significant majority (94%) of the articles were published in either national presswires and newspapers (e.g., Globe and Mail), or in large city daily papers (e.g., Vancouver Sun, Ottawa Citizen, Calgary Herald). Community newspapers (e.g., Coquitlam Now), although represented in the sample, did not contain many articles about immigrants in the criminal justice system (6%).

There were many different types of articles included in the sample. The two most common categories were news and crime articles (73%). These types of articles are often referred to as “hard” news stories – that is, news stories that adhere to “normal journalistic routines of sourcing objective data, interviewing non-partisan sources, and testing for bias and validity” (Hier and Greenberg 2002). The next most common categories were articles that were published as columns,

op-eds, statistics, in the business section, or in the city section of the newspaper (20%). Articles in these categories included a mix of opinions and “hard” news. Finally, there were a small number of articles (6%) that straddled a broad range of categories but could be seen as an in-depth “human interest” type of reporting.

The preliminary findings of this study reinforce many known patterns about how newspapers report crime stories. They include the types of crime stories newspapers emphasize, the characteristics of those involved in these stories, and the media slant that is often adopted to generate public interest and discussion.

**4.1.1 Which crimes received the most attention?**

There was a wide range of crimes mentioned in the sample. The most common type of crime found in the sample involved violence; 80% were murders, assaults, and sexual assaults, the three most common offences. The second most reported crime was illegal immigration, followed by property crimes, organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, smuggling, fraud or embezzlement and, finally, war crimes. These top ten offences constituted the bulk of the crimes referred to in the sample.

Top 10 crimes involving immigrants that received the most attention 1990-2005

Type of crime	No. of references
Violent Crime (murder, assault, sexual assault)	262
Illegal Immigration	246
Property Crimes (robbery, theft)	224
Organized Crime	191
Drug Trafficking	119
Terrorism	118
Smuggling	109
Fraud	97
War crimes	71

The emphasis given to the top three crimes within the violent crimes category is consistent with



reporting patterns by news media organizations more generally. Violent or sensational crimes receive disproportionate coverage, and the explanations given are nearly always simplistic and individualistic (Surette 1998, 78).

There was no obvious pattern to the types of crimes reported when broken down by the year the article was published. Even though, for example, violent crime is the most reported on type of crime from 1990 to 2005, there is no discernable pattern to the number of articles published across this timeframe. That is, there is no clear increase or decrease in the number of stories over time, nor does the number of stories remain constant. This is true across all of the different types of crimes reported. The only pattern that appears to emerge is that after a high-profile immigration-related event occurs, interest in the story remains for a year or two after. For example, in 1998 there were eight articles about illegal immigration. Then in 1999, the year that the Fujian Chinese boats came to BC, 37 articles were published. In the two years following, there were 22 and 27 articles respectively. After that, the number of news articles on illegal immigration dropped to 14 and hovers around this number for several years thereafter.

Four major events influenced the types of crimes discussed in the sample period. The most mentioned event in the sample was WWII, in reference to war criminals living in Canada, their alleged crimes, and the efforts by government and others to find and prosecute them. In 1994 and 1999 two high-profile immigration-related cases took place, which caused spikes in discussions of this topic. Finally, the number of terrorism-related articles peaked in 2001, most likely as a response to the events of 9/11.

The province of Ontario and, specifically, the city of Toronto, are where many of the crimes mentioned in the sample were recorded. This is followed by crimes taking place outside of Canada (e.g., war crimes), and those that occurred in the province of BC (primarily Vancouver).

News stories regarding the sentences offenders received for their crimes were unevenly reported. In some stories, particularly more high-profile ones, there were follow-up stories where

the sentences given by the courts were reported. Most of the emphasis in these stories was given to reporting on sentences where the offender received a deportation order, or a sentence of incarceration. In other stories, however, there were no follow-up articles to inform the public of how the case was resolved.

#### ***4.1.2 Portrayal of immigrants***

In newspaper articles about crime, criminals typically receive more attention than victims, since information about criminals is generally regarded as more newsworthy than news about victims (Surette 1998, 69). In this study, there was an overwhelming emphasis on immigrants as criminals in the news articles examined (95%). In comparison, articles about immigrants as crime victims comprised only 2% of the sample. While this pattern is not unusual when compared to other media studies of crime news, in the context of immigration, the negative representation of immigrants can result in negative consequences (van Dijk 1994). This section highlights the key social characteristics of immigrants discussed in the news articles and then examines common words and phrases used to describe immigrants.

##### *4.1.2.1 Key characteristics*

The gender of immigrants in the news articles was overwhelmingly male. For each article involving a female immigrant, there were six articles involving a male immigrant. Younger adults (18 to 39) represented the largest group in terms of age. The second largest group is older adults (40 to 65), the third largest is seniors (>65), and the smallest is youth (<18). When gender and age are examined across offences discussed, adult male immigrants were most often involved in articles about violent crimes or property crimes. Adult female immigrants were most often represented in articles about illegal immigration, smuggling, and fraud or embezzlement.

While information about the racial and/or ethnic background of all immigrants in the arti-

cles was not consistently available, the nationality of immigrants was more widely reported. There were, in total, 105 different nationalities represented in the sample of news stories. The top five nationalities represented in the articles were Chinese, Jamaican, Vietnamese, Russian, and Somali. Reference to Chinese immigrants represented 16% of all the articles in the sample.

#### *4.1.2.2 Common descriptors*

While the intent here is not to conduct a content analysis of the words or phrases found in the sample of articles, it is instructive to highlight some of the words used to describe immigrants in the data sample. This can give us a clearer picture of how the image of immigrants is constructed over time.

In the headlines of news stories in the sample, the most common words found, aside from Canada and immigration/immigrants, were criminal/s, deportation, crime, war, illegal, police, suspect and refugee/s. Within the content of the articles, the most common descriptor used in the story was ‘criminal’ (1231 references). This can be contrasted with the word victim, which only received 73 mentions in the entire sample. Use of the word ‘criminal’ most typically referred to a behavior or to an individual or group. Other common descriptors included illegal, terrorists, violent, dangerous, and smugglers. Racial or ethnic categories were also used to construct individuals, with Chinese, Asian, and Russian the references employed most often. Some of the most inflammatory words used to describe immigrants or refugees were violent, threat, fraudulent, and bogus:

Our efforts focused on violent criminals who, because of their actions, are now inadmissible to Canada. (2003)

...he was described as a threat to Canadian society. (1992)

Canada needs tougher rules to handle fraudulent refugee claims and immigrant smuggling. (1992)

...the Canadian government created a system which it hoped would provide protection and citizenship for those who really were in danger of persecution in their own countries,

while rejecting and deporting bogus claimants. (1998)

Other scholars have found that it is not unusual to find a pejorative labeling of certain individuals and groups in crime news (Brown 2003; Saxton 2003). Lurid and sensational language and images are often used, leading to the creation of stereotypes and urban myths about crime. Saxton's (2003) study of how asylum seekers are described in Australian newspapers found that news discourse played a key role in the management of a positive national identity through the discursive control of the identity of the other. Representations of immigrants and refugees in this study conform to claims that the use of exclusionary language is a common practice in crime news.

#### ***4.1.3 Key sources of information***

There was a wide range of sources for the news represented in the sample. The most cited voices of authority came primarily from official sources such as law enforcement (primarily police), the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and political elites. Relatives and friends were sometimes cited, but otherwise non-official sources, such as community organizations, academics, or interest groups, were cited much less often and were generally given less space to voice their opinions.

Top 10 news sources

<b>Source</b>	<b>No. of References</b>
Law Enforcement	278
Immigration Department	256
Politician	237
Legal Representative	229
Relatives and Friends	161
Government Official	102
Non-government Official	88
Ethnic Interest Group	87
Independent Agency	81
Community Agency	78

The top news sources were not only cited most often in the articles, but there was also a clearly discernable “hierarchy of credibility” (Becker 1967). This evident hierarchy is a ranked system of news sources that gives those at the top more opportunity to ‘define the way things really are’ by placing their voices earlier in the news story. Allan notes that the implicit assumption is that news sources higher up in the hierarchy will be considered more authoritative and factual (2004, 63). In this study, police officers, immigration officials, and politicians were typically cited early in the articles, thereby establishing not only their authority on the subject, but also the direction of the discussion. Dissenting views by friends and family members, academics, or community groups, for example, were placed lower in the story, suggesting that their perspectives are partial and distorted.

Law enforcement agents were cited most often in articles about organized crimes, violent crimes, and property crimes. Immigration officials and politicians were also cited most often for violent, organized, and property crime, but were also heavily cited in articles about illegal immigration. In contrast, neither legal representatives, nor relatives and friends were a key source of information for articles about illegal immigration.

The information provided by those cited is primarily factual, but they also offer their opinions about the situation as well. For example:

“Bogus refugee claimants and criminals treat this whole thing as a joke,” said Detective Y. P. Pat, the most senior Metro Toronto Police member of Chinese origin. “They know they can easily beat the system and a lot of them go on welfare.” (1991)

“If they are following through and they are deporting more of them, that is great,” said the MP for Surrey-White Rock-South Langley. (1995)

Often, news sources are asked by journalists to speak about the crime and those persons of interest in connection with the crime. Chinese people were the subject of the comments of many news

sources; the next most frequently mentioned were Jamaican and Russian people. Once again, it is clear that high profile, immigration-related events during this study period have influenced which groups receive more attention and commentary.

#### ***4.1.4 Media slant in newspaper articles***

One of the key objectives of this project is to determine the nature of newspaper coverage about immigrants involved in the criminal justice system. To examine this question, the stories collected in this project were coded for the overall slant or tone given to the story. Hamilton (2004) identifies various reasons why newspapers contain a particular slant. They include profit-making goals, political goals and journalistic goals. Among these goals, however, profit-making is regarded by many media scholars as the key determinant of news content (Gentzkow and Shapiro 2006, Groseclose and Milyo 2005). Thus, pleasing the news consumer is an important objective within profit-making. Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006) found that consumer preferences often involved a demand for ideologically slanted news. The emphasis on negative and sensational topics has been shown to be of greater interest to news readers, and tends to attract more audiences. In the context of immigration, negative news coverage is a dominant trend found in the articles examined for this study.

Five different categories of media slant were identified upon initial reading of the newspaper articles. They ranged from very positive (e.g., friendly or understanding) to very negative (e.g., hostile).

## Media slant categories and definitions

Slant (from negative to positive)	Definition	% of sources
Hostile	Includes a broad range of negative, alarmist attitudes. It is more negative than worry in that it moves past fear and anxiety towards contempt, frustration, anger, and aggression.	24%
Frustrated or suspicious	Not openly hostile towards immigrants, but wary of their activities.	9%
Worried	Denotes concern by the media towards the immigrant. Worry is a negative attitude that lacks the alarmist tones of hostile. Worry can include skepticism, mistrust, concern, and fear.	36%
Friendly or Understanding	Denotes a broad spectrum of positive attitudes (e.g., doubting the evidence presented against the immigrant, questioning the fairness of the sentence, showing concern, challenging the fairness of the system)	14%
Neutral	Denotes the attempt by newspapers to present two contrasting positions without siding with either one. The story is reasonable and balanced in its presentation.	17%

The most common media slant found in the articles was one that expressed worry about immigrants (36%). This is a negative slant insofar as immigrants and the immigration system are presented as a concern that needs to be addressed. Many of the articles in this category would highlight the sites of vulnerability in the immigration system, the problem of limited resources, or the lack of solutions available as factors contributing to the crime problem in question:

Serious criminals and terrorists can easily slip into Canada because the border screening system is so shoddy. (1990)

It's not just loss of face troubling the local Asian communities, which includes more than 350,000 Chinese and Vietnamese in a metropolis of more than 2.5 million. There is no agreement on how to cope with the rash of killings and the criminal subculture behind it. (1991)

This group of articles covered a broad range of issues in the criminal justice system, from stories about individual immigrant criminals and their activities to discussions about groups of individuals engaging in criminal behaviour.

Articles with a media slant that was hostile towards immigrants were the next most com-

mon (24%). Many of these articles focused on organized crime and gang activity, particularly among the Asian community. The problems of immigrant criminals evading deportation proceedings, refugees attempting to gain illegal entry into Canada, and immigrants with violent criminal histories were some of the most common topics in this group of articles. The open expression of anger was clearly discernable and often reinforced by the sources quoted:

Salomon Matzkin said he bribed Kenstavicius with two gold watches to escape, but his wife and children died at Polygon. "He is the greatest war criminal," Matzkin said. (1997)

Ottawa should be sued for allowing them in, along with the tens of thousands of Latin Americans and others it has allowed in here over the past few years from the U.S. as bogus "refugees." Anyone who makes up a sad story from anywhere is let in. We have been deluged with undeserving people from perfectly safe democracies. We have also been flooded with questionable people from Eastern Europe who have come via "safe third countries" such as Germany, Britain, Israel or France. Then there's the crush that have come here from Hong Kong or Singapore or other free cities in Asia. We have even let a gangster's wife from the United States come here as a "refugee" because she was frightened of him and could not get witness protection south of the border. (1999)

A higher proportion of stalkers are unemployed, are recent immigrants or have past criminal or violent experience than the average among men in Canada. Substance abuse, usually alcohol, is rampant among stalkers. (1996)

Law enforcement, politicians, and the immigration department were the key sources of information in this group of articles. They would lend support to the claims that immigrants or groups of immigrants were not just people who were causing problems, but they were also regarded as enemies of the state and 'bad' immigrants who were tarnishing the reputation of 'good' immigrants. The idea of Canada as a generous, welcoming nation relies heavily on a binary construction of immigrants as either 'good' or 'bad'. Articles hostile towards immigrants clearly illustrate who the 'bad' immigrants are and often include calls for punitive, swift action by the state:

"Canada has an immigrant tradition that has served it well," Long said. "This tradition is being insulted by a Liberal government that forces legitimate applicants to wait behind illegitimate refugees dumped onto our shores by criminal gangs and those who illegally claim refugee status. (2000)



Canadians are fed up with this and people in Ottawa scurry for cover because the immigration industry of lawyers and lobbyists and refugees pounces on any and all critics as racists. Good immigration is good for Canada. Bad immigration is not and Ottawa has demonstrably failed to protect our borders from the latter. (1999)

We are also letting in a lot of trash as immigrants and, even after they are convicted of serious crimes, not kicking them out. (1999)

The language used to describe immigrants here is attempting to invoke fear and anxiety among readers, and when combined with the emphasis on Canada being “abused,” “exploited,” or “taken advantage of,” the end result is a very negative construction of immigrants and refugees. The question of how much and how long Canada must endure the “undesirables” or “illegitimate” is also often raised, thus putting pressure on the government to respond to the problem.

Neutral articles made up the third most common media slant found in the sample (17%). These were the most balanced of the stories where the tendency to stereotype or homogenize all immigrants was resisted, and there was greater recognition that many different types of immigrants come to Canada. These articles also included a wider range of news sources and lacked the inflammatory language found in the negative coverage of immigrants:

There are a lot of excellent people who come to Canada. But those aren't the people we deal with in enforcement. (1992)

Only a small percentage of Russian immigrants are criminals, of course. (1995)

Some senior police officials, who would be happy to see criminals forced to leave the country, question whether the current process is fair, and wonder if Canada is being responsible by deporting people who may have spent most of their lives in this country. And one diplomatic mission has criticized the immigration department's methods as bordering on human rights abuses. (1995)

A key theme emerging from these articles is that they question and challenge the practices

of the state in a way that is absent in articles that were hostile towards immigrants. While in hostile articles, critics consistently claimed the government was not doing enough to prevent crime and criminals from causing problems in Canada, neutral articles would raise questions of fairness and justice in terms of how immigrants are being treated by the state:

Critics acknowledge there is little public sympathy for criminals but say some people don't deserve to be kicked out of Canada if they would be in danger if sent home. Many hope the courts overturn the law. (1996)

"Why would we take a person whose only offence is – potentially – an immigration violation and put them in a criminal environment? We would be outraged if we were subjected to that sort of thing," she said. "Yes, it's expensive to have an immigration facility but we owe it to our visitors to have a separate facility." (1998)

Unlike articles that were hostile or worried about immigrants, articles with a neutral slant did not immediately blame immigrants and would offer background context when situating the problem in question. Administrative or bureaucratic barriers, policies with other countries, and following institutional procedures or processes were cited as some of the major factors in helping to better understand the situation being discussed.

Friendly and/or understanding articles about immigrants were the fourth largest category (14% of all articles). These articles presented immigrants in a positive light using favorable language, and the articles are often sympathetic to the plight of immigrants and their situation. The focus of the articles was the social, political, legal and/or economic difficulties immigrants experience. It is also within this group of articles that many of the stories about immigrants as criminal victims were found:

The RCMP have charged a senior Immigration Canada manager and four accomplices in an alleged bribes-for-status scheme in which Arab immigrants paid up to \$25,000 to have their claims fast-tracked and approved. (2004)

Mario's case is all the more unusual for the social workers and lawyers backing him, convinced that the wayward young man with a history of bad breaks is, despite it all, an upstanding individual who deserves to be Canadian. (2003)

"I can understand the Canadian government's concern about criminals from other countries coming in and causing trouble," he says. "But this does not appear to be the case here. This was an apparently healthy child who came here with his parents some time ago and subsequently became ill. His illness is serious but it can be managed. And it appears that this specific individual has been responding quite well." (1997)

Where immigrants were involved in criminal activity, these articles would present a more complete picture of the immigrant, rather than simply offering a one-dimensional view of the person as a criminal. For example, it was not uncommon to see references made to family life, work, and community ties in an effort to demonstrate that the person in question is capable of changing for the better despite a history of poor decision-making. There was also greater acknowledgement in these articles that cutbacks to immigrant resources and the declining availability of support for immigrants has had a significant impact on the successful integration of immigrants in Canada.

The least common media slant involved articles that expressed frustration or suspicion towards immigrants (9%). This category is one step below hostile, but goes beyond concern and worry. It is therefore a negative media slant insofar as immigrants and the problems associated with them are viewed as occupying valuable resources within the immigration and criminal justice system:

Lax laws and immigration policies make Canada a haven for those who profit from organized crime while police forces "have to go begging for resources," an outspoken police chief said yesterday. (1998)

Powar's history includes alcoholism, beating his wife and child, stabbing another person, defrauding the unemployment insurance program, lying to immigration officials about his marital status and being belligerent to police. But he has been allowed back into Canada, because his wife and children miss him. (1995)

“We should not be harboring criminals in our country who are hollering refugee status subsequent to committing crimes here,” White said Thursday. (1997)

The lack of cooperation across law enforcement agencies, the slow pace of justice, and the many institutional hurdles in immigration and criminal justice processing are some of the complaints made in the articles that express frustration towards immigrants. Often, it is the immigration system that is being criticized for not having policies in place that can act swiftly, or deter criminal immigrants from entering Canada. For example, a *Vancouver Sun* article from August 29, 1996 focuses on how criminal immigrants labeled as dangerous offenders are being released back into the public by immigration adjudicators at their detention reviews. The frustration over how long it takes to deport someone from Canada is a very common criticism within these articles.

#### *4.1.4.1 Media Slant over Time*

An examination of the media slant in the articles over the time period of this study (1990 to 2005) highlights the Toronto shootings in 1994 as key moments in the direction of news coverage of immigrants involved in the criminal justice system. Prior to 1994, not only were there fewer articles about immigrants and crime (see earlier section), but the dominant slant of news coverage was neutral. However, from 1994 onwards attitudes towards immigrants shift, and the dominant slant is worry and concern about immigrants. In a similar trend, articles with a hostile slant rise markedly by 1994 (from nine articles in 1992 and zero in 1993 to twenty-seven in 1994), and peak between the years 1999 and 2001 (a high of thirty-three articles in 1999), coinciding with the arrival of Fujian Chinese migrants in 1999. At the other end of the spectrum, friendly or understanding articles about immigrants in the justice system were more common before 2000 and dwindle thereafter, with a low of only three articles in 2002.

Media scholars in Canada studying the Toronto shootings or the arrival of Fujian Chinese

migrants have commented extensively on the ways in which news coverage in both of these cases reinforced racialized understandings of crime and negative stereotypes of “undeserving” immigrants (Henry and Tator 2002; Hier 2002). It is not surprising that these cases would thus have an impact on the general direction of news coverage about immigrants in Canada. While around 1994 there were continued efforts to publish friendly and neutral articles alongside more negative articles, by 1999 public attitudes towards immigrants gradually hardened, and there were considerably fewer friendly and/or neutral articles about immigrants towards the end of the time period in this study.

#### *4.1.4.2 Media Slant across Newspapers and Presswires*

Closer scrutiny of who owns Canada’s newspapers and presswires demonstrates how news reporting is dominated by a handful of media companies who are able to tightly control how news is disseminated. Newspaper ownership in Canada is concentrated in the hands of four large conglomerates: Postmedia (ten dailies), Quebecor (thirty-six dailies), Power Corp/Gesca (seven dailies), and Transcontinental (ten dailies) (Newspapers Canada 2011). Despite several parliamentary reports reviewing the state of media concentration in Canada, there is little evidence to suggest that this issue will change in the foreseeable future (Winseck 2008). The lack of diversity in ownership raises some serious concerns about how news is reported in Canada. The key concerns include the silencing of opinions and ideas, such as making the choice to ignore certain stories while exploiting others, the lack of competition in producing quality news stories, and the emphasis on profit-making, where space is allocated to advertising at the expense of publishing more news stories (Blidook 2002).

Most of the news coverage about immigrants in this study was published in larger daily papers or presswires owned by the top three major media corporations (one of the three, Power Corp, publishes French-language papers, which were not represented in this sample). As a result,

many of the stories found in daily newspapers owned by the same company were very similar in terms of how immigrants were represented. For example, the dominant media slant in Postmedia newspapers (which represent the largest proportion of papers in this study, e.g., Vancouver Sun, National Post, and Ottawa Citizen), was one of concern and worry about immigrants, followed by hostile coverage. Though owned by CTVGlobemedia, the Globe and Mail, one of Canada's highest circulation national papers, had the same worried and hostile biases. The only daily paper that demonstrated efforts to publish a range of different perspectives about immigrants was another high-circulation daily paper, the Toronto Star (owned by Torstar), which is generally regarded as a liberal newspaper.

Concerns about content and diversity in news stories about immigrants are not unwarranted. While the few community papers represented in this project appear to offer a wider range of perspectives, there were simply too few stories outside the dominant narratives to make any general impact on the public since they only publish once or twice a week. Other concerns, such as scandals involving newspaper owners publicly expressing an opinion about a political issue, highlight the potential for interference in the content of news stories (Blidook 2009). The issue of media concentration is ongoing, particularly as different media formats (e.g., social media) develop alongside traditional print newspapers (Brin and Soderlund 2010).

#### **4.2 Dominant Narratives of Immigrants and Refugees**

The four dominant narratives or frames of representation in news coverage of immigrants and refugees involved in the criminal justice system in Canada are the portrayal of immigrants and refugees as individual criminals, as members of organized crime groups or gangs, as illegal immigrants and migrants, and as war criminals. Each of these categories present immigrants as the 'other' in a national story that is grounded in racial and nationalistic economies of discourse about 'our' nation and who belongs to Canada. These narratives reflect the anxieties that circulate about

racialized immigrants as suitable and desirable members of the Canadian state.

#### ***4.2.1 Immigrants as individual criminals***

The most prevalent type of narrative is where immigrants were represented as individual criminals in news stories. The coverage focused predominantly on criminal incidents rather than crime patterns or the possible causes of crimes. Although news media is intended to provide citizens with a public awareness of crime, Sherizen (1978, 204) points out that this awareness is often based on an information-rich and knowledge-poor foundation. For example, news coverage of property crimes accentuates information gathered from legal authorities about the crime being reported. Similarly, news stories about immigrants involved in terrorist activities emphasize Canada's efforts to combat terrorism. In both situations, virtually no information is provided about the immigrant at the center of the story. In the following example, the only information provided about the immigrant is that he is Algerian and lives in Montreal:

An Algerian living in Montreal who was arrested trying to enter the United States illegally was carrying enough bomb-making material to blow up four large buildings and cause thousands of casualties, the U.S. Congress was told Wednesday. (2000)

Thus, where information is provided about the immigrant, it is generally scant and incomplete. A common practice in the portrayal of immigrants in crime news is to focus on the descriptions of the perpetrator/s without situating them in a broader context. That is, aside from reference to the perpetrator's immigration status, the crime being discussed, and any previous history of criminality, not much else is known about the immigrant. References to family life, employment, or other social and economic factors are generally omitted:

The McKenzie brothers received landed-immigrant status in June, 1973, when they arrived in Canada, aged eight and nine respectively. Andre McKenzie went on to amass 35 convictions for a range of offences, including assault with a weapon, assault causing bodily harm (against the mother of his three children), breaking and entering and trafficking in crack cocaine. He filed yet another appeal against his deportation on July 31 at the Federal Court of Canada. The court will consider his case but does not have to hear it. (2000)

As a result, the public is left to make their own assumptions about the motives of the immigrant. Furthermore, by individualizing the crime through emphasizing the acts of individuals, news stories rarely consider the persistent and systemic victimization of social groups (Quinney 1970). For example, in virtually all types of crimes in the study, the emphasis on immigrants as offenders in news stories far outnumber stories where the focus is on immigrants as victims. The lack of balance is striking and, as a result, fails to adequately recognize the extent to which immigrants are victimized by other immigrants and by non-immigrants in Canada.

Given the emphasis on reporting crimes committed by immigrants, the content of many news stories often prescribes solutions. The most common solution proposed is a law and order approach that advocates the control and punishment of offenders. For example, stories about extortion committed by organized crime groups typically call for more resources to quickly remove criminals from Canada:

In a stock speech she delivered twice Tuesday, Johnston warns: “There will be no peace for criminals in our province, particularly imported criminals and those who are violent . . . Their lifestyle is based on drug trafficking, on robbery, on extortion, credit card fraud, prostitution and intimidation. They recruit by using girls, cars and drugs and guns as rewards . . . She says the membership is dominated by “refugees, landed immigrants, stateless students and visitors.” (1991)

Rarely do news stories suggest other possible solutions, such as changing the social, economic, or class structures (Turk 1971). Chibnall (2010) argues that one of the key professional imperatives of journalism is simplifying the news to eliminate the shades of grey and present a black and white story. Thus, “the subtle complexities of motivation and situation which makes human action intelligible at a level beyond the mundane one of ‘common sense’, ‘cliché’, ‘folk wisdom’, and taken-for-granted assumption” are glossed over (Chibnall 2010, 207). Dichotomizing a complex reality such as a criminal event has the consequence of reifying the categories of criminal and immigrant as one and the same, thereby entrenching the stereotype of criminal immigrants in Canada.



#### ***4.2.2 Immigrants as organized criminals***

Thompson et al. (2000) note that one of the most prevalent crime topics in the past several decades has been gang crime. The activities of organized crime have been a focal point for crime news, and the coverage has created fear in some communities. They note:

Gang news not only presents information, it also articulates ideological messages concerning the meaning and definition of gangs. Moreover, news stories influence community responses to gang activities, which in turn become part of the story to be reported. (Thompson, Young, and Burns 2000, 410)

In this study, crime news coverage about organized crime groups involved a number of different themes. The coverage highlights certain features of the problem, often to the exclusion of other themes. The first theme in reporting on the activities of organized crime groups in Canada emphasizes the violent activities of these groups, often with great detail:

According to a CISC report, Eastern European crime groups in Canada are alleged to be involved in murder, drug importation, extortion, counterfeiting currency, shoplifting, tobacco and weapons smuggling, prostitution rings, money laundering, organized immigration fraud and extensive fraud. (1999)

Kidnappings and home invasions by Chinese and Vietnamese gangs are increasing in frequency and brutality as gang members target both middle-class Canadians and recent immigrants. (1995)

“These persons are known to have had extensive paramilitary training in the use of automatic weapons, hand-to-hand combat, Russian RPGs (anti-tank weapons), rocket launchers and other offensive weapons and substances ... Many of these have been used in the Greater Toronto Area to carry out their projects,” the report says. (2000)

Both Canada as a nation and Canadians are seen as particularly vulnerable to victimization by these crime groups, who are often portrayed as devious and cunning in their ability to hide within a community.

A second theme found in the articles is how the state ought to respond to the problem. It

is generally recognized that criminal justice responses will be inadequate, and blame is directed at the immigration system for either allowing organized gang members into Canada, or for not swiftly deporting them upon knowledge of their presence in Canada:

An international investigation has been launched to determine how a notorious Asian gangster ended up living in Vancouver as a landed immigrant. Tong Sang Lai, alias Shui Fong Lai, alias Dragon Head Lai, escaped a crackdown on warring triads in Macao and is now living in a \$750,000 East Vancouver home on Fraserview Drive with his wife and children . . . Contrary to official policy, and despite what their Hong Kong colleagues had discovered about Mr. Lai, no one in the Los Angeles office made the necessary checks to reveal that he had a criminal background. (1997)

Although an alleged Asian gang member lost an appeal against deportation in just over an hour Thursday, he cannot be sent back to China immediately because he's involved in a criminal case. (1992)

Canada's porous borders and the lack of adequate surveillance in place to prevent gang members from entering Canada are concerns and, along with Canada's strong human rights record, are viewed as factors contributing to why Canada is a sought-after destination for organized gang members, and also an arena for their criminal activities:

Canada has become a prime target for Chinese gangs trying to funnel illegal immigrants into the United States in what is fast becoming a multimillion-dollar operation, new federal government information says. (1999)

Many op-ed articles offer scathing criticism of the government's inaction in the face of what is seen as an all-out assault on Canada by crime groups:

Ottawa should be sued for allowing them in, along with the tens of thousands of Latin Americans and others it has allowed in here over the past few years from the U.S. as bogus "refugees." Anyone who makes up a sad story from anywhere is let in. We have been deluged with undeserving people from perfectly safe democracies. We have also been flooded with questionable people from Eastern Europe who have come via "safe third countries" such as Germany, Britain, Israel or France. Then there's the crush that

have come here from Hong Kong or Singapore or other free cities in Asia. We have even let a gangster's wife from the United States come here as a "refugee" because she was frightened of him and could not get witness protection south of the border . . . Ottawa's not gentler and kinder. Ottawa's a sucker and we're paying the tab. (1999)

Headlines such as "Canada terrorist friendly", "Canada 'haven for crooks'" or "Who Stands on Guard for Canada?" reinforce the views that not enough is being done to prevent this problem from becoming more serious and the newspapers' warnings are not being properly heeded. At times, the anger of the journalist is palpable:

Not surprisingly, some 5,000 deportees have gone missing, according to Ottawa's own figures. But, fortunately for our society in the above drug dealer's case, an enterprising policeman decided to check the prints of the original "refugee" with the FBI. It found a match. This ringleader had been convicted three times of serious, violent and drug-related crimes in the United States, had seven aliases, and been deported twice before he tricked Canada into taking him in as a refugee. The others had convictions, too. Armed with this evidence, the men were deported in 1997. This story reveals why so many undesirables are coming here as refugees. It's because Immigration is simply not doing its homework to protect Canadians. It only goes half way. (1999)

News coverage of organized crime groups with a positive or neutral theme is less common. News coverage focusing on the successes of immigration enforcement, the changes to immigration policy to prevent organized crime activity, or the victims of organized crime groups is much less common. In addition, gang members are rarely cast in a positive or neutral light.

As expected, in all the news coverage about organized crime groups, the perpetrators' names are published and reference to their nationality or foreignness is commonplace. We are told about "Asian Triad members," "Chinese gangs," "Russian mobsters," "Columbia cartel members," "Japanese Yakuza," or "Tamil gang members". The message here is that "problem" immigrants are those from primarily non-European countries, and more should be done to prevent them from entering Canada. Their exclusion and expulsion from Canada is seen as not only the best response,

but the only appropriate response:

If any mobsters immigrated to this country by tampering with their computer files at the Canadian consulate in Hong Kong, they will be deported, Immigration Canada says.  
(1999)

Thus, news stories about immigrants involved in organized crime conceptualized the problem not as a criminal justice issue, but an immigration issue. The greatest concern engendered by newspapers is not for the victims of immigrants involved in gang activity, but that these immigrants are allowed to enter Canada at all. Their penetration into Canada is viewed as a threat to state sovereignty, and draconian remedies are therefore necessary to address the weaknesses of our immigration system.

#### ***4.2.3 Illegal immigrants***

Newspaper coverage of illegal immigrants to Canada was significantly shaped by the arrival of boat migrants from China in 1999 to the West Coast of BC. Prior to 1999, much of the news coverage focused on individual immigrants who either entered Canada illegally or remained in Canada without legal status. Rarely was the problem of illegality generalized towards a particular nationality or ethnic group before 1999. Where illegal immigrants were mentioned as a group, it was usually in the context of discussions around organized crime activities:

Federal agencies suspect some of the people in the Vancouver Island salal industry are involved in organized crime --including smuggling of illegal aliens, cigarettes and drugs.  
(1998)

However, after the arrival of the Fujian Chinese boat migrants in 1999, the news coverage placed greater focus on large flows of illegal migrants to Canada. The metaphor of water or natural catastrophe was deployed to describe the influx of migrants. The most frequently used terms were “flood”, “tide”, or “pouring in”, as evident in the following headlines:

“Migrant arrivals could soon become a flood” (1999)

“Canada faces a much larger tide of humanity” (1999)

As a group, migrants were often objectified as “human cargo”. This term was regularly used to foster the view that such persons were largely impersonal or interchangeable objects. It also fostered the “trade” rhetoric that saw migrants to Canada as a form of commerce:

Hong Kong is one of the favorite gateways for criminals moving human cargo to the West and Canada ranks third behind Japan and the U.S. on the list of destinations. (1996)

“Chinese gangs flood Canada with lucrative human cargo.” (Headline, 1999)

The case against allowing migrants who arrived in Canada through irregular means to stay was made by emphasizing their diseased nature and the social and economic costs borne by Canadians:

There are a number of negative outcomes from illegal immigration, whether from China or elsewhere: Without normal customs checks, illegal immigrants may be carriers of disease into the new country. Large-scale illegal immigration generates losses to local and state/provincial treasuries in the form of education, welfare, medical, and other costs, as they provide services to non-tax paying residents. (1999)

Lost in the discussion is any recognition of the personal and social history of the migrants being problematized; they are non-persons and simply objects to be managed – whether by smugglers

who wish to profit from their movements, or by immigration agents keen to detain and deport them.

The term ‘illegal immigrants’ was often used interchangeably with refugee(s) in the news coverage, thus creating the common-sense assumption that they were one and the same people. According to many researchers, this is a common rhetorical practice used by the news media to construct a definition of refugees that largely excludes most migrants, who could not possibly be ‘legitimate’ or ‘genuine’ (Pickering 2001; Saxton 2003; Horsti 2007).

Fear of losing control over who can enter Canada is a major concern expressed in the news coverage. The illegality of migrants highlights the weaknesses in Canada’s immigration system, and creates demands on the government to act. In Canada, as in many other Western countries, the consequences for migrants have been further restrictions on making refugee claims and punitive treatment upon arrival. News stories celebrating police raids or the capture of illegal immigrants almost always present the perspectives of the authorities only. Rarely are the migrants permitted to present their view of the situation. In the following news story about migrants arriving in Canada seeking asylum, only the perspective of the police was provided:

Twenty-six people deemed dangerous illegal immigrants were arrested in early-morning raids yesterday, police said.

Police said many of those arrested had been involved in gangs and gun play. The suspects had been convicted of violent offences in Canada, said police, adding that such convictions nullify their claim to any Canadian status.

Police did not identify the accused, their countries of origin or alleged links to organized crime. Those arrested had come to Canada from “all over the world,” authorities said. (2003)

The one-sided reporting found in these stories about migrants hoping to be accepted as refugees in Canada becomes logical and justified since the story is, after all, about “illegal immigrants” who have behaved deviantly and who pose a threat of chaos if not properly contained.

#### **4.2.4 Immigrants as war criminals**

News coverage of the search for and prosecution of war criminals who immigrated to Canada occupies a central place in discussions and debates about immigrants and immigration. Discussions of war criminals offered factual information about ongoing trials and the nature of the problem in Canada:

Canadian authorities are on the lookout for more than 90 war criminals who were supposed to be removed from the country due to their involvement in modern-day atrocities but failed to show up for deportation. (2002)

The federal government has accused an 84-year-old Toronto man of participating in the execution of Jews in German-occupied Latvia during the Second World War . . . Documents filed yesterday in Federal Court identify Erichs Tobiass as one of four suspected war criminals Ottawa is trying to deport for hiding their Nazi past when they came to Canada . . . The Immigration Department began formal proceedings against Tobiass to strip him of his Canadian citizenship. (1995)

There were also many criticisms made about the government's slow response to this problem:

Is Canada looking hard enough for war criminals who may have moved here after the Second World War? A two-year study recommended in 1987 that the country move quickly against dozens of people it identified as criminals. But Jewish groups say the government is moving too slowly, and will likely never prosecute more than a handful of alleged criminals. (1990)

Canada is seen as largely to blame for allowing war criminals to immigrate to Canada. Its lax screening procedures allowed many Nazi war criminals to enter and live for decades in Canada:

Even after immigration interview procedures were finally standardized in 1953, they contained no direct questions about Nazi party membership or wartime activities. (1990)

This theme continues into the present day, as the focus shifts from Nazi war criminals to those from more recent conflicts in Eastern Europe and Asia:

Bosnia's ambassador to the United Nations wants Canadian officials to investigate a news report that three Serbian war criminals – including a former Sarajevo sniper said to be

living in Burnaby – have found refuge in Canada. (1997)

No country wants to be known as a place of refuge for suspected war criminals, least of all a liberal democracy like Canada (1999).

But with its immense, open border and its generous acceptance of the world's refugees, Canada has been in danger of becoming known as such a haven. A list of people the federal Citizenship and Immigration Department has deported in the past eight months illustrates how real the danger has been. (1999)

The metaphors of disease and infection are deployed to highlight the urgent response required and the need to protect Canada:

The presence of suspected war criminals in Canada is like a virus, sapping the good will of many Canadians and eroding Canada's reputation abroad. What more justifiable target for anti-immigrant sentiment than war criminals? To have them living for years in ordinary Canadian neighbourhoods fosters the repugnant idea that behind every refugee claimant lurks a criminal. (1999)

The labeling of war criminals as “holocaust henchman”, “thugs”, “Canada's least wanted”, and “killers in our midst”, and government agents as the “federal Nazi hunters” or the “Nazi busters” highlights how the metaphor of war is invoked to construct the problem. In the conceptual domain of war, Canada is the victim who becomes the hero, and war criminals are the targets and the enemies to be purged. Their past crimes are unforgivable, and much of the coverage focuses on the views of government authorities and those urging the government to act. Thus, war criminals are overwhelmingly portrayed in a negative light. Only four articles (out of seventy-one articles) included the perspective of the immigrant. Not surprisingly, deportation is seen as the most appropriate response, regardless of how long they have resided in Canada. The metaphorical language of war justifies the strict control on immigrants entering the country, and it shapes public opinion about immigrants who are labeled as war criminals.



## 5.0 Discussion

### 5.1 Media Discourse and Racialized Exclusion

News media representations of immigrants in the criminal justice system offer a one-dimensional portrait that is overwhelmingly negative. The emphasis on immigrants as criminals to the exclusion of any discussion of their criminal victimization serves to ensure that immigrants are depicted, at the very least, as a risky population, and possibly even dangerous and threatening. Not only are immigrants presented as deviant, but their racial difference also informs the alleged ‘threat’ to Canada. The inherent deviancy of immigrants and the implied need for deterrence is heavily encoded in assumptions about race. That the integrity of Canada is routinely questioned when governments are seen as failing to prevent the ‘threats’ of criminal immigrants against ‘ordinary’ Canadians points to the dichotomous construction of normality as being whatever immigrants are not. Conflating the categories of immigrants and criminals thus becomes ‘common sense’.

Newspaper representations of immigrants draw heavily on the vocabulary of exclusion to highlight the themes of marginality, deviance, and irregularity. Immigrants, we are told, are the ‘crooks’, the ‘criminal gangs’, the ‘fake migrants’, the ‘bogus immigrants’, the ‘undesirables’, and the ‘outlaws’. Their racial otherness, made known through ongoing references to their nationality, bolsters the view that criminality is not just a characteristic of the individual, but it is also linked to the wider ethnic community to which the individual belongs. For example, the terms ‘Tamil guerrillas’, ‘Russian mobsters’, ‘Chinese gangsters’, ‘Palestinian terrorists’, ‘Loatian criminal’, and ‘Czech criminal’ promote the view that the threat of criminality can be found in these ethnic communities. The fear that immigrant criminal groups will overwhelm Canada, combined with the commonsense belief about who immigrants really are fuels the demand and justification for control. The news media’s role in mediating and also constructing these representations of immigrants and their communities has been instrumental to the criminalization of immigrants and refugees.

Portraying immigrants as dangerous and threatening by constructing their identities through the theme of criminality and deviance is a seductive and powerful way to reassert 'normality'. Many writers have pointed out how this binary logic is deployed in representations of immigrants and refugees both historically and in contemporary news discourse (Pickering 2001; Cisneros 2008; Fleras 2011). Pickering observes that this approach provides communal comfort both through removing ambivalence through the forced choice of either/or, and in state responses to these problems (2001, 172). Cisneros (2008) adds that constructing immigrants as a social danger serves a number of other purposes. It provides an opportunity to define the other and solidify the self, as well as use racial difference to constitute shared national and cultural identity, and it allows for simplistic understandings of immigration that suggest equally simplistic solutions (Cisneros 2008, 591). Canadian newspapers have constructed immigrants as outsiders to Canada, and in doing so, they continue to reinforce a cultural division between 'us' and 'them'.

This media-driven demonization of immigrants highlights the prejudice and bias that continues to influence public beliefs. Fleras (2010, 14) points out that, even when individual stories may be accurate, the cumulative effect of predominantly negative narratives of immigrants is distorting and demeaning. The loss of dignity and the denial of humanity that comes from portraying immigrants as an ongoing danger to Canada has enormous costs for Canadians and immigrants alike. The consequences of this approach are the corrosion of immigrant and refugee rights, the ascendancy of harsher immigration policies and practices, and the reproduction of immigrants and refugees as illegitimate members of the Canadian state. Shoring up support for protection of the sanctity and integrity of the nation by constructing immigrants as an ongoing danger and threat precludes a more complex understanding of immigration in a globalized society and the many positive contributions immigrants have made to Canada.

## 5.2 Immigrant Criminality as a Racial Project

The media's role in perpetuating the discourse of immigrant criminality is also important in managing the status and identity of immigrants in Canada. Fleras (2010, 14) argues that negative news media coverage of immigration and immigrants is neither random, nor accidental, nor out of the ordinary. The promotion of the dominant order through reinforcement of a particular ideological slant and the framing of stories around the views and interests of the dominant group is how the news media operates (Fleras 2010, 14). van Dijk adds that since elites control media institutions, they are able to control public discourses that 'enact, support and legitimate' White dominance (1993, 284). Positioning immigrants, particularly racialized 'criminal' immigrants, in opposition to 'normal' Canadians has been a very effective strategy for building consensus around punitive immigration reforms and unifying different groups under the banner of fighting off a common enemy. Furthermore, this construction of immigrants and refugees as outsiders, illegal, or unworthy members of the Canadian polity makes it so those who remain in Canada do so under conditions where their economic power is significantly reduced, their social and political status are limited, and their loyalty to Canada is always questioned. In turn, this makes it more difficult for immigrants and refugees to assert their rights, access entitlements, and make demands on the state for greater resources.

The media portrayal of immigrants is ideologically rooted and seeks to reassert an understanding of how immigrants ought to be positioned nationally in a Canada that continues to operate under a White hegemony. Although there were counter-narratives in this study attempting to debunk the myth that there is a link between immigration and criminality, they were very much the exception in the collection of narratives found. Rather, this study has shown how certain immigrant groups have been criminalized, 'raced', and rejected by the Canadian state (Provine and Doty 2011). While race may no longer be overtly accepted as a category of exclusion, the policies and practices that racialize immigrants through immigration enforcement currently enjoy broad popular support. Provine and Doty (2011, 267) highlight how crime, race, and immigration control

are conflated in the design, implementation, and funding of immigration policies. Consequently, many more immigrants are criminalized in the widening net of enforcement. Canadian newspapers have played a pivotal role in supporting this ‘racial project’ of targeting and punishing immigrants (Omi and Winant 1994). The media’s support and promotion of harsher controls is necessary, as one news article bluntly states, since immigrants are “the undesirables we have been trying to kick out for years.” (Mitrovica 2001)

## **6.0 Conclusion**

This paper has sought to demonstrate how mainstream papers in Canada represent immigrants involved in the criminal justice system. Far from breaking the mold, where immigration and crime are concerned, newspapers continue a long-standing tradition of offering a primarily negative portrayal of immigrants, regardless of the nature of their criminal justice problem. Immigrants are put on trial by the media, often without any opportunity to present their stories or accounts. As a result, it is unlikely that the hardened public perceptions towards immigrants will give way to a more balanced or empathic perspective. Immigrants are seen as easy scapegoats during difficult economic times, and those who have a criminal past or cause problems will experience the full force of the state’s actions. For example, recent changes to Canada’s deportation policies will deny increasing numbers of immigrants access to the appeal process for those with a criminal record (Levitz 2012). Public acceptance of these changes illustrates how the current Canadian government has successfully sold its campaign of exclusion as the only option available for managing “problem” immigrants. Far from remaining objective on this recent policy shift, the *National Post*’s response was to praise the Immigration Minister for acting in the best interest of Canada and preventing abuses by immigrants (McParland 2012). As Pickering (2001) notes, processes of demonization and sacrifice have been informed by deviancy. This approach to managing immigrants is a trend that is not unique to Canada, but occurs in many other developed nations whose media institutions follow similar patterns of news coverage. As immigration debates continue to inten-

sify, challenging the negative portrayal of immigrants in the media will be a vital part of resisting the punitive turn in immigration sentiment and policy.

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