

The Impact of Social Groups on Social Movements in Hong Kong

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Abstract: The phenomenon of communal social groups in Hong Kong in recent years cannot be underestimated. The sense of group in Hong Kong has its roots in the struggle over identity, which has led to the emergence of different ideologies in Hong Kong society due to external pressures to articulate multiple identities. Based on ideology, the first social group emerged in Hong Kong society before 1997, and after 1997, group consciousness in Hong Kong was also influenced by the subject of Liberal Studies 2009. With the understanding and popularisation of plenty of current affairs, students organised their social group as a methodology to participate in social movements and exert their influence. They believe that Hong Kong's social problems are rooted in political conflicts. To address the new challenges posed by external political factors since 1997, a new generation of young people in Hong Kong has begun to practise their civic engagement through social groups, which has led to a series of social movements, which have gradually formed the basis for mobilisation of Hong Kong's social activities, making the boundaries between the different ideological camps in Hong Kong's social activities more distinct, and forming a clear-cut mechanism for social movement cooperation.

Keywords: Social groups, National Education Campaign, Umbrella Movement, Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Social group is the coming together of different groups in a society with specific needs or political views, where members maintain a basic level of contact to maintain the flow of information within and even between groups. As a significant mobilising base for social movements in Hong Kong in recent years, social groups have enabled previously disadvantaged groups to develop a degree of influence and participate in the discussion of social issues. From the National Education Campaign to the Umbrella Movement to the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement, the political ecology of Hong Kong changed. The urgency of social movements escalated, and the space for inclusiveness and discussion between different groups was gradually tightened. This was reflected in the anxiety about the future of Hong Kong and the hostility between other social groups that permeated Hong Kong's social movements. Social groups can take the form of trade unions, political parties, NGOs, and online groups, where the sharing of information between those who share the

same political views is enhanced. In contrast, between groups formed based on different identities, political disagreements make the ideological divide in society even more divisive. Social groups are often based on ideology, and the earliest sense of group in Hong Kong society was rooted in the struggle over identity. Identity has long been an issue that has plagued Hong Kong society, primarily since the handover in 1997, when social movements have been based on a battle over the discourse of this controversy. The linking of different groups has reinforced the various ideologies in Hong Kong society. The multiple expressions of identity have become multiplicitous and precise in questioning and refuting each other's views. The various representations of identity have become more apparent in questioning and denying each other.

1.2. Literature Review

In recent years, research on social movements in Hong Kong has attracted much attention in the academic community. As the focus of regional political analysis, the Hong Kong issue is the focus of scholars engaged in relevant research. Their interpretation of social movements in Hong Kong also reflects the contention for the right to speak to characterise movements. Tian Feilong studied the evolution of civil disobedience in Hong Kong's social movements from the perspective of political philosophy and found that Hong Kong nativism and the brave warrior community constituted the internal motivation of the social movements in the anti-amendment movement [1]. Hong Kong scholar Leung Kai Chi interprets Hong Kong's social movements from the historical dimension of Hong Kong standards. His research finds that the reason why Hong Kong people cannot concentrate on economic development and repeatedly entangle in political issues is that Hong Kong people believe that the solution to people's livelihood problems lies in the reform of the electoral system [2]. Ho Ming-hsiu, a sociologist in Taiwan, studied the Enlightenment of Hong Kong Social Movements on Taiwan society from the perspective of comparative politics and proposed that the Hong Kong Anti revisionist movement was the reappearance of the 2014 sunflower movement, which mobilised widely and relied on the input of a large number of communities in Hong Kong [3]. It is less than two years since the end of the anti-amendment movement. The existing studies in the academic community are all about collating and interpreting the history of social movements in Hong Kong or imagining the future of Hong Kong. The academic research on the development history of social movements in Hong Kong since 2012 primarily focuses on the role of ideology and the disputes it has caused. As the mobilisation basis in Hong Kong's social movements, few scholars have studied the impact of community connection on Hong Kong's social movements. On the one hand, because Hong Kong's social movements have just ended, many problems still need to be sorted out. On the other hand, many social activists who dominated community connections were arrested and imprisoned for participating in the movement. This paper aims to fill this gap, hoping to arouse people's attention to the phenomenon of community connection by studying the impact of community connection on social movements in Hong Kong.

1.3. Research Content and Significance

This paper adopts the literature analysis method. Firstly, it traces the historical origin of Hong Kong's social group consciousness and sorts out that social group originates from Hong Kong people's expression and controversy about identity. Before 1997, the earliest social group appeared in Hong Kong society. After 1997, liberal studies provided theoretical guidance for the new generation of young people in Hong Kong. Then this paper takes National Education Campaign, Umbrella Movement and Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement as examples to compare the role of the social group in Hong Kong's social movement in different periods and provides a more

comprehensive and detailed perspective for us to observe the ideological changes in Hong Kong society in recent years.

2. A Sense of Group in Early Hong Kong Society

2.1. Stemming from A Struggle for Identity

Hong Kong society's early sense of the group was rooted in the struggle for identity. Early Hong Kong society maintained a delicate balance in a multi-ethnic cultural environment until the Hong Kong 1967 leftist riots, when the leftists launched a series of movements, including assassinations, demonstrations and marches, to counter the British Hong Kong government and essentially motivated by the quest for socialism. The Hong Kong 1967 leftist riots can be seen as a reaction to the Great Cultural Revolution that spread to Hong Kong, where there were few expressions of Chinese identity but more of a partisan dispute. The first discussions of the opposite face of identity, "Hong Kong people", emerged in the civil society shaped by the MacLehose Years [4]. When Governor MacLehose took office, Hong Kong was reeling from the social turmoil brought about by the Hong Kong 1967 leftist riots. MacLehose declared that Hong Kong was now in a good state of economic development to quickly heal the wounds of society and reinvigorate Hong Kong's civic life and could enter a phase of improving people's livelihood and optimising the city's infrastructure. As a result, from 1971 to 1982, the government introduced and funded a series of radical reforms covering education, health care, housing and transport, which steadily evolved Hong Kong society into a modern metropolis, with the citizens being the most direct beneficiaries, and as a result, a new "Hong Konger A new identity of "Hong Kong people" emerged [5]. With Hong Kong's economic take-off and social progress, they began to feel proud of their identity as Hong Kong people. This vigorous and optimistic mindset provided a warm ground for constructing a sense of local identity [6]. MacLehose's series of reforms, which directly linked policy initiatives to the people's lives, undoubtedly emphasised the residents' responsibility to Hong Kong society and accelerated the formation of Hong Kong's civil society, on which the identity of the "Hong Kong people" was based. At the same time, this top-down civil society building created good social preconditions for the public participation of Hong Kong people in the future.

In addition to the expressions 'Hong Kong people' and 'Chinese people, the identities that emerge in Hong Kong society include a complex mix of Hong Kong Chinese and Chinese Hong Kong people. In Hong Kong society of "cultural China", "economic China" and "political China" different levels, such as the deconstruction of China's national image, agree with the former two Hong Kong people tend to agree with the Chinese traditional culture, diet custom, friendly was the attitude of civil society in China, and will be the first two and socialist "political China" [7]. When the issue of reunification emerged as external pressure, various ideologies emerged based on different identities, such as Chinese nationalism, Hong Kong nationalism, Hong Kong conservatism, Hong Kong liberalism, and Hong Kong Localist groups. Moreover, it is based on these different ideologies that social groups in Hong Kong society have been formed. Based on these different ideologies, the social groups in Hong Kong society are formed. People with different political views can strengthen their sense of identity through these groups. The earliest social group in Hong Kong civil society was the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (HKASPDMC), whose identity was "Hong Kong people in China", homogenous but dispersed. Members of the Alliance recognise their Hong Kong citizenship but at the same time consider mainland China to be their homeland in terms of blood and history. They see Hong Kong society as part of the Chinese nation, inseparable from the Chinese government, while simultaneously emphasising a sense of place. The debate over identity led the Alliance to see itself as responsible for continuing the democratic aspirations of the Chinese intellectuals, and social groups were one of how they put their political ideals into practice.

In the future, with the emergence of social groups in Hong Kong society, the debates and conflicts between them were also centred on identity and political action.

2.2. Influenced by the Liberal Studies

The subject of Liberal Studies provides theoretical guidance for a social group in Hong Kong. As early as 1998, the education sector in Hong Kong advocated the need to nurture liberal arts talents with an international perspective to keep our society competitive in the process of globalisation. With the implementation of the 3-3-4 academic reform in Hong Kong in 2009, Liberal Studies has become one of the four compulsory subjects in secondary schools. Regarding educational objectives, Liberal Studies can be divided into three parts: First, to promote cultivating students' personal qualities and the formation of an independent personality. 2. To explore the social development and national culture of Hong Kong and emphasise students' social responsibility as members of society. 3. To popularise public issues in the global integration process and discuss the challenges that Hong Kong has to face in the international group from the perspective of Hong Kong society. Liberal Studies encourage students' social participation, emphasise their civic attributes in society, and train them to measure the quality of life in Hong Kong society through various perspectives. In the second part of the popularisation of social issues in Hong Kong, the Liberal Studies textbook suggests three ways of social and political participation: active engagement, collective action and support. Proactive engagement means that members of the group take the initiative to approach relevant people or groups to voice their demands, for example, by calling up radio programmes to ask questions about political affairs or writing to the Chief Executive. In contrast, collective action means that people with the same ideas connect to strengthen their voice in the group, for example, through rallies, joint signatures and marches [8]. The social groups that have attracted attention in Hong Kong since 2012 are mainly student organisations and student-formed political parties, such as Scholarism and Hong Kong Indigenous, which are built around a new generation of young people in Hong Kong, an era influenced by liberal arts education, and whose social groups are both proactive and collective. The new generation's social groups are initiated mainly by one or two rallying figures who, by building a group, raise their voices and generate social interest to the extent that they are invited to appear on specific public platforms. At the same time, in Hong Kong's social movements, large-scale demonstrations are often called by different groups, some of which are civil society organisations established by members of the group, and the people who respond to the call are also part of other groups fronts.

3. Social Groups: From the National Education Campaign to the Umbrella Movement

3.1. Sparking the National Education Campaign

In 2011, the Hong Kong government planned to introduce Moral and National Education as a compulsory subject from Primary 1 to Secondary six and launched a public consultation with the education sector. The National Education subject has sparked a debate on identity in Hong Kong. Secondary school students in Hong Kong consider the discourse on national identity in the National Education subject brainwashing. At the same time, the public consultation is only targeted at some professionals in the education sector. As the most direct audience of the policy, the students, out of their concern for the future and their strong sense of political participation, quickly formed a coalition against Moral Education and National Education. On May twenty-ninth 2011, they founded Scholarism. In its Chinese interpretation, Scholarism emphasises the mixed identity of students as citizens on the one hand. It expresses the inheritance of student progressivism from the May Fourth Movement in China, on the other, in the same way as the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, in that it draws on Chinese cultural traditions to attack political invasion in China. What began as a small petition against the National Education eventually became

a social movement. Students who shared the same political aspirations came together to form a group, and this group extended the influence of the student's aspirations. Members of Scholarism expressed their protest against the National Education through leaflet distribution, street speeches and media interviews. After the media had spread the word, Scholarism received widespread attention from the group, with parents of students curious as to what brought the uninitiated students together in an organised way to voice their severe demands to the government. The students pointed out that the government's decisions would negatively impact the future generations of Hong Kong's youth and shake Hong Kong society's long-held values of freedom and democracy. As the group's rhetoric intensified and expanded, they made more adults aware that decisions that may sound distant from their situations will ultimately impact their futures and destinies. The parents who were touched then formed the National Education Parent Concern Group, which has thousands of members. On September seventh 2012, more than 120,000 people came to Admiralty after work to show their support for the protesters, inspired by the hunger strike by members of the Student Movement. The largest rally in Hong Kong's history without prior police approval. The following day, under public pressure, Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-Ying held a press conference and announced that the national education curriculum would be suspended. It was a social movement triggered by social group, and at the same time, made the use of social activities to express public participation and accepted by the general public, laying the psychological foundation for social activities in Hong Kong since the national education campaign, bringing about a full-scale political awakening and civic participation, and reshaping the political landscape of Hong Kong [9].

3.2. Forming the Basis for Social Mobilisation

Before 2012, there was a crucial but unresolved issue in Hong Kong society, namely the promise of universal suffrage since the handover. After 2012 some Hong Kong people began to realise that the previous social problems in Hong Kong, such as housing difficulties and an inadequate social security system, were rooted in the political system of Hong Kong. The lack of effective channels for people to participate in politics has led to a doubling of government decisions favouring the business sector. The national education campaign has become a trigger for Hong Kong people in the new century to launch a rethink and revolt against the political system. The national education campaign has awakened Hong Kong people's awareness of political deliberation, which has led to discussions on the unfairness of elections. More and more Hong Kong people believe that the solution to Hong Kong's social problems lies in the implementation of universal suffrage so that all members of the group have the right to participate in the resolutions that can influence the course of Hong Kong's history.

In 2013, Tai Yiu-ting, an associate professor of law at the University of Hong Kong, mentioned in his article published in the Hong Kong Economic Journal that if the government reneged on its promise of universal suffrage, a mass sit-in would be launched in Central, Hong Kong, to paralyse Hong Kong's economic activities by non-violent means [10]. For a year afterwards, Tai set up the Occupy Central Group to promote ideas about implementing universal suffrage. By August thirty-first 2014, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) promulgated their final election proposal for Hong Kong, declaring that the Chief Executive needed to be elected by a 1200-member Election Committee. On the night of September twenty-sixth 2014, the Hong Kong Federation of Students and Scholarism jointly launched an action to retake Civic Square. Hundreds of students who had been staging a sit-in demonstration in front of the government headquarters, led by the spokesperson of the Scholarism, broke into Civic Square, which was heavily blocked by the police. During the clashes, several members of the Scholarism were arrested. The social group represented by the students quickly ignited the middle-aged group's participation and invigorated the Hong Kong people's determination for civic involvement. On September twenty-eighth 2014, in

response to the actions of the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) and Scholarism, Tai Yiu-ting announced the official launch of the Occupy Central Movement. As the number of demonstrators increased, the social movement grew in scale. The scale of the campaign expanded again and again. Among the groups that showed solidarity with the Umbrella Movement were the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, the Democratic Party, the Civic Party, the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions and the Civil Human Rights Front, which involved a large number of groups, and the practitioners within the groups were primarily administrative and professional, who formed a broad and relatively stable base of social mobilisation. In subsequent social movements in Hong Kong, the number of participants in social activities has also expanded from this mobilisation base. For example, the emergence of Valiantism as a nascent political faction in the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement is often influenced by the shadow of the failed Umbrella Movement. These groups, who participated in the Umbrella Movement, showed the same level of activism in the later Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement. In the field research on the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement nearly half of the respondents indicated that they had participated in the Umbrella Movement [11].

4. Social Groups During the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement

4.1. Reinforcing Ideological Boundaries

On March fifteenth 2019, a protest movement against the Fugitive Offenders Bill was launched in Hong Kong, initially by a large section of the Hong Kong social group concerned about the future development of Hong Kong's judicial system, which they believed would undermine the existing autonomy of Hong Kong, and on June ninth, the Civil Human Rights Front, one of the most influential civil society groups in Hong Kong, launched a protest march, which was met with a large number of responses. In the ensuing social movement, many group organisations in Hong Kong have joined together to continue the protest against the Amendment Ordinance. During the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement, the pan-democratic camp was often accused of being too moderate and compromising. Their ideologies of liberalism and support for democracy and human rights are no longer seen as radical since 2019. In Hong Kong, a wave of localism has emerged since the Umbrella Movement, with the Hong Kong Indigenous and the Valiantism being the most representative groups. They oppose the non-violent group between the pan-democrats and the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) and advocate using force to promote national self-determination. During this period, the different social groups were based on the ideologies they supported. As they spread and grew, the boundaries between the different ideologies in the movement became more distinct. This gradual clarification process allowed the other groups' organisers to further refine their real political aims and develop more detailed and specific political agendas, which continued to influence the social movements. For example, after the end of the Umbrella Movement, as the basis of groups shifted from a focus on education policies to political ills, Scholarism was disbanded, and its founders formed a new political party, Demosisto, which sought to promote political reform through social movements. Different groups acted on their blueprints, making social movements more comprehensible. Many people who do not understand political ecology can be introduced to some of the concepts of social movements through the propaganda of a particular social group. They will gradually grasp the whole picture as they learn more about them.

In addition, as political issues became increasingly hotly debated in Hong Kong society, ideology and political stance became the yardstick for interpersonal interaction, and belonging to a group became a criterion for personal moral judgement so that a new political identity replaced the social identity of Hong Kong people. At the same time, violent clashes between groups opposed to social movements and the former became the norm. In the middle of the anti-amendment movement, with

the July twenty-first attack on Yilang, which became a landmark turn in the direction, civil action escalated from peaceful, rational and non-violent means to violent demonstrations, in which the Valiantism, who advocated a radical, violence-for-violence approach to maximise the efficiency of the movement, became a high-profile emerging group in action. The protesters were also somewhat divided over their attitudes towards Occupy the Legislature [12]. In response, the general concern of the group was that violent means would dissolve the rational values of the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement. However, at the same time, many voices believed there was no more ample room for rational discussion in Hong Kong society due to the external political pressure exerted. This refinement of the ideological debate within the social movement has inadvertently reinforced the boundaries between the different group camps within the movement, making the criteria for belonging to other groups clearer.

4.2. Forming Mechanisms for Division of Labour and Cooperation

Social groups have been a constant source of momentum for social movements in Hong Kong by forming a clear division of labour. The difference between the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement and previous social movements lies in the absence of leaders, i.e., a unified organization to direct the protesters. Instead, there is a significant social group where people spontaneously continue to support the social movement [13]. These slogans reflect how groups operate in the Hong Kong social movement. Even though the means of resistance differ between groups based on different ideologies, social groups emphasise the importance of seeking common ground while reserving differences. They are trying to play their part in the same social movement. For example, the social workers of a group front that formed in mid-June 2019 acted as a de-escalator between the police and the protesters, holding microphones and calling on the police to remain calm, while members of the group, represented by the Valiantism, also began to confront the police by setting fires and throwing Molotov cocktails. They finally joined forces to force the government to respond to this [14]. On September fourth 2019, the government officially announced the withdrawal of the Fugitive Offenders Bill amendment. The division of labour and cooperation between different groups has created cohesion among the participants in the social movement. The ability of group members to connect through a cross-class political identity has undoubtedly played a key role in maintaining the vitality of the social movement in Hong Kong.

5. Conclusion

As the backbone of Hong Kong's social movements, Social groups have played an essential role in the campaign by raising awareness of the need to oppose moral and national education and creating a basis for social mobilisation in the subsequent Umbrella Movement. The ideological basis of Social groups reflected, to a certain extent, the freedom of association and expression in Hong Kong. The heated debates and cooperation between different groups reinforced the ideological boundaries of the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement in Hong Kong, making the other political schools of thought in Hong Kong clearly articulated in the social movement and again contributing to the social movement. The division of labour and cooperation between different groups has also allowed Hong Kong's social movement to maintain its dynamism and cohesion during the conflict, making it stand out among global issues and attracting worldwide attention.

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