

A Sense of Self

- An analysis on National Identity in Hong Kong

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the public protests now known as the “Umbrella Revolution”, many Hongkongers struggle to renegotiate what it means to be “Chinese”. Previous agreements about universal suffrage and political autonomy in Hong Kong, as outlined in the “One Country, Two System”-policy, now appear like broken promises. This thesis asks the question whether the Umbrella Revolution has changed the understanding of “Chineseness”, and if a contradiction has emerged between Chinese- and Hong Kong identity. The issue of national identity is explored using (1) micro-theories on self and identity drawn from social psychology, (2) macro-level theories on nationalism, and (3) a theory on group psychology called social identity theory. Based on qualitative interviews with Hongkongers, this paper concludes that the vagueness of “Chinese-ness” leads to contradictions in how individuals talk about their identities. The contradictions are expressed (1) between the notion as an ethnic marker versus a territorial identity, and (2) in the argument that “Chineseness” is both primordial and historically-based yet also politically constructed. This provides support to the idea that identities are situationally constructed but also multiple.

Keywords: National identity, social identity theory, nationalism, social psychology, Hong Kong, China, the Umbrella Revolution.

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1. Introduction.

As a small limited democracy inside a large communist one-party state, Hong Kong is an unusual case because of a binding political agreement called the “One Country, Two System”-policy. This arrangement allows Hong Kong to exercise some level of autonomy, today having its own multiparty political system, judiciary, currency, language, and level of transparency/censorship. Yet, in a relatively recent article by the international news agency Reuters, written amidst the unfolding events of the 2014 Umbrella Revolution, the author notes a city that clearly struggles to renegotiate what it means to be “Chinese”¹. One particular excerpt from the article reads:

“To many in Hong Kong, then, “Chinese” may primarily mean a cultural, ethnic, or racial marker of identity rather than of political nationality. There are “Chinese” of various types who make up the majority population in Taiwan and Singapore, a significant percentage in Malaysia and Thailand, and large numbers around the world.

So when the demonstrators chant “Hong Kong People!” they are asserting that to be a citizen of Hong Kong is emphatically not the same as being Chinese. For the authorities in Beijing, this may send shivers down their spines. Because there is nothing they hate and fear more than the center not holding, torn apart by rough beasts. They are unable to see that it is China’s own political shortcomings that encourage this fundamental debate and resulting protest.”

As a former British colony, Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, swapping London with Beijing as Hong Kong’s political proxy. This change generated worry among many locals who foresaw a slow step-by-step rollback in civil liberties and democratic rights in favor of a much more restrictive type of politics. In an era where colonial empires are politically unfashionable, the handover of Hong Kong was unavoidable. However, it is not

¹ Are ‘Hong Kong people’ still Chinese? Depends on how you define ‘Chinese’, Reuters Article, By Alan Chin, September 30, 2014, <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2014/09/30/are-hong-kong-people-still-chinese-depends-on-how-you-define-chinese/?fb_action_ids=10152700639721335&fb_action_types=og.recommends>

difficult to see how Hong Kong has grown to become a very dissimilar place from mainland China during its colonial period, and how pro-Beijing politics now represents a foreign type of policymaking.

In light of these historical circumstances, as well as recent events, national identity in Hong Kong becomes a complicated issue. The term “Chinese” holds both ethnic and civic connotations, but for many Hong Kong locals it is still relatively new as a national marker. Instead, labels such as “Hongkonger” holds greater emotional appeal. Lastly, with the demographic rise of a “born-in-Hong-Kong” generation, the cultivation of a Chinese national identity faces additional challenges. This thesis explores the issue of national identity in Hong Kong building on and adjudicating between a number of social science theories that can inform the study of national identities. It surveys micro-level theories of self and identity within social psychology, group level theory of social identity theory (SIT), and macro-level theories on nationalism to document the struggle of Hong Kongers in navigating their identities in the midst of political turmoil. Based on interviews with Hongkongers, the thesis finds evidence for individual struggle for identity but in ways that also manifest the lack of concrete definition of the national identity of the Hong Kong people. The vagueness in the meaning of “Chinese-ness” leads to contradictions in how individuals talk about their identities. The contradictions are expressed (1) between the notion as an ethnic marker versus a territorial identity that is based on affiliations with the mainland (a distinction which becomes salient in the course of contact with mainlanders), and (2) in the argument that “Chineseness” is both primordial and historically-based yet also politically constructed. This provides support to the idea that identities are situationally constructed but also multiple.

2. Previous Research - A perspective from History.

To understand the development of Hong Kong, both as a collective culture as well as how it effects the individual, a perspective from local history is needed. After roughly 150 years as a British colony, Hong Kong finally reverted back to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. This is held as a decisive victory for China given that Hong Kong had, during its colonial period, developed into a major economical hub and banking centre. For the last century, Hong Kong served as China’s entry gate into the global economy (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: 124; Siu, 2011: 129). Likewise, some 13 million people in total (about half Chinese) are estimated to have passed through Hong Kong's harbor between 1880 and 1939 (Siu, 2011: 132). Much of Hong Kong distinctiveness can thus be attributed to its *migratory* legacy (Mathews et al,

2007: 24). This is related to, but not the same as, Hong Kong's colonial history, which will be further elaborated on below.

Of course, Hong Kong predates its colonial period, having probably first been settled some 5000 or 6000 years ago. Similarly, Hong Kong is found under the formal jurisdiction of China during most of recorded history. However, during the time of its colonization, the population of Hong Kong was sparse - a mere 7.500 in 1844 (Mathews et al, 2007: 22-23). Since colonization, the city, due not only to its colonial status but also its geographical location, has played a much more important role in the region as a "safe haven" for a number of migratory events - the Taiping rebellion in 1850; the escape from radical nationalists in 1900s; evading Japanese troops in 1937; and fleeing from communists in 1945 - resulting in periodic booms in population. Hence, Hong Kong came to be populated by people whose experience with politics had been violent and oppressive as opposed to a public endeavor, fostering a climate that was not just politically apathetic but even "anti-political" (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: viii). However, this climate turned out to be largely beneficial for local politicians, the police force, as well as local businessmen, who each respectively preferred a "docile" citizenry or workforce.

The colonial government's historical involvement in economic policy is also much less pronounced than those compared to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. Instead, a "hands-off" approach was favored, in which the market regulates itself. As a result, the architectural landscape of Hong Kong came to be shaped by multiethnic sponsors and businessmen, given that many influential capitalist flocked to the city (Siu, 2011: 132). The underlying culture of Hong Kong therefore has a strong cosmopolitan legacy, i.e. international and multicultural, which makes capitalism and capitalist principles significant components of the local identity (Fung, 2008: 192-193). These conditions also orientated the individual towards a "market mentality", which describes a broad social attitude in which people look at national identity as a "product" to be rationally assessed rather than emotionally felt (Mathews et al, 2007: 35, 105). However, even though the prosperity of Hong Kong is largely an outgrowth of both global and national interests, China is still, arguably, the single most influential factor. Without the close proximity of the Chinese market during both the Opium Wars and British Colonial rule, Hong Kong is unlikely to have grown into the commercial success it is today. But the presence of global values in the local culture did shield Hong Kong from nationalist interventions that occurred on the mainland. By appropriating a global

culture into the local identity formation, it served as a competing force against Chinese nationalistic discourses (Fung, 2008: 200).

Yet, despite the city's close geographical vicinity as well as cultural ties with China, Hong Kong was effectively cut off from the mainland in the 50s due to the PRC, who did not open up its national borders again until the 70s (Keading, 2011: 3). During this period, Hong Kong was considerably more free to develop its own social and political mores, characterized by minimum manipulation from China. The extent to which Hong Kong was able to exercise cultural freedom, such as in the case of media consumption, is a significant force in the creative reinvention of local identity. If Beijing was to institute greater ideological control, it would obstruct Hong Kong's ability to assert itself on the international stage (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: 236).

So, in short summary; Hong Kong is shaped heavily by its relatively recent migratory legacy and facilitated China's access to the global economy. Hong Kong's colonial status made it a protective zone for many Chinese refugees, who sought to escape political persecution on the mainland. Also, the colonial government can be described as a non-interventionist government, who permitted much in terms of civil liberties and instead focused on commercial success, of which the Chinese market was crucial. Characterized by capitalist principles, Hong Kong has today grown into a cosmopolitan society, built and shaped by a mercantile class of entrepreneurs who came from very diverse cultural places around the world. These capitalist conditions also orientated local individuals towards a "market mentality", which not only acted as a competing force with Chinese nationalism but also made people look at national identity as something to be rationally evaluated rather than emotionally sensed. Lastly, Hong Kong has been able to exercise a level of cultural freedom that has enabled individuals to experiment with identity with minimum manipulation from the cultural politics of China.

2.1. One Country, Two Systems.

Hong Kong is a limited democracy inside a communist state. But under the policy "One Country, Two Systems", Hong Kong remains a semi-autonomous city-state, or "Special Administrative Region", holding many liberal freedoms that are currently denied in China. As a quick example; Hong Kong enjoys a level of press freedom that is second only to Japan in Asia (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: 230). Likewise, as a heavily "westernized" city, Hong Kong

encapsulates many values that are generally attributed to western cultures, such as freedom of expression, and tend to stress privacy and equality as inherent traits of individual rights (Keading, 2011: 4). Hong Kong is, by many estimates, one of the most open economies for conducting business ventures.

Even though Beijing has promised Hong Kong's relative autonomy via the "One Country, Two Systems"-policy, allowing the city-state to pursue its own interests on the international arena in regards to economics and culture, diplomacy still remains the purview of the Beijing Central Government. This essentially means that Hong Kong has to operate within the framework of the Chinese foreign policy. As a consequence, Hong Kong has to defer its political membership in many international organizations to China in cases where both are already represented. Furthermore, in cases where China's international relations with a foreign nation may be poor, Beijing can limit or infringe on Hong Kong's ability to interact with that state (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: 9-10). For example, Hong Kong's political relationship with America is now at the hands of the Central Government, which is of incredible inconvenience for both the local Hong Kong government and businesses given that America constitutes a major employer and economical contributor in the region (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: 12). This challenges Hong Kong's international independence.

Will Hong Kong eventually acclimate itself to Chinese values and social mores, or will they remain diffidently independent? This is a sensitive issue for the Beijing Central Government. Owing to Hong Kong's geographic location, neighboring regions such as Guangdong and Shenzhen are at risk of Hong Kong's "corrupting" cultural influence. Such vicinity could cultivate the spread of international values, which the Communist Party may hold as politically antagonistic or incompatible (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: 15). While such values are tolerated within the confines of Hong Kong itself, the task is to "limit" their proliferation outside the special administrative region. Regardless, it is in the mutual interest of both Hong Kong and Beijing to keep Hong Kong's economical capacity intact. China is an important market for Hong Kong and is therefore likely to be an influential factor in the continued evolution of Hong Kong. However, that said, Hong Kong is also likely to remain exceptionally globalized and internationalized compared to many other cities on the Chinese mainland (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: 18).

2.2. Existing Thoughts on Hong Kong Identity.

In today's global society, the existence of the market and the state are two discursive principles that receive near omnipresent status - their reality are taken for granted by most people around the world (Mathews et al, 2007: 13). In the case of Hong Kong however, due to its unusual historical legacy and colonial government, locals have been left with a very limited experience of state interventions (though this is likely to change). Furthermore, since many early migrants came to Hong Kong as refugees, seeking to avoid political persecution, political apathy became a widespread norm. Instead, a distinct "market mentality" came to dominate the social climate of Hong Kong. China remained the primary source for ethnic roots, but a sense of national identity was largely absent or unnecessary. Even long into later generations, the discourse of the state was distant and foreign, Hongkongers focusing instead on private finances, household economy, and making a living (Mathews et al, 2007: 14-16). However, as we move beyond a decade since the handover, the presence of the Chinese state has progressively made its presence known.

An early attempt at describing a new emerging Hong Kong identity includes the "Hong Kong Man" - i.e. a westernized Chinese, but still different from the British Colonizers (Keding, 2011: 3). Furthermore, another depiction of Hong Kong during the early post-war period was that of "*a lifeboat*", whose local populace were characterized by a "*refugee mentality*" which eschewed politics, or at least subpar politics. The "*lifeboat*"-imagery was specifically used to capture four interrelated aspects of the local culture. (1) Firstly, it described a willful attempt at avoiding taking a strong stance in the political rivalry that existed between the nationalist- and communist regimes in China. This conflict created two inconsistent notions of what is meant to be a Chinese national, but Hong Kong served as a third "neutral" option. (2) Second, it was meant to showcase the acceptance of Hong Kong's colonial status, where the economic and political situation was deemed as stable whilst it was not in China. In means that peoples could somewhat freely and comfortably focus on personal pursuits, such as making a living. (3) Thirdly, the "*refugee mentality*" was an expression of survival instincts. People looked toward short-term rewards, as opposed to investing in long-term plans with uncertain endings or gains. Surviving the "now" was a much more urgent concern, and Hong Kong provided a more reliable social climate for doing so. (4) Lastly, the term implied a sense of "rootlessness", and that few of the Chinese migrants really intended everlasting residence in Hong Kong. The non-interest in local politics, especially during British colonial rule, was based on short-term assumption regarding the duration of their stay. The fact that many

migrants eventually decided to permanently remain in Hong Kong was an unintended outcome (Mathews et al, 2007: 27-28; Keading, 2011: 6). This "*refugee mentality*" was a precursor that laid the foundation of the previously mentioned "*market mentality*" (Mathews et al, 2007: 29).

Bearing in mind Hong Kong's colonial status, nationalist sentiments have been a comparatively weak force in the local Chinese community, who instead opted for calling themselves "Hong Kongers" (or other variations) rather than "Chinese". While under British rule, Hong Kong was characterized by a limited government that focused primarily on commercial interest (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: 5). Anti-colonial campaigns remained few and spaced out, never achieving any serious consideration in the public agenda (Mathews et al, 2007: 24). On the contrary, the colonial government generally received good support from the Chinese community, who viewed them as a pragmatic and efficient administration. Since a considerable portion of the population prior to the Second World War was of migratory background - many directly seeking to avoid persecution from Chinese authorities - few political demands was put on the already lenient and open colonial government. Similarly, the reward for perusing political action was held to be of questionable merit and worth (Ibid.). Not until the 70s did such political demands find their way onto the political agenda, when great economic prosperity resulted in growing concerns in regards to social issues such as education and housing. The grassroots elites came coordinate such efforts, eventually laying the foundation for democratic participation (Mengmeng, 2010: 11).

The importance of media in relations to the development of local culture is noncontroversial. "Media" in this context includes everything from film to printed press. Due to Hong Kong's non-interventionist politics and lack of hegemonic culture during its colonial period, local media has generally been characterized by creative freedom (Mathews et al, 2007: 60). These conditions gave ample space for the transmission of a "depoliticized" version of Chinese identity which, consequently, resulted in the "othering" of the mainland Chinese. This created a psychological distance between themselves and China, allowing for the development of a distinct local identity. Sometimes, such dissimilarities were especially emphasized (Keading, 2011: 3-4). Because of the "one country, two system"-policy, China is not able to directly transport its national censorship system onto Hong Kong. Instead, Beijing has employed a strategy of slow cooption of media, using Hong Kong's free market against itself to acquire ownership. This shift in ownership has left many locals to decry the ongoing development as

"the death of the traditional intellectual-operated media" (Chan & Lee, 2007: 50; Mengmeng, 2010: 64). It is a cooptation based not on political pressure, but on the allure of money and market demands. Local media has come to tailor their discourse such that media companies don't get blocked on the mainland. Essentially, it is a matter of self-censorship (Mathews et al, 2007: 60-61).

Regardless, political participation, be it on both on local and international levels, today makes for an important contemporary social issues in Hong Kong. There is equal skepticism among all locals in regards to the power of the Chinese state, and their ability to preserve Hong Kong's independence (Postiglione & Tang, 1997: 8).

2.3. The Umbrella Revolution.

As a relatively recent and fresh historical event, the long-term consequences (if any) of the 2014 Umbrella Revolution are yet to be seen, but the Umbrella Movement itself, which began in September and persisted for about two months, is largely a continuation of the "1st July Protests". The pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong organize an annual civic protest ever since 1997 - the "1st July Protest/March" - during which demonstrators voice their support for the expansion of human- and democratic rights. Several pro-democracy groups already affiliated with the July Protests later returned in the Umbrella Movement, in particular the *Civil Human Rights Front*. However, just prior to the annual 2014 protest, in a White Paper released by Beijing in June 2014, the Central Government proclaimed that the central leadership exercise full jurisdiction in all "special administrative regions" of China, including Hong Kong:

*"As a unitary state, China's central government has comprehensive jurisdiction over all local administrative regions, including the HKSAR. The high degree of autonomy of HKSAR is not an inherent power, but one that comes solely from the authorization by the central leadership."*²

As stated, the Chinese government has the power to redefine the "One Country, Two System"-policy and intervene in Hong Kong politics. This made many forecasts manipulation in the

² *The Practice of the "One Country, Two Systems" Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*, Xinhuanet, 2014-06-10, Editor: chengyang, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-06/10/c_133396891_11.htm>

upcoming 2017 election. As predicted, not long after, the issue that would spark additional controversy and inflate events into the now much more widely known Umbrella Revolution/Movement, came after a purposed electoral reform by the central authorities in Beijing (which is still an ongoing debate) which only permits political candidates who have been pre-approved by a nominating committee to participate in the 2017 Hong Kong election. More precisely, the provision as stated demands that:

"II. When the selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is implemented by the method of universal suffrage:

(1) A broadly representative nominating committee shall be formed. The provisions for the number of members, composition and formation method of the nominating committee shall be made in accordance with the number of members, composition and formation method of the Election Committee for the Fourth Chief Executive.

(2) The nominating committee shall nominate two to three candidates for the office of Chief Executive in accordance with democratic procedures. Each candidate must have the endorsement of more than half of all the members of the nominating committee.

(3) All eligible electors of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region have the right to vote in the election of the Chief Executive and elect one of the candidates for the office of Chief Executive in accordance with law.

(4) The Chief Executive-elect, after being selected through universal suffrage, will have to be appointed by the Central People's Government." ³

³ *The Practice of the "One Country, Two Systems" Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*, Chinese White Paper (pg. 3), Xinhuanet, 2014-06-10, Editor: chengyang, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-08/31/c_133609238_3.htm

An additional provision also include that the candidates must "*love the country and love Hong Kong*", which many take as a vague and suspicious euphemism for nationalistic, or pro-Beijing, values. But this new direction in the electoral method effectively puts candidates in the control of the central leadership of China, which severely undermines the demands for universal suffrage as advocated by the pro-democracy movement. While the 2014 protests themselves have seized, the development of this controversy is still ongoing and the upcoming 2015 annual protest is likely to echo the concerns of the Umbrella Revolution.

Arguably, the Umbrella Revolution is a significant event in the formation of local identity. Firstly, conflicts themselves are contribute to creating in-group/out-group boundaries, or bolster the salience of already preexisting in-group and out-group distinctions. Secondly, conflicts like the Umbrella Revolution can make individuals reevaluate previous values and identities. Therefore, it is important to ask how these situational developments have influenced the self-identification of the locals and how Hong Kong people think about their locations within the ever-changing political landscape.

3. Research Area and Research Question.

As the dust settles from the scuffles that is now the Umbrella Revolution, many Hong Kong locals find themselves in the process of renegotiating their 'Chineseness'. Hence, a research question can be formulated in the following manner:

- How has the Umbrella revolution affected Hong Kong identity?
- How do Hong Kong people understand "Chineseness" in the aftermath of the Umbrella Revolution?
- How is the notion of "Chinese-ness" understood, and is it understood as being in contradiction to "Hong Kong identity"?

The purpose is to do a nuanced study on identity. Furthermore, secondary data, such a survey polls, will be used to supplement the primary data. In 2013 (16 years after the handover), only about 21.8% of the people surveyed was comfortable labeling themselves as "Chinese"⁴, many others opting for alternatives such as "Hongkonger" or "Hongkongnese" (Chan, 2014: 25). However, these survey instruments that require individuals to select only one of the

⁴ Public Opinion Centre "POP Poll", The University of Hong Kong (accessed on 4th of January 2015), <<http://hkupop.hku.hk/chinese/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/datatables.html>>

following are fundamentally flawed in that they fail to capture the complexity and multiplicity inherent in the Hong Kong identity. While some scholars argue that "Chinese" and "Hongkonger" have binary qualities, in other words, one identifies as either one or the other (Keading, 2011: 2; Ma & Fung, 2008: 173), individual interactions with the Hong Kong people reveals that the underlying dynamics are much more complicated and often contradictory. Therefore, it is crucial to ask how to conceptualize the question of national identity and analyze the current situational developments in Hong Kong identity.

4. Theories on Identity.

There are more than one theory on identity and I will endeavor in this chapter to discuss at least four such perspectives – (1) social psychological theories on identity; (2) constructivist theories on nationalism; (3) essentialism/primordialist theories on nationalism; and lastly, (4) Social Identity Theory (SIT). But these theories operate on different levels, meaning that some deal directly with individuals, while others focus more on group psychology. The above four perspectives can be divided into three levels of analysis – (1) micro-level (ex. individuals); (2) meso-levels (ex. communities, the state); and (3) macro-level (ex. nations, society).

The social psychology perspective is concentrated on the micro-level, dealing with the psychology of individuals, and will be the first theory to be discussed. Next, I will discuss two theories on nationalism, namely the constructivist and essentialist/primordialist perspectives. Both of these perspectives make exclusive assumptions about the nature of human behavior, but both are operating on a macro-level of analysis. Lastly, I will discuss Social Identity Theory (SIT), which takes the position as a meso-level theory.

4.1. The Micro-Level: Social Psychology.

Subjective experience is central to the formation of identity, which depend on at least some level self-awareness and consciousness. "*Identity*", as mostly used in social psychology, can be understood as self-perceived "*traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is*" (Oyserman et al, 2012: 69). Identity can also be conceptualized as narratives, i.e. stories we tell our self and others about who we are, as well as how we would like to be. This can be termed the "narrative approach" (Yuval-Davis, 2010: 266). "Narratives" in this context need not be verbal articulations but can also be constructed through physical practices and actions. Identities are versatile in the sense that it involves not

just one's current forms of identity, but also include past experiences (memory) and future expectations (ex. aspirations, obligations, etc). Identity provides a lens for meaning-making and focuses your attention towards certain features in your immediate social context. Finally, the term "*Self-concept*" refers to the combined collection of identities (Oyserman & James, 2011: 117-119; Oyserman et al, 2012: 69). Since "identity" in this context refers to social relations, any kind of identity becomes by definition social. As such, identities are not a fixed constructs because changes in personal relations may produce new forms of identity.

National identity, as defined in this thesis, is a social identity about community and belonging. National identities hold emotional attractions and can acts as a socially binding force between people. However, they can also have profound impact on a person's self-concept and overall worldview, as they typically includes a set of values and common beliefs, a national history, conventions about social interaction, as well as a sense of national memory about previous achievements (Kelman, 1997: 172). As a social identity, national identities are collective products, and by asking about individual's national identity, we are, in effect, asking how that individual incorporates the elements of that national identity into his/her self-concept. I.e., to what degree do people adopt the normative beliefs, values, assumption, and expectations of that group? Not all narratives relating to identity are necessarily directly about group belonging or collectivity. Many narratives are instead about personal traits and characteristics, such as body image, skills and talents, and future aspirations. However, even such narratives have indirect concrescences for the perception of "Others", and how to place you self in relation to certain groups (Yuval-Davis, 2010: 267).

National identity can also be compared to "*collective identity narratives*", which give individuals a sense of personal agency while also providing meaning and continuity in the collective order (Yuval-Davis, 2010: 267). This receives further implication when transported to the landscape of politics. The term "identity politics" is sometimes broadly used to signify a number of political projects and/or social movements wherein the aim has been greater political inclusiveness and representation. For many, identity politics develops into a struggle for recognition and belonging; to have one's subjective experience acknowledged. For this reason, identity politics is typically a response to some kind of perceived oppression, where actors seek to replace negative cultural roles, or scripts, with more desirable alternatives, often through various methods of consciousness-raising (Heyes, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2010: 266).

In summary, national identity can be described as a social experience, or interaction with social groups, that includes collective narratives. On the individual level, national identity provide people with a sense of historical continuity as well as unity with other people across geographic distance. By adopting a sense nationality into their self-concept, it contributes to their overall worldview by prescribing values, assumptions, and expectations. National identity is not a fixed construct but dependent on social relation and may change over time.

4.2. The Macro-Level: Theories on nationalism.

In today's global world, having or belonging to a nationality is just a "natural" experience. Nation-states have become a normal discursive principle in the current political context and for many it is even difficult to imagine being without a nation or nationality (Mathews et al, 2007: 1). Even though individuals may regard themselves as inclusive of a certain nationality, nations-states themselves are not solely dependent on the mental constructs of individual members. Instead, nations exist independently through various symbolic artifacts, historical documents, writings, institutions, or traditions. Moreover, individuals may be of different opinions, as well as emotional commitment, on how to define the nation. Yet, national identity is a collective product, not an individual one (Kelman, 1997: 171-172). But how then can we explain the emergence of nations in the modern world? The literature is here largely split into two exclusive camps: (1) a constructivist perspective and (2) a primordialist/essentialist perspective.

4.2.1. Constructivism.

The conception of a nation as an "imagined community" has grown increasingly prevalent within sociological literature during the last decade (Mengmeng, 2010: 40; Wodak et al, 2009: 186). This theory originates in the writings of Benedict Anderson who works from the constructivist school of thought. He argues that national communities are "*imagined*" given that most nation-members will never personally meet or know each other directly, but will instead invent a bond of national solidarity between them (Anderson, 2006: 6). In psychology, this phenomenon may be referred to as a "*psychological group*". Comparable to Anderson definition, members in a psychological group need not know or interact with each other personally. The only requirement is that an individual perceive him- or herself as being included in a certain group (Ashforth & Meal, 1989: 24). But nationality, Anderson continues to explain, is a very "modular" construct, compatible with a vast variety of political schools and ideologies, and tend to very difficult to dismiss or remove once a sense of nationally has

become entrenched in the collective psyche and historical memory. But as such, national communities are historical constructs, or as Anderson put it, "*cultural artefacts*", and to best understand the formation of a nationality one has to carefully study the historical forces that underpin the construction of any one nation (Anderson, 2006: 4).

Anderson, like other constructivists, as well as modernists in general, subscribes to a view of nations, the international order, and nationalism, as relatively recent constructions, born out of modern conditions such as capitalism, secularism, industrialization, urbanization, and other current forms of bureaucracy (Smith, 2000: 3-4). Anderson here coins the term "print-capitalism" as a way to describe the rise of national consciousness in Europe. Because of an emerging capitalist market between the 16th and 18th Century, the printing press would, in due course, lead to the standardization of a national vernacular and common discourses. The previous literate elite of a few Latin-readers eventually had to give way, once their market was saturated, to a much broader audience of monolinguals. Similarly, regional dialects and differences slowly eroded in favor of a national print-language. While a national vernacular is not itself the cause of nationalism, it was an important step in the development of a national awareness and mass communication. "Print-capitalism" was largely an unguided process that merely reflects the interplay of technology and capitalism. But still, it would lay the foundation of the nation as an "imagined community" that could later be exploited by a new (19th Century) generation of nationalists (Anderson, 2006: Chapter 3). However, China is a very different case since many southern provinces, including Hong Kong, more commonly speak Cantonese rather than Mandarin (and other languages in other regions). This introduces linguistic barriers that may obstruct people's ability to think themselves as fellow nationals or as an imagined community.

Another strong proponent of the modernist position, who espouses this idea of nations as modern constructions, is Ernest Gellner. Gellner argues that people of pre-modern societies where primarily agro-literate communities, consisting primarily of farmer and food producers, who organized themselves into self-sufficient local cultures but otherwise lacked a sense of nationality (Smith, 2000: 4). Rather, it is a recent (1800s and onwards) wave of nationalism, grounded in modern conditions, that has invented a sense of nationality where none existed before – i.e. nationalism created nations, rather than the reverse, because nations are not an intrinsic quality of humanity (though nationality as become a taken-for-granted experience in the modern era) (Gellner, 1983: 6; Smith, 2000: 5).

But what does Geller mean by “political unit” and “national unit”? Simply put, the “political unit” is the state. Geller’s definition of the state is inspired by Max Webber, in which the state is defined as the “*agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence*” (Geller, 1983: 3). In other words; in a society where all manner of legitimate violence can only be applied by a centralized agency (or group of connected agencies), as well as any to whom it delegates these responsibilities (ex. the police force), unescapably *becomes* the state on the virtue of that monopoly on violence (Geller, 1983: 4).

By "nationalist unit", or nation in this context, Geller applies a somewhat more complex but vague definition as an ethic-cultural unit. Basically, any two people who recognize each other as mutual fellows, and can presuppose a set of shared rights and duties based on it, has the potential to become nation (Geller, 1983: 7). Geller explains his standpoint by problematize some widely used definitions – primarily those that delineate a nation as *only* being of a “shared culture”, or it being an act of self-identification, i.e. “will”. Both such definitions are problematic if used on their own; the former having the problem that not all cultures have fixed and definite boundaries, but mix, blend and intermingle in complex patterns.

Furthermore, it would exclude many modern nations that are today characterized by cultural pluralism. Similarly, the latter issue of “will” have the problem of also encompassing small social groups, ex. gangs or sport teams, to whom a “nation” would be an overly broad, if not inappropriate, descriptor (Geller, 1983: 53-55). Rather, Geller concludes that (as previously stated) nationalism creates nations, and “culture” and “will” can only be used to define a nation in the modern era of nationalism where culture also becomes the source for political legitimacy – that is to say the fusion of culture, will , and politics (Geller, 1983: 55). It is thus nationalism that drives the demands for cultural homogeneity, not the other way around, and it does so in the pursuit of “high culture”, which is a much needed element for an industrial society which is orientated towards growth (Geller, 1983: 56-57; Smith, 2000: 8). Hence, the “nation” is a modern construction.

There are multiple ways in which the nationalist principle can be violated, but most depend on local circumstances. But there is one such violation the principle is especially vulnerable.

Geller writes (next page):

“if the rulers of the political unit belong to a nation other than that of the majority of the ruled, this, for nationalists, constitutes a quite outstandingly intolerable breach in political propriety.”

- (Geller,

1983: 1)

Geller’s conceptualization of nationalism is that it is susceptible to the human weakness for partiality. Furthermore, the number of potential nations in the contemporary world greatly outnumbers the current available states, which means that not all nationalist movement can be gratified (Geller, 1987: 2). However, nationalism is dependent, if not even “parasitic”, to the prior existence of a recognized state. Where there is no state, the principle of nationalism cannot be violated. A stateless society can therefore not experience nationalism (Geller, 1987: 4).

4.2.2. Essentialism and primordialism.

In opposition to the constructivist perspective, as represented by Anderson and Geller in the previous chapter, is an essentialist school of thought. This perspective entails the view that biology, lineage, ethnicity, language, and territory, all possess inherent qualities that necessarily result in certain types of group identities (Keading, 2011: 2). Nations and nationality can also be conceptualized in a similar manner, in which case it is more commonly referred to as “primordialism”. In this logic, nations possess “primordial attachment”, which emphasizes long-term kinship and cultural bonds (Smith, 2000: 2). The term is dated to Edward Shils in 1957, who wrote that modern society is *“held together by an infinity of personal attachments, moral obligations in concrete contexts, professional and creative pride, individual ambition, primordial affinities and a civil sense”* (Shils 1957, p. 131, as cited by Bayar, 2009: 1641).

According to primordial scholars like Anthony D. Smith, a “nation” is a named population with common ancestry (sometimes referred to as *“ethnie”* in his writings), who share a territory and cultural history, and includes practices like a common economy, a public culture, as well as some mutual understanding of rights and duties. Nations further legitimize their territorial sovereignty in the eyes of the outside world through the use of a state apparatus. Finally, “nationalism”, as he describes it, is an ideological movement, the aims of which are to keep the nation and the state, as it is perceived by some of its members, as autonomous and

unified as possible (Smith, 2000: 1). But unlike Geller and Anderson, Smith wants to reintroduce the importance of ethnicity and cultural ties for the emergence of nationalism (Smith, 2000: 7). In this conceptualization, nationalism can be said to be the historical continuation of ethnic attachment. As such, some nations have existed prior to modern times, and many modern nations can trace their ancestry to kingdoms such as England or Scotland, or even more ancient civilizations such as the Greeks or Egyptians.

But this is not to say that nations have “always” existed. Smith partly agrees that nations are modern creations, but there is also a continuous link between modern nations and pre-modern ‘ethnies’ that the constructivists, he argues, tend to ignore (Smith, 2000: 14). Smith wants to, in this context, distinguish between “civic” and “ethnic” nations, which he describes as two different ‘paths’ to nationhood. In a civic nation, citizens are members of a territorial political community who share a legal system and mass public culture (ex. language). Membership is automatically granted to anyone born within said territory. It is also relatively easy for non-nationals to become a citizen of a civic nation – local residency for a prescribed period of time, as well as the adoption of the local culture and/or language, will usually suffice (Smith, 2000: 16). In an ethnic nation however, citizens are related through common descent, and the importance of ethno-history is heavily emphasized such that it makes them distinct in terms of local customs in relation to outsiders. It is also very difficult for outsiders to become a citizen of an ethnic nation since membership is largely based on genealogy (Ibid.). These two types of nations have consequences, especially in the treatment of immigrants. However, Smith also purposes a third type of nation – the cultural nation - which is a mix of the ethnic and civic paths. In a cultural nation, membership is based on a combination of territorial residence, as per the civic ideal, but also assimilation into the dominant ethnic culture. It is Smith's observation that the majority of nations today is of this third type; the cultural nation. This is because a nation can change its ‘type’, and move back and forth on the civic-ethnic spectrum to varying degrees (Smith, 2000: 17).

In addition to the thoughts purposed by Anthony Smith, primordialism can also encompassed a *sociobiological* perspective, such as those held by Pierre Van den Berghe. Where the constructivists, as he describes them, subscribe to an incredibly plastic understanding of human behavior, shaped almost exclusively by culture, Van den Berghe argues that human behavior is also the product of Darwinian natural selection, i.e. evolution. Hence, human behavior can be analyzed on the levels of genetics and ecology in addition to culture (Van den

Berghe, 1987: 5). Indeed, using the model of evolutionary biology, some scholars assert that phenotypic similarity promote positive in-group behavior, greater cooperation, and lowers the threshold for altruistic behavior towards “similar others”, or “kin” (McDonald, 2001: 69). Therefore, the argument is that we are genetically predisposed towards ethnocentrism and nepotism; ethnic and racial sentiments are the extension of kin selection (Van den Berghe, 1987: 18-19). However, sociobiology operates more on the micro- and meso-level of analysis, not the macro-level like other theories on nationalism. But sociobiology is still a theory that falls inside the essentialist/primordialist framework of thinking in so much as it supports to the idea that ethnicity carry a “primordial attachment” that facilitates in-group solidarity.

4.2.3. Summary

The clash of primordialism and constructivism is both old and ongoing. While it is not the goal of this thesis to participate in this debate, it is important to note that modern nationalism as expressed today is recent. It is also important to note that nationalism is described as the aspiration for social, political, and cultural homogeneity, which seeks to make competing identities irrelevant. The difference is that primordialism emphasis nationalism as intrinsic and inherent, the extension of biology, where constructivism says it is a socially constructed sentiment. Lastly, both school sees nationalism as collective identities.

4.3. The Meso-Level: Social Identity Theory (SIT).

A theory is needed to bridge or synthesize the micro- and macro-level, that can add to our understanding of the mechanisms behind group psychology. From the writings of Tajfel and Turner, we receive the framework of "*Social Identity Theory*" (SIT). SIT is complimentary to the theories on nationalism because SIT do not itself explain how individuals come to value certain types of group identities (ex. social class) as more meaningful than others. Such a thing is instead determined by the undercurrents of historical and societal forces. However, SIT do provide an operational explanation for the interaction of social groups once a certain identity becomes entrenched.

SIT formulates the predication that "in-groups" (us/self) are strong purveyors of pride and self-esteem, and people will seek to strengthen their own self-image by finding flaws in, or discriminate against, the perceived "out-group" (them/others) (McLeod, 2008; Cote & Levin, 2002: 23-24). Furthermore, groups are inclined towards in-group favoritism regardless of the formal structure of the in-group, which may be only vaguely defined, without formal

membership or leaders. Favoritism is known to occur even under the most minimal of conditions (Ashforth & Mael, 1989: 24; Huddy, 2001: 128). Groups, or social categories, can be diverse, including religious affiliation, gender, age, organizational membership, or - as is most relevant for this thesis - nationality. Such groups will be defined by traits that are abstracted from its current member base, which can be either (or both) psychological and physical in nature (Ashforth & Mael, 1989: 20).

TIS is dependent on another parallel mental practice referred to as "stereotyping", in which people (1) exaggerate the shared characteristics found within the in-group, while also (2) exaggerate the differences between the in-group and out-group (McLeod, 2008). And yes, stereotyping results in faulty, or unreliable, assessment of people (Ashforth & Mael, 1989: 21). However, it is still a vital cognitive function for how we organize our social world, as well as how we filter our real life experiences.

The formation of intergroup relations, as predicted by SIT, are the result of three underlying cognitive processes; (1) social categorization, (2) social identification, and (3) social comparison (McLeod, 2008). *Social categorization* is the mental process that allows people to orientate themselves in their social environment, including the ability to recognize the function or fate of a certain group. Categorization, or classification, is reliant on upon the self-concept, which includes a person's many social identities. A person can be either an actual member (ex. in the case of physical traits or by category) or a symbolic member of any certain number of group(s) (Ashforth & Mael, 1989: 21). Many types of classification are relational and comparative in nature, meaning that categories such as "new" and "old", "tall" and "short", are only made only significant in relation to one other.

Some scholars levy criticism towards SIT's ability to explain social phenomena such as nationality, saying that the theory focuses too much on the mere existence of groups and in-group inclusion, but overlooks the existence of an "*internalized subjective identity*", that national identity is a personal experience with subjective meaning (Huddy, 2001: 130). Two major points of criticism can be formulated as; (1) SIT assumes uniform group development and therefore cannot explain why certain individuals decide to identify as a group member; and (2) SIT assumes social identities as being an "*all-or-none phenomena*" (Huddy, 2001: 31). However, social identities need not always be a case of "*all-or-none*" but do indeed allow for a matter of degree. While some classifications may indeed be exclusionary or categorical (ex. gender), the extent to which a person invests his/her self-concept into that identity may

vary (Ashforth & Meal, 1989: 21). Some people, for example, may hold their political orientation as more significant for defining their self-concept than their gender, holding the latter as "only" a matter of category. The cognitive process whereby a person actually starts perceiving him- or herself as included in a certain group is referred to as *Social identification*. *Social categorization*, by contrast, concerns itself only with the creation of social groups, regardless if he/she fit the definition or not (McLeod, 2008). There is also little cause to assume a uniform definition of national identities. Though some may invest heavily in their national identity, the experience and meaning of what it means to be a national is likely to be different from person to person. However, it is unsure if the existence of in-group differences of is a challenge, or is inconsistent, to the overall framework of SIT. If nothing else, SIT does not prohibit the formation of schisms.

Social identification is unto itself a complicated mental process that can, again, be a matter of degree. But identification is considered to have taken place when an individual starts perceiving him- or herself as entangled with the fate of a certain group, both in regards to the groups failures and successes - ex. you identify as a fan of your favorite football-team when you are emotionally committed in that team's outcome, be it success or loss (Ashforth & Meal, 1989: 21). However, a distinction needs to be made between *identification* and *internalization*. Where identification is the process of including oneself as a member of a certain group (which may still only be superficial or categorical), internalization refers to the process where an individual actually adopts the values or goals of a group as his- or her own (Ashforth & Meal, 1989: 21-22). Several factors interplay with a person tendency to positively identify with a certain group, and subsequently internalize the values of said group. Such factors include; (1) the *distinctiveness* of the group, i.e. the level by which the group stands out, or is made distinct, from others; (2) the current *prestige* or *status* of the social group (generally, the more popular, the better); (3) the *pronounced presence, or salience, of out-groups* who may already define, or reinforce, certain boundaries (ex. masculinity vs. feminine), which are made even more prominent during cases of extreme competition; and finally (4), *common dynamic factors* such as a shared history, level of interpersonal interaction, similarity, mutual aims, common threats, geographic proximity, etc. (Ashforth & Meal, 1989: 24-25).

Finally, *social comparison* is when individuals assess one social group (usually one in which he/she is a member) with another, which can be either a negative or positive intergroup

comparison. A comparison need not be underscore by a sense of animosity or rivalry (though it can). Instead, like previously explained, SIT predict that group identification is a source of self-esteem and, hence, people will seek to improve their in-group status (Ashforth & Meal, 1989: 22; McLeod, 2008). The implication here, rather, is that negative in-group traits will be recast as positive qualities, and that the defensive bias of the in-group will match up with the perceived level of threat from the out-group (Ashforth & Meal, 1989: 24). Rivalry may or may not be a factor during comparison, but can also arise as a result.

5. Hypothesis.

These above theories lead to a set of hypotheses that are applicable to the Hong Kong situation.

1. Social psychological theories of identity predicts that identities develop through struggles for political recognition and belonging through processes of “collective narrative.” We can predict that:

- The Umbrella Revolution will have a salient effect on how people narrativize their identities.
- A sense of threat might result in a local identity that is more hostile to Chinese nationalism.

2. Macro-theories of nationalism argue that nations are recent creations and national identity relies on people’s acquisition of historical knowledge, as well as awareness about the cultural context of beliefs and values. (Kelman, 1997: 173). This leads to the hypothesis that:

- Differential levels of historical understanding will lead to differential awareness of national identities and cultural identification of Hong Kongers with mainlanders.

3. Group-level theories of Social Identity Theory emphasizes how individuals utilize schematic understandings regarding group categories to draw large distinctions with others who do not share group characteristics while particularly sympathize with those who share similar characteristics. This leads us to hypothesize the following:

- The complex political situation of Hong Kong will lead individuals to draw differential group boundaries vis-à-vis China.

- The group boundaries, however, will be also affected by the vagueness of “Chinese-ness” and the everyday reference of “Chinese-ness” as a ethnic market, a territorial or civic identity.
- The above characteristics will lead to considerable level of confusion among locals in how to identify themselves, and this might lead to considerable switching between different group memberships depending on the context of membership.

6. Methodology and Data Collection.

In order to meaningfully answer the research question, I sampled Hong Kong locals between age 21 and 29 years old. The rationale for delineating the population to this restricted age group was as follows: Locals born between the years of 1986 and 1994 spent their formative years in a post-handover Hong Kong, and they were among the first generation to do so. Primary data was collected through a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews with locals from Hong Kong. This means I prepared questions ahead of time, but still allowed a flexible dialog such that new inquiries could be made based on the direction of the conversation (Bryman, 2012: 213). Qualitative interviews extract more detailed information from its participants compared to standard surveys, allowing for a more in-depth analysis. Attention can also be put in regards to the participant’s tone of voice or body language. Finally, qualitative surveys on national sentiments in Hong Kong already exist.

Despite my population delineation of the age group, in reality, no participant younger than 24 (born after 1990) did partake in this study. Though an upper limit for participants was never decided, a total 17 people eventually did agree to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted between the time periods of February and March 2015. Interviews occurred both individually and in groups. Additionally, interviews were recorded using a recorder. Interviews was carried out in English since I personally lack proficiency in Cantonese. Though the general English ability of Hong Kong is relatively high, English proficiency correlates with educational level, making participants more likely to have university background. Furthermore, as both a Westerner and a foreigner myself, it is also possible that participants tailored their responses to meet some kind of expectation, or that they felt uncomfortable revealing personal opinions or views.

Two willing informants were procured prior to conducting field research (personal acquaintances). Thereafter, acquiring additional participants relied on a snowball method.

Snowball sampling relies on the social networks of prior informants and is a convenient way of finding additional participants (Bryman, 2012: 424). However, due to its unsystematic nature, my sampling strategy might have introduced bias into the study results in a few ways. First, the sampling strategy clearly excludes people who lack English proficiency, even if they fit the demographic or target group. Second, snowball sampling is a non-random selection that makes further generalization problematic because not everyone in the population are likely to be picked for an interview. As a consequence, the study sample is not likely to be representative of the Hong Kong population (Bryman, 2012: 201-202).

Due to these shortcomings, primary data is supplemented using secondary data acquired from the Public Opinion Program, University of Hong Kong, or "HKU POP Site". Secondary data is used to plot the longitudinal development on the sentiment of Hong Kong identity and compliments the personal interviews that will partially provide a view of how individual identities are negotiated.

6.1 Ethical Considerations.

The topic of national identity can indeed be a very sensitive or complex issue for many people. Moreover, the 2014 Hong Kong protest have likely intensified political tensions even more. While there is reason to expect a high level of enthusiasm for the opportunity to talk about this topic, the four ethical principles outlined by Bryman adequately highlighted the concerns that needed to be addressed before any fieldwork was conducted; (1) harm to participants, (2) informed consent, (3) invasion of privacy, and (4) deception (Bryman, 2012: 135).

Obviously, this study did not seek the harm of its participants or informants, neither during interviews nor as a result of it. Consequently, interviews (including transcriptions) will be kept confidential as well as the identity of any informants anonymous. The study also sought the consent of its participants before conducting any interviews, and informants was sufficiently informed on both the topic and what kinds of questions they could anticipate. Also, questions was formulated so as to be non-offensive. In regards to privacy, interviews could be performed at any location and time of the participants choosing - no need to invade private space. In most cases, a coffee shop did suffice; it was both casual and relaxed. Similarly, participants was under no obligation to respond to uncomfortable questions about

their private life. Lastly, this study involved no deception and was straightforward about its intent and purpose with every participant.

7. Primary Data.

A total of 17 informants (10 female, 7 male) participated in this study. The youngest informant was 24 years, while the oldest was 29.

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Male	24	Student, English Major
Male	24	Student
Male	27	-
Male	27	Waiter
Male	28	-
Male	28	Finance
Male	29	Sales, Electronics
Female	24	Student, Accounting
Female	24	Student, Social Science
Female	24	Sales
Female	25	Accounting
Female	25	Student, M.A.
Female	25	-
Female	27	Consulting, Communications
Female	27	-
Female	28	Student, PhD Music
Female	28	Store Manager

The research area is how Hongkongers negotiate their national identity in the aftermath of the Umbrella Revolution. A number of questions on this topic were assembled for the participants prior to the interviews (please see appendix 1 for a complete list of interview questions), but the semi-structured format also allowed for ad hoc and follow-up questions depending on the direction of each interview.

7.1. Primary Data Findings

1A: *How often do you discuss politics?*

In the roster of interview questions was a few related to the political understanding of the participants, and if the Umbrella Revolution changed their individual relationship with politics. The rationale for including these questions was to gauge the participant's level of political interest, and if political debates are all a meaningful in how they negotiate their social identities.

All of the informants gave similar answers, stating that they rarely talk about politics with others and especially avoid it at the office or workplace. A lack of knowledge or interest was stated to be the reason by only a few of the participants. Instead, a more recurring response was a concern not to offend or make other people uncomfortable. Many added that they will only discuss politics with friends and family if they can guarantee that they already share a similar view. This became a reliable enough reply even after only a handful of interviews that question 1C (*Do you think that having different political opinions is a cause for conflict?*) was added to the basic roster of interview questions.

One of the male (28) participants, when asked how often he talks about politics, gave the following response:

“I would say maybe 20% of the time because I do feel this is ascribed as a sensitive topic. It gets people... you know, if you are in a different view of them, or have the opposite view of them, I do not, you know, want to press the wrong buttons, basically.”

Another male (24) informant expressed his cautious attitude to talk about politics with his family as such:

“Maybe some daily topics but not really deep information because my point of view may be different from my parents because we are different generations.”

One female (28) participant contrasted Hong Kong with Taiwan and explained, in her view, the difference in how people from these places approach political discussions:

“In Taiwan, people tend to have discussion, to have even argument. But here, they don’t want to listen because they don’t know how to present their points to each other. Everything is more emotional instead of realistic facts. [...] At my office, people will sometimes talk about things they read in the news but that’s about it.”

A similar response by three other participants was that they seldom talk about politics because it rarely affects or involves them. If there is no noticeable impact on their personal quality of life, such as through censorship, the availability of jobs, or living costs, then a political discussion becomes unnecessary. One female (28) participants explained herself in the following manner:

“If life is good, then we don’t have to worry about it. We don’t have that mindset of voicing our opinions. Politics are very tricky thing; you don’t know what others are thinking. Maybe you and your boss are in different camps, then it is a concern. So you rather say nothing than to go up against each other.”

Finally, two informants stated they never participate in political discussions at home because they either don’t understand or simply have no interest. One female (27) said:

“My mother has strong opinions about politics and she talks a lot about it at home. But I don’t listen or participate much because I don’t understand.”

1B: *Have the “Umbrella Revolution” made you think or talk more about politics?*

Only one participant was of the view that the Umbrella Revolution has made him talk *less* about politics. Two informants stated that the movement had no impact on how often they talk or think about politics. The remaining 14 participants agreed that the Umbrella Revolution have made them more talkative about politics, as well as about other social/political issues related to the revolution. Most also expressed support in favor of the Umbrella Revolution, while only one remained somewhat ambiguous. A few responses include:

Male (24): *“Actually, this is a very big issue that made me and my parents discuss more than before because it is a breakthrough in Hong Kong for this kind of campaign. [...] Previously maybe, my trust in them [the Hong Kong government] is quite high but after this kind of revolution, I think my trust is getting less because I think the transparency is getting worse between the government and the people.”*

Female (25): *“We are fighting for universal suffrage; this is why we have ‘Umbrella Revolution’.”*

Male (29): *“People at my office talk about it every day.”*

Female (24): *“We feel that that the Hong Kong-government does not support us, us citizens, they are with the Chinese government. But Hong Kong government should support us more.”*

The only response that voiced an opposition towards the ‘Umbrella Revolution’ was made by a male (28) who explained himself in the following way:

“Actually, I start talking less because... I am on the conservative side, so a lot of times when they [the protesters] are very collectively, you know, try to seek what they want, I may not 100% agree with it. [...] I do not want to sound like I disrespect what they are doing but they don’t seem to understand where I’m coming from as well, so I try to avoid that kind of conflict with them, I guess.”

In general, political awareness is on the rise since the Umbrella Revolution. Most participants came out in support of the Umbrella Movement, expressing distrust in both the local and central government. Political awareness give individuals an advantage in negotiation their political identity, and to orientate both Hong Kong and Chinese identity in relation to that.

1C: *Do you think that having different political opinions is a cause for conflict? (Added later)*

This question was added after interviewing four people because of a consistent trend in the responses to question 1A. Most informants expressed the sentiment that having different outlooks on politics or on social issues will result in unfriendly arguments that can jeopardize friendships, and arguments therefore should preferably be avoided. A good relationship with friends and family was explained to be of high priority and should not be put at risk because of sensitive discussions. Several responses include:

Male (24): *“When I notice there is some conflict between me and my parents and they may get angry or sad, I will just stop the discussion.”*

Male (28): *“Yes, it is a source of conflict.”*

Female (27): *“I don’t want to get into argument with friends, so we avoid sensitive issues. I think having different opinions is a problem, so I prefer not to talk about it because I don’t want to make people upset.”*

Female (25): *“Maybe among the colleagues some of us will discuss. But if we have different kinds of opinion, maybe we will argue and so it is better not to chat about this topic among us. [...] In my family, my father side, my grandmother has four sons. Two is supporting the Umbrella Revolution, one does not support, and one is neutral. Everything is kind of weird and not very appropriate to talk about during family gatherings.”*

Female (24) *“For me, only if I know that person has the same point of view as me, then we will discuss this topic. But otherwise, I prefer not to talk about it. Like, if we are friends or family, I do not want to have argument or stuff. Everyone can have their own point of view, that is okay, that is fine, but I also have mine and I don’t think we should have a discussion or argument about this.”*

2: *Does China feel like a foreign country to you?*

Most participants were of the opinion that China feels like a foreign country. However, they stated very different reasons for this experience. But one recurring argument was that the language is different, which was a concern voiced by six of the informants. Three participants said that people “behave” or “act” differently on the mainland, such as being ruder or talk differently. Other arguments include that the cultures are different, that China lags behind Hong Kong in terms of technology and development. Two informants expressed a negative view of Chinese mainlanders, saying that they interrupt or disturb the way of life in Hong Kong. A few of the responses include:

Male (24): *“I think it is totally different place.”*

Female (24): *“I think we have different cultures. [...] Sadly for China, it is still developing; it is not very developed country. Maybe fifty years ago, Hong Kong was this as well, but we are on different page for cultural development and society – we are on total different page.”*

Female (25): *“Yes. [...] The way they behave is different, like how they talk.”*

Female (25): *“Yes because they are interrupting our lives. Like, all the shop in Mong Kok now turn to pharmacy, accessory-shops, and all the price of the house is rising because they have money to invest in Hong Kong, and because the demand increase but the supply is the same – they interrupt our lives!”*

Male (29): *“Yes, because I cannot speak Mandarin.”*

Female (27): *“Yes, they have different behavior.”*

Female (28): *“Yes, but they look at me as foreigners as well, so it is mutual, I think.”*

Only one participant said that China do not feel like a foreign place, or at least less than it used to do. He said:

Male (28): *“Less than before because my family where immigrants from the mainland and I still have relatives leaving in mainland China”.*

Though participants gave imprecise explanations, the responses suggests a notion of mainlanders as an out-group. While this does not explicitly prohibit Hongkongers from also identifying with Chinese identity, it does make them less likely to internalize that identity, as explained by SIT.

3: *What do you know about Hong Kong history?*

Overall, participants admitted to either poor knowledge of the history of local history or low interest. While most could state the year of Hong Kong’s handover to China, as well as that Hong Kong used to be a British colony since the mid-1800s, several participants simply shook their head and gave no response at all. One participant explained this lack of knowledge due to a generational gap, his parents or grandparents used to have better knowledge about local history. Chinese history however is much more prevalent.

Male (24): *“Almost nothing. Maybe because of my age. My generation, we don’t know as much as our parents did. [...] I know we returned to the Chinese government in 97.”*

Male (28): *“A little bit but not too much. [...] In school we usually cover Chinese plus world history, but not so much Hong Kong history.”*

Female (28): *“Usually we read about Chinese history and then how we [Hong Kong] became a British Colony. But then there is almost nothing.”*

Historical memory is cited as important for the construction of collective identities by both the primordialist and constructivist school of thought. The lack of a historical memory as it pertains to Hong Kong specifically can be a contributing factor to the inconsistent meaning of “Chineseness”, and how Hong Kong identity relates to that national identity.

4A: *Do you consider yourself part of an ethnic group? Which one?*

Participants gave varied responses but generally agreed that they are “Chinese” because of ancestry. However, most felt the need to emphasize that they are also from Hong Kong. Only one informant had a different view, saying that she is solely a “Hongkonger”. Two participants stated that, although they consider themselves Chinese or part of China, they don’t like being called such. Another two participants also explained that they understand, or are aware, that a lot of locals have mixed feelings about being called “Chinese” and usually like to preface themselves as being “from Hong Kong”.

Female (25): *“I’m still Chinese – yellow skin, black hair, black eyes.”*

Female (27): *“I am Chinese.”*

Female (28): *“If I meet new friends, I will say I am Chinese from Hong Kong.”*

Male (24): *“I think in nature, I am really part of China. But actually, personally, I struggle with this identity [...]. Maybe when I go to places, people will think that you are Chinese but I have to explain myself that I am from Hong Kong.”*

Female (24): *“I was born in Hong Kong, so Hong Kong.”*

Male (29): *“Some people are really strong on this [...] they will get offended if you ask ‘are you from China?’”*

As an ethnical identity, Chineseness face less ambiguity among Hongkongers. However, responses was also accompanied by an apathetic attitude, implying little emotional commitment towards said ethnicity. Furthermore, territorial identity with Hong Kong was added for extra emphasis by several of the informants.

4B: *What label would you prefer? – Ex. Chinese, Hongkonger, Hongkongnese, Hong Kong Chinese.*

Participants clearly preferred being called “Hongkonger” or “Hongkongnese” before other alternatives. However, most also said they didn’t mind being called “Chinese”, especially in the case of foreigners who may not know the difference. A few statements include:

Male (28): *“I don’t mind being called Chinese, but I mean... I guess both are fine. [...] Because China is so big, right, like the states or something. I usually say I am Chinese, but I am from Hong Kong. Like maybe I want to differentiate myself a little bit by just pointing out where I am from. [...] But I am happy to call myself Chinese. But if I had to choose, I would say Hong Kong Chinese.*

Male (24): *“Hong Kong-people.”*

Female (24): *“I prefer being called Hongkongnese.”*

Female (25): *“If you ask me if I am ‘Chinese’, to that extent I am, but if you ask me where I come from I will say Hong Kong instead of China.”*

Female (25): *“Hong Kong is not country, China is, so I would say Chinese from Hong Kong.”*

Participants put different empathic connotations on labels such as “Hongkonger” and “Chinese”, most showing a preference towards the former (or some variation). This does not prevent individuals from also identifying as Chinese, but individuals may feel it is an unnecessary descriptor.

4C: *In your view, can I become a “Hongkonger” if I take up residency and learn the local language?*

This question generated very oppositional responses in the sense that participants were divided equally in a “yes” or “no”-camp. Only one informant gave a separate ambiguous response in which she said the decision was up to me, though it can be taken as a kind of

“yes”. But eight participants affirmed they would gladly consider me a local “hongkonger” if I lived in Hong Kong long enough. However, the remaining eight informants stated that they would not consider me to be a “local” or, at best, only very loosely so if I also learned the language in a proficient enough manner. Some of the “yes” responses include:

Male (24): *“I think for me, I would consider you part of Hong Kong. [...] I think, for me, Hong Kong is very multinational city already.”*

Female (24): *“It seems you have to live here for seven years, but I would consider you “Hongkongnese.”*

Male (28): *“Yeah, yeah. In general, I feel this city show a lot of appreciation when any foreigners speak our language. To be honest, if you speak one of the major languages here, then people do associate you much closer, like you are one of us.”*

Some participants from the “no”-camp explained themselves thusly:

Female (25): *“No, you are Westerner. I don’t even consider mainlanders who live here as ‘Hongkongnese’.”*

Female (25): *“Not really. [...] But if you learn to speak Cantonese, then maybe.”*

Male (29): *“No, you will be an expat. Even if you get your permanent residency, you will still be considered an expat.”*

The final, ambiguous response was expressed in the following manner:

Female (25): *“It all depends on you, on your feelings.”*

Reponses reveal an inconsistent view on how to conceptualize Hong Kong identity as either an ethnic or civic notion. This inconsistency suggests that Hongkongers likely struggle how to negotiate between Hong Kong and Chinese identity.

5: *For the purpose of governance, do you think it is a problem that they speak different languages in Hong Kong and Beijing?*

Participants had mixed reactions, while several also preferred not to answer. Different languages were stated as a “potential” issue for miscommunication, but otherwise not overly detrimental. Mandarin was said to be growing in use across Hong Kong but if they could have their individual way, they would prefer a single language for China – Cantonese. Some of the more interesting responses from the interviews include:

Male (24): *“Because I live here, I prefer Hong Kong-style. [...] I prefer my original language.”*

Female (25): *“I prefer using Cantonese, but more and more people are using Mandarin.”*

Male (28): *“It is, it is a problem because... like I value language a lot. I always try to speak the same language as the person I talk too. [...] It’s like a sense bonding, you know. So if our central government and we speak different language, it’s definitely going to cause... I wouldn’t say problem, but maybe lack of communications at times.”*

Female (25): *“I can see how different languages can be a problem sometimes because people can misinterpret, but I think it still works out fine. If I could decide, Beijing would speaking more Cantonese instead of we [Hong Kong] speak Mandarin but I don’t really mind, and I don’t think most Hong Kong-people mind either.”*

As implied by Anderson’s concept of print-capitalism, a national language was foundational for the emergence of a cohesive national identity in European countries. Mandarin however is yet to conquer all of China, as Cantonese is more commonly spoken in Hong Kong and other neighboring regions in the south (though Mandarin is growing in usage). Linguistic barriers makes the formation of a cohesive national identity less likely to reach all segments of the nation. Differences in spoken languages can also be a contributor towards in-group/out-group differentiation.

6: *In your opinion, what would you like to see happen to Hong Kong in the future? What kind of development would you like to see?*

Given the opportunity to freely express their personal thoughts and wishes for the future of Hong Kong, a great deal of support (as anticipated) was voiced for greater independence, democracy, freedom, and civil liberties. Greater integration with China was not a recurring argument, stated only by one participant, and then only under the condition that Hong Kong still maintains relative freedom. Some of the informants expressed themselves in the following way:

Male (24): *“Of course, maybe we could vote for Chief Executive ourselves. [...] More freedom, more freedom, because we are getting desperate right now. Hong Kong, previously, we are famous for freedom of speech, freedom of journalism, like people can say what they want in the press, and everything.”*

Female (24): *“I would not like it [Hong Kong] to be a communist-place; that is the basic thing I would like to say.”*

Female (25): *“Maybe China will take after Hong Kong, and I hope they will do this more and more.”*

Male (28): *“To be very honest, to me, I would think that Hong Kong would cooperate with China more. [...] We pretty much have no industry but finance, right, so if we are not being seen as the financial center of entire China.... once another city, like maybe Shanghai, overtakes us, then it will make our lives much harder. So, I would like to see Hong Kong cooperate more with China. [...] But I would also like Hong Kong to remain independent as it is right now; I think that would be best for finance.”*

Male (29): *“I would like to see One Country, One System – Hong Kong system.”*

Female (25): *“I want real democracy.”*

Female (27): “*More independence.*”

Democratic values makes for essential components of the participants, which put them in stark contrast with the politics of Beijing. This political conflict lay at the heart of the Umbrella Revolution. As a political marker, Chinese identity therefore becomes a sensitive issue on a personal level.

7.2. Secondary Data

There is no shortage on quantitative surveys that aim to capture people’s ethnic and national sentiments in Hong Kong. In fact, surveys are being made repeatedly by several local universities. This section aims to supplement the primary data, and place my qualitative interviews within a larger, quantitative context.

This survey comes from the University of Hong Kong, who conducts a public surveys twice a year (four or more times a year before 2003). The datasheet comes from the *Public Opinion Centre*, “POP Poll”, and the indicator is identification as Chinese or Hongkonger. This survey goes back to 1997 (the year as the handover) up till 2014 (the latest). The original table can be found at their website.⁵ The biggest fault of the available secondary data is that it includes no age disparity, meaning that it is reflective of a much wider demographic as opposed to the one outlined in the research question of this thesis. In addition, unlike my hypotheses that hypothesize the multiplicity of national identities of Hong Kongers, this survey assumes a pre-fixed local vs. Mainlander identity, making it difficult for individuals to identify as both or neither.

Date of survey	樣本人數 Total Sample	次樣本人數 Sub-sample	香港人 Hongkonger	中國的香港人 Hongkonger in China	香港的中國人 Chinese in Hong Kong	中國人 Chinese	混合身分 Mixed Identity	其他 (請列明) Other	唔知/ 難講 DK/HS
10-16/12/2014	1016	660	42.3%	24.3%	15.0%	17.8%	39.3%	0.6%	0.0%
6-12/6/2014	1026	660	40.2%	27.1%	11.6%	19.5%	38.7%	0.2%	1.3%
9-12/12/2013	1015	628	34.8%	27.6%	15.0%	21.8%	42.6%	0.8%	0.1%
10-13/6/2013	1055	677	38.2%	24.3%	12.0%	23.0%	36.3%	1.1%	1.6%
14-17/12/2012	1019	687	27.2%	33.1%	16.1%	21.3%	49.2%	0.6%	1.7%

⁵ Public Opinion Centre “POP Poll”, The University of Hong Kong (accessed on 4th of January 2015), <<http://hkupop.hku.hk/chinese/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/datatables.html>>

Date of survey	樣本人數 Total Sample	次樣本人數 Sub-sample	香港人 Hongkonger	中國的香港人 Hongkonger in China	香港的中國人 Chinese in Hong Kong	中國人 Chinese	混合身分 Mixed Identity	其他 (請列明) Other	唔知/ 難講 DK/HS
13-20/6/2012	1001	560	45.6%	22.8%	11.5%	18.3%	34.3%	1.1%	0.7%
12-20/12/2011	1016	541	37.7%	25.3%	17.8%	16.6%	43.1%	0.6%	2.1%
21-22/6/2011	520	520	43.8%	21.3%	10.3%	23.5%	31.7%	0.4%	0.6%
13-16/12/2010	1013	1013	35.5%	27.6%	13.8%	21.1%	41.4%	0.4%	1.5%
9-13/6/2010	1004	1004	25.3%	31.3%	14.8%	27.8%	46.0%	0.4%	0.5%
8-11/12/2009	1007	1007	37.6%	23.9%	13.1%	24.2%	37.0%	0.2%	1.0%
8-13/6/2009	1002	1002	24.7%	32.0%	13.3%	29.3%	45.3%	0.2%	0.4%
9-12/12/2008	1016	1016	21.8%	29.6%	13.0%	34.4%	42.6%	0.5%	0.7%
11-13/6/2008	1012	1012	18.1%	29.2%	13.3%	38.6%	42.5%	0.1%	0.7%
11-14/12/2007	1011	1011	23.5%	31.5%	16.0%	27.2%	47.5%	0.7%	1.1%
8-12/6/2007	1016	1016	23.4%	31.8%	16.7%	26.4%	48.5%	0.3%	1.4%
6-12/12/2006	1011	1011	22.4%	24.3%	20.1%	31.8%	44.4%	0.6%	0.7%
13-15/6/2006	1018	1018	24.8%	25.1%	14.9%	34.6%	40.0%	0.3%	0.3%
9-14/12/2005	1017	1017	24.8%	26.5%	16.9%	30.7%	43.4%	0.0%	1.1%
6-8/6/2005	1029	1029	24.0%	21.2%	14.7%	36.4%	35.9%	0.5%	3.3%
6-9/12/2004	1007	1007	25.9%	23.1%	16.2%	31.6%	39.3%	0.4%	2.8%
7-11/6/2004	1027	1027	28.0%	21.2%	14.3%	33.0%	35.5%	0.4%	3.1%
10-14/12/2003	1059	1059	24.9%	23.4%	15.6%	32.5%	39.0%	0.3%	3.3%
1-4/3/2003	1035	1035	28.5%	22.3%	15.0%	32.3%	37.3%	0.3%	1.6%
13-18/12/2002	1026	1026	31.1%	21.3%	14.3%	29.7%	35.6%	0.6%	3.0%
2-5/9/2002	1017	1017	28.9%	22.0%	15.0%	32.5%	37.0%	0.4%	1.2%
4-5/6/2002	1067	1067	32.2%	18.1%	13.0%	32.5%	31.1%	0.4%	3.9%
12-13/3/2002	1024	1024	27.5%	23.3%	17.9%	28.3%	41.2%	0.0%	3.0%
7-9/12/2001	1052	1052	31.9%	20.5%	10.4%	31.5%	30.9%	0.3%	5.4%
13-21/9/2001	1025	1025	26.1%	27.9%	17.6%	25.8%	45.5%	0.4%	2.1%
1-5/6/2001	1053	1053	36.1%	18.3%	13.3%	28.4%	31.6%	0.0%	3.8%
22/3-2/4/2001	1014	1014	31.4%	21.7%	16.0%	28.2%	37.7%	0.4%	2.3%
4-12/12/2000	1040	1040	35.6%	19.1%	13.8%	25.2%	32.9%	0.9%	5.5%
21-25/9/2000	1087	1087	37.0%	26.8%	14.5%	17.4%	41.3%	0.4%	3.9%
7-8/6/2000	1074	1074	35.5%	22.9%	14.0%	22.8%	36.9%	0.7%	4.1%
6-7/4/2000	570	570	38.7%	21.4%	14.2%	20.4%	35.6%	0.2%	5.1%
1-2/2/2000	566	566	38.3%	23.2%	19.5%	13.8%	42.7%	0.5%	4.6%
13-15/12/1999	529	529	39.0%	20.9%	17.2%	19.9%	38.1%	0.2%	2.8%

Date of survey	樣本人數 Total Sample	次樣本人數 Sub-sample	香港人 Hongkonger	中國的香港人 Hongkonger in China	香港的中國人 Chinese in Hong Kong	中國人 Chinese	混合身分 Mixed Identity	其他 (請列明) Other	唔知/ 難講 DK/HS
26-27/10/1999	535	535	31.2%	23.7%	16.2%	25.5%	39.9%	0.7%	2.6%
6/8/1999	596	596	30.3%	23.3%	17.5%	25.3%	40.8%	0.3%	3.2%
8/6/1999	538	538	39.9%	25.0%	11.2%	17.0%	36.2%	0.6%	6.3%
15/4/1999	527	527	43.4%	20.0%	13.1%	18.0%	33.1%	0.4%	5.1%
8-9/2/1999	513	513	41.0%	20.9%	15.3%	17.6%	36.2%	1.2%	3.9%
21/12/1998	544	544	40.7%	22.3%	15.1%	17.2%	37.4%	0.6%	4.2%
29/9/1998	517	517	39.4%	22.9%	15.5%	20.6%	38.4%	0.4%	1.2%
14/8/1998	526	526	29.7%	25.2%	19.6%	22.0%	44.8%	0.2%	3.2%
22-24/6/1998	1042	1042	30.2%	18.0%	16.1%	31.6%	34.1%	0.4%	3.8%
3-4/6/1998	544	544	34.2%	18.6%	18.7%	24.8%	37.3%	0.2%	3.4%
8-9/12/1997	500	500	35.8%	22.9%	18.9%	18.2%	41.8%	0.2%	3.9%
28-29/10/1997	536	536	36.6%	22.6%	20.1%	17.5%	42.7%	0.2%	3.0%
23-24/9/1997	512	512	36.2%	24.2%	20.3%	17.5%	44.5%	0.2%	1.6%
26-27/8/1997	532	532	34.9%	24.8%	20.1%	18.6%	44.9%	0.4%	1.3%

The percentage of locals who favor “Chinese” as their descriptor peaked in 2008 (38.6%), but saw a noticeable downward trend afterwards, while the term “Hongkonger” saw an upward trend during the same period, with an result of above 40% in 2014. “Chinese in Hong Kong” is arguably the least popular choice overall.

7.3. Analysis Summary.

This thesis finds evidence for individual struggle for identity but in ways that also manifest the lack of concrete definition of the national identity of the Hong Kong people. The vagueness in the meaning of “Chinese-ness” leads to contradictions in how individuals talk about their identities. The contradictions are expressed (1) between the notion as an ethnic marker versus a territorial identity that is based on affiliations with the mainland (a distinction which becomes salient in the course of contact with mainlanders), and (2) in the argument that “Chineseness” is both primordial and historically-based yet also politically constructed. This provides support to the idea that identities are situationally constructed but also multiple.

While being Chinese is not incompatible with Hong Kong identity, many hold “Chinese-ness” as having little practical value as a national marker. Though many embrace “Chinese” as an ethnical identity, nationalist sentiments are lacking. Little agreement is also shown in regards to the political philosophy of the Chinese Central Government, and personal desires instead stray towards a politically independent and democratic Hong Kong. Language differences in Beijing and Hong Kong also make the formation of a cohesive national identity more difficult.

8. Conclusions / Final Reflection.

Hong Kong is a complex case and this study reflects only the thoughts and experiences of one particular group of the local population. China and Hong Kong are geographical realities, with clear objective borders, and it is therefore a trivial task to divide people as living in distinct political regions. But identity is a fluid thing, much more difficult to divide in a similar fashion. Then again, identity is also malleable to local circumstances and given the imprint of Hong Kong’s colonial and migratory history, it is perhaps an easy conclusion to make that Hong Kong identity is both unique and distinct from mainland China. Cultural identities, including nationality, are important for people’s self-representation; they are a source for meaning, history, and values. However, Hong Kong is a place with limited exposure to Chinese nationalism. Arguably, the issue of "nationality" is even a relative newcomer into the mental life of many young Hongkongers. Similarly, the meaning of "Chinese-ness" is also vague and often contradictory.

The goal of this thesis was to answer three questions regarding the issue of national identity in Hong Kong:

- How has the Umbrella revolution affected Hong Kong identity?
- How do Hong Kong people understand "Chineseness" in the aftermath of the Umbrella Revolution?
- How is the notion of “Chinese-ness” understood, and is it understood as being in contradiction to “Hong Kong identity”?

The Umbrella Revolution as left a clear mark in the political consciousness of Hongkongers, and made Hong Kong identity more confrontational to Chinese nationality as a political marker. On a personal level, Hongkongers put less emotional attachment to China than they do Hong Kong, being generally critical to Chinese nationalism. Meanwhile, they express

commitment to the fate of Hong Kong in so far as there is a support (though there is cynicism as well) to the Umbrella Movement and the democratic future of Hong Kong. Consequently, many favor, for example, being called “Hongkonger” or “Hongkongnese” above other designates. A few participants outright say they do not identify themselves as “Chinese”. However, most are still willing to consider themselves Chinese as a matter of nationality and as acknowledgement of ethnical roots. When used in this context, Chineseness face less friction as an identity. However, the meaning of “Chineseness” is unclear, having both primordial and civic connotations.

The salience of in-group and out-group distinctions between Chinese and Hongkongers are noticeable in their accounts of interactions with mainlanders. A select few even consider mainlanders a disrupting element. Several informants also think that mainland China feels like a different or foreign place to visit, chiefly because of different behavior and languages. Admittedly, a missed opportunity of this study was that no particular inquiry was made into the media habits and media consumption of the sample group. Such a thing could reveal more about how individuals both navigate and negotiate Hong Kong and Chinese identity.

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Appendix 1. Interview Questions.

1A: *How often do you discuss politics?*

1B: *Have the “Umbrella Revolution” made you think or talk more about politics?*

1C: *Do you think that having different political opinions is a cause for conflict? (Added later)*

2: *Does China feel like a foreign country to you?*

3: *What do you know about Hong Kong-history?*

4A: *Do you consider yourself part of an ethnic group? Which one?*

4B: *What label would you prefer? – Ex. Chinese, Hongkonger, Hongkongnese, Hong Kong Chinese.*

4C: *In your view, can I become a “Hongkonger” if I take up residency and learn the local language?*

5: *For the purpose of governance, do you think it is a problem that they speak different languages in Hong Kong and Beijing?*

6: *In your opinion, what would you like to see happen to Hong Kong in the future? What kind of development would you like to see?*