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AIS 4051 Directed Research Project -
Revisiting Hong Kong Identity: the Case of Anti-Moral
and National Education Curriculum Movement

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Abstract

This study explores the popular topic of Hong Kong identity and attempts to provide explanation of the issue in a different light. While recent conflicts became intensified between Hong Kong and Mainland China on their way of integration, addressing the Hong Kong identity helps to understand the heated debate. It is then necessary to revisit to problematic Hong Kong identity issue to look for insights. This study draws theoretical explanation from the dichotomous framework of civic versus ethnic nationalism raised by Hans Kohn and Anthony D. Smith; thus arguing that the Hong Kong identity consists of two core parts – the civic identity and ethnic identity. To demonstrate this construction, I study the case of Anti-Moral and National Education Movement in 2012, a significant event that was participated by large numbers of Hong Kong people. Understanding the motive behind the organizers and the participants helps me to address my proposal of the two components within the Hong Kong identity. In the end of the day, this study hopes to contribute to the literature of identity politics in Hong Kong, provide inputs to the study of nationalism and to light up a spark for the future of Hong Kong and its people.
Acknowledgement

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Content

I. Introduction

II. Literature Review

III. Research Questions

IV. Theoretical Framework
   - Nation state, national identity and Nationalism
   - The Dichotomy of Ethnic versus Civic Nationalism
   - The Case of Hong Kong: Ethnic and Civic Identity

V. Case Study - The Anti-Moral and National Education Curriculum Movement
   - Case Selection
   - Overview of the Movement
   - The Curriculum
   - Analysis on Public Speeches, Slogans and Texts
   - Interview Session and Analysis

VI. Conclusion and Discussion

VII. Appendix I and II

VIII. Bibliography
I. **Introduction:**

When some were celebrating the return of Hong Kong to China for fifteen years in 2012, they may not be aware of the fact that the questions on the Hong Kong identity remain unsolved. Longitudinal surveys conducted by the University of Hong Kong (2013) suggest that Hong Kong people still draw a line between being a Chinese and a Hong Konger today. For instance, 38% of Hong Kong people identify themselves as Hong Kong citizens while only 17% identify themselves as Chinese citizens. Hong Kongers also cling on labels such as “Hong Kong Chinese” and “Chinese Hong Kong”. In truth, Hong Kong people recently started to discuss and debate how they should situate themselves when Hong Kong is building a closer and closer relationship with mainland China. In terms of economy, Hong Kong and China look to strengthen trade and investment cooperation by signing the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Arrangement (CEPA) in 2003. Plus, the introduction of Individual Visit Scheme by the Hong Kong government in 2003 allows Mainlanders to visit Hong Kong on an individual basis, helping to boost the tourism industry of Hong Kong.

However, on the socio-political aspect, Hong Kong people have shown dissatisfaction towards Mainland China's increasing political influence on Hong Kong.

While the Basic Law provides shelter for an autonomous system that emphasizes on freedoms, rule of law, human rights and capitalized economy; the Central People’s Government attempted to undermine some civil values through the legislation of the anti-subversion law Article 23 in 2002. Newspaper commentaries often report and discuss increasing conflicts between mainland tourists and the locals in terms of cultural differences and allocation of resources. Plus all the
continuous protests on requesting universal suffrage, the yearly June 4th memorial meeting in Victoria Park and the most recent Anti-Moral and National Education Movement, Hong Kong people today tend to resist being more Chinese but rather embrace a more complex form of identity. Therefore, it is still necessary and urgent to address the problem of the Hong Kong identity under today’s setting and constant changes. This study aims to re-visit the Hong Kong identity and addresses what elements it is built on. Concepts of identity, nation-state and nationalism are involved and hope to provide new exits for the problem.

II. Literature Review

Addressing the present day Hong Kong identity issue requires considerable attention to what have been discussed in the past studies. Identifying the focal points of these studies can help one to understand what scholars have explored over the years; and how different understanding of the Hong Kong identity issue.

The study of Hong Kong identity emerged in the late 1980s/early 1990s after the Sino-Joint British Declaration was signed in 1984, deciding the sovereignty of Hong Kong shall return to the People’s Republic of China in the year 1997. These studies can be generally categorized into two time slots: before and after 1997. Along with these studies, longitudinal public polls and research projects like Public Opinion Programme (POP) developed by University of Hong Kong (from 1991- present) and Hong Kong Transitional Project (from 1989-2010) are launched to conduct surveys and data to track changes on perception of Hong Kong identity among Hong Kong citizen
Before 1997, scholars were aware of the possibility that identity crisis would be found among the Hong Kong citizens; thus looked to discuss what causes the crisis and to predict the future prospects of Hong Kong identity. Lau (1997), one of the representative local scholars on identity politics, attempted to find out whether there would be a crisis of having both ‘Hongkongese’ (Xianggangren) and ‘Chinese’ (Zhongguoren) among Hong Kong people (as ‘Hong Kong Chinese’ in his paper) as the Handover was approaching. He suggests the Hong Kong identity still encompasses a strong identification with the Chinese nation despite some concerns and mistrust over the socialist regime. This is explained by the Hong Kong citizens’ upheaval emotions towards the June 4th movement in 1989 - about a million Hong Kong citizens demonstrated against the CCP in the street and showed support for the Beijing students. This reaction reflects a strong connection and identification with the Chinese nation among the Hong Kong people. Moreover, Lau listed seven factors that contribute to the formulation of Hong Kong Identity before the Handover, including factors such as rule of law and human rights (but limited under the colonial regime); but he puts much emphasis on comparing the attitudes of ‘Hongkongese’ or ‘Chinese’ towards China and Hong Kong by analyzing his survey result. Lau did successfully predict that a ‘new’ HK identity that is different from the Mainland Chinese would be formed. However, he could not foresee political changes and the precise development of Hong Kong identity. Rather than adopting “a larger Chinese identity” as he claims in the paper, Hong Kong people today tend to emphasize their ‘Hong Kong identity’ and distinguish themselves from their mainland counterparts.
Prior to the Handover, Timothy Ka-ying Wong also published two studies in 1996 and 1997. Both studies aim to examine the relationship between Hong Kong people’s civic awareness and their national identity through surveys. Based on Anderson’s idea (1991), the 1996 study highlights how the colonial experience made Hong Kong different from Mainland China – in contrast to the communist regime, liberal values including human rights, freedom, rule of law and etc. started to germinate along with the laissez-faire and non-intervention policies, under the limited democratic ruling of the British. In Wong’s eyes, this development of liberalism is influential to the construction of Hong Kong identity. The 1997 study continues the discussion on liberalism and identity. At this time, Wong uses the term ‘civil awareness’ to refer to Hong Kong people’s level of awareness on liberal values and rights; and how this awareness affects their interpretation on national identity. In fact, both studies indicate that civil/liberal value is an important attribute in defining Hong Kong community. This is shown by the fact that Hong Kong people pay attention to politics through media and engage in civil participation in different ways. Also, Wong points out Hong Kong people rather have a stronger recognition on the ethnic past but a weaker acknowledgement on the current regime. In concluding remarks, he infers Hong Kong people’s civil awareness may create obstacle when perceiving their national identity, which seems quite close to the reality today. Therefore, the argument presented in this research extends the discussion of these two studies.

In addition, more studies provide different understandings on the formation of Hong Kong identity. For instance, Lau emphasizes on his concept of utilitarianistic familism as cultural code of Hong Kong and suggest Hong Kong people prefer social stability over freedom and democratic government; as well as limited political
awareness and participation (Lau & Kuan, 1989); Leung (1997), on the other hand, suggest Hong Kong identity is also based on popular culture like movies, canton pop songs and local icons. Overall, most of them point out that there would be a possibility of conflicts and a timely process in negotiating the Hong Kong versus National Identity after Hong Kong returns to China based on differences in many aspects (Wong, 1996; Wong 1997; Lau, 1997; Lee, 1997; Leung, 1997). Also, through public surveys, some studies also find out that Hong Kong people possess a strong local identity since they come to identify themselves as less Chinese but more Hongkongese (Lau & Kuan, 1988; Lee and Leung, 1995; Lau, 1997). However, these studies either lack a coherent theoretical framework to interpret the construction of Hong Kong identity; or the data and analyses are outdated and inapplicable due to present day political and social changes. Nonetheless, these studies before 1997 provide valuable knowledge background and indicate that more researches are needed. Therefore, the study of Hong Kong identity continues to emerge and becomes an increasingly popular research topic after the Handover.

After Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) in 1997, scholars continued to study the identity crisis issue. Some publications at this stage continue to adopt quantitative methods, mainly public survey to collect data. As survey results of these studies show that Hong Kong people perceive themselves as a mix of Hong Konger and Chinese, the boundary between the two identities become less precise (Fung, 2004; Fung 2001; Ma, 2000; Brewer, 1999; Ma & Fung, 2007). For instance, by asking who and what cultural icons can represent Hong Kong and China (i.e. Hong Kong – Lee Ka Shing; China – the Great Wall), the studies of Fung (2001; 2004) find out that Hong Kong people has a strong identification with China. The results of the
survey suggest that there are more people who acknowledge icons such as the Great Wall and national flag than those who feel unease about them. Meanwhile, Hong Kong people also cling to a strong local identification as they think some local authorities such as former Chef Executive Tung Chee-hwa can best represent Hong Kong. Apart from assimilation, Fung concludes that that would be a struggle between the two identities since the nationalization process could oppress local identity; but it could also strengthen indigenous culture and identity when they resist domination from China. Other studies also agree that the “re-imagination” process of the Hong Kong community contains conflicts (Ma, 2000; Ma and Fung, 2007). In short, these studies mainly aim to show that Hong Kong people adopt a multiple identity, or attempt to argue that further integration with China would influence the understanding of Hong Kong identity; but still none of them can offer a new framework to explain the complexity in within.

On the other hand, some other scholars’ works offer alternative ideas with theoretical basis. Brewer (1999) takes a psychological perspective to argue that two different forms of identification with region (Hong Kong) and ethnicity (Chinese) were forged among the Hong Kong people. Using the Optimal Distinctiveness theory, Brewer suggests that group identification contains both needs of inclusion and differentiation, which they operate against each other. Thus, during the colonial era, the regional identity of Hong Kong people serves the need of distinguishing themselves from the western rulers; and the ethnic identity fulfills the need for assimilation. Prior to or after 1997, the regional identity shifts to differentiate Hong Kong people from their fellow countryman in mainland, while the ethnic part remains the same. But the studies seem to take a step back on explaining the motive
behind the ascription. What exactly formulate the regional identity remains unclear except the Hong Kong identity is “more westernized” compare to China.

The book “Hong Kong, China: Learning to belong to a nation” (2008) written by Matthew, Ma and Lui address the national belonging of Hong Kong people with a great deal of details. In fact, a chapter in this book incorporates the idea of ethnic and civic nationalism given by Anthony Smith in explaining the identity issue, which is quite close to the main theoretic approach this study adopts. However, the author of the research Matthew limits the room for discussion by arguing that Hong Kong identity is defined by “Market Mentally”. Under this view, Hong Kong people make judgment based on personal calculation of profit because they seem to take advantages from both (love China when it wins the right to hold Olympics; but love Hong Kong when it comes to civic values); or they can belong to any state if it provides a good life. Such argument is indeed debatable because it assumes Hong Kong is simply just a special region under the ruling of China. It also highly undermines other factors such as language, local culture, shared memories and etc. in contributing to the formation of a distinct Hong Kong identity.

Case study, not surveys

Overall speaking, the studies published after the 1997 revolve around the theme of multiple identity ascribed by Hong Kong people. Terms such as ‘hybrid’, ‘mixed’, ‘dual’ identity and etc. are used to label the Hong Kong identity. While integration, resistance, domination, local/regional versus national are the main focuses of these studies, most of which record and explain the multiple identity through surveys. However, the study of Hong Kong identity should not bound by the
concept of sovereignty on Hong Kong, thus only pay attention to the Hong Kong-China binary model. Also, studies on this area seem to suffer from a lack of theoretical framework. What we found instead are attitude analysis over times in which derived from surveys of certain groups or data collected at a particularly moment. Knowing the problems found today, it is necessary to re-visit the Hong Kong identity with a series of case-studies over time of changes as recorded in literature, texts, speech, historical memories and etc. through mass media. Such studies allow more in-depth investigations on deconstructing the many layers of the Hong Kong identity. Thus, this study specifically concentrates on looking at the fundamental parts of the Hong Kong identity through a case study, as they all directly link to the most heated debate today. To start the discussion, the next section presents the research questions and the theoretical framework.

III. Research Question

Consider the nature of this study is about identity politics, starting with the concept of collective cultural identity helps guiding the rest of the discussion. The concept does not refer to fixed patterns overtime; but as Smith explains, it signifies a sense of shared continuity among a population unit over generations; and “shared memories of earlier periods, events and personage in the history of the unit”; as well as ‘the collective belief in a common destiny of that unit and its culture’ (Smith, 1992). In this light, I raise the following questions:

1) What is the Hong Kong Identity fundamentally constructs on?

And,
2) How does the case of Anti-Moral and National Education Movement demonstrate the Hong Kong identity?

The first component of the concept does not apply here since this is not a continuous and longitudinal study on Hong Kong identity. But studying the Anti-Moral and National Education Movement among the Hong Kong people allows me to get one step closer to the Hong Kong identity problem- It is a shared memory among hundreds and thousands of Hong Kong people who participated; And analyzing the actions, texts, speech and opinion of the organizers also shows the collective belief in what Hong Kong people want to achieve ultimately. However, the concept of cultural identity alone is not enough to address the Hong Kong identity issue. Under the modern age of industrialization, capitalism and bureaucracy, the numbers and the scale of identities have expanded, such as gender, class, religion and etc.; while above all, national identification has become the political and cultural norm today, transcending other types of identities with power (Smith, 1992). As a result, the ideas of nation state, national identity and nationalism are adopted in my theoretical framework below.

IV. Theoretical Framework

Nation state, national identity and Nationalism

In the classical definition of Smith, a nation-state is “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (Smith, 1992). While Hong Kong is commonly regarded a Special Administrative
Region (SAR) under the ruling of China, it has almost all the characteristics of a modern nation state. It is necessary to divide it into separated forms of state and nation for the ease of understanding the Hong Kong identity.

A broad definition of the state is a sovereign political organization which centralizes power and independent authority in legitimate means over a geographic area (Thomas, 1999). Except being independent (de jure), Hong Kong indeed fits the role of a modern state. Briefly speaking, Hong Kong has its independent set of constitutional text, the Basic Law. It has control of a territory; it has an autonomous political apparatus (a government) with the power of legislation, legal authority and in control of daily operations. And it is recognized by the people and other states in the world as being the controlling power within the state (Thomas, 1999). In terms of status and practice under international law, Hong Kong enjoys a ‘legal proximity of statehood’ (Thomas, 1999). For instance, Hong Kong is an accepted member of international trading bodies like the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the General Agreements on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). Other states also accept the operation of Hong Kong government offices in overseas and welcome the officials when visiting. Hong Kong also participate the Olympic Games under the team Hong Kong instead of China. In fact, Hong Kong enjoys even more state-level recognition then Taiwan does. Hong Kong indeed fulfills most of the criteria of being a state.

On the other hand, a nation is held together by a body of people who share a communal identity with some historical continuity of union, common culture, sense of geographic location, race, language, religion and etc. (Thomas, 1999)(Smith, 1992). In other words, these separable components can all contribute to the multiple layers
of national identity - they are united by the nationalist ideology, into a “potent vision of human identity and community” (Smith, 1992). From this point, the issue of Hong Kong identity becomes problematic. Hong Kong people share a wide range of Chinese cultural identities with their country fellowman, but also connect to other components developed within the territory of Hong Kong. What are the cultural elements that Hong Kong people subscribe to? What is their imagination of the Hong Kong community based on? In the following I draw ideas from the theoretical explanation of nationalism raised by Hans Kohn and Anthony D. Smith to capture the core parts of Hong Kong identity.

The Dichotomy of Ethnic versus Civic Nationalism

The ideology of Nationalism emerged in Western Europe and the United States of American in the late 18th century as a powerful force that ‘taking the place of religion…. giving meaning to man’s life and justifying his noble and ignoble passions before himself and history (Kohn, 1944; Smith, 1991; 1992). And nationalism has continued to spread since early 19th century – first in Central and Eastern Europe, then in the Middle East and India, then in Americas, and finally in Africa and Eastern Asia. The basic goals of nationalism are “to unify the nation, to endow it with a distinctive individuality, and to make it free and autonomous.”(Smith,1992). Yet two distinguished scholars Hans Kohn and Anthony D. Smith suggest that there are important differences between nationalists’ conception of the nation state. Two main models of the nation emerged out of historical contexts which remains influential to the world today. The first one, the “Western” model of nation
“was basically a rational and universal concept of political liberty and the rights of man, looking towards the city of the future…. It found its chief support in the political and economic strength of the educated middle classes and, with a shift of emphasis, in the social-democratically organized labor movements.”

(Kohn, 1944)

“(This model) tended to emphasize the centrality of a national territory or homeland, a common system of laws and institutions, the legal equality of citizens in a political community, and the importance of a mass, civic culture binding the citizens together.”

(Smith, 1992)

While on the other side of the dichotomy, a second one, also known as the Eastern model of nation

“was basically founded on history, on monuments and graveyards, even harking back to the mysteries of ancient times and of tribal solidarity. It stressed the past, the diversity and self-sufficiency of nations. It found its support, above all, among the aristocracy and the masses.”

(Kohn, 1944)

“by contrast, was more preoccupied with ethnic descent and cultural ties. Apart from genealogy, it emphasized the popular or folk element, the role of vernacular
mobilization and the activation of the people through a revival of their native folk culture – their languages, customs, religions and rituals, rediscovered by urban intellectuals…”

(Smith, 1992)

In other words, the first “civic” model raised by Western European nationalists stresses universalism, law and institutions, rationality, self-transcendence and the people who subscribe to this idea volunteer to be a part of the nation; whereas the “ethnic” model, raised by Central and Eastern European nationalists stresses distinctive nationality, an emotional connection to history, development rather than transcendence and the people belongs to the nation in an organic form (Calhoun, 2008). Examples drawn from Kohn and Smith’s idea on the western model are France and the United States of America while German nationalism around the Second World War can most represent the eastern model. Personally, Kohn fears and disagrees with the Eastern ethnic model as it may violate the liberal values that he believes in.

The case of Hong Kong – ethnic and civic identity

In a strict sense, one may hardly raise the term ‘Hong Kong nationalism’. Yet, consider the fact that Hong Kong is a quasi-nation state, and the people of Hong Kong ascribe to an identity that is different from the Mainland Chinese; it is reasonable to suggest that Hong Kong community is united by, if not nationalist ideology, some collective beliefs and shared cultural identities. We can therefore use the idea of nationalism to define the identity of Hong Kong people
The Hong Kong identity, I propose, is fundamentally composed of both ethnic and civic components that are depicted in the two models of nationalist ideology. It was formed under the unique historical experience and political changes that the city faced during the colonial era. The first part, the ethnic identity, resembles to the eastern model of nationalism. It connects to ancient history and traditions, graveyards that trace ethnic-decent and roots, folk elements that define cultural ties. Some scholars define Hong Kong as an “immigrant society” since the Hong Kong citizens today are originally immigrants who fled from China after the Second World War (Ting, 1997). Therefore, these people still share a level of primordial sentiments on the same racial, historical, cultural and geographical past with the Mainland Chinese (Wong, 1996). These sentiments and connections, however, only limit to recognition over ancient Chinese elements, rather than the modern Chinese nation state under the ruling of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This is because Hong Kong was already a colony of the United Kingdom before the very last empire Qing collapsed, and transitioned into a modern nation state, which is China today after the civil war. Thus, those who escaped to Hong Kong from the development of Mainland China and were never be able to experience the nation building process of the new Chinese nation state. Although these early immigrants who were born after the 1950s still preoccupied by a level of Chinese folk identity such as descendants,

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customs, languages and religions, all of them still had no first-hand knowledge of China until it opens up in the 1970s (Ortmann, 2010). Therefore, this ethnic component still cannot fully bind the masses alone, nor does it represent all the shared memories and developmental experience within the territory of Hong Kong. From this we shall look at another core element of the Hong Kong identity.

The second face of the Hong Kong identity is similar to the western model of nationalism. It is founded on the universal principles of political liberty and human rights; and the people are bind by a mass civic culture, laws and institutions. Although economically the British government adopted a lasses-faire economic policy, Hong Kong people did not enjoy all the civil liberties in the very first day. During the colonial era in the 1970s, there were still many regulations that restricted oppositional group behaviors and political expressions, in the name of creating public order (Ortmann, 2010). One of the most significant regulations was the Public Order Ordinance in the 1967. It was enacted after the riot during that year to suppress street violence. Under this law, it is necessary to apply for a permit for public assembly or else those who violate this law would receive severe punishment. The order also created restrains on the press, as new publishers had to register and pay registration fee to operate. Although in reality media were free to publish whatever they chose, this order is likely to signify the attitude of self-censorship (Ortmann, 2010). In addition, other regulations like the Emergency Regulations allow the government to arrest anyone without a trial (Ortmann, 2010).

While pressure groups and democrats requested for political changes at the time, the situation was fully changed after the signing of the joint declaration
between China and Britain. The constitutional document of Hong Kong, known as the Basic Law, which was drafted accordance to the declaration, ensures the fundamental rights of Hong Kong citizens. According to Chapter 3, Hong Kong people are all equal under the law, and shall have the right to vote and to stand for election. Also, the law states that Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of speech, freedom of the press and of publication; freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of procession, of demonstration, of communication, of movement, of religious belief, and of marriage; and the right and freedom to form and join trade unions, and to strike and more (Basic Law, 2006).

Furthermore, the western model builds on a strong civic spirit. Indeed there are many evidences supporting that Hong Kong people do promote and exercise civic and democratic values in many forms, especially through informal political participations including protest, rallies and social movements. In truth, political movements and rallies have been non-stop since day one after the Handover. For instance, while Hong Kong’s political system is regarded as a form of “bureaucratic hegemony”, executive-led government, or quasi-democracy (Morris et al, 2000); the 1st July Marches have been held annually to demand democracy, universal suffrage and other matters. The 2003 marches have been one of the biggest one – with over 500,000 people took to the street and protested against the Article 23 (Wong, 2008). Also, assembly like the annual 4th June Memorial Candle Vigil organized by the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China also shows the collective belief in and exercising civic values.
In sum, this chapter argues that the fundamental components of the Hong Kong identity feature both “ethnic” and “civic” characteristics drawn from the two models of nationalism by Kohn and Smith. On one side, the ethnic part closely connects the present day Hong Kong people with ‘myths of the past’ and the ‘distinctive tradition’ of ancient China, similar to those in the Mainland China. On the other side of the weighting scale, the Hong Kong identity built on rationality, common laws and civic spirits, in contrast with the limited expression and self-censored authoritarian system in mainland China. To further demonstrate this argument, the case of Anti-Moral and Education Curriculum Movement is studied and presented in the following session.

V. Case Study: The Anti-Moral and National Education Curriculum Movement

This chapter presents a case study on the Anti-Moral and National Education Curriculum Movement. To demonstrate the Hong Kong identity consists of two fundamental parts – the civic and ethnic identity, I study and analyze several speeches, texts and the interview answers of the organization and the organizers of the movement; and discuss how the attitude, motive and meaning behind the movement address the Hong Kong identity issue.

Case Selection

Before getting into the main content, it is necessary to explain the selection of this case. First of all, it perfectly implies the ‘key difference’, between the identity of Hong Kong and China - while the Central Government attempted to promote its
ethnic-based nationalist ideas to foster integration of Hong Kong to China; Hong Kong people, apart from recognizing the importance of ethnic connection, resisted as they also believe in rational and liberal understanding of a nation. Besides, mass participation implies identity. Collective identity can stimulate participation in collective actions; on the contrary, collective actions of the people also reinforce their identity (Klandermans et al., 2002). Therefore, the 120,000 people who participated in the movement in turn demonstrate their Hong Kong identity through actions. Also, the case of The Anti-Moral and National Education Curriculum Movement is a timely one, which helps to provide the latest and first hand evidence for understanding the identity. As a result, compare to other significant events such as the Article 23 protest in 1st July in 2003 (representative and related but not updated); Diaoyu Island protests (not representative as only some activists participated) and the annual 4th June memorial candle Vigil (celebrating the death rather than addressing the issue of Hong Kong); this movement can best address the Hong Kong identity issue in many respects.

Overview of the movement

The Anti-Moral and National Education Curriculum Movement was a social movement started by a secondary school student-based pressure group Scholarism. The whole movement lasted around 17 months since April, 2011; while its peak action period (including all the main media events, protests and assemblies) centralized from April to October, 2012 (Scholarism timetable, 2012). The movement aimed to protest against the implementation of the Moral and National Education Curriculum in both primary and secondary schools (Primary 1 to Form 6). Trace back
to the policy address presentation since 2007, for five consecutive years (2007-2011), former Chief Executive Donald Tsang has mentioned about increasing the elements of national education in school curriculum, in order to strengthen students’ understanding towards China and national identification (CityU Monthly, 2012). In 2011, the government eventually released a guideline for the curriculum (currently deleted by the government) and recommended including Moral and National Education as one of the core subjects. Without releasing all the opinion letters submitted by the public, the Education Bureau accepted the final guideline drafted by the Curriculum Development Council and decided to impose the curriculum starting with a three-year initiation period (CityU Monthly, 2012). Coupling with a series of media occasions and speeches of government officials, Scholarism started to organize protest, street stations and public assemblies to gather support from the public for the whole summer. They eventually founded the Alliance against Moral and National Education in May, 2011; and elevated their actions by stationing in front of the Central Government Offices in Admiralty for 10 consecutive days. With around 12,00,000 participants at peak time in all the continuous rallies and protests (Scholarism, 2012), current Chief Executive CY Leung announced the government decided to scrap the curriculum indefinitely at a press conference on 8th October, 2012.

The Curriculum

The Moral and National Education Curriculum is mainly being criticized on its bias attitude towards China in different aspects, in order to justify its way of ruling and strengthen younger generations’ national identification. The most controversial
part is certainly the publication of the “Chinese Model” booklet, a teaching material sample that describes the PPC government as “progressive, selfish and unified” (Baptist University of Hong Kong, 2011). Along with the debatable statement, the booklet also introduces and promoted the so-called ‘Chinese Model’ of development, namely a detailed description and justification on the semi-liberal economic system and other policies imposed and governed by the centralized, authoritarian regime of CCP. In fact, the attitude and content shown in the curriculum guideline match the ‘Eastern model’ of nationalist ideas raised by Kohn and Smith. For instance, in the ‘country session’ of the first learning stage (for primary school students), cultural roots, customs, geographic significance and more are emphasized to strengthen students’ national identification and trigger sentimental connection with the nation. Critics point out that it is a form of brain-washing as primary school students lack critical thinking at a young age (Scholarism, 2012). They may easily allow these ethnic elements to attach to their national identity without properly understanding fundamental concepts of nation and identity. Plus, the curriculum introduces civil-related concepts at a later learning stage four, which does not synchronize with the teaching of ethnic elements and nations. Such unbalanced and bias design can be influential to the minds of teenagers. Last but not least, the content of the curriculum is criticized of its racial bias (Scholarism Leaflets, 2012). There is a certain population of other ethnic groups living and working in Hong Kong. While the curriculum aims to strengthen student’s national identification towards China, it is unfair and unreasonable to require students with different ethnicities to permit Chinese custom and history to be a part of their identity. As a result, for a city where multiple ethnic groups try to make a living in, the curriculum lacks international awareness and undermines ethnic diversity. In addition, other problems include lack
of transparency during consultation and PRC members involved in drafting the guideline created more controversies for the implementation process.

VI. Analysis on Public Speeches, Slogans and Texts

To explain how the movement demonstrates the two faces of the Hong Kong identity, it is necessary to find out the motive behind the collective participation. To do so, I select and analyze some public speeches, slogans and published texts of Scholarism as they express the goal of the movement as well as the motive behind.

Public Speeches

Scholarism addressed the motive and the goal of the movement for multiple times through media interviews. One of the most viewed video on YouTube is the interview of the co-founder and convener of Scholarism Joshua Wong in front of the Central Government Offices. In this four-minute Q&A session on 13th May, 2012, Joshua Wong directly expressed some main reasons why Scholarism opposes the implementation of the curriculum:

“We request the government to withdraw the Anti-Moral and National Education subject– firstly, the learning outcome of the subject requires student to feel proud of their nation; it aims to trigger the emotions of students and asks them to possess special feelings towards their motherland and etc. We think it is inappropriate to judge students’ performance based on their level of emotions to the nation. Besides, recent news revealed that the guideline of the curriculum is drafted by some PRC
members from the National Education Bureau. We think that it is unacceptable for the central government to intervene our education policies. We don’t want this to be the precedent (of interference). We don’t accept a national education curriculum written by the Communist Party in China.”

(YouTube, May, 2012)

In another interview programme hosted by former politician and current commentator Dr Allen Lee Peng-fei, Joshua expressed similar comments. He also added:

“Primary school students are still young and they haven’t developed any independent and critical thinking. I recall myself in primary school level one; I was still innocent and did not know what was happening around me. It is indeed worrying to let young students to absorb these ideas (love to a nation based on ethnic connections and emotions

(YouTube, July, 2012)

From the above comments made by Joshua, it is clear that the implementation of the curriculum implies manipulation of emotions towards a nation and political interference from the Chinese government. Based on these comments, Scholarism indeed stresses the importance of the political autonomy of Hong Kong. “Hong Kong people Ruling Hong Kong” is one of the foundations of the Basic Law. Therefore, on one way Scholarism attempted to stop the implementation of the curriculum, while the actions also signify the dependence over the political autonomous Hong Kong and the constitutional texts that differentiate Hong Kong from China. Moreover, from his answers about national emotions, we can also identify the curriculum is designed
mostly based on the Eastern Model of nationalism. From the above speech, we can locate the source of the conflicts is about different ways of understanding and learning about a nation; and also emphasizing the spirit of Basic Law. Nevertheless, we should look at more information to make further discussion.

**Slogans and Declarations**

The slogans of the movement directly reveal the attitude of the organizers and the participants as they are used for chanting and mobilizing people during the movement. The slogans used and the messages expressed during the whole period are rather similar but clear. For instance, one of the slogans used at the 13th of May March to the Central Government Offices in Admiralty is:

*Withdraw Curriculum, Restart Consultation, Clarify Teaching Detail*

撤回課程文件 重新推出諮詢 釐清教學細節

*Defend Freedom of Thoughts, Oppose Brain-washing, No PRC interference*

捍衛思想自由 反對洗腦教育 中共停止干預

(13th of May March by Scholarism, 2012)

Another declaration and slogan used at the Occupy Central Government Offices (stationing around the streets near the Central Government Offices) from the 30th August to the 2nd September stated:

*Back to Primary Principles. Promise and Stick to Resistance.*
These two slogans and declarations also express the attitude and goals of Scholarism in a simple yet clear manner. The first slogan expresses more than just the request of withdrawing the curriculum. In fact, it first points out the nature of the curriculum involves again, political interference; and how the curriculum aims to ‘brain-wash’, or spread nationalist ideas through education to young students. Yet apart from this, the slogan expresses that Hong Kong people should defend their freedom of thoughts by saying no to the curriculum. Moreover, in the second slogan, Scholarism shifted the theme of the focus. Instead of repeating the request of withdraw, they chanted “Back to Primary Principles” and “Resistance”. “Primary Principles’ under their explanations refer to the culture of protest, taking it to the street and getting into the crowds (Scholarism News, 29th August, 2012). As I mentioned, Hong Kong people tend to exercise their political participation through informal politics like rallies and protest rather than through voting and official channels provided by the government. It is obvious that at this peak movement period with high momentum and high participation (the biggest protest among all), the latent goals of the movement are revealed – to exercise and defend the civic values of Hong Kong.

**Texts**

Furthermore, texts such as leaflets and articles online also express the attitude and goals of the movement. Taking the example of leaflets given to most people,
Scholarism lists out 10 main reasons explaining why they oppose to the curriculum and it has to be scrapped (see Appendix 1). Some of which repeats the concerns mentioned about the autonomy of Hong Kong and civil values. While in a Question and Answer session, the leaflet features some answers that provide insights for the civic and ethnic faces with the Hong Kong identity.

Q: What's wrong with letting students to learn about the nation through the curriculum?

A: Under the guideline, the Moral and National Education emphasizes on emotional attachment. It aims to strengthen students’ national identification, but it cultivates such patriotism among students in a forceful manner. For instance, it requires students to cry during the flag raising ceremony or feel proud of being a member of the flag raising team. Such methods and goals violate the principle of independent thinking that is being emphasized in education; and it certainly controls the thoughts of students. Plus, student can learn about the knowledge and history of our nation through general studies or subject like Chinese History. It is a waste to spend half a billion to open a new, independent course in which its content overlaps with the above subjects.

Q: Many countries in the world also have their own national education, what is wrong with Hong Kong having the course?

A: Most of the developed countries impose civic education, but not national education. Civic education aims to cultivate students to become a world citizen with independent
thinking, so they can actively participate in social matters in the future; not only teaching about emotions to a nation unilaterally.

Q. Does opposing the curriculum mean denying one’s identity as a Chinese?

A: We do not deny our identity as a Chinese, but we think national education cannot be only about praising the greatness of a nation. Patriotism starts with one’s heart and we don’t need to force it through education tools. What student should learn is to think critically whether a nation deserves our love, but not to blindly worship and follow the nation.

(Scholarism, Anti-Brain-washing leaflets, 2012)

These three questions and their answers from the leaflets indirectly demonstrate the two faces of Hong Kong identity. On one hand, they recognize the need of learning about one’s nation. But it has to be taught in a correct way – based on rationality and critical thinking. In other words, they approve the love towards a nation after rational considerations instead of unilateral patriotism based on emotional attachment to flags and national anthem or love to a country bounded by the past and geographic connections. Meanwhile, as we can see in the last question, they still recognize their ethnic identity as a part of the Chinese race as they oppose the curriculum. Therefore, one can assert that the Hong Kong identity is built upon both civic values and ethnic elements. The next part presents my interview session with some key members of Scholarism. From their personal answer, we can understand more about the two main faces of the Hong Kong identity.
VII. Interview Session and Analysis

On 27th April, 2013, Scholarism organized a Q&A session for students (mainly for secondary students’ individual projects) to attend and acquire information from the members of Scholarism. The speakers, also my interviewees include Joshua Wong, the co-founder and convener of Scholarism; Oscar Lai, member of Scholarism; and Ivan Lam, co-founder and former convener of Scholarism. This private session organized in a panel and session-to-session based format. The whole meeting was organized into seven parts. The first part was a brief introduction held by Oscar and the last part was for photo-taking. The five parts in between addressed five different topics, they included National Education/Anti-National Education Movement, Political participation, Protest/demonstration culture, Hong Kong/mainland conflicts and other topics. Attendants were allowed to ask limited questions but our questions had to be asked in related session. A total four questions along with some follow-up questions were raised by me in the session (questions see Appendix 2). From the speakers’ answers I analyze below, also demonstrate the two core parts of Hong Kong identity that I propose. In addition, it is noticeable that due to the format of this Q&A session, not all the interviewees got to answer all the questions. Nevertheless, their answers still provided valuable information for this research.

The first and second questions that I raised were both addressed by Joshua Wong. They both designed to acquire the interviewees’ motivation behind the movement, which in turn demonstrate their identity. Firstly, his answers on the background of the movement are quite similar to the texts and speeches of
Scholarism. But when asking about what the movement means to him, he claims that:

“The meaning to participate and organize the movement is to locate the identity of being a Hong Kong citizen and its obligations. The name ‘Scholarism’ in Chinese means student citizens’ wave of thoughts. Students are also Hong Kong citizens.”

From this answer, we get to understand the motivation behind Joshua to organize the movement, as well as emphasizing the importance of being a citizen and what a citizen should do. Also, he thinks it is also crucial to create a culture or a trend of political participation by organizing the movement. That is because it encourages Hong Kong people to tackle social problems through civic means of thoughts and actions. Furthermore, the answer of the second question also provides insights regarding civic values. Joshua suggests that the core values of Hong Kong include the belief in democratic and civic values such as rule of law, freedom of expression, speech and assembly etc. And it is absolutely necessary to defend these core values because they are the reasons why Hong Kong is different from China. The overall answers of question one and two support my proposal that civic elements are an important part of the Hong Kong identity, because the founder of the movement and the organization strongly speaks out his will and attitude on the importance of civic values.

Moreover, the answers of question three and four, answered by all three speakers further stress that civic values are the keys that differentiate Hong Kong people and Mainland Chinese. For question three, all three of the speakers agree that belief in democratic values; freedom of speech, assemblies and more are the core parts in
defining Hong Kong people. Yet the three of them added some extra understandings. While Joshua limited the identity of Hong Kong people within the territory of Hong Kong, Ivan feels like it is indeed difficult to define Hong Konger as a whole because different generations have their own understanding. For his generation, he thinks the culture of consuming is a big part of the Hong Kong identity. Oscar, on the other hand suggests that Hong Kong people are mostly reactive rather than proactive. This question is designed to acquire more details and in-depth understanding of the identity issue. The three of them all, again, point out the beliefs in civic values, further support my argument. However, their answers do not extend much to other cultural identities such as languages and race. But Joshua did mention territory, which links to the idea of Anderson (1991) on boundaries; and Ivan mentioned a little about consuming culture. Nevertheless, these extra answers do not link to the motive of the movement but rather suggest there are more layers within the Hong Kong identities.

The last question aims to acquire more information on the Hong Kong/mainland relations. All the answers show that the three speakers are quite clear about what the statement of identity crisis is built on. Again, the three of them first point out that elements like rule of law and institutions and belief in democracy are the main source of the identity crisis. Also, Joshua and Ivan suggest the recent increasing influence from China disturb many Hong Kong people. They show grievance towards to authoritarian regime; but they also fear Hong Kong would lose all it has now in the future. These two opposite ideas and systems, in their opinion, created the identity crisis. Although they did not directly mention what the Chinese ethnicity means in the identity crisis, but their own identifications – A Chinese Hong Konger, imply that
on one hand they realize that belief in civic values is the biggest difference between the two identities; but they also recognize their ethnicity as part of them. As a result, their answers and understanding further fit in my proposal of civic versus ethnic identities within Hong Kong people.

VIII. Conclusion and discussion

This research adopts a case study method on questioning and addressing the Hong Kong identity problem. It is argued that among the many understandings of the Hong Kong identity, civic identity and ethnic identity are the two core parts in understanding the Hong Kong identity. To demonstrate my proposal, I first draw ideas from the two models of nationalism raised by Hans Kohn and Anthony D. Smith as theoretical framework for my argument. Then, I study the recent case of Anti-Moral and National Education Movement and analyze the speeches, texts, slogans and interview answers of the organizer Scholarism. From these materials and answers that I acquire, it is quite clear that the movement itself indeed demonstrate my proposal that the organizers and participants, who are Hong Kong citizens, embrace and attach to two types of identities. On one hand, they oppose the implementation of the curriculum; because it adopts the Eastern model of Nationalism, namely manipulate people’s emotions towards race, history, languages, and cultural roots of a nation to enhance their national identification. But such model and belief violate the core values of Hong Kong people, which also represent the other face of the Hong Kong identity – civil values. Through the resistance, statement, motive and comments of the movement, we can find that Hong Kong people emphasize rationality and democratic values. Such belief fit into the model of Western Nationalism since a nation is bind together by these values rather than ethnic
elements. However, in the case of Hong Kong people, it seems that ethnic elements also constitute to the core foundation of their identity because they also approve Chinese customs and connections to be attached in their identity. This is shown by some statements of the movement and also the identification of the three members of Scholarism.

On the way of searching this two faces of Hong Kong identity, more information are involved in the discussion. Firstly, it certainly depicts the role of historical changes and experience played in the formation of Hong Kong identity, including the colonial history of Hong Kong, the Handover, the transition of Hong Kong to a SAR under China, the Basic Law and recent attempts on integrating Hong Kong made by China. These changes created a boundary in separating Hong Kong and mainland China; and the main difference is marked by the belief in civic values and semi-democratic system of Hong Kong, in contrast with the authoritarian regime in mainland China. Thus, the discussion on Hong Kong identity also reflects the Hong Kong/mainland relations in many aspects. Apart from that, this research only focuses on the fundamental construction of the Hong Kong identity. Many other layers of the Hong Kong identity are not included in the discussion. And that requires possibly more case studies or other form of studies to locate other components such as race and popular culture, so that a complete and complex picture of Hong Kong identity is shown. After all, we can agree that Hong Kong identity is unique but worth studying because it provides many insights and ideas for a different version and understanding on identity in general. It also suggests there is possibly an alternative form of nation-state existing in the world, and the values that glue its people together maybe more complicated can the current explanation in studies of nationalism can provide. And these possibilities, shall guide the people of Hong Kong to a better, optimistic future.
VII. Appendix 1

1) The government secretly forced school to accept the curriculum by different means

2) The government sponsored half a billion in total to ‘seduce’ schools to open the subject

3) Consultation process was not transparent

4) Neglect other ethnic groups

5) Control the thoughts of students (‘brain-wash’)

6) Emphasize national education while the original moral & civil education already covered the topic.

7) Teachers are not confident about teaching the subject

8) HKU Surveys suggest over 60% of the interviewees request withdraw

9) Vague and unclear guidelines

10) CCP member involved in drafting the guideline and teaching material, which goes against academic autonomy

(Anti-Brain-washing leaflets, given by Scholarism)
Appendix 2

Interview Questions

1) In your opinion, what was the Anti-National Education movement about?
   - Follow up questions: What does it mean to you? Why being a part of the protest?

2) Scholarism mentioned “Core values of Hong Kong” in some of your statements, what are the “Core values of Hong Kong” in your opinion?

3) What are Hong Kongers/Hong Kong people? Or how to you define Hong Kongers?
   Follow up questions: What makes you say that? Any other thoughts?

4) What is your opinion on the statement “There is identity crisis among Hong Kongers”?

(Photo taken by author)
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