



**Identity, civic engagement, and learning about citizenship:
university students' experience in Hong Kong**

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Abstract

This article aims to provide an interpretative illustration of Hong Kong (HK) university students' notions of citizenship and relevant learning experience before and after the Umbrella Movement. It draws findings from two surveys conducted in 2013-14 and 2016-17. The former survey reveals that HK university students' ideas about citizenship are mainly associated with their lived reality and visceral sense of local belonging. They aspired to social movement as the site for learning and exercising citizenship. However, findings of latest survey show that students' sense of HK pride, identity, attachment and interest in voting are in decline. According to interviews with students, such changes are partially due to their feeling of political exclusion and disappointment, and partially due to young people's unpreparedness to make informed decisions or judgement in the public sphere. The paper concludes by discussing in what way students' experiences mirror the features of citizenship education in HK education system, and the implications for the civic role of higher education in the comparative contexts of democratic and non-democratic polities.

Keywords: Identity; civic engagement; citizenship; higher education; university students; Hong Kong

Introduction

In September 2014, Hong Kong (HK) university students made global headlines, as classroom boycotts protesting Beijing's efforts to screen and control HK's electoral system mushroomed into a massive, leaderless civil disobedience – the Umbrella Movement, so-called for its use of umbrellas as shields against tear gas (BBC News 2014; The Guardian 2014). In the largest anti-government protest in HK since its 1997 handover to the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Movement demanded true democracy and a 'referendum' of HK's relationship with China (Ng 2016, p. 11). The protest sites were dismantled by police after 79 days.

Since then, aside from commentaries about the movement's political implications for the future of democracy in HK within the PRC authoritarian regime, a number of scholarly

works has sought to understand the impact of the social movement on HK young people's ideas of citizenship. The Movement is widely regarded as civic awakening, in terms of raising the political awareness among young people, learning about political literacy such as civil disobedience, feeling social empowerment, cooperation, and the affirmation of one's identity as a Hongkonger rather than a citizen of China (Umbrella Movement Participant Record Group 2014; Lee 2015; Ng 2016). Jackson (2016) regards that the movement reflects HK young people's desires to engage democratically in political processes outside the control of educators and other adults. Lau (2017) is optimistic that the Movement has exemplified a kind of action civics, suggesting an experiential approach to civic education that might encourage more authentic participation. Considering the wide use of information and communication technologies among the participants, the movement is also regarded as giving birth to an active civic tech community devoted to empower democracy in HK (Jacomet 2017).

Despite heated discussions, extant literature and commentaries do not explore or explain a number of phenomena I have observed from two surveys on HK university students' perception of citizenship. The first survey was conducted prior to the Movement (between March 2013 and May 2014). It reveals that HK university students' ideas about citizenship are mainly associated with their lived reality and visceral sense of local belonging. They aspired to social movement as the site for learning and exercising citizenship. The second survey was conducted two years after the Movement (between October 2016 and March 2017). Findings show students' decreased affection towards HK identity and declined belief in voting as a core component of good citizenship. According to interviews with students, such changes are partially due to the feeling of political exclusion and disappointment, and partially due to young people's unpreparedness to make informed decisions or judgement in the public sphere.

This paper provides an interpretative illustration of these findings. The rest of the paper will first set out its theoretical lenses and methodological consideration. Then results from the two surveys will be presented and compared. The paper concludes by discussing in what way students' experiences mirror the features of citizenship education in HK education system, and the implication for citizenship culture in HK higher education in the post-Movement era.

Theoretical lenses: citizenship and higher education

The concept of 'citizen' was resurrected in the context of the French Revolution, which transformed France into a democratic and secular society with freedom of religion, civil rights, and political equality for all citizens (Hunt 1996). 'Citizenship' is a contested concept, subject

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3 to contextual and temporal variations (Cogan *et al.* 2002). This paper focuses on three aspects
4 of citizenship: the ‘political’ aspect of citizenship defining membership in a territorially-
5 defined political entity (commonly a nation-state) with legal rights and responsibilities thereby
6 (Marshall & Bottomore 1992); the ‘identity’ aspect of citizenship defining individuals’
7 loyalties to and identifications with the places and communities in which they have lived (Osler
8 & Starkey 2003); and the ‘civic’ aspect of citizenship defining the actions of civil society,
9 political and civic participation, and interest and involvement in public affairs (Heater 1999;
10 Harriger & McMillan 2007; Fletcher 2015). The articulation of the three aspects of citizenship
11 is well illustrated by Painter (1998, p. 4), who explained ‘[I]legal rights...while essential, are
12 not sufficient. Identification with an imagined community also underwrites a further aspect of
13 citizenship, namely citizenship as active participation in society. Citizens will be more likely
14 to contribute to society in a variety of ways and to participate in its political processes if they
15 have an emotional identification with the wider community.’

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27 In particular, the notion of citizenship specifically suggests a societal role for the
28 individual as a participant/actor, rather than observer (Fletcher 2015). Therefore, education
29 for democratic citizenship emphasizes on civic engagement, which means ‘working to make a
30 difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge,
31 skills, values and motivation to make that difference’; it is also a political platform ‘promoting
32 the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes’ (Ehrlich
33 2000, p. vi)

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40 This paper draws empirical findings to reflect on the theoretical lenses of citizenship.
41 Previous empirical studies have demonstrated the gap between formal recognition of
42 citizenship rights and the reality of unequal access in institutions (Jenson & Papillon 2001).
43 Studying into the genealogies that describe citizenship as alterity in cities, Isin (1997, 2002)
44 provides insightful understandings of how the concept represents the images conveyed by
45 history’s victors, and how the fiction of the unified city serves the interests of dominant groups
46 by suppressing or excluding other characters. In the light of these inspiring works, I researched
47 into citizenship as a complex of political pursuit, identity, and civic engagement in the context
48 of higher education.

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60 The need to rethink about the role of higher education in fostering citizenship has
received much attention in scholarly discourses and education policymaking since the 1990s.
One of the driving forces of this research flourish is the trend of disengagement from civic and

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3 political process particularly amongst young people in Western democracies. In the United
4 States, Europe, and Australia, for example, youth participation in community and public affairs
5 has markedly declined (Council of Europe 1999; Curris 2003; Joint Standing Committee on
6 Electoral Matters 2007). Not only that youth who are eligible to vote in national elections tend
7 to do so less frequently than older generations, youth's direct engagement in politics and
8 government has fallen steadily and sharply over the recent decades, despite the fact that average
9 levels of education – the best individual level predictor of political participation – have risen
10 sharply throughout this period (Putnam 1995, 2000).

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Researches attribute young people's civic inaction to various factors. They mainly
include that: [1] the young people considered politics as unappealing, rough, and irrelevant to
their lives; [2] they were dissatisfied with the working of government; [3] they didn't have
successful experience of making any impact on the political system; and [4] their lifestyles
focus on self-interest rather than public affairs (Bennet & Wells 2009; Youth Civic Leaders
Summit 2012). It is noticed that university students are in general disinterested in conventional
forms of democratic politics and civic engagement (e.g., voting, volunteering, keeping
informed about public affairs and politics), but are rerouting engagement towards new forms
of public life, such as lifestyle politics and online activism (Sanford 2012; McCormack *et al.*
2015).

European and American researchers opined to rebuild the social function of
'universities as a site of citizenship' for improving democratic governance, because the future
of democracy depends on each new generation developing the skills, values and habits of
political participation (Council of Europe 1999; Curris 2003). In both established and
relatively new democracies (e.g., the US, the UK, Australian, and Ethiopia), a trendy higher
education policy is including citizenship-related ideas within university official mission
statements, and adding new forms of civic engagement (e.g., community-based service
learning) as a component of education programmes (Tafes & Desta 2014; Sklad *et al.* 2015).
Still, how to address the apparent civic disengagement of young people in public sphere, and
to nurture young people's preferences for more 'direct' and daily forms of civic engagement,
are pedagogical tasks facing universities and schools (Youth Civic Leaders Summit 2012;
Manning & Edwards 2013).

Extant studies mainly draw on Western accounts of higher education and academic
values, focusing on higher education's civic mission to democratic society at large. They do
not consider youth's civic engagement and citizenship ideas in non-democratic contexts,

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3 however. With specific reference to Hong Kong, this article addresses this under-researched
4 area. Hong Kong, a British colony since 1841, was returned, in 1997, to under the PRC
5 sovereignty. The handover changed Hong Kong's political status from that of a dependent UK
6 polity, to a Special Administrative Region (SAR) under the PRC's 'One Country, Two Systems'
7 principle, which promises Hong Kong's capitalist system and way of life would remain
8 unchanged for 50 years, despite the PRC's socialist nature.
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14 Although many former British colonies achieved independence and nation-state status,
15 the 1997 handover merely changed the territory's political dependency; Hong Kong has never
16 enjoyed independent political status as a democratic nation state, and its citizenship education
17 has emphasized identity over political equality (Ku & Pun 2004). Unlike their counterparties
18 in Western established democracies, Hong Kong youth aspired for democracy in the absence
19 thereof, both in course contents and in HK society (Lee 2003). For local Hongkongers, the
20 identity aspect of citizenship is intertwined with the city's historical legacy of British
21 colonization, its geopolitical and cultural ties to mainland China, its transfer from British to
22 Chinese sovereignty, and its residents' resulting ambivalent citizenship (Tu 1991; Vickers
23 2003).
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32 Various public surveys (e.g., Hong Kong Transition Project 2014; HKU POP 2016)
33 have found young Hongkongers developed a stronger sense of local identity in post-1997. The
34 statistic results do not explain the factors influencing HK youth's identity formation and ideas
35 of citizenship. Researches (e.g., Morris & Vickers 2015) suggest that HK youth's political
36 participation mirrors HK citizens' epic journey in pursuit of democracy and civil rights. Most
37 longitudinal researches on HK youth's identity and civic participation focus on school levels
38 (e.g., Lee 2003; Leung 2006), and little is known about HK university students' experiences.
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45 In recent years, HK university students have become active in civic engagement and
46 political activities. This is evidenced by their involvement in recent social events such as the
47 protest against the construction of a high-speed rail link in Hong Kong, the struggle for
48 installing the 'statue of liberty' on the campus of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the
49 formation of the Tertiary 2012 Platform in the election campaigns called the Five District
50 Referendum Movement in Hong Kong, the protests that forced HK government's withdrawal
51 of the proposed 'Moral and National Education', and the Umbrella Movement. Students have
52 made the headlines of local and global media (e.g., South China Morning Post 2012; BBC
53 News 2014; The Guardian 2014), yet scholarly research into their citizenship learning
54 experience thereof is lacking. Citizenship and education are not the sole purview of academics;
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3 educational research should welcome the wide variety of experiences learners bring to their
4 education. This paper aims to fill in this research vacuum. It focuses on students' notions of
5 citizenship and relevant learning experience before and after the Umbrella Movement.
6 Analysis draws findings from two surveys conducted in 2013-14 and 2016-17. Before the
7 results are presented, it is important to explain the research methods used and procedures.
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13 14 **Research methods**

15 *Design of questionnaire*

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18 Questionnaire survey is an appropriate approach to investigate the general patterns of students'
19 perceptions, views, and intentions when evaluating citizenship ideas (Schulz 2009). The
20 questionnaire comprises three sections. A demographics section makes up the six independent
21 variables in the study – gender, age, institutional affiliation, discipline area, birthplace, passport
22 type, and length of residence in Hong Kong. The remaining two sections comprise three major
23 questions. The first asked what attributes a good citizen should possess, with a list of
24 behaviours or qualities characterized 'good citizenship' relating to three dimensions of the
25 concept, i.e., right, identity, and participation (Heater 1999). Some questions items were
26 adapted from the International Civic and Citizenship Study (2009-2011).
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34 The second question asked how strongly students identified themselves as citizens of
35 HK, PRC, and the world, with a list of related statements to which students were asked to
36 indicate the strength of their agreement or disagreement. The statements specify cognitive,
37 affective, participative characteristics of citizens in the contexts of HK, PRC, and global, given
38 that one's knowledge and feelings about political objects, as well as participation in particular
39 sociopolitical contexts, reflect how strongly citizens viewed themselves as members of their
40 political systems (Almond & Verba 1963). Reference was made to empirical studies of
41 citizenship ideas involving school students in HK and other PRC cities (Law & Ng 2009; Pan
42 2011). Wordings were modified to suit undergraduates.
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50 The third question asked students' participation in various forms of civic engagement,
51 with a list of items specifying three forms civic activities on/off university campus: academic
52 activities (e.g., courses, seminars, and workshops), conventional civic activities (e.g.,
53 participation in election and political membership), and non-conventional civic activities (e.g.,
54 internship and community service). Constructs made reference to relevant Western studies
55 (e.g., Osler & Starkey 2003; Chi *et al.* 2006) investigating university students' citizenship
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3 development. The survey questions showed high internal reliability (Cronbach's Alpha =.943).
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6 Respondents were asked to assess on the scale 1-4 the measure of their agreement or
7 disagreement with the schedule of items. Strong agreement was represented by 4 through to
8 strong disagreement represented by 1. SPSS software was used to analyze questionnaire data.
9 Calculated order of mean scores of each of the items, which corresponds closely with the
10 combined percentages agreeing with the statements, denotes respondents' views on relative
11 importance of various characteristics associated with citizenship at local, national and global
12 levels. Independent-samples T-test compared students' responses to their demographic
13 characteristics, showing how students' perceptions differ by sub-group.
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22 ***Sampling and procedure***

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24 Due to their length and the difficulties associated with random sampling, the questionnaires
25 were administered to convenience samples. Participants were recruited through the researchers'
26 connections to HK's institutions of higher learning, and through teacher colleagues willing to
27 distribute questionnaires in classes, residential halls, or to students in different subject areas.
28 As most citizenship-related courses target undergraduates, undergraduate volunteers were
29 asked to participate.
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35 In 2013-14 survey, 2,601 questionnaires were distributed; 1,389 were returned
36 (53.40%), with 1,145 (82.43%) being complete and effective. In 2016-17 survey, due to the
37 sensitivity of the research topic and the difficulties to get students' consent to participate, the
38 sample size was relatively smaller. 400 questionnaires were distributed, with 301 (75%)
39 returned, being complete and effective. Quantitative data collected from the two surveys were
40 compared, to identify possible changes in students' perceptions of citizenship. Since the two
41 phases of survey contain different sample sizes, Welch's Test for Unequal Variances was used
42 as an analytical tool to compare the statistical data generated from two surveys. The confidence
43 interval is set at 0.95.
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52 ***Interviews***

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54 After comparing statistical results from the two surveys, semi-interviews were conducted to
55 investigate the possible factors that have affected students' changing attitudes towards HK
56 identity and civic participation. 33 individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with
57 voluntary participants who indicated interest to talk about the issue based on their previous
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3 experience of civic engagement. They came from diverse discipline areas (including Natural
4 Sciences, Engineering & Technologies, Social Sciences, etc.).

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6 Interviewees were asked to describe their civil participation, and how such experience
7 affected their citizenship knowledge/behavior, and identification as a citizen of Hong Kong.
8 Content and context analyses (Cohen *et al.* 2007) delineated and clustered the meanings of
9 citizenship expressed by the interviewees. Analysis of the interview data generated key
10 themes that enrich, and possibly explain, the patterns emerged from the statistical analysis.
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19 **2013-14 survey results**

20 ***Hong Kong-focused political right***

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22 Table 1 shows students' responses to statements regarding the attributes of a good citizen in
23 the local, national and global communities. According to the order of mean scores, students
24 held high regard to participation in local election (M=3.36). More than 90% of the respondents
25 highly valued the right and responsibility to vote in local elections. They were proud of being
26 a Hongkonger (M=3.13). They liked living in HK more than elsewhere and tended to disagree
27 that they preferred living permanently in cities other than HK (M=2.38, with 2 representing
28 'disagree'). Analysis suggests that student's sense of HK identity was closely related to their
29 aspiration for HK-based political participation and strong sense of local belongingness.
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37 Independent-samples T-test compared students' responses to their demographic
38 characteristics, and showed students' responses significantly differed by the length of residence
39 in HK. Comparing with more recent residents, longer-term residents in HK for four or more
40 years (mainly local students) more highly regarded exercising political rights and
41 responsibilities as HK citizens (e.g., voting) and defending HK's policies against outside
42 influence; but they were less interested in China's policies or participation in international
43 affairs, suggesting local students' perception of citizenship were mainly HK-focused.
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55 ***Affective-oriented Hong Kong identity***

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57 Survey students showed strong affective orientation towards HK identity. They gave
58 significantly higher ratings to all items relating to their love for, pride in, and belonging to HK,
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3 and much lower ratings for all national identity items. They were more negative about local
4 and national governments' performance, suggesting greater expectations of governments'
5 accountability. Still they were emphatic about HK's superiority, and strongly rejected living
6 permanently elsewhere, suggesting that local students' strong sense of HK identity.
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10 More recent residents (mainly non-local Mainland Chinese students) gave more positive
11 responses to items on national love, pride and belongingness (mean scores > 3.0). Nevertheless,
12 all respondents held negative views (mean scores <2.5) on China's stand in the world. Only
13 23% of respondents saw China as a better country than most other countries in the world, whilst
14 over 60% reporting that they preferred to live permanently elsewhere than Mainland China.
15 Survey findings lent itself to a clear local-national identity divide, which simultaneously reflect
16 HK students' visceral sense of local belonging and political discontent with national
17 governance. Comparing with more recent residents, longer-term residents were more certain
18 of what being a HK citizen meant, and more doubtful whether they clearly knew what it meant
19 to be a PRC citizen (see Table 2).
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30 [Table 2 here]
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33 *Aspired-to civic participation*

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35 As shown in Table 3, longer-term residents rated lower items claiming citizenship curricula
36 and activities facilitated understanding governance and political system, suggesting their
37 higher expectations of learning political literacy; also they showed lower interest in curriculum-
38 based citizenship learning, but higher involvement in conventional forms of civic engagement,
39 e.g., votes in election and acting in communities.
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Students' preference for civic engagement may be related to contextual factors. During
the survey period, the Occupy Central movement outbreak in September, 2014, involved tens
of thousands of Hong Kong people, including university students, responding to Beijing's
refusal to adopt 'international standards in relation to universal suffrage' in the scheduled 2017
election of Hong Kong's Chief Executive (The Guardian 2014). The movement evolved into
the Umbrella Movement after riot police fired tear gas. (For details, see Chan 2014a). The

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3 events gave students an authentic political participation experience, and jolted them out of their
4 political complaisance.
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10 **2016-17 survey results**

11 *Changing attitudes towards HK identity and civic participation*

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13 Results of the 2016-17 survey were used to compare with those of the 2013-14 survey, to
14 identify changes in students' perception of being a HK citizen (as seen in Table 4). Using
15 Welch's Test for Unequal Variances for statistical comparison, analysis identified three items
16 showing HK youth's changing attitudes towards HK identity and civic engagement. They
17 concern about [1] sense of pride for being a Hongkonger, [2] preference for living permanently
18 in HK, and [3] the interest to vote in local elections.
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27 [Table 4 here]
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31 As shown in Table 5, the results of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances regarding
32 the three items show $p < 0.001$, which suggest that variance between the two surveys' results
33 are not equal, allowing to row 'Equal variances not assumed' in the Welch Test. The Welch
34 Test results for the three items show $p < 0.001$, thus we can reject the null hypothesis and
35 confirm three changing patterns. Comparing with participants of the 2013-14 survey,
36 participants of 2016-17 survey showed declined sense of HK identity, as indicated on [1] lower
37 sense of pride for being a Hongkonger; [2] less rejection to consider living elsewhere other
38 than HK, and [3] declined belief in voting as a core component of good citizenship.
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50 *Political exclusion*

51 Interviews provided possible explanations for these changes. Students' declined sense of HK
52 identity could be related to the city's political image. In the interviews, students explained that
53 their strong sense of Hong Kong identity was mainly related to Hong Kong being the place in
54 which they were born and raised, had established personal networks, and had accordingly
55 developed a strong emotional attachment to the place. In students' eyes, HK in the past was
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3 relatively a better place than elsewhere in China. This is mainly because, in addition to the
4 city's financial well-being, HK people used to enjoy relatively higher levels of political rights,
5 in terms of freedom to speak, publish, and assemble for the public goods. Students considered
6 political engagement as HK's privilege under the ruling of the PRC state. As a student
7 explained, the right to participate in political processes brings the hope for HK citizens to make
8 HK better place to live:
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15 The political movements in Hong Kong in the recent years have raised
16 Hong Kong people's social awareness about Hong Kong and developed a
17 stronger sense of citizenship, as people regardless of their political stances
18 have developed a stronger desire to help the society to achieve to a certain
19 state which they wish to see. (Interviewee #05)
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26 However, students felt excluded from the political processes, especially after the Umbrella
27 Movement. Two examples were given:
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30 The punishment to student leaders [of the Umbrella Movement] is the
31 signal that Hong Kong's legal system no longer gives privilege to youth
32 who break the law not for self-interest but for the public good ... The
33 prison sentence increases youth's life cost to take part in political protest.
34 (Interviewee #13)
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40 Most of our elected political representatives were disqualified from the
41 seats in LegCo [i.e., Legislative Council of HKSAR]... LegCo is now
42 dominated by the pro-Beijing parties ... young people is legally
43 depowered [in governance]. (Interviewee #20)
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50 *Unimproved liveability*

51 Students' feeling of political exclusion also affect their declined interest to live permanently in
52 HK. Students were dissatisfied with the performance of the Hong Kong government, but used
53 to think they had 'the opportunity to help improve governance through civic actions such as
54 protest march against injustice' (Interviewees #12). Students pointed out areas in which they
55 wanted HK to improve, including 'political reform and real democracy', 'reduce the disparity
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3 of wealth and income between rich and poor’, and ‘improve governance to lower the high
4 property price’ (Interviewees #02, 25, 33). These were major issues of concern raised by
5 interviewees when sharing the reasons why they were involved in political protests.
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9 Nevertheless, students saw their political engagement as helpless. As one of them
10 explained: ‘the voice we made was heard, but the problems remained unsolved’
11 (Interviewee#23). In general, interviewees did not think the HK government has satisfactorily
12 addressed its citizens’ views about livelihood issues. They gave examples of policy failure to
13 ‘lower the city’s unaffordable property price’, ‘improve living condition’, ‘change education
14 from ‘stuffing duck’ to encouraging creativity’, and ‘provide better welfare benefit to
15 employers and taxpayers’ (Interviewees # 07, 14, 28, 30). In students’ eyes, these long-lasting
16 problems had made HK less competitive in the world’s liveability ranking. Some interviewees
17 expressed outward-looking attitude about the preference for living in other cities such as
18 Singapore and Melbourne, because they had better impression of these cities’ living conditions,
19 political tolerance, and civic rights.
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29 ***Doubt about voting mechanism and civic capacity***

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31 According to interviewees, students continued to aspire the right to vote in political elections,
32 but they had hesitations to do so, mainly because of two reasons. The first relates to the lack
33 of trust to the political voting mechanism. One student who offered volunteering services in
34 the Legislative Council elections observed election manipulation:
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40 There are types of funding provided to pro-Beijing parties. They won
41 election by using funding to buy votes. There are voters who exchanged
42 votes for current economic interest. But the price they paid is their own
43 freedom to vote in the future. (Interviewee #19)
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48 Some other students shared similar concern, questioning the independence and fairness
49 in local election: ‘[t]o be fair, the voting process must provide equal treatment and opportunity
50 for all participants’; ‘if the voting procedures were materialistic and money-oriented, then the
51 election can be manipulated by the parties having the funding to buy votes’; as such, students
52 believed that their participation in local election ‘couldn’t bear any favourable effect’ on their
53 lives (Interviewees # 6, 19, 30).
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3 Second, apathy also appear to spring from students' doublet about their civic capacity to
4 make a proper vote. Some students recognized that 'voters should be well-informed and
5 rational', in order that 'voting can help protect voters benefit' (Interviewees #1, 16). However,
6 they did not feel that they had enough information at their disposal to make an informed
7 decision. Nor did they feel confident to understand the political matters. As two students
8 explained:
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15 I am very skeptical especially on political matters. I would rather not to
16 involve in politics before I have developed a firm stance on the issue. So
17 I may not be able to make a proper vote. (Interviewee #32)
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22 There are many parties fighting for seats in the Legislative Council. I do
23 not know much about all the parties and everything they are doing. What
24 if the person gets in and then maybe does not stick with some of the things
25 they have promised? (Interviewee #15)
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31 Some interviewees referred their hesitation to vote as the 'fear of regret'. They learned
32 lessons from their elected political representatives who won seats in Legislative Council but
33 failed to fulfil their election promises. They concluded that, without sufficient information or
34 comprehend understanding of the issues, 'you should not vote according to what they say, or
35 voting in a burst of impulsive action'; otherwise, 'you have to regret for making a wrong
36 decision' (Interviewees # 18, 31).
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45 **Discussions and conclusion**

46 Although not designed to capture students' Umbrella Movement-related thoughts and actions,
47 the two surveys' findings reflect pre- and post-protest dynamics, and have implications for HK
48 higher education. The 2013-14 survey found HK undergraduates (majority aged 18-22)
49 showed stronger local identity, weaker national identity, more interest in social movement, and
50 less avoidance of confrontational civic engagement than HK school students (aged 6-16) did
51 in a 1999 survey (Lee 2003), and that their affection towards China weakened the longer they
52 lived in HK.
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58 In comparison, participants of 2016-17 survey showed lower sense of pride for being a
59 Hongkonger, less rejection to consider living elsewhere other than Hong Kong, and declined
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3 belief in voting as a core component of good citizenship. According to the interviews the
4 changes appear to spring from a sense of powerlessness, and a feeling that ordinary citizens do
5 not have a positive impact on the workings of government. This is partially due to the city's
6 changing political landscape and legislative mechanism, and partially due to the lack of civic
7 capacity, in terms of ability to comprehend information, that is important for young citizens'
8 judgement in the public sphere and their influence on the decision-making processes. Results
9 of the study echo the findings of a recent opinion poll, showing that 'one out of three
10 Hongkongers would emigrate if they had the chance'; that 'the main factors responsible for
11 Hong Kong people wanting to move were dissatisfaction over political disputes and social
12 splits, as well as that of local living conditions'; and that 'the younger generation were more
13 eager to leave than the older generation, with 51 per cent of the age group between 18 and 30
14 saying they had considered emigrating' (Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies 2019, pp.
15 para. 1, 3, 8).

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17 It is important to note that student participants in these surveys were all brought up in
18 the post-1997 era, without experiencing a democratic system; their civic engagement can be
19 attributed to aspirations for political entitlements, rather than a reflection of the citizenship
20 education provided them in their formal schooling. Their experiences suggest that one's sense
21 of identity cannot be imposed, but may be 'thoroughly socially constructed' through social
22 transactions and interactions (Jenkins 1996, p. 20). HK students' experience of living in a free-
23 information society has better informed their sense of identities and citizenship ideals.

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25 The case of Hong Kong has three implications for the studies of citizenship and higher
26 education. First, it supplements the understanding of how three aspects of citizenship –
27 political rights, identity, and civic engagement – are correlated in a complex one. This paper
28 echoes Painter's (1998) view that citizens will be more likely to participate in the political
29 processes if they have an emotional identification with the community. And more important,
30 it is likely that political exclusion and disconnection from civic life would lead to citizens'
31 lower sense of identity, pride and attachment towards the community. Surveyed student's
32 attributed their declined sense of HK pride to various unsolved social issues concerning
33 liveability and political equality. Their increased preference for emigration resonates with
34 many young Hongkongers who are anxious, unhappy and leaving (Lee 2018; Hong Kong
35 Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies 2019). Likewise, turning away from political engagement
36 (e.g., vote) reflects on young Hongkongers' political ambition in decline - a symptom of HK
37 moving towards a 'Low Desire Society' (Ohmae 2018) resulted from its citizens' loss of
38 competence and confidence in the city's economic and political future (Mingpao Blog 2019).
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Second, empirical findings of this study reflect on educational barriers to young people's civic engagement and political pursuit for democracy. As seen, survey students' political pursuit could be hindered by their lack of capability to understand the political issues, or to comprehend diverse sources of information on the electoral process. The situation mirrors the features of citizenship education in HK education system. In HK schools, citizenship education emphasizes identity over political literacy. HK students have been expected to learn they are Chinese by nationality, not just ethnicity (Mathews *et al.* 2008). In HK universities, citizenship-related education is provided through common learning program emphasizing generic intellectual capabilities to learn values associated with broad civilizations and diverse human social needs (University Grants Committee 2012). Despite offering courses to foster undergraduates' 'global,' 'responsible,' and 'informed' citizenship capabilities, the underlying values are mainly to improve students' intellectual breadth and to become employable in a competitive global market economy (Cheung 2008; Chan 2014b).

Therefore, from school to university levels, citizenship education in HK is still largely de-politicized and democracy deficient (Kerr 2003, p. 10), but largely lacking in any nurturing of critical, democratic citizens prepared to engage actively in politics at any level. Like citizenship curricula at HK schools, which adopt the lexicon of nationalism and globalism in course contents (Lo 2007), citizenship-related courses and activities at university level are also decontextualized from the local polity. They did not resonate with students' civic engagement in local communities, which are the more authentic and real-life contexts informing students' ideas of citizenship. This calls for an injection of civic literacy into HK higher education, to scaffold citizenship education in the lived reality. This is a pedagogical approach for higher education to influence citizenship in an invigorating manner, by fostering democratic citizens who are morally and civically responsible members of a larger social fabric, having the civic capacity to 'considers social problems', 'make and justify informed moral and civic judgments', and 'take action when appropriate' (Ehrlich 2000, p. xxvi).

The third implication of the study provides an understanding of the citizenship-university relations in the comparative contexts of democratic and non-democratic polities. Western discourses on the civic role of higher education tend to encourage youths' civic engagement as a promising educational pedagogy, aiming to help university students acquire civic virtues and civic literacy important to for them to act as civic-minded professionals (Lisman 1998). Educators and administrators share the commitments to address young citizens' civic disengagement. Michael Jeffery, the 24th Governor-General of the

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3 Commonwealth of Australia, argues that civic disengagement is a symptom of a breakdown in
4 the democratic processes particularly amongst younger citizens, because the risky consequence
5 is the disconnection between politics and citizens; therefore education should find ways to
6 spark young people's civic engagement for improving governance in a robust democracy (Joint
7 Standing Committee on Electoral Matters 2007).
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12 In contrast, citizenship culture embedded in HK universities is torn between young
13 Hongkongers' preference for localism and government officials' nationalistic orientation. In
14 the post-Umbrella Movement era, localism has become popular amongst younger, highly-
15 educated Hongkongers who advocated the preservation of the city's autonomy, local culture,
16 and Hong Kong people's right to self-determination (Yuen 2015). On the other hand, the
17 Beijing and HK governments have replied by acting on citizenship education. Beijing's HK
18 Liaison Office (2017) urged HK's leading universities to improve their international profile,
19 cooperate with Mainland Chinese universities, and serve HK's economic development.
20 Officers also told local HK schools they should enhance moral and 'national citizenship'
21 education (*guomin jiaoyu*). Similarly, HK's Education Bureau (2016) extended class hours for
22 teaching the Basic Law, *i.e.*, the PRC's constitutional document defining HK's 'One Country,
23 Two Systems' relationship with China, and its citizens' duties and responsibilities.
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33 These phenomena reflect the official intention to educate young Hongkongers as law-
34 abiding, economically-contributing national citizens. The official imperative imparted identity
35 and employability as key attributes for citizens. It reflects the PRC's tradition of charging
36 citizenship education, from school to university levels, with safeguarding loyalty, promoting
37 nationalistic identity, and acceptance of state hegemony (Fairbrother 2008; Sung 2017). Such
38 approach to citizenship education reflects the 19th century nationalistic education, which
39 Marxism views as 'ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it
40 subjugates' (Eagleton 1991, p. 112).
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47 It must be asked, what makes citizenship education in higher education sectors a 'higher'
48 learning experience? Macfarlane (2014) argues that truly 'higher' study demands critical
49 thinking, not simply emotional performativity that expects students to show undiluted
50 identification for political orthodoxies claiming 'national identity' or vogueish value positions
51 invoking 'global citizenship'. Relating this to HK, university citizenship curricula should
52 move beyond skill-based, identity-oriented education, to develop 'critical citizenry'. To that
53 end, efforts might be better focused on 'equipping students to understand what political
54 questions are, and why they are often contested, and to prepare them to become, as far as
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possible, active participants in such debates – at every level from school and local community to the national and even the global’ (Beck 2011, p. 13). It remains unseen how HK universities will manage to develop critical citizenry in response to local identity, national obligations, and global imperatives. This would rely on academia’s judgment of the university’s integrity and civic responsibilities to HK society in the new national and global contexts at large.

To conclude, this article sheds light on the organic relationship between political pursuit, identity, and civic engagement as the constructs of citizenship education at the level of higher education. From the above-mentioned research findings, it is crystal clear that HK youths are increasingly disengaged and disaffected in their sense of local belongingness because of the lack of actual platforms for political participation and civic engagement, through which they can influence the government policies and make a difference in the society in which they grow and live. What is urgently needed now is not only the civic literacy, skills and competency to be imparted to the youths through various modes of civic education that are government initiated, top-down, formal, state-focused, and instructive. Instead, education for citizenship should be more participant-oriented, process-oriented, democratic, inclusive, and right-based in order to enable and empower the citizens in social reconciliation and reconsolidation through consultation, communication and dialogues. In fact, it is difficult to construct identity and promote the sense of belonging without making the people seen and their voices heard through the processes of civic participation. In addition to promoting global and national citizenship, it is also pertinent for the government and various stakeholders to rethink how they can be aligned/articulated with and built on the local identity and citizenship so that a better balance or mix among the three components can be made in a complementary, but not a conflicting or competing way.

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For Peer Review Only

Table 1 Students' Views on Attributes of a Good Citizen

<i>A good adult citizen is one who</i>	Longer-term residents			Recent residents			t	df	Mean Difference	Total		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N				Mean	% of agree and strongly agree	
<i>Political participation</i>												
Votes in local election	3.37	0.593	1175	3.26	0.632	176	2.304*	1349	0.111	3.36	93.7	
Votes in national election	3.22	0.657	1175	3.23	0.645	176	-0.049	1349	-0.003	3.22	87.7	
Give views to international agencies	3.09	0.558	1172	3.16	0.587	176	-1.650	225.24	-0.078	3.10	87.9	
<i>Legal obligation</i>												
Obeys the laws	3.40	0.622	1175	3.39	0.660	175	0.163	1348	0.008	3.40	92.2	
<i>Socio-economic-related responsibility</i>												
Seeks to reduce income inequality in												
Hong Kong	3.29	0.669	1174	3.29	0.685	176	-0.034	1348	-0.002	3.29	89.2	
China	3.20	0.707	1171	3.28	0.684	176	-1.390	1345	-0.079	3.22	85.7	
The world	3.18	0.690	1173	3.20	0.701	176	-0.263	1347	-0.015	3.18	85.3	
<i>Civil action</i>												
Prevents other places from influencing												
Hong Kong's policies	2.95	0.676	1172	2.67	0.818	175	4.216***	211.02	0.274	2.91	72.9	
China's policies	2.55	0.697	1167	2.87	0.765	174	-5.234***	218.01	-0.322	2.59	55.5	
Participates in international activities that benefit people in the world	3.15	0.574	1173	3.30	0.608	176	-3.068**	224.37	-0.150	3.17	89.7	

Scaling: 4 = Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

Table 2 Students' Perceptions of HK and China Identities

Statement	Longer-term residents			Recent residents			t	df	Mean Difference	Total		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N				Mean	% of agree and strongly agree	
<i>Cognitive perception</i>												
I have a clear understanding of what it means to be a citizen of ...												
Hong Kong	3.00	0.521	1177	2.78	0.685	178	4.214***	209.08	0.226	2.97	85.1	
China	2.58	0.671	1171	2.77	0.721	177	-3.463**	1346	-0.189	2.60	57.7	
<i>Affective attitude</i>												
I feel I am part of...												
Hong Kong	3.17	0.696	1175	2.35	0.786	176	12.990***	218.05	0.814	3.05	77.4	
China	2.34	0.816	1175	3.12	0.868	177	-11.728***	1350	-0.778	2.44	44.7	
I have great love for												
Hong Kong	3.01	0.642	1176	2.63	0.686	178	6.768***	226.43	0.370	2.95	78.5	
China	2.32	0.761	1174	3.11	0.714	177	-13.589***	240.35	-0.789	2.43	46.1	
I am proud of my ... identity												
Local (Hong Kong)	3.18	0.616	1175	2.82	0.697	173	7.094***	1346	0.362	3.13	87.3	
National (China)	2.47	0.744	1172	3.17	0.729	176	-11.829***	233.24	-0.699	2.57	54.4	
<i>Evaluative attitude</i>												
I am satisfied with the ... government's performance over the last five years												
Hong Kong	2.14	0.760	1171	2.62	0.684	175	-7.769***	1344	-0.473	2.20	34.6	
Chinese	2.07	0.769	1176	2.69	0.715	177	-10.015***	1351	-0.615	2.16	33.0	
Generally speaking, ...												
Hong Kong is a better city than most other cities in China	3.47	0.616	1178	2.55	0.845	177	13.819***	205.05	0.912	3.34	89.1	
China is a better country than most other countries in the world	1.96	0.728	1175	2.44	0.801	174	-7.437***	217.49	-0.478	2.03	23.0	
I'd prefer to live permanently in another place other than												
Hong Kong	2.32	0.766	996	2.76	0.718	151	-6.712***	1145	-0.445	2.38	35.2	
Mainland China	2.77	0.816	1177	2.44	0.865	177	4.950***	1352	0.328	2.73	60.3	

Scaling: 4 = Strongly Agree; 1=Strongly Disagree

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

Table 3 Students' Preferred Sites of Learning about Citizenship

Statements	Longer-term residents			Recent residents			t	df	Mean difference	Total		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N				Mean	% of agree and strongly agree	
<i>I often took part in the following activities</i>												
Providing service at NGO	2.35	0.810	1168	2.17	0.798	174	2.859**	1340	0.188	2.33	37.4	
Vote in election	2.52	1.000	1170	1.72	0.877	174	10.993***	244.88	0.799	2.41	46.0	
Organizing community service	2.29	0.890	1168	1.93	0.844	175	5.313***	235.72	0.366	2.24	37.0	
Following local political and current events on mass media	2.62	0.841	996	2.46	0.806	151	2.175*	1145	0.159	2.60	46.1	
Attending courses/seminars about China studies	2.12	0.819	1170	2.35	0.808	175	-3.506***	1343	-0.232	2.15	30.8	
Attending courses/seminars about Global studies	2.23	0.820	1169	2.42	0.811	175	-2.780**	1342	-0.184	2.25	35.4	
<i>University courses and activities help improve</i>												
My understanding of the social development of China	2.47	0.781	1171	2.64	0.783	174	-2.569*	1343	-0.163	2.49	46.8	
My caring for China	2.46	0.774	1169	2.64	0.767	175	-2.951**	1342	-0.185	2.48	47.2	
My understanding of the social development of the world	2.54	0.775	1169	2.69	0.734	174	-2.313*	1341	-0.145	2.56	52.2	
My caring for the world	2.62	0.783	1170	2.75	0.784	175	-1.990*	1343	-0.126	2.63	55.7	

Scaling: 4 = Strongly Agree/ Always/Very Much to; 1=Strongly Disagree/Not at all/Never. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

Table 4 Students' Changing Attitudes towards HK Identity and Civic Participation

Group Statistics					
Statements	Year	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I am proud of my local (i.e. Hong Kong) identity	2013-14	1373	3.13	.642	.017
	2016-17	301	2.98	.583	.034
I would prefer to live permanently in another city other than Hong Kong	2013-14	1169	2.38	.773	.023
	2016-17	301	2.58	.885	.051
A Good citizen should... Votes in local election (when the opportunity is provided to do so)	2013-14	1368	3.36	.597	.016
	2016-17	301	3.10	.695	.040

Table 5 Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
I am proud of my local (i.e. Hong Kong) identity	Equal variances assumed	15.193	.000	3.722	1672	.000	.150	.040	.071	.228
	Equal variances not assumed			3.958	473.365	.000	.150	.038	.075	.224
I would prefer to live permanently in another city other than Hong Kong	Equal variances assumed	16.314	.000	-3.944	1468	.000	-.203	.052	-.304	-.102
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.641	425.142	.000	-.203	.056	-.313	-.094
A Good citizen should... Votes in local election (when the opportunity is provided to do so)	Equal variances assumed	3.862	.050	6.536	1667	.000	.256	.039	.179	.333
	Equal variances not assumed			5.933	403.005	.000	.256	.043	.171	.341