The Attitudes of Hong Kong’s Minoritized Communities to the Recent Social Movement and the Implications for Education

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Background and objectives

• Hong Kong (HK) experienced both peaceful and violent protests since June 2019 due to a proposed extradition bill which would have allowed transfer of suspected criminals to the jurisdictions including Mainland China, with which HK does not have an extradition arrangement. In the face of strong social movements, the bill was withdrawn.

• This paper investigates the attitudes of minoritized communities towards the social movements in HK where they constitute 8% of total population (Census and Statistics Department, 2017). The implications of their attitudes for citizenship education are also explored given that citizenship education emphasizes a need for integrating different perspectives together in meeting the challenges of today’s globalized world which is characterized by many tensions between freedom and order, diversity and uniformity, localization and globalization (Chung, 2019; Garcia, 1976; Lee, 2009).
Conceptual framework

• Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is concerned with the underlying ideologies in the use of language, which is relevant to examining the worldviews of the people. The key principles in CDA include discourse reflects and reproduces social relations, and ideologies are produced and reflected in discourse (Fairclough 2001, 2010).

• Following Fairclough’s (2001) framework of CDA, the current study deals with the level of lexical and grammatical choices. The linguistic traces depict participants’ attitudes and implicit ideology and the experiential and relational values at lexical and grammatical levels help to reveal a much clearer meanings implied in the discourse used (Mohammadi & Javadi, 2017).
Methodology and methods

• This qualitative research conducted in-depth interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994) with minoritised community leaders and individuals.

• A total of 25 interviewees including 13 minoritized community leaders and 12 individuals participated in the study. 13 are males and 12 are females.

• The participants represent five different minoritized ethnic groups including Filipinos (6), Pakistanis (5), Nepalese (5), Indians (5) and Bangladeshis (4).

• Professionally, the participants are from varieties of backgrounds including teacher, business person, journalist, NGO professional, student, domestic helper, social worker, business consultant, building management professional and marketing professional.

• Thematic analyses (Aronson, 1994) were used to analyse the interviews data.
Multiple views towards the protests

- Minoritized communities’ attitudes to the protests can be classified into three main broad groups – first, some supporting the protests; second, some holding a rather neutral attitude; third, a smaller number opposing the protests.

“In the beginning, it was just a social movement where people *gather peacefully*... people would gather really amazing atmosphere. People that protest again to get there. Right. And so, I would join that. I would be *happy.*” (Consultant of Pakistani heritage) (Supportive)

“I think it’s more the identity issue. I think Hong Kong people want to establish their unique status, what they used to have from historically.” (Educator of Nepalese heritage) (Neutral)

“We are not happy with protesters because it was really, you know interrupting...” (Community worker of Nepalese heritage) (Negative)
Participants’ changing attitudes

• The participants’ attitudes were not static and violent protests turned many originally supportive individuals to being opponents.

“I disagree with the violence, definitely I would never endorse violence, although I understand that some people might think it’s necessary...” (Journalist of Filipino heritage)
Intergenerational differences in attitudes

- Intergenerational differences in attitudes were found within the family and in the community. Generally, the younger generation was supportive to the protests, while the older generation was more conservative supporting cultural norms such as harmony and stability.

“The younger generation would be more supportive because they have been born and raised here. So, they would have more of an attachment. They would have friends who are participating in the protests. It’s easier for them to believe in what’s going on at the protesters side but like the elder generation, I think they would see this as unnecessary like disturbance caused. It’s two sides.” (Student of Bangladeshi heritage)
Implications for citizenship education

- The findings have implications for citizenship education as it is important for bringing together varieties of perspectives to deal with complex challenges and tensions of the globalized world (Chung, 2019; Garcia, 1976; Lee, 2009). Our findings suggest the following priorities for citizenship education:

  Students need to:

  - be supported to understand civic institutions such as elections, voting, legal protests etc. so that they can contribute actively to the development of democratic values through these institutions;
  - develop critical thinking skills that will enable them to engage with and understand conflicting points of view and make reasoned judgments about disagreement and contestations in the community;
  - be committed to civic values such as tolerance, respect for others’ opinions, constructive discussion and engagement etc.;
  - be aware of Hong Kong’s multicultural context and its implications for inclusive community development.
References


