The Water Movement: Waves in Media

by

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ABSTRACT

In 2019, Hong Kongers entered a battle against the Hong Kong and Chinese government for their democratic rights. I interviewed Hong Kongers living in Hong Kong or abroad to investigate how they interacted with social media during the current social movement. I further explored how their location may affect their collective identity, as well as their participation in the Water Movement, online and offline. All of my interviewees physically joined at least one movement-related event in Hong Kong. However, due to geographic location, my participants residing outside of Hong Kong did not have the opportunity to attend events as actively as those living in Hong Kong. This difference led to varying perceptions of their roles in the movement, as my interviewees abroad felt that they were not at the core of the movement despite similar levels of engagement as those in Hong Kong. Location did not seem to play a factor into how my participants engaged with virtual platforms as those living in Hong Kong and abroad utilized social media similarly as a tool for mobilization, information sharing, political expression, raising awareness, and news consumption. Studying social media during a time of social unrest shows how a controversial situation may be viewed through the perspective of its community members. Furthermore, investigating how geographic location influences collective identity, as well as virtual and physical participation, sheds light on how social movements may impact community members living outside of that community.

INTRODUCTION

"I am representing Hong Kong and I am sharing that responsibility to tell the world …

you can say that it is very local, but at the same time, it is very international in terms of

actually challenging the global values about democracy" (Ming 2020).

In 2019, Hong Kongers entered a battle against the Hong Kong and Chinese

government for their democratic rights. Although the protests are taking place in Hong

Kong, Hong Kongers all over the world are supporting the movement through online

platforms. I investigate the relationship between social movements, social media,

location, and collective identity, using Hong Kong's recent protests as a case study. This

thesis sheds light on how members of the Hong Kong community whether they are living

in Hong Kong or abroad utilize virtual platforms, specifically social media, as a tool to

further raise awareness about their political attitudes regarding the social movement.

Studying social media during a time of social unrest shows how a controversial situation

may be viewed through the perspective of its community members.

"Hong Konger" describes someone who was born in Hong Kong and/or currently

lives in Hong Kong. Hong Kongers have developed a unique identity separate from

mainland China due to its complex history. As a part of a trade agreement in 1898, Hong

Kong was given to Britain for 99 years until 1997 when it was handed back over to China

(Law 2017:803). The Sino-British Joint Declaration following the handover stated that

Hong Kong would function under Chinese sovereignty until 2047 in the "one country,

two systems" principle, giving Hong Kong a higher degree of autonomy than the

People's Republic of China (Law 2017:806). However, in 2014, Hong Kong citizens

poured into the city's streets to protest, when the National People's Congress declared

their resolution to implement strict restrictions on Hong Kong's political structure, threatening to take away Hong Kong's opportunity to develop as their own democracy (Law 2017:802). This protest calling for universal suffrage became known as the Umbrella Movement, as Hong Kongers used umbrellas to protect themselves from tear gas and pepper spray (Lee et al. 2015:356).

This fight for democracy continues today. On March 31, 2019, demonstrations began against a proposed extradition bill, which would allow Hong Kong criminals to be sent to mainland China for trial, putting the region's democratic rights in jeopardy. About 12,000 people showed up, which was one of the largest turnouts for a demonstration against the extradition bill up until that point (McLaughlin 2019). However, on June 9, 2019, estimated more than one million Hong Kong residents flooded the streets of the city demanding the withdrawal of the bill (Robles et al. 2019). Although this movement began because of the bill, it has now evolved into a larger pro-democracy movement (Shao 2019). The protestors have created a list of five demands: resignation of Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong; an external investigation into the police brutality; release of those arrested; greater democratic rights; and the withdrawal of the proposed Extradition bill (John 2019). Although the withdrawal of the bill has now been met, social movement supporters will not settle. The slogan goes, "Five demands, not one less" (Chan 2019). This current pro-democracy social movement has come to be known as the Water Movement, although many people still refer to it as the current movement as it is still ongoing. The name comes from Bruce Lee's famous phrase, "Be water, my friend". It serves as a reminder to Hong Kongers to be adaptable and mobile in this time of social unrest (Sala 2019).

This thesis looks at a social movement through the lens of members' social media interactions. Social media bridges gaps in time and space and provides a channel for reciprocal communication and connection. These functions serve an important role in a social movement, which requires quick circulation of information to a wide, diverse audience. I interviewed Hong Kongers living inside and outside of Hong Kong seeking to find out how their location may affect their collective identity, as well as their participation in the movement, online and offline. The questions driving this thesis are, how do Hong Kongers living inside and outside of Hong Kong use and engage with social media during the current social movement? How does their geographic location influence their collective identity and/or participation in the movement virtually or physically? To answer these questions, I provide a theoretical framework and a review of previous literature explaining concepts of collective identity, location, news outlets and the connection between social media and social movements. Next, I outline the qualitative methods I employed in order to answer my questions, as well as ethical concerns that arise due to the nature of my project. Then, I provide an analysis and discussion of the results based on the data I collected and theories I used. Finally, I discuss the limitations to my research, as well as recommendations for future studies.

My theoretical framework provides a lens to examine how social media and social movements are intertwined, relying heavily on two theories: network theory and collective identity theory. Network theory tackles the importance of our social networks in creating connections and distributing information. Castells (2004 and 2012) goes on to include how online resources have added to the strength of those social networks because virtual platforms can disrupt space and time, allowing people to instantly reach others all over the world. Collective identity outlines one's connection to a social movement through shared experiences, interests, or goals, explaining why people come together to participate.

Before describing these theories in detail, I will define two important concepts of my thesis: social movements and social media. Most definitions of social movements include the following aspects: "some degree of organization, some degree of temporal continuity, change-oriented goals, and at least some use of extrainstitutional forms of action to supplement more institutional forms of claims making" (McAdam and Snow 2010:1). Social movements generally describe a group's fight to alter, oppose, or undo a social and/or political change on a large systematic scale. However, rather than focusing on the details of social movements, I emphasize how members interact with the movement through social media. Sociologists have studied how social media has changed the diffusion of social movements due to its wide-reaching nature. Social media is "internet-based platforms that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content, usually using either mobile or web-based technologies" (Margetts et al. 2016:5). Although this definition encompasses many sites, such as YouTube, Reddit, and TikTok,

I will be focusing on social networking sites (SNSs): Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and Instagram. Rather than a one directional path of communication, SNSs focus on more of a mutual interaction between two or more parties, allowing for personal discussions.

Network Theory

In order to establish how online resources have become a prominent aspect of social movements, I frame my work in the theory of network society and networked social movement as theorized by Castells (2004 and 2012). First, giving an overview of network theory, Foust and Hoyt (2018) describe networks as focusing on arrangement rather than content. Network theory presumes two main points: (1) through social networks, information is going out to people of similar social status, forming smaller groups that come together to form a whole; (2) an important characteristic of networks is their ability to create, organize, and/or mobilize information (Foust and Hoyt 2018:43). These two aspects highlight a network's strength to mobilize individuals from a large, diverse group, raise awareness about issues going on, and call people to action. Network theory emphasizes the ways in which we interact with information through the utilization of our social circles.

Even though social networks have existed throughout history, with the advancements in technology, our world has become more interconnected, leading to what Castells terms, the network society. In his early work, *The Network Society*, Castells (2004) explains, "A network society is a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies", meaning our social organizations are structured around new technologies, through which we interpret and circulate information (3). This concept is explicitly

demonstrated in social media, which acts as a tool for reciprocal communication, sharing, and creation of ideas on a virtual platform to a wide audience. Network society theory helps frame how the widespread nature of social media would be beneficial in promoting social and political change. However, studies based on this theory are often "susceptible to a techno-bias, in which the sheer interconnection of people through Web 2.0 is 'enough' to indicate democratic potential or social change" (Foust and Hoyt 2018:44). Additionally, network theory may assume social media is simply a way to construct and develop networks, but these online networks also provide a way to promote solidarity (Foust and Hoyt 2018:44). However, networks and social media are not the only factors in influencing social movements. For example, physical participation, commitment of movement actors, and solidarity amongst the members also play key roles in the success of a social movement.

Next, I further frame my work in what Castells identifies as "networked social movements" within a network society. This describes the phenomenon that while social movements may occur on a local level in the form of protests and demonstrations, having an online presence allows them to reach a global scale, informing people all over the world (Castells 2012:222-223). Castells (2012) coins the term *space of autonomy* to describe the combination of taking up virtual and urban space. "The space of autonomy is the new spatial form of networked social movement" (Castells 2012:222). This concept explains that even though social movements are often associated with a specific place, they have also expanded to an international scale due to the wide-reaching nature of online resources.

Furthermore, creating and circulating information online demonstrates *timeless time*, which means that although events take place day to day, the message of the movement is carried into the future (Castells 2012:223). "They live in the moment in terms of their experience, and they project their time in the future of history-making in terms of their anticipation" (Castells 2012:223). The information exposed on virtual platforms, such as news sites and social media, remains online even after social movements end. Incorporating these terms help reduce the bias that online resources alone indicate potential social change. These concepts focus on how virtual platforms are able to magnify and expand the reach of a movement in a specific place.

Collective Identity

Castells' theoretical framework explains how digital networks are able to spread information, mobilize groups, and raise awareness over a large, diverse population. The theory of collective identity focuses on how social movement members that participate in those actions are connected, trying to push for social and/or political reform. Through an analysis of the concept of collective identity in modern social movement literature, Fominaya (2010) establishes that despite discrepancy among scholars about its importance and other details, the concept of collective identity is valuable in understanding social movements, their organization, and their mobilization. Collective identity theory stems from the idea that not all social movements can be predicted by class location because members are not necessarily trying to gain political and/or economic power to further their individual interests. Social movement actors "sought recognition for new identities and lifestyles" (Polletta and Jasper 2001:286). Collective identity can be defined as "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection

with a broader community, category, practice, or institution" (Polletta and Jasper 2001:285). Collective identity describes the perception of shared status or connection, whether it be thought or directly experienced. It acts separately from personal identity, although it may become part of that personal identity (Polletta and Jasper 2001:285). Collective identity connects an individual's thoughts and feelings about an issue to the larger movement around them.

The identity fostered in a social movement is not imposed by the government or any other political system; the actors have the ability to develop as their own characters (Polletta and Jasper 2001:286). However, the collective identity of a movement is defined by a certain set of requirements that members can recognize in themselves, as well as in other members (Melucci 2003:49). Boundaries, such as aesthetic and lifestyle requirements, create connections between movement actors, but they also act as exclusion tools, separating movement members and those who are not (Fominaya 2010:396). Although there are characteristics to outline what collective identity looks like, this collective identity is still fluid and flexible.

Many scholars have related collective identity to various concepts, such as goals, rituals, tactics, and interests, but Fominaya (2010) recognizes that collective identity cannot be reduced to any one of these things for various reasons. Although social movement supporters all interact with the movement in some way, they may form relationships with different audiences (Polletta and Jasper 2001:298). Actors also participate in the social movement in various ways. Some may be willing to break laws, while others strictly stay within legal boundaries (Polletta and Jasper 2001:293). "Actors do not necessarily have to be in complete agreement on ideologies, beliefs, interests or

goals in order to come together and generate collective action" (Fominaya 2010:395).

They may experience different interactions with other members and outsiders, participate

in the movement in varying degrees, and hold contrasting perspectives about certain

issues. "In sum, one cannot treat collective identity as a 'thing,' as the monolithic unity of

a subject; one must instead conceive it as a system of relations and representations"

(Melucci 2003:50). Despite differences, supporters are able to hold some degree of

collective identity to the movement.

Collective identity can be thought of as a product or a process. Collective identity

as a product defines similar characteristics, goals, and interests as a result of a movement,

while collective identity as a process refers to shared experiences and meanings through

the movement and interactions with other movement participants (Fominaya 2010:397).

Collective identity is created through both day-to-day activities and larger movement

events, such as demonstrations and protests. These events act as essential spaces for

fostering unity, solidarity, and loyalty, as well as reaffirming members' conception of

their identities, goals, and opposition (Fominaya 2010:398). Noting the environment in

which it is generated is also important because positive movement surroundings keep

members involved regardless of political results (Fominaya 2010:395). Collective

identity as a process frames how people develop their identities through interactions with

the movements and its actors.

Collective identity plays a vital role in social movements because it can be used to

"recruit members and supports, gain a public hearing, make alliances with other groups,

and defuse opposition" (Polletta and Jasper 2001:295). Often times, organizers of a

movement use collective identity to their advantage in social movements, encouraging

members to think of participation as a duty of the group. The idea of "us" must also be

framed in relation to injustices in order for participants distinguish themselves from the

opposition and bystanders (Polletta and Jasper 2001:292). The success of the movement

is determined by the commitment of the members over time, so this identity must be

maintained without repressing differences among the members (Polletta and Jasper

2001:292).

I draw parallels between the role of social media and collective identity in a social

movement. Similar to how Castells describes the ability of social media to disrupt space

and time of a social movement, Polletta and Jasper (2001) and Melucci (2003) talk about

how collective identity also creates permanence of the movement through time, as it has a

long-term effect on the institutional organizations and political structures in place.

Although network theory seems to move away from collective identity's notion of

importance of content by focusing on form, I argue that these two theories work in

tandem to address both how social movement mobilization works in the digital age and

why people participate in social movements.

Social Media in Hong Kong Movements

Even in 2014, social media acted as an important tool in influencing people about the Umbrella Movement. "Facebook and WhatsApp were among the major platforms for information distribution and opinion sharing among different groups of people regarding the various incidents related to the movement" (Lee et al. 2015:358). Social media not only helped bond people within Hong Kong, but Jenny Runnacles, a news reporter for Diplomatic Courier, explained that even though she was not in Hong Kong, social media helped her feel connected to the social movement (Runnacles 2014). She further expressed that traditional news outlets did not seem to be giving her the whole picture, so she often turned to Facebook to gather more perspectives and stories from Hong Kongers themselves. "Data showed that acquisition of political news through social media was related positively to support for the Umbrella Movement and adversely with satisfaction and trust of established political authorities" (Lee et al. 2015:357). Thinking about the importance of social media during the Umbrella Movement and the technological advancements in the past few years, the role of social media in the current social movement is important to study.

Unlike the 2014 Umbrella Movement, older platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, are being used to create more visually appealing campaign posters and images, as well as show picture and video evidence of police brutality (Shao 2019). Although there is a lot of surveillance on one's SNSs, users still hold freedom in choice of content, complex channels, and instant communication, making it hard for the government to fully monitor everything that goes on online (Lee et al 2015:371).

Additionally, in contrast to the 2014 Umbrella Movement, the Water Movement has no individuals or organizations claiming to lead the movement (Shao 2019). When discussing key individuals in this movement, Bonnie Leung, a member of the Civil Human Rights Front, told *The Atlantic*, "The momentum was not built up by us. It was built up by the government. It's the government's indifference" (McLaughlin 2019). Members of the Civil Human Rights Front, made up of 50 pro-democracy organizations, have played a big role in pushing the current movement forward by working to organize and mobilize individuals, which helped to increase the size of the protests (McLaughlin 2019). However, the group's focus is to give Hong Kongers the power to decide for themselves, rather than try to control them, by giving them information instead of orders (McLaughlin 2019).

Since there are no central organizers, this leaderless movement relies heavily on social media, specifically Telegram, an app that allows users to stay anonymous to those they are communicating with (Shao 2019). According to Consumer News and Business Channel, "Hong Kong demonstrators have remained largely anonymous, using social media to avoid being identified and arrested by police authorities… Social media has played a significant role in the documentation, organization, and assembly of the large-scale protests" (Shao 2019). King-wa Fu, associate professor at the Journalism and Media Studies Centre at Hong Kong University, said that groups within Telegram have become "powerful mobilization channels" (Shao 2019). He also said that "platforms like LIHKG [an online forum similar to Reddit] have enabled smaller groups to 'initiate new agenda, campaign ideas, and strategies'" (Shao 2019).

With these platforms specifically created to allow individuals to hide their

identities, Hong Kongers are able to mobilize with little centralized individual or

organization (McLaughlin 2019). Rather than just information sharing and connection

between community members, social media seems to play a bigger role in organizing and

mobilizing individuals than before.

Leaderless Movement

Hong Kong's current social movement is unique because there are no central

individuals or organizations claiming responsibility for all the organizing, information

distribution, and events that have taken place. "These movements differed from the

norms and rituals of conventional social movements and operated with a new 'self-help'

and 'self-actualization' ethos" (Lee et al. 2015:357). However, even though people are

the center of their own worlds, due to the social networking potential of these connective

online resources, those worlds can be very big (Bennett 2012:22). "These often dense

communication networks enable political organization and expression that often lacks, or

actively shuns, clear central leaders and organizations" (Bennett 2012:22). Since

everyone creates and controls their own social networks as explored by Lee et al. (2015),

these large virtual networks supporting social movements often go without a main leader.

In a sense, everybody who participates online acts as a leader of the movement.

Furthermore, "when conventional political institutions seem on the verge of acting

against the interests of diverse and seemingly isolated populations, the social networked

communication of digitally networked activism (DNA) can produce surprising results"

(Bennett 2012:29). When traditional rules and processes in a country contradict what a

group of people want, those individuals utilize online resources to fight against those

inequalities. "The more diverse the mobilization, the more personalized the expressions often become, typically involving communication technologies that allow individuals to activate their loosely tied social networks" (Bennett 2012:21). People are making use of their connections online in order to increase mobilization and promote social movements.

Collective Identity in the Water Movement

Even though each protest puts Hong Kongers' lives at risk as they could face police brutality or criminal charges if caught, they feel so strongly about this pro-democracy movement that they are willing to take the risk. Actions, such as going to protests, signing petitions, facing and/or seeing police brutality firsthand, foster collective identity as people share these experiences. Furthermore, this collective identity "is given voice through a common language, enacted through a set of rituals, practices, and cultural artifacts" (Fominaya 2010:395).

Collective identity can be expressed through cultural materials, such as rituals, clothes, and symbols (Polletta and Jasper 2001:285). Movement members have demonstrated support in past and current social movements by using "symbolic resources as signifiers of collective identity" (Fominaya 2010:396). In the Water Movement, Hong Kong protestors wear the color black as a symbol of solidarity. In order to protect themselves from tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets fired by the police, they also wear safety gear, such as heavy-duty face masks, hard helmets, gloves, and goggles (Leung 2019). Although this attire allows the protestors to stand in solidarity, it also makes them stand out to the police. Protestors have also created hand signals in order to communicate to others the need for gloves and inhalers after the police fires pepper spray (McLaughlin 2019). Along with these physical signifiers, they also use online resources

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to express this unity, which is especially important for Hong Kongers living outside of Hong Kong. During the Umbrella Movement, Facebook was the dominant social networking site used as many Hong Kong youth changed their profile pictures to yellow ribbons or umbrellas to display their support for the movement (Lee et al. 2015:358).

Location and Proximity

Location plays a key role in one's collective identity to a social movement because of two major aspects: sense of place and geographic location. One's identity is strongly related to a physical place, whether or not that connection is positive or negative. "Place is a profound centre for human existence, important for identity of the individual (with the group). It is of course not the only basis of identity or attachment but it provides a grounding for other dimensions beyond the household" (Butz and Eyles 1997:2). Geographic location influences an individual's identity development as it functions not only as a place of residence but also as a place of community. Community involves various networks of individuals and the connections between them. "This social life does not necessarily involve place. However, place necessarily locates activities and has meaning as an area for social activities or for the expression of sentiments" (Butz and Eyles 1997:4). The interactions between people within a community are not exclusive to a physical location, but those places do serve as a space for events and feelings about those events.

Talking about physical location of the protests, Wallace et al. (2014) found small protests close by participants strongly impacted their positive attitudes towards government, but large protests were correlated with lower feelings of effectiveness (443). Looking at the connection between protests and attitudes towards government, they found

that in some cases, protests can increase feelings of trust and efficacy, while in other situations, they can heighten feelings of political alienation (Wallace et al. 2014:445). Physical location of where the social movement events take place seems to have an effect on an individual's thoughts and feeling about the movement.

There is a gap in research about how physical location, especially on an international scale, may impact one's collective identity to a movement. To some degree, people are still able to feel a sense of place through online resources. "What media do on a daily basis is to reaffirm the identity of the city as an ambivalent location between the real and the virtual" (Georgiou 2010:346). Media has allowed a specific place to become an image that is sold to the world. "The city has become a valuable commodity, packaged, exchanged and sold around the world as a visual and virtual product and an attractive place-less destination" (Georgiou 2010:346-347). Similar to how media can portray a place's good qualities to outsiders, it is also able to show the world pressing events going on inside that place, such as social movements. However, that media representation of those events is not experienced and tangible as they were in real time and space. Overall, a physical place influences an individual's identity and community, proximity of protests impacts attitudes towards that social movement, and sense of place can also be virtual.

Digital Natives

Other than geographic location, age and generation may impact members' connectedness to a movement. The Umbrella Movement was considered a "youthquake" as there was a lot of "active participation from young people" (Chu 2018:2). Similarly, in this current movement, a large majority of active people were born between 1980 and

2000 (Buchholz 2019). Although most of them did not experience British rule, many high school and university students are concerned about the future of Hong Kong with the encroachment of the ruling Communist Party (Ives and Li 2019). Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Movement and this current social movement have been mostly youth led.

Introducing how age and technology are connected, the term "digital native" describes people who have grown up in a technologically advanced time when "online and offline identities are blurred" (Lee et al. 2015:357). People born after 1980 are usually considered "digital natives" because they share the common experiences of digital technologies, such as the Internet, cell phones, and SNSs (Lee et al. 2015:357). In 2014, the Hong Kong youth were labeled as "digital natives". As technology gets more advanced, the younger generation continues to develop technological skills and digital literacy "different from those possessed by the members of the prior generation" (Akçayır 2016:435). Since the Umbrella Movement, Hong Kong's youth have evolved in the ways they utilize virtual platforms, especially social media.

Online News Outlets

The Internet gives people unlimited access to online news media, an important aspect in promoting social movements. These media sources have also migrated onto social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which may increase their influence in shaping people's views. Referencing the Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey (2014), "of youth aged 18 to 29, 44% frequently obtained news from various websites via their mobile phones, whereas only 20% of those aged 60 or older did the same" (Lee et al. 2015:358). Although many traditional news sources use

social media as a way to distribute information, alternative news outlets have also taken to SNSs to promote their views and opinions.

Since non-traditional news outlets use social media to quickly spread information to a wide, diverse audience, they hold a great deal of impact during times of social turmoil. Alternative media is defined by three major characteristics: less adherence to professional regulations, less strict organizations allowing community members to become journalists, and smaller operation costs based on SNSs and/or other online resources (Chan 2015:425). "Because alternative media are often closely tied to social movements, they go beyond the social roles of objective reporting and critical watchdog to become part of the movement by mobilizing rallies and promoting collective action" (Chan 2015:425). Social media and the news consumed on those platforms can influence social movement participants' perspectives about the situation.

During times of social unrest, media outlets, including newspapers, television, and social media, may face difficulty remaining objective on controversial matters. Chan (2015) found that Hong Kong journalists greatly value the accuracy of news to the public; however, they also recognize other social positions, such as interpretation, advocacy, contradictions, and cultural function (421). Additionally, the Umbrella Movement specifically questioned the traditional standard of quality journalism as valuing objectivity as the public expected journalists to support a certain stance (Chan 2015:421). Journalists at the time posted pictures wearing black t-shirts and holding up a political gesture, which "indicated the negotiation of news values and organizational practices that possibly challenged the priority of objectivity in the representation of the news" (Chan 2015:422). Since everyone chooses what news outlets to get information from, they are

most likely mainly consuming news that aligns with their political views. This calls into question the relationship between news outlets and people's perspective on the government or other political systems.

The consumption of traditional and alternative news seems to hold different effects on perceptions about democracy and government in those countries. Investigating the perceptions of the news in 27 European countries, Ceron and Memoli (2016) found that satisfaction with democracy is positively influenced by the consumption of news through traditional media, while it is negatively affected by alternative news seen through social media. Because social media follows a bottom-up distribution of information, allowing the people to create their own content without being dominated by traditional news outlets, there is more room for online disagreement (Ceron and Memoli 2016:237). However, Lee (2018) established a relationship between positive attitudes for Hong Kong's independence and encountering Internet alternative media content. Furthermore, Lee et al. (2015) found that during the Umbrella Movement, political news consumed through social media "increased support for the Occupy Movement and reduced satisfaction with the HKSAR government's method of handling the Movement and trust in the HKSAR government, as well as satisfaction with and trust in the Hong Kong police and the Chinese central government" (370). These articles find different results in terms of the connection between alternative news media and thoughts about political ideas, possibly due to the variation in geographic location or cultural differences within those countries. It is interesting to note both studies as some of my participants are Hong Kongers currently living in Europe.

According to previous literature and many news articles, social media specifically can play an essential role in the success of a social movement. Media that is customized by its user, "particularly mobile phones, Internet websites, and social media, constitutes a new platform for alternative views and collective actions" (Lee et al. 2015:357). Social media can help people form connections with other members of a community and/or social movement. People encounter lots of information on SNSs, increasing their social capital and support network, which helps like-minded individuals gather for collective action (Lee et al. 2015:370). People who share these similar views can easily connect through SNS, allowing them to seek solidarity and form large groups (Lee et al. 2015:370).

Social media not only offers a space for discussion between community members about issues of social and political injustices, but it can also influence people's perspectives about the situation. By studying claims in social science about the relationship between social movements and social networking, Kidd and McIntosh (2016) found that "social media played a central role in shaping the decisions that individuals made regarding whether to attend protests, the logistics of the events, and the likelihood of success" (787). Social media influences one's exposure to a social movement and in turn the probability that they will participate in that social movement. Furthermore, "the political identity and attitudes of young people were increasingly shaped by their social networks instead of their local community ties" (Chu 2018:2).

Through social media, people become connected to individuals they have not necessarily interacted with. SNSs awaken those latent ties, which are crucial for

mobilizing individuals (Lee et al. 2015:370). The relationships formed and maintained on social media are especially important during social movements because "the emphasis on interaction, collaboration and user-generated content of social media technologies all point to new participation opportunities in contentious politics and political communication" (Chu 2018:2). The Internet has made it easier to organize social movements because we can simultaneously reach multiple networks, both close and distant, disrupting time and space (Kobayashi and Arita 2015:179). The ties created online can be a powerful weapon for mobilizing and organizing members of a social movement.

Other than online resources, Tang (2015) argued that in the Umbrella Movement, television also played an important part in mobilizing people and contributing to the scale of the movement (338). "The widely transmitted broadcasts of live images of the police firing tear gas into the protesting crowd generated 'mediated instant grievances' in a substantial sector of the viewing public, thus contributing to the size and scale of the Umbrella Movement" (Tang 2015:338). Television is still a prevalent source in Hong Kong society, and during the Umbrella Movement, it helped people with relatively lower level of digital knowledge and political involvement become more informed (Tang 2015). These findings can be connected with the use of social media in the current social movement. Masato Kajimoto, a professor at the University of Hong Kong's journalism school, said, "I haven't seen this kind of live-streaming of civil unrest and social unrest at this scale, and in my observation it's quite unique to Hong Kong" (Hui 2019). Tang (2015) emphasized that the importance of television in the Umbrella Movement was due

to the nature of live broadcasting, so since these live videos are now available on SNSs, I

argue that social media has increased in importance since the last social movement.

The connective and collaborative aspect of social media is a significant aspect of

its power, but another factor is users' ability to somewhat control their own social

networks online. "Networks allow all citizens to change their relationship to the public

sphere. Net citizens are no longer passive consumers and spectators; they have become

creators and primary subjects, and in this sense, the Internet democratizes" (Lee et al.

2015:359). However, since people participate in personal communication and have

control over what content they are exposed to, they are able to restrict their social media

to like-minded individuals, which enforces perspectives of the counter publics (Lee et al.

2015:371). The ability to control their own social media seems to be an important aspect

of its power, but it also may limit the networks they are able to connect with.

Social media performs three major actions in relation to social movements:

mobilization, information sharing, and political expression (Chu 2018:2). Documentary

films and social media alone will not be enough to stop global and social inequalities

(Canella 2017). However, the cultural production of social justice messages through these

mediums "serves as a way to capture symbolic power, bridge the ideological divides

between working-class people, and build a progressive political project" (Canella

2017:35). These literatures help to establish that virtual networks can serve as a powerful

space for communication and discussion about political and social struggles, as well as

become an influential force in shaping people's thoughts and opinions. Online resources

and virtual actions alone will not be able to change any social or political structures;

however, despite the limitations, social media served, and continues to serve as a

powerful platform in social movements.

METHODS

I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with Hong Kongers living inside and outside of Hong Kong in order to learn more about their interactions with social media during this current pro-democracy social movement. Interviews were the best method for my thesis because talking with someone directly allowed me to better establish trust, which is particularly important when discussing sensitive topics (Hampton 2017). By doing this, I was able to learn in-depth about one's thought process when using and engaging with social media. Often times, my participants also included personal narratives to follow up their initial answers, which allowed me to deepen my understanding of the concerns about Hong Kong's future. Overall, I studied the patterns among my participants to see how Hong Kongers living inside and outside of Hong Kong understood, discussed, and/or participated in the current social movement through social media. I also investigated how their geographic location influenced their collective identity to the movement, and in turn their social media use.

I used snowball sampling by asking my relatives to provide names of their friends, who are Hong Kong citizens and/or residents either still living in Hong Kong or abroad that would be willing to be interviewed. At the end of the interview, I asked if they knew anyone that would also be willing to be interviewed. I did not give them any criteria when recruiting participants other than Hong Kong citizenship or residency and age.

My target age demographic was Millennials and Generation Z, people born between 1980 and 2000 because as I mentioned before, a large majority of people active in Hong Kong's current social movement fall into this age range (Buchholz 2019). I tried

to get an equal number of participants living inside and outside of Hong Kong, as well as

women and men. However, I faced challenges in widening my sample demographics.

Since a majority of my relatives are older than me, the people they referred me to were

also typically in the older range of my target age demographic. I was able to interview

eight Hong Kong citizens living outside of Hong Kong and six Hong Kongers living

inside of Hong Kong. I had ten women and four men in my sample. The average age of

my participants was 29 years old. I have assigned pseudonyms to each of my participants

to hide their identities as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Attribute Table of my Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Occupation	Country of Residence	Years Spent in HK
Chen	Woman	26	Occupational Therapist	United States	14
Ming	Woman	35	Technology Marketer	Germany	30
Hoi	Man	36	School Teacher	Hong Kong	36
Poon	Woman	31	Marketing Manager	Germany	30
Wah	Woman	40	Product Specialist	Australia	24
Lam	Woman	32	Sales Professional	United States	32
Deng	Woman	31	Engineer	Hong Kong	16
Yuen	Woman	35	Digital Consultant	Hong Kong	30
Jun	Woman	20	Student	Hong Kong	20
Siu	Woman	36	Analyst	Hong Kong	20
Tang	Woman	28	Business Owner	Hong Kong	20
Man	Man	20	Student	Canada	16
Hung	Man	22	Sustainability Fellow	United States	2
Kit	Man	19	Student	Canada	16

All the interviews were conducted in English because my level of Cantonese

would not have allowed me to get the depth of information I wanted. Although I spoke to

my interviewees in English, I also informed them that they could use Cantonese if they

felt more comfortable explaining themselves in Cantonese. Although on a few occasions

some of my participants used Cantonese, they would follow up with the English

translation. Sometimes my interviewees would be stuck on how to express something, but after a few moments, they would come up with the words to explain their ideas. Their voices sounded confident in their answers as they did not stutter or stumble over their words when explaining. However, since the interviews were conducted in English, I cannot be for certain that whether or not their words fully convey their thoughts. English is technically a second language to all my participants, although Hung moved to the United States when he was 2 years old, possibly giving him a better handle on English than my other participants. All my other interviewees spent the majority, if not all of their childhood in Hong Kong. When including quotes in my thesis, I did not alter the words of my participants because I felt their feelings and opinions could be understood despite the grammatical errors. If they repeated a word or phrase several times, I included an ellipsis instead.

I communicated with my participants through texting or messaging on apps, specifically Whatsapp and Telegram. Since I did not travel outside the country to do these interviews, I conducted interviews in-person when possible, or on video or voice call if necessary. For the in-person interviews, I held them wherever the participants would be most comfortable but also in a location where others could not hear the interview information. I had two in-person interviews, one video interview, and 11 phone interviews. Although video calls can be more informative because facial expressions and gestures are visible, I offered the choice of video or phone calls to my participants and a majority of my participants felt more comfortable doing a phone interview. For the one video interview that I conducted, the video added an extra layer of lagging, which made it difficult when later transcribing. For all the online or phone interviews, I did them in my

room, so no one else was present or able to hear my conversation. My interviews ranged

from 15 minutes to 50 minutes. I recorded all the interviews on my password protected

devices, such as my tablet or phone.

Regarding my specific interview questions, I asked about the type of content my

participants posted about and the type of audience they cater to, but I did not look

specifically at my participants' social media accounts because that would be an invasion

of their privacy. Also, I did not want to make an extra connection between myself and the

participants by adding them on SNSs. I developed an interview guide which included

topics, such as general social media use, the current social movement, news consumption,

SNS usage during the movement, and collective identity (see Appendix A for interview

guide). I wanted to see how their social media use may have evolved since the movement

started. I also asked about news consumption because previous literature has indicated an

increase in news consumption through online resources, specifically social media. After

asking about SNS usage during the movement, I investigated how collective identity may

or may not relate to that concept. After interviewing my second participant, I decided to

include a question about how physically protesting compares to posting something on

social media. This seemed to be an important point to highlight, especially for

participants living outside of Hong Kong. Later on in the interview, I asked if they felt

like their geographic location influenced their identity as a Hong Konger and/or supporter

of the social movement.

Since this population would have been otherwise difficult to access on my own,

snowball sampling allowed me to collect the data necessary to analyze my research

question. However, I recognize that since this is a nonrandom sampling method, there are

several biases. I did not have control over the sample because it was largely dependent on the first participants, who created my sampling pool by referring people for me to interview. Also, since all my relatives are pro-protestor and anti-government, the people they referred me to often shared the same values as them. All my interviewees were supporters of the social movement and have been to at least one protest in Hong Kong for the current social movement.

My positionality as a second-generation Hong Kongese-American, living in the United States placed me in an interesting role as a researcher, juggling insider versus outsider status (Merton 1972). Although I was in Hong Kong for a few weeks during the time of this social movement, I did not personally witness any events, demonstrations, or protests. I could only understand the extent of the situation through news articles and personal narratives from my relatives and participants. I held outsider status in terms of being on the ground of the protests and other events, which limited the knowledge I had access to, but it also allowed me to have less bias and greater objectivity about the situation. To some degree, I related to my participants, especially those living outside of Hong Kong. This partial insider status was beneficial and challenging in various ways. My participants may have felt more at ease talking with me, knowing I had ties to Hong Kong and would be conducting this research honestly and sincerely. My insider position was also challenging as sometimes my participants would assume that I had certain knowledge about the situation. To account for this, I always asked follow-up questions about concepts or events they mentioned that I did not know. My outsider status gave me potentially less bias than an insider, but my partial insider position challenged me to present this information to an outsider audience as objectively as possible.

Ultimately, my insider position allowed me to access my sample through my relatives, who referred me to their friends. I told my participants that I am a friend of my relative doing a thesis project about the current Hong Kong social movement. Although I did not tell my participants that my relatives gave me their contact information, my relatives may or may not have conveyed that to them before I contacted them. This could have potentially limited what they were willing to talk about with me, but it could have also reassured my participants in my character, possibly making them feel more comfortable.

Although I tried to recruit a diverse group of participants, limitations to my methods include a relatively small sample size and limited generalizability. Furthermore, I had no previous interview experience, which may have influenced my ability to gather rich data. There may have been human error when I was transcribing my interview recordings; however, I listened to each recording twice, once while transcribing and once after, to reduce this probability as much as possible.

I used ExpressScribe to transcribe my interviews and Dedoose to code and analyze my data. I used a combination of deductive and inductive coding, drawing from my theory, literature review, and findings in order organize the data I collected (see Appendix B for Codebook). First, creating a deductive framework, I looked for patterns that were present in other studies, such as social media use and collective identity. Since I divided my literature review into different sections, I was able to easily draw from the different sections to form codes. The inductive approach allowed me to look for patterns that related to my research question but did not explicitly come up in my deductive framework. Data can often fit into multiple codes, which affects the reliability of this

qualitative method. However, this aspect has allowed me to draw connections between multiple concepts.

Ethics

There were potential risks in talking about the events of the social movement because participating in them can be illegal, depending on the person's actions, as well as whether or not that event had police authorization. If information about their participation in an illegal protest, demonstration, or event were to get leaked, they could get criminalized and penalized by the government. In order to ensure confidentiality of my participants, I did not ask for their names during the recorded interviews. I only asked for verbal informed consent (see Appendix A for informed consent form). I did not send a written informed consent form ahead of time for the interviewees to look over because I did not want to leave any trail, virtual or physical, of their participation in this study. At the start of the interview, I carefully went over the form with them, and answered any questions or concerns they had about the process. After ensuring they had no questions, understood the process, and agreed to participate, I signed the informed consent document for them. I identified each written consent form I signed by a number assigned to each participant to keep track. Having no paper trail was the safest process for my interviewees.

Additionally, I did not ask about any identifying information. The demographic questions I asked (country of residency and citizenship, gender, age, and occupation) would not be able to be used to specify any individuals. However, if identifying information came up in the interviews, I removed that information from my transcripts. For example, if they stated particular protests they have gone to, I removed that

information and included a vague description instead. Sometimes, parts of their stories had to be removed completely and replaced with the text "[sensitive information]" due to potential dangers if that information were to get leaked.

As for the interview voice recordings, I deleted them after I transcribed the interviews. After the interview was finished, I also deleted the exchange of messages with participants (e.g., the Whatsapp messages), regarding time, date, location and any other information leading up to the interview. My phone is passcode protected, so no one would have been able to look at those exchange of messages even before I deleted them. Regarding the specific storage of the files, I placed the electronic interview transcripts into a security locked folder, so no one other than myself had access to those files. I did not print any of the transcripts, so there are no physical copies of the interviews.

A second potential risk of this project was causing distress to participants. Asking about the protests could have brought up potentially triggering or traumatic events to the participants, but I made sure to inform them that they can choose to skip questions or stop the interview at any time. Although there were a number of foreseeable risks to the participants, since the protests have become a part of their everyday routine, I did not consider this study to place the participants in any more risks than they would face in their day to day life. For the protestors and people engaging in the current social movement, this is not a one-day event for them, this has been their reality. Finally, although I referred to my interviewees with a number while documenting interviews and transcripts, as mentioned before, I have assigned each of my participants a pseudonym, so readers can get a more personal feeling from their stories and opinions. My project received full board review by Whitman's Institutional Review Board.

ANALYSIS

 In this study, I investigated how Hong Kongers living in Hong Kong or abroad interacted with social media during the current social movement. I further explored how their physical location impacted their collective identity and participation in the movement online or offline. Even though Hong Kongers living outside of Hong Kong may have formed a strong sense of community with the networks and individuals in Hong Kong before they moved abroad, they are not able to physically participate in movement events on the grounds in Hong Kong. I set up my analysis into four major sections: political stance, social media use, physical participation, and collective identity. The first section focuses on the characteristics of the movement and its actors. The latter three sections show the ways my participants participate in the movement and how they view that participation as a part of their identity as a Hong Konger and/or in relation to the collective identity of the movement. Although location is not organized as its own section, the concept is brought up throughout the latter three sections.

 All of my participants actively engaged with social media about the social movement at the time that I interviewed them. All of them said they checked social media and news outlets daily in order to keep up to date about events taking place in Hong Kong. My participants further described how they themselves utilized social media platforms to share information and organize groups, or how they saw other Hong Kongers do so. Although social media helped to bridge the physical distance between Hong Kongers living inside and outside of Hong Kong in some ways, it did not allow my participants abroad to physically participate in the events of the movement. Despite finding communities and connecting with other movement actors through social media,

most of my participants expressed that these relationships were greatly strengthened

through on the ground participation in protests, demonstrations, and marches. My

participants mentioned age and generation several times in relation to how this movement

is largely youth-led, but within my sample, this demographic did not appear to influence

the way my participants interacted with the social movement. Furthermore, I was not able

to identify whether or not demographics, such as gender and occupation, played a role in

the way that my participants engaged with movement-related social media, physical

participation inside and outside of Hong Kong, and collective identity to the movement,

as no patterns between these concepts seemed to arise. However, consistency in data

demonstrated that location influenced these actions greatly.

Political Stance

First, talking about my participants' political stance regarding the Water

Movement, movement members can generally be divided into two groups: yellow and

blue. The yellow camp includes people who support the movement and are against the

Hong Kong and Chinese government. On the other hand, the blue camp contains

individuals who are pro-police and pro-government. As mentioned above, all my

interviewees identified as being in the yellow camp, also known as pro-protestor, but

many of my participants explained that there is a spectrum of "how yellow" Hong

Kongers are. Yuen, a woman in her 30s currently living in Hong Kong, gave a thorough

outline of what this spectrum looks like for her:

> First thing if you're supportive but you do nothing. The second grade is like you're
> support, but you do things, probably only online and just sharing and stuff. And
> then, if you're slightly down the line, you at least post stuff and then you take
> action also like offline, like economic action. Then, further that you go, you also
> go to protest. So, I think going out to protest, I think that's on a level of risk, so it
> seems that certain people don't, like going out to protest seems sort of to be a

brave act already because there's a chance that you'll have, you know, eaten some sort of tear gas. And then, people on the front line, I actually know people that are actually on the front line, like in some of combat and stuff. And as a result, that's why I would say especially given the risk there is to go to protest right now … it seems to be some of a dividing line between how active you are.

People's comfortability with physically participating in the movement seems to determine where they are on the spectrum of yellowness. However, Yuen did not speak about Hong Kongers living abroad, so I cannot assume where they would fall on this spectrum. Hoi, Jun, and Tang, all of whom currently live in Hong Kong, were the most proactive amongst my participants in physically attending events. Deng, Yuen, and Siu, my other participants in Hong Kong, did not go into depth about their physical participation. Determining where my participants living abroad lie on this spectrum is difficult because they are not able to physically participate to the same degree as my interviewees in Hong Kong. However, Ming and Man were more vocal about their overseas participation in Hong Kong movement-related events. My other interviewees living abroad did not explain the lengths of their participation in Hong Kong or abroad.

Along with this spectrum, there is also a range of people's political beliefs. Jun, a university student in Hong Kong, categorized people into three groups: against the protestors, against the government and believes violence is acceptable, and against the government but believes violence is not acceptable. These are general groups, so many of my participants did not neatly fall into one category. Wah, a woman living in Australia, explained that although she does not believe that violence is the best method, if violence breaks out during an event, she still stands on the side of the protestors. Similarly, Hung, a sustainability fellow living in the United States, believed that the violence detracted from the original intentions of the protests but also understood that some protestors felt it

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was a necessary tactic in order to fight against the police. Hoi, Jun, Tang, and Man explicitly said that they found violence acceptable in order to fight against police forces. Other than Man, Hoi, Jun, and Tang were also the ones who more actively attended movement-related events. Kit, a college student in Canada, believed that violence is only necessary in cases when the police is infecting harm on others but not to randomly vandalize a store.

Yuen described a famous slogan of this movement, "Whatever the protestors do, we're not going to isolate ourselves from them." This phrase emphasizes that although people may hold various political stances regarding how to reach the five demands, they should still support the movement regardless of other members' actions. Siu, a woman in her mid-30s living in Hong Kong, also expressed that she did not blame the protestors for resorting to violence. Members of the movement should not criticize other actors in the way they choose to participate in the movement. Supporters may have contrasting beliefs, ideologies, and tactics, but by acknowledging these differences, their collective identity is stronger. This plays an important role in the success of a movement, which is often reliant on the commitment of its actors (Polletta and Jasper 2001:292). My other participants did not talk about whether or not they thought violence was acceptable. These two spectrums of political stances translated into other aspects of the movement, such as social media, physical participation, and collective identity.

Social Media Use

Without orders from a leader, social media plays a really important role in circulating information and establishing trends within the movement. In general, social media usage increased among many of my participants when the social movement

started. This movement has sparked better utilization of SNSs. LIHKG, an anonymous

online forum created in 2016 that has been recently developed into an app, provides

space for information sharing. Most of the news shared is written in Cantonese. New

radical ideas, as well as protest art, are born on LIHKG. The protest art, including an

iconic frog, dog, and pig, has now been turned into emojis that people use on other apps,

such as WhatsApp. Yuen said,

> That's where all the special point of view come from or usually, usually it's some
> niche information that nobody has ever thought of… As for LIHKG, there are a
> lot of people   posting information on there and their point of views. And some of
> them, if it gets kind of enough traction, then it kind of gets shared to Facebook or
> via other means.

LIHKG seems to be a starting point for most of the information circulated on other sites,

such as Facebook and Telegram. Members of this community seem to be on the more

extreme side of the spectrum of yellowness, meaning they actively participate in protests

and demonstrations and often post online about the movement.

Additionally, Telegram, a SNS which has recently gained popularity during the

Water Movement, also offers anonymous services and has two major functions:

reciprocal communication and group channels. Individuals are able to start individual

conversations with other people. However, a majority of my participants talked about

how during this current social movement, they subscribed to various group channels that

acted as news outlets for them. These channels have admins that control the content of

the pages, so subscribers are mainly consuming information on Telegram, rather than

writing or reposting their own content. Overall, my participants seemed to prefer

Telegram over other traditional SNSs because since everyone on Telegram is anonymous,

the platform feels safer and more confidential than Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp,

which are monitored and run by the same company. This is important because people do

not want to be penalized for any actions they take or words they use online.

However, despite not knowing the identities of others on the app, Telegram group

channels provide a way for movement members to successfully connect other individuals

and groups. Lee et al. (2015) explained that since people are able to control their own

networks on social media, often times, they tend to keep their circles to like-minded

people. However, Yuen explained that social media allowed her to connect with people

who she would not normally encounter because they do not share the same political

views. Some also mentioned that their family members were in the blue camp, so they

posted on social media in order to inform those groups in hopes to change their relatives'

perspectives about the situation. Lee et al. (2015) focused solely on social media and its

effects on people's thoughts and feelings about the Umbrella Movement. However, he

did not incorporate outside factors, such as personal relationships and individual

personalities. These seem to play a role in how my participants interacted with and used

social media during this time.

Furthermore, on social media, people are able to hold conversations and discuss

issues going on, allowing them to learn more about each other's perspectives. SNSs focus

on a two-directional path of communication. Not only do these apps allow individuals to

form relationships with a diverse group of people but also in very large numbers. Hoi, a

schoolteacher in Hong Kong, explained,

> Some radical protestors may communicate within themselves and like on
> Facebook you only have 5,000 friends and friends no matter you know them or
> not, they are still friends. On Telegram, you can have billions of combinations.
> You can share your views. You can work out with the others. There are much
> more possibilities than only Facebook.

Hong Kongers using Telegram during the current movement have played a big role in

spreading information, raising awareness, and organizing groups.

Hong Kongers are able to consume news through group channels on Telegram.

Unlike traditional news outlets, these group channels are able to produce and circulate

content almost instantaneously. This news often includes information such as, where the

police are stationed, where tear gas is being fired, and who has been arrested. These kinds

of details are particularly important for Hong Kongers going on the ground to physically

participate in events. Furthermore, on top of instant news, these channels also provide

educational materials about the Hong Kong protests. This information often deconstructs

details of what the media is saying or what the government is doing in layman's terms,

allowing Hong Kongers of all backgrounds to better understand the news. They also

provide different ways to join the movement. Tang, a business owner in Hong Kong,

described information that she learned from social media,

> When you pay your tax, instead of paying it in one lump sum, you can actually
> pay dollar by dollar. Because every time you pay, the government actually needs
> to be pay, I don't know, 20 Hong Kong dollars, so for every dollar you pay, if you
> break it down to pay your tax of dollar by dollar, you're hurting the government.

The educational material not only includes information about the actions of the

government and the police, but it also teaches Hong Kongers how to participate in the

movement in ways other than physically protesting. Lam, a woman who recently

immigrated to the United States, highlighted how Facebook groups inform people about

which stores and restaurants are on the protestors' side. Information influencing the

economy is not only being circulated on SNSs, but new apps have been created for

people to find and support businesses or other individuals that are pro-protestors, such as

yellow taxi drivers and local independent restaurants. The action stems from social

media; Hong Kongers are able to enact this real economic change through the information promoted on online resources. Social media provides the information necessary for people to make their own decisions about how and to what degree they want to participate. Deng, an engineer in Hong Kong, said, "So, you can decide to stay or you can decide to leave. You can decide to do your own action. So, in that sense, it's very helpful." Members of the movement have taken to social media in order to spread information to Hong Kongers in a well-organized manner, allowing people to make their own choices about how to participate.

A majority of my participants mentioned that they read most of their news not just on Telegram but also on other SNSs, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. However, although they use social media to get updates about the situation in Hong Kong, many participants stated that they do not rely solely on SNSs for accurate information. After looking at news headlines or important topics on social media, they go to more traditional sites to confirm the accuracy of the news. Ming, a woman in her mid 30s living in Germany, explained,

> Once I kind of know what is happening in Hong Kong at that moment, I am actually going to the news, like the original news source… because I mean on Facebook or on social media, you can get the topic or you can get the headline, but mostly there are a lot of emotional content in it. And if I actually want to know what exactly happened then I would actually have to read the report of it.

In order to avoid biased or fake news, some of my interviewees not only check multiple sources, but they also look at a variety of political views. Man discussed how sometimes he looks at more neutral and blue news outlets so that he can get an idea of what the other side is saying. Furthermore, Jun explained that she consumes news that is aligned with her political views, as well as more neutral news, in order to get a more well-rounded

idea of the events taking place. They said that these news sources seemed to rely more heavily on the facts and evidence of those facts than on feelings and emotions. They did not mention specific news groups they rely on for more neutral news.

My participants use social media to connect with others and gather information, but they also utilize it to share that information and raise awareness to the networks they are involved in. In comparison to news shared by acquaintances or strangers, my interviewees were more likely to repost something without double-checking it if their friends had posted it on social media. However, they also carefully considered the source they were reposting from. Hoi said he typically looks for traditional broadcast companies or news groups because these sources seem more trustable to him, as well as to his potential readers. Outside of traditional news outlets, Lam also mentioned that she prefers to post information from higher authorities, such as lawyer associations. Ming had a similar response, but also added that if the news seemed really important to her, she would spend more time looking into the information.

In addition to friends' posts, a few of my participants highlighted the importance of live videos in determining whether events are real or not. They preferred to post videos because it can show their networks that the events happening are a matter of fact, rather than opinion. When discussing what she posts on social media about the movement, Siu said, "Some are rather emotional, and some are more factual. And I think I tend to post something more factual like what's happened and what I saw on TV or what I saw with my own eyes, you know." Videos are able to more realistically show what is going on during protests, demonstrations, and encounters with the government or police, without manipulation by others. Furthermore, Deng talked about how the kinds of video content

displayed on SNSs is drastically different from television. In a way, these videos could be considered unfiltered as there is no higher authority that determines what can and cannot be posted on these group channels and other social media platforms. The people at the protests film videos and are free to upload them as they please. Poon and Man discussed how videos are more effective than articles in convincing their family members in the blue camp that the police and government are doing harm against the Hong Kong people.

Along with videos from the protests, many of my participants share other information that they feel would be important for people to know. For example, Kit posts about how to recycle masks and Man uploads schedules to show when events for the movement are taking place. Regardless of whether they lived inside or outside of Hong Kong, many of my participants expressed that they were sharing this information on social media in order to raise awareness to their friends and family, as well as the public in general. As mentioned previously, a few of my participants said this kind of information, along with the live videos, was particularly important for educating pro-government relatives about the situation. Furthermore, Chen said, "sharing on social media brings people to a deeper level of understanding or bring them into the light of politics." Many of my participants explained that they are not usually very political, but because this situation is directly related to their home country, they felt a responsibility to inform their networks. They tried to spread this information not just on a personal level but also to a national or even international scale, so more people around the world are aware of the situation. Lam said by posting more, more people will see and share that news, which increases the likelihood that other people inside and outside of their

networks will see it. My participants are utilizing social media in order to spread and circulate information to a wide, diverse audience.

Nonetheless, when posting movement-related information on their social media, many of my participants living both inside and outside of Hong Kong said they would tailor and/or censor their content for a variety of reasons, whether it was because of their work, personal preferences, or language differences. Tang, a business owner in Hong Kong, explained that she has to be careful about what she posts on her social media because not all the events are authorized by the police. Deng, an engineer for an airline company, said that she did not want to post too many political things on her social media because of her job status. Despite the freedom to post any content they wanted, the fear of censorship seems to be more of a concern amongst my participants living in Hong Kong than those living abroad. None of my participants living abroad mentioned concealing or tailoring their content due to fear of censorship. However, Chen, an occupational therapist living in the United States, mentioned that she chooses not to post too many political statements on her social media because of the networks she is connected with. She explained,

> I do work in a professional world in the United States and they are other people on my Facebook and Instagram that might hold opposite points of views. And I don't think there's a need to get into an argument on social media. It's not a smart move. It just creates more conflict between people in the real world and that's not necessary.

Chen and Deng both expressed that they were hesitant to make too many political posts on their SNSs due to their job statuses. However, unlike Deng who was concerned about possible repercussions from her workplace, Chen was concerned about possibly offending someone on her online networks.

However, when explicitly asked about how location plays a factor in posting on social media, both Hong Kongers living inside of Hong Kong and abroad did not deem it to be an obstacle. My participants only mentioned location being a barrier in deciding what to post when talking about other people. For example, Wah, a product specialist in Australia, said, "Compared to some friends that who've been explaining to me that they have to be careful or what they post online… I don't have to worry about it. So, I think that's an advantage." To Hong Kongers living outside of Hong Kong, location seemed like an obstacle when posting on social media, but for people living in Hong Kong, they felt they had the freedom to post what they wanted. Tang said, "In general, I would say that the fact that I'm in Hong Kong, of course. I have the freedom to do so, that's why I would do it." Even though she previously mentioned fears about posting illegal activities on her social media, she later explained that if the content had no illegal implications, she felt free to post what she wanted. Rather than censorship due to location, Tang seemed to be more concerned about whether the content she posted would have legal repercussions, such as arrest or conviction for attending unauthorized protests.

Other than tailoring their content because of censorship, participants talked about changing the language of their content in order to match their audience. If the information is directed towards people living outside of Hong Kong, my participants often use English. However, if it was news that they want to share to their Hong Kong family and friends, they write the post in Cantonese. My participants that are currently living abroad or have lived abroad for a significant amount of time in their lives were the ones who often changed the language of their posts. Wah said, "And probably things that are a little bit more tailored, I would add comments let's say I want more people to know in

Australian, I would definitely be doing some translation." Changing the language of the posts allows people outside of Hong Kong to better understand the situation of the events from the perspective of Hong Kongers themselves.

By changing the language of the content to reach more networks and posting information to promote economic change, as well as schedules to tell people about events, Hong Kongers are using online resources to organize and mobilize individuals from around the world. Several of my other participants mentioned using social media as a way to gather individuals; however, they did not go into much detail about how that process works. Ming, an organizer of Hong Kong related events living in Germany, explained, "During those events, it is getting quite a bit of exposure and some people, I mean some international people are seeing our promotion on social media and they are coming specifically for it." Social media reaches a large group of people, informing them of events happening around them. Not only do SNSs reach a wide network, but they also allow members of the movement to inform and gather other individuals quickly. Tang described, "And that's how people call, you know, joining the strike and that's how people call people to just come and support if there are sudden events or protests more small scales protests going on in the area." Despite short notice, social media helps these events to gain traction due to its ability to disrupt time and space.

Ultimately, all my participants deemed social media as an essential part of the current movement because of its major role in raising awareness and organizing individuals. Most of my participants talked about how this was possible because social media is able to break space and time, allowing individuals to reach a large group of people all over the world almost instantaneously, but social media plays different roles

for Hong Kongers living inside and outside of Hong Kong. My participants living abroad

talked about how social media allowed them to raise awareness to their foreign networks.

Wah, who currently living in Australia said,

> It's a lot of information that people, the sharing part is the most powerful piece.
> You know how everything can reach so far, doesn't matter where you are, what
> time it is, live footage and all that. I think without social media, this movement
> would not have this impact and last for this long and reach so far apart to not just
> people who are Hong Kongers, but everywhere else international.

Although my interviewees living in Hong Kong also talked about its international reach,

they also added how social media was able to give them instant information during a

protest. Deng said "Even where I live in (place name), we have our own Telegram as

well, so you get instant information. So, if outside, there is a tear gas, or if outside, there

is a police, or if outside, there is a protest. So, it's very helpful if you want to move

around." This aspect of social media is more helpful for Hong Kongers living in Hong

Kong as people living abroad are not physically in Hong Kong to attend protests and/or

encounter Hong Kong police forces. My interviewees living inside and outside of Hong

Kong described social media's importance through concepts Castells (2012) termed

space of autonomy and *timeless time*. The movement is taking up urban and virtual space.

SNSs enhance the movement by widening the cause beyond borders, allowing it to reach

people all over the world. Furthermore, news is not only posted almost instantly, but it is

also able to remain online indefinitely, carrying the movement's message into the future.

Social media bridges the distance in geographic location for Hong Kongers living outside

of Hong Kong, as well as the time gap between when events take place and when they are

uploaded online.

However, although social media serves an important role in the current movement, my participants also said that, it alone is not be enough to make social and/or political change. Tang explained, "I think we need to do both because if you just post something on social media, it's just like… itching on your foot, but you're wearing a leather boot and you're scratching outside. It's nothing. You have to really walk and show it physically to the government by numbers." Physically going to protests shows the government and even the world the will and strength of the members of the movement. Despite all the benefits of social media during this social movement, similar to Canella's (2017) argument, my participants also expressed that it alone was not enough to fight the injustices they faced. Many of my participants mentioned that physical participation in the protests plays a drastically different role in the social movement than posting on social media.

Physical Participation

Although eight of my participants currently live abroad, they have been in Hong Kong at some point during this social movement. All my participants have attended at least one protest, demonstration, and/or march in Hong Kong related to the Water Movement. However, there is a wide range in the number of events they have attended. Although the number tended to be higher for participants living within Hong Kong, my interviewees living outside of Hong Kong also attended protests when they happened to be in Hong Kong, as well as events abroad in support of the current social movement. However, the situation supporters face at events in Hong Kong and abroad differ dramatically. I will discuss this in greater detail below. Similar to how all my participants view social media as an essential tool in the movement, they also talked about how

physical participation holds great importance in promoting change. There are two types

of protests in Hong Kong's current social movement: authorized and unauthorized ones.

Deng explained, "For each march or protest, they have to request, submit the application

to the police, and then when the police issue the no objection letter, it means the march

and the protest is legal." Several of my participants discussed that the authorization of the

protest played a major role in determining whether or not they attended an event.

I categorized the reasons for physical participation into two groups: for external

validation and for personal affirmation. External validation refers to using physical

participation to show others their will and beliefs, while personal affirmation defines an

individual's desire to participate in order to affirm their identity. In contrast to my

participants living abroad, my participants who lived in Hong Kong would more often

focus on their individual reasons for joining the movement. Many of my participants

living inside and outside of Hong Kong explained that they want to show the government

and the world their feelings through physical participation. Deng said,

> Because I think they don't listen to us. One of the ways that can demonstrate our
> voice is through march and protest. And then also sometimes you feel anger
> because there's not much way that for the government to listen. Of course, for
> the march or even protest, they don't care about the number, but for us, it's a
> way to showing what we want to say officially.

Deng is touching upon both external and personal validation through physical

participation. In terms of showing the world, many participants spoke about how the

large number of protestors helped to receive more news coverage by foreign outlets.

Hung explained,

> We saw basically international media was covering, continues to cover and has
> been covering for the past half of year, the huge turnouts for these protests. So,
> physically showing up is extremely important in terms of showing the world, this

is not just people posting online or random, it's not like a subsection or a small minority of society. It's actually a mass movement.

Hung does not live in Hong Kong and has only attended one demonstration, but he recognizes the importance of these large protests in attracting international attraction. As a Hong Konger living abroad, he appreciated it because more people in the United States were becoming aware of the situation in Hong Kong.

In comparison to wanting to prove to the government and the world their will, some participants focused more on how physical participation validated their identity and contribution to the movement. Jun said,

I think attending the protest makes me feel that I am really contributing to the movement because I'm really doing something instead of I guess, posting something. Because just posting something, it's just for a few seconds and I'm not really supporting those who are being charged by the police.

Instead of solely posting online, she felt physically joining the protests deepened her connection to the movement. Her participation justified to herself that she is really supporting the members of the movement. Perhaps, since my participants in Hong Kong have access to the events on the ground, they feel more obligated to attend protests as a way to validate their individual identities.

Nonetheless, both participants living inside and outside of Hong Kong talked about how it is their duty as Hong Kongers to join the movement in some form. Hoi identified his participation as a responsibility. He said, "After the incidents in June, I think the policemen brutality on the protestors are another issue that arose most of the people in Hong Kong that we need to say something. We need to do something. It's our, my duty to go to the protests, to go to the demonstrations." He highlighted this fight as a part of his responsibility, as well as a part of all Hong Kongers' duty. A few of my

participants living abroad also recognized this obligation as a Hong Konger but felt guilty

for not physically being in Hong Kong. I will dive deeper into this idea in the collective

identity section.

As mentioned previously, events in Hong Kong and abroad differ greatly in their

meaning, situation, and potential danger. Going on the ground to movement-related

events can be dangerous due to possible encounters with tear gas, rubber bullets, and

police brutality. Even though there are events organized by Hong Kongers abroad, these

events do not have the same risks as protests and demonstrations in Hong Kong.

Unexpectedly, my participants living abroad brought up the dangers of physical

participation more often than those living in Hong Kong when asked about differences

between virtual and physical participation. Poon explained,

> Like in Germany when we were there, actually I can't really feel the dangers, the
> danger as in the feeling that I felt in November in Hong Kong… Maybe the police
> is shooting the tear gas already we should be very alert, maybe the police around
> us will arrest us. Like I can feel that feeling inside the protestors already when I
> was in Hong Kong.

The protest experience inside and outside of Hong Kong cannot be compared. Hong

Kongers on the ground in Hong Kong face potential arrest and violence, while Hong

Kongers marching abroad are in a mostly safe environment. The purpose of having

foreign events related to Hong Kong's movement is to raise awareness to the people of

those countries, while in Hong Kong, the main purpose is to demonstrate to the

government and the world Hong Kongers' will and strength as a people. However,

despite the differences in purpose, my participants living abroad explained that they still

go to the events in their countries because they want to do everything possible to support

the movement even if the implications of their physical participation are not the same.

Unlike all the other participants living abroad, Man, a college student studying in Canada, explained that even though he cannot physically join Hong Kong's protests at the moment, he doesn't think location affects his ability to participate in the movement in other ways. He said,

> I feel like I can do something else to create some global network between Hong Kong and other countries. So, in order to gain some support from people in Canada, like Canadians, so I need them to know what exactly is happening. So, I don't feel like location is a big issue for me.

For him, not being able to physically join the protests does not detract from his ability to contribute to the movement. Furthermore, he emphasized that participating online is also a major factor not only for people living abroad but also for Hong Kongers that may be too scared or do not have the ability to physically go out and protest. He highlighted, "And not many people are willing to go out and physically go against the police and government. And I totally understand that because maybe people are scared of losing their job. They get family issues. So, I agree there are many different ways to support the movement." He recognizes the various methods to participate and does not deem any single approach more important than another.

Ultimately, geographic location determined whether or not my participants were able to physically participate in movement-related events specifically in Hong Kong. A few of my interviewees living in Hong Kong talked about how physically participating in the movement strengthened their identity as a Hong Konger, while some interviewees living abroad discussed how they felt as if they were missing something because they were not able to actually participate on the ground. During the protests, there was a strong sense of community amongst the protestors. Yuen talked about her experiences at a protest when tear gas was being fired,

It's quite different when you are there in danger and somebody goes the other way. You immediately make the connection that they are trying to protect you. But if you see it online, like okay they're making road blocks, but you don't make that immediate connection that directly relevant to me. So, I think in terms of feeling the sense of unity or feeling the sense of how people have been putting their hearts and minds and even their lives for something that the collective good. That is a lot more, a lot more stronger when I'm on the ground.

Although people are able to see the collectiveness amongst Hong Kong protestors in photos and videos, on the ground, participants are able to feel that community. Many of my participants highlighted seeing people helping strangers on the streets during these events. They began to feel a sense of unity amongst the people around them despite being strangers. Ultimately, most of my participants drew a clear distinction between the feelings felt online and in-person during these times of social unrest.

Collective Identity

The way people understand and connect their individual identities to a larger community provides a way to look into their reasons for joining a social movement. My analysis on social media use and physical participation can be further examined through the lens of collective identity. As mentioned before, all my participants are supporters of the Water Movement. They talked about their identities in relation to the collective group of Hong Kongers and those against the Hong Kong government. Rather than specifically saying "Hong Kongers", often times many of my participants would refer to themselves using personal first plural pronouns, such as "us", "we", and "our", while using the personal third plural pronouns, "they" and "them" to reference the government and/or police force. Tang, a business owner in Hong Kong, stated, "To me, I think like many of my fellow Hong Kongers, we believe that we can express our stance and express how much we are against this bill and against China invading Hong Kong by marching the

streets peacefully." She references Hong Kongers using the pronouns, "we" and "us" in order to draw upon that collective group. Then, she places this collective group against the larger force of the Chinese government. By calling the government "they" and "them", Hong Kongers are setting a boundary between the two groups. This language of "us" versus "them" allows movement members to separate themselves from the opposition and bystanders (Polletta and Jasper 2001).

This collective identity is not only expressed through speech but also the actions of the protestors. A few of my participants highlighted specific signifiers unique to the Hong Kong protestors. Deng, a Hong Konger not actively participating in protests, explained, "They have their own way of expressing things. They have their own language. They have their own signal. And people who knows about it, you think that they don't, but they actually know about it." Even though she identifies as a Hong Konger and supporter of the social movement, she separates herself from movement members who actively physically participate in events, using "they" and "them" to describe those protestors. This distinction may relate back to Deng's position on the spectrum of yellowness as she did not seem as yellow as some of my other participants, who proactively join movement-related events and frequently post online. Although she said that she has seen these actions used during protests, she did not explicitly give examples of the language and signals that protestors use.

Not only during protests, but supporters of the movement also have signs that are unique to them online. Ming talked about how for a period of time, Hong Kongers would write Cantonese using English letters. She reasoned that in order to identify real Hong Kongers amongst Chinese who were trying to infiltrate the site, they would be able to

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read and write in this style. Unlike Chinese characters that are often similar in Mandarin and Cantonese, only people who can speak Cantonese are able to read the romanization of Cantonese. People were able to express their collective identity as supporters of the Hong Kong social movement through words and other signs.

All of my participants except Hung were born and raised in Hong Kong at least up till the start of high school. They all seemed to have a strong sense of identity as a Hong Konger. However, geographic location, which determined individuals' ability to physically participate in the movement, continues to play a role in Hong Kongers' connection to the collective identity of the movement. My participants living in Hong Kong clearly identified that they needed to fight in this social movement because the future of their country is at stakes. Many of the participants living outside of Hong Kong reasoned that they grew up in Hong Kong, so even if they no longer lived there, they still considered it their hometown. Chen, who lives in the United States, said,

> I think I identify myself as a Hong Kong citizen and I also identify myself to be basically part of the generation that is fighting back at this point, but at the same time, I don't live in Hong Kong, like I cannot identify myself with a protestor. I cannot identify myself to be really fighting for what they're fighting for. Like I'm not there.

As I introduced earlier, physically being at the events sparks some sort of unity and community amongst its participants. Deng said, "When you go on some physical protest, you really feel they are the same Hong Konger that share the same thing with you that they think the same." The experience of the protests creates a special bond between the people who are in the same situation. Movement events act as a space to foster unity and solidarity and reaffirm members' conceptions of their identities, goals, and opposition (Fominaya 2010:398).

Although all my participants recognize themselves as Hong Kongers, not all of them felt so before the social movement started. Despite being born and raised in Hong Kong, surprisingly, for a few of my participants, this identity stemmed and/or was strengthened from the social movement itself. Wah explained,

> When I grew up, we have observed the handover and throughout my, I think my majority of my life as a Hong Kong citizen, I have no idea what the identity is. I think when this movement came along, it actually redefined and give people the definition of what really Hong Konger is, so I think I have a sense of pride in that.

This movement has been able to remind people what being a Hong Konger means on a macro-level but also on a micro-individual level, as people are coming together regardless of other differences to work towards the same goals. Man, a college student in Canada, explained that although he is from Hong Kong, he did not necessarily feel as if he was a part of the Hong Kong people until this current social movement because he did not identify his own characteristics to match those of a typical Hong Konger. He elaborated, "Because Hong Kong people are typically working hard every day. They just go to work and all they care is money and paying off their mortgage. So, they don't care about other people's feelings. They just care about their own." Man compared these values with those of people he has encountered in Canada. However, he stated that during this movement, he saw Hong Kongers uniting and helping out one another, which he connected more with than the previous values.

Despite identifying as a Hong Konger, this strong sense of identity did not necessarily translate to their collective identity in relation to the social movement, especially for my participants living abroad, mainly because of the differences in physical location. All my participants living abroad except for Man said that although they try to

actively participate in the movement in other ways, they do not feel as if they are at the core of the movement. Poon, who works in Germany, explained,

> I would say I think I am a part but not in the middle. But maybe like around… I think quite a lot of people, inside of Hong Kong, the people are really attending movements and then they do quite a lot to support the movement. They are more like the core for me. But then, I'm doing something, but not that a lot.

She established the difference in involvement in the movement due to restrictions from geographic location. All the participants living outside of Hong Kong mentioned that they worked to contribute to the movement through posting on online platforms and/or holding events in their current countries of residence. However, other than Man, since they are not able to physically be with the Hong Kongers protesting, they do not identify themselves as being the core of the movement.

The participants residing in Hong Kong, except for Siu, a new mother, identified as being a part of the movement and described the movement holding a central part of their identity. Despite the similarity in the degree of actions among my participants living inside and outside of Hong Kong, if they currently resided in Hong Kong, they recognized the social movement as a central part of their identities and themselves as important actors in the movement. In contrast, many of my participants who lived abroad identified the social movement as a key part of their identities but did not think of themselves as playing a big role in the movement. Ming and Poon, both Hong Kongers living in Germany, explained that although they were contributing in their own ways, they felt guilty for not being in Hong Kong. They highlighted that the social movement supporters in Hong Kong encountered the high possibility of getting arrested and beaten at protests, which is drastically different than the situation they faced at events abroad. Poon said, "I can't experiencing the things they are facing. I think you go out to protests.

They felt the danger already, which I can never feel here. And then also I believe that of one, they share the anger." The lack of ability to physically participate due to location seems to influence one's collective identity to the movement.

Although my interviewees living outside of Hong Kong, as well as Siu, a new mother living in Hong Kong, are not able to join the movement physically, they still feel emotionally attached to the cause because they identify as Hong Kongers. However, because of the limitations to physical participation, they also feel as if they are not able to fully contribute to the movement. Geographic location does not only affect one's ability to physically join the protests, but it also influences one's life in general. Jun explained, "I think so because we are deeply affected by the policy introduced by the government instead of some of my friends who are studying abroad, they are not truly affected by the policy, so that's why it might not be that important to them." She believed that if one was not currently residing in Hong Kong during the time of this social unrest, they would not be able to fully experience the same feelings that people in Hong Kong felt. Furthermore, some of my participants abroad explained that they are living a completely different life than they would be if they were still in Hong Kong. In other countries, they are entitled to different rights and privileges.

Ultimately, regardless of how members choose to participate in the social movement and to what degree, many of my participants have formed connections with others who are in a similar situation as them. For example, Ming has formed an organization with other Hong Kongers living in Germany in order to raise awareness about Hong Kong's issues in Germany. Siu explained that she was able to connect with mothers from the yellow camp on WhatsApp. Jun, a college student in Hong Kong,

highlighted that people from all across the spectrum of yellowness were able to form relationships with one another through this movement.

Most of my participants mentioned some sort of community, whether it was among the protestors in Hong Kong or the Hong Kongers living abroad. Those relationships were fostered through both virtual and physical means. This suggests that although location plays a major role in one's collective identity to other members of a movement, it does not limit the potential for connections with others in similar situations. Although my participants abroad may not necessarily be able to identify with the collective identity of the movement, they can navigate what their identities as Hong Kongers abroad with other Hong Kongers living outside of Hong Kong. All these connections are mainly created online through joining Telegram group channels or WhatsApp groups. These relationships may start online, but the physical presence of other members strengthens those connections immensely.

DISCUSSION

All of my interviewees engaged with social media in numerous ways as a method to participate in the Water Movement. However, due to geographic location, my participants living abroad did not have the opportunity to actively attend events in Hong Kong. This difference led to varying perceptions of their role in the movement compared to my interviewees currently residing in Hong Kong. First, dissecting social media's role in social movements, Chu (2018) identified three major functions: mobilization, information sharing, and political expression. Although my participants did not discuss extensively how they gathered and organized movement members, Ming, a woman in her mid 30s, mentioned that she joined a group for Hong Kongers living in Germany. This group puts on events to raise awareness to foreigners about the situation in Hong Kong. Other than Ming, who actively plans movement-related events with an organization, my other participants also mentioned smaller scales of mobilization. Many of my interviewees posted details, such as when events are taking place, how to recycle masks, how to pay taxes, and where there are yellow shops, in order to inform others about ways to participate in the movement. Although they did not explicitly express whether or not their intention was to mobilize individuals, I argue that sharing that information to a wide audience indicates my participants' hopes of engagement and potential participation from others. Mobilization and information sharing often work in tandem as information prompts individuals to join the movement and take action. Regarding political expression, although some of my participants talked about posting more neutral news in order to appeal to a wider audience, all the posts, videos, and images my participants

shared still aligned with their political beliefs and represented their thoughts and feelings regarding the situation.

Along with the reasons Chu (2018) stated, my participants also utilized social media to raise awareness and consume news. I identify raising awareness as a separate category from information sharing because my participants expressed that they were not only trying to inform their networks, but they were also working to spread the news to a larger audience locally and internationally. Also, rather than educational materials that taught people specific information, my interviewees were sharing news to raise awareness about the situation in Hong Kong to their networks and people outside of those networks.

Although Chu (2018) did not identify consumption of news as a major function of social media, other scholars (Ceron and Memoli 2016; Lee 2018; Lee et al. 2015) found that political news seen on social media played a major role in influencing people's thoughts about democracy. Many of my participants often read or watched news that was neutral or aligned with their political stances. Live broadcasting of events on social media also seemed to play a big role in consuming and reposting news. My participants discussed how they felt live videos were more valid to themselves, as well as their networks, because there was little to no manipulation of the content. This aspect served a particularly important role for my interviewees who were trying to convince their pro-government relatives that police brutality against protestors is very real. Similar to how Tang (2015) placed importance on television during the Umbrella Movement due to its live broadcasting, I highlight social media's role in providing alternative platforms for those live videos. Although all of my participants described how they consume news

through social media, they did not talk in depth about how that news impacted their

perspectives on democracy or the government. However, they did speak about how the

news they shared would have an impact on their audiences. Hoi explicitly talked about

how he shared neutral news to his networks so that they would be more likely to read it

regardless of which camp they were in.

I found that social media can be utilized in a social movement for mobilization,

information sharing, political expression, raising awareness, and news consumption.

However, location did not seem to influence the content or frequency of my participants

posting on social media about the social movement, perhaps due to the similarities in

Internet democracy abroad and in Hong Kong. My participants living inside and outside

of Hong Kong shared similar information regarding the Water Movement that they found

useful for their networks. Although I expected that my interviewees living in Hong Kong

would be more likely to post details regarding specific events to mobilize individuals, a

few of participants abroad also uploaded similar information to organize and gather

members in Hong Kong and abroad. Rather than location, fear of legal repercussions,

such as arrest and any penalization, seemed to influence what my interviewees in Hong

Kong posted on their SNSs.

Location did play a major role in determining my participants' ability to

physically join protests, marches, and/or demonstrations in Hong Kong. Although my

participants living abroad attended Hong Kong-related events, some of them expressed

that they were not facing the same dangers as they would at a similar event in Hong

Kong. Other than Man, all my participants living abroad expressed that because of this,

they felt as if they were not at the core of the movement. Media acts as a bridge for a

physical location as it can convey that place's characteristics and share ongoing events with the world (Georgiou 2010:346). However, virtual platforms do not allow those events to be experienced as if they were in real time and space. Although sense of place can be translated through media, it is not felt as deeply as in-person.

I draw a distinction between collective identity as a Hong Konger and as a member of the Water Movement. All my participants identified themselves as being Hong Kongers. The physical place of Hong Kong seemed to have a strong influence on my participants' identities whether or not they live inside or outside of Hong Kong. A physical location impacts a person's identity, attachment and community (Butz and Eyles 1997). Even Hung, who spent the most of his life in the United States felt some sort of connection to Hong Kong. The sense of responsibility towards their motherland drove many of my participants to join the movement in any capacity possible, whether that was virtual or physical. This individual identity as a Hong Konger pushed them to join the Water Movement. Furthermore, their identities as Hong Kongers seemed to be strengthened as a result of this movement.

However, although my participants all expressed that the movement was an important part of their identity, they did not necessarily all share in the movement's collective identity to the same degree. Other than Siu, a new mother, my interviewees living in Hong Kong expressed a strong connection to the movement, while most of my participants living abroad felt as if they were not playing a major role in the movement due to their lack of physical participation. Collective identity as a process highlights the shared experiences of the movement and with other movement actors (Fominaya 2010). For Hong Kongers living inside and outside of Hong Kong, the experiences during this

movement are drastically different, which explains the difference in degrees of collective identity. For my participants living abroad, they are not able to physically experience movement-related events in Hong Kong and form connections with other members as easily as my interviewees residing in Hong Kong. Therefore, geographic location's influence on movement actors' ability to participate affects their degree of collective identity. However, although physical location of my interviewees influenced their perspective of their role in the movement, it did not seem to impact their use of social media. Despite the varying degrees of collective identity to the movement, my participants living inside and outside of Hong Kong engaged and used SNSs in similar ways to participate in the movement.

CONCLUSION

The questions driving this thesis were, how do Hong Kongers living inside and outside of Hong Kong use and engage with social media during the current social movement? How does their geographic location influence their collective identity and/or participation in the movement virtually or physically? My participants living in Hong Kong and abroad actively interacted with social media as a way to participate in the social movement. They promoted social change, shared information, expressed their political beliefs, raised awareness about the situation, and consumed news. However, despite the benefits, due to differences in geographic location, my participants living outside of Hong Kong were not all able to consistently physically participate in movement-related events on the ground. This discrepancy seemed to lead to varying degrees of collective identity to the movement, even though all my participants identified as Hong Kongers.

Many of them explained that joining the movement virtually or physically was a part of their responsibility as a Hong Konger. Many of my interviewees in Hong Kong expressed that physical participation played an important role in reinforcing their connection to the movement, while those living abroad often talked about how they were working to increase exposure of the situation to those around them. Their location influenced the ways in which they were able to participate in the movement. Patterns in the data emphasized geographic location's impact on an individual's relationship with the social movement. However, I was not able to establish any connections between age, gender, and occupation demographics to my findings. My participants only represent a small population of Hong Kongers participating in the Water Movement.

Due to the networks I had access to, I was only able to interview Hong Kongers who stood in the yellow camp. However, they were on various points on the spectrum of yellowness, as well as political beliefs. The data did not show differences based on gender as the men and women I interviewed had corresponding responses. I had a wide age range from 19 to 40 years old, but my interviewees of various ages also seemed to have similar answers. However, perhaps this is a result of my set age demographic of people born between 1980 and 2000. This group not only falls into the category of digital natives, but they were also identified as the generation in which a majority of active Water Movement members fall (Buchholz 2019). These shared characteristics amongst this age demographic could possibly explain the similarities in answers. However, ultimately, due to the small sample size, I cannot generalize my findings to a larger group. Other than Hung, all my participants lived in Hong Kong at least up until high school. Although the language he used to express his ideas differed from the other participants, the concepts within his answers closely paralleled theirs. Nonetheless, these results cannot be used to represent the larger population of Hong Kongese immigrants as I only interviewed one person in that position. Furthermore, all of my participants spoke English with high levels of proficiency. In general, many Hong Kongers have a relatively strong grasp on the English language because due to the British rule, the English language has been taught as a second language in schools starting in kindergarten. However, people's proficiency varies case by case, so I cannot say for certain how my participants' levels compare to Hong Kong's general population.

Also, they were all professionals or university students, possibly indicating higher levels of education, as well as socioeconomic status. These individuals have relatively

easy access to the Internet and social media, which allows them to stay informed about the situation almost instantaneously. This accessibility may influence how people participate in the movement as information, such as when events take place and where yellow shops are located, is often spread through online resources. Without such resources, keeping up to date with the situation may be difficult, which could in turn influence one's collective identity to the movement. Furthermore, since all of my participants have high levels of education, they may have different ways of thinking than people who have not gone to college. Education and socioeconomic status also influence the networks that my participants are involved in. Since they are from similar backgrounds, the type of people in their networks could be alike, which may explain why my participants' answers, regarding social media use, were similar.

As technology continues to advance, the ways movement actors utilize those resources to participate will also evolve. My thesis highlights the new functions social media plays in Hong Kong's current social movement. I also studied the effects of geographic location on movement actors' participation online and offline, as well as their collective identity to the movement. For future research, I recommend focusing on participants living abroad and further investigating how networked social movements impact those citizens in terms of participation and identity. Previous research mainly focuses on movement members who reside in the same area that the movement is taking place. By looking beyond those borders, we can deepen our understanding of how online resources disrupt a movement's time and space, as well as the influence of physical location on collective identity formation.

General Questions
- What country do you currently live in?
- How long have you lived there?
- Have you ever lived in Hong Kong or elsewhere?

Everyday Social Media Use
- What social media apps do you use?
- What app do you spend the most time on and why?
- Are there other popular social media apps you know of in Hong Kong or used by Hong Kongese living abroad?
- How many hours do you spend on social media a day on a typical day?
- How has your social media usage changed at all in the past several years? (e.g. different platforms, using less/more)
- What kind of things/ content do you typically post about?
- Why do you usually post something on social media?
- Who are your posts targeted to?
    - How do you tailor your content based on your audience?

Regarding the Protest
- What is your stance on the current social movement in Hong Kong?
- Have you attended protests or demonstrations?
    - What made you do so?
- How does the physical act of protesting compare to posting on social media?

Social Media Use During Current Social Movement
- How closely do you follow the events of the social movement?
- Where do you get information about the current social movement from?
    - How do you determine if the source is reliable?
- How do you filter the news?
- Do you post about the social movement on social media?
- Why or why wouldn't you post something on social media about the current social movement?
- Who are your posts targeted to when you post about the social movement?
    - How do you tailor your content based on who you are trying to send a message to?
- How does your location affect your social media posts?

Collective Identity
- Is the current social movement a central part of your own identity? Why?
- Do you feel as if you are a part of the current social movement? Why or why not?
- In what ways is your identity as Hong Kongese and [a supporter/opponent of the social movement] affected based on your location?
- Do you think social media is an important part of the identity of the current social movement?

Demographics
- What gender do you identify as?
- How old are you?
- What is your occupation?
- What country do you hold citizenship to?

Informed Consent Form

Please read the following carefully.

Thank you for choosing to participate in my interview. This interview will be exploring how Hong Kong citizens living in Hong Kong and abroad are engaging with social media during this current social movement. In order to participate, you must be at least 18 years of age and be a Hong Kong citizen or resident.

This interview will be used strictly for academic purposes. All the information will be kept confidential. You will not be asked to give any identifying information, such as your name, and there will not be any specific connections between you and the results. Interview recordings will be stored in a password-protected folder on a password-protected computer, and will be deleted once they have been transcribed. Interview transcripts and final written documents will not include your name or any identifying information. By participating in this interview, you are potentially benefiting because you will find out how Hong Kongese citizens are mobilizing and participating in the current social movements through means other than physical protesting. If you find yourself uncomfortable at any time, you may choose to stop the interview.

Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any point without penalty. Additionally, if any question makes you uncomfortable, you may ask to skip that question and continue with the rest of the interview. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (415)606-3678 or wongsw@whitman.edu, or Alissa Cordner, my thesis chair, at (509)527-5124. This interview has been approved by Whitman College's Institutional Review Board; you can contact the IRB at irb@whitman.edu.

Thank you again for your participation!

Code Name	Description
Age/ Generation	refers to their own or someone else's age or generation
Changes from the Past	mentions differences between social media usage, general ideas or events now and in the past
Collective Identity/ Community	describes their connection to the movement, a larger community, or a country
Concealment/ Tailoring Content	mentions being cautious of content they post on social media
Leaderless Movement	refers the leadership status of the social media
Location and Proximity	describes effects of their location and/or proximity in relation to the social movement
News Consumption	mentions the way their interact with news or information consumption
Physical Participation	describes their participation or lack of participation physically in protests, demonstrations, and/or marches
Political Views	mention of or allusion to their political beliefs
Social Media Use	describes how they engage with social media
Umbrella Movement	mentions the 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong

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