

# Protests & Democracy:

## Hong Kong's Pro-Democracy Protests

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### *Abstract*

Protests that occur in the public sphere shed light on the different types of democracy that exist in a region. A protester's reason for participation demonstrates what type of democracy is missing, while a protest itself demonstrates what type of democracy exists in the region. This Politics Senior Comprehensive Project hypothesizes that the recent pro-democracy protests in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("Hong Kong"), dubbed the Umbrella Movement, demonstrate an effective democracy due to active citizen engagement within the public sphere. Data is collected through personal interviews of Umbrella Movement participants that demonstrate what type of democracy currently exists in Hong Kong, what type of democracy protesters are looking for, and what type of democracy exists as a result of the recent protests. The interviews show that a true representative and substantive democracy do not exist in Hong Kong as citizens are not provided the democratic rights that define these types of democracy. However, the Umbrella Movement demonstrates an effective democracy in the region as citizens actively engage with one another within the public sphere for the purpose of achieving a representative and substantive democracy in Hong Kong.

## I. Introduction

After spending most of my junior year studying in Hong Kong, I have become very interested in the region and its politics. I am specifically interested in the different types of democracy that exist in Hong Kong as it is a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China ("China"). Hong Kong is governed by the "one country, two systems" formula -- a phrase that I heard countless times during my stay in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is therefore a part of China, yet the region is governed under democratic rule, while China is governed under communist rule. The Chinese government's ("Beijing") recent decision to preselect the next chief executive candidates is important to examine as Hong Kong citizens take great pride in the "one country, two systems" style of governance. Many of the Hong Kong locals that I know do not even identify as Chinese. They instead identify themselves as either Hong Kongese or a Hong Konger. Beijing's decision to preselect the next chief executive candidates therefore serves as a threat to the Hong Kong identity, questioning whether a democracy can truly exist in the region. As the recent protests are the only means to which the Hong Kong people can voice their concerns around this issue, I find it important to examine both protests and democratic theory to learn if protests are effective in helping maintain the different types of democracy in the region.

This Politics Senior Comprehensive Project examines Hong Kong's pro-democracy

influence in protecting Hong Kong's democratic future. Since the protests are the only means in which the Hong Kong people can voice their opinions around their future, it is especially important to examine the recent protests in Hong Kong and if they effectively demonstrate different types of democracy in the region.

### ***Brief History of Hong Kong***

After the First Opium War between Britain and China (1839-1842), China ceded control of Hong Kong Island to Great Britain. On July 1, 1842, the Convention of Beijing was signed, and Hong Kong Island was ceded to the United Kingdom.

Therefore, Hong Kong citizens are protected of their democratic rights and freedoms, which include “those of the person, of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of travel... [and] of strike” until the year 2047 (Sino-British Joint Declaration, section 3 part 5).

On July 1, 1997, China formally resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong, enacting the agreements made in the Sino-British Joint Declaration under Hong Kong’s Basic Law.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese government selected Tung Chee Hwa, a Shanghai-born former shipping tycoon, as the first chief executive of Hong Kong. However, Hong Kong citizens were dissatisfied with Chief Executive Tung, especially with his administration’s proposal of a controversial Anti-Subversion Act.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in July of 2003, 500,000 Hong Kong people participated in a march against Chief Executive Tung and his proposed Anti-Subversion Act. This protest resulted in the withdrawal of the act and Chief Executive Tung’s later resignation. Despite this success for Hong Kong people, in 2004, China “rule[d] that its approval must be sought for any changes to Hong Kong’s election laws, giving Beijing the right to veto any moves towards more democracy, such as direct elections for the territory’s chief executive” (BBC, 2014). Since this announcement, Hong Kong citizens have been continuing to participate in the annual July 1st protests in support of “full democracy” in Hong Kong (BBC, 2014).

In 2007, the Chinese government announced that it will allow Hong Kong people to directly elect the next chief executive.

candidates, ultimately undermining Hong Kong democracy. Following this announcement, tens of thousands of Hong Kong citizens occupied the streets of Hong Kong, protesting against the Chinese government's decision to preselect the next chief executive candidates. These protests, known as the Umbrella Movement, not only demonstrate Hong Kong citizens' resistance to the Chinese government, but also their demand for democracy in Hong Kong.

### ***Umbrella Movement Timeline and Background***

On August 30, 2014, the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China announced that it will nominate the chief executive candidates for the 2017 Hong Kong election. In other words, the Chinese government ruled out true universal suffrage, threatening Hong Kong democracy. On September 9, 2014, over 13,000 students joined in a week-long class boycott for democracy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong campus in Sha Tin (Breakazine, 2014). Students and other Hong Kong citizens soon after moved to and occupied the Civic Square in front of the government headquarters to speak with current Chief Executive and .2 (y of) LT2 10.2 (o



“[f]reedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and the absence of discriminatory barriers to participation” (Katznelson et al., 2002, p. 12). A representative democracy, however, is limited to the political sphere as a citizen only has the political right to vote for a representative. Under a representative democracy, citizens are not all provided the power to directly make decisions that can influence their everyday lives.

An **effective democracy**, on the other hand, is a situation where “democratic practices have spread throughout society, governing not only relations between state and citizens but also public relations between citizens” (Heller, 2000, p. 488). Therefore, social movements, like protests, demonstrate an effective democracy where issues are raised and citizens are mobilized. Heller (2000) explains how social movements “not only provide a counterbalance to more bureaucratic and aggregated forms of interest representation, but they also create new solidarities, which in many instances specifically challenge existing inequalities and hence help democratize society itself” (p. 488). The active engagement of citizens within society therefore demonstrates an effective democracy or, in other words, a “working” democracy. An effective democracy demonstrates an “everyday” form of democracy where all citizens can participate and attempt to influence their everyday lives. This type of democracy ultimately supports Katznelson et al.’s (2002) definition of a substantive democracy.

Katznelson et al. (2002) defines a **substantive democracy** as a “situation in which all citizens have relatively equal chances to influence the making of decisions that affect them” (p. 14). The role of an individual should therefore be more than a voter within the political sphere, but also a citizen with the power to pursue a way of life that they wish to have. A substantive democracy moves beyond a representative democracy as it focuses on social equality within the public sphere. Therefore, a substantive democracy is “the fullest degree of democracy”



(Katznelson et al., 2002, p. 15) since it requires democratic political and social rights. This type

contributing to China's economy. The Chinese government therefore supports the preservation of Hong Kong freedoms and democratic institutions as long as it contributes to Hong Kong's economic success (and consequently China's). Therefore, this semidemocratic (or semiauthoritarian) system demonstrates how Hong Kong citizens do not experience genuine democratic rights and why further democratization is desired by the majority of the region's population.

While Hong Kong's free election supports a democracy, Overholt (2001) questions the process and the selection of the Legislative Council members and whether they are truly representative of the Hong Kong people. Although a 70-member Legislative Council is elected, it is composed of not only geographic representatives (all citizens and permanent residents), but also functional representatives (mostly business people). Business people serving as representatives for the Hong Kong people undermines democracy in Hong Kong as decisions are not necessarily made for the public, but instead in favor of businesses. In addition to the semidemocratic Legislative Council, the Beijing-chosen Chief Executive controls almost all of the power needed to implement certain programs and policies (Overholt, 2001, p. 5). The Chief Executive is so powerful that bills (that affect budget and policies) cannot be proposed without Chief Executive approval. Therefore, during Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa's administration, the Legislative Council and the Chief Executive were at great odds, leaving no room for citizen involvement (Overholt, 2001, p. 9).

In addition to the issues regarding Hong Kong's "representative democracy," the "government-sponsored cartel system" (Overholt, 2001, p. 8) in Hong Kong continues to undermine democracy in the region. Hong Kong's housing policy demonstrates this corrupt

prices are therefore so high that even the upper middle class can only afford 460 square feet of living (Overholt, 2001, p. 13). Overholt (2001) explains how “much of the population feels left out” (p. 13) in the decisions that are being made that affect their everyday lives. As former Chief Executive Tung’s popularity came from his promises for housing reform, he consequently lost this popularity with his failure to implement such reforms. Citizens want better accessibility to housing, yet government policies make this almost impossible. As the government continues to exacerbate the housing issue in Hong Kong, a substantive democracy clearly does not exist as citizens do not have a chance “to influence the making of decisions that affect them” (Katznelson et al., 2002, p. 14).

Chen (2014) continues to describe Hong Kong as a semidemocratic political system, specifically looking at the Chinese government’s proposal to select the next chief executive candidates. Although the Chinese government announced in 2007 that universal suffrage may be introduced in 2017, its recent decision to preselect the candidates illustrates a “democracy that might never come” (Ngok, 2007, p. 225). Hong Kong aspires for a Western-style liberal constitutional democracy; however, it is understood that this does not fit with the Chinese government’s plans for Hong Kong. The Chinese government continues to undermine Hong Kong’s pursuit for democratization as is demonstrated by the 2014 Umbrella Movement that expanded throughout Hong Kong. As “genuine universal suffrage” fails to exist under Beijing’s pro

### ***Hong Kong Pro-Democracy Protests (prior to the Umbrella Movement)***

Fiss (1998) examines the relationship between protests and democracy in Hong Kong. Since the handover back to China in 1997, Hong Kong experienced around 20 pro-democracy street demonstrations every week. The requirements for these demonstrations were that participants must inform the police beforehand and that the reason behind the demonstration was for national security. Fiss (1998) also examines Hong Kong's Basic Law and how it does not guarantee true democracy, further questioning whether a democracy can exist within the "totalitarian" (p. 496) or strong authoritarian state of China. Although this article was published in 1998, the type of issues previous protests intended to address remain the same as demonstrated by the recent Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. Fiss (1998) explains that the "immediate



Katznelson et al.'s "Democracy's Challenge," Patrick Heller's "Degrees of Democracy," and Benjamin Barber's "Three Challenges to Reinventing Democracy." Several of these texts demonstrate why protests are important to democracy, which supports the project's argument that pro-democracy protests demonstrate different types of democracy. The project then analyzes literature on Hong Kong democracy, describing what a democracy looks like in this region and how it functions. This literature review is then applied to primary data to ultimately help answer the research question: How do pro-democracy protests demonstrate different types of democracy?

The primary data was derived from in-person interviews of protesters who participated in the recent Umbrella Movement. The purpose of the interviews was to learn what democracy means to protesters and what kind of democracy they are looking for. The interviewer did not directly ask the subjects for their definition of democracy, but instead asked the following questions:

- (1) Do you identify as a Hong Kong citizen, Chinese citizen, or both?
- (2) Have you participated in previous protests?
- (3) Why did you decide to participate in the Umbrella Movement?
- (4) How confident are you in the effectiveness of the protest?

The purpose of question #1 was to help understand whether one's cultural and/or national identity influences participation in the protests. The purpose of question #2 was to see if the success of previous protests have influenced one's participation in the recent pro-democracy protest. For example, if an interview subject participated in the July 1, 2003 protest, the interviewer would ask if the success of the 2003 protest is what inspired the individual to participate again in the 2014 protest. As it is understood that supporters of the movement are supporters of democracy, question #3 is important in learning what kind of democracy the

they help answer how the protests demonstrate different types of democracy in Hong Kong. For example, while many are not confident that the government will listen to the protesters' demands for democracy, all of the interview subjects agree that the protests were still necessary. As the government is not making decisions that align with the needs of Hong Kong citizens, citizens have no choice but to voice their opinions through protest. The Umbrella Movement continued to help raise awareness of different political issues through its public forums and debates. Several interviewees also mentioned how the protests created an inclusive, public space where citizens can gather and share their ideas in personal ways. The creation of public space coincides with the hypothesis that certain aspects of protests demonstrate different types of democracy (specifically how active collective citizenry within public spaces supports an effective democracy).

Eleven protesters of different genders, age groups, and occupations were interviewed for this project (see Appendix on pg. 43). More specifically, 6 male protesters and 5 female protesters. Of the male protesters, 3 are university professors or lecturers, 2 are university students, and 1 is a white-collar worker. Of the female protesters, 2 are recent university graduates now working in their respective fields, 2 are white-collar workers, and 1 is a university student. The researcher found most of the interview subjects from snowball sampling. She first emailed both U.S. and Hong Kong professors, Hong Kong students, and friends from both Hong Kong and the U.S., asking if they or anyone they know have participated in the recent Umbrella Movement and are willing to do an interview. From these emails, the researcher received contact information and more contact information from these secondary contacts.

The information obtained from these interviews is limited as the subjects are all highly educated individuals. As contact information was retrieved from people from Occidental

affected the educational background of the interview subjects and perhaps their responses. The research findings were also influenced by the group dynamic of two of the interviews. Two interviews were conducted in a group setting that consisted of colleagues either from work or from school. It was evident that the dynamic of a group interview affected interviewee responses as there was a lot of agreeing despite there may being differences in opinion.

These interviews demonstrate how the reason for participation varies depending on the individual. However, responses are organized and categorized under the following reasons: *Cultural, Political, and Historical*. The *political* responses, for example, express the Hong Kong people's dissatisfaction with the decisions made by both the Hong Kong and Chinese government around Hong Kong issues. This dissatisfaction thus led to the decision to participate in the Umbrella Movement. All reasons ultimately demonstrate the different types of democracy in Hong Kong. For example, a representative democracy technically exists in Hong Kong as citizens elect their chief executive; however, protesters seek a stronger degree of representative democracy (*political*), specifically the direct election of a chief executive who was not preselected by the Chinese government. In answering the research question, however, the author focuses on how a protest itself demonstrates different types of democracy in the region.

#### **IV. Primary Data Analysis**

##### ***Interview #1 - "A"***

"A" is a University student in Hong Kong who participated in the Umbrella Movement for three consecutive weeks. "A" supports the protest as he is in opposition to the Chinese government's decision to preselect the next chief executive candidates. However, his decision to



participate in the protests stemmed from the Chinese government's constant "promise-breaking" ("A," personal communication, January 8, 2015) with the Hong Kong people. The Chinese government had promised Hong Kong democratic freedoms under the "one country, two systems" formula, yet "A" finds that the Chinese government undermines Hong Kong citizens'



(2000) defines a representative democracy as “marked by universal suffrage” and “regular and competitive elections” (p. 487-489). As the Chinese government decided to preselect the next chief executive candidates, the election will not be competitive as all candidates will most likely act in the interest of the Chinese government. As “B”’s demand for true universal suffrage is the common goal of the Umbrella Movement, his participation continues to demonstrate the collective effort of the Hong Kong people. The aim for genuine universal suffrage in Hong Kong has mobilized citizens, like “B,” to participate in the pro-democracy protests and “help democratize society itself” (Heller, 2000, p. 488).

Similar to “B,” “C” explains that the reason why she decided to participate in the Umbrella Movement was due to the lack of a true representative democracy in Hong Kong. However, “C” emphasizes Hong Kong’s “handicapped Legislative Council” (“C,” personal communication, January 9, 2015) that manipulates the direct election process and ultimately fails to act in the interest of the Hong Kong people. There are two types of constituencies in Hong Kong: geographical (all citizens and permanent residents) and functional (professionals, companies, etc.) constituencies. While both geographical and functional constituents can vote in the Legislative Council

most likely act in the in

*Interview #3 - "E"*

"E" is a University professor in Hong Kong who attended the protests to talk to people and learn more about the Umbrella Movement. "E" identifies as both a Hong Kong and Chinese citizen; however, "E" agrees with the protestors' rationale for genuine universal suffrage and for a true representative democracy to exist in Hong Kong. After spending time at the protest sites,



to “make noise” (“F,” personal communication, January 10, 2015) around the need for genuine universal suffrage in Hong Kong. “F” does not support the power of the Chinese government, especially after police violence against the protesters shed light on the “Chinese government’s dark side” (“F,” personal communication, January 10, 2015). As both the Chinese and Hong Kong government during the protests continue to serve as threats to Hong Kong democracy, “F” finds that the protests are necessary means for the Hong Kong people to speak out and demand a true representative and substantive democracy.

The tens of thousands of citizens who gathered in the streets of Hong Kong demonstrate an effective democracy, where citizens work together in order to influence the decisions that affect their everyday lives (Heller, 2000). However, “F” finds that these protests do not seek to influence only the everyday lives of Hong Kong citizens, but also the everyday lives of Chinese citizens. As other interviewees mentioned, there are many cultural differences between those who live in the Mainland and those who live in Hong Kong. However, “F” explains how despite these differences, it is the duty of the Hong Kong people to share this knowledge of democracy with those who live in China under its authoritarian rule. “F” therefore supports the occupying of space as a means to effectively draw international attention (which it succes2 (s) -0.s4,4,8.2 (f) -0e0.2( a) 5 s7l

In addition to educating others about democracy, “F” decided to participate in the protests for the democratic right to elect a chief executive candidate who will represent Hong Kong citizens. If the Chinese government pursues its decision to preselect the next chief executive candidates, “F” believes that the next chief executive will exploit Hong Kong citizens as he will be representing Beijing, not Hong Kong. Although “G” does not support the protests, she agrees with “F” stating that Hong Kong needs a chief executive who truly represents the region and its people. “G” further explains how Hong Kong citizens are threatened by the Chinese government as they are fearful of communism. The fears and concerns expressed by “F” and “G” demonstrate Overholt’s (2001) argument that the Chinese government exploits Hong Kong and its economic success. As “F,” “G,” and other Hong Kong citizens participated in the Umbrella Movement to voice their demand for a truly representative chief executive, the protests ultimately demonstrate the demand for a representative democracy in Hong Kong -- a situation where citizens participate in free elections and vote for a political representative who acts in the interest of the people (Katznelson et al., 2002, p. 12).

### ***Interview #5 - “H”***

“H” is a University professor in Hong Kong who identifies as both a Hong Kong and Chinese citizen. “H” is a strong advocate of the Umbrella Movement and has been involved in pro-democracy protests before Hong Kong’s handover back to China. For example, even when studying abroad in the United States during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, “H” was still very involved and supportive of the protests that have been occurring across the world. Although the Tiananmen Square protests were based in China, “H” finds that social and political issues developing in China have strong links with Hong Kong. As “H” is a strong advocate for



democracy, he participates in these pro-democracy protests in hope for democratization not only in Hong Kong, but also in China.

Although “H” finds strong links between Hong Kong and China, he explains that many Hong Kong citizens have a deep-rooted distrust of China and are therefore strongly against its influence on Hong Kong politics. Even before Hong Kong’s handover back to China i

Despite his strong support for a representative democracy in Hong Kong, “H” explains that he first decided to participate in the recent protests to support the students who were trapped in the Civic Square and subjected to police violence. He believed that the police would not continue to pursue violence against protesters if there was a big enough crowd in support of the movement. “H” further explains that older Hong Kong citizens who support the protests are mostly in support of the students who are involved in the protests. This reason for involvement demonstrates a sense of collectivity that resulted from the protests, which Barber (1996) finds to be a “prelude to democracy” (p. 109). Barber (1996) specifically states how citizens’ active engagement with one another within the public sphere creates a “solidarity that serves as a prelude to democracy” (Barber, 1996, p. 109). As “H” and other older Hong Kong citizens have decided to participate in the recent protests to support the student protesters, this demonstrates the type of solidarity that Barber (1996) emphasizes to be essential to democracy. This reason for protest further demonstrates an effective democracy in Hong Kong, where “democratic practices have spread throughout society, governing... public relations between citizens” (Heller, 2000, p. 488). The recent Umbrella Movement illustrates citizens’ support not only for democracy in Hong Kong, but also for each other. The protests therefore show the “everyday” aspect of an effective democracy, where citizens engage with one another to try to influence the decisions that affect their everyday lives.

### ***Interview #6 - “I”***

“I” is a University student in Hong Kong who strongly identifies as a Hong Kong citizen. Although “I” participated in the Umbrella Movement occasionally (2 or 3 times a month), she is very supportive of the protests and Hong Kong democracy. “I” decided to participate in the



for the democracy movement” (AFP, 2014). As the notes and chalk are removable, citizens found this as a means to lawfully exercise their freedom of speech and to have the government listen to their concerns. “I” finds that the police’s decision to arrest and detain this young girl not only weakens democracy in Hong Kong, but also demonstrates the government’s role in weakening Hong Kong democracy. The Umbrella Movement ultimately reveals how the government does not truly represent the people of Hong Kong and how much it is influenced by Beijing.

As the Umbrella Movement reveals the Hong Kong government’s support of police over citizens, this demonstrates how a true representative democracy does not exist in Hong Kong. Hong Kong’s political representatives are not acting in the interest of citizens and are instead weakening civil liberties and rights, specifically the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press. The stories that “I” shares regarding the Umbrella Movement ultimately demonstrate Hong Kong’s semidemocratic (or semiauthoritarian) political system. As Overholt (2001) and Chen



preselect the next chief executive candidates, all citizens were still given the opportunity to voice their opinions at the forums in trying to influence the decisions that affect their everyday lives.

The protests in Mong Kok also demonstrate an effective democracy in Hong Kong as protesters work together to “fight”<sup>9</sup> (“J,” personal communication, January 14, 2015) against the police. “J” explains how there were “commanders” (personal communication, January 14, 2015) at the frontline between the protesters and the police, ensuring that no further violence occurs from either sides. Although the role of commander required much more time and effort, these roles were still voluntarily filled and facilitated a less violent protest moving forward. “J” explains how other roles were also created, such as a cleanup team to pick up trash and a first-aid team to take care of hurt protesters. “J” finds that these roles were all necessary as “Hong Kong people need to act together” (“J”, personal communication, January 14, 2015) in order to have their voices heard and their demands met. The collective efforts made by the Umbrella Movement protesters in Mong Kok ultimately demonstrate an effective democracy as citizens are engaging with one another to influence the government’s decisions regarding their future. The protests in Mong Kok therefore continue to support Heller’s (2000) definition of an effective democracy, specifically a situation where democratic practices have “spread throughout society, governing...public relations between citizens” (p. 488). By taking on different responsibilities at the Mong Kok site, Umbrella Movement protesters were engaging with one another to help achieve both a representative and substantive democracy in Hong Kong.

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<sup>9</sup> “J” uses the word “fight” as he describes the Mong Kok site as a war zone. Protesters were not pursuing violence, yet they were defending themselves from the Hong Kong police who had previously pursued violence against the protesters (e.g. beating protesters under the tunnels). “J” along with the other protesters therefore wore physical “armor” (“J,” personal communication, January 14, 2015) underneath their clothes in order to protect themselves from potential police violence.

### *Interview #8 - "K"*

"K" is a University student in Hong Kong who strongly identifies as a Hong Kong citizen. After seeing the police violence against the student protesters in the Civic Square, "K" decided to support the protesters by participating in the Umbrella Movement. His decision to participate demonstrates Heller's (2000) argument that social movements, like protests, not only raise issues, but also mobilize citizens. As the author of *One Person, One Vote* (2000) (p. 488), this shows that the Umbrella Movement has encouraged active citizen engagement within the public sphere. The Umbrella Movement continues to show that these protests serve as more than just a "prelude to democracy" (Barber, 1996, p. 109) as it also demonstrates Heller's (2000) definition of an effective democracy. Heller (2000) describes an effective democracy as a situation where "democratic practices have spread throughout society, governing not only relations between state and citizens but also public relations between citizens" (p. 488). The government-backed police violence during the protest shows that democratic practices are not governing "the relations between state and citizens;" however, the protesters' collective activism shows that democratic practices are governing "public relations between citizens," demonstrating an effective democracy in the public sphere of Hong Kong.

In addition to his reason to support the protesters, "K" decided to participate in the Umbrella Movement as he seeks a true representative democracy in Hong Kong. "K" explains how he is dissatisfied with almost all of the Hong K





essential to an effective democracy. As the Hong Kong government is attempting to dismantle the collectivity created by the Umbrella Movement, the government continues to undermine a representative, effective, and substantive democracy in Hong Kong.

## **V. Discussion**

The interview responses show that the reason for participation in the Umbrella Movement varies depending on the individual. However, the responses share similar themes as all demonstrate whether a representative, effective, and substantive democracy exist or do not exist in Hong Kong. All of the interviewees find that a true representative democracy does not exist in Hong Kong, which serves as the primary reason for participation in the protests. On the other hand, many of the interview responses imply that an effective democracy has been created as a result of the protests, moving Hong Kong a step closer to a true representative democracy and ultimately a substantive democracy.

### ***Protests and Representative Democracy***

The data analysis of the interviews demonstrates that a true representative democracy does not exist in Hong Kong, but that pro-democracy protesters seek this type of democracy in the region. Many of the pro-democracy protesters who were interviewed explain how both the Chinese and Hong Kong government have been infringing on Hong Kong civil liberties and rights, which are essential to a representative democracy. The Hong Kong government, heavily influenced by Beijing, undermines Hong Kong citizens' freedom of speech as it limits the type of stories that can be published in the media. For example, Hong Kong newspapers and television

news channels are limited to the type of stories they can share about the protests, specifically limited to stories that support the government and the police. While protesters have uploaded videos of police brutality against protesters on social media, Hong Kong's official news sources fail to shed light on this type of violence as they face risks of attacks from the government (as history has shown). The limitation to Hong Kong's freedom of speech ultimately infringes upon the freedom of the press in the region. Hong Kong news sources cannot freely express and publish stories that negatively portray the Chinese and Hong Kong government, demonstrating that the civil liberties and rights essential to a representative democracy do not exist in the region.

Interviewees also explain their dissatisfaction with the Chinese government's decision to preselect the next chief executive candidates as it undermines genuine universal suffrage and ultimately a true representative democracy in Hong Kong. The current Hong Kong government evidently supports Beijing as it has not been making decisions in the interest of the Hong Kong people. As Overholt (2001) explains, affordable housing has been one of the greatest issues for Hong Kong citizens. Therefore, the government's recent decision to privatize many of Hong Kong's public housing demonstrates how the government is not acting in the interest of the people, instead focused on increasing government revenue. As the Chinese government is also primarily focused on the economic success of Hong Kong (Overholt, 2001), this continues to explain why Hong Kong citizens are worried about Beijing's decision to preselect the next chief executive candidates. Hong Kong citizens feel alienated from the political system, showing that the government is not acting in the interest of the people and that a true representative democracy cannot exist under the strong influence of the Chinese government.

The Legislative Council elections described by the interviewees further demonstrate how elected representatives are not acting in the interest of its citizens due to an unfair election process. While a representative democracy is marked by “competitive elections” (Heller, 2000, p. 487), the Legislative Council elections are not truly competitive as functional constituents (e.g. professionals and business people) are given greater voting power than geographical constituents (all citizens and permanent residents). While all constituents have the power to vote in the elections, functional constituents have the power to vote twice in these elections. The unfair distribution of voting power illustrates why many Hong Kong citizens decided to participate in the pro-democracy protests as they feel alienated from the political system. The unfair election process in Hong Kong demonstrates why a true representative democracy does not exist and why many Hong Kong citizens have decided to participate in the recent Umbrella Movement.

### *Protests and Effective Democracy*

Although the protests demonstrate that a true representative democracy does not exist in Hong Kong, the protests themselves demonstrate an effective democracy in the region. Many of the interviewees decided to participate in the Umbrella Movement to support the protesters who were subjected to police violence. This reason for involvement shows that the protests mobilized citizens to participate within the public sphere, which is essential to an effective democracy. As Heller (2000) explains, active engagement of citizens within society demonstrates an effective democracy as it shows an “everyday” form of democracy. In an “everyday” democracy, citizens have the opportunity to engage with one another in the public sphere, “creat[ing] new solidarities, which in many instances specifically challenge existing inequalities and hence help

democratize society itself’ (Heller, 2000, p. 488). As the Umbrella Movement motivated citizens to come together and participate in the public sphere, this demonstrates how the pro-democracy protests demonstrate an effective democracy in Hong Kong.

The distribution of roles among the Umbrella Movement protesters continues to show the level of community engagement in the protests that support an effective democracy in Hong Kong. As explained by the interviewees, protesters created different roles to ensure a peaceful protest moving forward. Therefore, some protesters worked in the frontlines, preventing clashes between police and protesters, while other protesters worked in the cleanup team, throwing away trash for a cleaner and safer environment for the protesters. The distribution of roles and duties illustrates how citizens are working together to have their voices heard and needs met by the government. The Umbrella Movement shows that democratic practices are ultimately governing the “public relations between citizens,” a situation which Heller (2000) describes as an effective democracy (p. 488).

As an increasing number of citizens became involved in the protests, the Umbrella Movement created an open, inclusive space that further demonstrates an effective democracy in Hong Kong. This space provided citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions regarding Hong Kong’s future as the government fails to listen to the people’s needs and demands. For example, the public forums at the Central District protest site support this argument as citizens who are for and against the movement not only had the opportunity to speak, but also to be listened to. The high levels of community engagement have raised consciousness of different democratic issues and ideas, while also creating a democratic space for the people of Hong Kong. This inclusive space that was created by the Umbrella Movement demonstrates an effective democracy as

citizens are provided the opportunity to truly participate and engage with one another in the public sphere.

### *Protests and Substantive Democracy*

The interviews demonstrate that the ultimate goal for the Umbrella Movement participants is for a substantive democracy to exist in Hong Kong. Although the interview subjects specifically express the need for genuine universal suffrage and a true representative democracy in Hong Kong, their dissatisfaction with Hong Kong's political system and policies demonstrates that they seek a more substantive change. As both the Chinese and Hong Kong government fail to act in the interest of the people by excluding them from the decision-making processes that affect their future, Hong Kong citizens ultimately want a substantive democracy. Participants of the Umbrella Movement seek a life in Hong Kong where everyone has "relatively equal chances to influence the making of decisions that affect them" (Katznelson et al., 2002, p. 14). The citizens of Hong Kong therefore not only demand that the government listens to their needs, but also seek the opportunity to actually influence the decisions that affect their everyday lives.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The strong political influence of China on Hong Kong questions whether a democracy can exist in the region. Scholars who have examined Hong Kong democracy describe the region

together in distributing roles for a more peaceful protest, the protesters at the Central District site

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**Appendix: Interviewee Descriptions**

<b>Interviewee Name (“_”)</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Self Identification</b> (e.g. Hong Kong citizen)	<b>Duration of Protest Involvement</b>
“A”	January 8, 2015	Male	University Student		