

DISSERTATION

HONG KONG'S UMBRELLA AND HARD HAT REVOLUTIONS:
TOWARD A THEORY OF THE IDEOLOGY OF PROTEST STRATEGIES

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2021

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ABSTRACT

HONG KONG'S UMBRELLA AND HARD HAT REVOLUTIONS: TOWARD A THEORY OF THE IDEOLOGY OF PROTEST STRATEGIES

In this study, I analyzed Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Revolution and 2019 Hard Hat Revolution to answer two research questions: (1) What ideologies characterize the protest strategies of Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution and Hard Hat Revolution? and (2) What protest mechanisms communicate the ideologies of the protest strategies of Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution and Hard Hat Revolution? Using participant interviews, mass media, social media, and my own embodied experiences, I analyzed three major protest mechanisms of the two revolutions—metaphors of the home, the use of public transportation infrastructure, and the portrayal of political leaders. My analysis led me to uncover two distinct theoretical protest ideologies that characterize the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions—*One World, One Dream* (Umbrella Revolution) and *Our World, Our Dream* (Hard Hat Revolution)—and the tenets that undergird these two ideologies. My development of the two ideologies revealed that the two major differences in ideological approaches and their communication mechanisms derived from different audiences—the target audience for the Umbrella Revolution was potential external allies, while the target audience for the Hard Hat Revolution was the Hong Kong police force and the Hong Kong and Beijing governments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my doctoral committee: Greg Dickinson, Eric Aoki, Scott Diffrient, and KuoRay Mao. Each of you has played a vital role in helping me to produce this study. Thank you for giving me your time and energy, for listening to me, and for providing your unique perspectives.

Huge thanks to the Department of Communication Studies at Colorado State University, in particular: Karrin Anderson, Carol Busch, Julia Khrebtan-Hörhager, Nick Marx, and Eliza Wagner-Kinyon. This study also would not have come to fruition without the support and guidance of other Colorado State University personnel, including Angeline Chromiak in the Research Integrity & Compliance Review Office, Christy Eylar at International Student Services, Charles Hoseth at International Initiatives, Jennifer Wang at the Graduate School, and Renae Watson at the university library.

Sonja Foss and Anthony Radich: Thank you for surrendering to me your bowling alley for more than a year; for hundreds of hands of cards; “slogging through” movies; accommodating my dietary requirements; providing car-maintenance service; and, of course, your constant love, humor, advice, and support. You are like family to me. Lisa Keränen, Stephen Hartnett, and Patrick Dodge: You, too, are not only mentors and friends but also family. Thank you for your continual guidance and for championing me over the last seven years. Where would I be without the five of you?

When I left England for Hong Kong in January 2011, I told my family I’d be gone for three to six months. Over a decade later, I’m still away. Mum, Steve, Dad, Stephen, Jamie, Ben,

Matthew, Anya, and Tom—I'm sorry! Special hugs are saved for my sister, Lauren: Thank you for reversing the roles and looking out for me.

The support of friends in the US has been vital. Thank you to:

Harry Archer for relatable English cynicism

Laura Hoffman for being you

Leigh Laubenstein for perspective, for having my back, and for making life seem simple and stress free

Jeremy Make for vegan treats

Lindsey Nielsen for long email threads

Chaioning Su for sage advice and engaging conversation

Will, Tracey, and Mary-Katherine Thompson for escapes and ice cream

Erika Weiss for your patience, understanding, and grace

Nick Zoffel for treating me as though I've known you my entire life

Last, but not least: Emily Kay Amedée—Děkuji. Za všechno.

There are countless other friends and colleagues who can't be named or have chosen not to be named. I trust you know who you are but, if not, I will remind you the next time I see you.

To friends and family in Hong Kong: You also know why I'm not naming you. If you have let me stay at your house, have taken me to hotpot, have introduced me to and connected me with creative people and other scholars, or have gone to The Wanch with me—thank you!

Hong Kongers who allowed me to interview them: You risked a lot by choosing to speak with me, but your perspectives provided real insight, and your voices made this study much richer.

And finally, Hong Kong: On a whim, I moved there to tune harps, but the city and its people ended up inspiring me to dedicate years of my life to reading, thinking, and writing about it. To thank a city and its sights, smells, and crippling humidity may seem strange, but Hong Kong is the most resilient and beautiful city I know. Thank you, Hong Kong and Hong Kongers.

直到我哋再次见面.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Following a tipoff from people I had interviewed earlier in the day, on the evening of June 26, 2019, I jumped into one of Hong Kong's famous red taxis and headed to Edinburgh Place in the heart of the city's financial district. My trip to Hong Kong to present at a communication conference had coincided with the city's protest against a proposed extradition bill that, if passed, would potentially see suspected criminals in Hong Kong transferred to mainland China to face trial.¹ While the 2014 protests of the Umbrella Revolution had been mainly peaceful and showcased Hong Kong's penchant for creative protest strategies, something about the summer of 2019 felt different. On the night I found myself in a taxi to Edinburgh Place, I had been in Hong Kong for a week and, while I had previously lived in the city for three years (and had returned many times since), a sense of tension, anxiety, and anger was in the air that I had never experienced before. This atmosphere, however, was also juxtaposed with expressions of unity, solidarity, and kinship. In the summer of 2019, then, as has often been the case throughout its confusing and colorful history, Hong Kong was a city of contrasts and contradictions.

As we drove closer to my destination, the taxi driver turned and told me I would have to get out. He explained that if he took me closer to Edinburgh Place, he would not be able to turn his vehicle around and get out again. I was confused; the streets were empty and the area appeared to be a ghost town. I got out of the car and walked the two blocks to Edinburgh Place, where I had been told Hong Kongers would be gathering en masse. With G20 leaders set to meet in Osaka, Japan, the following day, people I had interviewed that afternoon told me that the

evening's gathering was to urge the G20 nations to draw attention to Hong Kong's plight and to speak out against the proposed extradition law that had sparked what was, at that point, seventeen days of continuous protest. Earlier in the day, Hong Kongers had marched across the city to consulates of G20 nations, handing over letters pleading for the plight of Hong Kongers to be raised in Osaka.²

When I turned the corner and crossed Harcourt Road, I was confronted by a sea of bodies and, try as I might, I could not get into Edinburgh Place. I stood on the periphery of the crowd for a while but then spotted a public parking garage that was also full of people. I entered the garage and walked up the ramps until I reached the top level of the structure. Still, I was faced with a swell of bodies and could not see what was happening. As I stood there, live streaming the event on Instagram, an arm suddenly stretched down beside me. I looked up and saw a young Hong Konger, probably in his late teens. I grabbed his arm, and he pulled me onto the roof of the garage stairwell. After steadying myself, I looked down and could not believe what I saw. Tens—and, more likely hundreds—of thousands of people stood together, shining their cell-phone lights into the night sky.

As the protest wound down an hour or so later, I stayed and interviewed participants who told me of their fears and aspirations for the protests as well as for Hong Kong's future. Their determination and courage were admirable—some might say *misplaced*—but as I left Edinburgh Place and went to meet friends in a bar in the early hours of the morning, I reflected on what the protesters had told me, and I decided that I had just witnessed the end of the Hong Kong that I knew. Many commentators, including Denise Ho, Cantonese pop star and staunch democracy advocate, agreed. For Ho, as the city's inhabitants were “fighting for their lives,” Hong Kong had reached “a point of no turning back.”³

For many commentators, by the end of 2019, Hong Kong was “on fire,” “unraveling,” and had “descended into chaos.”⁴ What began in the summer of 2019 as peaceful opposition to a proposed government policy grew “into something much more fundamental.”⁵ Hong Kongers—historically renowned for peaceful forms of protest—threw Molotov cocktails, vandalized subway stations and store fronts, took over the city’s airport and university campuses, and protested in all corners of the city. The city’s police force responded with rubber bullets, water cannons, and thousands of cans of tear gas (800 of which were fired on a single day in August 2019).⁶ Carrie Lam, the city’s embattled chief executive, asserted that the “violence and lawlessness” witnessed across Hong Kong had “seriously affected” the city’s “core values.”⁷ Although Lam’s assessment was difficult to argue against, for many Hong Kongers, their city had long been changed not by the violence but by the influence of the Chinese mainland. Consequently, many young Hong Kongers believed that they had no choice other than to continue with their violent protests.

With the date of Hong Kong’s full re-integration with China looming in 2047, young Hong Kongers were still, quite literally, fighting for their future, a fact reinforced by a recent report revealing that over 60 percent of protesters in the city in 2019 were under the age of twenty-nine.⁸ However, although Hong Kong’s pro-democracy protests have been renowned for being predominantly student led—and a majority of Hard Hat Revolution protesters were overwhelmingly young—not all were high school or university students. Office workers, teachers, shopkeepers, and even K-12 children took to the streets and, by doing so, were, in the words of the Communist Party of China (the Party), “driving Hong Kong to the brink.”⁹

The unrest in Hong Kong is not new; the city is renowned for its unique and thriving protest culture to the extent that it is often referred to as the “City of Protests.”¹⁰ The 2019

protests—colloquially referred to as the *Hard Hat Revolution*—were quite simply the latest episode in Hong Kong’s history of protest culture. Although activism is ingrained in Hong Kong life and the ideology of its inhabitants, the Hard Hat Revolution stands out in Hong Kong’s long-running history of civil disobedience. For example, although the city’s 2014 Umbrella Revolution was often described as *civil, humorous, innovative, imaginative, and artistic*, the Hard Hat Revolution was described as an “anarchic campaign against China,” an “escalating humanitarian crisis,” and “a defacto war about the future of democracy” across the globe.¹¹ “There is a war . . . here . . . now, in Hong Kong,” said one protester.¹²

A clear ideological difference characterized the Umbrella Revolution and the Hard Hat Revolution. Using the two protest movements as sites of comparison, I focus in this study on a number of rhetorical modes that communicate the changing and conflicting ideologies regarding how Hong Kongers conceptualized the two protest movements. My interest is in the ideology of *how* people protest instead of *why* they protest—how participants conceptualize the nature of protest. Although studies of protest movements often focus on the ideology that is the exigency for the protest, my focus is different. I explore the ideology that undergirds protesters’ views of the protest strategies themselves.

To think about the focus of my study outside the context of Hong Kong, the Black Lives Matter movement provides another lens through which to view the ideology of how individuals conceptualize the nature of protests. George Floyd’s murder at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer in May 2020 sparked protests across the United States and other parts of the globe.¹³ In Denver, some “destructive protesters” arrived at the scene of a Black Lives Matter protest with crowbars, baseball bats, assault rifles, and handguns, prompting the city’s mayor, Michael Hancock, to decry them for “drown[ing] out the peaceful cries for change” by choosing a path of

violence.¹⁴ The fact that participants took crowbars to the protest rather than, for example, signs or flowers suggested that the protesters were envisioning a particular kind of protest.

In contrast to Denver, the reaction to Floyd's death by protesters in Columbia, South Carolina, was quite different. Protesters "fully adorned in their Sunday best" communicated an entirely different ideology with regards to how participants conceptualize a protest.¹⁵ Protesters who were "gussied up on purpose" "reframe[d] the narrative" of violent unrest to "build a sense of joy."¹⁶ Writing in the *New York Times*, journalist Vanessa Friedman posited that protesters wearing bright colors, jewel-toned ties, plaid bow ties, sundresses, and suits "communicate[d] a set of values and implicit references" that portrayed them as respectable, law-abiding, churchgoers.¹⁷ Friedman's assessment is not only applicable to protesters. Indeed, choices made by law enforcement with regards to attire also communicate certain messages and, although riot gear and military-style SWAT uniforms may be required for protection, the same uniforms can make protesters feel threatened and, in turn, can instigate violence.¹⁸ As highlighted by the two different approaches to protesting the murder of George Floyd, the decision of a protester to take a crowbar to a protest instead of a homemade sign and police officers wearing military-style fatigues rather than regular uniforms communicate different ideas and expectations as to how those involved conceptualize the nature of a protest.

When rioters descended on the US Capitol in January 2021, their clothing choices constituted a "riotous expression" that helped to "feed the frenzy of the event." Quotidian clothing was not deemed able to "contain the extremity of the outburst," and rioters—many shirtless and carrying Confederate flags—donned coonskin caps, animal pelts, sphagnum-covered ghillie suits, tactical gear, and sweaters bearing the term *Camp Auschwitz*. The protesters did not descend on the US Capitol to participate in a peaceful march. Instead, they went "dressed

for chaos.”¹⁹ As another example, in March 2021, hundreds of women marched in Mexico City to protest the violence against women that is “rampant” across the country. Although some protesters marched while carrying their children, others, carrying blowtorches, hammers, and bats, were “prepared for confrontation.”²⁰ Each of these examples communicates very different ideological approaches to protest strategies. In this study, I explore the ideologies of the protest mechanisms that characterize and communicate the protest strategies of Hong Kong’s Umbrella Revolution and Hard Hat Revolution. I will argue that three communication mechanisms (the home, public transportation infrastructure, and the portrayals of political leaders) characterized two distinct protest ideologies of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolution. These two ideologies—*one world, one dream* (Umbrella Revolution) and *our world, our dream* (Hard Hat Revolution)—were used to make the protests compelling to targeted audiences—external allies (the Umbrella Revolution) and an internal audience (Hard Hat Revolution).

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study are:

RQ1: What ideologies characterize the protest strategies of Hong Kong’s Umbrella Revolution and Hard Hat Revolution?

RQ2: What protest mechanisms communicate the ideologies of the protest strategies of Hong Kong’s Umbrella Revolution and Hard Hat Revolution?

Definition of *Ideology*

Although four key terms are central to this study, three of them—*one country, two systems*; *mainlandization*; and *Hong Kongers*—are parsed out in chapter 2. Below, however, I offer a definition for the term that is critical to my research question: *ideology*.

In this study, I define *ideology* as a mental framework of socially shared beliefs, values, interpretations, representations, and experiences expressed and reproduced by communication. My definition of *ideology* is derived from six definitions and conceptions that others have proposed. Stuart Hall defines *ideology* as a “mental framework,” while Khadidiatou Ndiaye defines it as “a pattern or set of ideas, assumptions, beliefs, values, or interpretations of the world by which a group operates.”²¹ Leah R. Vande Berg, Lawrence A. Wenner, and Bruce E. Gronbeck describe an ideology as “the systematic representation of ideas and values that members of a society learn to regard as the normal or natural way things are.”²² Relating ideologies to protest, David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford describe an ideology as a “framing activity” for “events, experiences, and existing beliefs and values, most of which are associated with existing ideologies.”²³ Jo Little defines ideology as “a system of beliefs or a set of ideas that both constitute a general worldview and uphold particular power dynamics.”²⁴ For Teun A. van Dijk, ideologies are “the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group” that allow group members to “organize the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, for them, and to act accordingly.”²⁵ His theory of ideology asserts that ideologies are “socially ‘invented’ and reproduced in society” through discourse.²⁶ He elaborates that ideologies are “not individual, idealistic constructs, but the social constructs shared by a group”; ideologies are “constructed, used, and changed by social actors as group members.”²⁷

I draw on these scholars’ definitions of ideology in various ways to construct my own definition of the term. Ndiaye, Vande Berg and her coauthors, and Little provide me with the constructs of beliefs and values of groups that are important to my analysis as they are major considerations for how people might conceptualize protest in the way that they do. Snow and Benford’s definition that features framing activity aids me in analyzing how the ideologies of

Hong Kong protesters on the issue of mainlandization—mainland China’s increasing influence over Hong Kong— constitutes a frame that affects their responses to the perceived threat to their future. Little’s definition introduces the elements of power dynamics that lie at the heart of mainlandization. Van Dijk’s theory of ideology allows me to make an explicit connection with communication in my definition of *ideology*, although he uses the term *discourse* and I have elected to use the broader term *communication*.²⁸ This is particularly relevant to my second research question that analyzes the protest mechanisms that communicate the ideologies of the protest strategies of Hong Kong’s Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. The second element from van Dijk’s theory on which my definition of *ideology* draws is his notion that ideologies are socially shared. This element of a socially shared experience is important because, like many global protests, Hong Kong’s revolutions are regarded as networked protests that attract vast numbers of participants.

My decision to use the term *ideology* was a conscious one that involved thinking about and rejecting a number of other terms, including *worldview* and *philosophy*. Although definitions of *worldview* point to conceptions of the world from a specific standpoint, the term feels too broad in scope in that I focus my study on how participants conceptualize the nature of protest. I am interested in the participants’ perspectives on one specific thing—protest strategies—and not on their general conception of or stance on the world. Often associated with the beliefs, attitudes, and concepts of individuals or groups, my other discarded term, *philosophy*, appears to be a more appropriate term than *worldview*. Upon reflection, however, *philosophy* is too narrow and is missing a number of elements that many scholars, including Hall and van Dijk, associate with *ideology*. Moreover, *philosophy* lacks the social aspects and, consequently, the communicative ties of *ideology*. In addition, *ideology* is a more widely used term in the field of communication

studies. It is used by scholars in many areas of the discipline from rhetoric to cultural studies, and it is even the basis of a critical method of analysis. Consequently, *ideology* provides me with a term that is wide in scope and will not limit my analysis or findings. Moreover, it encapsulates communicative elements that are vital to my study.

Having outlined my definition of *ideology* as it pertains to my study, I now turn to summarize key works in which scholars in the field of communication studies have analyzed protest movements. While not providing an exhaustive review of the wealth of research that has been carried out in this area, my approach is to point to a number of examples of studies that have explored—both implicitly and explicitly—the intersection of ideology and protest.

Approaches to Studying Ideology and Protest

The focus of this study is not on why large groups of Hong Kongers are protesting—those reasons are explicated briefly in chapter 2. Instead, my interest is in how and why the 2014 Umbrella Revolution and 2019 Hard Hat Revolution looked so different to one another. With this in mind, in this section, I review some of the relevant literature from social protest movement scholarship that is relevant to ideology and is useful for my study. Because few studies deal explicitly with my topic—the ideology of protest strategies—my review of relevant literature includes studies that relate ideology in diverse ways to protest movements. To this end, my review of relevant literature proceeds in four sections. I begin by drawing attention to very limited work that deals with my concern with the ideologies of the nature of protest. Next, I turn to literature that focuses on the ideological exigencies of protest movements. I then sample some of the relevant literature that explores the ideology of media coverage of protest movements. I conclude by noting literature that explores the implicit ideologies that are associated with protest movements, including stages of protest movements, leadership, and a number of specific

strategies of protest movements. I conclude each section by suggesting how the literature provided me with constructs that were useful for me as I proceeded with my analysis in later chapters.

Ideologies of Protest Strategies

Although scholars have explored the ideologies that lead to protests and the ideologies that frame the media coverage of protests, studies that explore ideologies of the mechanisms or strategies of protest are rare. I have been able to locate only one study that explores and describes the ideology of *how* individuals protest—the ideology behind the nature of protest strategies.

The study most relevant to my research questions is by Paolo Gerbaudo and is related to the Hong Kong protests. In his exploration of the ideological characteristics of the internet and online spaces as digital activism and the accompanying “techno-political” orientations that connect politics and technology, Gerbaudo lays out two different approaches that protesters have taken to using online and digital spaces as protest tools.²⁹ These two technological approaches carry their own ideologies—cyber-autonomism and cyber-populism—that have seen digital activism move from “a separate countercultural space,” in which “activists can find solace from the oppressive character of society,” to a view of online spaces as “a centrepiece of contemporary society” and a part of the political mainstream through which protesters can attract both highly politicized people and large sections of the general population.³⁰ For Gerbaudo, then, how protesters conceptualize a space—whether a physical or online space—directly affects how they use it during protest.

Although not as directly relevant as Gerbaudo’s study, other studies relevant to mine focus on alignment issues between the chosen method of protest and the ideology of the protesters. The issue with these studies is that the ideological performances of protest strategies

are not a central focus. One example is by Francesco Screti, who analyzes the art and web presence of activist and street artist Shepard Fairey (also known as *OBEY*). Screti evaluates the “emancipatory potential” of Fairey—an artist who advocates for a wide range of issues, including immigration, hunger, education, and free speech—in an effort to unveil the hidden ideologies behind his art.³¹ Screti suggests that while Fairey labels his art as “politically engaged” and it is often treated by audiences and critics as “profound and deeply critical,” because Fairey’s work is appropriated by the market, it loses its subversiveness. As a result, Fairey professes an oppositional behavior but perpetuates the same hegemonic systems he claims to be protesting.³²

Using the Occupy movement as her point of analysis, R. Lila Steinberg also analyzes the alignment between the ideologies that motivate a protest and the ideologies of the protest strategies used. She notes that in the Occupy movement, participants engaged in ideologies of horizontalism and egalitarian decision-making, the goal of which was to create power-with instead of power over. Harnessing a “shared recognition of social crisis and systemic injustice felt increasingly around the world,” participants facilitated a praxis of egalitarianism and global solidarity by engaging in “co-constructed discourses about human rights, collectivity and autonomy, and the nature of fairness.”³³ This ideological approach enabled participants to “converse and collaborate meaningfully about these matters and their implications for action.”³⁴ Thus, Steinberg shows how protesters may intentionally enact methods of protest that align with their ideological views.

In an analysis of the global justice movement—networked protests that oppose the current globalization systems and processes that lead to social inequality and are locally rooted but global in scope and reach—EunKyung Lee explores how networked organizations allow for

a multiplicity of ideological positions that, in turn, enable different perspectives to coexist without conflict. This is another instance in which the ideologies of the cause and mechanisms of protest match. The approach requires harnessing a decentralized and horizontal structure that harnesses “loose, flexible coordination” and embraces “creativity, communication, and self-organizing” as its cultural systems.³⁵ Thus, the flow of communication is not monopolized by particular individuals, and the structure of the movement enacts the movement’s objectives. Although allowing for multiple ideologies to coalesce around one central theme can help to unite people and strengthen the bond among participants, this multiplicity of ideological stances can also lead to fragmentation and disorganization in the networked protest.³⁶

Although the authors to whom I have drawn attention above write about elements of protests that are not explicitly the focus of my study (such as the alignment between the movement objectives and the chosen strategies), because they explicitly analyze the ideology of protest strategies, their studies provide me with ideas and examples of protest strategies that form part of the ideologies of the nature of protests.

Ideological Exigencies of Protest Movements

In the rich body of protest literature within communication studies, many scholars have explored the ideology of protest movements and the ideologies for which protesters are fighting—in other words, the exigencies that motive people to protest. All of the studies highlighted below explicate the ideologies and overarching exigencies that motivate people to protest, but they do not deal with the ideologies of chosen protest strategies.

From James Chesebro’s early study of the exigencies behind the militant strategies of America’s New Left and the emergence of what many term “new social movements” to more recent studies of networked protest and counterpublics that take into account digital and online

spaces, numerous scholars in the communication discipline have analyzed the ideologies that people protest for or against.³⁷ Exploring the five strategies that “characterize the ideology of the radical movement” of the New Left in the United States in the 1960s, Chesebro identifies political revolutionary, cultural revolutionary, urban guerrilla, political anarchist, and superstar as ideological bonds that enable movements to “maintain a rich diversity of types and kinds” of participants. Although Chesebro notes that each strategy is based upon different approaches to protest, he posits that each shares a complementary “ideological and rhetorical bond.”³⁸

Other scholars have studied the nature of the specific grievances that form the motivation for various types of collective action. In the area of disability studies, for example, Benjamin W. Mann explores how disabled protesters aim to encourage ideological change and raise awareness of disability issues in the larger society.³⁹ Phaedra C. Pezzullo explores the ideological arguments of two sides of the debate about the origins of cancer-causing toxic pollution in San Francisco.⁴⁰ Another example of a study of ideological exigencies to which protesters have sought to raise attention or fight against is Daniel C. Brouwer’s exploration of the various ideologies that surrounded the relocation of a piece of art made to commemorate individuals who died of AIDS or AIDS-related conditions.⁴¹ John Flowerdew and Yiqi Liu are two scholars who write about the ideological struggles and contrasting political agendas that divide large sections of Hong Kong society.⁴² Similarly, Daniel Garrett, in a visual essay, provides an introduction to many facets of the ideological divides that separate Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese citizens—mainlandization—and how these divides are communicated through protest signage.⁴³

Although the exigencies of protest movement are not the focus of my study, the scholarship I have highlighted here is helpful to me because the intensity and nature of the grievances that lead people to protest carry different implicit ideologies that suggest different

ranges of protest strategies. As a result, these studies provide a clue about the kinds of protests strategies that participants might use.

Ideology of Media Coverage of Protest Movements

A third body of research relevant to my study explores the ideologies of journalists and news organizations in the coverage of protests. A number of scholars have explored how the political economy of the media and the corporate challenges it entails have led to an ideological filtering in the production and reporting of news. Aziz Douai is one scholar, for example, who has explored the relationship between the ideological leanings and corporate affiliation of news outlets and their visual framing of the 2010 G20 meetings in Toronto, Canada. Douai reports that ideological leanings, ownership, and a reliance on advertising revenue meant that protesters were overwhelmingly depicted negatively, while police officers were portrayed positively and world leaders were portrayed neutrally.⁴⁴ A second representative study in this category is Aziz Douai and Terry Wu's analysis of the ideological pressures that journalists from the *Wall Street Journal* faced when reporting on the Occupy Wall Street movement and the challenges protesters encounter in influencing public discourse.⁴⁵ Chris Flood, Stephen Hutchings, Galina Miazhevich, and Henri Nickels explore issues of impartiality and political economy pressures in *BBC News'* reporting of Islam-related topics, and, focusing on a non-Western context, Saif Shahin, Pei Zheng, Heloisa Aruth Sturm, and Deepa Fadnis examine news coverage of Brazilian, Chinese, and Indian protests by their respective domestic media outlets.⁴⁶ This latter analysis reveals that a news organization's ideological affiliation with the government influences news coverage of protests.

Analyzing the ideological motivations and corresponding pressures of media coverage of Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution, Francis L. F. Lee explores how the ideological stances and

discursive strategies of Hong Kong newspapers were used to shape public opinion throughout the Umbrella Revolution and to frame the legitimacy of the protests.⁴⁷ Lee's study uncovered how selective reporting and the careful articulation of polling results was directly correlated with the political leanings of a publication. Aditi Bhatia, too, explores how the "conflicted political stance" of the *South China Post (SCMP)* led to contrasting representations of different groups of protesters. Much of the *SCMP's* discursive framing is a result of the publication's historical and ideological leanings and its conflicted political stance.⁴⁸ The ideological underpinnings and opposing stances of news outlets also have been addressed in a number of comparative studies. William Dezheng Feng and Janet Ho each analyze the strategies employed by Hong Kong and mainland Chinese/Party-sponsored media outlets in their reporting on the Umbrella Revolution.⁴⁹ Similar studies are those by Y. Roselyn Du, Lingzi Zhu, and Fan Yang as well as by Li Lan and Ye Meng, who explore the ideological news framing of the Umbrella Revolution in the United Kingdom, United States, mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan and the contrasting ways in how protesters are portrayed.⁵⁰

Although the ideological framing of protesters by the media is not of direct concern to me, the studies I have identified above provide me with some constructs relevant to my study. The framing of images by media outlets provides a terministic screen that influences and constrains the ways consumers interpret events.⁵¹ Terministic screens function to shape reality by directing attention to particular aspects of reality over others and, in turn, can reveal the worldview and hence the ideology of a rhetor.⁵² In a similar vein, agenda-setting theory assumes that the media establish a reality that shapes and filters reality for the public. To do this, media outlets concentrate on issues that comprise the agendas of their owners, advertisers, and other stakeholders.⁵³ Terministic screens and framing decisions provide theoretical grounding for my

first research question that asks what ideologies characterize the protest strategies of Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution and Hard Hat Revolution in that terministic screens and media framing/agenda setting affect the ways in which both media and protesters conceptualize a protest movement.

Implicit Ideologies of Elements of Protest Movements

In this section, I draw attention to literature by scholars who explore traditional studies of the implicit ideologies within protest strategies. The use of the word *implicit* is an intentional choice that I have made because although all of the examples I draw upon below contain elements of the ideological choices made by protesters, none of the scholars explicitly mentions *ideology* in relation to the choices of protest strategies and tactics used by participants. This lack of the use of the term *ideology*, however, does not mean that a consideration of ideology is not present in the studies, nor does it mean that the studies cannot aid my analysis in some way. For example, the decision made by protesters to have a focal point/leader for their movement and the choice to use violent or nonviolent methods for communicating dissatisfaction and the goals of a movement are all closely linked to ideology. I begin by referencing some of the literature that analyzes the different stages of protest movements and then summarize research that explores the role of leaders during protest movements. The section concludes with a discussion of protest strategies identified in the literature, including performance, the use of physical space, and online and digital tools.

Stages of Protest Movements

Stages are one of a number of categories explained in social movement studies that suggest implicit ideologies of those involved. Citing work from as early as 1929, Doron Shultziner and Sarah Goldberg note that literature focusing on stages of mass mobilization has a

long history.⁵⁴ Since Dawson and Getty's four-stage sequence of social movements (a preliminary stage of social unrest, a popular stage of collective excitement, formal organization, and a terminal point of institutionalization), theories of the stages of collective behavior have been built on and re-worked. For John W. Bowers, Donovan J. Ochs, Richard J. Jensen, and David P. Schulz, agitation can be divided into eight stages—petition of the establishment (the “normal discursive means of persuasion”); promulgation (the aim of winning public acceptance for the protesters' ideology, values, and beliefs); solidification (protesters reinforcing the cohesiveness of their members); polarization (the assumption that anybody not committed to the agitation is, in fact, supportive of the opposing side); nonviolent resistance (collective disorder in which customs but not laws may be violated); escalation/confrontation (to confuse the establishment and make it, not the protesters, seem inadequate, foolish, and in the wrong); Gandhi and guerilla (large groups of protesters confronting the establishment, with one group committed to nonviolent resistance and the other to the destruction of the establishment); and revolution (a war). Although not necessarily followed in a particular sequence, these eight stages are seen as “more or less cumulative and progressive.”⁵⁵ Shultziner and Goldberg propose a similar schema in which the study of protest movements is composed of three main stages—origins, protest, and outcome.⁵⁶ This conception of the stages of movements is not unlike Leland M. Griffin's classic study that proposes a three-stage structure for the success of social movements: the inception stage, rhetorical crisis, and the consummation stage.⁵⁷

The classic studies highlighted here that analyze the different stages of protest movements aid my study in that the number and types of stages used by protesters communicate how they are conceptualizing the movement, whether deciding how long the movement should last or how quickly it should escalate, for example. Although Dawson and Getty's four-stage

sequence only contains one more step than Griffin's three-step strategy, following one of the sequences over the other could change how protesters conceptualize a protest movement and the options they see as available to them. For example, Griffin's schema presents a simple sequence that involves pre-protest, the protest, and post-protest, but Dawson and Getty suggest a sequence that is more methodical, requires more time, and has to be more organized.

Leadership

The role of leaders in protests has been a much-explored topic in communication studies, ranging from Herbert W. Simons's theory of persuasion in social movements in the 1970s to Richard B. Gregg's study of the ego-function of the rhetoric of protest to more recent studies of social movement rhetoric by scholars such as Robert Cox and Christina R. Foust.⁵⁸ Although the ideology of various conceptions of leaders is not explicitly addressed in these studies, a number of authors do implicitly gesture toward the functions of a leader's ideology. Parsing out the strategies of leader-centered persuasion and the other rhetorical requirements of leaders, Simons, for example, studies how leaders attract supporters to ensure that a protest movement is successful.⁵⁹ Maegan Parker Brooks also analyzes leaders in movements, focusing on the rhetorical influences on Fannie Lou Hamer. Brooks argues that Hamer made strategic choices to "encourage her oppressed audiences to recognize their capacity for activism, and to cultivate the will to change among their oppressors."⁶⁰ Brooks's analysis reveals how oppressed advocates establish their authority to speak, motivate the subjugated communities they represent, and engage broader national audiences. As social movements have evolved to follow the trajectory of online and digital platforms, a number of scholars have written of the growth of leaderless movements. In her analysis of the Arab Spring, for instance, Zeynep Tufekci draws attention to

the growth of the nature of leaderless movements (“horizontalism”) that are without formal hierarchies and utilize an ad hoc approach to organizing infrastructure and tasks.⁶¹

Scholarship that analyzes the role of leaders in protest movements encourages an exploration of various elements that are closely linked to how protesters conceptualize a movement. For example, the decision of protest participants to have a leader, the ideology to which such a leader might ascribe (for example, violent or nonviolent), and how a leader is perceived can influence the protest strategies involved. It might also affect the overall ideology of how participants conceptualize the protest. Thus, such studies have the potential to be useful for my study in suggesting possible connections between leadership elements and a conception of protest strategies.

Strategies

The study of protest strategies is another area of rich research in social movement literature in the discipline of communication. While Herbert W. Simons explores militant versus moderate strategies of protesters and Bowers, Ochs, Jensen, and Schulz theorize strategies of agitation more generally, other scholars have analyzed more specific strategies, including images, physical performance (which often incorporates mundane items of everyday life), physical space, and online and digital platforms, all of which implicitly suggest ideologies concerning the nature of protests.⁶²

Images, of course, are one of the most attention-grabbing forms of protest strategies and, consequently, a number of scholars have explored the power images have to draw attention to protest movements. Representative of such studies is John W. Delicath and Kevin M. Deluca’s study of image events—“staged protests designed for media dissemination”—that carry argumentative possibilities that can provoke emotions and garner support for a cause.⁶³ Davi

Johnson maps out how image events worked in tandem with Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches to help make racism visible. Shocking images of police dogs turned against Black demonstrators were vital, Johnson argues, to displaying the abuses of African Americans to the eyes of the nation.⁶⁴ Christine Harold and Kevin DeLuca also analyze the power of shocking images, suggesting that widespread dissemination of images of Emmett Till's mutilated body communicated the "all-too-common consequence of blackness" and became "a powerful symbol of resistance and community."⁶⁵ Although an image of Till's closed casket or crowds of people listening to King's speeches could have been disseminated in place of photographs of Till's body, the strategy of using violent and potentially triggering/distressing images resulted in a protest ideology that is designed to shock and force viewers to confront the reality of grievances and injustices.

Although images act as powerful symbols that can communicate ideologies of protest strategies, readers also can work to imply the underlying ideological leanings of protest participants. In one such example, Adrienne E. Christiansen and Jeremy J. Hanson focus on the implied ideology of the *how* of protest by using Kenneth Burke's comic frame to analyze AIDS and reproductive rights activists' "Stop the Church" campaign of 1989, which decried the church for its role in US politics and its stance on homosexuality and abortion rights. Using a mixture of comedy, art, theatre, and parody—including mock tombstones, fancy dress, and a torpedo-sized mock condom—activists were accused by some critics of making a party out of a protest and, consequently, could not be taken seriously.⁶⁶ In another study that features performance as a key strategy, Svilen Trifonov analyzes the carnivalesque nature of Bulgaria's 2013 antigovernment protests. For Trifonov, nonviolent, carnivalesque tactics enabled activists to move beyond the norms of democratic dissent in their protests against the Bulgarian government by

communicating “an attitude of creative disrespect.”⁶⁷ Niamh NicGhabhann also maps creative and performative strategies used by protesters in the Republic of Ireland to draw attention to abortion rights. During these protests, professional artists and community groups joined together to amplify their message through the use of art and the occupying of public spaces.⁶⁸ Although these studies analyze data that are similar to the data that I analyze, these scholars do not take the next step to formulate a protest ideology.

Another set of studies deals with artistic performances, and Caitlin Bruce, for example, explores the use of music, singing, dancing, and the balaclava as vehicles of resistance and the ideological connectedness among supporters of the Russian punk/activist band Pussy Riot. Protesters used the balaclava as an object that challenged state authority and drew attention to the imprisonment of members of Pussy Riot.⁶⁹ Bruce’s analysis of the balaclava is one of many studies that analyzes how protesters use mundane, everyday items as protest tools. David R. Gruber, for instance, analyzes how a US\$10 IKEA stuffed toy wolf named *Lufsig*, reminiscent of the protagonist in *Little Red Riding Hood*, became a “folkloric image with a profane linguistic twist”—loosely translated from Cantonese to English, the *Lufsig* means “throw your mother’s cunt.”⁷⁰ According to Gruber, *Lufsig* became a “soft, cuddly vessel of political rage.”⁷¹ In another example of Hong Kongers’ use of mundane, everyday items as protest tools, Andrew Gilmore explores how Umbrella Revolution protesters made artistic use of double-decker buses by transforming them into democratic billboards that communicated the present, past, and future of Hong Kong’s existence.⁷² Like the use of stuffed animals, the careful nonpermanent decoration of double-decker buses gestured toward Hong Kongers’ ideological leanings of ensuring that the Umbrella Revolution remained an artistic and largely nonviolent protest movement.

Again, while the performative themed studies pointed to here do not explicitly highlight the ideologies of protesters, the fact that protesters are choosing to sing, dance, and express their anger through the use of items of clothing, modes of transport, toys, and the use of public spaces is in stark contrast to protesters who choose more violent forms of protest. Thus, protesters who chose these particular strategies are likely to harness ideologies that value nonviolent and peaceful interaction over more violent forms of protest.

In addition to the analysis of performances that take place in certain spaces, a number of scholars have drawn attention to the role and use of the physical place in which protests are occurring. In their essay considering “place in protest,” for example, Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook focus on how the rhetorical performance and (re)construction of places in protest can align with the goals of a social movement. For Endres and Cook, where a protest is taking place should be considered in addition to speeches, marches, signs, and other protest tactics that traditionally are associated with protests. Although the authors do not explicitly associate the use of place with the performance of an ideology, by invoking “a particular place as warrant for a claim,” protesters are, perhaps inadvertently, communicating an ideology of the nature of protest.⁷³ In another place-based study, Isaac West explores the decision of People in Search of Safe and Accessible Restrooms (PISSAR) activists’ decision to take their grievances to public restrooms. For West, this move by PISSAR represents a form of embodied politics that challenged power relations and rhetorically produced a particular identity for the activists.⁷⁴

Another representative example of how particular spaces can be used by protesters is Daniel Handley’s exploration of how Pittsburgh became a site that was reconstructed to “signify a larger meaning” in a movement in which African Americans attempted to resist urban renewal.⁷⁵ The protesters created a public “hush harbor” space—a highlighted safe space, often

in the form of a church or a barber shop, where community members could openly discuss ideas without interference or judgment from white members of the community.⁷⁶ Although Handley does not draw on ideology explicitly, by creating a public space, participants were enacting an ideology of peaceful discussion and debate rather than of violence.

As digital connectivity enables protesters to communicate to the entire world, it has become integral to today's social movements.⁷⁷ Young protesters today are "digital natives," and the internet and other digital platforms have become embedded in their protest strategies and ideologies.⁷⁸ A burgeoning body of scholarship explores the ever-increasing use of online and digital protest tools. Megan Boler, Averie Macdonald, Christina Nitsou, and Anne Harris, for example, explore the roles of women in the Occupy movement. Because women tend to take on certain responsibilities online, the authors suggest an ideology of a DIY *ethos* that characterized the Occupy movement as well as gender discrimination concerning the often-hidden labor of women.⁷⁹ Kate Drazner-Hoyt provides another example of a study of online strategies in social movements. She analyzes a hashtag that became part of the public consciousness following the death of Michael Brown, who was shot by a police officer in Missouri. For Drazner-Hoyt, #Handsupdontshoot became an extension of Brown's (dead) body and a symbol of the lived experiences of African Americans.⁸⁰ Again, while ideology is not highlighted in the essay, the fact that protesters chose to politicize a hashtag as opposed to reacting to a shocking and deadly incident with yet more violence implicitly reveals the ideology concerning the nature of protest of those involved.

In each of the examples of representative literature analyzing protest strategies I have summarized in this section, ideology is not explicitly used as a central focus of consideration. However, by offering salient examples of specific strategies used in protest movements, these

studies provide a starting point for my own analysis and are particularly useful for helping me answer my second research question concerning the protest mechanisms that communicate the ideologies of the protest strategies of Hong Kong's Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. They provide me with a starter list for the kinds of strategies protesters might use and the nature of the ideologies of protest strategies they might suggest.

Research Design

As a rhetorical critic, I present and contribute my own description, interpretation, and evaluation of my data. However, by adhering to a rhetorical perspective, I acknowledge that my findings throughout this study are not definitive or absolute. By using grounded theory, I create and argue for the origins of an initial theory—a starter theory that others can use as a guide for others. The theory I form does, of course, come from limited data and, although I form and name two ideologies in my study, there undoubtedly are many more. I used a variety of data in this study to answer my research questions: (1) participant interviews; (2) mass media; (3) social media; and (4) my own embodied experiences. My decision to use certain data sources is rooted in a humanistic perspective that forefronts human beings. Thus, although I had eight initial interview questions, I followed a semi-structured approach to my conversations with Hong Kongers and I gave them the space and time to go into as much detail as they felt comfortable related to Hong Kong protests and their democratic desires. In addition, interactions with interviewees helped to guide the choices I made with regards to selecting data, including media and social media sources. Before I explain my sources of data and their parameters in detail and the method I used to analyze these data, I turn to outlining the intricacies of studying a protest movement that was ongoing while I wrote this study.

Temporal Considerations

After seventy-nine days, the Umbrella Revolution was brought to a conclusive end on December 15, 2014, when police moved in to clear the remaining on-street camp sites. The end and, indeed, the beginning of the Hard Hat Revolution were not as definitive. Unrest in Hong Kong was still ongoing and evolving as I wrote, and this is an element of my study that I had to carefully consider. Meaghan Morris asks how we “stabilize” an object of analysis in light of grappling with “information flows” and “high-speed temporal forms.”⁸¹ Annoyed by transformation of her object of study—the Sydney Tower—Morris lamented that this imposed a tense change on her account that saw her writing about “history” instead of “discourse.” Consequently, she was forced to enter into what she saw as a “different relationship” with her site of analysis that “threatened the legitimacy” of her research.⁸² Addressing such a dilemma facing researchers, Lawrence Grossberg asks what a researcher should do when “every event is potentially evidence, potentially determining, and at the same time, changing too quickly to allow the comfortable leisure of academic criticism.”⁸³ Henri Lefebvre, too, grappled with this issue, writing that some of his work was never published or, in fact, never completed due to the “momentous changes taking place in society.”⁸⁴

I dealt with temporal considerations related to the two Hong Kong protests by setting a specific start and end date for my analysis of the protests. Although the most recent round of unrest in Hong Kong began in March 2019, I consider the start of the Hard Hat Revolution to be when the first major protest march occurred on June 12, 2019. Although participation in the Hard Hat Revolution dwindled due to the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the protest movement is still taking place. Indeed, throughout 2020, Hong Kongers faced multiple new threats to their eroding sense of autonomy; these threats and challenges are explored in the

epilogue of this study. For the purposes of my analysis, my four analytical chapters focus on the entire seventy-nine days of the Umbrella Revolution and the period of June 12 to December 31, 2019, for the Hard Hat Revolution.

Data

In this section, I explicate each of my four data sources, explaining why I chose particular types of data and how they contribute to my study. To conclude this section, I explain how the data work together and why it was important to use them in conjunction in order to study the ideology of protest strategies in the Hong Kong revolutions.

Interviews

In 2015 and 2019, I was present in Hong Kong for two research trips and was able to carry out a number of in-person interviews with Hong Kong protesters. I planned to return to the city in the summer of 2020 to carry out further interviews. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, however, travel was not possible. Consequently, I used a mixture of in-person interviews from time spent in Hong Kong in 2015 and 2019 supplemented with online/virtual interviews in 2020. Although I originally planned to interview participants in Hong Kong via Zoom or Skype calls, interactions with a number of potential interviewees revealed that because of the ongoing political unrest in Hong Kong, they only felt comfortable communicating via the messaging platforms WhatsApp and Telegram due to fear of being listened to by the authorities. Consequently, I broadened the choices offered to potential interviewees to accommodate their desires for alternative communication channels. Despite offering this options, my interview pool was significantly reduced and, as a further explicate in the epilogue to this study, I was only able to carry out a total of twelve interviews in 2019 and 2020.

I recruited participants using purposeful and convenience sampling through the use of informal acquaintances in Hong Kong.⁸⁵ This form of recruiting enabled me to select participants who closely fit the parameters of my study and who were easily accessible through established contacts. After finding and interviewing initial participants, I also turned to snowball sampling. In this recruitment approach, a researcher asks interviewees to recommend other potential participants.⁸⁶

After locating willing participants and securing their consent, all interviews followed the funnel method of qualitative inquiry.⁸⁷ I began the interviews with broad questions that enabled me to gather initial data before narrowing my focus to ask more structured and specific probing questions.⁸⁸ This “iterative approach” enables a researcher to alternate between the use of existing theory while still considering emergent data and theories that come to light during qualitative research.⁸⁹

Inclusion criteria I used for interviews stated that participants must be over the age of eighteen years, must be able to communicate in English, and must have taken part in some way in Hong Kong’s 2019 protests. Each participant was compensated with a digital gift card worth US\$25 (HK\$195).

My initial eight interview questions were:

1. What took you to the sites of the protest in the 2019 protests?
2. What do you think Hong Kongers were trying to achieve through protest?
3. In an ideal scenario, what would you like to see changed in Hong Kong?
4. What media, news outlets, or other sources have you been using/accessing to keep up to date with what is happening regarding protests in Hong Kong?
5. What are your thoughts about current Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam?

6. What are your thoughts about former Hong Kong Chief Executive CY Leung?
7. Did you prefer CY Leung or Carrie Lam as Hong Kong's Chief Executive?
8. In your opinion, what were the main differences between the Hong Kong protests of 2014 and 2019?

Although the first four questions were included for contextualization and to uncover potential answers to my research questions, the second set of questions represents more pointed, specific questions chosen to correlate directly to chapters 3, 4, and 5 of my study. The questions laid out above are associated with Institution Review Board Protocol:19-9116H. The interviews I carried out in 2015 are associated with Institution Review Board Protocol:15-0407. The interview data from 2015, however, were not used in the analytical chapters of my study. Instead, those data are included in chapter 2 to provide context for my study.

Interview data contributed to my study in two primary ways. First, interviews ensured that I was hearing directly from Hong Kong protesters and was not speculating about them or speaking on their behalf. Second, interviews allowed me to probe interlocutors and expand on emergent themes by asking follow-up questions and securing more in-depth perspectives.

Social Media

Hong Kong protests have become renowned as networked movements that embrace social media and other digital platforms. With this in mind, in addition to interviewing Hong Kong protesters, I also analyzed online content, including Twitter feeds and Instagram posts published from the outbreak of the Umbrella Revolution in 2014 to the end of 2019. The social media content that I analyzed included posts published by a number of Hong Kong activists, including Joshua Wong, Badiucao, Resistgirl.diary, Ar YU, and memes.hk. In addition, I analyzed the content created by the left-leaning Hong Kong political party Lsd_HongKong and

Hong Kong's pro-democracy party Demosisto. In addition to these activists, I also analyzed content posted by independent photographers and journalists, including Laurel Chor and May James.

Together, social media sources allowed me to access and analyze a wide range of voices, including official media sources, political groups, democracy activists, and independent journalists. As networked movements, the importance of social media content in Hong Kong protests cannot be overlooked. Moreover, the analysis of social media content was vital because some of these activists—including artist Badiucao, who is residing in Australia for fear of reprisal if he returns to Hong Kong—are not present in the city but continue to express themselves via social media. Analyzing their social media posts was the only way to access these important individuals and enabled me to gain insight into the protest strategies of Hong Kongers even when they were not physically in the city.

Mass Media

A third source of data for my study were traditional outlets of mass media. I analyzed a range of traditional media sources, including the *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, *Hong Kong Free Press (HKFP)*, *China Daily*, the *People's Daily*, the *New York Times (NYT)*, the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Economist*, and *Time*. I chose these media sources because they represent a wide range of different ideological perspectives, including mainland Chinese/Party commentary (*China Daily*, the *People's Daily*); established Hong Kong news sources (*SCMP*); independent, not-for-profit Hong Kong media (*HKFP*); respected Western news reports (*NYT*, *BBC*); and magazine-type periodicals that focus on policy and current affairs (*Foreign Policy*, *The Economist*, and *Time*). In addition to using traditional

news stories, I also analyzed the social media feeds of the traditional media outlets listed above.⁹⁰

Newspapers provided me with basic facts about what was taking place in a city thousands of miles from where I was located as I completed this study. In addition to providing me with basic data in the form of images and quotes, analysis of the mass media provided me with a range of different perspectives linked to the geographical location and ideological leanings of each news outlet.

Embodied Experience

Although I was not in Hong Kong during the 2014 Umbrella Revolution, I was present in the city in the early stages of the 2019 Hard Hat Revolution. As a result, in addition to using the data described above, my analysis of the Hard Hat Revolution included my own photographs, observations, and experiences of living in Hong Kong for three years. During my time living in Hong Kong, I walked the streets and smelled the air, including the aroma of stinky tofu from the stall on the corner of Argyle Street and Tung Choi Street in Mong Kok and the smell of orchids from Flower Market Road. I have heard—and still hear—the clacking of the crosswalks as I waited to cross the teeming intersection opposite my Wan Chai apartment. I have stepped over drunken bodies heaped on the floor after a night of excess in Lan Kwai Fong. On afternoons of intense heat and humidity, I have battled crowds in the Ladies Market to barter for gifts. I have been in the Central district on smoggy days when the top of Hong Kong’s International Finance Centre tower disappears behind a plume of thick, polluted air that has blown in from mainland China. In short, I am more than familiar with Hong Kong’s materiality—its sights, its sounds, its smells; I can close my eyes and be in the city.⁹¹ These embodied experiences aided in my analysis of the revolutions of both 2014 and 2019.

Returning to the city in 2019, I (quite literally) brushed shoulders with protesting Hong Kongers. For Candice Rai, “being there” is a process that sees a critic inhabit a space and joins other bodies in “concrete times and places” in order to try to comprehend the rhetoric that is taking place.⁹² While in Hong Kong, I spoke to protesters in the city’s streets and sat with them on the sidewalks. This means that my experiences and perceptions of the Hard Hat Revolution are different from my observations of the Umbrella Revolution. Thus, instead of analyzing images of the Lennon Wall as I did in my analysis of the Umbrella Revolution, in 2019, I experienced the Lennon Wall firsthand. I stood and witnessed individuals writing and adding their messages to the wall, lighting candles to honor the dead, and silently praying. Back at my desk in Colorado, I analyzed images, but they were images that *I* took and, moreover, I analyzed, reflected, and wrote with my own embodied experiences in mind.

Carole Blair argues that little credence should be granted to researchers who neglect to visit and be present in a space they are studying.⁹³ “We must pose the question,” writes Blair, “of how we, as critics, make the object ‘real.’”⁹⁴ In their “friendly revision” of Blair’s argument that studying material places calls for “being there,” Greg Dickinson and Giorgia Aiello go one step farther, arguing that “being *through* there matters [emphasis added].”⁹⁵ For Dickinson and Aiello, critical analysis of a space involves more than simply being present in the space. By studying materiality, bodies, and movement, researchers take their “empirical selves (which are always mediated, symbolic, material, biological, chemical, imaginative, and extended through time and space) into experiential contact with the world they are studying.”⁹⁶ Ergo, my experiences of being *in-situ*—in “close contact with things and places”—was vital to my analysis in that it provided me with detailed knowledge of Hong Kong, despite not “being there” at the time of analyzing and writing.⁹⁷

My data of interviews, social media, mass media, and embodied experience were used together in this study to accomplish triangulation, which is used to increase the credibility of research findings.⁹⁸ Of the four types of triangulation offered by Norman K. Denzin (data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation), I am concerned with data triangulation, in which a researcher focuses on particular groups of people, places, or periods of time using multiple data-collection methods.⁹⁹ By using multiple methods, triangulation helped me produce a study that helped reduce my fundamental biases and allowed me to offer a balanced explanation of my object of study.¹⁰⁰

Data Analysis

To analyze my data, I used the grounded theory method as developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss.¹⁰¹ Grounded theory is rooted in several basic assumptions. One is that the focus of the process is on theory generation rather than on theory verification. The researcher does not undertake the research task with hypotheses in mind that are either verified or rejected. Instead, grounded theory is focused on the systematic review of data that will result in the development of propositions or hypotheses about them. Because there are very few previous studies that deal with my topic of the ideology of protest strategies, I was unable to begin with hypotheses and instead focus on developing a theory. A second assumption behind grounded theory is that an inductive rather than a deductive process is used to generate the theoretical framework. This means that there is very little idea of what the structure of a phenomenon is prior to the inception of the research. Another feature of this method is that the framework that is generated is data based—both in terms of its generation and presentation; no theorizing occurs apart from the data. Finally, a framework or theory is seen as emergent and as a process rather

than a product. The resulting patterns are considered to constitute steps on the road to understanding of the phenomenon rather than a final statement about its nature.

The grounded theory method of analysis involves five key steps: (1) The data are coded for concepts or ideas that answer the research questions. The research questions provide guides for what passages or images should be coded. A phrase or label is assigned to the coded passage or image that describes what the researcher is seeing in that passage that is most important. (2) The codes are then sorted into categories according to similar topics, and the categories are assigned general labels. (3) The codes in each category are assessed for their fit with the category, and data that are less relevant or less representative examples of the categories are eliminated. (4) The nature of the category itself is assessed. If more than one category is evident, it is divided into smaller categories. If some categories overlap, they are combined into one. (5) A theoretical framework or conceptual schema is developed from the data that ties the data together and provides a coherent answer to the research question that is original and not obvious.

Significance of Study

My study of the ideology of protest strategies of the two Hong Kong revolutions is significant for four reasons. First, this study is not just a project *about* Hong Kong and its protests; the questions I ask about Hong Kong are important because of the importance of Hong Kong in the world. Hence, my study focuses on Hong Kong as a site of rhetorical production that is important not only for the future of Hong Kong but also for global citizens. The latest episodes in Hong Kong's long-running democracy debate are not confined to the city; what happens in a relatively tiny city that is one hundred times smaller than New York City does have profound effects on the rest of the world. As a trade and finance hub, Hong Kong is a "strategic exchange node" that has traditionally acted as the West's "gateway to China" and, conversely, as China's

gateway to the West.¹⁰² Hong Kong, then, has played a key role in often being able to temper United States-China relations. The US public support of Hong Kong's recent democracy protests, however, means that Hong Kong now has the potential to create barriers rather than bridges between the two nations.¹⁰³ Although the effects of mainlandization are a pressing global concern, outside of Hong Kong, the ramifications of China's growing influence are perhaps most evident in the United States. A third of the 1.1 million international students in the United States hail from China—seven thousand of whom are from Hong Kong—and they contributed over US\$30 billion in tuition fees into the US economy in 2015.¹⁰⁴ When all expenses are accounted for, the amount contributed by Chinese students to the US economy is over US\$11 billion.¹⁰⁵

My study is important for a second reason—it is relevant to China's actions concerning other territories. These actions have the potential to affect the world in profound ways. As Chinese President XI Jinping's "Chinese Dream" seeks to unite China's territories under its "one China" policy, the escalating situation in Hong Kong represents "the greatest turmoil in China" since the 1989 incident in Tiananmen Square.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, analysis of Hong Kong's protests is relevant to mainland China but also other territories that China is targeting under its "one China" umbrella, including Macau, Taiwan, and Tibet. Understanding China's response to the Hong Kong protests may provide clues to how some of the other territories may respond to increase the likelihood of their resistance to China's efforts at domination.

As a third reason for my study, the ideologies of protest strategies I explore in this study also are relevant to other protest movements, especially nondemocratic ones. What I learn about Hong Kong may provide an understanding of how such protests operate. Ralph Cintron, for example, posits that since the fall of the Berlin Wall, democratic protests have become a global or transnational phenomenon."¹⁰⁷ Many cities and nations across the globe are suffering the same

contestations as Hong Kong. For example, a state of emergency was declared in Chile when citizens protested the rising cost of living and issues of inequality. While up to one-million people were reported to have taken part in a peaceful march in Santiago, the situation quickly escalated, and more than seven-thousand protesters were detained, hundreds were injured, and at least sixteen people died.¹⁰⁸ In early October 2019, anti-government rallies in Iraq led to the shooting of at least 149 protesters.¹⁰⁹ In response to issues of government corruption, economic crisis and other localized issues, Egypt, Lebanon, Ecuador, and England also witnessed mass-scale protests in late 2019.

Finally, there is a theoretical contribution my study makes to the understanding of protest movements that is currently lacking in existing scholarship. As highlighted in my literature review, studies concerning how the conception of protests held by the participants affects a protest movement is an understudied area of research. My study seeks to address this gap and, in doing so, provide a new way for thinking about and analyzing protest movements.

Preview of Study

In this first chapter of my study, I have laid the foundations for my study; outlined my research questions; defined key terms that will be used throughout my study; provided a literature review of relevant protest movement scholarship; explicated my research design, including an explanation of my data and how I will analyze it; and offered reasons for the significance of my study. In chapter 2, I provide context to explicate Hong Kong's current status as a quasi-independent territory of mainland China and unpack a number of elements that led to the outbreak of Hong Kong's Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. In chapter 3, my analysis uncovers the contrasting ways in which both revolutions were conceptualized using metaphors of the home. In chapter 4, I analyze how protesting Hong Kongers made contrasting use of public

transportation infrastructure in the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolution. In chapter 5, I explore the portrayal and treatment of Hong Kong's chief executives during the two protests (CY Leung in 2014 and Carrie Lam in 2019). Although both leaders are considered to be proxies for Beijing's governance of Hong Kong, protesters' opinions and level of anger and violence directed toward the two leaders contrasted greatly between the Umbrella Revolution and Hard Hat Revolution. In chapter 6, I summarize my study, highlighting its contributions to protest movement scholarship. I conclude with an epilogue in which I trace events that took place in Hong Kong following the December 2019 cutoff date for my analysis, review some of the new threats that continue to affect Hong Kong's relationship with mainland China, and consider how recent events in Hong Kong might affect me as a former and potential future resident of Hong Kong, scholar, and a global citizen.

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CHAPTER 2:

UNPACKING MAINLANDIZATION

Having laid the foundations for my study in chapter 1, I turn in this chapter to focus more specifically on Hong Kong. I unpack some of the factors that, since Hong Kong's return to mainland Chinese rule in 1997, have accumulated to make the city ripe for the two protest movements on which I focus in this study—the 2014 Umbrella Revolution and the 2019 Hard Hat Revolution. Beginning by offering definitions of the so-called *mainlandization* of Hong Kong, I proceed by addressing seven of the main facets of mainlandization—(1) politics; (2) plutocratization; (3) housing; (4) identity; (5) language; (6) education; and (7) the media—and explicate how and why these facets led to the outbreak of sustained periods of unrest in Hong Kong since 2014. I end this chapter by offering a brief overview of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions.

The Mainlandization of Hong Kong

After 150 years of British colonial rule, Hong Kong was returned to the People's Republic of China (PRC) on July 1, 1997. The signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration—a legally binding treaty—in 1984 set out a number of specific terms to which the Communist Party of China (the Party) agreed in relation to Hong Kong's return to the mainland. The overarching policy of the Joint Declaration—the “one country, two systems” policy—was designed to ensure that Hong Kong would remain autonomous from mainland China, and the city's way of life would remain unchanged for fifty years. Since the signing of the Joint Declaration, however, the Party's governance of Hong Kong has been a contentious issue, and its actions in the city have led large numbers of Hong Kongers and scholars to argue that a transition that was supposed to

take fifty years has been accelerated.¹ This Party interference is often referred to as the *sinification, Chinafication, or mainlandization* of Hong Kong.

Mainlandization—the term I will use throughout this dissertation—is defined by David Gruber as “the encroaching influence” of mainland China in Hong Kong.² Ching Cheong, meanwhile, is more specific, positing that mainlandization represents the “the erosion of freedom, plurality, tolerance, respect for human rights and the rule of law” in Hong Kong.³ As the Party has sought to exert greater control and influence over Hong Kong politically, economically, socially, and culturally, many people in Hong Kong believe they are being forced to converge with China in a way that amounts to a form of colonization that Stephen J. Hartnett refers to as “postcolonial colonialism.”⁴ As a result of this forced convergence and China’s ever-increasing influence over Hong Kong, many Hong Kongers claim that the uniqueness of their city is slowly ebbing away.⁵ Thus, before turning to provide an overview of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, in the sections that follow, I unpack seven of the main facets of mainlandization.

Politics

The most pressing concern regarding mainlandization is the Party’s interference in Hong Kong’s political system. The Party’s insistence on requiring Hong Kongers to vote from a carefully selected pool of pre-approved and carefully vetted candidates has led to “fervent debates” regarding the issue of democracy and the “ominous erosion of civil liberties.”⁶ While the Party views its offering of a pool of candidates as being a democratic process, for many, it offers “fake suffrage” and allows the Party to maintain “a permanent stranglehold” over Hong Kong’s political system.⁷ Although chosen by Hong Kongers, the city’s chief executives are viewed by observers as “Party proxies” in Hong Kong.⁸

Although the Party's insistence on limiting Hong Kong's democratic allowances is problematic, the city's political system is suffering in other ways as well. Human rights scholar Xiao Shu believes the corruption of the city's politics is "messing Hong Kong up" and that the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Hong Kong is at the heart of this corruption.⁹ Through the sale of Congress and National Committee seats at banquets and other formal events and the offer of "power-for-money deals," the Liaison Office has "drowned in the ocean of corruption," affecting Hong Kong's integrity.¹⁰

Plutocratization

The issues of corruption that are deeply embedded in Hong Kong life reach beyond the walls of the city's government headquarters. Indeed, Hong Kong has become "addicted" to keeping apart the rich and the poor and commentators assert that Hong Kong has morphed into a plutocracy.¹¹ As this gap between the rich and the poor Hong Kong becomes greater, the vast amounts of money spent and invested by elite classes in Hong Kong are leading to the plutocratization of the city.¹² Defined as a society that is governed by the wealthy, elite, or a ruling class of people whose power derives from their wealth, *plutocracy* was a word used habitually by people with whom I interacted in Hong Kong. The perception that a plutocracy has developed stems from the upward mobility and often unexplained wealth of mainlanders in Hong Kong which, in turn, has led to the fragmentation and disparity of wealth in the city and to a spiral of downward mobility for locals across Hong Kong.

Within debates about plutocratization, a key source of contention is how mainlanders accumulate their "ill-gotten gains" in Hong Kong. For example, the bulk purchasing of apartments is a way of laundering money out of China in a bid to circumvent a mainland law that limits the amount of money that Chinese citizens can exchange overseas.¹³ This exodus of

money from China was highlighted in the 2016 *Panama Papers*, which reported that Hong Kong's innumerable currency-exchange shops are aiding in the flow of money from the mainland at an "unprecedented rate."¹⁴ The leaked documents revealed that at least seven current and former Chinese leaders and their families, including President Xi Jinping, were among the biggest perpetrators of these laundering acts. Chinese leaders, then, can be viewed among the leading plutocrats driving the mainlandization of Hong Kong.

Evidence for the growing notion of the plutocratization of Hong Kong also can be seen in *The Economist's* crony-capitalism index.¹⁵ Published on an annual basis, the index is designed to measure and compare countries based on their main sources of wealth and then to count the number of crony businesses in the country, defined as industries that are "vulnerable to monopoly, or that involve licensing or heavy state involvement," thus ranking the places where government-connected businesses are most likely to prosper.¹⁶ With almost sixty "crony" business sectors versus twenty-two "non-crony" sectors, Hong Kong ranks first in the world for crony-sector wealth. Russia, with fewer than twenty "crony" business sectors, ranks second, while the United States is sandwiched between Thailand and Poland in seventeenth place.¹⁷ Hong Kongers with whom I have spoken have noted that, across the city, this disparity of wealth is the real issue disrupting the daily lives of Hong Kongers and driving their anger toward the Party.

Hong Kong, home to the sixth highest number of billionaires in the world, is a city that varies from obscene wealth to desperate poverty.¹⁸ In 2017, the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) reported that the richest 10 percent of households in Hong Kong earn around forty-four times the amount of the poorest families.¹⁹ Despite attempts by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (GovHK) to address the city's wealth disparity, the city's

then-chief executive CY Leung made a statement during the height of the Umbrella Revolution explaining that the reason genuine universal suffrage in Hong Kong would not be successful was because “you would be talking to half of the people in Hong Kong who earn less than HK\$1,800 a month. Then you would end up with those kind of politics and policies.”²⁰ Leung’s statement is indicative of the Party’s stance, in which the post-Communist plutocracy is wary of giving too much power, voice, and political agency to Hong Kong’s poorer citizens. Put simply, by continuing to refuse genuine democracy, the Party and GovHK ensure that the rich continue accumulating wealth, while the poor continue their struggle to survive. And so, the Party’s governance of Hong Kong ensures that the plutocracy is maintained.

Housing

Nowhere is the notion of the plutocratization of Hong Kong more visible than in the city’s unsustainable housing market. As Hong Kong’s property market continues to be a popular place for “rich mainlanders . . . to park their money,” the city has ranked at the top of a global list of cities with unaffordable housing for over a decade.²¹ With a median housing price of US\$631,026 and a median income of only US\$37,020, large groups of Hong Kongers can no longer afford to reside in their own city and have been pushed to its outlying areas.²² Hong Kong journalist and author Joyce Man explains the frustration many feel as a result. “I resent that being a homeowner in Hong Kong means saving for over a decade to buy a miserable hovel in the boondocks,” laments Man.²³ The Tuen Mun suburb is one example of the far-flung areas of Hong Kong where mainlandization is taking hold to the detriment of Hong Kongers. Nestled in Hong Kong’s New Territories, Tuen Mun is a two-hour commute from the city’s Central district. With a square footage that is only “slightly larger than the average American kitchen” and a price tag of 2.9 million Hong Kong dollars (about US\$375,000), even the cheapest Tuen Mun

apartment is out of reach for a frustrated generation “increasingly unable to afford the lives their parents had.”²⁴ China’s forced convergence of Hong Kong with wealthy mainland investors has led to a dramatic sense of fragmentation within the city.

The concept of gentrification is often associated with the Anglo-American and Western heartland, but a look at the vanishing of Beijing’s heritage through the declining number of the city’s hutongs suggests that gentrification is spreading to Asia.²⁵ Indeed, scholars argue that despite a lack of research into gentrification in Hong Kong, it is manifest across the city.²⁶ One employee of a Hong Kong community alliance believes that the gentrification of Tin Shui Wai—one of Hong Kong’s poorest suburbs—underlines how the city is being “plagued” by the wealth gap that is increasingly polarizing the rich and the poor.²⁷ In more severe cases, some Hong Kongers are reduced to residing in “wire mesh cages resembling rabbit hutches” in dilapidated Kowloon buildings, roof top shanty towns, and “coffin homes” that are too small for inhabitants to fully stretch out their legs.²⁸

The gentrification generated by mainlandization is leading to the vanishing of local family-run businesses.²⁹ As street-side cobblers who mend shoes in a matter of minutes have been forced to abandon their rickety tin huts and locals who have peddled dumplings and egg waffles for generations are being forced to close their doors, these businesses have been replaced with lustrous and luxury apartment developments that are unobtainable for the average Hong Konger. Consequently, more people are leaving Hong Kong as locals and expats increasingly question their future in the city.³⁰ In a heartfelt op-ed for the *SCMP*, for example, Joyce Man echoes the sadness of many Hong Kongers as they contemplate leaving their home city. “It feels like desertion and betrayal,” she writes. Hong Kongers are leaving “not because they do not love Hong Kong, but because they can’t bear to see the home they love slip away.”³¹

Although the one country, two systems policy was designed so that Hong Kong's way of life would remain unchanged for the fifty years following the handover, some supporters of Hong Kong's independence believe that GovHK privileges China's needs over Hong Kong's. Because GovHK is "inclined to appease and bow down to the Party," pockets of pro-democracy advocates argue the "two systems" element of the handover is being disregarded.³² Indeed, one of the criticisms leveled at CY Leung during his time in office was his tendency to give "overwhelming priority to 'one country' over 'two systems.'" ³³ Journalist Tim Hamlett agrees, writing that Hong Kong *does* have two systems: one for the rich and one for the poor.³⁴

Identity

The economic disparity evident in Hong Kong has led to an identity battle as large groups of Hong Kongers feel they are losing their city to the influx of mainland Chinese citizens. Hong Kongers' growing resentment of the Party has "spilled over" and is increasingly directed toward residents of mainland China, resulting in great "social, identity, and cultural tensions" between Hong Kong citizens and residents from the mainland.³⁵ As their city converges with the mainland, Hong Kongers feel they are losing the fight against mainlandization, so stories that draw attention to the flaring tensions between Hong Kongers and mainlanders are commonplace across Hong Kong and in the Western media.³⁶

Many Hong Kongers perceive mainlanders as engaging in a host of inappropriate behavior. They "spit, litter, jaywalk and cut in line . . . they talk too loudly, eat on the subway and otherwise flout Hong Kong's more refined standards of public behavior."³⁷ Wealthy mainland visitors to Hong Kong are "dismissed as loutish boors who constantly flaunt their newfound wealth with newfound arrogance. . . . To the people of Hong Kong, the rich shoppers are *wong chung*—locusts—who buy whatever they can."³⁸ Hong Kongers' disdain of "mainland

parents allowing their children to urinate or even defecate in public” demonstrates just “how far apart culturally Hong Kong and mainland China are.”³⁹ Although the notion of mainlanders using public areas as a bathroom is sometimes perceived as an urban myth in the city, evidence suggests it is, in fact, not a myth.⁴⁰ As one interviewee told me, “I used to say I can't believe that, but I've actually seen it a couple of times now, and at first, I kept thinking, God, this has got to be staged . . . but no, I've actually seen it.”⁴¹ Many in Hong Kong, then, perceive mainlandization as a culture clash between the urbane locals and poorly behaved Chinese interlopers.

The disparaging sentiments directed to mainlanders from Hong Kongers were not born overnight. While the unease—or, in some cases, fear—that Hong Kong citizens feel toward the mainland has accelerated since 1997, long-standing tensions directed at the mainland and the Party were, in fact, initiated by Hong Kongers who risked their lives by migrating from the mainland in the 1950s to escape “the chaos of the Chinese civil war and Maoist repression.”⁴² Seeking refuge from the mainland, a large majority of the migrants settled in Hong Kong to raise families.⁴³ People went to Hong Kong to escape the hard labor, assaults, and repression of Communist China and to “seek protection and build a life that was separate from the mainland.”⁴⁴

When negotiations between Great Britain and the PRC regarding the question of Hong Kong's sovereignty began in 1982, the Hong Kong public realized that the city's return to China could become a reality. The Chinese citizens who had fled to Hong Kong were shocked; the nation that they had risked their lives trying to escape was about to return and take them back. For these Chinese migrants, reunification with the PRC would “defeat their entire life projects” of escaping the clutches of Communist China.⁴⁵ Many Hong Kongers base their sense of self on

the premise of separation from and rejection of the Party; mainlandization strikes them as very dangerous because it amounts to their forced convergence with the same Communist Party they fled generations ago. And so, over time, older generation Hong Kong families deliberately disassociated from their mainland roots and, despite moving to the relative safe haven of Hong Kong, still felt that “China was always too close for comfort.”⁴⁶

The trepidation, prejudices, and fears expressed toward the mainland by Hong Kong’s Chinese migrants have been ingrained in their children and grandchildren. Younger family members have grown up “know[ing] nothing other than Hong Kong,” an experience and a mindset that have led to the emergence of fragmented and hybrid identities that combine a sense of being Chinese (in a civilizational sense), Western (in a consumer and freedom sense), yet largely Hong Kongese or Hong Konger (in a unique sense).⁴⁷ Through the city’s period of British colonial rule, Sebastian Veg points out, Hong Kong cultivated a form of “pan-Chinese cultural identification”; and, thus, a Hong Kong identity and the notion of being Hong Kong-ese or a Hong Konger was adopted by citizens who did not “want to be ruled by a country that massacres its own people.”⁴⁸ Of course, between the signing of the Joint Declaration in 1984 and the actual handover in 1997, the 1989 “incident” in Tiananmen Square in Beijing did little to quell the fears and sense of ideological detachment that Hong Kongers felt toward the mainland. In fact, as Sharon Yam writes, public anxiety prior to the 1997 handover was so strong that many Hong Kongers emigrated or acquired citizenship in other countries to avoid living under Chinese rule.⁴⁹

At the ceremony to mark Hong Kong’s return to China in 1997, the Party worked hard to foster identification between Hong Kong and the mainland. Using a number of rhetorical strategies, including situational patriotism and consubstantiality, then-Chinese president Jiang

Zemin welcomed Hong Kongers “back into the embrace of the motherland” and attempted to persuade Hong Kongers to embrace a Chinese national identity.⁵⁰ As I will highlight later in this chapter, in addition to Jiang’s handover address, in the two decades since the handover, the Party has utilized other strategies and methods through Hong Kong’s educational system and media outlets to attempt to solidify a unified Chinese identity in Hong Kong.

Jiang’s strategy in his handover address was initially successful. Hong Kong University’s (HKU) semi-annual identity poll reveals that in the year immediately following the handover, after an initial small spike, the number of people in Hong Kong who identified as Hong Kongers dropped from 35 percent to under 30 percent. In the same period, the number of respondents identifying as Chinese rose from 18.6 percent to 31.6 percent. Just over twenty years later, however, that initial progress made by the Party had been reversed. HKU’s most recent data—collected in 2019 at the outbreak of the Hard Hat Revolution—reveals that over half (52.9 percent) of those surveyed identified as Hong Konger and, worryingly for the Party, only 10.8 percent identified as Chinese and 12.3 percent identified as Chinese in Hong Kong—a drop of over 48 percent.⁵¹ However, while Hong Kongers have worked to forge an identity that is unique and distinct from that of their mainland counterparts, the notion of being a “Hong Konger” has gone through “seismic changes” over the last decade, resulting in an “identity crisis” across the city.⁵² Many Hong Kongers take pride in their Chinese identity, “rooted in a rich philosophical and historical heritage of over five millennia.”⁵³ Although scholar Brian YS Wong and others see the value of a having dual Hong Kong/Chinese identity, many Hong Kongers do not share these sentiments.⁵⁴ For young Hong Kongers in particular, there is an ideological bridge separating themselves from mainlanders that simply cannot be crossed. In 2019, over 35 percent of Hong

Kongers admitted to having a “mixed identity,” and almost a quarter of those surveyed in Hong Kong still link the terms *China* or *Chinese* to their identity.⁵⁵

The fact remains, however, that despite being “steeped in Western ways” as a result of 150 years of British colonial rule, around 95 percent of Hong Kong’s population is Chinese born.⁵⁶ As a result, the identity of Hong Kongers is an entanglement of Chinese customs and Western sensibilities that means they cannot completely dissociate themselves from the mainland. Maintaining Chinese heritage, culture, and history while simultaneously upholding the liberties and rule of law that delineate Hong Kong from the rest of China is a delicate balancing act that forms a major part of the everyday lived experience for Hong Kongers.⁵⁷ Consequently, many Hong Kongers draw a clear distinction between China as a nation and China as a Communist regime and, while Hong Kongers do “not wholly repudiate the notion of being Chinese, a love of China does not necessarily entail the love of the CPC.”⁵⁸ Chinese scholar J. F. Tsai similarly notes this incongruity, observing that “in the past one hundred years, Hong Kong people politically identified China as their motherland and yet at the same time held a negative view of the government.”⁵⁹ Accordingly, in Hong Kong “an entire generation act on their sense of alienation from China and its values.”⁶⁰

Like all cultures, Hong Kong culture is by no means fixed; it is “generated by various national forces and interests rather than by a single origin.”⁶¹ Claiming to be “Asia’s world city,” the number of non-Chinese people living in Hong Kong (mainly British, Filipino, Indonesian, Indian, and Pakistani expatriates) rose by over 70 percent through the decade from 2008 to 2018.⁶² Consequently, Hong Kong is influenced by a multitude of national forces. However, while Hong Kong is often considered to be an inclusive and accepting society, there is one group of post-handover immigrants of whom many democracy-leaning Hong Kongers are wary,

believing they represent an attempt by the Party to change the demographics of Hong Kong: those from mainland China.⁶³

GovHK statistics reveal that 828,000 mainlanders settled permanently in Hong Kong between 2003 and 2014—around 11 percent of the city’s overall population.⁶⁴ A GovHK policy that allows 150 mainland residents per day to take up permanent residence in Hong Kong has invoked feelings of anger, fear, and disgust among many Hong Kongers and has led to Hong Kongers’ deep distrust and suspicion of mainland residents.⁶⁵ The increasing number of mainland “maternal tourists”—expectant mainland mothers who travel to Hong Kong with the explicit intention of giving birth to ensure their unborn children are granted permanent Hong Kong residency—is one source of Hong Kongers’ anger.⁶⁶ In addition to driving up real estate prices, the influx of mainland families has led to a lack of school places, employment opportunities, and a stalling of or decline in wages for Hong Kongers.⁶⁷ The permanent settlement of mainlanders in Hong Kong, however, is not the only issue facing the city. Immigration statistics reveal that since 1997, the number of tourists visiting Hong Kong from the mainland has risen from two million per year to a staggering forty million per year.⁶⁸ Consequently, Hong Kong and its citizens are not only besieged by mainlanders who live in Hong Kong but also by an influx of tourist bodies and money. Thus, as their city converges with the mainland, Hong Kongers feel they are losing the fight against mainlandization.

The sense of alienation and trepidation directed toward mainland residents from Hong Kongers is reciprocated as mainlanders, too, feel a sense of detachment from Hong Kongers. Journalist Sergey Radchenko believes that despite the various elements linking the mainland to Hong Kong, for many mainlanders, “Hong Kong is effectively a foreign country.”⁶⁹ Mainlanders feel patriotic toward Hong Kong, but they actually know little about the city, and the issues and

struggles faced by Hong Kongers do not resonate with many mainland residents. To many mainlanders, Hong Kong is “an attractive but hopelessly remote world of Cantonese pop singers and Jackie Chans,” and these cultural divisions make it “virtually impossible to bring the two mindsets together.”⁷⁰

Hong Kong’s push for genuine universal suffrage is a major point of contention that exacerbates the division between Hong Kongers and their mainland counterparts. Although she is not writing specifically about Hong Kong and China, Candice Rai sums up this divide eloquently: “Whatever it is we imagine democracy to mean, we can be sure that our neighbors will have a very different understanding.”⁷¹ Nowhere do Rai’s words resonate more than in Hong Kong. For many mainland residents, Hong Kongers have democracy, especially when compared to the Party’s strict Communist rule in China; Hong Kongers are, after all, offered a pool of potential candidates for chief executive from which to choose. Because the candidates are pre-approved by Beijing, however, Hong Kongers see the “democracy” offered to them by the Party as fake, a pseudo-democracy, and a democracy with Chinese characteristics that fails to offer the city the autonomy that they feel Beijing has long promised. Because the mindset and ideology of mainlanders and Hong Kongers are so different, observers have rebranded the one country, two systems policy as “one country, two nationalisms.”⁷² Hong Kong has become a “powder keg” of “narrower and more combative” ideologies and identities that has resulted in a toxic and often violent mentality of us (democracy-supporting Hong Kongers) vs. them (mainlanders).⁷³

The divide over democracy is not only evident between Hong Kongers and mainlanders; families across Hong Kong are being torn apart by politics. While “yellow” supporters (mainly comprised of young Hong Kong activists) hold grievances against GovHK and the city’s police force, “blue” supporters (mainly comprised of older Hong Kongers) support the same institutions

that their children and grandchildren are battling against.⁷⁴ Clear divides exist among different mindsets among Hong Kong residents. These divisions stem largely from the fact that older Hong Kongers have first-hand experiences of the extreme efforts the Party will deploy to support its totalitarian rule. Their experiences have led some members of Hong Kong's older generation to value stability over radical political change, a mindset that appeases the Party. Instead of stability, young Hong Kongers want real change—a life that is not dictated by the Party—and they are not afraid to stand up to and question the government. Young Hong Kongers have only experienced Hong Kong as a fairly free society separate from the mainland; as a consequence, they had not—prior to the Umbrella Revolution—witnessed Party brutality and its heavy forms of governance firsthand.

China's influence over Hong Kong has been exacerbated by the recent construction of high-speed rail links that mean travel from Hong Kong to the mainland can be completed in fifteen minutes. In addition, the completion of the world's longest sea-crossing bridge in 2018 now connects Hong Kong to the Chinese city of Zhuhai. Consequently, mainland China is physically closer than ever before to Hong Kong.⁷⁵ However, while Hong Kong's links to China appear to be getting closer, David Gruber explains that Hong Kongers still see themselves as “citizens of the world, with strong ties stretching back to England.”⁷⁶ The Party, however, is unable to accept this notion as it derails the plans for the “reunification” of Hong Kong with the mainland and conflicts with Xi Jinping's “Chinese Dream” that is hoped will lead to the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”⁷⁷

Language

Language is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity⁷⁸; thus, “when authorities want to destroy a place's culture, they start with language,” says pro-democracy Hong Konger Joe

Wong. The strategy of suppressing Cantonese in Hong Kong, laments Wong, is “yet another step to mainlandize Hong Kong and get rid of our unique identity.”⁷⁹ Scholars of identity, belonging, and intercultural communication agree. For Benedict Anderson, through language, “pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed.”⁸⁰ As Cantonese vanishes from the streets of Hong Kong, so, too, does the city’s past and, perhaps, any possibility of a democratic future.

Despite being the daily language of over 90 percent of Hong Kong’s ethnic Chinese population, Cantonese is not officially recognized by the Party.⁸¹ Instead, Cantonese is classed as a spoken vernacular, a decision that reinforces journalist Martin Jacques’s claim that the Party has “a very weak conception of cultural difference.”⁸² Believed to have originated in 220 AD (much earlier than Mandarin, which was not documented until the fourteenth century), Cantonese is much more than the language predominately spoken in Hong Kong.⁸³ It is a symbol that distinguishes Hong Kongers from the mainland Chinese and acts as a yardstick by which Hong Kongers measure their cultural and political differences from the mainland, a thought process that the Party and GovHK despise.⁸⁴

Translated literally as “common speech,” Mandarin or Putonghua was installed by the Party in 1982 as the country’s official language.⁸⁵ In debates about whether Mandarin should become the lingua franca of Hong Kong, the Party is often accused of deliberate attempts to suppress Cantonese.⁸⁶ Carrie Lam, Hong Kong’s current chief executive, rejects these claims, stating that it is “a non-issue.”⁸⁷ This response, however, has not quelled the commitment to Cantonese by Hong Kongers, and the decision about whether to speak Cantonese or Mandarin has now “become a political act.”⁸⁸

Not only do many Hong Kongers speak Cantonese rather than Mandarin, but they expect mainlanders to do the same while in Hong Kong. Kong Qing-dong, a Peking University professor, used an appearance on a Beijing talk show to air his disdain for the expectation by Hong Kongers that mainlanders speak Cantonese when in their city. Kong was firm that mainlanders “don’t have the responsibility to speak [the Hong Kong] dialect,” arguing instead that “everyone has the responsibility to speak Mandarin,” the Party’s preferred language of national convergence.⁸⁹ He called Hong Kongers who reject “the mother tongue” “bastards” and “British running dogs.”⁹⁰

While speaking Mandarin in Hong Kong is seen by some as “taboo” and an “unwelcome reminder” of the increasing mainlandization of the city, more of the city’s residents than ever before are speaking in Mandarin.⁹¹ Between 1996 and 2016, the number of Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong remained consistent (there was a slight drop from 95.2 percent of the population in 1996 to 94.4 percent in 2016). Moreover, the number of people speaking English as a second language jumped by over 15 percent (from 38.1 percent in 1996 to 53.2 percent in 2016).⁹² Although a quarter of Hong Kong’s population was able to speak Mandarin before the city’s handover, by 2016, this number had almost doubled, and a reported 48.6 percent of people living in Hong Kong had a command of Mandarin.⁹³ Some of this rise can be attributed to the increasing numbers of mainland Chinese settling permanently in Hong Kong, but it also is the result of Hong Kongers who realize fluency in Mandarin can help with upward mobility. With a total of 898 million Mandarin speakers and only seventy-three million Cantonese speakers across the globe, there is a recognition, especially among parents of young children, that, as the most widely spoken language across the globe, fluency in Mandarin may provide the “key to wealth and success.”⁹⁴

As schools discourage the use of Cantonese, middle-aged and older citizens are finding themselves having to communicate in Mandarin with their children and grandchildren.⁹⁵ In 2014 and 2015, advocacy groups in Hong Kong suggested that 70 percent of the city's primary schools and 40 percent of its secondary schools favor Mandarin over Cantonese for Chinese-language lessons.⁹⁶ University of Hong Kong lecturer Lau Chaak-ming believes that the gradual elimination of Hong Kong's mother tongue from the city's classrooms provides yet further evidence of how the Party's governance of and influence over Hong Kong is leading to the waning of the city's sense of local identity and culture.⁹⁷

Education

Discouraging the use of Cantonese in Hong Kong's classrooms is only one way in which mainlandization has infiltrated the city's schools. Since Hong Kong's return to China, as a proxy for the Party, GovHK has been tasked with "instilling a sense of Chinese patriotism" among Hong Kong citizens.⁹⁸ The Party views education as a crucial platform to "to shape thoughts and ideologies."⁹⁹ Although forms of patriotic education have been "seeping" into Hong Kong classroom since 1997, the task given to GovHK by the Party was perhaps most laid bare when, in 2012, it tried to introduce its National Education Policy.¹⁰⁰ For many, the National Education Policy was designed "deliberately to regulate and normalize Hong Kong people as Chinese" through "heavy doses of patriotism" and to promote a sense of a shared identity to students who "are taught to be positive about the mainland, learn to appraise its achievements, strengths, and future prospects, and accommodate any differences with Hong Kong."¹⁰¹ The proposed education policy included "lessons on Chinese government bodies and the correct etiquette for raising the national flag."¹⁰²

Before I explicate how Hong Kong's youth have reportedly been affected by "brainwashing propaganda" disseminated in the city's classrooms to "subtly manipulate a Chinese identity" to students, I turn to look at how educators are being affected by mainlandization.¹⁰³ Increasingly, Hong Kong's teachers complain that their academic freedoms are being surreptitiously eroded as they are being required to promote and teach a Chinese ideology to their students.¹⁰⁴

Many observers believe that the Party's interference in Hong Kong's educational system was laid bare when, in 2015, Hong Kong University voted to reject the promotion of Johannes Chan to a top administrative post. Despite recommendations in support of Chan from countless faculty and students, half of the official committee—all of whom were either appointed by CY Leung or had deep ties to the Party as delegates to the National People's Congress—voted to reject Chan for promotion. According to Ho Fung-Hung, Chan's rejection marked "the death of academic freedom in Hong Kong."¹⁰⁵ Chan's supporters believe that his area of expertise—constitutional law—in concert with his friendship with pro-democracy leader Benny Tai led to a decision "orchestrated by Beijing."¹⁰⁶ According to Denise Y. Ho from Yale University, Hong Kong scholars are under surveillance in universities as well, and their classrooms are no longer free from outside interference and scrutiny. "What are the implications of the stranger who appears in the audience of your lecture course, who appears again in the talk you've organized on China's Cultural Revolution?" asks Ho.¹⁰⁷

GovHK's attempts to implement the National Education Policy in 2012 ultimately failed.¹⁰⁸ The unexpected victory for Hong Kongers—however fleeting—led to the birth of the Hong Kong pro-democracy student activist group Scholarism and catapulted its fifteen-year-old leader, Joshua Wong, into the public consciousness.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the victory—again, however

temporary—instilled in Hong Kongers the belief that large-scale protests can lead to change in their city. The victory *was* short lived and, despite the fact that Leung’s proposed bill was later vetoed, reports suggest that Hong Kong classrooms are being infiltrated by mainlandization. After becoming chief executive, Lam’s decision to appoint pro-Beijing school principal Christine Choi as Hong Kong’s deputy secretary for education did nothing to squelch the growing fears of Hong Kongers.¹¹⁰ In 2017, after only a month in office, Lam again raised the issue of installing a patriotic curriculum. Even before taking office and succeeding Leung as the Hong Kong’s chief executive, Carrie Lam floated the idea of instilling “I am Chinese” in kindergarten children.¹¹¹

Media

Educators are not the only individuals who report that their sense of free speech is being regulated. Journalists, too, are feeling the strain of mainlandization under the ever-watchful eyes of the Party. Although China is ranked 178th out of 180 countries in a 2019 survey of freedom of the press—a statistic reinforced by China’s imprisoning of more journalists than any other nation—Hong Kong has been renowned for historically having a free press.¹¹² In fact, the rights and freedoms of the city’s press were specifically highlighted in the Joint Declaration that was agreed upon prior to Hong Kong’s return to the PRC in 1997. Despite the claim in the fifth article of the Joint Declaration that the “rights and freedoms, including those of the person, of speech, of the press, of assembly” would remain unchanged, since the handover, the mainlandization of the city’s press has been a much-explored and debated subject.¹¹³ Although recent reports and events suggest that the feared breach in Hong Kong’s press freedom after the handover is happening, it did not occur overnight. Indeed, there was little evidence of any serious erosion in Hong Kong’s press freedom in the years immediately

following 1997.¹¹⁴ Although scholar Chris Yeung wrote in 2001 that Hong Kong’s media were “healthy, diverse and independent,” the tide now appears to be turning.¹¹⁵

A report by the Committee to Protect Journalists highlights the battle that Hong Kong journalists and media outlets face in attempting to preserve their right to report freely.¹¹⁶ As the Party attempts to influence editorial content of both print and television media, journalists have succumbed to Party pressure, and Hong Kong’s press freedom has deteriorated.¹¹⁷ As an example, the largest free television station in Hong Kong, Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), has been regularly criticized by Hong Kongers for toeing the Party line with regards to its reporting.¹¹⁸ Much of TVB’s decision to censor its own content, however, probably stems from the fact that the network is owned by mainland Chinese media mogul Li Ruigang. His takeover of TVB was shrouded in controversy for apparently flouting regulations that restrict the ownership of Hong Kong broadcasters by non-Hong Kong entities, providing further evidence of the mainlandization and plutocratization of Hong Kong.¹¹⁹ As mainland Chinese investors now have financial stakes in 35 percent of Hong Kong’s media outlets, Li’s ownership of TVB is only the tip of the iceberg, and two newspapers—*Wen Wei Po* and the *Ta Kung Pao*—are owned outright by the Party.¹²⁰

Perhaps the most pressing incident of Chinese ownership of Hong Kong’s media involved the *SCMP*.¹²¹ In 2015, the *SCMP*, Hong Kong’s flagship English-language newspaper, was purchased by Jack Ma, one of China’s wealthiest tycoons and owner of Chinese e-commerce giant *Alibaba*.¹²² Angry Hong Kongers and the city’s expats immediately began to question the *SCMP*’s editorial independence, and *Alibaba*’s announcement that it purchased the publication in order to “promote wider views of China’s rise as a global economic power” did nothing to quell their fears.¹²³ One of Ma’s first acts as the *SCMP*’s owner was to close down the English-

language weekly newspaper *HK Magazine*. For twenty-five years, *HK Magazine* had provided over a quarter of a million readers with a mix of entertainment and social issues while often commenting in a lighthearted manner on the relationship between Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese.¹²⁴ All trace of *HK Magazine* vanished from the internet.

Rumors that the *SCMP* had morphed into a Party mouthpiece were compounded when the publication ran a controversial interview with a recently released Chinese activist who wished to express remorse for her actions against her country. After Wang Yu claimed in the interview, “I am a Chinese and I only accept the Chinese government’s leadership,” Hong Kong media analyst David Bandurski spoke of how the interview was eerily similar to the type of forced confessions broadcast on Chinese state media that have become commonplace since President Xi took control of the Party in 2012.¹²⁵ Incidents like this add credence to journalist Zheping Huang’s assessment that, as the suppression of Hong Kong media outlets increases, they become more like extensions of Chinese state media.¹²⁶ In other words, as mainlandization overtakes Hong Kong’s mainstream media outlets, news agencies can no longer be fully trusted because they face pressure to discredit Party critics and to portray the Party in a favorable light.¹²⁷

Because an increasing number of Hong Kong’s media organizations have business links with mainland China, journalists are increasingly succumbing to Beijing’s pressure.”¹²⁸ Describing *HK Magazine* as “a canary in the coal mine,” in his final piece for the magazine, Zach Hines wrote that “to be a truly independent press, you cannot be beholden to anyone except your readers. But, to my great dismay, this is becoming an increasing impossibility in Hong Kong.”¹²⁹ According to the Hong Kong Journalists Association’s annual survey, in 2019, one in five Hong Kong journalists reported that they were pressured by employers to report about the

city's independence movement in a certain way. Moreover, over 80 percent of journalists surveyed said that press freedom in Hong Kong had declined over the previous twelve months.

If Hong Kong journalists do not fall into line, the Party employs a variety of other strategies by which to “exercise its influence in a more covert, indirect, and careful manner.”¹³⁰ One such strategy is the deployment of the 50 Cent-Army. Researchers Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret Roberts estimate that, through the use of human proxies, the Party fabricates and posts about 484 million social media comments each year.¹³¹ To be able to disseminate such a vast amount of information, as many as two-million people are employed by the Party “to surreptitiously insert” huge amounts of “descriptive writings” into the deluge of social media posts.¹³² Given the formal title of *internet commentators*, the individuals tasked with infiltrating social media feeds are referred to colloquially as the *50-Cent Army* because they are reportedly paid fifty cents per online post.¹³³

Soldiers of the 50-Cent Army are instructed to post fabricated content as if they were “the genuine opinions of ordinary people.”¹³⁴ By posing as ordinary citizens, members of the 50-Cent Army can influence and shape public opinion by labeling “critical opinion leaders as traitors of the country” and “defending or promoting the government’s point of view.”¹³⁵ For political scientist Sheena Chestnut Greitens, members of the 50-Cent Army “mix control and activism” in their quest to “push [online] discussion toward pro-Party lines.”¹³⁶ These Party-funded “troll factories” are not confined to the control and dissemination of fake news in the mainland.¹³⁷ Taiwan and, more recently, Hong Kong have been viewed as a “test ground” for the Party’s cyber warfare techniques that aim to spread political discord through “coordinated inauthentic behavior” online.¹³⁸

Erosion of the city’s free press is happening at a much more accelerated rate than people realize. As Tom Grundy, editor-in-chief at the *Hong Kong Free Press (HKFP)* explains, “we often talk about a drip drip slow erosion,” but “we need to put these analogies to bed.”¹³⁹ At the time of the handover, the maintenance of Hong Kong’s free press was going to be one of the benchmarks by which the one country, two systems policy would be judged. With reports of press freedom shrinking, increasing police violence against journalists, and the threat of visa restrictions for journalists who do not toe the Party line, however, the very foundations of Hong Kong’s return to China appear to be failing.¹⁴⁰ According to Reporters Without Borders, Hong Kong has fallen from fifty-eight in 2013 to seventy-three in 2019 on the World Press Freedom Index.¹⁴¹

As the Party exerts an increased stranglehold over Hong Kong’s traditional media outlets, young, tech-savvy, pro-democracy Hong Kongers are turning to the city’s growing plethora of online and alternative media sources for their news coverage.¹⁴² Hong Kongers, for example, rallied around online news outlet *HKFP*. A groundswell of support not just from Hong Kongers, but across the globe has seen *HKFP*’s traffic jump from between 500,000 and one-million page views per month to four-and-a-half million per month.¹⁴³ Moreover, a successful crowdfunding campaign saw *HKFP* raise over a quarter of a million US dollars, enough to fund the publication for an entire year.¹⁴⁴ Citizen journalists who work for *HKFP* and other independent news organizations, however, are not immune from mainland influence and, consequently, carry out their work while facing potential risks. For example, during the Umbrella Revolution, *Apple Daily*—considered by many Hong Kong protesters with whom I spoke to be the only explicitly pro-democracy daily news source in Hong Kong—suffered multiple cyberattacks on its website, and its physical newspapers were destroyed at pick-up points across the city. More alarmingly,

Apple Daily's owner Kimmy Lai had his emails hacked and his house firebombed, and he was physically attacked by pro-party supporters.¹⁴⁵ As I point to in the epilogue of this study, hostility directed toward *Apple Daily* and Lai intensified during Hong Kong's Hard Hat Revolution.

Hong Kong's Revolutions

Hong Kong is one of the world's wealthiest cities. It has a low unemployment rate of 3.5 percent (as of the end of 2019); its citizens have access to heavily subsidized government healthcare; education is free up to high school, tertiary education is heavily subsidized by the government; public transportation is plentiful and cheap to use; and life expectancy is the highest in the world.¹⁴⁶ When these factors are taken into account, journalist Michael Chugani posits, Hong Kong citizens should be among the happiest in the world. But they are not. According to a 2020 United Nations World Happiness Report, Hong Kong ranks below Pakistan and Russia as the seventy-eighth happiest country in the world.¹⁴⁷ In Gallup International's 2017 survey of Happiness, Hope, and Economic Optimism, Hong Kong was reported as the seventh unhappiest place on Earth.¹⁴⁸ So, why are a majority of Hong Kongers so unhappy?

As I have explained in this chapter, Hong Kong has the most expensive property market, one of the widest socioeconomic gaps in world, an eroding press, and an influx of immigrants, it faces many more challenges as well. Crucially, however, as Hong Kongers are repeatedly denied genuine universal suffrage, they have no conceivable route for changing their daily lived experiences. This is the overarching issue. "People cannot be happy if they lack hope," posits Chugani. People "cannot be happy if they don't know who they are, what they want to be, where they are headed, and if their culture and way of life is dying a slow death."¹⁴⁹ As a city that is undergoing a period of simultaneous decolonization from Great Britain and recolonization by

China, Hong Kong is a city that “is uncomfortable with its history, unhappy with its present, and unsure of its future” and, as a result, something had to change.¹⁵⁰

After decades of a constant, gradual erosion of their identity and escalating anger, fear, and frustration, young Hong Kongers decided that collective action was the only remaining strategy to attempt to change their future. And so, on the night of September 28, 2014, hundreds of thousands of Hong Kongers took to the streets of their city, and the city’s first major protest movement, the Umbrella Revolution, was born.

The Umbrella Revolution

In late summer of 2014, Hong Kong—renowned as one of the world’s most orderly and dynamic cities—became a battle zone. Triggered by an announcement that Hong Kongers would not be allowed to choose candidates for the city’s 2017 election, tens of thousands of Hong Kongers took to the streets of the city to vent their frustration. The Umbrella Revolution—named after Hong Kong protesters’ use of yellow umbrellas as symbols to represent their calls for genuine universal suffrage—was, at the time, the city’s largest and most prolonged on-street occupation.¹⁵¹ Over the course of seventy-nine days, the streets of Hong Kong became embodied spaces of resistance as Hong Kongers clogged the arteries of some of the city’s busiest areas. The Mong Kok, Causeway Bay, and Admiralty districts of Hong Kong were transformed into makeshift, temporary campsites of artistic expression and freedom. Hong Kongers took education, art, farming, religion, and other aspects of everyday life into public spaces to promote a new collective vision.

The Umbrella Revolution was reported to be one of the most vibrant, colorful, innovative, witty, and imaginative protest movements in recent memory.¹⁵² Hong Kong’s pro-democracy supporters did not destroy their city in acts of violent unrest; instead, protesters

cleared their litter, designated study corners complete with bookshelves and power sockets, and made signs that apologized for the disruption their actions created for the city.¹⁵³ Participants in the Umbrella Revolution embraced artistic flair and innovative ideas to ensure that their message reverberated around the globe. This “outburst of creativity and expression” garnered the world’s attention and was deemed so important by artists, academics, and archivists that the Umbrella Movement Art Preservation and the Umbrella Movement Visual Archives and Research Collective were formed to preserve the public art that exploded across Hong Kong.¹⁵⁴ In addition to umbrellas, objects of everyday life, including double-decker buses, sticky notes, cling wrap, and comic book characters were embraced by Hong Kongers and transformed into innovative, *in-situ* tools of protest.

On the night of December 11, 2014, Hong Kong police cleared the final protest camp in the city’s Admiralty district.¹⁵⁵ While some news outlets reported a stand-off by protesters, China’s state-run media told a different story. Writing in the *China Daily*, Lau Nai-keung reported that the “awful, divisive movement” that had taken place “on Chinese soil” had ended uneventfully with “no resistance whatsoever.” Protesting Hong Kongers, said Lau, were “a bunch of bad-tempered, spoilt brats” who, lacking the “conviction and faith of true revolutionaries,” had “unconditionally surrendered.” A movement that, according to the Party, had been “fueled” by external forces (the United Kingdom and the United States), the Umbrella Revolution was, said Lau, a “total failure.”¹⁵⁶ Issues of “exhaustion” or protest fatigue, internal tensions within Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement, repetitious protest tactics and events, and a decline in global media coverage (possibly in response to the escalating Ebola crisis) were all cited as reasons behind the end of the Umbrella Revolution.¹⁵⁷ Whatever the reason, after seventy-nine days, the Umbrella Revolution ended almost as abruptly as it had begun.

In the aftermath of clearing of the Admiralty campsite, Hong Kong's pro-democracy contingent vowed to come again. Signs displayed around the city told the government, "we'll be back," "it's just the beginning," and "Season 2: Coming Soon."¹⁵⁸ Protesters may have taken longer than expected to return to the streets, but almost four-and-a-half years after the end of the Umbrella Revolution, a new large-scale protest movement broke out in Hong Kong.

The Hard Hat Revolution

In the summer of 2019, Hong Kongers once again took to the streets of their city in response to an extradition bill proposed by the Hong Kong government that, if passed, would allow suspected criminals in Hong Kong to be transferred to mainland China to face trial. This time, however, the protest—re-branded the *Hard Hat Revolution*—quickly escalated. While the Umbrella revolution was described as *civil*, *humorous*, and *artistic*, the Hard Hat Revolution was described as "a war," an "escalating humanitarian crisis," and "a defacto war about the future of democracy" across the globe.¹⁵⁹

By October 2019, one protester was shot in the eye and another in the chest; one politician had his ear partially bitten off; a police officer was shot with an arrow; at least four young Hong Kongers were reported to have died by suicide; and twenty-four Hong Kongers were missing, but these numbers keep rising.¹⁶⁰ One of the most shocking moments of the protests was depicted in a disturbing video that was shared across the globe via social media. Fifty-seven-year-old father of two, Lee Chi-cheung, was chased by a group of masked protesting Hong Kongers and set on fire after a dispute over Hong Kong/mainland Chinese identity.¹⁶¹ The situation in Hong Kong, then, was—and still is—desperate. Hong Kong was, quite literally, "on fire," "unraveling," and had "descend[ed] into chaos."¹⁶²

Although the chances of success were slim, the city's pro-democracy supporters were intent on keeping "an seemingly impossible fight alive."¹⁶³ As Hong Kongers shared their fears of facing "an unimaginably grim" future, one protester told reporters that he and fellow democracy supporters would "fight until we win or die."¹⁶⁴ "We'd rather die in the fight," he said, "than slowly suffocate to death after we lose the fight."¹⁶⁵ "Freedom," another protester told a *BBC News* reporter, "is more valuable than our life."¹⁶⁶ Some young Hong Kongers protesting on the city's university campuses wrote letters to their families in case they died while attempting to achieve their goals of a democratic future.¹⁶⁷

Hong Kong is a city with a history of protests; activism is ingrained in Hong Kong life and in the ideology of its inhabitants. However, 2019 stood out in Hong Kong's long-running history of civil disobedience. With no end in sight to Hong Kong's regular mass-scale protesting, author and China commentator Philip J. Cunningham has written of the "protest paradox" that has become visible in Hong Kong. For Cunningham, "cultural creativity inspires, enlightens, soothes and calms; it allows for some breathing space, humility and humour."¹⁶⁸ However, the "effusion of music, art, and Cantonese word play" that can act as a "weapon"—and, as I will highlight in the chapters that follow, formed the basis of Hong Kongers' protest strategies during the 2014 Umbrella Revolution—were, posits Cunningham, replaced in 2019 with "impotent rage" and instances of "mob justice."¹⁶⁹

In this second chapter, I defined *mainlandization*, outlined what I consider to be the seven main facets through which the mainlandization of Hong Kong is evident (politics, plutocratization, housing, identity, language, education, and the media), and explicated how these seven facets converged to become the exigencies that led to the outbreak of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. In the epilogue of this study, I will return to address these seven

facets of mainlandization in the aftermath of the two revolutions. I move now, however, to the first of my three analysis chapters in which I explore the contrasting ideologies and communication mechanisms of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. In the next chapter, I address the foundation of the two revolutions by unpacking the contrasting ways in which Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters used metaphors of the home to conceptualize the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions.

Notes

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12. Interview with volunteer participant, June 2015. All interviews were conducted by the author in confidentiality according to Colorado Multiple Institution Review Board Protocol 15-0407, and the names of interviewees are withheld in protection from possible reprisal.

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CHAPTER 3

ALWAYS COMING HOME:

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE UMBRELLA AND HARD HAT REVOLUTIONS

In this first analytical chapter, I provide an analysis of a number of the general protest tools and strategies used throughout the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions to lay the foundations to begin to answer the research questions that guide my study. I seek to discover the ideologies that characterize the protest strategies of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions and the nature of the protest mechanisms that communicate those ideologies. To support my analysis, I use a mixture of interview data gathered in 2019 (five volunteer participants) and 2020 (four volunteer participants) as well as media images and media reports from the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions to explore protesters' contrasting ideological conceptions that characterized the protest strategies of the two revolutions.

My analysis uncovers how both revolutions were conceptualized using metaphors of the home, each constructed in different ways. In 2014, Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters built the Umbrella Revolution out of their familial home, while in 2019, Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters used the Hard Hat Revolution to create a new homeland. I argue that both ideological conceptions of home created substantial constraints and consequences for the two movements. I begin by unpacking the multiplicitous nature of home and the cultural, emotional, social, political, and individual appeals that home has as a rhetorical resource.

The concept of home is "often taken for granted" but is a "fundamental part of being human."¹ Human geography and urban planning scholar Hazel Easthope writes that home is a highly contextual concept that is difficult to define and that means different things to different

people; home thus is a place that is a “multidimensional concept” offering “considerable social, psychological, and emotive meaning.”² The most basic meaning of home is as a physical structure that can also include individual streets, neighborhoods, geographic regions, or even entire countries.³ With these key meanings in mind, lacking such a structure may seem strange, and those without a home are often “viewed with suspicion” by society.⁴ The importance of the social, emotional, and spiritual connections to home, however, means that those who do not have a physical home do not necessarily feel homeless.⁵ And so, despite contemporary Western conceptions, home does not have to equate to a house.⁶

For some, home offers a sense of control and family. Indeed, through the “the accretion of well-worn patterns of behavior,” home is often conceptualized as “a location of ideologically compelling images” of family and provides to those who reside within a sense of self; the familiarity and sameness of home can make them feel safe and protected.⁷ As a positively valued concept, home also can serve as a “vessel” of memories that can “protect, heal, and restore.”⁸ For others, however, home is a site of trauma, and the sights, smells, and sounds of home that are ingrained in childhood and remain throughout life conjure uncomfortable and traumatic recollections.⁹

As somebody who lives outside of my “home” nation (i.e., the country in which I was born and where I spent the majority of my life), when I tell friends that I am “going home,” I am referring to England, not the specific house in which I grew up. Thus, home is not only a physical place in which human beings eat, sleep, laugh, cry, and make memories, but it is also a place of the mind, representing thoughts, values, beliefs, and perspectives. Martin Heidegger observes that individuals can feel at home in a place that they do not live, such as a workspace.¹⁰ Indeed, thoughts of home carry “emotional, relational, cultural, and political significances,” so

home can be a place, a space, a feeling, certain practices and routines, or simply an active state of being or existing in the world.¹¹

Although family is often most closely associated with home, five other core meanings of home are offered by urban studies scholar Adriana Mihaela Soaita, including comfort, well-being, and self-identity.¹² Comfort and well-being refer to the familiarity that home offers and, in turn, the peace and solace that home provides from the outside world.¹³ The home offers physical security, privacy, and refuge from both the external elements and other living beings.¹⁴ The home houses self-identity through feelings of attachment to the space and the practices of personalization that communicate the values and tastes of the inhabitants. This notion of personalization marks the home as an “emotional territory” or an “atmosphere” in which everything from refrigerator magnets to furniture communicates the identity of those who occupy the space.¹⁵ Thus, people may move to a new home, but they often move a majority of the contents from the old dwelling to the new one. Thus, the home is “a vehicle for communication and display,” and people use their homes—and in some cases, lack of home—to “express something about themselves.”¹⁶

For architecture scholar Clare Cooper Marcus, the home is “a mirror” of the self in which individuals can express who they are and become who they are meant to be.”¹⁷ While Carole Després reinforces the notion that the home offers a reflection of the ideas, values, beliefs, and status of those inside, Marcus argues that the “physical fabric” of a home alone does not symbolize the self.¹⁸ The idea of homemaking or placemaking, however, is more than bricks and mortar, and the moveable objects in a home offer “potent statements” about who individuals are.¹⁹ Similarly, Robert Ginsburg writes that individuals build the “intimate shells” of their lives not only through physical structures or dwellings but through the “organization and furnishing”

of the spaces in which they live.²⁰ Thus, for the purpose of this chapter, I am interested not in the physical structures and spaces made of concrete, brick, stone, mud, canvas, and other available materials. Instead, I focus on the physical items, routines, and practices of home and, in particular on homemaking—management and organizational tasks that leads to make the home “physically attractive and emotionally satisfying,” and thus make “a house feel like a home.”²¹

The Umbrella Revolution: Building a Protest Out of the Home

Home spaces house cultural meanings and practices that are important to individuals and facilitate the construction of communal identities that are maintained through the “daily performance of traditions, customs, and rituals.”²² In addition to forging individual and shared identities, the feeling of being “at home” can be “generated by living in an environment that is familiar.”²³ Although participants in the Umbrella Revolution may not have been in their familial homes and dwellings for the seventy-nine days of the protest, they transported their home lives onto the streets of Hong Kong and continued to replicate their daily lives there. For social and cultural geography scholar Tim Edensor, the “shared practices” and “notions” of everyday life, including seemingly banal tasks such cooking, homemaking, and worshipping, are essential to establishing community.²⁴ Thus, by continuing their daily home routines on the streets of Hong Kong, Umbrella Revolution protesters established a “cultural community” of protest when they tackled the world around them with “familiar maneuvers.”²⁵

In the first section of this chapter, I explore how Hong Kong’s major districts were transformed into home during the on-street occupation through everyday habits, rituals, and items. I present three ways Umbrella Revolution protesters built a protest by taking their familiar world of home onto the streets of their city: replicating home routines, repurposing homewares, and reproducing family dynamics.

Replicating Home Routines

The repetition and “routine social performances” of everyday duties, habits, and rituals that include walking, talking, procreating, attending school between particular hours, shopping, eating and drinking at certain times, and working according to a schedule are essential to forging a sense of identity and belonging and help individuals make sense of the world around them.²⁶

The performance of actions and habits of everyday life are “dramatized, broadcast, shared, and reproduced” in episodes that showcase identities in symbolic and imaged geographies.²⁷

Informed by Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*—a collective entity in which dominant social and cultural conditions are established and reproduced through human habits and routines—embodied habits are manners and etiquette practices such as “walking, sitting, conversing with friends, and other modes of conviviality which constitutes shared worlds of meaning and action.”²⁸

Although many of these activities that take place in the home may seem ordinary, they can be transformed into the extraordinary through “artisan-like inventiveness” and serve as “lightning rods” that transform the often banal into symbolic communicative modes that carry meaning and communicate contested fears, emotions, concerns, and hopes.²⁹ Umbrella Revolution protesters transported the familiar and familial conditions of their everyday lives into the Admiralty, Causeway Bay, and Mong Kok districts of Hong Kong and continued with what they typically did each day at home. Throughout the protest, Hong Kongers cooked and shared food, slept, and cleaned and, by doing so, performed quotidian acts as a form of solidarity and “gentle violence” that is more symbolic than physical.³⁰

For almost three months, thousands of Hong Kongers slept in the streets as some of Hong Kong’s busiest roads were turned into ephemeral campsites. The roads that were usually

overflowing with traffic constitute some of the most open spaces in the densely populated city. With space at such a premium in Hong Kong, the tents in which Umbrella Revolution protesters slept may not have been much different from their bedrooms at home. The open roads actually offered more space than protesters were used to but, despite this, they mimicked the close living quarters that were familiar to them.³¹ Indeed, much like the design of Hong Kong's apartments in which inhabitants are able to open their kitchen or bathroom windows and literally touch the hands of those in adjacent apartments, Umbrella Revolution protesters pitched their tents in neat, tightly compacted rows (figs. 1, 2). The tents may not have mimicked the cloud-touching apartment blocks that are associated with Hong Kong, but the temporary dwellings did imitate the vast urban sprawl and density of the city.

Once protesters had places to sleep, they set about reproducing other routines from their home lives. One of the most familiar and essential everyday routines that Umbrella Revolution protesters transported to the streets of Hong Kong was the act of cooking and sharing food. Eating is, of course, a necessity of everyday life, and numerous scholars have drawn attention to the role of preparing and eating food in forging and negotiating relationships with the self and others, particularly in the home.³² For many families, mealtimes offer a moment to catch up, reflect, and bond. Communication scholar Greg Dickinson writes that “perhaps there is no single human activity that brings together everyday practices, consumption, materiality, and embodiment more completely than does eating.”³³ Cooking is a process through which individuals use intelligence to manipulate, organize, combine, and modify “ordinary things” so that the sounds, colors, smells, and tastes associated with cooking provide pleasure and nostalgia and “a way of being-in-the-world.”³⁴

The various acts of cooking were evident in many of the protest mechanisms that Umbrella Revolution participants used to transport their familial home lives onto the streets of Hong Kong. Although some Hong Kong protesters used camp stoves on which to cook food for themselves and their neighbors, for those unable to cook, tents were erected to supply noodles, cereal, fruit, cookies, and water.³⁵ Protesters were seen pushing grocery carts laden with supplies to dispense for free to those who needed them.³⁶ Local businesses that supported the movement also provided food and water, organizing supplies into “neat stockpiles” along the edges of the streets.³⁷

Protesters in the Umbrella Revolution not only cooked in their proxy neighborhoods as they did in their homes, but they cleaned and cared for their spaces as they would their homes; protesters were fastidious about ensuring that their living spaces were kept clean.³⁸ In keeping with Hong Kong’s etiquette of removing shoes before entering a home, protesters took off their sneakers before entering certain areas of the protest sites.³⁹ Protesters also set up recycling stations and food-composting stations to ensure that their on-street homes were clean. A bridge over Harcourt Road in the Admiralty district was transformed into a roadside recycling station piled high with bags of separated plastic and aluminum.⁴⁰ One image even shows Hong Kongers on their hands and knees, scrubbing the roads clean with small brushes (fig. 3).⁴¹ Protesting Hong Kongers even went so far as to clean the public toilets that they were using just as they would their bathrooms at home. Protesters not only paid attention to the cleanliness of their surroundings but to their personal hygiene as well. As temperatures soared, some Hong Kongers walked around the campsites offering free clothes-freshening spray to their fellow protesters.⁴² “Our responsibility,” said one pro-democracy protester, is to “try and be a good citizen, not to

damage Hong Kong.” Consequently, as NBC News observed, the Umbrella Revolution was a form of “very civil disobedience.”⁴³

The Umbrella Revolution was renowned for being a predominantly student-led social movement—an overwhelming majority of Umbrella Revolution participants were university and senior high school students.⁴⁴ Described as a “scholastic-obsessed culture,” in Hong Kong, education is fiercely competitive, and studying “takes up a disproportionate share of a young person’s life.”⁴⁵ Reports suggest that admission to Hong Kong’s top kindergartens is so competitive that children as young as three years old are required to have resumes listing artistic and musical achievements and attendance at sports classes.⁴⁶ Indeed, studying imposes a heavy psychological toll on Hong Kong’s students and, when not in school, they are often to be found studying late into the night at home or in other spaces.⁴⁷ When living in Hong Kong and walking home from work at 8:00 p.m. or leaving a bar with friends at 1:00 a.m., I would invariably see groups of students, still in their school uniforms, diligently studying in coffee shops or outdoor spaces. Thus, in addition to treating the streets of Hong Kong as they would their familial homes, Umbrella Revolution protesters spent their evenings completing their homework in makeshift study corners just as they would have been doing at home (fig. 4). As exam season approached for the students, journalist Elizabeth Barber suggested that protesting students were seeking answers to two very different but equally important sets of questions, those on exam papers and the even harder ones being posed in the temporary on-street living spaces: “How can we make China answer us? Where is this all going? What should we do next?”⁴⁸

During the Umbrella Revolution, some critics were quick to accuse students of prioritizing protest over their education.⁴⁹ But as well-organized study areas, complete with makeshift libraries, stationery supplies, lamps, and power sockets, popped up across the protest

sites, protesting Hong Kongers demonstrated that they could maintain their normal, everyday lives while protesting for their future.⁵⁰ This act of maintaining their scholastic commitments not only ensured that Umbrella Revolution protesters maintained their grades and their *ethos* as diligent students, but it simultaneously worked to limit potential criticism from the Communist Party of China (the Party). The actions of Umbrella Revolution protesters thus can be observed as a direct rebuke to those of the students who comprised Mao's Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution. Chinese author Liao Yiwu observes that during the Cultural Revolution, students in Chinese cities were "busier beating up their teachers than learning science or history" because the "young rebels" were intent on punishing anyone who was believed to be "straying from Mao's revolutionary line."⁵¹ In contrast, the Umbrella Revolution saw Hong Kong students honoring their education while, at the same time, using it as a protest mechanism to revolt against the government.

By continuing to enact the "habitual performances of everyday life," including sleeping, eating, and studying on the streets of Hong Kong, Umbrella Revolution protesters were not only replicating their daily lives on the streets but also powerfully displaying their commitment to peaceful and ethical protest that was heavily linked to their identity as Hong Kongers.⁵²

Repurposing Homewares

In addition to engaging in the same acts as they would in their homes, Umbrella Revolution protesters utilized items from home in the streets. For Cooper Marcus, the "personalization of place is an inalienable right."⁵³ For example, even prisoners are permitted to take a small number of personally meaningful items into their small concrete and metal homes. By taking items such as umbrellas, furniture, and cooking implements from their homes and

using them in the same way on the streets of Hong Kong, Umbrella Revolution participants were personalizing their new, temporary living quarters.

The most recognizable item of Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution was, of course, the umbrella, which is a ubiquitous symbol of Hong Kong life. On any given day in Hong Kong, local people, expatriates, and tourists can be seen clutching umbrellas as they scurry across the Mid-Levels, Wanchai, Kennedy Town, Aberdeen, and Stanley districts of the city. Through intense sunshine, torrential rain, and the seasonal typhoons that often batter the city, Hong Kongers take refuge under umbrellas on a daily basis. The constant need for an umbrella means that most Hong Kong homes have a cupboard full of them. Although in a few rare instances, umbrellas were used by protesters to threaten police, they were seldom used as offensive weapons.⁵⁴ Instead, they were used as defensive shields against the elements as they would be used on any other day. This time, however, in addition to sun and rain, tear gas and pepper spray were added to the list of elements that umbrellas were required to deflect.

Although the umbrella gave the revolution its name and became the overriding symbol that was associated with the movement, it was by no means the only common household item that was used. When protesting Hong Kongers left their familial homes at the outbreak of the Umbrella Revolution, many of them took with them the supplies that they needed to live on the streets of their city. Before leaving home, they raided the cupboards of their kitchens and bathrooms and the wardrobes in their bedrooms. Armed with backpacks containing plastic cling wrap (to keep clothes dry and to protect skin from the effects of tear gas and pepper spray), water, cloth face masks, bicycle helmets (worn for protection against the potential threat of violence), cable ties (used to secure barricades, awnings, and banners), sticky notes (on which to draw and write protest slogans), and, of course, carrying an umbrella, it was almost as though

these Hong Kong teenagers were setting off for a slumber party, albeit a prolonged one.⁵⁵ Once Umbrella Revolution protesters had pitched their tents on the concrete of the Central, Admiralty, Causeway Bay, and Mong Kok districts, they had no need to go back to their familial homes because they had everything they needed to transfer their home lives to the streets of Hong Kong.

In addition to transporting items from their familial homes, like many students who furnish and decorate their bedrooms or dorm rooms with donated furniture and garage- and lawn-sale finds, those taking part in the Umbrella Revolution utilized what was available to them in their immediate environment. Bamboo scaffolding and wooden pallets were turned into makeshift barricades joined together with cable ties. Plastic stools that are in abundance both inside and outside Hong Kong's many dumpling houses and char sui—Cantonese-style barbecue pork—restaurants were not only used as chairs on which to sit when studying but were also repurposed as stumps on which to address fellow protesters.⁵⁶ Cardboard boxes left out on the side of the street to be collected by trash and recycling trucks were cut up and used to make protest signs. In a further example of the resourcefulness of Umbrella Revolution protesters, when rain fell in Hong Kong, protesters repurposed the plastic cling wrap that they had brought with them from home to cover and protect the protest artwork that adorned walls and other surfaces around the living spaces.⁵⁷

By continuing to use items from their permanent homes as well as materials that were readily at hand around their temporary homes, Umbrella Revolution protesters successfully engaged in homemaking through the re-composition of spaces and the use of everyday rituals and familial practices that Michel de Certeau describes as “poetic ways of making do” or “bricolage.”⁵⁸ In doing so, Umbrella Revolution protesters were personalizing their spaces in

ways that maintained their values as Hong Kongers as being committed to maintaining peaceful homes and neighborhoods through nonviolent actions.

Reproducing Family Dynamics

As I have highlighted thus far, Umbrella Revolution protesters continued with their everyday lives and the performance of their daily routines and used items from their homes and immediate surroundings to help them maintain a sense of the normalcy of home. There was, however, another vital aspect of their home lives that also was maintained or, at the very least, temporarily replicated: kinship and interpersonal relationships.

Despite the fact that an overwhelming majority of Umbrella Revolution protesters were students, in keeping with sociologists Griff Tester and Adia Harvey Wingfield's assertion that the home is "(re)produced through social relations that extend beyond its physical boundaries," Hong Kongers of all ages and from all sections of society facilitated the students' actions by functioning as proxy family members.⁵⁹ Different people contributed to the Umbrella Revolution, including "able-bodied men" who served as marshals and helped reinforce barricades and retirees who made and maintained the makeshift study corners that student protesters used for completing their homework.⁶⁰ In general, these older members of Hong Kong society did not join in the act of protesting, but this "all-hands-on-deck" approach communicated the tight-knit family group dynamic in which different family members play different roles and strengthens my assertion that the Umbrella Revolution was built on a foundation of home.

A number of individuals and groups were involved in leadership capacities during the Umbrella Revolution. Among them were Occupy Central with Peace and Love, the Hong Kong Federation of Students, and the pro-democracy student activist group Scholarism.⁶¹ Although Scholarism and the Hong Kong Federation of Students were predominately run by young Hong

Kongers, Occupy Central with Peace and Love was headed by university professors and a Baptist minister. The family dynamic of the Umbrella Revolution was comprised of a diverse mix of generations who played different roles and held different positions within the family unit.

Within the family dynamic that characterized the Umbrella Revolution, one individual was the focal point: Joshua Wong. Wong is often perceived as the mastermind of the Umbrella Revolution, and there can be no denying that he played a pivotal leadership role and provided a face for the movement.⁶² Moreover, Wong was—and still is—the individual most targeted and prized by the Hong Kong and Beijing governments. At the time of the Umbrella Revolution, an overwhelming majority of those who were camped on the streets of Hong Kong looked up to and respected Wong. He may have been the same age as or, in some cases, younger than many of his fellow protesters, but Wong was seen as leading Hong Kong’s push for democracy. He thus functioned as the teenage rebel of the family unit who stood with a microphone, giving public addresses in front of thousands. He was willing to break the law, disrespect and stand up to authority figures, risk arrest, and commit to a hunger strike as an act of defiance. Wong was the “cool” sibling who appeared on magazine covers and the front pages of newspapers around the world and, in so doing, became a global media icon and a poster boy for democracy.

Each temporary neighborhood created during the Umbrella Revolution welcomed diverse family members with different styles, perspectives, and approaches. For example, the temporary neighborhood created in the Admiralty district was a “festive village” in which the “hippy” siblings congregated. The Mong Kok encampment, meanwhile, was a place for the less restrained and “more idealistic” members of the family.⁶³ Despite the tight-knit family dynamic I have laid out here, as in many families, there was also division and discord in the Umbrella Revolution. Many protesters were unwilling to invite into their homes those who held viewpoints

that were diametrically opposed to their own. “Blue” protesters—those who were “pro-China, pro-police, and against the democratic selection of the chief executive”—were not welcome. “Yellow” protesters—those who supported Hong Kong’s democratic plight—were welcome but only if they abided by the household rules of using only nonviolent forms of protest.⁶⁴ If these rules and ideologies were not followed, individuals were excluded from the “family.” Indeed, when asked about the Umbrella Revolution, many Hong Kongers with whom I spoke told me that, in 2014, most were unwilling to accept participants who wanted to protest by using violence. “We didn’t want that [violence] in 2014,” one interviewee told me. “If you wanted to use violent means in 2014, you weren’t welcome to join us.”⁶⁵ Even breaking windows was frowned upon.⁶⁶

Home and home life are experienced on a daily basis through a series of interactions, negotiations, intimacies, exchanges, and reciprocal relationships with close kin, extended family, and acquaintances.⁶⁷ Sometimes, however, these experiences of home are not always positive. Earlier in this chapter, I extolled the virtues of home as a place of safety, protection, and close family ties. Home, however, also can entrap and restrict and, as Bidy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty suggest, the safety and stability of home are, in fact, often built on repression and exclusion; as a result, home can also be a site of anxiety, fear, loneliness, and rejection.⁶⁸ In the case of the Umbrella Revolution, those who did not conform to the ideas and beliefs of the new home were cast out and banished from the family unit. Certainly, some members of families are perceived as black sheep or rebels. A general expectation and hope for the home, however, is that it is a space of peace and harmony. Despite reports of strained and tumultuous relationships among different factions of Umbrella Revolution protesters—especially as the movement was

close to ending and protest fatigue was setting in—for the most part, protesters were respectful of each other and their surroundings.

Violence during the Umbrella Revolution was, for the most part, sporadic and extremely uncommon. Protesters responded with violence only when police fired eighty-seven tear-gas canisters on the night of September 28, 2014 (the first time in almost fifty years that tear gas had been fired in Hong Kong).⁶⁹ The respect shown by Umbrella Revolution protesters for their city extended beyond their use of the umbrella and other household items. In addition to the aforementioned clearing of litter from the streets, respect for Hong Kong was shown in other ways. For example, despite scores of protesters gathering around the war memorial in the Central district of the city, they obeyed a polite, handwritten message requesting that nobody set foot on the surrounding grass.⁷⁰ Polite messages were a common sight throughout the Umbrella Revolution. When blocking roads, entrances to subway stations, and access to businesses, for example, participants created handwritten signs to apologize for the disruption their actions were causing. A handwritten sign at the entrance to Causeway Bay subway station informed passengers that protesters were “sorry for the inconvenience” that was caused to their commute.⁷¹ When a police van was vandalized in the Admiralty district of the city, one protester left a handwritten note on the windshield. “Sorry,” the protester wrote, “I don’t know who did this, but we are not anarchists.”⁷²

For journalist Matt Sheehan, the actions of Umbrella Revolution protesters were “weird.”⁷³ For others, the Umbrella Revolution protesters’ actions were disciplined and orderly; the protest was “rooted in community”; and the participants were unique, sweet, polite, and not in the least threatening.⁷⁴ For many protesters, however, the Umbrella Revolution was simply an extension of everyday life, albeit in a very public setting, as they continued to do the same things

that they did in their homes on any given day. In fact, as notions of home and self are intrinsically tied together, perhaps Umbrella Revolution protesters felt most at home when surrounded on the streets by like-minded individuals.⁷⁵ By being steadfast in their commitment to continuing their day-to-day lives, Hong Kong protesters attempted to normalize the fact that they were publicly opposing the Party by participating in the largest protest movement that, up until that point, Hong Kong had witnessed.

In this section, I analyzed Umbrella Revolution protesters' transformation of the streets of Hong Kong and presented three ways protesters deployed everyday habits, rituals, and items associated with the home. By replicating home routines, repurposing homewares, and reproducing family dynamics, Umbrella Revolution protesters transported their familiar/familial world of home onto the streets of their city. In doing so, they normalized the events in which they were engaging and upheld Hong Kong values. Four-and-a-half years later, however, Hong Kong was in the midst of a very different kind of protest.

The Hard Hat Revolution: Building a Homeland Out of the Protest

Although some of the tactics from the Umbrella Revolution were replicated and recycled during the Hard Hat Revolution, Hong Kong's two largest protest movements differed in a number of ways. In the second half of this chapter, I argue that instead of attempting to use their homes as a foundation for a protest movement, as had been the case during the Umbrella Revolution, Hard Hat Revolution protesters used the protest movement to build themselves a new home—specifically, a new homeland. Michael Walzer writes that a nation must be “personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, and imagined before it can be conceived.”⁷⁶ Benedict Anderson, in his work on imagined communities, makes a similar point, writing that nations are “mental constructs” that are imagined by people who perceive

themselves as part of the nation.⁷⁷ I suggest that six protest mechanisms— establishing a military, implementing emergency services, inventing a language, symbolizing a homeland, annexing territory, and eschewing leadership—were used by Hard Hat Revolution protesters to personify, symbolize, and imagine a new homeland and thus a new future for the city.

Ultimately, however, as I will suggest in the conclusion to this chapter, Hard Hat Revolution protesters' were constrained by their attempts to forge a new homeland for Hong Kong that, in truth, could never be a reality.

Establishing a Military

Considered by many pro-democracy-supporting Hong Kongers to be a nonsovereign territory—a claim hotly contested by the Party—Hong Kong has never had its own military.⁷⁸ Having previously been protected by British forces, it is now under the jurisdiction of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). One of the primary roles of a military is to protect the nation and its citizens from external attack by “hostile actors.”⁷⁹ For many Hong Kongers, the external threat and hostile actor was the Party, which posed an existential threat to Hong Kong's way of life. In response to this perceived exigency, Hard Hat Revolution protesters created a military and, by doing so, began to lay the foundations for some of the infrastructure they envisioned the city would need in order to be democratic and achieve self-actualization and autonomy from China. In the next section, I explicate Hard Hat Revolution protesters' creation of a military, including weapons and artillery, a uniform, and offensive and defensive equipment and strategies.

The first requirement for the military was a uniform. School uniforms worn by protesters in 2014 were exchanged in 2019 for black clothing and, as the Hard Hat Revolution progressed and became more violent, exchanged again for “Airsoft”-style pseudo-military clothing complete

with knee and elbow pads.⁸⁰ In a similar move, an upgrade from home items to more militaristic tools saw the cloth face masks of 2014 replaced by gas masks and respirators and bicycle helmets swapped out for industrial hard hats.

Military equipment acted as a double layer of protection for Hard Hat Revolution protesters. First, it provided increased physical protection against the tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, and physical violence to which they were subjected. Second, the upgrade to military equipment acted as a layer of identity protection and camouflage that offered a sense of identity protection. By wearing a similar black “uniform,” covering their faces with full-face gas masks and respirators, and wearing hard hats, the Hong Kong police and security forces had difficulty identifying and thus prosecuting individual protesters. In addition, when throwing tear-gas canisters back at police, Hard Hat Revolution protesters wore oven gloves to ensure that they would not leave fingerprints on the returned canisters.⁸¹ Even the umbrella—the household item that became synonymous with the 2014 on-street occupations—was used by protesters to hide their faces and to cover the city’s surveillance cameras.⁸²

As Hong Kongers increasingly adopted and used offensive weapons, like many items that Hong Kong’s pro-democracy protesters harnessed in 2014, the umbrella was upgraded for the Hard Hat Revolution. The umbrella was predominantly used as a defensive shield in 2014—and was also used in this way in 2019. The cry of “it’s raining” was used by protesters to warn those behind them to open their umbrellas and prepare for another volley of police tear gas.⁸³ But in 2019, umbrellas were used in some new ways as well. Some protesters became baseball sluggers who used umbrellas to bat away and redirect gas canisters back toward those who threw them. Others used them to smash windows and damage property.⁸⁴ The umbrella also was used to beat those who were opposed to the pro-democracy message; attack police officers; and lock the

doors of the Hong Kong Legislative Council building from the outside, trapping those inside.⁸⁵

In addition to the more extreme and offensive uses for the umbrella, Hard Hat Revolution protesters carried batons, poles, and iron rods.⁸⁶ Using university buildings as “improvised weapons factories,” protesters ripped up ceramic floor tiles to use as projectiles and set up workshops to produce and supply petrol bombs and “medieval tech,” including catapults, bows and arrows, and tire spikes made out of garden hoses and nails.⁸⁷

In addition to offensive tools, Hard Hat Revolution protesters also needed to defend themselves, a primary function of a military. Back out on the streets of Hong Kong, protesters, now functioning as soldiers, utilized paving stones, floor tiles, ironing boards, swimming floats, cardboard, wood, skateboards, and suitcases from their immediate surroundings as makeshift shields.⁸⁸ Bamboo scaffolding and bricks were taken from building sites and used alongside garbage bins, traffic cones, furniture, potted plants, and even a ping pong table to create barricades.⁸⁹ Unlike in 2014, when Umbrella Revolution protesters threw together barricades, in 2019, Hard Hat Revolution protesters strategically assembled barricades, much as military tacticians would do, into “wedged” and diamond-shaped formations to fortify their structures and make them more difficult to penetrate.⁹⁰

Rather than sticking to defensive strategies, groups of “more hard-core” Hard Hat Revolution protesters “took justice into their own hands” and engaged in offensive maneuvers. When a Hong Kong taxi driver—presumably angry that his route was blocked—purposefully swerved into a group of pro-democracy protesters, other protesters dragged the driver out of his vehicle and beat him “until he was covered in blood.”⁹¹ In one video, a group of six Hard Hat Revolution protesters were seen beating a man perceived to be against the city’s pro-democracy calls with umbrellas while kicking and punching him in the back and chest as he lay on the

floor.⁹² The cowering victim was depicted in a video that was shared across the globe via social media in November 2019. Fifty-seven-year-old father of two, Lee Chi-cheung, was chased and set on fire by pro-democracy protesters after a dispute over Hong Kong/mainland Chinese identity.⁹³ In another incident, when Hong Kong actress Celine Ma began filming Hard Hat Revolution protesters who were vandalizing an ATM of the Bank of China, protesters reportedly punched her in the face.⁹⁴ When mainland Chinese journalist Fu Guohao was “detained” by pro-democracy protesters and restrained with cable ties around his wrists, protesters went through his personal belongings and forced him to unlock his cell phone. Court proceedings reveal that during Fu’s twenty-minute detention, he was punched and kicked, flashlights were shone in his eyes, and water was poured on him.⁹⁵ The use of cable ties, the act of shining lights into eyes, indiscriminate beatings, interrogations, and waterboarding showcased Hard Hat Revolution protesters’ willingness to engage in a major part of a military’s mission: to attack its enemies.

By creating what was akin to their own pseudo military, Hard Hat Revolution protesters furthered their attempts to establish and maintain Hong Kong as a separate entity from the mainland. Hard Hat Revolution soldiers created a uniform, armed themselves with offensive and defensive weapons, and engaged in militaristic strategies. Establishing a military communicated that Hong Kongers no longer needed protection from the PLA; in fact, the PLA and the Party had become the enemy of the Hard Hat Revolution military and its desired nation-state.

Implementing Emergency Services

Despite the often-violent protest mechanisms that I identified above, not all Hard Hat Revolution protesters were willing to engage in violence. Once Hong Kong had its own pseudo military, Hard Hat Revolution protesters were on their way to transforming Hong Kong into its own nation-state, but the imagined homeland needed other essential services to help it function.

Hong Kongers who were unable to join or who were uncomfortable joining the frontline protesters still had an important role to play in the formation of the homeland: They could participate in delivering emergency services to the protesters. “Those who don’t want to protest on the frontline still have an important role,” one protester told me. “They can play a supporting role, like buying protective or medical materials, forming a line to pass materials to the frontline.” Another protester explained how Hong Kongers could participate according to their strengths. “If you know first aid, we really need your help! You don’t need to be facing the police,” one interviewee explained. “Also, maybe you have things to help put out tear gas.”⁹⁶ With various individuals pitching in in different ways, those who were able to provide first aid and medical assistance and those who were willing to help extinguish tear-gas canisters became members of the Hard Hat Revolution’s newly created emergency services.

Fire Service

One branch of Hong Kong’s new emergency series was a fire department. Images from the early stages of the Hard Hat Revolution showed protesters crowded around and dousing water on a tear-gas canister that had been thrown by the police and had landed in the middle of the street.⁹⁷ A few weeks later, a video surfaced that depicted “voluntary firefighting teams” that had devised a method by which they covered tear-gas canisters with traffic cones and poured water through the hole in the top of the cone until the smoke dissipated.⁹⁸ Hard Hat Revolution firefighters also used metal bowls and pan lids to cover smoking tear-gas canisters.⁹⁹ In one video that went viral across the globe, an older Hong Konger was seen using a garden leaf blower to redirect away from protesters the flow of smoke from a tear-gas canister. Shouting “fai de la” (“quickly/hurry up”), the firefighter continued to hold off the smoke until a crew of younger colleagues arrived to douse the canister with water.¹⁰⁰

Emergency Medical Services

In addition to their own fire service, Hard Hat Revolution protesters created their own emergency medical services. The city's trained doctors, nurses, and medical students went out to help protesters, but they were not working in their official capacities in hospitals and clinics. Instead, created by ordinary citizens with basic first-aid training and wearing hard hats with self-attached red and green medical crosses fashioned from tape, the city's new medical teams mingled among protesters, cleaning cuts, bandaging wounds, and using saline solution to wash pepper spray from protesters' eyes.¹⁰¹ "I work in a hospital," explained one Hong Konger, "but I'm not a nurse, I work in the pharmacy." Despite his lack of specific medical expertise, he felt he had to "support the city I love. I can't find a reason not to come out."¹⁰² Roles assigned within Hong Kong's newly established medical services also allowed volunteers to participate in ways they felt comfortable and that fit with their protest ideologies. For example, for some, volunteering as a medic meant that they could still maintain family harmony while playing an active role in the movement. "My family would definitely ban me from going to the frontline," said one volunteer medic.¹⁰³ Helping those in need, however, was acceptable.

The unpredictable nature of the Hard Hat Revolution, the sheer volume of participants, and the dispersed nature of the protest across the city meant that, unlike the Umbrella Revolution, semi-permanent structures offering first-aid assistance were difficult to organize. Although official organizations such as the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and the Hong Kong Red Cross managed to set up in some fixed locations, by and large, medical assistance was offered by teams of four-to-six Hong Kong citizens who felt comfortable "afford[ing] the risk" of "going deeper" into the crowds of protesters and police.¹⁰⁴ Those who were not comfortable provided back-up triage support in nearby subway stations.¹⁰⁵

Establishment of their own citizen-led emergency services communicated Hard Hat Revolution protesters' commitment to protecting Hong Kong and its citizens despite the increasing levels of violence. Moreover, in their continued quest to create a new homeland out of the ashes of the Hard Hat Revolution, establishing emergency services offered a way for citizens, including nonprotesters, to play to their strengths by using their skills, knowledge, and expertise to actively participate in the creation of the new homeland.

Inventing a Language

Although Hong Kong protesters now had a new military, fire department, and emergency medical services, the emerging homeland needed symbols to visually display the ideology of the new nation-state.¹⁰⁶ Thus, Hard Hat Revolution protesters set about creating a number of visual and emotive symbols of the kind that form a symbolic glue and enable citizens of a nation to bond through a sense of situational patriotism.¹⁰⁷ The first of these strategies to forge emotional attachment was the creation of a new language.

Playing a central role in both the formation and expression of national identity, language is viewed by many as the most critical component of a national identity and is "one of the most significant cultural markers on which nationalism is built."¹⁰⁸ Acting as a "driving force" behind the "unity of a nation's people," language makes a place "respectable" and "unique" and builds homogeneity.¹⁰⁹ Thus, as has been witnessed in the Party's multiple attempts to eradicate the teaching of Cantonese in favor of Mandarin in Hong Kong schools (see chapter 2), language is one tool that governments use in an attempt to nation build and forge a sense of national identity. Hard Hat Revolution protesters created a completely new nonverbal language to serve these functions.

Basic hand gestures are commonplace in street protests, but Hong Kong protesters' creation and use of nonverbal communication was more sophisticated and useful than such efforts typically are.¹¹⁰ Distributed via the encrypted message system Telegram, the two-page color-coded "dictionary" listed hand gestures to ask for supplies, seek assistance, and provide warnings. A yellow page included hand symbols to request supplies, such as scissors, pliers, face and eye protection, umbrellas, saline solution, and helmets. A green page provided hand gestures to be used to signal feeling dizzy, being in pain, struggling to breathe, and suffering from other effects of tear gas or pepper spray. Hand gestures on the same page were used to inform fellow protesters that the police were approaching, danger was coming, or, quite simply, that they needed to run (fig. 5).¹¹¹

Hong Kong's new but unspoken vernacular or lexicon worked in multiple ways. It hindered the efforts of the police and security forces to respond to protesters' actions and monitor and control their movements.¹¹² Because the police were not privy to Hong Kong's new nonverbal vernacular, the unspoken language worked to bypass police who were not familiar with the meanings behind the nonverbal gestures. This slowed down the police and created more confusion and chaos among them. The coded languages also aided protesters in communicating quickly and effectively over the cacophony of the vast number of people in the street as well as the noise of tear gas and approaching police officers. A third function of the newly developed nonverbal language was to allow for the formation of human chains that acted as production lines to provide much-needed supplies to all corners of Hong Kong.¹¹³ These supply lines stretched as long as a kilometer in length, passing messages and vital supplies as hundreds of thousands of bodies filled the streets of Hong Kong.¹¹⁴

A final function of Hong Kong's newly established language was its inclusivity. Immigrants and other individuals with less mastery of a verbal language can "make more progress" in a society and are able to more successfully communicate through nonverbal gestures and cues.¹¹⁵ With their multiple tones, Cantonese and Mandarin are notoriously difficult languages to learn. With a nonverbal language, however, even those who could not speak fluent Cantonese, the primary language of Hard Hat Revolution protesters (including the city's expatriates), were able to communicate with protesters and, more important, to stay safe by knowing when they needed to disperse from protest sites and how they could receive medical attention.¹¹⁶

Nations are successful in staying together when citizens "share enough values and preferences and can communicate with each other."¹¹⁷ The predominant way to achieve a set of shared values is through a common language. In addition to aiding protesters to ask for assistance, to provide warnings, and to potentially save lives, Hong Kong's new language sent a message to the Party and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (GovHK). Firmly planting their language flag in the ground, Hard Hat Revolution protesters invented a new way to make themselves stand separate and distinct from the mainland and from post-handover Hong Kong.

Symbolizing a Homeland

In addition to a unifying language, other elements such as flags, songs, and physical landscape can become "sacred" symbols of attachment through which nations "become visible" and proclaim their "identity and sovereignty."¹¹⁸ Songs, in particular, carry an emotive appeal" that has the power to "strengthen a nation's resolve."¹¹⁹ Throughout the Hard Hat Revolution, pro-democracy protesters adopted multiple songs to capture the spirit of their

revolution, including “Do You Hear the People Sing?” from the musical *Les Misérables* and the Christian hymn “Sing Hallelujah to the Lord.”¹²⁰ In September 2019, however, a young Hong Konger known only as *Thomas* posted lyrics he had written to *LIHKG*, a website often referred to as Hong Kong’s version of *Reddit*. Fellow Hong Kongers contributed additional lyrics, and Thomas used *LIHKG* to recruit musicians and producers to help arrange and mix the song.¹²¹ The completed song, “Glory to Hong Kong,” was quickly embraced as the protesters’ new national anthem.

National anthems possess a unique power over people and are an example of *unisonance*—a situation where “people, wholly unknown to one another, utter the same verses to the same melody.”¹²² During the Hard Hat Revolution, on an almost-nightly basis, Hong Kongers gathered in malls across the city to sing “Glory to Hong Kong.” Lyric sheets featuring both Cantonese and English translations were handed out, and some Hong Kongers even took their violins, flutes, and other instruments to malls to play the song.¹²³ A video featuring black-clad Hong Kong protesters singing the new anthem while wearing hard hats, goggles, and black masks was uploaded to YouTube and, as of October 2020, had received over 5 million views.¹²⁴ For Thomas, the song’s original composer, music “is a tool for unity,” and at least one protester agreed, telling *Time* magazine that “Glory to Hong Kong” “gives me very strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong.”¹²⁵

Hard Hat Revolution protesters used another element to enact situational patriotism—a new flag. As I pointed to in chapter 2, many Hong Kongers perceived that the city had become unsuccessful under Chinese rule as it was subjected to increasing mainlandization. Consequently, during the Hard Hat Revolution, participants sought to shed their recent past and create a new future and a new homeland. As one of the most “pervasive cultural and ideological images,”

flags are used to “present, represent, create, re-create, justify, glorify, and model nations.”¹²⁶ In addition to evoking powerful emotions, flags communicate ideas, beliefs, and goals and thus significantly influence thoughts and behaviors.¹²⁷ A flag constitutes a rallying point for group action, and the very existence of a national flag becomes “a sign and a measure of success.”¹²⁸ Flags can be sacred or mundane, depending on the context, but they are more than simply a piece of material; a flag is a political symbol and a claim to territory.¹²⁹ For Gabriella Elgenius, “nation-ness becomes visible” through symbolic measures such as flags, and they provide a “tangible measure of recognition.”¹³⁰ Protesters’ adoption of a new flag signaled that they no longer wished to be recognized by the flag that had been bestowed upon them by the Party and first hoisted over Hong Kong on the night of the city’s return to China in 1997.

Inspired by the brightly colored sticky notes that adorn Hong Kong’s Lennon Walls (figs. 6, 7), three months into the Hard Hat Revolution, dissident cartoonist Badiucao unveiled his design for a new Hong Kong flag. Consisting of ninety-six randomly allocated colored squares, Badiucao’s flag represented the different voices and cultural backgrounds of Hong Kongers (fig. 8). His decision to include ninety-six squares was not a coincidence—the number represented 1996, the year before the city’s return to Chinese rule.¹³¹ The large block of red that associates Hong Kong’s existing and official flag with China’s national flag was nowhere to be found on Hong Kong’s new flag, and the white bauhinia flower that was included in Hong Kong’s existing flag to highlight Hong Kong as “an inalienable part of China” also had been removed from the new design.¹³²

Not only did Hong Kong protesters create their own flag, but they waved the flags of their allies. Images of pro-democracy-protesting Hong Kongers proudly waving British and US flags served to fuel Party accusations of foreign interference and collusion in the Hard Hat

Revolution which, for the Party, was a “Chinese internal affair.”¹³³ The Party’s fury was heightened when Hard Hat Revolution protesters took to burning the official Hong Kong flag and combining the flags of the People's Republic of China and the Nazi Party to create a “Chinazi” flag.¹³⁴ The act of destroying a flag is considered “an act of desecration and lays bare the flag’s intricate relationship to the nation,” and so, disrespecting a flag is tantamount to insulting a nation.¹³⁵ By waving other countries’ flags and desecrating the Hong Kong flag, Hard Hat Revolution protesters were dramatically communicating their desire to be separate from the mainland.

In the space of ten days, Hong Kong protesters had a national anthem and a flag that had been created by its own citizens. Alongside its newly created language, “Glory to Hong Kong” and Badiuca’s flag became a symbol of the city’s democratic desires and, in addition to creating a sense of unity among Hong Kongers, acted as clear forms of political communication designed to send an explicit message to the Hong Kong and Beijing governments—they wanted independence and no longer wished to be attached to the mainland. Moreover, protesters had waved the flags of their perceived allies and destroyed and disparaged the flag of their opponents. All that was required now was to claim land.

Annexing Territory

The next stage in Hard Hat Revolution protesters’ strategy of creating a new homeland was to claim land. Unlike cession, through which an entity cedes or surrenders territory to another in an often-peaceful, postwar situation (as was the case when Hong Kong was handed from China to Great Britain in 1847), annexation is the result of an entity asserting “physical control” by taking territory by force, usually following military occupation.¹³⁶ Annexation is usually driven by coercive measures, including the “physical threat of force, intimidation or fear

tactics, and other means of direct or indirect pressure.”¹³⁷ These measures were enacted by Hard Hat Revolution protesters toward the police and security services.

Unlike the Umbrella Revolution, during which Hong Kongers lived and slept in the streets of their city, the Hard Hat Revolution in general saw participants return to their familial homes each night. In 2014, Umbrella Revolution protesters had with them everything they needed to protest and, consequently, had no need to return each night to their homes. In 2019, however, as a result of the increasing levels of violence that were witnessed throughout the Hard Hat Revolution as well as the need to maintain their arsenal of supplies, Hard Hat Revolution protesters needed to return home to patch up their wounds, restock their supplies, and strategize their next moves before returning to the frontline.

Although the strategy of returning home at night meant that pro-democracy-protesting Hong Kongers were not staking a long-term claim to territory in some of the busiest districts of Hong Kong, it nonetheless saw them claim vast swaths of land. Although the Umbrella Revolution, by and large, was contained to three distinct neighborhoods in the densely populated Causeway Bay, Admiralty, and Mong Kok districts, the Hard Hat Revolution infiltrated all corners of Hong Kong, stretching to the Yuen Long and Tai Po districts in the north, the Tuen Mun and Tung Chung districts in the west, and the Kwun Tong district in the east.¹³⁸ Moreover, the occupying of university buildings and, as I point to in chapter 4, the storming of the city’s airport maximized disruption and left Hong Kong’s police force and security services stunned, overwhelmed, and stretched to their limits. The strategy of taking the Hard Hat Revolution to all corners of Hong Kong allowed more diverse people to be involved in the protest. Instead of being confined to the busiest and most prominent and recognizable districts, as was the case during the Umbrella Revolution, Hard Hat Revolution protesters took their message to far-flung

corners of Hong Kong. In doing so, they included Hong Kongers from all walks of life and accepted diverse citizens into their emerging homeland.

The tactics of the Hard Hat Revolution adhered to the much-used rallying cry of “be water” that could be heard throughout the Hard Hat Revolution. Inspired by Hong Konger Bruce Lee, who told an interviewee, “Be formless, shapeless. Like water. Be water, my friend,” Hard Hat Revolution protesters took Lee’s words literally and spread throughout the city.¹³⁹ The cat-and-mouse game between police and Hard Hat Revolution protesters saw Hong Kongers descend on a site, cause disruption, use the Telegram messaging app to track police locations, and disperse before the police could arrive. It was a chaotic but “highly disciplined strategy” that enabled Hong Kongers to outwit the police.¹⁴⁰ Like a real-life version of the “Whac-A-Mole” arcade game, protesters employed the “fluid” tactic of unexpectedly “popping up in small groups in multiple locations across the city.” “Keep the hunt dogs [police] running everywhere, getting crazier and crazier, without catching the prey [protesters],” said one protester. “That’s best.”¹⁴¹

By annexing territory, Hard Hat Revolution protesters deployed a fundamental military strategy. Hard Hat Revolution protesters had physically taken over vast areas of land in Hong Kong, some of which was extremely close to enemy lines: mainland China. In addition to confusing the police, by infiltrating all corners of the city, Hong Kong’s pro-democracy protesters took the revolution to those who were not able to participate in the centralized violence that took in place key locations on Hong Kong Island, still enabling them to play a role in the creation of the new homeland.

Eschewing Leadership

Hard Hat Revolution protesters had created an army, emergency services, a language, a flag, and a national anthem, and they also had acquired land. Intriguingly, however, this was all

achieved without a clear leader. Unlike the Umbrella Revolution and its general acceptance of Joshua Wong as its leader, the Hard Hat Revolution did not have a widely recognized leader. Consequently, nobody was in control of the protesters' formation of a new homeland. One of the reasons behind the leaderless Hard Hat Revolution is the fact that some sections of Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters were not impressed with Wong's efforts in 2014. Indeed, Wong was, for many of the Hong Kongers with whom I spoke, a divisive figure. While some described Wong as "brave," "an influence," and "a pioneer," others criticized him for having "no strong plan" in 2014. "He's not the smartest," one Hong Konger remarked. For others, Wong was "arrogant and not humble" and became "famous by accident."¹⁴² Eschewing efforts by those such as Wong, the Hard Hat Revolution thus was a leaderless movement that was "decentralized and radicalized."¹⁴³

The lack of a leader for a movement could be perceived as a weakness. Indeed, as Hong Kong scholar Brian Leung Kai-Ping argues, decentralized protests can be "derailed very quickly" by the police and security forces.¹⁴⁴ The fact that the Hard Hat Revolution was sustained and increased solidarity among its participants suggests that the leaderless nature of the movement was actually a strength in this case. "If we have a leader," one Hong Konger told me, "they would be targeted by police and the government and be forced to take the blame. If there is no leader, what will the police do? Arrest all of the one-million protesters?"¹⁴⁵ As Brian Leung Kai-Ping explained, it "behooved everyone to bear the consequences" of the Hard Hat Revolution.¹⁴⁶

Instead of giving the authorities a face to target, Hard Hat Revolution protesters created a "democratic participatory movement" in which leadership was "open access," "self-organized," and available to all.¹⁴⁷ Instead of having an overriding ideology of a leader, Hard Hat Revolution

protesters were free to protest as they pleased. During the Umbrella Revolution, peaceful protesters were “allergic” to violent actions and “refused to cooperate” with those who wished to enact violence.¹⁴⁸ By 2019, however, Hong Kongers had “learned from the mistakes of 2014” and “respected each other’s choices.” “I’m not interested in throwing a Molotov cocktail,” one Hong Konger admitted. “But I do play a supporting role. I’ll buy the materials and form a line to pass them to the person at the front who is going to throw it.”¹⁴⁹ Hard Hat Revolution protesters “intentionally built solidarity across difference”; everybody chipped in and worked toward the “war” effort.¹⁵⁰

The rise in solidarity that resulted from the lack of a leader meant that, unlike the Umbrella Revolution, in which peaceful and violent protesters refused to acknowledge and legitimize each other, the Hard Hat Revolution had a strict code of conduct. “Do not split,” “don’t distance yourself” [from violent protesters], and “don’t snitch” were commonly heard slogans that called for protesters to “remain united, even as different factions” emerged and their tactics diverged.¹⁵¹ By and large, participants who were opposed to violence avoided such actions, but they did not try to prevent others from engaging in them.¹⁵² The Hard Hat Revolution was “what people made of it”; with a “mutual respect for diverging views” across the movement, participants could protest however they wished.¹⁵³ By encountering and tolerating difference, Hong Kong protesters gained the capacity to create a new homeland that allowed for freedom of choice.

While the Umbrella Revolution eschewed difference with regards to violent protest methods, the Hard Hat Revolution’s acceptance of violence—without requiring all to engage in it—meant that it was a movement in which all Hong Kongers could take part, regardless of their

ideological beliefs. Thus, Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters had created a mental construct of a new homeland that was inclusive and allowed for freedom of expression.

In this section, I presented six mechanisms by which Hard Hat Revolution protesters rhetorically created a new homeland. By establishing a military, implementing emergency services, inventing a language, creating symbols for the new nation, annexing territory, and eschewing leadership, Hard Hat Revolution protesters imagined a potential new future for Hong Kong that saw it as autonomous from mainland China. Unfortunately, however, the attempted creation of a new homeland came with a price: Hong Kong was no longer a preeminently peaceful city. Hong Kong was on fire and, as I will point to in chapter 6, would never be the same again.

Conclusion: Home vs. Home

Throughout this chapter, I have pointed to the contrasting ideologies that characterized Hong Kong's Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. In doing so, I pointed to two key protest mechanisms through which these contrasting ideologies of the movements were communicated: building a protest out of the home in 2014 and building a homeland out of the protest in 2019.

In 2014, Umbrella Revolution protesters camped out in the streets of Hong Kong for seventy-nine days and, in doing so, used their everyday, familial home lives as the foundations for the protest. Umbrella Revolution protesters cooked and ate, cleaned and recycled, studied, and slept on the streets. Transporting their home lives and daily cultural habits onto the streets of Hong Kong offered Umbrella Revolution protesters a sense of familiarity and sameness that normalized the scope of the protest they were undertaking. Items from the home, including umbrellas, cling wrap, bicycle helmets, kitchen and garden supplies, and items from the immediate surroundings were repurposed as a form of bricolage and used as predominantly

defensive shields. Pro-democracy-protesting Hong Kongers were simply going about their daily routines, carrying out the same duties they would on any given day, using the same items, and duplicating familial relationships.

In 2019, pro-democracy-supporting Hong Kongers engaged in a different type of protest. The Hard Hat Revolution was violent and, at times, deadly. Instead of transporting their home lives onto the streets of Hong Kong, Hard Hat Revolution participants radically altered their city to create a new homeland and, with it, altered the ideology of Hong Kong identity. To do so, protesters upgraded their protest tools of 2014. Bicycle helmets were swapped for hard hats, cloth face masks were exchanged for full-face gas masks and respirators, and school uniforms were replaced by pseudo-military-style clothing. Moreover, umbrellas were no longer only defensive shields and symbols of democracy but were transformed into offensive weapons, and projectiles such as bricks, Molotov cocktails, and arrows were fired from bows and catapults. In essence, Hard Hat Revolution protesters had created their own military that was unafraid to use physical violence and torture tactics to try to defeat opposing forces. Protesters and their supporters also used a number of strategies through which individuals bond under a sense of “nation-ness” thorough situational patriotism, celebration, and glorification. The development of medical and fire services was intended to protect and help protesting Hong Kongers in need. The creation of a new flag, a national anthem, and a nonverbal language further functioned to build an attachment to Hong Kong as a separate and distinct entity from mainland China.

Having reviewed the major ideological components that characterized the conceptions of home and thus the protest strategies of the two revolutions, I conclude by explicating the five reasons that, I argue, account for the different conceptions of home as a protest strategy between

the two movements. Finally, I suggest why neither metaphor of home ultimately served the Hong Kong protesters well.

Accounting for Revolutionary Differences

Despite some positive aspects of the strategies used in the Hard Hat Revolution, the overriding memories of this movement are of the violence that was inflicted across the city. Indeed, in 2019, Hong Kong became almost unrecognizable from the city I knew and the image of the city that had been projected around the globe during the Umbrella Revolution. Unlike the Umbrella Revolution, in which protesting Hong Kongers made no inroads into securing a democratic future, Hard Hat Revolution protesters did secure a victory: the extradition bill they vehemently opposed was shelved. Hard Hat Revolution protesters saw this as a sign that violent protests do achieve intended results and, instead of ending the Hard Hat Revolution, protests continued and, in fact, escalated as Hong Kongers made more demands and ramped up their use of violence. But what could account for such a change in the ideological conceptualization of the strategies of the Hard Hat Revolution? I suggest that five reasons accounted for these different ideologies: a failed (Umbrella) revolution, increased mainlandization, a global rise in nationalistic sentiment, protesters' aging, and unification around a common enemy.

A Failed (Umbrella) Revolution

The Umbrella Revolution failed because it ended with the government giving zero concessions to pro-democracy-supporting Hong Kongers. In fact, the Umbrella Revolution concluded without the Party even feeling the need to release an official statement about the revolution.¹⁵⁴ Hong Kongers were applauded for their artistic, energetic, polite, and predominantly nonviolent forms of protest, but it was an unsuccessful approach. "Somehow," said one Hong Konger reflecting on the Umbrella Revolution, "we thought if we could keep the

revolution peaceful, it might lead to some changes.”¹⁵⁵ This notion was folly, however, and many of Hong Kong’s pro-democracy advocates realized that a different approach might be needed. “A revolution takes 30 years,” the protester continued. “We are just the first generation,” and 2014 was “an education for the next generation.”¹⁵⁶ The lesson learned from 2014 may have been that predominantly peaceful protest that alienates and divides cohorts of citizens may not be the most successful approach to protest. “After 2014, the sentiment of failure was quite strong,” one Hong Konger told me. “We were immature activists; we didn’t bargain for anything, and we failed. I don’t think this will be a peaceful revolution anymore.”¹⁵⁷ When thinking about what unfolded four-and-a-half years later, these comments were prophetic.

Increased Mainlandization

In the years between the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, further calls for democratic reform in Hong Kong were repeatedly ignored, and a number of incidents continued to fuel fears that the mainlandization of the city was being expedited. The first fallout came within weeks of Carrie Lam being sworn in as the chief executive when six pro-democracy politicians were disqualified from Hong Kong’s legislative council after refusing to take the oath of allegiance to China. For Nathan Law, one of those disqualified, the oath was a “political tool being used by the regime to suppress Hong Kong’s people.”¹⁵⁸ Next came the case of five employees of a Hong Kong book shop who went missing in 2015. The employees of Causeway Bay Books—a shop that stocked controversial texts that are banned in the mainland—were widely believed to have been taken to the mainland for interrogation.¹⁵⁹ Then, almost three years after the conclusion of the Umbrella Revolution, in 2017, leading pro-democracy activists Joshua Wong, Nathan Law, and Alex Chow were sentenced to serve jail time for their roles in the on-street occupation.¹⁶⁰

In the midst of these events, the Party announced plans for its Greater Bay Area project, an economic plan that would see nine mainland Chinese cities, Macau, and Hong Kong linked through the joint development of technology, infrastructure, and finance.¹⁶¹ These developments, along with the opening of the world's longest sea-crossing bridge that links Hong Kong to the mainland Chinese city of Zhuhai, meant that, for many Hong Kongers, the mainland and the reach of the Party felt closer than ever before.¹⁶² This uneasy feeling was further exacerbated when, in 2018, the Party approved the removal of the two-term limit for its leader, allowing current president Xi Jinping to lead the Party until his death.¹⁶³ The biggest controversy, of course, was the proposed—and later shelved—extradition bill that proved to be the exigency that led to the outbreak of the Hard Hat Revolution.

Global Rise in Nationalistic Sentiment

Although “every successful revolution has defined itself in national terms,” recent times have seen a rise in global nationalistic sentiment. In the years between the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, two major events involving Hong Kong's closest allies led to a spate of protests that looked very different from the Umbrella Revolution.¹⁶⁴ Donald Trump's US presidential election victory and the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union in 2016 are examples of events that are “largely products of rising nationalism” and highlight global issues of localist and nationalist divides.¹⁶⁵ For law professor Taisu Zhang, the mainlandization of Hong Kong was on par with such examples of nationalism. In the midst of unrest over rising inequality, increased corruption, and thus the allure of populism, by the time of the Hard Hat Revolution, the city had been swept up in the “tsunami of protests that swept across six continents.”¹⁶⁶ Indeed, in the same year that saw the outbreak of the Hard Hat Revolution, over a quarter of the globe saw a rise in civil unrest. Violent and often-deadly clashes broke out among

groups that positioned themselves at opposites ends of political and ideological spectrums as some focused on nationalism and others desired to be part of a larger global community.¹⁶⁷

The global rise in nationalism that was replicated in Hong Kong had three primary effects on the city. First, it aided many pro-democracy-supporting Hong Kongers in differentiating themselves from their mainland counterparts. Hong Kong, a city where, historically, “orderliness is sacrosanct” and diversity is embraced, became a battleground as Hong Kongers caught “a disease that has plagued the United States: partisan polarization” regarding nationalism.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, echoing Donald Trump’s slogan of “Make America great again,” calls to “reclaim Hong Kong” were increasingly heard across the city throughout the Hard Hat Revolution as large groups of democracy-supporting Hong Kongers became “closed and inward-looking.”¹⁶⁹ The Hard Hat Revolution saw the burning and looting of shops, restaurants, banks, and other organizations that were deemed to be linked to the mainland, and their employees and customers were not safe from the scorn of protesting Hong Kongers. Accused of stealing jobs, taking school places, and raising house prices, mainlanders in Hong Kong were referred to as “yellow thugs,” “savages,” “locusts,” and “Chinazis” who should “go back” to mainland China.¹⁷⁰

The second effect of Hong Kong’s rising sense of nationalism was that it encouraged the violence that was rife across the city through the Hard Hat Revolution. As often-violent protests occurred in Chile, Egypt, Iraq, England, Lebanon, France, and Ecuador in the weeks and months preceding Hong Kong’s Hard Hat Revolution, constant news cycles displayed the “public fury” that was being “unleashed on a global scale.”¹⁷¹ Having failed to enact change through a predominantly peaceful and artistic protest, Hong Kong’s pro-democracy-protesters found themselves at a post-Umbrella Revolution crossroads. With the continuing increase of mainlandization, the threat of the enactment of the extradition bill, and the failure of the

Umbrella Revolution weighing heavily on their minds, perhaps Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters saw violence as their only option.¹⁷² Whatever the cause, Hong Kongers followed the lead of the rest of the world.

In addition to further separating Hong Kong from mainland China by allowing violent methods of protest in their new homeland, a third effect of the rise of nationalistic sentiment in Hong Kong was that it alienated the city's potential allies. In 2014, Umbrella Revolution protesters won the support of foreign allies due to their predominantly peaceful protest. In 2019, however, the violent acts of large groups of Hard Hat Revolution protesters presented a headache for foreign allies: How could they speak out in support of protesters who were looting stores, setting fire to buildings and city infrastructure, and taking the law into their own hands? The Hard Hat Revolution may have been more inclusive for those taking part in Hong Kong, but this ideological and metaphorical construction of a new homeland, in fact, isolated Hong Kong from the outside world. The nationalist bug that had gripped many parts of the globe had also taken hold in Hong Kong and led to Hong Kong protesters' isolation of the city.

Protesters' Aging

A failed Umbrella Revolution, an increase in mainlandization, and a rise in global nationalistic sentiment offered Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters a number of exigencies to trigger an escalation of their protest strategies. Another important factor that took place in the years between the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions and was a decisive element in the contrasting ideological approach to protest was that by 2019, those who took part in the Umbrella Revolution were older.

In 2014, many Umbrella Revolution protesters juggled school and social activism. They camped out in the streets of their city by night and performed their role of diligent students by

day. When out protesting, many protesters with whom I spoke told me that that were cognizant of how they participated. “I didn’t protest too much in 2014,” one Hong Konger told me. “My parents told me not to become involved with any violent acts.”¹⁷³ By 2019, this approach had changed. Not only were Hard Hat Revolution protesters willing to be more violent, but they were less concerned with the potential consequences of their actions. In 2014, “I was afraid of being arrested and beaten by the police,” one Hong Konger told me. “But now, I’m not afraid. I’m willing to get arrested. I’m willing to get hurt. I will stand up for my city.” Another observed, “Now, I’m older, though. I can protest how I like.”¹⁷⁴ Hong Kong protesters, then, had grown up both figuratively and literally. Pro-democracy protesters who had taken part in the Umbrella Revolution when they were fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen had come of age by the time of the Hard Hat Revolution and were nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one. They were in the throes of adulthood and were no longer accountable to their parents. Consequently, the more adult strategies they used to protest reflected their older ages.

Common Enemy

No matter how old Hong Kongers were, in 2019, they had a common enemy around which to unite. The wide-ranging age of Hard Hat Revolution protesters stems from the fact that the movement was protesting a different exigency from that of the Umbrella Revolution. The announcement of the proposed extradition bill was, for many, “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” “I didn’t really agree with the protests in 2014,” one interviewee told me. “But this extradition bill is too much. I can’t ignore the protests this time.”¹⁷⁵

In 2014, in contrast, the Umbrella Revolution was built on the foundations of genuine universal suffrage—the right for every adult Hong Konger to have a voice about who is in charge of the city—a very general and nebulous objective. Although large sections of Hong Kong

society desired a democratic future, in 2014, unity was lacking with regards to how or when the desired democracy would be achieved. Many Hong Kongers wanted democracy and were willing to show their disdain for the Party and mainlandization by taking part in the Umbrella Revolution, while others yearned for democracy but did not feel comfortable taking a stand against the government by participating in protests. Conversely, other Hong Kongers were willing to wait to let the situation play out and see what happened as 2047 and full reintegration with China neared.

The togetherness and camaraderie displayed throughout the Hard Hat Revolution stemmed from the fact that Hong Kongers were fighting a common enemy. In 2019, everybody in Hong Kong potentially could be affected by the implementation of the proposed extradition bill, and it became a concern for a majority of Hong Kongers. Even those in Hong Kong who were loyal to the Party would rather not face the possibility of being transferred to China for questioning or a trial if they happened to break the law. For the majority, then, the proposed extradition law was simply a step too far. “In 2014, my family were against me going out to protest,” one Hong Konger told me. In 2019, however, “my family do not mind me protesting. In fact, they protested with me last week.”¹⁷⁶ Indeed, in addition to young Hong Kongers, the Hard Hat Revolution was bolstered by the visible support of older generations. Office workers, for example, used their lunch breaks to join in the protests, and in June 2019, thousands of elderly Hong Kongers—some in wheelchairs—took to the streets to support the younger protesters.¹⁷⁷ For the *South China Morning Post*, the involvement of “silver-haired” Hong Kongers marked a “new page” in the city’s social movements.¹⁷⁸ Although thoughts about democracy, the Party, and GovHK might still have been disparate and divisive, in 2019, there was a common enemy

around which Hong Kongers united and upon which their new homeland was built: the possible implementation of the proposed extradition bill.

Ideological Constraints

In this final section, I explicate how the ideological conceptions of the metaphor of the home that I have identified and explored in this chapter ultimately constrained and limited both the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters created two different versions of home, but neither worked in the way they hoped or expected.

The reproduction of the home environment during the Umbrella Revolution significantly limited participants and their activities. Although Umbrella Revolution participants were applauded for their general commitment to nonviolence and quirky approach to protest, continuing with their everyday lives and enactment of their familiar home environments did not encourage a majority of Hong Kong's pre-democracy protesters to step out of their comfort zones and experiment with alternative protest strategies, even when the strategies they were using were clearly ineffective. Moreover, the overriding determination to conform to nonviolent protest and an adherence to traditional Hong Kong values and methods of protest led to schisms among Umbrella Revolution participants that ultimately led to groups of Hong Kongers being excluded, cast aside, and devalued. The home metaphor, then, constricted how Umbrella Revolution participants could protest and, moreover, for how long they could protest. After all, in reality, how long could Hong Kongers have continued to camp in the streets before they missed the homecooked food, warm showers, and other comforts of their familial homes? Thus, the Umbrella Revolution ended without Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters making any strides toward their goal of democracy.

Although the Hard Hat Revolution's ideological construction of a new homeland allowed for a more inclusive protest, the violence that was enabled by this inclusiveness ultimately constrained its participants and the results of the revolution. By enacting violence which, at times, was extreme, Hard Hat Revolution protesters were playing into the hands of both the Hong Kong police and the Party. Violent acts provided ammunition for the authorities, giving them reason to respond with more violence and also to implement tougher punishments that led to an increase in mainlandization. The acts of symbolizing the ideological conception of a new homeland through the creation of a national anthem and flag only antagonized authorities, leading to a loss of face for the Party on an international scale and further legitimizing the Party's heavy-handed response to the Hard Hat Revolution protesters. Moreover, the violence that resulted from the ideological construction of a new homeland isolated Hong Kong by making it difficult for potential allies to intervene and defend Hong Kong protesters' actions.

In this chapter, I have pointed to two distinct ideologies that characterized and differentiated the protest strategies of Hong Kong's Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. What follows in the next chapters are analyses of two particular arenas—the use of public transportation infrastructure and the portrayal of political leaders—that provide more specific examples of how the two foundational ideologies explicated in this chapter were further manifest in the Hong Kong protests. Following these analyses, in chapter 6, I engage in a more theoretical discussion of the ideologies of protest strategies derived from these analyses of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. In the epilogue, I discuss the consequences of the protest ideologies for Hong Kong's future.

Figures



Figure 1: Umbrella Revolution campsite, Admiralty, Hong Kong, October 2014.¹⁷⁹



Figure 2: Umbrella Revolution campsite, Admiralty, Hong Kong, 2014.¹⁸⁰



Figure 3: Umbrella Revolution protesters clean the streets, Hong Kong, 2014.¹⁸¹



Figure 4: Umbrella Revolution study corner, Hong Kong, 2014.¹⁸²



Figure 5: The nonverbal lexicon of the Hard Hat Revolution.¹⁸³



Figure 6: Lennon Wall, Hong Kong, June 2019.¹⁸⁴



Figure 7: Lennon Wall, Hong Kong, June 2019.¹⁸⁵



Figure 8: Artist Badiucao unveils his design for a new Hong Kong flag, 2019.¹⁸⁶

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CHAPTER 4

TICKET TO (NOT) RIDE:

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AS A VEHICLE OF PROTEST IN THE UMBRELLA AND HARD HAT REVOLUTIONS

The Umbrella Revolution was renowned as an artistic and predominantly peaceful protest that creatively harnessed aspects of everyday life. This creative *ethos* was visible on the first full day of the Umbrella Revolution when a number of double-decker buses that were stranded on the roads of Hong Kong were artistically decorated with paper and other ephemeral materials. Images of the buses immediately piqued my interest, and I began to analyze the protest functions of the double-decker buses. This analysis was eventually published in 2020 in the *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*.¹ In 2019, public transportation was used again by Hard Hat Revolution protesters. This time, however, the city's Mass Transit Railway (MTR); Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA); and multiple roads, bridges, and tunnels became scenes of some of the most violent and dramatic acts of the Hard Hat Revolution.

In this chapter, I continue to analyze the contrasting ideologies that characterize the protest strategies of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions and the nature of the protest mechanisms that communicate these ideologies, focusing on transportation infrastructure. I argue that, in 2014, the “outburst of creativity and expression” of Umbrella Revolution protesters saw them harness a number of aspects of a marketing communications campaign as a form of “creative disrespect.”² Umbrella Revolution protesters transformed a number of double-decker buses into artistic billboards that promoted the Umbrella Revolution's plea for genuine universal suffrage. In 2019, Hard Hat Revolution protesters again utilized public transportation, but this

time, the MTR; airport; and roads, bridges, and tunnels were used in such a way that constituted a theatrical production with the protesters functioning as performers. I argue that although the use of public transportation infrastructure was vastly different in the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, both strategies ultimately constrained Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters in their efforts to achieve their intended goals.

Because I was not in Hong Kong during the Umbrella Revolution or the latter stages of the Hard Hat Revolution when violence was more prevalent, in this chapter, I predominantly use media images and reports as my main data source. In addition, I use social media posts, including Twitter and Facebook, that focused on the two protest movements. I also use interview data, but my interview data are limited because the interviews were carried out in the initial days of the Hard Hat Revolution before the widespread violence on which I focus in this chapter had occurred or when violence had dissipated due to police and government crackdowns and the COVID-19 outbreak. Thus, I use data provided by four volunteer participants in 2019 and one volunteer participant in 2020. I begin this chapter by turning to address the everydayness of public transportation and its intrinsic link to protest and democratic desires.

The repetitive nature and mundaneness associated with the everyday use of public transportation means that, when used as a protest tool, parallels can be drawn with Michel de Certeau's notion of everyday life as a "sphere of resistance"; the re-composition of spaces and the use of everyday and familiar rituals constitute a form of protest.³ Acts that appear to be mundane and routine, in fact, can be used as "poetic ways of making do" or "bricolage" that can "offer a voice to the silent majority."⁴ Hong Kong protesters' use of public transportation enacted this transformative process.

Hong Kong protesters were not the first to use public transit as mechanisms in support of democratic pursuits. Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in 1955 is perhaps the most famous example in US history of public transit serving as "a space of dissent."⁵ More recently, a "global protest wave" has seen public transit systems in cities such as London, Santiago, and New York become the "locus of protest and mobilization."⁶ Transportation systems are a vehicle for protest for a number of reasons. Public transit is "a public thing" or part of "the commons" and thus is a shared space in which individuals from varying demographics, neighborhoods, and levels of social privilege interact and coexist as they travel among places such as home, work, school, and commercial establishments.⁷ For mobility and planning scholar Paola Jiron, public transit in cities such as Santiago cuts through geographic segregation by bringing together people from different socioeconomic groups in a classless carriage. Enrique Peñalosa, the mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, agrees, explaining that a bus comprised of all types of people speeding past static traffic is "a picture of democracy at work" and a "beautiful democratic symbol."⁸

Despite offering "a lifeline for citizens," however, public transportation systems are also viewed by many users as an "extension of local government and of the officials that run them."⁹ The Hong Kong government owns 76 percent of the city's MTR system and, as a result, became "a ripe setting" for acts of civil disobedience.¹⁰ Although global instances of social unrest are not all directly linked to public transportation services, it is no coincidence that public transit and its infrastructure act as a site of agitation that connects the dots among specific, localized incidents such as fare hikes (Santiago), increased policing (New York City), and more widespread dissatisfaction with policies and policymakers (Hong Kong).¹¹

I turn now to address how public transportation infrastructure was used as a protest mechanism through which the contrasting ideologies of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions were communicated. I begin with Umbrella Revolution protesters' creative use of double-decker buses.

The Umbrella Revolution: Driving a Creative Communications Campaign for Democracy

When activists spontaneously flooded the streets of Hong Kong on the night of September 28, 2014, a number of vehicles, including taxis; police vehicles; and, most notably, double-decker buses, were abandoned on Nathan Road in the city's Mong Kok district.¹² As an uncontrollable swell of pro-democracy-supporting Hong Kongers filled Nathan Road, the usually bustling thoroughfare came to a grinding halt. A number of double-decker bus drivers abandoned their vehicles and fled the scene, perceiving that no safe driving routes were available to them, and the stricken buses took on a new life form. As the sun rose on Hong Kong after a night of unrest that resulted in the police's deployment of tear gas and pepper spray, photographs began to circulate that showed the abandoned double-decker buses had been covered with written messages calling attention to the Umbrella Revolution. By covering almost all of the buses, including the wheels, the vehicles not only communicated the powering down of everyday transportation and the shutdown of the city but, crucially, the end of Hong Kongers' passive acceptance of mainlandization.

In the first section of this chapter, I explore how Umbrella Revolution protesters—or creatives—employed seven elements of integrated marketing communications (IMC)—location, crowd sourcing, repetition, viral marketing, cross fertilization, endorsements, and visualization—and applied them to double-decker buses. I argue that, by harnessing a number of elements of IMC, resourceful Umbrella Revolution protesters transformed double-decker buses from large,

mobile machines into static billboards calling for democracy and, by doing so, gained seventy-nine days of free advertising in one of the world's most expensive media markets.

The lens of marketing theory can be used to focus on how the artistic appropriation of urban space during protest can utilize promotional and marketing techniques to enhance awareness, increase participation, and educate audiences.¹³ Comprised of “the four P’s”—product, price, promotion, and place—the marketing mix is a long-established approach in communications campaigns that offers “controllable variables” that can influence an audience.¹⁴ In their study of the marketing techniques of Umbrella Revolution protesters, Georgios Patsiaouras, Anastasia Veneti, and William Green focus on the “place” element of the marketing mix.¹⁵ While “product” (Hong Kong’s democratic desires) is rather obvious and “price”—with regards to monetary value—is not relevant, my analysis in the first half of this chapter will focus on the rhetorical aspects of the promotional techniques harnessed by Umbrella Revolution protesters—in particular, the transformation of double-decker buses into advertising billboards.

Despite fulfilling different requirements and meeting particular needs, advertising, public relations, and marketing are often confused and the terms used interchangeably. *Advertising* is the paid-for, specific placement, presentation, or promotion of ideas, goods, or services.¹⁶ *Public relations*, in contrast, is designed to educate and inform via a variety of promotional activities that result in media editorial coverage—third-party coverage that results from the dissemination of a press release as opposed to a paid-for advertisement. *Public relations* is focused on establishing relationships and achieving understanding among all stakeholders and building credibility for a product, service, or idea.¹⁷ The pros and cons of advertising as opposed to public relations are much debated. For some, the editorial coverage achieved from a public relations campaign is more credible than paid-for advertising. Conversely, public relations has its

drawbacks, for while advertising is controlled by the individuals or organization purchasing the advertising space, public relations is less malleable and thus can result in negative publicity.¹⁸

Advertising and public relations are, more often than not, preceded by marketing. A broad term that encompasses a wide variety of activities, *marketing* includes the processes of defining a target audience, planning and executing the conception of a product or message that will appeal to the target audience, setting a price for what is being sold, and distribution. The “neat and tidy divisions” between marketing and public relations have been “breaking down,” however, and given the rise in potential advertising outlets, especially with the growth of the internet and digital media, the lines among advertising, public relations, and marketing are more blurred than ever before.¹⁹ The current perspective on advertising, public relations, and marketing is that they are key elements of the marketing mix or “integrated marketing communications,” defined as “the planning and execution of all types of advertising-like and promotion-like messages selected for a brand, service or company, in order to meet a common set of communication objectives.”²⁰

In the case of social movements, colors, symbols, and other visual elements can communicate and reflect “collective identities and stimulate emotional responses” from participants.²¹ Particular protest movements are renowned for harnessing unifying colors (e.g., the yellow and black of the Umbrella Revolution, the green of Argentina’s abortion-rights movement, and the saffron of Myanmar’s anti-government protests) and recognizable symbols (e.g., the umbrella in Hong Kong; the three-finger salute in Bangkok, Thailand; and Guy Fawkes masks to mark the global Occupy movements) to help communicate their messages.²² The 2016 Women's March on Washington, however, provides an example of a protest movement that intentionally utilized branding and marketing strategies.²³ Taking place just meters from the

steps of the US Capitol, where less than twenty-four hours earlier Donald Trump had been inaugurated as the forty-fifth president, the Women's March on Washington became the largest coordinated protest march in US history.²⁴ Aiming to “harness the political power of diverse women and their communities to create transformative social change,” the movement mobilized millions of people around the world in “sister marches” that took place in more than thirty countries.²⁵

United States-based creative agency Big Monocle was tasked with creating a “visual identity” for the Women’s March “that all participants could rally behind.”²⁶ What followed was a publicly available ninety-four-page “Brand & Communications Guidelines” document that provided participants and activists with a mission; a vision statement; “driving values”; brand elements that included primary and secondary color palettes and typography; permitted use, size, spacing, placement, and presentation of the logo; branding rules; and social media guidelines.²⁷ Despite its careful branding, however, the Woman’s March on Washington and the annual Women’s March movement that has continued since is perhaps best remembered not for the official logo, colors, or fonts but instead for the homemade placards and pink “pussy hats” worn by female marchers and allies, which became the unofficial brand of merchandise for the movement.

Returning to Hong Kong—one of the few places in the world to still have such vehicles—double-decker buses are “rolling billboards” across the city.²⁸ This idea is reinforced when the comparative size of double-decker buses and billboards is considered. At fourteen feet tall and around forty-two feet long, an average double-decker bus is roughly the size of the large billboards—referred to as *bulletins* in the advertising industry—that can be seen on roadsides and other areas that offer large reach and impact.²⁹ In cities such as Hong Kong that have high

traffic and pedestrian densities, advertising on the exterior of buses is popular due its high exposure frequency.³⁰ In their study exploring the effectiveness of exterior bus advertising in Hong Kong, marketing scholars Gerard Prendergast and Chan Chi Hang discovered that 80 percent of interviewees could recall at least one exterior bus advertisement and its associated brand name.³¹ Once on board a bus, passengers' exposure to advertising does not cease as they are targeted via posters, televisions running infomercials, and even the logo-laden shopping bags carried by fellow passengers.

When multiple double-decker buses were stopped on the evening of September 28, 2014, however, they were covered with pieces of paper, each featuring a handwritten message that called attention to the democratic dreams of Umbrella Revolution protesters, including “Free HK,” “Support HK,” and “Real True Democracy NOW.” Thus, I argue that Umbrella Revolution protesters engaged in an integrated marketing campaign to advertise their social movement. A key feature of the marketing campaign was the transformation of double-decker into static billboards.

Referred to as “outdoor” or “out-of-home” advertising, billboards have long been considered an effective advertising medium for engaging audiences.³² High-density urban areas are the most popular spaces to place billboards that can act as “visual megaphones” and thus increase customer exposure to a product or message.³³ Indeed, some of the most popular and iconic tourist destinations in the world—for example, Piccadilly Circus, London; Times Square, New York City; and Shibuya Crossing, Tokyo—are renowned for their larger than life billboards. Due to the sheer number of images that are taken by tourists alone, sites such as Times Square offer “global branding in their domestic markets.”³⁴ Billboards, then, are used

intentionally to connect with desired audiences and, as a result of that connection, the products or ideas they present often are spread around the world.³⁵

Despite the billboard's long history as a traditional form of advertising, as pedestrians are increasingly connected to online spaces, their eyes are often looking at their cellphone screens as they are walking the city. Thus, advertisers face a struggle to attract attention to billboards. The transformation of a double-decker bus into a billboard in one of the world's largest cities, however, was a creative way to disrupt pedestrians who were navigating their surroundings on autopilot. I now turn to explicate the seven elements of IMC that Umbrella Revolution creatives applied to double-decker buses: location, crowd sourcing, repetition, viral marketing, cross fertilization, endorsements, and visualization.

Location

As consumers have become more mobile and are less frequently exposed to transitional forms of media and advertising, outdoor advertising has become increasingly important to organizations that seek to communicate with potential stakeholders.³⁶ As organizations work to reach the largest audience possible, location remains the most important consideration when placing an advertisement. Factors such as visibility and traffic (by drivers, passengers, and pedestrians) in a location determine how many eyes see an advertisement. Meanwhile, questions regarding demographics of the people who are present in a location help to ascertain if an advertisement will reach the appropriate target audience.³⁷ Finally, location can simply be chosen for prestige, and placing an advertisement in a particular location can add to the *ethos* of a product or organization.

As one of the most densely populated cities in the world, space in Hong Kong is hard to come by for everybody but especially for advertisers. With some large companies booking

billboard space in premium locations far in advance, Hong Kong has become a “billboard jungle” as savvy landlords have taken advantage of the need for organizations to communicate their messages. Despite Hong Kong’s exorbitant rent and real estate prices, some buildings in the city generate more income from advertising than they do from the offices, apartments, or retail spaces they house inside. Advertising space in Hong Kong is at such a premium that even rooftops have become profitable spaces for the rental of potential advertising space.³⁸

Positioned on the Kowloon side of Hong Kong, the area of Mong Kok—meaning *busy corner* in Cantonese—is one of the most densely populated places on the planet. A major transportation hub, the area is served by multiple subway lines, train tracks, and countless bus and mini-bus routes. The recently opened Express Rail Link enables travel between Hong Kong and multiple mainland cities in less than an hour. If Hong Kong is, as it is so often labeled, *China’s gateway to the West*, Kowloon is Hong Kong’s gateway to the mainland.

As the first road built in Kowloon in 1861, Nathan Road has historical connections to Hong Kong’s former colonizer, Great Britain. Referred to as the *Golden Mile* in the years preceding World War II, Nathan Road today is Kowloon’s main thoroughfare, passing through the heart of Mong Kok. Lined with shops, museums, high-end hotels, and restaurants, Nathan Road is a mecca for tourists as well as locals going about their daily routines. Because of this traffic, Mong Kok—and especially Nathan Road—is a desirable location for advertisers. When walking down Nathan Road, pedestrians are bombarded by people pushing flyers in their faces, never-ending neon signs, billboards, advertisements whizzing by on the sides of taxis and buses, and sales associates in doorways of businesses trying to entice potential customers to come inside and browse their wares. The number of illuminated billboards in Mong Kok even has led residents of the district to complain of intolerable light pollution as a “source of

nuisance.”³⁹ The fact that a number of double-decker buses were abandoned in one of the premium retail and advertising districts in Hong Kong was unplanned. However, creative Umbrella Revolution protesters used the serendipitous resting place of the buses to secure seventy-nine-days of free advertising billboards in a bid to communicate to a global audience.

Crowd Sourcing

The fact that the Umbrella Revolution billboards were independently created meant that no branding guidelines were provided to protesters. Quite simply, anybody could step up to any of the double-decker buses and attach their written or drawn messages. Because the buses had been transformed into static billboards, more leeway was given to Hong Kong’s newest creatives with regards to what could be placed on the buses. In keeping with the Umbrella Revolution’s nonhierarchical approach to marketing and promotion that allowed for “free flowing creativity,” the branding of the Umbrella Revolution was an inclusive, collaborative affair almost immediately.⁴⁰ The on-street occupation was only a few hours old when Kacey Wong, an artist and assistant professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, posted a call on his Facebook page asking for submissions for potential logo ideas to represent the Umbrella Revolution. In response, Wong was inundated with responses from artists and designers across the globe.⁴¹ Without any prompting from Wong, almost all of the designs utilized the same color palette: yellow and black. Hence, the colors of the Umbrella Revolution were chosen by participants.

Protest efforts around the bus followed a similar pattern. When transforming the double-decker buses into billboards, Umbrella Revolution participants encouraged each other as well as nonparticipating Hong Kongers and tourists to “actively participate in the co-production of protest art,” no matter what their level of artistic skill.⁴² With paper and writing implements provided in boxes around the buses, people were free to write messages and draw pictures and

place them wherever they desired on the buses. The Umbrella Revolution, then, may have been a movement without a dedicated marketing team and budget, but Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters were able to build brand identity and "internationalize" the movement.⁴³

Repetition

Although much debate has ensued regarding the success and influence of repetition on communication effectiveness—for example, it can lead to customer fatigue—repetition is a standard advertising practice that forges familiarity.⁴⁴ The goal of an advertiser is for the audience not only to watch or listen to an advertisement but to act on the message that is being communicated.

In keeping with the advertising industry's name for large billboards (*bulletins*), from afar, the billboards looked like the bulletin boards that adorn the walls of classrooms and students' bedrooms and are often seen in the hallways of churches, schools, and other public buildings. Some of the handwriting was illegible, some signs were in color and some in black and white, and the sheer volume of messages meant that many were covering and overlapping each other. This approach meant that the Umbrella Revolution billboards may not have been as crisp and as clear as a planned and paid-for billboard but, after all, they were created in an ad hoc fashion and without a budget or an official team of creatives. If the audience wanted to read the intricacies of each piece of writing that had been attached to a bus, a closer inspection was required. But that was not necessary because the messages on the pieces of paper were essentially the same. They repeated the message that Umbrella Revolution protesters wanted democracy. Despite being small and difficult to read from distance, the Umbrella Revolution's billboards showcased the repetition that is vital to successfully reinforce and amplify a message to an intended audience.

Viral Marketing

Umbrella Revolution creatives transformed what is traditionally a location-specific form of advertising and promotion into viral marketing to a global audience. A vital element of the marketing mix in the digital age, *viral marketing* refers to how messages are spread among people. Embracing the internet and social media, viral marketing uses hashtags, tags, shares, follows, and likes to increase the dissemination of a message by the general public to a wider—often global—community.⁴⁵

As images of the buses began to flood the internet, accompanying hashtags included #UmbrellaRevolution, #HongKong, and #OccupyCentral.⁴⁶ From September 26 to October 1, 2014, more than 1.3 million tweets were generated that related to the events in Hong Kong. At one point, #OccupyCentral was being tweeted more than two-hundred times a minute.⁴⁷ By attracting a large volume of online traffic, Umbrella Revolution protesters initiated another element of the marketing mix: electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM). Occurring on discussion forums, blogs, social media, and other virtual spaces, eWOM's impact "can spread epidemically," transcending time and space as users share opinions and information and influence one another.⁴⁸ In essence, the participatory creation of the Umbrella Revolution billboards saw them morph into a viral marketing campaign that utilized eWOM. As the number of messages stuck to each bus grew, so, too, did the number of people who posed for selfies by the emerging billboards and then shared their images across the globe.

Cross Fertilization

Cross fertilization is an essential element of the marketing mix that is used to grab the attention of customers and target a specific audience and other stakeholders.⁴⁹ One form of cross fertilization—piggybacking—includes leveraging live events like the Super Bowl through social

media to comment on the expensive television advertisements of other competitors. Another form of cross fertilization is newsjacking, when brands (e.g., carpet retailers) use one event (e.g., the Oscars) to promote their own products. Even the yellow-and-black color palette that was associated with the Umbrella Revolution can be considered an example of strategic piggybacking. When Kacey Wong posted his Facebook call for logo designs for the Umbrella Revolution, the fact that he received designs that were predominantly yellow and black was intriguing given the color palette of human rights nongovernmental organization Amnesty International.⁵⁰ Although the color choices of logo designers may have been subconscious, harnessing the same colors as the leading and most recognizable defender of human rights meant that audience members could link the Umbrella Revolution to the mainlandization of Hong Kong as a human rights issue.

While road closures, coupled with the sheer volume of Hong Kongers who were camping on the streets, meant that the Umbrella Revolution led to the abrupt halt of the city's "unfettered capitalism"—an element of the city's existence that distinguishes it from mainland China—this did not stop large businesses from playing a role in the city's daily life.⁵¹ Two of the stranded buses carried branding that Umbrella Revolution protesters were careful not to obscure. While most of the reachable surface on both buses was covered with messages, the logos of Advance Toiletries (fig. 9) and Esso were still visible and recognizable (fig. 10). A local company specializing in toiletries and health and hygiene products, Advance Toiletries is a brand with which Hong Kongers are familiar. Moreover, the use of Advance Toiletries could be seen as connotatively communicating Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters' desires to clean up and sanitize the political and plutocratic mess that had befallen Hong Kong. While the Advance Toiletries logo was still largely visible, on another bus, part of the logo in the top left-hand

corner of the bus was covered with a handwritten protest sign. While only the letters *S* and *O* were visible, the globally recognized brand that was partly obscured was unmistakable—the oval shape, white background, blue edging, and red lettering were clearly parts of the Esso logo. Having its branding on the side of a static bus appeared to go against what Esso is known for: producing the fuel that helps vehicles and machinery to operate. The bus may have been static and not using Esso-produced fuel, but by being unwittingly featured on a static billboard, Esso was helping to fuel the Umbrella Revolution.

In addition to piggybacking off of the existing branding that was on the buses, Umbrella Revolution creatives made good use of the serendipity of the buses' resting places by harnessing the advertising and branding that surrounded them. For example, the Advance Toiletries bus came to a stop under the sign outside of a Lukfook Jewellery store (fig. 9).⁵² One of the most prestigious jewelry chains in Hong Kong, the organization claims to be the “Brand of Hong Kong, Sparkling the World.”⁵³ In an advertisement on the wall of the Lukfook store's exterior, a young woman who usually would be casting a watchful eye over the store was now looking down at the store's latest piece of merchandise: the Advance Toiletries Bus. The new billboard thus depicted the cross fertilization of two brands: the Umbrella Revolution and Lukfook Jewellery.

In one nighttime image, the Advance Toiletries bus was even illuminated by powerful lights from the expensive electronic LED billboard that sits over the entrance to the Lukfook store. In addition to securing free advertising space, then, Umbrella Revolution creatives secured premium lighting for their billboard. Hong Kong protesters had harnessed, perhaps unwittingly, the branding of one of the city's billion-dollar businesses that, incidentally, has a huge footprint in mainland China. During this time, the artwork of the Umbrella Revolution

superseded the branding of Lukfook and became the brand associated with Hong Kong, the Umbrella Revolution, and democracy. Despite being forced to close its doors for the duration of the Umbrella Revolution, Lukfook's newest billboard referenced the organization's corporate mission "to contribute to the community through enforcing communications with the public."⁵⁴

A vital part of the marketing mix, public relations is designed to create a positive image through endorsement by a third party.⁵⁵ Utilizing this strategy, Umbrella Revolution protesters capitalized on the fame, reputation, and recognizability of celebrities as a form of piggybacking in the Umbrella Revolution's billboards. The back of the Advance Toiletries bus carried an image of one of the most famous nonviolent activists of all time, Martin Luther King Jr. A man who used the "power of words and acts of nonviolent resistance . . . to achieve seemingly-impossible goals," King fit the bill as a heroic figure to oversee the protesters of the Umbrella Revolution.⁵⁶ He also was no stranger to the protest function of buses—in 1955, King served as spokesperson throughout the thirteen-month bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, that was sparked by the arrest of Rosa Parks. Hong Kong creatives successfully used King's famous face to convey a message of their plight that engaged the public, attracted media attention, and stirred global action.⁵⁷ Moreover, this strategy ensured that they remained within their nonexistent promotional budget because displaying a photograph of the civil rights leader came at no cost.

There was, of course, one final element on which Umbrella Revolution protesters were piggybacking: Hong Kong's British past. From department stores to restaurants to numerous streets named after British figures and places, British architecture remains imprinted onto Hong Kong's postcolonial landscape, and British influence is still deeply woven into everyday life in

Hong Kong. One of the strongest and most distinctively British symbols can be found driving on the left-hand side of the city's roads—the double-decker buses. Thus, the transformation of double-decker buses into billboards communicated Umbrella Revolution protesters' sense of Britishness via a nod to Hong Kong's period of British colonization that, for some, was preferable to current Chinese rule.

The “polyvocal discourse” of the double-decker buses was able to communicate interpretations and reinterpretations of messages that were “not necessarily recognized as contrary or resistant by those in power.”⁵⁸ As de Certeau explains, the use of “clandestine” tactics or “tactical ruses” and the “clever tricks of the ‘weak’ within the order of the ‘strong’” can reconfigure dominant spaces” to communicate something unanticipated and thus “challenge systems of order.”⁵⁹ Although the Communist Party of China (the Party) undoubtedly would have seen news coverage of the use of double-decker buses as tools of protest, the rhetorical connection to British colonialism was a subtle, connotative reading that would not have been immediately recognizable to Party members.

Visualizing a Desired Future

Products are often marketed and sold as aspirational: If you buy this product or buy into this idea, your life will be better. By communicating aspirations, needs, desire, and visions, creatives seek to “guide the choices” of and identify with audiences and potential customers who share “the same values and aspirations” as those the brand communicates through its products and messages.⁶⁰ Of course, Umbrella Revolution protesters were not selling a physical product. Instead, they were promoting a gateway to a better reality and a set of values and visions for an aspirational future in which Hong Kong would be a democratic space.⁶¹

Visual mental imagery is one method that can influence the appeal of a product or message, and visualization that centers on imagination has been shown to lead to the positive reception, evaluation, and acceptance of a product or message.⁶² Although visualization can be retrospective and a connection to past scenarios can be successful, visualization aids that are anticipatory, geared toward future use, and abstract lead to a more positive reception and evaluation.⁶³

Umbrella Revolution creatives used the front panels of one bus to present a desire future to the audience. The front center panel of any bus, which displays the route number and final destination, is highly visible, and a number of buses abandoned on the streets of Hong Kong had their route numbers changed to #689 or #N689 (the night bus equivalent) and their destinations changed to “HELL.” A highly symbolic number in Hong Kong, 689 represents the small number of votes that CY Leung needed to be elected to preside as chief executive over a city of more than seven-million people.

Umbrella Revolution creatives’ transformation of one bus, however, went beyond a simple renumbering and displayed “an attitude of creative disrespect, a radical opposition to the illegitimately powerful.”⁶⁴ The bus, which I refer to as *Bus 689*, was transformed into a monument that commemorated the death of a living person—CY Leung (fig. 11).⁶⁵ In addition to decorating *Bus 689* akin to a Chinese-style shrine to a deceased person, complete with flowers, candles, and a photograph of the “deceased,” Umbrella Revolution creatives redesigned the route for the bus. Created to replicate authentic Hong Kong bus-stop signage, the new route included fictitious stops to mock Leung and the Party. These stops included renaming the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Corporation as *Hell Shade Banking Corporation*, Earth Temple as *Death’s Door*, and Gloucester Road as *High Protest Road*.

Although the selection of a cemetery plot and the installation of a gravestone by individuals who wish to plan their self-commemoration before death is a rather unusual act, a larger public gesture of commemorating the death of a living individual is undoubtedly eerie, especially for the individual who is still living and breathing.⁶⁶ Moreover, the portrayal of Leung's death via a bus transported Hong Kongers to an "otherworld" where Leung ceased to exist and where democracy had been achieved. In short, Umbrella Revolution protesters had created a billboard that visualized an aspirational future in which Leung no longer presided over Hong Kong.

In this section, I analyzed Umbrella Revolution protesters' transformation of double-decker buses into billboards promoting their democratic aspirations for Hong Kong. By employing seven elements of integrated marketing communications—location, crowd sourcing, repetition, viral marketing, cross fertilization, endorsements, and visualization—Umbrella Revolution protesters worked to ensure that their democratic message reached a global audience and that the movement's brand of protest was creative and predominantly peaceful.

Two years after Umbrella Revolution protesters had promoted their democratic calls, CY Leung shocked Hong Kongers when he unexpectedly announced his decision not to run for a second term in office. Umbrella Revolution protesters may not have actually killed Leung, but they certainly curtailed his political career as Leung cited the "intolerable stress" that his role placed on him and his family.⁶⁷ Whatever sense of victory Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters felt, however, was fleeting. Hong Kongers did not get to choose Leung's successor and, instead, his replacement, Carrie Lam was "pre-approved" by Beijing. And so, by June 2019, Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters were back at square one.

The Hard Hat Revolution: Fueling a Theatrical Production for Democracy

Four-and-a-half-years after the conclusion of the Umbrella Revolution, the curtain rose on a new Hong Kong protest when, in June 2019, a reported two-million people took to the streets of Hong Kong. The creative side of the Umbrella Revolution was also on display in the early stages of the Hard Hat Revolution. Quickly, however, the levels of violence escalated, and images broadcast across the globe from Hong Kong showed “marauding mobs” comprised of black-clad, masked individuals attacking police and civilians and setting fire to the city.⁶⁸ In 2019, Hong Kongers were prepared to deface their city and to create more lasting damage; thus, Hong Kong could no longer be characterized as the nonviolent city on which Martin Luther King Jr. had looked down from the back of the Advance Toiletries bus in 2014. Even double-decker buses—the vehicles that Hong Kongers transformed with creative disrespect in 2014—were treated differently in 2019. Abandoned buses, once again stranded in the road, had their tires slashed and their windshields smashed. The words “Join Us” were spray painted on the front windows of one bus.⁶⁹

Social psychologist Erving Goffman uses theatre as a metaphor to represent how people present themselves and their actions to others. For Goffman, a performance is “the activity of a given participant on a given occasion that serves to influence in any way any of the other participants.”⁷⁰ Goffman posits that society is a stage; people are actors; and their beliefs, values, and norms direct their daily performances. Using what Goffman terms *dramaturgical practices*, individuals use “stage craft” and “stage management” in social life to carefully construct and present choreographed and desirable public self-images.⁷¹ In short, the self is a constant “collection of performances” that takes place across everyday life.⁷² In the sections that follow, I

argue that the Hard Hat Revolution went beyond such performances to create a live political theatre production.

The term *political theatre* is often used to describe “symbol-laden performances,” the efficacy of which “lies largely in their power to move specific audiences.”⁷³ From the swearing in of a new political leader to military parades that celebrate national holidays, such events are typically theatrical performances of pomp and circumstance. Political theatre, however, can also be performed by activists and citizens who are not directly involved in politics. In this setting, *political theatre* can refer to a piece of drama that communicates “a central message regarding a poignant socio-political issue” with the intention of “inspiring an examination of, or teaching a lesson regarding, that central socio-political issue.”⁷⁴ A “long history of mutual affinity” has existed between theatre and protest, and in addition to providing a stage on which performances and performers illustrate political issues, theatre can serve as a form of “direct political action” by making visible opposition to existing conditions.⁷⁵

Contentious politics functions as “loosely scripted theatre,” writes sociologist and historian Charles Tilly, and acts such as protests and demonstrations constitute “a performance” involving at least two actors—a claimant and an object of claims.⁷⁶ The Tiananmen Square massacre in China and the actions of las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina are examples of performative political action in which participants have utilized theatrical elements such as costumes, props, and songs in public settings. The events in Tiananmen Square in 1989, for example, were part of a large-scale “production” comprised of different “acts.” Paul Allain and Jen Harvie argue that the third and final act of the Tiananmen Square production was a “tragic denouement” that saw hundreds killed as the authorities “cleared out the protesters in order to re-establish the square’s place within the regime’s construction of authority.”⁷⁷ Historians Joseph

W. Esherick and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom also see the Tiananmen Square events as a form of street theatre that was untitled and improvisational and that had a constantly changing cast. The power of the student protest that preceded the government massacre lay in the “potency” of its performance that harnessed the power to “symbolically undermine the regime's legitimacy” and move others to take sympathetic action.⁷⁸

In the second part of this chapter, I move away from the use of double-decker buses and turn to analyze protesters’ use of Hong Kong’s public transportation infrastructure during the Hard Hat Revolution. By analyzing Hard Hat Revolution protesters’ use of the city’s MTR; airport; and roads, tunnels, and bridges, I argue that participants deployed a form of art that is more “emotionally and politically affective (and effective) than painting or sculpture”: the art of theatre and theatrical performance.⁷⁹ Whereas protesters in the Umbrella Revolution used advertising in an effort to attract the attention of audiences, Hard Hat Revolution protesters abandoned advertising in favor of a more flamboyant, in-your-face form of advertising—theatre. I turn now to explicate the script, stage sets, and actors and audience that comprised the performance before presenting the five structural elements of the play: exposition, inciting incident, rising actions, crisis/climax, and denouement of a play that I call *Hong Kong’s Journey to Nowhere*.

Script

A script includes all of the information and minutia of a performance, including directions for the performers such as dialogue, actions, and stage directions; settings of the stage, such as backdrops, props, and lighting; information regarding directions for stagehands; and information about any music that might be part of the production.⁸⁰ In response to the perceived failure of the Umbrella Revolution and Hong Kong’s historical examples of predominantly

peaceful repertoires in their performances of political protest, I argue that Hard Hat Revolution protesters acted on their instincts and completely tore up the script for how they and fellow Hong Kongers had historically approached protest.

In keeping with the protesters' Bruce Lee-inspired "be-water" philosophy that saw them attempting to outsmart the police by "popping up in small groups in multiple locations across the city," the production that was the Hard Hat Revolution was a predominantly improvised piece of theatre.⁸¹ Defined by the principles of spontaneity, inventiveness, creative play, openness to chance, and group participation, improvised performance offers freedom of expression and can produce unexpected outcomes.⁸² Requiring that performers and participants "constantly be prepared to adapt to its live, unpredictable conditions" and be willing not to "block a partner's proposition, but to go with it and build on it," improvised performance has "enormous political potential."⁸³

With no firm leader (director) and no formal script, there was much room for Hard Hat Revolution actors to ad-lib and improvise. Like an actor who plays the same role on Broadway for an eighteen-month run, perfectly replicating previous performances can "breed boredom and indifference" for both claimant and object.⁸⁴ At the same time, as Tilly explains, using new and "genuinely unfamiliar performances . . . almost always backfires." Thus, experimentation and innovation in small ways "at the edge of established actions" in the confinement of a previously well-used script is the key to success.⁸⁵ Consequently, when appropriate, room exists for actors to improvise, meaning that the claim making within the performance can often be like a piece of jazz music as actors play several pieces at the same time.⁸⁶

On the very rare occasions when Hard Hat Revolution protesters did have a loose plan—such as the coordinated occupation of HKIA—any semblance of a script followed an episodic

structure. Generated by “accumulating associations rather than telling a linear story,” an episodic plot structure involves a large cast of different characters and locations; covers a lengthy time period; and, in addition to the main story, includes multiple sub plots, each potentially containing different climaxes.⁸⁷ Over the course of multiple acts, the *Hard Hat Revolution* script included a number of plot twists and turns, and artistic license taken by the actors revealed plot developments such as fictional deaths that, although not necessarily true, added drama and intrigue to the production.

Stage Sets

Set design sees the preparation of a stage for a performance. Stage backdrops are often hung, and furniture and other props are placed on the stage in order to transform it into a particular space in which a story will unfold.⁸⁸ Sometimes, however, instead of attempting to recreate a space on a stage, the stage can be taken to the theatrical space. Theatre and performance studies scholar Lara Shalson points to activist theatre makers who argue that, in order to be politically relevant, the theatre “needs to leave the *theatre*.”⁸⁹ Answering this stage call, actors, directors, and citizens have “called into question the parameters of the nature of theatre and where it is located” and have taken their narratives to wider audiences.⁹⁰ Lippard recounts that one of the “most sophisticated theatrical ventures” she witnessed took place “entirely outside of the boundaries of the art establishment” when a building on New York’s Lower East Side became the theatre, the residents became the actors, the scenes were their apartments, and the plots “came to life from the actors/residents’ own lives.”⁹¹

Producing a form of *in-situ* theatre, United Kingdom-based theatre company Punchdrunk is one example of an organization seeking to take theatre out of the theatre. Punchdrunk provides a form of immersive theatre in which audience members become the main participants, choosing

“what to experience, and what to carry home as an enduring memory” of the performance.⁹² Also making the audience the focal point of a performance, French theatre company The Phun takes performances to “unlikely surroundings” and public spaces and weaves fictional performances into the reality of the space in which the performance is taking place. Spectators and even those simply passing by are invited to question their senses, feelings, and thoughts as actors and the public become one.⁹³

The “be-water” philosophy meant that Hard Hat Revolution protesters were answering Shalson’s call to take theatre out of the theatre.⁹⁴ This was a play *about* Hong Kong that stretched beyond the walls, red velvet seats, and fixed stage of the theatre house and took place *in* Hong Kong. As Hard Hat Revolution performers built stage sets all over the city, the play became a form of environmental or “site-specific” theatre that took place in “non-theatre settings” and aimed to “engage directly with the meaning and history of those sites.”⁹⁵ Allain and Harvie posit that environmental or site-specific theater “almost always aims to make political interventions in relation to their audiences and sites.”⁹⁶ Although large geographic areas of Hong Kong were prepared by protesters so that they could be used as backdrops, special attention was paid to the locations where the major acts would take place. Sets were created using locations and materials that were widely available and readily at hand in the immediate environment.

The Hard Hat Revolution’s theatrical production that focused on transportation infrastructure took place on three major stage sets. Multiple MTR stations acted as one stage set that depicted violent clashes. Station entrances and concourses at Causeway Bay, Wanchai, Mong Kok, Cheung Sha Wan, and Central were all set on fire (fig. 12).⁹⁷ Furthermore, in these scenes, props including ticket machines, concourses, and trains were destroyed and used to denounce the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (GovHK) and the

city's police force. One specific MTR station, Prince Edward, provided a second stage set that made for a particularly extended scene. The B1 entrance/exit of this station was transformed into a particularly elaborate stage set. As I will explicate later in this chapter, the retractable gate used to cover the B1 entrance/exit when the MTR is not running was completely covered with a wall of predominantly white flowers, alongside lighted candles and burning incense, to commemorate a number of deaths.

With almost seventy-five-million passengers and almost five-million tons of cargo passing through Hong Kong International Airport in 2018, HKIA is the fifth busiest airport in the world in terms of passengers and the world's largest cargo airport.⁹⁸ As thousands of performers took over the main terminal buildings, HKIA became the stage set a second dramatic act of the *Hard Hat Revolution's* transportation production.

Finally, multiple roads, bridges, and tunnels also served as a third type of stage set for some of the most violent scenes of the *Hard Hat Revolution*. Props in these sets included bamboo poles and the strategic placement of “brick battlegrounds” to create “mini-Stonehenge” formations and “carpeted” major roads and hinder police advances in at least ten Hong Kong districts, including Central, Mong Kok, Kowloon Tong, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun.⁹⁹

Entrances to Hong Kong's underwater Cross-Harbour Tunnel—the city's busiest and most crucial tunnel that links the two sides of Hong Kong that are separated by the harbor—were blocked with railings and barricades, trash cans, traffic cones, and even *Hard Hat Revolution* protesters' own bodies.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the Tolo Highway, one of the city's key arteries that connects Hong Kong's northern New Territories with Kowloon, was closed for over sixty hours when *Hard Hat Revolution* protesters threw debris onto the four-lane carriageway.¹⁰¹ A crossing over Tolo Highway—referred to colloquially as *Number Two Bridge*—was the stage set

of another particularly tense scene as protesters used poles, garbage bins, and furniture to fortify the bridge and constructed lookout towers out of ladders as they tried to defend the Chinese University of Hong Kong campus from advancing police officers.¹⁰²

By transforming MTR stations; HKIA; and roads, tunnels, and bridges into stage sets, Hard Hat Revolution protesters took their performance to all areas of Hong Kong. Multiple sets meant that different narratives could be performed at the same time and, moreover, could attract audiences not only in Hong Kong but farther afield by reaching a global audience.

Actors and Audience

The Hard Hat Revolution featured a wide-ranging cast, including GovHK, the Hong Kong police force, journalists, and global citizens. Hong Kong protesters, of course, played the lead roles in the play that took over Hong Kong. Just as Kenneth Burke attests that rhetoric involves the self as audience, Hard Hat Revolution protesters played the simultaneous roles of actors and directors in an improvised form of theatre in which actors “must constantly be prepared to adapt to its live, unpredictable conditions.”¹⁰³ Throughout the play, everybody’s roles were fluid, and there was no “call sheet” that listed specific sets and required actors for each day or each scene. In some scenes, for example, major actors such as protesters and police officers were relegated to minor roles or, in some instances, forced to become passive spectators, watching as they were overpowered, outwitted, and overwhelmed by the tactics of the opposing side.

In other scenes, Hong Kongers who had no intention of becoming part of the cast were inadvertently caught up in the acts of the play. As they were shopping, traveling to work, or simply going about their daily lives, those not participating in the Hard Hat Revolution were thrust into the spotlight and unwittingly became audience members as violent and chaotic scenes

unfolded around them. Spectators can “be compelled by epic theatre to go out after the show and take direct political action,” and, inspired by the performances of some of the lead actors, some nonparticipating Hong Kongers made a conscious decision to transition from audience to cast members and to join the Hard Hat Revolution.¹⁰⁴

The Hard Hat Revolution thus blurred the distinction between frontstage and backstage personas. Erving Goffman explains how a frontstage persona is the “expressive equipment” that an individual communicates—intentionally or unwittingly—in everyday performances through speech patterns, facial expressions, bodily movements, posture, and biological makeup.¹⁰⁵ Backstage, with the cameras no longer rolling and makeup and costume no longer required, performers can “drop their front,” relax, and step out of character.¹⁰⁶ Those acting—intentionally or otherwise—in the performance that was the Hard Hat Revolution were unaware if and when they were being photographed, featured on a newsreel, or being monitored and surveilled by closed-circuit cameras. The fluidity of the cast and audience meant that those who found themselves featured in a scene or an act had the potential to transition very quickly from an audience member to a stagehand to a supporting actor to a lead role and back again.

Costumes helped actors be fluid and switch roles easily, transitioning among major actors, supporting characters, and audience members. With the police and GovHK as engaged and active audience members, costumes became a source of protection for Hard Hat Revolution cast members. Masks were a key piece of costumes as gas masks, surgical masks, scarves, bandanas, and balaclavas became essential wardrobe items for the Hard Hat Revolution actors. Harnessing the ability to create a new identity, masks offer performers the opportunity to embrace an alter ego behind which they can hide their nerves, quell stage fright, and shed their inhibitions.¹⁰⁷ Masks provided cast members and stagehands with the confidence to participate in

the protest and, if desired, to enact violence. Quite simply, offering protection to engage in acts that might not be considered appropriate when an individual is in full view of an audience, masks became a costume accessory that offered protection from potential police violence, arrest, and prosecution.

All-black attire became another component of the preferred costume for Hard Hat Revolution protesters, allowing them to orchestrate and move among sets and acts without being seen easily. Black clothing also made participants indistinguishable from each other and difficult to identify. As another form of protection, a quick wardrobe change allowed the actors to merge into the general public, where they could not be identified as protesters. Protesters often left colorful clothes in MTR stations that they could change into at the end of the show.¹⁰⁸ Like an actor leaving the theater via the stage door following a performance, without the costume, those outside could not be sure who was a performer and who was a member of the general public—police could not distinguish protesters from nonprotesters as they made their way home after the day's performance had concluded.

By keeping the roles of audience, performer, stagehand, and director fluid, Hard Hat Revolution protesters were able to keep their theatrical production fresh. Moreover, combined with the use of black costumes and masks, protesters were able to stay one step ahead of the police and also add a layer of protection against police violence and tear gas.

Dramatic Structure

Analysis of the structure of a dramatic work originated with Aristotle's *Poetics* and his approach to Greek tragedies. For Aristotle, a play should be "whole and complete and of a certain magnitude" by having a three-act structure comprised of "a beginning and middle and end."¹⁰⁹ Since then, many playwrights, literary theorists, and other writers have put forth their

own variations of dramatic structure, including Henrik Ibsen's four-act structure, Gustav Freytag's five-act structure, and Northrop Frye's U-shaped plot structure.¹¹⁰ For my analysis of the Hard Hat Revolution, I use contemporary novelist Joe Bunting's structure that features the elements of exposition, inciting incident, rising actions, crisis, climax, and denouement.¹¹¹

I selected Bunting's structure to encapsulate my analysis for three reasons. First, the Hard Hat Revolution's plot contains more depth and is more intricate than a structure that contains a simple beginning, middle, and end, as Aristotle suggested. Second, the story of the Hard Hat Revolution does not follow a continuous and predictable path that travels full circle and arrives at a neat resolution and a happy ending, as Frye suggests in his structure. Although Freytag's five-part structure is closer to what I am seeking, I dismissed it because it fails to include an inciting incident that provides the audience with a much-needed backstory. Bunting removes the "falling action" sequence from Frye's structure and replaces it with a "crisis" that precedes the climax of the story, which aligns more clearly with the theatrical performance that I title *Hong Kong's Journey to Nowhere*.

The structural elements highlighted in the work of all the scholars mentioned here, of course, can provide the foundations for a five-minute silent movie, a ninety-minute stage production, or a three-hour Hollywood blockbuster. Conceptualizing Hard Hat Revolution protesters' use of transportation infrastructure as a play, I present five acts that encompass all six elements of Bunting's structure: exposition, inciting incident, rising actions, crisis and climax, and denouement. It is important to note that the concept of the play to which I draw attention focuses on protesters' performative use of public transportation infrastructure (the subject of this chapter) and does not encapsulate the entirety of the Hard Hat Revolution's strategies.

Act I: Exposition

A performance that follows a dramatic plot requires exposition, the presentation of the backstory and information—including establishing characters and settings—that the audience requires in order to understand the story that is about to unfold.¹¹² With the passing of over four years since the conclusion of the Umbrella Revolution, as well as the outbreak of a “global protest wave” outside of the city, Hong Kong’s democratic plight was no longer at the forefront of public consciousness.¹¹³ Moreover, the intricacies of the proposed extradition bill, which acted as the exigency for the outbreak of the Hard Hat Revolution, were confusing to many, especially to those for whom the bill did not pose a direct threat. Consequently, the Hard Hat Revolution began with scenes that were reminiscent of the Umbrella Revolution as Hong Kong’s pro-democracy protesters peacefully communicated their disdain for mainlandization.

The Hard Hat Revolution—unnamed at the time—began in June 2019 when a reported one-million people marched in the streets of Hong Kong.¹¹⁴ A week later, almost two-million Hong Kongers participated in another march.¹¹⁵ Like both marches, the initial stages of the Hard Hat Revolution were predominantly peaceful, including the strategies that involved the use of public transportation. In the initial stages of the Hard Hat Revolution, MTR stations provided backdrops in front of which pro-democracy-protesting Hong Kongers acted in respectful ways toward public transportation, similar to how they had in 2014. For example, after police used tear gas to disperse protesters at Kwai Fong MTR station, a number of Hong Kongers arrived with washcloths to wipe down the soiled surfaces.¹¹⁶ A similar scene was witnessed as Hong Kongers armed with face masks, gloves, and wet wipes cleaned up tear-gas residue at Sham Shui Po MTR station.¹¹⁷

The creative side of the Umbrella Revolution was also on display in the early stages of the Hard Hat Revolution. The safety and information stickers from MTR trains, for example, were redesigned in a move that paralleled Hong Kongers' redesign of bus routes in 2014. Mimicking the same colors and other graphic design elements of existing MTR signage, the redesigned safety stickers offered "guidelines" to help MTR "get [on] the right track." The rules, shared by Joshua Wong on Twitter, included: "no more closing stations," "do not allow police to use stations as satellite police stations," and "don't cancel trains."¹¹⁸ As the police use of tear gas increased, protesters modified the MTR system map by adding skull-and-crossbones symbols to signify stations at which tear gas had been fired.¹¹⁹ Like the 2014 redesign of the route for Bus 689, in 2019, the 777 bus service (with 777 representing the number of votes that Carrie Lam required to become the city's chief executive) was rerouted to "Hell."

These moments of creative and artistic forms of protest were fleeting, however, and by August 2019, the two-month-old Hard Hat Revolution had taken "a darker turn" and entered "a dangerous new phase."¹²⁰ As some of Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters "upgraded" their protest tactics, the Hard Hat Revolution's transportation play began to unfold as the scene was set for the watching audience.¹²¹

Act II: Inciting Incident

After using exposition to provide the audience with the basic information required to follow the performance, the next step in presenting an effective story is to offer an inciting incident that sees the main character thrown into "a challenging situation." An inciting incident depicts an interruption in the character's normal life that takes place early in the story, is not caused by the protagonist, is out of that character's control, and requires urgent action.¹²²

After starting as a largely peaceful and nonviolent movement, scenes of violence became more frequent across Hong Kong. One event in particular, however, tipped large numbers of Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters over the edge and caused them to turn to extreme violence, the level of which had never before been witnessed in Hong Kong. As Hong Kong police began to disperse the crowds and clear streets after a day of heavy protests on August 31, 2019 (hereafter *831*), chaos ensued as Special Tactical Squad officers of the Hong Kong Police Force made their way inside Prince Edward MTR station, firing pepper balls and tear gas.¹²³ In terrifying scenes captured by *Stand News*, police officers were seen storming a subway car and using batons to beat cowering passengers who were trying to defend themselves with umbrellas. In the same video and accompanying images, officers were seen firing pepper spray directly into the faces of a family huddled on the floor of the subway car. One man tried to cover his face as a jet of pepper spray ricocheted off the side of his face and bounced off the door of the subway car behind him. To his left, a man whose face mask had slipped below his mouth and whose hair was visibly wet after having faced a deluge of tear gas could be seen raising his hands as though surrendering. As the video ends, the man is screaming as his female companion cowers while she grabs his leg for protection (fig. 13).¹²⁴ Despite public circulation of the images of the police attack, according to Senior Police Superintendent Yu Kaijun, officers used “professional experience” and “appropriate force” when dealing with the situation.¹²⁵

The ending of an act marks a shift in the pace, focus, or rhythm of a play.¹²⁶ After the events of 831, violence escalated, and the Hard Hat Revolution became more widespread and violent. In act III, the focus of performers and audience moved away from the proposed extradition bill and turned toward the actions of the Hong Kong police force.

Act III: Rising Action(s)

After exposition and an inciting incident, an act follows that depicts “rising action” that begins with a conflict and prompts the main character to take action.¹²⁷ As the chief source of conflict, the sequence of rising action contains the most action and thus is usually the longest act in a theatrical production.¹²⁸ The complications and crises that unfold in the rising action see characters forced to make a decision “between two conflicting values” such as “safety or sacrifice, love or duty, performance or righteousness.”¹²⁹ Thus, in the first scene of rising action, Hard Hat Revolution protesters were forced to decide how they would respond to the police’s use of violence on 831. They made the decision to respond by fighting violence with violence. In the case of the theatrical production of the Hard Hat Revolution, rising actions took place in multiple sets in multiple locations as various MTR stations; HKIA; and multiple roads, tunnels, and bridges became stages on which the Umbrella Revolution was acted out.

Unlike the use of nonpermanent and easily removable sticky notes and paper that gave double-decker buses ephemeral, artistic skins in 2014, the tactics of 2019 had more lasting effects. A week after the events of 831, Hong Kongers’ disdain toward MTR intensified. Burning MTR concourses and entrances became regular acts as multiple stations were set on fire using cardboard, traffic cones, wood, and any other flammable materials available.¹³⁰ Meanwhile, below ground, ticket machines, turnstiles, and customer-service and ticket booths were smashed and set on fire.¹³¹ Performers vandalized ticket machines and customer-service booths at Mong Kok MTR station, broke turnstiles at Tung Chung MTR station, spray painted ticket machines at Kwun Tong MTR station, smashed glass platform screen barriers at Prince Edward MTR station, and threw objects onto the tracks that connect Hong Kong Island to the city’s airport. The *South China Morning Post* reported that, by the end of the weekend of 831, a third of the rail network’s

stations had been severely damaged—acts described by MTR officials as “illegal,” “barbaric,” and “outrageous.”¹³²

As violence escalated below ground, the MTR system became a “no-go zone” for police.¹³³ Hard Hat Revolution performers had taken over the MTR system and had free reign of underground Hong Kong. One train vandalized by protesters at Hong Kong’s University Station looked as though a bomb had exploded inside. With all windows smashed, the floor of the train car was covered in shards of glass and large tree branches that had presumably been used as weapons.¹³⁴ Another train at the same station was engulfed in flames.¹³⁵

Celebrated for its affordability, first-class safety record, and world-class efficiency (99.9 per cent of its services run on time) and transporting almost six-million passengers daily, the MTR is regarded as a jewel in Hong Kong’s crown.¹³⁶ Commissioned by the Government of British Hong Kong to provide solutions to the city’s road congestion, the first MTR line opened in 1979.¹³⁷ Today, Hong Kong’s MTR covers over 140 miles and is the most popular mode of transport in the city.¹³⁸ In 2019, however, protesters, many of whom prided themselves on the politeness, punctuality, and law-abiding tendencies that typify Hong Kong culture, turned against the method of transportation that makes their city run like clockwork. At multiple points throughout the Hard Hat Revolution, MTR was forced to temporarily close almost half of its stations to ensure passenger safety.¹³⁹ Hong Kong’s ever-reliable and much-lauded subway system designed to transport life across the city had stopped and had become a relic of any form of democracy that the city once had or hoped to have.

Media reports and social media posts contributed to a subplot that suggested that in the immediate aftermath of the police’s storming of Prince Edward MTR station on 8/31, journalists and medics were denied entry to the station. These reports led to fears that something sinister

was taking place backstage, underneath the streets.¹⁴⁰ Later in the evening, in addition to fifty arrests, emergency services reported varying numbers of casualties. Initially, ten individuals were reported to have required hospitalization; later, this number was reduced to seven.¹⁴¹ Although officials claimed that the chaotic scenes in the station led to the miscount, the discrepancy fueled rumors among Hong Kongers of three or as many as six “missing” people presumed to have been beaten to death by police officers.¹⁴² The reality was that no names of supposed victims were ever revealed and, furthermore, no relatives or friends reported loved ones missing or dead.¹⁴³ Although no bodies were found to substantiate Hard Hat Revolution protesters’ claims, the fact that Hong Kongers *might* have died at the hands of the police added a plot twist to the performance and, moreover, was used as a means of justifying violence.

Rising action in a play puts characters through “a series of progressively more complicated events and choices” and, despite a lack of evidence that anyone had died or was even missing, Hard Hat Revolution protesters began to spread rumors of MTR and government collusion to cover up deaths.¹⁴⁴ In the days and weeks that followed, the B1 entrance/exit of Prince Edward MTR station was transported into an ephemeral monument to the “deceased” (fig. 14). Each night, Hong Kongers gathered at the B1 entrance/exit of Prince Edward MTR station to lay white flowers—representing death in Chinese culture—in memory of those reported to be missing and presumed dead. Handwritten signs that lamented the failing of “one country, two systems”; accused the city’s police force of being “corrupt” and “lawless”; and called for the “truth” behind the beatings on 831 to be revealed were also attached to the wall. In addition to the flower offering that grew to cover the entire B1 entrance/exit, the MTR logo had been spray painted over, leaving only the words *Prince Edward Station*.¹⁴⁵ The removal of MTR branding

meant that Prince Edward MTR station no longer belonged to the majority-government-owned MTR: it was now belonged to mourning Hong Kongers.

As was the case with Bus 689, of course, there were no bodies; nobody had died. Unlike the use of CY Leung's image on Bus 689, however, pictures of the "dead" could not be displayed at Prince Edward station; there were no names or other identifying links to any individuals. As with Umbrella Revolution protesters' artistic enactment of Leung's pseudo death, as a method of nonviolent protests and persuasion, a demonstrative funeral or memorial to the deceased was not necessarily enacted to mourn a physical death. Instead, it served as an act of "protest and moral condemnation of opponents' actions, policies, or systems" and communicated the death of a principle that protesters cherished and that they accused the opponent of violating.¹⁴⁶ The only thing that had died in 2019 was Hong Kong's way of life. As one interviewee told me, "Hong Kong is over, there's no way back for us. Hong Kong is dead."¹⁴⁷

By adding a pivotal scene that included a subplot of possible collusion and unconfirmed death, Hard Hat Revolution performers created a plot twist riddled with intrigue, mystery, and suspense. The events at Price Edward MTR station had turned into a whodunit narrative to entice audiences to watch and potentially take part. Acting out flawed narratives and unsubstituted claims against GovHK and the city's police force also worked to incite and recruit other actors to join in the violent tactics and, at the same time, to justify the increasingly violent acts that were being featured more frequently in the performance.

As Hard Hat Revolution protesters expanded their tactics, so, too, did the forms of public transportation they utilized as vehicles. Located in Chek Lap Kok on Lantau Island, Hong Kong International Airport sits over twenty miles from the city's Central district. Despite its distance from the center of Hong Kong, in keeping with Hard Hat Revolution protesters' strategy of

performing in all corners of the city, HKIA's main terminal buildings became the backdrop for the next scene of rising action.

What began as a peaceful sit-in escalated as protesters began to physically block travelers from checking into their flights and reaching departure gates. They also made arriving into Hong Kong difficult. For many weary travelers, their first glimpse of Hong Kong upon walking through the arrivals gate was protesters holding signs that warned travelers to "Turn back: Hong Kong is not safe anymore." Other messages informed travelers that the city's police "attempt to kill HK citizens," while another linked the events in Hong Kong to those in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989.¹⁴⁸ If travelers chose not to heed the advice of Hong Kongers stationed at the arrivals gate and wanted to travel into the city, they were forced to negotiate the thousands of Hong Kong protesters who sat on the floor of the terminal building. If Hong Kong's newest arrivals were not already aware of the city's democratic plight, they were after being forced to carry their luggage above their heads, unwittingly becoming performers in a theatrical production as they were forced to carefully step among the thousands of bodies on the floor of the airport terminal building (fig. 15).¹⁴⁹

As the HKIA occupation progressed, violence increased, and Hong Kong's largest transport hub turned into a battle zone. In one scene I described in detail in chapter 3, a group of protesters "held hostage" and detained a man whom they claimed was an undercover police officer.¹⁵⁰ He was restrained with cable ties around his wrists, was punched and kicked, and had water poured on him.¹⁵¹ After being set upon by a group of protesters and trapped against a wall in terminal one, a Hong Kong police officer drew his gun and aimed it at the fleeing protesters.¹⁵² As protesters blocked surrounding roads and the entrances to MTR's Airport Express—the most efficient way to travel between HKIA and the center of Hong Kong—and

threw metal poles, bicycles, and ladders onto the tracks farther down the line, travelers arriving in Hong Kong had no means of escape.¹⁵³ With the closest alternative MTR stations located almost three miles away in Tung Chung or ten miles away in Sunny Bay, those who had just stepped off flights were seen leaving the airport on foot, pulling their luggage behind them.¹⁵⁴ Those lucky enough to find a bus that was able to find a way through protesters were then stranded on Tsing Ma Bridge as protesters cut off traffic to and from the airport.¹⁵⁵

In one image taken inside HKIA's terminal one, a large, permanent sign that welcomes travelers to the airport claims that Hong Kong is "Asia's World City" (fig. 16). In the bottom right-hand corner of the sign are the words "Connect and Excel." Taking the message of the sign quite literally and connecting with a wider global audience, beneath the sign Hard Hat Revolution protesters are waving the US flag and holding homemade signs asking then-president Donald Trump to "Liberate Hong Kong." Throughout the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, Hong Kongers sought support from external audiences, especially from their Western allies. Indeed, when I was in Hong Kong during the early stages of the Hard Hat Revolution, I asked protesters what message I should take back with me to the United States. "Tell Trump to help us" and "tell the president we need him" were frequent responses.¹⁵⁶ Hard Hat Revolution protesters' performative use of public transportation meant that they had garnered the attention of a global audience and world leaders.

Lasting for five days, the occupation of HKIA increasingly garnered the attention of a growing global audience. The chaotic scenes in HKIA led to the cancellation of over three-hundred flights, but it also had implications across the globe. The effect of cancelled and rerouted flights into, out of, and circumventing Hong Kong led to travel disruptions in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, India, and South Africa.¹⁵⁷ The US State Department

warned its citizens to “exercise increased caution” if traveling to Hong Kong, and Australia, Great Britain, Japan, and Singapore all advised their citizens to avoid traveling to there.¹⁵⁸ If the Hard Hat Revolution had not resonated with an audience outside of Hong Kong, it had now as events in Hong Kong generated repercussions across the world, expanding the audience for the play.

Act IV: Crisis and Climax

A crisis within a play occurs when characters find themselves “in way over their head” and in a situation from which they will struggle to recover.¹⁵⁹ In a crisis framework, a problem gets progressively worse until a character is forced to take decisive action. A climax is a turning point in the story that occurs as a result of the decision or action taken and leads to a temporary resolution. The Number Two Bridge over Tolo Highway became the scene in which act IV’s crisis was acted out. Seventy bus services ground to a halt and cars were stranded on Tolo Highway, acts that, for Hong Kong’s Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung, were tantamount to “holding the public hostage.”¹⁶⁰ Drivers who remained in their cars and refused to leave the highway were told to “U-turn or you pay your price” as their cars were threatened with bricks.¹⁶¹

Connecting Tolo Highway to the eastern side of the Chinese University of Hong Kong campus (CUHK), the Number Two Bridge became a “flashpoint” as protesters barricaded themselves in the campus that had become home to an “improvised weapons factory” and battled to stop police from gaining access.¹⁶² A temporary resolution occurred as Hard Hat Revolution protesters armed with Molotov cocktails, bricks, umbrellas, bows and arrows, and a chainsaw forced police officers to retreat and to temporarily cede control of the Number Two Bridge.¹⁶³ Later, however, as Hard Hat Revolution protesters reportedly threw more than thirty Molotov cocktails at police in less than twenty minutes, police responded by continuously firing their

weapons for fifteen minutes. After gaining access to the campus, multiple arrests were made as the police were depicted “dragging a limp body of an arrested protester along the ground.”¹⁶⁴ The development of a crisis in a narrative often occurs “off screen” or “off stage.” This was the case for shocked audiences who were viewing the events at CUHK through media coverage. As actors barricaded themselves into the university campus, details and conditions were not specified but implied, and viewers had to guess for themselves what was taking place behind the curtain that shrouded the CUHK.¹⁶⁵ Ominously, one protester inside CUHK told reporters that “whatever happens, we must defend the university, we must not allow the police to take it.”¹⁶⁶

Act V: Denouement

Referring to the final part of a narrative in which the outcome of the story is revealed, the denouement is often one of the shortest scenes of a play. It remains, however, one of its most important elements.¹⁶⁷ Given the date parameters on which I focus my analysis (June 12 to December 31, 2019), *Hong Kong’s Journey to Nowhere* did not have a clear ending or denouement. Instead of presenting a definitive conclusion, audience members were left with a cliffhanger, wondering in which direction Hong Kong would head and how the story would unfold as students were dragged from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and thrown into police vehicles.

In this section, I analyzed Hard Hat Revolution protesters’ use of public transportation infrastructure as a form of theatrical performance. I presented and explicated four elements—script, stage sets, actors and audience, and structure—that helped to form the theatrical performance of the revolution. *Hong Kong’s Journey to Nowhere* continues as GovHK and the Party refuse to accede to Hong Kong’s prodemocracy supporters.

Conclusion: End of the Line

In this chapter, I have analyzed the contrasting use of public transportation infrastructure by Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions protesters. In doing so, I uncovered two key protest mechanisms through which the contrasting ideologies of the movements were communicated: driving a creative communications campaign and fueling a theatrical production.

In 2014, Umbrella Revolution protesters—creatives—used a number of elements of an integrated marketing communications campaign to transform a number of double-decker buses into billboards that communicated their messages for a democratic Hong Kong. They used location, crowd sourcing, repetition, viral marketing, cross fertilization, endorsements, and visualization in an effort to make their protest movement stand out and thus attract a large global audience that may have been able to help them realize their goals of democracy.

In 2019, Hard Hat Revolution protesters—performers—again used public transportation infrastructure, albeit in a much more violent way. Hong Kong’s subway system, airport, roads, bridges, and tunnels became backdrops for a theatrical production that displayed protesters’ democratic calls. In addition to using Hong Kong as a stage, the performance—*Hong Kong’s Journey to Nowhere*—included an ever-changing cast and rotating audience members and followed five structural elements: exposition, inciting incident, rising actions, crisis and climax, and denouement.

In contrast to Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolution participants’ use of the home as a protest mechanism that I outlined in chapter 1, the use of public transportation infrastructure did not function as a metaphor. Instead, it functioned as a tangible resource and a ready-made platform that was easily available and accessible and, importantly, predominantly owed by the target audience. Rather than using public transportation infrastructure to create metaphors about

the identity of Hong Kongers and the future of their city, public transportation infrastructure functioned as a form of became inartistic proof already in place in and around the city.

To conclude this chapter, I present three reasons that, I argue, account for the difference between the contrasting use of public transportation infrastructure as protest tools in the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. Finally, I turn to address the constraints of Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters' implementation of the integrated marketing campaign and the theatrical performance as protest tools through the use of public transportation.

Accounting for Revolutionary Differences

Four elements that account for the different ideological uses of public transport replicate those that provided the foundations of the ideological shift in Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolution protesters' ideological conception of home: a failed (Umbrella) revolution, increased mainlandization, a global rise in nationalistic sentiment, and protesters' aging. The failure of the Umbrella Revolution to enact change in Hong Kong festered for over four years and finally came to a head when the extradition bill was proposed in the summer of 2019. Moreover, an increase in mainlandization and the rise in global nationalistic sentiment and increasingly violent protests fed the anger of many of Hong Kong's—now older—pro-democracy supporters to such an extent that the city witnessed the unprecedented violence of the Hard Hat Revolution. There was, however, an element to account for the revolutionary differences of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions that, I suggest, was unique to Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters' use of public transportation infrastructure: the emergence of a new enemy.

A New Enemy

In chapter 3, I presented the proposed extradition bill as a common enemy behind which all Hong Kongers united in 2019. Although the appearance of a common enemy helped to

explain the different ideological conceptions of home—and still works to help understand why increasing numbers of Hong Kongers were willing to use or accept more violent means of protest—it does not fully account for the revolutionary differences in how public transportation infrastructure was used in the two movements. Instead of a single common enemy to unite Hong Kongers, I argue, the more violent use of public transportation in 2019 resulted from the addition of a new enemy: the Hong Kong police force. The actions of the police on 831 were a turning point for many Hong Kongers. Moreover, the perceived collusion between the government and the police only served to ignite the fire inside many Hong Kongers.

In addition to the introduction of a new enemy, mistrust and possible police collusion meant that Hong Kongers' feelings toward their old adversary—GovHK—intensified during the Hard Hat Revolution. This anger led some protesters—referred to as *the valiant* in Cantonese—to engage in violence, especially toward symbols of the state, such as government buildings and public transportation systems.¹⁶⁸ While the double-decker buses that were used as protest tools in the Umbrella Revolution are privately operated by five franchises, GovHK owns 76 percent of the city's MTR, and HKIA is entirely government owned, and both were major targets during the Hard Hat Revolution.¹⁶⁹

Ideological Constraints

In this final section, I explicate the constraints of the ideological functions of public transportation infrastructure in the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. Admittedly, there were some positive consequences of the use of public transportation infrastructure. Both the marketing campaign of the Umbrella Revolution and the theatrical performance of the Hard Hat Revolution did achieve small-scale victories in regard to drawing attention to Hong Kong's pro-democracy cause.

The artwork produced by Umbrella Revolution creatives, for example, garnered the attention not only of the general public but of art critics, among others. Umbrella Revolution artwork was deemed so important by artists, academics, and archivists that the Umbrella Movement Art Preservation and the Umbrella Movement Visual Archives and Research Collective were formed to preserve the public art that exploded across Hong Kong throughout the movement. A number of sketches made during the Umbrella Revolution were published in a 2015 book titled *Sketches under the Umbrella*, and some art pieces were sent to London to be displayed in the British Museum's *I Object* exhibition.¹⁷⁰ In 2015, Swiss human rights arts organization The Freedom Flowers Foundation awarded one Umbrella Revolution digital art installation first prize in its annual global art awards.¹⁷¹ The *Stand By You* installation projected onto the wall of GovHK headquarters garnered over 30,000 messages of support and solidarity from at least seventy countries. It also attracted the support of global celebrities, including Pussy Riot, Peter Gabriel, Kenny G, and celebrity chef Mario Batali.¹⁷² Plaudits and awards, however, did little to ensure that the Umbrella Revolution stayed in the public consciousness, and following the movement's conclusion, Hong Kong's plight was largely absent from the minds of the global public.

Despite the violence that featured in the theatrical performance of the Hard Hat Revolution, it, too, garnered support for Hong Kong's democratic fight. Images of burning MTR stations, chaotic scenes at HKIA, and roads blocked with debris attracted the attention of a global audience who may have forgotten about Hong Kong's democratic plight in the four-and-a-half years that had elapsed since the conclusion of the Umbrella Revolution. The sight of fire, Molotov cocktails, and trapped subway passengers being sprayed with tear gas at point-blank range viscerally shocked viewers. Lennon Walls appeared in cities in the United

States, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Japan to express solidarity with Hong Kong.¹⁷³ As the events in Hong Kong became more violent and chaotic, the Hard Hat Revolution was mentioned on presidential candidate debate stages and discussed in the halls of the US Capitol and the chambers of the British House of Parliament.

Despite these minor successes, I argue that the constraints outweighed the advantages and, ultimately, as with the ideological conceptions of home, neither the use of an integrated marketing communications campaign nor the performance of a theatrical play worked in the way Hong Kongers desired or perhaps expected. Although aesthetically pleasing, the transformation of double-decker buses into billboards was a passive form of protest that did little to force the hand of GovHK or the Party into accepting the democratic wishes of Hong Kong protesters. In 2019, Hard Hat Revolution protesters used public transportation in much more violent ways. The violence of protesters was met with an even more violent response by the police, who then had justification for their actions. While the Umbrella Revolution stuck out as a unique and predominantly peaceful protest, in 2019, the actions of protesting Hong Kongers meant that the Hard Hat Revolution became simply one of the many violent protests that were taking place around the world.

After outlining in chapter 3 two distinct ideologies that provided the foundations of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, in this chapter, I have focused on a more specific example of how two different ideologies manifest in Hong Kong protests by providing an analysis of the contrasting uses of public transportation infrastructure. To further explore the ideological manifestations of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions I turn in the next chapter to an analysis of the different portrayals of Hong Kong's leaders during the two protest movements—CY Leung and Carrie Lam. Following that analysis, I will engage in a more theoretical discussion of

the ideologies of protest strategies derived from the analyses of the Umbrella and Hard Hat
Revolutions.

Figures



Figure 9: The Lukfook/Advance Toiletries Bus, Hong Kong, 2014.¹⁷⁴



Figure 10: The Esso Bus, Hong Kong, 2014.¹⁷⁵



Figure 11: Bus 689, Hong Kong, 2014.¹⁷⁶



Figure 12: Central MTR station ablaze, Hong Kong, 2019.¹⁷⁷



Figure 13: Passengers pepper sprayed in an MTR car, Hong Kong, 2019.¹⁷⁸



Figure 14: Prince Edward MTR station, exit B1, Hong Kong, 2019.¹⁷⁹



Figure 15: A passenger struggles through a crowd of protesters at HKIA, 2019.¹⁸⁰



Figure 16: Hard Hat Revolution protesters take over HKIA, 2019.¹⁸¹

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CHAPTER 5
ONCE UPON A TIME IN HONG KONG:
THE DENIGRATION OF LEADERS IN THE UMBRELLA AND HARD HAT
REVOLUTIONS

When interviewing protesters in Hong Kong during the initial stages of the Hard Hat Revolution, I asked for their opinions of CY Leung, the city’s chief executive at the time of the Umbrella Revolution, and Carrie Lam, the city’s current chief executive who was pushing to pass the controversial extradition bill that was the catalyst behind the Hard Hat Revolution. When asked if they preferred Leung or Lam, many of the Hong Kongers to whom I spoke told me the same thing: they did not want either of their “unelected” leaders but, if they had to choose, they preferred Lam.¹ Their preference for Lam surprised me; after all, the piece of legislation that she was trying to make law was the very reason that Hong Kongers had taken to the streets.

After a few hours of speaking with pro-democracy protesters, I walked up the curved staircase lined with sticky notes that traverses the side of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (GovHK) headquarters and walked across the footbridge above Harcourt Road and Queensway Road. Taking in the protest art and messages attached to walls, railings, barriers, street lights, the ground, and any other possible surface, I was struck by some of the depictions of Carrie Lam. Drawings showing Lam with devil horns or a Hitler mustache and crying crocodile tears was one thing, but artwork depicting Lam as being injured (perhaps dead) and calling her a “Communist dog,” a “bitch,” and a “whore” shocked me; it certainly contrasted with the family-friendly vibe that has often been associated with Hong Kong protests.

If this is how Hong Kongers depicted their preferred choice for chief executive, how did they treat CY Leung in 2014? This is a question I consider in this chapter as I explore how the depictions of Leung and Lam constructed particular ideologies of the protest strategies of Hong Kongers.

Continuing my analysis of the ideologies that characterize the protest strategies of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions and the nature of the protest mechanisms that communicate these ideologies, in this final analytical chapter, I focus on protest artwork created by Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters that was used to criticize Leung and Lam. To supplement my analysis, I use interview data that I gathered in 2019 (six volunteer participants) and 2020 (five volunteer participants) as well as media coverage of and commentary on Leung and Lam's respective reigns as Hong Kong's chief executive. The main focus of my analysis, however, will be protester-created visual images and texts on placards and posters that depicted Leung and Lam.

Although much research has explored how political leaders are depicted during political races, that is not my interest here. After all, the candidates for the role of Hong Kong's chief executive are "pre-approved" by Beijing and require only a minuscule number of votes in order to take power. Instead, I focus here on the portrayals of Hong Kong's chief executives during the most turbulent periods of their leadership—the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. My analysis uncovered two different ideologies with substantially different consequences for how Hong Kong protesters used protest art to dehumanize, denigrate, deride, and ultimately disempower Hong Kong's chief executives in 2014 and 2019.

During the Umbrella Revolution, protesters used characters from childhood and adolescent popular culture in often humorous ways to denigrate CY Leung in such a way that

made him an imposter in the city over which he presided. In contrast, during the Hard Hat Revolution, protesters used gendered stereotypes and metaphors to attack Carrie Lam in an act that I argue was tantamount to a metaphorical act of sexual violence. These different ideologies generated different rhetorical constraints and consequences for the two movements, as I will begin to explore in the conclusion to this chapter but will explicate in detail in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Although the portrayals of Leung and Lam were markedly different, I argue that they both were forms of political violence. Gabrielle Bardall, Elin Bjarnegård, and Jennifer M. Piscopo stress that, like all violence, political violence does not have to be physical or explicit but can take the form of coercion and intimidation.² Political violence functions much like Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of "symbolic power" and "symbolic violence" as two forms of power that are "routinely deployed in social life." For Bourdieu, routine power that is displayed in daily life is "seldom exercised as overt physical force" but instead is manifest in symbolic form.³

Analyzing the framing and perception of political leaders is important because they are "supposed to represent society." Although governments and their leaders are expected to be "responsive to the preferences" of citizens, in truth, the leaders hold the power.⁴ This is especially true during times of protest and, although protesters can try their best to persuade leaders as to how they should act, ultimately, those in power decide if a movement will succeed in achieving its goals. Much scholarship exists that explores the framing of political leaders via a number of modes, including mainstream and traditional media outlets, political punditry, blogs, viral videos, and campaign paraphernalia.⁵ Although the portrayals of Lam may have been in response to media coverage of her and were certainly fueled by interviews given by Lam in

Hong Kong's local press, my interest is in the forms of leader-focused rhetoric created and displayed at protest sites by the general public.

By identifying and coalescing around a common adversary—usually a political leader—participants in social movements can develop and forge collective identities.⁶ A major way this is achieved is through the creation and display of protest art. Using the 2016 global Women's March as a site of analysis, Avigail McClelland-Cohen and Camille G. Endacott explore how protest signs work as a strategic frame through which protesters can “negotiat[e] meaning and purpose together.”⁷ Strategic framing enables participants in social movements to define unjust conditions, attribute responsibility for injustices, identify alternative visions, cultivate collective identity, and attract new members.⁸ Analyzing protest signs as a form of oppositional framing of former US president Donald Trump through the use of metonymy and hostile vocabularies, McClelland-Cohen and Endacott explore how, even if the content of the frame differs for each individual participant, a “master frame” of resistance means that protesters can create shared meanings and a collective identity through protest.⁹

The 2016 Women's March on Washington is one major protest movement that has been studied using as data protesters' own artwork and texts. Using a thematic cluster analysis of the content of protest signs, including the appropriation of words; expressions of unity; and criticisms of Trump, such as personal attacks on his intelligence, personal appearance, vocabulary, and personal scandals, Kirsten M. Weber, Tisha Dejmanee, and Flemming Rhode argue that the Women's March is an example of what W. Lance Bennett refers to as the “rise of personalized forms of political participation.” In this case, the protest encouraged women to take a more active role in politics.¹⁰

Having outlined scholarship that has explored the political violence and the portrayals of political leaders through the use of protests signs and artwork, I now turn my attention to Hong Kong's prodemocracy protesters' depictions of the city's chief executives in the two most recent protest movements. I begin with the Umbrella Revolution protesters' portrayal of CY Leung.

The Umbrella Revolution: CY Leung as Imposter

Often referred to as *689*—a sarcastic reference to the number of votes he needed to secure to preside over a city of over seven-million people—CY Leung was sworn in as the chief executive of Hong Kong in July 2012. Leung's tenure as the city's leader was not without controversy. Within seconds of being sworn into his new role, Leung proceeded to dismay Hong Kongers by presenting his inauguration speech in Putonghua, as opposed to the Cantonese dialect favored by a large majority of Hong Kong's Chinese residents.¹¹ Throughout his tenure, Leung was viewed by many as an obedient Beijing lackey, a "Party appointed stooge," and "a cunning wolf in sheep's clothing."¹² Leung faced a string of controversies during his time as chief executive, including but not limited to the HK\$400 million Karolinska Institute donation scandal, the discovery of six "illegal structures" at his multi-million-dollar Hong Kong mansion, his daughter's internship at J. P. Morgan, and his failure to declare income from a 2011 HK\$50 million deal with an Australian engineering firm.¹³ Controversy and unrest continued to plague Leung's term in office, culminating with his handling of the 2014 Umbrella Revolution.

A Hong Konger from a humble upbringing in an immigrant family, Leung was raised in the city's low-income government-housing complexes after his "penniless parents" moved to Hong Kong from China's Shandong Province to seek refuge from political turmoil in the mainland.¹⁴ In the run-up to the 2012 election, Leung went to great lengths to present himself as somebody from the grassroots of Hong Kong, without links to the tycoons who were stifling the

city.¹⁵ Revered by his supporters in both Hong Kong and the mainland, Leung was seen as a working-class hero and a man of the people who, as leader, used the same briefcase that he had used as a student.¹⁶ The view of Leung's supporters, however, was in stark contrast to that of his detractors. Leung may have been born in Hong Kong, but by the time he came to preside over the city, he was the owner of at least five properties around the world, including a multi-million-dollar home on Hong Kong's Victoria Peak. Leung, then, lived far beyond the means of the citizens he was supposed to represent. Indeed, Leung's immense wealth, gained as a result of his successful career in real estate, coupled with his speedy rise through the political ranks, led to him being referred to as the "emperor of the working class," a "closet Communist," and "a very obedient cadre" who had been carefully trained by the Communist Party of China (the Party) to carry out its orders.¹⁷ His "confrontational and belligerent style of governance" divided and polarized Hong Kongers.¹⁸

Despite the negativity and anger directed at Leung by a large majority of Hong Kong's population, during his tenure as chief executive, Leung was credited with successfully combating some of the issues that were driving mainlandization. He banned mainland women from traveling to Hong Kong to give birth to ensure their newborn children would be granted Hong Kong citizenship, he stopped the parallel trading of baby milk powder, and he increased public housing supplies.¹⁹ These successes, however, were not enough to boost Leung's popularity because, ultimately, he was unwilling—or unable—to provide Hong Kongers with their desired goal of genuine universal suffrage.

Leung's refusal to offer the democracy that so many Hong Kongers desired was the exigency for the pro-democracy protesters' portrayal of Leung during the Umbrella Revolution—a depiction that was tantamount to making him an imposter in the city that he led.

In this sections that follow, I analyze Umbrella Revolution protesters' use of characters, images, and symbols from popular culture to denigrate and ridicule Leung. Magazines, cartoons, children's stories, toys, and characters from movies were all appropriated by Hong Kong protesters for this purpose. When making these connections to Leung, Hong Kongers often did so in juvenile and almost childlike ways that began with the appropriation of children's fairy and folktales and progressed to the use of imagery from the genre of horror.

Commandeering Childhood Stories

What seem like innocuous and innocent stories, fairytales actually give readers—or, in the case of younger children, listeners—an insight into the world that is still largely unknown to them.²⁰ Although sometimes “too strange” for young children upon first encounter, over time, through repeated engagement with the stories and morals told through fairytales, children “interweave their own worries and thoughts” into the narratives of the stories.²¹ Not unlike Kenneth Burke's notion of literature as “equipment for living” and “proverbs writ large” that can become strategies, attitudes, or methods for dealing with life's situations, fairytales can help children understand their world, “cope with problems,” and prepare them for “the reality of the harsh world” they will experience.²² Indeed, while fairytales are renowned for depicting a quest or struggle that leads to triumph over adversity after which “all lived happily ever after,” this pattern does not necessarily translate to real life.²³ Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim argues that when the “dreamlike features” and narratives of fairytales are brought to real life, they often do not have the “satisfying solution” that is expected of a fairytale.²⁴ Nevertheless, Terri Windling argues that fairytales speak of “danger, struggle, calamity” but also of “healing journeys, self-transformation, deliverance, and grace.”²⁵

Although fairytales are “most powerful” during childhood, they can also be a primer for adolescence and adulthood.²⁶ The power of fairytales, in fact, endures as adults often reminisce and recall elements of fairytales as they are “forced to cope with real injustices and contradictions in their lives.”²⁷ Answering eternal questions that become more persistent and pressing with age, such as what is the world really like?, how am I to live my life in it?, and how can I truly be myself?, readers are highly influenced by the stories they encounter in the earliest years of their lives and never really outgrow the fairytales and stories they read—or had read to them—as children.²⁸ These formative stories “reverberate so deeply” in the psyches of children that they “echo” and offer comfort throughout their “life’s journeys” as they encounter what adulthood entails.²⁹ Bell hooks, for example, explains that her commitment to the disrupting of the ideology of domination has its roots in her response to fairytales—she became “most obsessed with the idea of justice” in the stories and “the insistence in most tales that the righteous would prevail.”³⁰

Fairytales function as narratives that “offer hope that one can do something positive about changing oneself and the world” and can help children and adults move from a state of disempowerment to “a condition that may not be emancipation but that marks the beginnings of some form of agency.”³¹ Allowing for “magical thinking,” fairytales can help readers and listeners learn to be brave, clever, and trust their own moral compass.³² A fairytale offers escapism to a different world, explains Windling, and “opens a door, shows the sunlight outside, gives you a place to go where you are in control, are with people you want to be with.”³³ A fairytale, then, can provide “knowledge about the world and your predicament, give you weapons, give you armor: real things you can take back into your prison. Skills and knowledge and tools you can use to escape for real.”³⁴

The comforting aspect of contemporary or what might be perceived as *classic* fairytales is the result of their simplistic and predictable progression that sees characters (often vulnerable children) lose something (often a parent) and then must “set off on an arduous journey testing their courage and outwitting their foes, before realising their true place in the world, usually by bonding with another.”³⁵ In Hong Kong, Umbrella Revolution protesters who found themselves on the verge of losing their city set about on a journey to claim democracy by facing their fears of the erosion of their autonomy and way of life that resulted from mainlandization. As Hong Kong’s quest unfolded, they used familiar stories and characters from their childhood to bond with one another and to denigrate their adversary, CY Leung. Umbrella Revolution protesters relied on imagery from their childhood by reprising a number of children’s fairy and folktales as they camped out in the streets of Hong Kong. Throughout the Umbrella Revolution, elements from the childhood stories of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, Pinocchio, and Little Red Riding Hood were used not only to denigrate and disempower Leung but also to portray him as inauthentic and to draw attention to his lack of agency—he was simply the Party’s proxy in Hong Kong and an imposter in the city that he supposedly led.

One way Leung was portrayed as an imposter was as the Pied Piper of Hamelin. In one image taped to a wall, Leung was depicted as the “Pied Piper of Hong Kong” (fig. 17). Shown looking down over the street below him, the image suggested that Leung was bearing down on the Hong Kongers below. The Pied Piper folktale—which some consider to be based on a real event—involves a piper who is hired to lure away a plague of rats from the German town of Hamelin. Playing hypnotic music on his magical flute, the rats simply follow the piper out of town to the river, where they meet their demise. According to legend, however, rats were not the only things that followed the piper and, when the mayor of Hamelin refused to pay the piper the

promised amount for his rat-disposing services, the piper used his flute to transfix the town's children and lead them out of Hamelin, never to be seen again.³⁶ For some, then, the Pied Piper was an imposter, a “universal bogey man that continues to haunt,” and a metaphor for what can happen when leaders make irresponsible or false promises.³⁷

The piper was simply a hired hand, employed to carry out a dirty job that nobody else wanted to do. Linking Leung to the piper depicts him as somebody who had been tasked by his employer to lead Hong Kong toward full integration with the mainland. Indeed, Leung's main task was to enable the spread of mainlandization throughout Hong Kong and drive out the cultural beliefs, values, and ways of life of Hong Kongers. Quite simply, like the piper, Leung was an imposter who self-identified as a humble Hong Konger but had loyalties that lay elsewhere. Indeed, reports suggest that far from being a loyal Hong Konger, Leung was a Party member whose go-to karaoke songs were patriotic tunes that praised the “motherland.”³⁸

Linking Leung to children's stories to portray him as an imposter does not end with the murderous piper. In another piece of satire, a larger-than-life cardboard cutout of Leung was modified to include a huge nose (fig. 18). Fashioned out of what appears to be rolled paper, Leung's doctored nose extended out about two feet in length. In addition to making Leung look ridiculous, the long nose could be linked in a number of ways to the story of Pinocchio, the wood-carved puppet whose nose grows each time he tells a lie. At a very basic level, comparing Leung to Pinocchio equated him with being a liar. More important, however, just as Pinocchio longs to obtain agency and become a real boy, Leung believes he is holding power in Hong Kong. Although Leung may have appeared to have been leading Hong Kong, of course, the Party ultimately controlled Leung and pulled his strings by telling him what to do and what to say. Thus, despite refuting allegations of being an “obedient cadre,” nobody, least

of all democracy-supporting Hong Kongers believed him.³⁹ He was an imposter—a Party sympathizer who portrayed himself as a humble Hong Konger.

Another classic children’s story was also appropriated by the Umbrella Revolution protesters to depict Leung. Like the Pied Piper, the story of Little Red Riding Hood harnesses dark undertones that involve deceit and murder. Upon meeting a wolf in the forest on the way to visit her grandmother, Little Red Riding Hood is friendly and honest and tells the wolf where she is headed. The wolf goes ahead of Little Red Riding Hood, enters the house, eats the grandmother, and gets into her bed to await the arrival of Little Red Riding Hood. When the young girl arrives at the house, the wolf imitates the grandmother before eating the girl. And so, Hong Kongers were being tricked by a lying, cunning Leung who was pretending to be something he was not in order to satisfy his insatiable appetite for power and control.

Since early in his tenure as Hong Kong’s chief executive, Leung was often referred to as a *wolf* by his detractors—*láng*, the Chinese word for *wolf*, sounds like *Leung*.⁴⁰ This would not be the first pun that associated Leung with a wolf. As Leung arrived at one town-hall meeting in December 2013, a soft toy flew through the air. Named *Lufsig*, the toy in question—a US\$10 plush toy sold by the home-furnishing store IKEA—was a wolf with a small accompanying grandmother-like figure. Photoshopped images of Leung with *Lufsig* infiltrated social media, and lines formed around the blocks of Hong Kong’s IKEA stores as shoppers were handed reservation tickets to ensure they could get their hands on a *Lufsig*; IKEA’s stock lasted only a few hours.⁴¹ Less than a year after the *Lufsig* flew at the town-hall event, Umbrella Revolution artwork continued to use *Lufsig* to denigrate Leung by portraying him as a cunning and lying wolf. One poster (fig. 19), for example, featured a photograph of

Lufsig alongside text that drew attention to a number of Leung's perceived indiscretions, including an allegation that he built illegal structures at his Hong Kong home.⁴²

The word *Lufsig* in Cantonese sounds very much like the profanity that loosely translates into English as “throw your mother's cunt.”⁴³ Although the use of the word *cunt* is more boundary pushing and risqué than other depictions of Leung, the term was associated with a child's soft toy and, consequently, is another example of an almost-juvenile form of “rude” humor during which, amidst stifled giggles, teenagers are using the most shocking profanity they know for the first time. Equating Leung with the Lufsig and the wolf from Little Red Riding Hood, however, was more than a piece of crude humor. The use of Lufsig reinforced the connotations of Leung being a “wolf in sheep's clothing” and an imposter who presented himself as a caring Hong Konger when, in fact, he was working as a Party proxy in Hong Kong.⁴⁴

By utilizing various stories and characters from childhood to remove Leung's power, Umbrella Revolution protesters could imagine what “might be, could have been, perhaps will be.”⁴⁵ The rhetorical force of the use of childhood stories exposed Leung as an imposter and a fraud in the city that he called home. In fairytales, however, good does not always conquer evil, the wicked do not always get punished, and the perceived righteous do not always live happily ever after.⁴⁶ Thus, depicting Leung as various fairytale characters was not enough to completely disempower him, and an additional strategy was required.

Harnessing Horror Stories

Umbrella Revolution protesters' denigration of Leung as an imposter continued when they also harnessed symbols from the genre of horror, including depictions of the “undead,” in numerous pieces of artwork. Protest art depicted Leung as the devil, a vampire, and a zombie.

Moving from fairytales to horror stories saw a move to more adolescent-appealing stories that are enjoyed by and appeal to a more mature audience. Critical race scholar Bernadette Calafell writes that human beings are “surrounded by monsters” that inundate everyday life through films, books, video games, and even politicians.⁴⁷ For critical/cultural scholars Marina Levina and Diem-My Bui, monsters “represent anxieties” and “ontological threats” to society.⁴⁸ Zombies, for example, are often used to depict racialized bodies and Middle Eastern terrorists as well as carriers of a host of viruses, including AIDS and Ebola.⁴⁹

Leung’s depiction as a devil assumed many forms. One black-and-white image featured a black outline of Leung’s face, and at the top of the piece of paper, a typed message stated, “EVERYONE CAN BE AN ARTIST. FEEL FREE TO DRAW 689’s FACE WITH YOUR IMAGINATION” (fig. 20). In addition to adding the word *Liar* and drawing two crosses across Leung’s face, one person added devil horns to the chief executive’s head. In another example of Hong Kongers’ transformation of Leung into the personification of evil, after adding red horns to the black-and-white image of Leung, one artist wrote *D7 689* in a number of places around the image (fig. 21). In Cantonese, *D7* sounds similar to the expression *fuck*, so *D7 689* was a clear message: “Fuck CY Leung.” Depicting Leung as the devil is the first method by which Umbrella Revolution protesters portrayed him as an imposter in Hong Kong. In 2 Corinthians, Paul warns of Satan as an imposter and a “deceitful worker” who “masquerades as an angel of light” and a “servant of righteousness.” In addition to portraying Leung as a deceitful imposter, his depiction as the devil also directed a veiled warning toward him, for Paul warns that “the end” of such imposters and conspirators will correspond with “what their actions deserve.”⁵⁰

After utilizing the often-used political protest act of portraying leaders as the devil, Umbrella Revolution protesters drew on other conventional horror metaphors for denigrating

leaders—vampires and zombies. A larger-than-life cutout of Leung’s head was attached to one of the support structures that holds up the bridge connecting the GovHK headquarters to the opposite side of Queensway Road. Although not much was altered on the image that showed Leung laughing, two vampire fangs were added to stick out of Leung’s open mouth (fig. 22), suggesting that Leung was literally sucking and draining the life out of Hong Kong. Linguistics scholar Rashid al-Balushi writes that “vampire” politicians use their position of power to “accumulate wealth, exploring all possible means to increase their properties, through enacting new laws, manipulating policies, and developing new techniques, using the help and talent of corrupt officials.”⁵¹ Requiring the blood of others in order to survive, vampires are powerless if they are not able to prey on victims. And so, in order to remain favorable to the Party, Leung continued to suck the life out of Hong Kongers, turning them into obedient followers of the Party. Moreover, a vampire is unable to see itself in a mirror, meaning that Leung could not see that he had become an imposter because of his role as a faithful Party servant at the expense of his fellow Hong Kongers.

The zombie was another common image used to depict Leung. With his skin from the bottom half of his face rotting, another image stuck to a concrete block depicted Leung as a zombie (fig. 23). In addition to grey eyes that lacked distinguishable irises or pupils, Leung had a rotting hole—possibly a gunshot wound—in the middle of his forehead, and bugs were crawling out of the head wound and into his open mouth. Traditionally, zombies are deceased individuals who are resurrected by “authoritarian masters” for whom the zombie “labors . . . without complaint.”⁵² In short, the traditional zombie is a slave who is “speechless, incapable of emotion, slow moving but diligent, and utterly beholden” to the master.⁵³ Communication scholars Joshua Gunn and Shaun Treat refer to “the zombie complex” as a fantasy in which the ideology of a

master animates the bodies of zombies and “robs them of agency.”⁵⁴ Thus, by depicting Leung as a zombie, Hong Kongers were presenting him as a non-living being who was being brainwashed by his authoritarian master (the Party) and was seeking to infect Hong Kong with Party thought. Depicting Leung as a zombie communicated protesters’ belief that he was merely doing what the Party asked of him—putting an end to Hong Kong as it was currently known.⁵⁵ Thus, they saw Leung as passing himself off as something he was not—a leader with agency.

According to folklore, one way a zombie is created is after being bitten by another zombie infected with a “zombie virus.”⁵⁶ Writing about zombie politicians, al-Balushi states that they lack “a true heart and a true mind” and are not concerned about positive aspects of life such as cooperation, invention, progress, and relationships.⁵⁷ As a result of the Party’s insistence in selecting Hong Kong’s chief executive, the city’s political process had been “zombified.” As a zombified leader, Leung’s job was to infect the minds of Hong Kongers with “Xi Jinping Thought” that sought to achieve China’s “rejuvenation.”⁵⁸

Depicting politicians as zombies or vampires is not new, especially in US culture. Donald Trump, Barack Obama, John McCain, Sarah Palin, George W. Bush, Abraham Lincoln, and more have all been the victims of such portrayals.⁵⁹ In his work exploring the use of the zombie as a metaphor for thinking about culture and political power, scholar and cultural critic Henry A. Giroux writes that “twenty-first-century zombies no longer emerge from the grave”; instead, they “have an ever-increasing presence in the highest reaches of government and in the forefront of mainstream media.”⁶⁰ As vampire politicians drain citizens of any potential for a successful life, citizens led by such a creature face a society lacking in basic services and decreasing levels of safety, security, and dignity.⁶¹ For many Hong Kongers, the basic rights listed above were and continue to be at risk as a direct result of mainlandization, although Leung pretended otherwise.

Leung was still the city's chief executive when the Umbrella Revolution drew to a close on the night of December 11, 2014.⁶² For almost three months, however, he had been denigrated and ridiculed publicly and, even worse, on a mass scale as images of the protest art were disseminated by global media outlets. In this section, I have highlighted how Umbrella Revolution protesters used fictional and often nonhuman characters that are enjoyed by children and teenagers through which to depict Leung. In efforts to disempower Leung, Umbrella Revolution protesters showed him as the Piper of Hamelin, Pinocchio, the wolf in the Little Red Riding Hood story, the devil, a vampire, and a zombie, all characters who change form or persona or, in one way or another, are not what they appear to be.

On December 9, 2019—two days shy of the second anniversary of the clearing of the final Umbrella Revolution encampment by police—Leung sent shockwaves across Hong Kong when he announced that he would be the first chief executive in the city's history not to seek a second term.⁶³ A leader with few sympathizers—to the extent that rolls of toilet paper carrying images of his face were sold—many Hong Kongers were happy to learn of Leung's planned departure; he “had it coming,” quipped one observer.⁶⁴ Many Hong Kongers breathed a sigh of relief, but Leung's resignation was only a small, fleeting victory for pro-democracy-supporting Hong Kongers. After all, the goal of the Umbrella Revolution was for Hong Kongers to be able to choose their own candidates for the position of the city's chief executive. As the Party put forward a new pool of carefully vetted candidates, in March 2017, Leung's assistant, Carrie Lam, was installed as the Party's so-called “preferred candidate” and won the race to become Hong Kong's next—and first female—chief executive.

The Hard Hat Revolution: Carrie Lam as Sexual Assault Victim

Over the course of almost four decades, Carrie Lam became a well-respected politician who rose through the ranks of GovHK until, in 2012, she became chief secretary for administration—effectively CY Leung’s deputy. After her addition to Leung’s cabinet, Lam’s popularity began to wane as she became associated with Leung’s controversial moral and national education policy. In an effort to gain the support and trust of Hong Kongers, like Leung before her, Lam was quick to stress her Hong Kongness and her working-class upbringing. A diligent student who claimed to have completed her homework on her bunk bed, Lam’s election manifesto told of her “grassroots family” and her belief in “public engagement and community consensus” as an important step in policy implementation. In an attempt to bring together Hong Kongers after the often-chaotic rein of Leung, Lam’s 2017 election slogan was “同行 WeCONNECT.”⁶⁵ “As long as we can connect and achieve consensus,” wrote Lam, “the future of Hong Kong is bright”—beliefs that appeared to fall by the wayside when, just over two years later, Lam refused to engage in dialogue with Hong Kongers who took to the streets by the millions to protest the proposed extradition bill.⁶⁶

Receiving eighty-eight votes more than Leung did in 2012—incidentally, eight is regarded as the luckiest number in Chinese culture, bringing prosperity, success, and high social status—Lam claimed her mandate to lead Hong Kong despite the fact that only 0.1 percent of the public voted for her. For Lam, however, her victory was not a question of numbers; it was “a question of legitimacy.”⁶⁷ Conscious of the disastrous start to Leung’s reign when he ruffled the feathers of Hong Kongers by speaking in Putonghua (the standard spoken form of modern Chinese, based on the dialect of Beijing), even before she had officially taken her seat in office, Lam was swift to speak to the media in a bid to distance herself from the *Leung Chun-ying 2.0*

label that critics had given her. Lam informed reporters that the difference between the two leaders would “be seen through the governance [of Hong Kong].” Vowing to “embark on a new style of governance and heal the city’s social and political divide,” Lam explained that she and Leung were “totally different types of people.”⁶⁸

In an interview with *BBC News*—a Western news outlet to which Leung refused to grant an interview during his four years as chief executive—Lam claimed to be “honest and straightforward.” Despite appearing to learn from Leung’s mistakes, Lam approached a number of questions during the interview with unspecific and unsatisfactory responses, complaining that the lines of questioning were unfair. In another attempt to differentiate herself from her predecessor, Lam used another *BBC News* interview to make a bold claim, insisting that she was not “a puppet” of the Party.⁶⁹

On the day Lam was officially sworn into office—July 1, 2017—she and Chinese President Xi Jinping were pictured together as they visited the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge. The picture showed how close Hong Kong now was to China, not just as a result of the newly built bridge that connects Hong Kong to the mainland but through the relationship between Lam and Xi. Although not obvious at the time, the irony is striking that, in the image, both leaders donned hard hats, the symbol of and name given to Hong Kong’s next revolution.⁷⁰ For Lam’s reign at Hong Kong’s chief executive, the writing was on the wall (or the bridge).

Although violence can be enacted in many forms, Bardall, Bjarnegård, and Piscopo assert that political violence is gendered.⁷¹ Violence against women in politics (VAWIP) occurs simply because the targets are women.⁷² Undergirded by sexism, VAWIP mirrors and maintains the “gendered arrangements of power in society.”⁷³ Whether physical, sexual, psychological, economic, or symbolic, the mistreatment of women in politics is “an emerging global priority,”

and efforts to “harm, intimidate, and harass women” should be viewed as “a serious threat and affront to democracy,” asserts political scientist Mona Lena Krook.⁷⁴

In this section, I explore how “gendered scripts” that rely on sexualized language, imagery, or content were harnessed by protesting Hong Kongers in a way that was tantamount to sexual violence against Lam.⁷⁵ To claim that Hard Hat Revolution protesters’ denigration of Lam was akin to sexual violence may seem too strong or even hyperbolic. By making this argument, my intention is not to detract from the seriousness of sexual violence and those upon whom sexual violence is enacted.⁷⁶ As I will highlight in my analysis of pro-democracy protesters’ portrayals of Lam, the strategies harnessed throughout the Hard Hat Revolution— exposing Lam’s perceived vulnerabilities, blaming Lam, and denying Lam’s personhood—involved aspects of sexual violence and paralleled the ways in which women who are sexually assaulted are treated. Sexual violence, of course, does not only constitute physical harm. Indeed, sexual violence is viewed as a form of “public cruelty” through “the deliberate infliction” of physical or emotional pain in order to achieve some tangible or intangible result.⁷⁷ Although Lam was not physically harmed during the Hard Hat Revolution, through the use of metaphors embedded in protest artwork, Lam suffered many of the acts that are associated with sexual violence against women. Through the protest art, Hard Hat Revolution protesters exposed Lam’s perceived vulnerabilities, blamed her for the treatment she received, and denied her personhood. The very first sticky note I read said, “Carrie Lam . . . Screw You!” (fig. 24).

Exposing Vulnerabilities

Sexual violence often involves the perpetrator’s assumption of a more powerful or dominant position over the victim. Indeed, whether the act involves intimidating words or violent physical contact, the motivation for sexual violence stems from the perpetrator’s need for

dominance and control.⁷⁸ Importantly, sexual violence and rape are not about sexual attraction but are the “expression of power through sexual behavior.”⁷⁹ Throughout the Hard Hat Revolution, pro-democracy protesters exposed Lam’s perceived vulnerabilities in three ways. First, Hard Hat Revolution protesters questioned Lam’s *ethos* when they presented her as evil incarnate through association with various unpleasant and villainous protagonists, including the devil, Hitler, and Donald Trump. Next, they portrayed Lam as a weak, emotional, and unstable leader. Finally, Lam was depicted as blind, deaf, and unable to speak, suggesting she lacked the faculties required to lead Hong Kong.

Like Leung, many examples of protest art linked Lam with evil protagonists. The first and least detailed of these depictions saw black Hitleresque mustaches crudely added to various images of Lam (fig. 25). One sticky note informed Lam that she was a “backboneless dictator” and “even Donald Trump is a better person than you” (fig. 40). Another piece of art called Lam a “murderer” (fig. 26). On more than one occasion, Lam was depicted as the devil, complete with horns protruding from her perfectly quaffed black hair and demonic red eyes glowing behind her glasses (fig. 27). A number of pieces of sticky-note artwork told Lam to “GO TO HELL” (figs. 28, 29) and to “BURN IN HELL” (fig. 30). Another piece of devil-themed art carried text that informed the reader that Lam had “sold” her “soul” to the Party (fig. 31). By associating Lam with evil protagonists, protesting Hong Kongers were depicting Lam as evil incarnate who, because of her association with the evil, was not an appropriate leader for Hong Kong. Although the examples of body shaming that I have highlighted do not communicate a sense of physical violence toward Lam, some escalated to personal attacks on Lam of a more aggressive and violent nature.

A second way protesters withdrew power from Lam was that they portrayed her as weak and emotional and thus unable to perform her duties as Hong Kong's leader. Highlighting perceived incompetence with regards to women's professional roles is another typical method of gendered violence.⁸⁰ During the initial stages of the Hard Hat Revolution, Lam herself provided pro-democracy protesters with the ammunition they needed to begin their act of disempowerment. In June 2019, not long after the outbreak of the Hard Hat Revolution, a tearful Lam was interviewed on Hong Kong's Television Broadcasts Limited network (TVB). Asked if she had betrayed Hong Kong by trying to push through the extradition bill, Lam, with tears running down her face, responded by reminding the audience that she was a Hong Konger. "I grew up here together with all the Hong Kongers," said Lam. "My love for this place . . . has led me to make a fair amount of personal sacrifices."⁸¹ Following the interviews, a number of pieces of protest art featured Lam—sometimes portrayed as a crocodile—crying what were often red tears (figs. 32, 33, 34). In one image, a crocodile was shown biting at Lam's right eye as red tears/blood dripped out of it (fig. 33). While labels such as *kitten* and *bunny* "characterize women as domesticated sexual playthings," the comparison of women to creatures such as foxes and wildcats suggests an "exotic and appealing female to be tamed or hunted."⁸² The crocodile fits into the latter category. Indeed, a crocodile conjures images of a silent predator that slowly creeps up on its prey and, once caught, kills it, leaving the carcass to rot before finally consuming it—a possible metaphor for mainlandization.

Lam's tearful TVB appearance was not the first time she cried during a television interview. In 2012, when she was part of Leung's newly sworn-in administration, Lam "lost her composure" when answering a question about whether her popularity had suffered as a result of her involvement in the administration's controversial national education policy.⁸³ As the TVB

images aired in 2019, many watching Hong Kongers would have linked Lam's tears to her 2012 interview and thus perceived her as an emotional, weak, and unstable leader. Like the *bitch* label that, as I will point to in my explication of the Hong Kongers' third strategy to denigrate and take power from Lam, works as a rhetoric of containment to discipline and govern the popular understanding of women in power, the TVB interview shaped the political narrative of Lam's failing leadership. It governed Hong Kong protesters' perceptions of her and became a terministic screen through which Lam would be forever viewed.⁸⁴

Public crying has been referred to as "political kryptonite" for those who shed tears publicly.⁸⁵ Authenticity lies at the heart of the mixed feelings toward crying. Scholar Nicholas Jenkins explains that "crying as a genuine emotional expression and the crying as part of the new political theater have become harder and harder to distinguish."⁸⁶ Male politicians have paid the price for publicly crying. When former Democratic senator Edmund S. Muskie shed tears when addressing false accusations of racism that were leveled against him. Muskie denied crying, insisting that it was melting snow on his face, not tears.⁸⁷ Tears or no tears, Muskie's public display of affection killed his political career. Although Muskie's case provides evidence of male politicians suffering as a result of shedding tears, recent examples of male criers, including Republican governor Charlie Baker, Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti, and presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden show that men can cry publicly without being overly criticized.⁸⁸ Thus, reactions to public tears are often based on misogynistic and patriarchal lenses and societal norms.

Women's tears are often consigned to the category of theatre or weakness. A woman who is a political leader is frowned upon when she displays emotion, suggesting she does not display the strength required to lead. Thus, although men are held to stereotypical assumptions of how a

political leader should act, their women counterparts face a number of double binds that constrain their political agency if they attempt to break the traditional boundaries within which they are confined. The most common of these is the femininity-versus-competence double bind. In short, if a woman leader is feminine, she will be judged as incompetent, but if she communicates an air of competence, her femininity is questioned.⁸⁹ If a woman leader communicates a “soft” image, Karrin Vasby Anderson suggests, her leadership qualities may be criticized; if she presents a strong and assertive leadership persona, however, she faces being labeled a *bitch*.⁹⁰

The femininity-competence double bind can be seen in the case of Democratic representative Pat Schroeder when she announced in 1987 that she would not seek the Democratic nomination for president, the tears she shed made front-page news. *The Chicago Tribune* described her face as “so screwed up with emotion she looked like a Cabbage Patch doll.”⁹¹ *The Washington Post*, meanwhile, published an image of Schroeder’s husband wiping tears from his wife’s cheek. The image of a woman seeking comfort from a man “set back” the feminist movement, according to conservative political commentator Rush Limbaugh, to the point that he was “inspired” to “play the video and the audio” of Schroeder’s tearful press conference all the more.⁹² Attempting to show support for Schroeder, biochemist William H. Frey told the *Washington Post* that crying “has nothing to do with sex. It has to do with humanity. Only humans weep emotional tears.”⁹³ The words of a scientist, however, did not work for most people. Even other women derided Schroeder tears: “The single greatest error in public is to cry,” one woman told *The Chicago Tribune*, “what Schroeder did is a blow to women.”⁹⁴

The passage of time since Schroeder's display of emotion has not done anything to further the acceptance of women political leaders daring to display emotions. For example, when Hillary Clinton's 2009 US presidential bid stalled after losing the Iowa caucuses to her Democratic rival Barack Obama, the tears Clinton shed in a New Hampshire diner were described as a "calculated move" by her critics.⁹⁵ Reflecting on her experience, Clinton explained the dilemma that she and other women face: "If you get too emotional, that undercuts you. A man can cry, but a woman, that's a different kind of dynamic."⁹⁶

In the days following her TVB appearance, Lam apologized to Hong Kongers and expressed her deep sorrow and regret as she announced that she would suspend the proposed extradition bill.⁹⁷ Suspension, however, was not enough for Hong Kongers. Lam had revealed her hand and had shown weakness, and Hong Kongers saw an opportunity. That weekend, a reported two-million people—almost one third of the entire population of Hong Kong—marched in the streets of the city, calling for her resignation.⁹⁸ Lam was steadfast and refused to relinquish her power, but Hard Hat Revolution protesters metaphorically took Lam's power away through their denigration of her.

A third way Hard Hat Revolution protesters withdrew power from Lam was via a number of Lam-themed pieces of art that depicted her with disabilities that suggested she lacked the faculties needed to lead Hong Kong. For example, one large drawing on what appears to be a piece of wood showed Lam's trademark glasses and quaffed hair along with a "Mandarin collar" that she often wore (fig. 35). Covered with Cantonese characters, Lam was asked to "stop pretending" and told that she was "blind" to what was taking place in Hong Kong, a point reinforced by the artist's decision not to show Lam's eyes behind her glasses. In fact, this time, her glasses were completely opaque. Cantonese characters told Lam, "we see through you" and

“we have eyes, hearts, and brains”—perhaps suggesting that Lam did not. Unlike figure 11, which is a detailed drawing of Lam, figure 15 was a hastily drawn representation of her face. Drawn with a black marking pen, the character was a simple outline of the top half of Lam’s body that failed to even include eyes—perhaps another nod to her lack of a soul. In other images, Lam’s eyes were covered with electrical tape (fig. 36), material was stuffed into the spaces where her eyes and mouth should be (fig. 37), and her lips were sewn shut (fig. 35).

At face value, these depictions present an attempt by protesting Hong Kongers to remove Lam’s voice and further add to accusations of Lam being silenced by the Party and blind to the plight of Hong Kongers. Furthermore, unable to hear, see, or speak effectively rendered Lam disabled and, consequently, physically unable to lead Hong Kong. In one piece of art (fig. 29), Lam was shown lying on the ground at the foot of a staircase. Whether Lam is alive or dead was unclear; she most certainly looked injured and, consequently, unable to continue in her role as Hong Kong’s leader. Together, the three strategies outlined here functioned to take power away from Lam by exposing her vulnerabilities, much as perpetrators of sexual assault do to their victims.

Victim Blaming

Although some may view Hong Kong’s protest art as colorful, humorous, and perhaps even edgy, the act of taping and sewing shut Lam’s eyes and mouth, harnessing bondage connotations, and calling her “CARRIE SLUT” (fig. 38) and “a whore of HK” (fig. 39) added a more explicit sexual narrative to depictions of Lam. Protesters thus pushed the boundaries of an ideological approach to Hong Kong protests that, for many, were historically family-friendly affairs. Indeed, the depictions of Lam described here continued the introduction of sexual

connotations to protesting Hong Kongers' portrayal of their chief executive, but this rhetoric escalated to a much more X-rated level.

Victim blaming—the act of suggesting that the victim bears responsibility for a sexual attack, not the offender—occurs through the assumption that individuals did something to provoke the violence enacted against them.⁹⁹ For example, victims may be accused of acting or dressing in ways that encourage their attackers and, consequently, that they are “deserving of violence and violation.”¹⁰⁰ Other traits of victim blaming can include victims being accused of participating in the attack by putting themselves in danger by “being in the wrong place at the wrong time” and fraternizing with “the wrong crowd.”¹⁰¹ Indeed, rape culture often sees sympathy lie with the perpetrators, not the victims.¹⁰²

Victim blaming is deployed by perpetrators in an attempt to remove or redirect responsibility and guilt. Such accusations were leveled at Lam. By acting as a proxy for the Party in Hong Kong, Lam found herself in the unfortunate position of leading Hong Kong during the most turbulent period in its history. While the timing for Lam was bad, however, as a self-proclaimed Hong Konger, the city should have been the right place for her. However, Lam was a “whore” (fig. 39) by fraternizing with Beijing despite telling Hong Kongers that she cared for them as though they were her own children. Victims of sexual violence are often portrayed as deserving of the abuse they receive.¹⁰³ Hard Hat Revolution protesters were laying Lam's predicament at her own feet: Lam's actions led Hong Kongers to enact sexual violence upon her, and Lam's downfall was of her own making.

Denying Personhood

Sexual violence objectifies the—often female—body and equates its worth to appearance and sexual functions.¹⁰⁴ Objectification occurs when a women's body or parts

of her body are singled out and separated from her as a person.¹⁰⁵ In a number of pieces of art, Hard Hat Revolution protesters explicitly focused on particular parts of Lam's body, including her jowls (figs. 27, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35) and her hair (figs. 29, 31, 33, 34, 35). In many of these drawings, Lam's body was not detailed and, instead, the depictions of Lam consisted of sketchy outlines. For example, toward the bottom of Hong Kong's Lennon Wall, a light blue sticky note featured a quickly drawn image of Lam. Although the seemingly hastily inked single-line image featured standard traits such as glasses and jowls that became synonymous with portrayals of Lam, the lack of detail dehumanized Lam and meant that she was not depicted as a whole person. Indeed, while male politicians are often depicted as complex and fully formed humans, women politicians are often reduced to simple stereotypes about their looks.

Pornographic metaphors, images, and narratives can infiltrate political culture and frame women political leaders in ways that objectify, symbolically annihilate, attack, fictionally murder, and pictorially dismember them.¹⁰⁶ As a rhetorical process, pornification does not need to include actual nudity or explicit sex acts and thus is not the same as pornography. Instead, pornification harnesses references from the realm of pornography, hypersexualizes or sexually exploits an individual, uses crude humor or gender-based parody, and disciplines those who do not conform to traditional gender norms.¹⁰⁷ Although both male and female politicians can be pornified and body shamed, women are far more likely to be targeted as, under the guise of parody or humor, they are sexualized, objectified, disciplined, and dehumanized.¹⁰⁸

By pornifying Lam, protesters moved to more personal and focused attacks on Lam's physical appearance that equated her with animals in an act that completely dehumanized her. One sticky note attached to the Lennon Wall read "Carrie Lam #bitch" (fig. 40), while a t-shirt emblazoned with "GO TO HELL BITCH. I AM SERIOUS 777" (fig. 28) was attached to the

steel fence around the perimeter of the GovHK headquarters.¹⁰⁹ Associating women with female dogs that are uncontrollable, in a wild state, and in heat, the term *bitch* conjures images of a “domesticated animal that has gone wrong” and needs to be tamed.¹¹⁰ As a sexist stereotype, the *bitch* label is a conventional approach to dehumanizing female leaders who are forced to cultivate and navigate an image of competence and leadership while, at the same time, trying not to be accused of being a *bitch*. For Anderson, the *bitch* label works as a rhetoric of containment that disciplines women in power and, as a rhetorical frame, is a metaphor that “shapes political narratives and governs popular understanding of women leaders.”¹¹¹ An issue for women and especially women in positions of power is that once the bitch narrative has become part of the public lexicon, it is hard to shake off and becomes a terministic screen through which women are often forever observed, defined, and judged.¹¹²

Once Lam had been publicly labeled a *bitch*, the perception was hard for her to escape because almost every available surface not just around the GovHK headquarters but in protest sites across Hong Kong were plastered with depictions of the untrusted “Communist dog!” (fig. 38) who posed a real threat to the future of Hong Kong. Because political portrayals in general have become more personal and venomous, however, Anderson suggests that the word *bitch* now seems “almost quaint” as it has been replaced—or at least supplemented—with a multitude of other misogynistic expressions that further dehumanize women.¹¹³ In a piece of art that depicted Lam as a pig (fig. 35), in addition to the written language used in the art, her depiction as a pig carried a number of connotations of being fat, smelly, and dirty—although the claim that pigs are dirty is questionable. When viewed alongside the image that told Lam that her “face is disgusting” (fig. 41), the image of the pig further revealed that protesting Hong Kongers had

advanced from the use of the quaint *bitch* label to explicit body shaming that drew on Lam's physical appearance.

Through their protest art, Hong Kongers removed Lam's ability to see, speak, and hear; effectively rendering her disabled. Lam was depicted as weak, emotional, and unstable and, consequently, unfit to lead Hong Kong. Moreover, much as a perpetrator of sexual violence would, protesting Hong Kongers used sexual narratives to dehumanize Lam and to blame her for the predicament in which she found herself. In short, Hong Kongers used gendered metaphors to frame her power in misogynistic ways to "reveal and reinforce stereotypes" that play a defining role in shaping the stories about female political leaders and perpetuating the myth of women's power as "unnatural and threatening."¹⁴

Of course, as my analysis has suggested, despite exposing Lam's perceived vulnerabilities, blaming Lam, and denying Lam's personhood, no physical harm ever came to Lam during the Hard Hat Revolution. Because Lam was labeled a *bitch*, a *whore*, a *pig*, and a *murderer*; portrayed as the devil and Hitler; and was told to "burn in hell," she was pornified, ridiculed and shamed, objectified and sexualized, denigrated and dehumanized, and ultimately disempowered in much the same way that victims of sexual violence are. Despite such portrayals, Lam remained resolute and refused to step down. When Lam's first term comes to an end in 2022, it remains to be seen if she will take a second term or, like Leung before her, will succumb to the pressures of being placed in an impossible position by Beijing.

Conclusion: No Happy Ending

In this final analytical chapter, I have analyzed Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolution protesters' depictions of Hong Kong's chief executives—CY Leung and Carrie Lam—to uncover two contrasting mechanisms through which the different ideologies of the movements

were communicated. Throughout the Umbrella Revolution of 2014, pro-democracy-protesting Hong Kongers used artwork to denigrate and ridicule their chief executive, CY Leung, in such a way that he became an imposter in the city that he led, thus removing his power and autonomy. Protesters relied on symbols from fairy and folktales of their formative years before progressing to utilizing symbols from the horror genre associated with adolescent and early teen years in order to make Leung inauthentic and thus difficult for him to exert power.

In the Hard Hat Revolution of 2019, Hong Kong's chief executive Carrie Lam was also disempowered. The attacks directed toward Lam, however, were much more pointed, personal, and violent. Although this violence was not literally physical, the attacks harnessed a number of strategies that are associated with acts of sexual violence, sexual assault, or rape. Instead of relying on symbols from their childhood, as they had done in 2014, Hard Hat Revolution protesters used pornified and stereotypical gendered and misogynistic images and phrases to expose Lam's perceived vulnerabilities, blame Lam for her own downfall, and deny her personhood.

Although both strategies used to depict Hong Kong's leaders constituted forms of political violence that attempted to disempower them, the mechanisms used were most certainly based on gender. But what accounts for the change from predominantly playful depictions of CY Leung in 2014 to the more vicious and, at times, chilling depictions of Carrie Lam in 2019? To conclude this chapter, I present the reasons that I suggest account for the difference between the contrasting use of denigrative art as protest tools in the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions: a failed (Umbrella) revolution, increased mainlandization, a global rise in nationalistic sentiment that led to more violent protest, protesters' aging, and a rise in rape culture. I then address the

consequences of Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters' use of denigrative art as a protest tool by highlighting the constraints of the depictions of Leung and Lam in the two revolutions.

Accounting for Revolutionary Differences

As with Hong Kong protesters' ideological conceptions of home and the use of public transportation infrastructure in the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, four of the same exigencies can be pointed to that account for the contrasting depictions of Leung and Lam: a failed (Umbrella) revolution, increased mainlandization, a global rise in nationalistic sentiment that led to more violent protest, and protesters' aging. There is however, one other reason that I suggest explains the revolutionary differences in the treatment of Hong Kong's chief executives: a rise in rape culture.

A Rise in Rape Culture.

In the years between the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, sexual violence permeated popular culture and the public consciousness so that sexual violence is now “constantly represented and re-represented” in individuals' daily lives.¹¹⁵ The increase in graphic depictions of sexual violence on television shows and in movies and the normalization of sexual violence in video games has led to sexual violence being trivialized and becoming “shorthand for backstory and drama.”¹¹⁶ Moreover, the uncovering of high-profile historical sexual abuse cases against celebrities such as Bill Cosby, Harvey Weinstein, and Jeffrey Epstein—as well as a former president of the United States boasting of being able to “do anything” to women, including “grabbing them by the pussy”—meant that the constant reporting of sexual violence became so prevalent that it was almost normalized in society.¹¹⁷ All of this led to an increase in rape culture that encourages male aggression, supports violence against women, and blames victims for the attack.¹¹⁸ Thus, moving to the use of pornified, gendered, and misogynistic tactics to

metaphorically enact sexual violence against Lam was not a major step for Hong Konger protesters. After all, according to society, this was simply how women are treated—they are sexualized in order to achieve power over them.

Ideological Constraints

In this final section, I explicate the consequences of the denigration of Hong Kong's leaders in the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. As with the use of public transportation, the depiction of CY Leung as an imposter and the metaphorical sexual assault of Carrie Lam did achieve small-scale victories by drawing attention to Hong Kong's pro-democracy cause. As I pointed out in chapter four, much of the artwork produced by Umbrella Revolution protests was archived and preserved. Moreover, both the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions were renowned as creative protest movements, and the protest signs and artwork were shared across the globe by the press and social media. Leung's resignation could also be perceived as a positive result that was linked to his denigration and disempowerment in the Umbrella Revolution. The victory, however, was fleeting and hollow as it did not stop the Party from putting forward a list of preferred candidates to succeed Leung.

Two constraints resulted from Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters' disempowerment of their leaders. Both Leung and Lam were powerful leaders who had been hand selected by the Party to be its proxy and instill "Xi Jinping Thought" across the city with the goal of fully reuniting Hong Kong with the mainland to achieve China's "rejuvenation."¹¹⁹ Despite Leung's powerful position, Umbrella Revolution protesters chose to denigrate him as an imposter using childish imagery and characters who were fictional. Although such depictions may have been slightly embarrassing to Leung, they were never serious enough to render him powerless. The metaphorical sexual assault of Lam was much less playful and more serious. However, as I will

point to momentarily, Hard Hat Revolution protesters' depictions of Lam actually strengthened her position. Lam remained resolute, she is still in power, and the Party has further mainlandized Hong Kong.

Oddly, Leung and Lam switched the roles that Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters had assigned to them. I began this chapter by explaining my amazement at Hard Hat Revolution protesters' preference for Lam over Leung as the city's leader. By the summer of 2020, however, this changed, and Hong Kongers realized in hindsight they had perhaps misjudged Leung and underestimated Lam. At the start of his tenure as the city's chief executive, Leung made no false promises to Hong Kongers and, as such, never lied about his intentions for Hong Kong in contrast to how they had portrayed him as an imposter. Moreover, throughout the seventy-nine day of the Umbrella Revolution, Leung was strong and resolute. He played his role as a strong, powerful, male leader who stuck to the decisions that he made and refused to back down. He did not engage with or acquiesce to protesters. After his resignation, Leung admitted that he had been a puppet of the Party all along: "All power comes from the central government," Leung stated.¹²⁰ He also defended young Hong Kongers who were protesting, claiming they were "victims" of the British government's failure to instill a concept of "country" prior to the handover. "You cannot blame the young people now," Leung said.¹²¹ Leung, then, was even strong enough to speak out against the Party and to direct blame for Hong Kong's violent protests away from the city's pro-democracy protesters. At a time when Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters had very few allies, they had acquired a potential and unexpected ally in Leung.

Like Leung, Lam, too, admitted that she was not really in control of Hong Kong. In August 2020, after the introduction of the extradition bill, in an interview on Phoenix Satellite

Television, Lam shocked Hong Kongers by claiming not to consider herself a politician. “I am an administrator,” said Lam, not “a person who understands politics very well.”¹²² Lam’s admission was startling given that, unlike Leung, who admitted after he was no longer charged with leading Hong Kong to being controlled by the Party, Lam was still leading Hong Kong when she admitted that the Party put her in power despite the fact that she did not understand politics. Moreover, at the start of her reign, Lam had promised a style of governance that would “heal the city’s social and political divide.”¹²³

In actuality, Lam’s style of governance only exacerbated the cracks in Hong Kong’s society. In a television interview, Lam further weakened her position and continued to portray herself as an ill-equipped leader, claiming she “could not have predicted the turmoil” that occurred in response to the extradition bill.¹²⁴ Hong Kongers, however, could be forgiven for assuming that a strong and experienced leader would have prepared for and have foreseen such instances. Thus, in 2019, Lam initially conformed to the gender stereotype of a weak, emotional, and unfit leader that Hard Hat Revolution protesters attributed to her. This stereotype was compounded when, three months after the start of the Hard Hat Revolution, Lam announced the planned withdrawal of the extradition bill that was the cause of the protest.¹²⁵ The bill was officially withdrawn in October 2019, so she acquiesced to protesting Hong Kongers’ demands, but that did not quell their anger. Once again, Lam had shown her hand and displayed her “feminine” weakness by caving into protesters’ demands—something that Leung steadfastly refused to do during the Umbrella Revolution. Lam had conformed to the weak, feminine role that Hard Hat Revolution protesters had assigned to her by giving pro-democracy-supporting Hong Kongers an inch; consequently, they then wanted more.

Lam, however, remained resolute and, by 2020, many Hong Kongers had changed their minds about their preference for Leung or Lam. Whereas those I interviewed in 2019 told me that, if forced to choose, Lam would be their preferred chief executive, when I interviewed Hong Kongers twelve months later and asked the same question, I was taken aback when all of the interviewees told me that, in hindsight, they would prefer Leung to be leading their city. In 2020, many interviewees were describing Lam in the terms they once had used for Leung—*fake* and *inauthentic*. Lam’s “dirty work is more explicit,” one interviewee proclaimed. Building on this perception, another Hong Konger spoke of Leung’s honesty. “CY told less lies [than Lam] . . . at least CY Leung didn’t hide or pretend not to be a liar. At least CY was honest about trying to fuck Hong Kong.”¹²⁶

The symbolic sexual assault of Lam failed because it did not weaken Lam’s position; in fact, it made her stronger. Lam dug in her heels and hardened her stance, refusing to back down to Hard Hat Revolution protesters’ demands. As such, Lam was a metaphoric survivor of sexual violence. Not only is she still in power, but the enactment of the national security law means that she will not have to suffer the same ordeal again. If her attackers do attempt to denigrate Lam with sexual tropes or any kind of criticism, under the new law, they will be sent to jail and possibly have to answer for their crimes in the mainland. After all, Lam gave Beijing what it always wanted but could not get while Leung was in power. As a result of the national security law, Beijing now rules Hong Kong.

Having analyzed three distinct ideologies that characterized and differentiated Hong Kong’s Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolution—the metaphorical conceptions of home, the use of public transportation infrastructure, and the denigration of Hong Kong’s chief executives—in the next and final chapter, I engage in a more theoretical discussion of the ideologies of protest

strategies derived from these three analyses of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. In that final chapter, I also discuss the consequences of the protest ideologies for Hong Kong's future.

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Figure 23: CY Leung as a zombie.¹³³

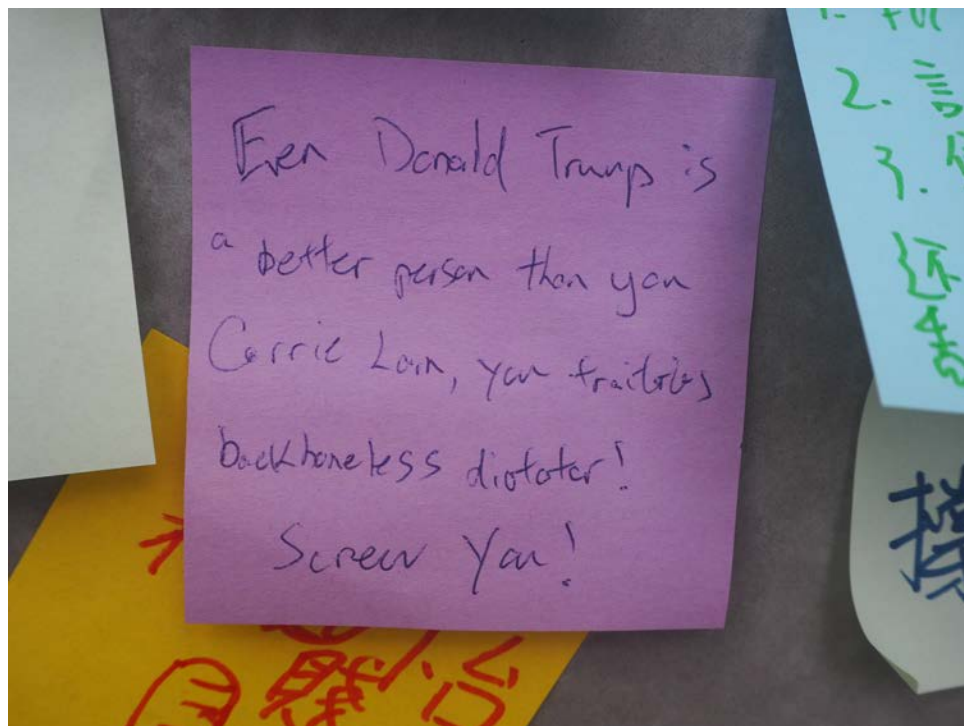


Figure 24: "Screw You," Carrie Lam.¹³⁴



Figure 25: Carrie Lam with “Hitler” mustache.¹³⁵



Figure 26: “Carrie Lam the murderer.”¹³⁶



Figure 27: Carrie Lam, glowing eyes.¹³⁷



Figure 18: Carrie Lam, "go to hell, bitch."¹³⁸



Figure 29: Carrie Lam, step down/go to hell.¹³⁹



Figure 30: Carrie Lam, burn in hell.¹⁴⁰

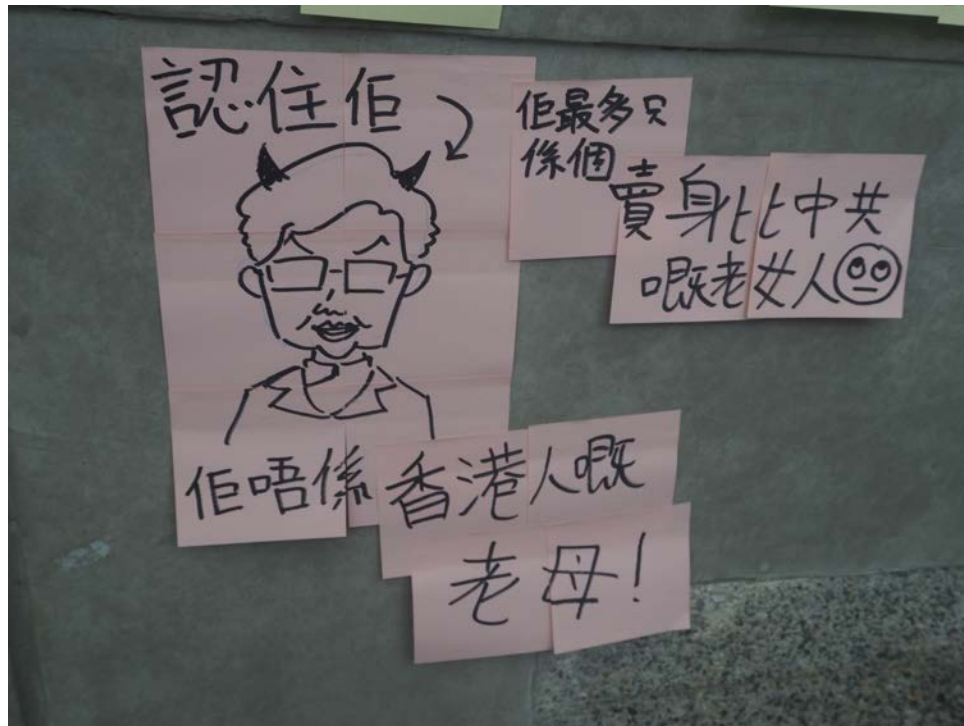


Figure 31: Carrie Lam, “sold” her “soul.”¹⁴¹

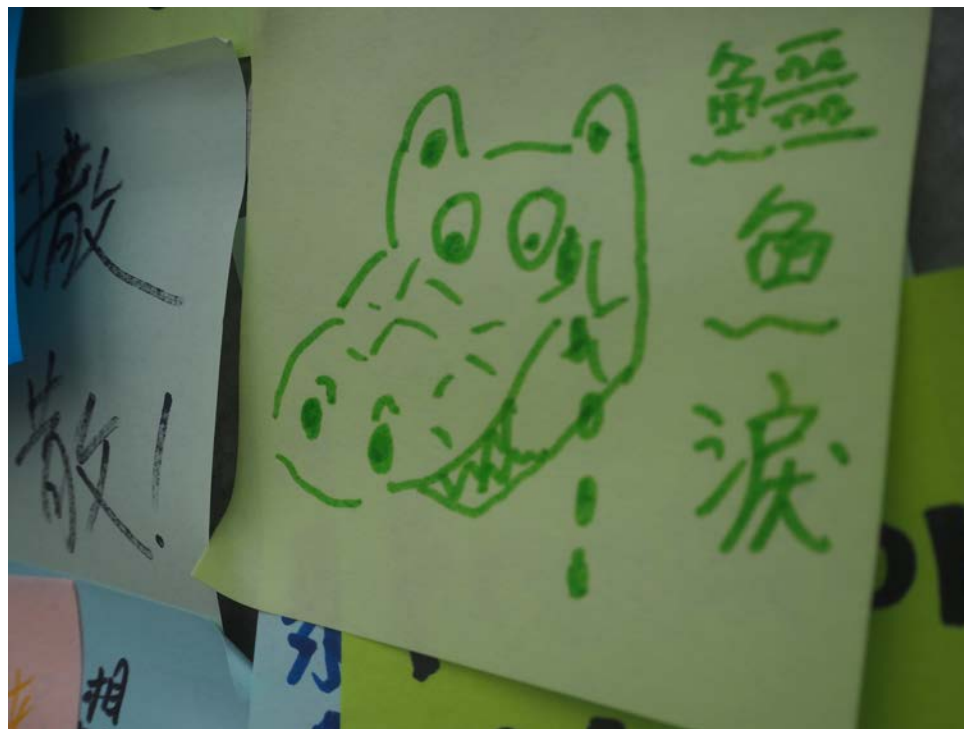


Figure 32: Carrie Lam’s crocodile tears.¹⁴²



Figure 33: Carrie Lam, crocodile attack.¹⁴³

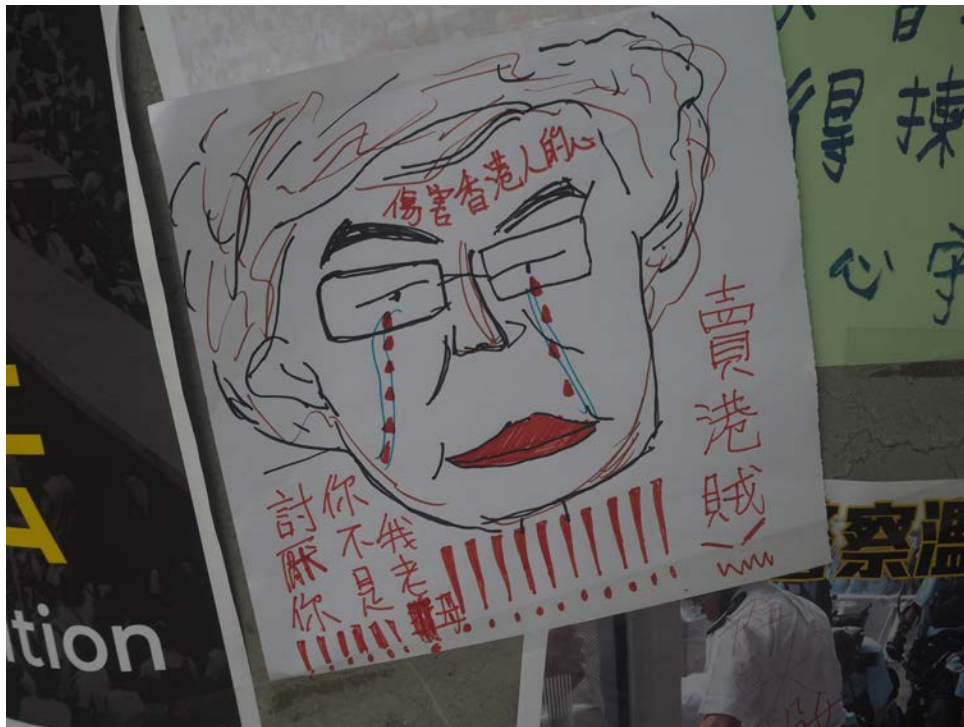


Figure 34: Carrie Lam crying blood.¹⁴⁴



Figure 35: Carrie Lam as a pig.¹⁴⁵



Figure 36: Carrie Lam, blind.¹⁴⁶



Figure 37: Carrie Lam, blind and silenced.¹⁴⁷



Figure 38: Carrie, “slut” and “Communist dog.”¹⁴⁸



Figure 29: Carrie Lam, “whore of Hong Kong.”¹⁴⁹



Figure 30: Carrie Lam, “#bitch.”¹⁵⁰

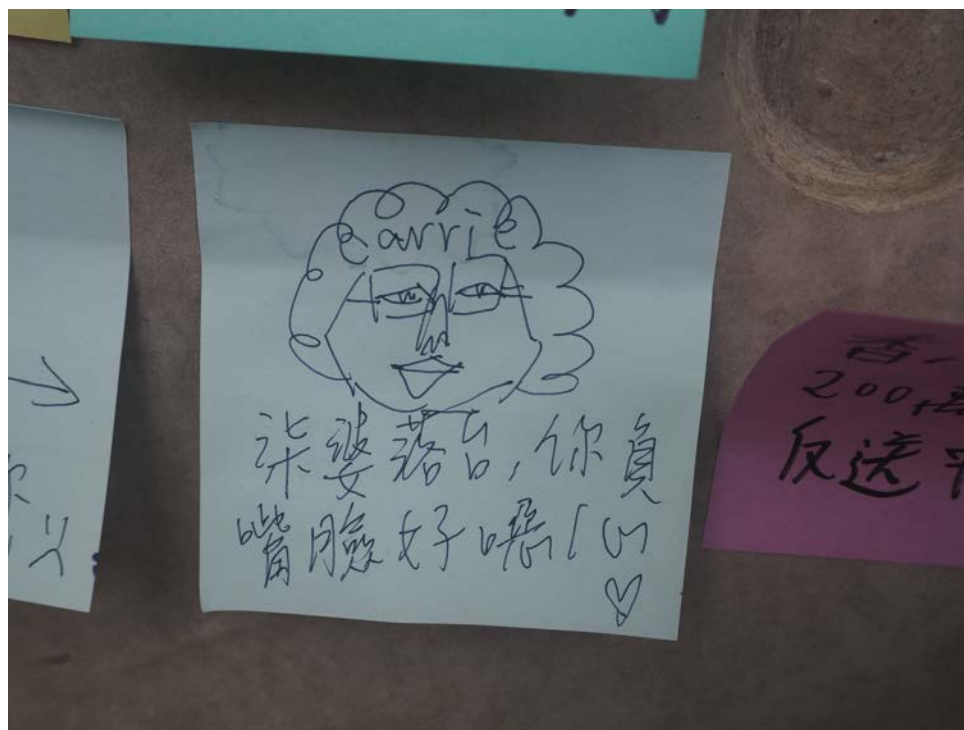


Figure 41: Carrie Lam, “your face is disgusting.”¹⁵¹

Notes

1. Interviews with volunteer participants, June 2019. All interviews were conducted by the author in confidentiality according to Colorado Multiple Institution Review Board Protocol 19-9116H, and the names of interviewees are withheld in protection from possible reprisal.

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CHAPTER 6

TOWARD A THEORY OF THE IDEOLOGY OF PROTEST STRATEGIES

The purpose of this study was to uncover the ideologies that characterized the protest strategies of Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Revolution and 2019 Hard Hat Revolution as well as the nature of the protest mechanisms that communicate those ideologies. The study was guided by the following specific research questions:

RQ1: What ideologies characterize the protest strategies of Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution and Hard Hat Revolution?

RQ2: What protest mechanisms communicate the ideologies of the protest strategies of Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution and Hard Hat Revolution?

In response to my first research question, I uncovered two distinct theoretical protest ideologies or genres that characterize the protest strategies of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions—*one world, one dream* (Umbrella Revolution) and *our world, our dream* (Hard Hat Revolution). In response to my second research question, I analyzed three major mechanisms used for protest in the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions—the home, public transportation infrastructure, and portrayals of political leaders—that undergird the two contrasting ideologies of protest strategies. My development of the two ideologies revealed that the two major differences in ideological approaches and their communication mechanisms derive from the audience as defined by the participants in each revolution. In the case of 2014, I argue, the Umbrella Revolution was outward looking and thus the targeted audience for the movement was potential external allies. In 2019, in contrast, the Hard Hat Revolution was more inward looking

and thus the target audience was the Hong Kong police force, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (GovHK), and the Communist Party of China (the Party).

Theoretical Findings

I begin by presenting theoretical findings related to my second research question about protest mechanisms because they undergird and provide grounding for the findings related to my first research question concerning protest ideologies. The three protest mechanisms are the home, public transportation infrastructure, and perceptions of political leaders.

Protest Mechanisms

My analysis of the foundations of the protests revealed that both revolutions used metaphors of the home as a protest mechanism, albeit in very different ways. In 2014, Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters built the Umbrella Revolution out of their familial homes by reproducing their lives, routines, and daily cultural habits in the streets of Hong Kong. For seventy-nine days, Umbrella Revolution protesters slept in tents on the streets of the city, completed their homework, cooked, cleaned, and duplicated family relationships. In addition to repurposing items from their immediate surroundings, Umbrella Revolution protesters imported items from the home, including umbrellas, cling wrap, bicycle helmets, and kitchen and gardening supplies. A second type of protest mechanism of the Umbrella Revolution saw protesters use seven elements of integrated marketing communications to help transform double-decker buses into artistic billboards that promoted the movement's call for a fully democratic Hong Kong. In a third protest mechanism used by Umbrella Revolution protesters, characters, narratives, images, and symbols from childhood and popular culture were deployed to denigrate and ridicule then-Hong Kong chief executive CY Leung in a way that was tantamount to making him an imposter in the city that he led.

In 2019, Hard Hat Revolution protesters conceptualized the home very differently from how Umbrella Revolution protesters had done earlier. Hard Hat Revolution protesters established a military, implemented emergency services, invented a language, symbolized a homeland, annexed territory, and eschewed leadership to personify, symbolize, and imagine a new homeland and thus a new future for the city. Instead of maintaining what was familiar to them, Hard Hat Revolution protesters set about creating a new homeland that clearly differentiated them from mainland China. A second type of protest mechanism of the Hard Hat Revolution saw participants use the city's subway system, airport, roads, bridges, and tunnels to communicate their desires to the Hong Kong and Beijing governments. This time, however, public transportation infrastructure was used in such a way that it constituted a theatrical production that I called *Hong Kong's Journey to Nowhere*. Protesters' use of an improvised script, stage sets, actors and audience, and five structural elements that constituted acts created a much more violent style of protest. The third type of protest mechanism of the Hard Hat Revolution involved the use of gendered scripts to denigrate chief executive Carrie Lam. Protesters used the scripts to expose Lam's perceived vulnerabilities, to blame her for the treatment she received, and to deny her personhood—acts that were tantamount to a metaphorical sexual assault.

After identifying the protest mechanisms of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, I transformed them into more abstract theoretical features that transcended the specific details of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions and thus could serve as communication mechanisms for participants in protests movements that are not in Hong Kong. For example, my analysis in chapter 5 uncovered how Umbrella Revolution protesters commandeered childhood stories to denigrate Hong Kong's then-leader CY Leung. This act of portraying a leader as a character from a well-known fairytale provided evidence of protesters' use of protest mechanisms

grounded in the familiar; the feature I gleaned from this act, then, was “familiar.” Similarly, Umbrella Revolution protesters’ use of gendered scripts to denigrate Hong Kong’s chief executive Carrie Lam—depicting her as injured and perhaps dead, for example—led me to formulate the mechanism of “confrontational.”

The theoretical features of the protest mechanisms I uncovered for each of Hong Kong’s revolutions are summarized here:

Table 1: Theoretical features of the protest mechanisms of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions

The Umbrella Revolution	The Hard Hat Revolution
Creates unity with target audience	Dissociates from target audience
Nonviolent	Violent
Nonconfrontational	Confrontational
Unconventional	Conventional
Planned	Improvised
Familiar	Inflict harms on target audience
Conforms to self-definition	Challenges self-definition

As the table above shows, the data for my analyses led me to conclude that the protest mechanisms that formed the ideologies of Umbrella Revolution protesters were largely nonadversarial and nonconfrontational. Rather than directly challenging the opposition, the protest mechanisms used were predominantly nonviolent and often unconventional and unique. Because a majority of the protest mechanisms also were grounded in familiar, everyday routines, these mechanisms worked to help forge attachment and create unity between Umbrella Revolution protesters and potential external allies who, as I point to below, were the primary target audience of the Umbrella Revolution. Umbrella Revolution participants used protest mechanisms that conformed to and maintained the historic expectations for a Hong Kong identity.

In contrast, the protest mechanisms that formed the ideologies of Hard Hat Revolution protesters were improvisational, confrontational, violent, and designed to inflict harm and damage; thus, they represented more conventional protest mechanisms. Instead of maintaining what was familiar to them, Hard Hat Revolution protesters set about creating a new homeland that clearly differentiated them from mainland China. Furthermore, protesters used the city's transportation and infrastructure systems and sexual metaphors to communicate their desires to the Hong Kong and Beijing governments and to create a much more violent style of protest. These protest mechanisms derive from Hard Hat Revolution protesters' desire to directly target, inflict harm on, and create divisions between themselves and the intended audience of the protest movement. The mechanisms served another—probably inadvertent—function as well in that Hard Hat Revolution participants used protest mechanisms that challenged and transcended the confines of what has historically been expected of them as Hong Kongers and Hong Kong protesters.

Protest Ideologies

In response to my first research question, after identifying the ideologies inherent in the protest strategies of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, I transformed these ideologies into more abstract theoretical ideological tenets that transcended the specific details of the two revolutions and thus could serve as protest ideologies for movements other than those in Hong Kong. For example, in my analysis in chapter 3, I presented three ways in which Umbrella Revolution protesters built a protest by taking their familiar world of the home onto the streets of their city. Protesters' acts such as sleeping, cooking, eating, and studying in the streets are unusual protest acts; thus, from these, I devised the ideological tenets of the use of “unconventional” and “nonthreatening” strategies that are designed to attract the attention of an

audience. The fact that everyday routines are relatable to many other people led me to develop another ideological tenet—that protesters “create unity” and identification with potential allies. As a second example, in chapter 4, I presented three ways by which Hard Hat Revolution protesters used public transportation infrastructure through which to communicate their dissatisfaction toward the Hong Kong and Chinese governments and the Hong Kong police. Protesters’ targeting of government-owned buildings and infrastructure such as subway stations and Hong Kong’s airport led me to formulate the ideological tenet that protesters engage in action that is designed to “inflict harm” on the targeted audience and its possessions.

Umbrella Revolution protesters’ ideological tenets coalesced into an ideology that might be labeled *one world, one dream*. In this ideology, composed of four tenets, protesters try to connect with an audience that is outside of the immediate environment of the protest. To make these connections, protesters highlight commonalities that show how similar they are to their target audience in order to persuade the audience to pay attention to and support the protest cause. Hard Hat Revolution protesters’ ideological tenets coalesced into an ideology that might be labeled *our world, our dream*. This ideology also functions to reach and communicate with an audience. This time, however, the audience is internal and within the immediate environment of the protest. Instead of highlighting commonalities between protest participants and the target audience, in this ideology, protesters seek to disconnect themselves from the audience by highlighting distinct traits that differentiate them from the audience. I move now to present the tenets of the two ideologies that I uncovered that are undergirded by the communication mechanisms identified earlier and are organized around the target audience. They are summarized here:

Table 2: Ideological tenets of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions

The Umbrella Revolution: <i>One World, One Dream</i>	The Hard Hat Revolution: <i>Our World, Our Dream</i>
Audience (external): Potential allies outside Hong Kong	Audience (internal): GovHK, the Party, Hong Kong police force
Tenet 1: The audience for the protest is potential external allies outside of the site of resistance.	Tenet 1: The audience for the protest is potential internal allies within the site of resistance.
Tenet 2: Protesters create identification with external allies.	Tenet 2: The actions of the protesters are designed to inflict harm on the targeted audience.
Tenet 3: Protesters employ strategies designed to attract the attention of external allies.	Tenet 3: Protesters withdraw from the regime created and maintained by the target audience and create a new reality.
Tenet 4: Protesters employ strategies designed to make the protest palatable to external allies.	Tenet 4: Protesters scapegoat the targeted audience as rationale for protesters' actions.
	Tenet 5: Protesters create an inclusive environment in order to increase animosity toward the targeted audience.

The Umbrella Revolution: One World, One Dream

The ideological tenets of the Umbrella Revolution reveal that it was an outward-facing protest movement that sought to attract the attention of an external audience. Umbrella Revolution protesters communicated an ideology through their protest mechanisms that showcased and prioritized similarities and kinship over differences that may exist with the target audience. Umbrella Revolution protesters were thus communicating to their audience that Hong Kong and the rest of the world were one and the same. In short, Hong Kong's pro-democracy advocates were telling the world: Our fight is your fight and, despite geographical differences, we are united through our shared references and similar struggles.

I developed four ideological tenets to capture the ideology that characterized the protest strategies of the Umbrella Revolution. Because protesters sought to target an external audience that was not in Hong Kong, Umbrella Revolution protesters had to create mutual identification

with the audience. To do this, participants in the Umbrella Revolution employed both unconventional and nonthreatening protest strategies. In the sections that follow, after outlining the strategies that comprise each of the four tenets of the ideology of *one world, one dream*, I evaluate each tenet by assessing its benefits and limitations in an effort to account for the outcomes of the Umbrella Revolution.

The audience for the protest is potential external allies outside of the site of resistance. Protest strategies are often aimed at audiences who are in the immediate locale of the protest, such as local governments, the police, and the local press. In the ideology I have identified, the intended audience during the Umbrella Revolution is different. It is composed of potential allies outside of the site of resistance. The strategies that characterize the ideology are used to target and seek support from external audiences for the protest cause and to persuade the audience to empathize with protesters' plight and perhaps to intervene in the protest. In the case of the Umbrella Revolution, Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters were communicating with the target audience—specifically Western audiences—through media coverage, social media posts, and word of mouth in an attempt to gain external support and ensure that their messages about the desire for genuine universal suffrage reverberated around the globe. In short, Umbrella Revolution protesters were enacting persuasion through identification.

The first tenet of the ideology of *one world, one dream* carried both benefits and disadvantages for the Umbrella Revolution protesters. A benefit of targeting external allies was obviously advantageous to the protest movement because a large audience ensured that the exigency of the protest and the actions of the protesters were heard far beyond the site of resistance—consequently, more people knew about Hong Kongers' plight for democracy. A disadvantage of this tenet of the ideology, however, was that the target audience—predominately

global citizens—did not have the power to take on China; thus, the audience did not have the ability to help to create change for Hong Kong. Consequently, Umbrella Revolution protesters had attention-grabbing protest strategies but lacked specific instructions on how, exactly, the external audience could assist them.

Protesters create identification with external allies. A second tenet in the ideology of protest I identified from the Umbrella Revolution states that protesters create identification with potential external allies by utilizing images that are recognized outside of the context in which the protest is taking place. In this ideology, protesters create connection and identification with an audience by enacting recognizable, everyday habits, routines, and rituals. In other ways of connecting and identifying with an audience, protesters use symbols that directly link to particular sections of an audience and utilize widely relatable images to help achieve mass attention by highlighting commonalities and shared interests, thus forging connection through familiarity.

This tenet of the ideology can be seen in various ways in the protest strategies of the Umbrella Revolution. Protesters publicly engaged in familiar, everyday routines such as cooking, cleaning, studying, and sleeping. While continuing with these everyday routines, Umbrella Revolution protesters used everyday items such as sticky notes, umbrellas, and plastic cling wrap as protest tools. Through this approach, Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters displayed themselves as relatable people who were doing many of the same things and repurposing and using many of the everyday items that those watching around the world were doing and using.

Umbrella Revolution protesters also harnessed widely recognizable characters, such as Little Red Riding Hood, Pinocchio, the Pied Piper of Hamelin, and Martin Luther King Jr. that would be known to a global—particularly Western—audience. By harnessing these widely

recognized and predominantly Western symbols, Umbrella Revolution protesters were communicating their similarities with their audience and telling the audience that Hong Kongers are just like those around the world who are watching events unfold in Hong Kong. As a result, they hoped to persuade the external audience to take notice of and support the Umbrella Revolution. Umbrella Revolution protesters also targeted a very specific audience in their use of double-decker buses—a distinctly British symbol—to appeal to those watching the protests in Great Britain. This strategy sought to remind the audience of Hong Kong’s British history that, for some of Hong Kong’s pro-democracy supporters, was preferable to the constantly increasing rule of the Party.

Creating identification with potential external allies was beneficial for Umbrella Revolution protesters because it worked to create empathy with allies by highlighting connections and similarities. By highlighting likenesses, watching allies could see that something bad was happening to people to whom they were similar and, in the case of Great Britain, those who shared a historical relationship with Hong Kong. In short, creating identification and bonds with an external audience outside of the site of resistance helped to cross geographical divides and aided in making a protest in the distant land of Hong Kong relevant to potential allies. In general, people are inclined to pay less attention to events taking place far away from their own homes, so by harnessing strategies that highlighted similarities and created identification, Umbrella Revolution protesters made their protest movement seem salient and closer geographically to their external allies.¹ As a result, those allies were more likely to care about what was happening in Hong Kong and perhaps to take action to intervene in the events there.

Protesters employ strategies designed to attract the attention of external allies. When something seems to be unusual or out of the ordinary, it can shock or at least surprise an

audience. In turn, this can lead to curiosity or intrigue that can lead to greater attention on the part of an audience. Thus, in the second tenet of the ideology that characterized the Umbrella Revolution, in order to attract potential supporters to the movement, protesters use atypical, creative, and innovative strategies that do not align with how people typically imagine protest.

In the case of the Umbrella Revolution, Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters transported their home lives and routines onto the street of the city. Everyday items such as umbrellas and bicycles helmets were used as defensive shields against the police's use of tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets. In another example of the use of everyday items, sticky notes that are disposable and often used to jot down quick reminders or messages were used to communicate the democratic desires of Umbrella Revolution protesters. Furthermore, these sticky notes were used to cover double-decker buses, transforming them into colorful democratic billboards. Through the medium of a cuddly toy, Hong Kong's city's chief executive CY Leung was portrayed as the lying wolf from the story of Little Red Riding Hood. As a result of their peculiarity as protest strategies, they were reported around the world by media outlets and social media users. Although some of these strategies have since been replicated by participants in other movements around the globe, in 2014, many of these strategies were quite unusual.

This tenet of the ideology saw Umbrella Revolution protesters attempt to attract external allies through relatable practices and symbols that were quirky and attention-grabbing. The strategies of this ideological tenet functioned to present the Umbrella Revolution as a creative, quirky, and civil protest that was worthy of attention in part because it was different from protests that had been witnessed in recent times. An orderly protest that involved living on the streets, setting up on-street libraries and study corners, harnessing characters from fairytales, and making works of art out of double-decker buses was intriguing and attention-grabbing.

Moreover, engaging in multiple and ever-changing tactics also ensured that the image of the Umbrella Revolution did not go stale and suffer from protest fatigue; thus, it secured continuous media coverage and social media attention as the audience watched to see what creative strategies the protesters would employ next.

The use of unconventional protest strategies, however, also carried limitations. It had the potential to dilute the Umbrella Revolution's message for genuine universal suffrage. Overly artistic protest strategies that prioritized style over substance may have meant that Hong Kongers' calls for genuine universal suffrage were lost behind the artwork and playful style of the protest.

The creative and artistic nature of the Umbrella Revolution may have constituted a second disadvantage in that the approach had the potential to make targeted allies reluctant to participate or intervene if they did not feel they could be as innovative as the protesters or add to the creativity being demonstrated. For example, when I was in Hong Kong, I went to the Lennon Wall that lined the side of the GovHK headquarters. When I got there, I quickly wrote a message on a sticky note that was handed to me. However, as I went to stick it on the wall among the thousands of messages that were already there, I got nervous. Was my message of solidarity of sufficient quality to sit alongside the heartfelt messages and creative pieces of art that adorned the wall? In the end, I stood there for fifteen minutes and ended up writing eight messages on different sticky notes before I was content with one that I would stick to the wall. Even then, however, my nervousness did not dissipate. I began to look around to see if anybody was watching me. I quickly stuck my message to the wall and left. Thus, although unintentional, perhaps creative Umbrella Revolution protesters set the bar too high with regards to the quality of their protest art. I was just one person trying to match the creativity of the protesters. Nations

being asked to serve as allies and intervene to help the protesters may very well have felt the same pressure. Furthermore, typical strategies used by nations in such cases such as sanctions and tariffs many have seemed irrelevant or moot in the face of protesters' unusual strategies.

Protesters employ strategies designed to make the protest palatable to external allies. Protesters who embrace the ideology of *one world, one dream* adhere to nonthreatening and often nonviolent protest strategies. They engage in strategies that may cause some disruption, but although they cause inconvenience to some, they are ephemeral, peaceful, and do not cause major damage to the site of resistance. The nonviolent and nonthreatening nature of a protest that prioritizes safety and respect over violence is likely to appeal to a watching audience and thus makes the strategies difficult to criticize or condemn. After all, peaceful and nonviolent acts are difficult to admonish.

In the case of the Umbrella Revolution, protest sites and gatherings were inclusive, family-friendly affairs where violence was discouraged. In fact, Umbrella Revolution protesters frowned upon and excluded Hong Kongers who wanted to use violent strategies in the protest. Protest signs and artwork, such as those that depicted characters from childhood fairy stories and written messages that were attached to double-decker buses, were predominantly polite and nonthreatening. Umbrella Revolution protesters did disrupt traffic and pedestrian movement in some of Hong Kong's busiest districts for almost three months. Although these protest strategies may have inconvenienced some nonprotesting Hong Kongers and tourists, the protest sites were fairly easy to circumvent. In addition, although protesters did live on the streets for the duration of the protest, they cleaned up after themselves, composted their food waste, recycled their trash, and were careful not to damage their surroundings.

By adhering predominantly to strategies that did not threaten people, buildings, or infrastructure, protesters could not really be criticized. After all, they were simply continuing with their everyday lives while in the streets of Hong Kong. Thus, with the exception of the Umbrella Revolution's fiercest detractors who would have condemned the protest no matter what ideological tenets or tactics were employed by the protesters, the movement largely avoided criticism from the target audience and received plaudits from around the world because of the nonthreatening and creative strategies that were used.

The fourth tenet of the ideology of *one world, one dream* saw Umbrella Revolution protesters adhering to nonthreatening strategies in order to further appeal to and persuade external allies to support Hong Kong's pro-democracy cause. Of course, employing nonthreatening and nonviolent protest strategies had benefits. The strategy ensured that the Umbrella Revolution was seen by the audience as a respectful and thoughtful protest that was not founded on chaos and violence and thus was more likely to appeal to potential allies.

Another advantage of the use of nonthreatening strategies was that Umbrella Revolution protesters were not seen to be compounding their problems as they protested. When protesters act against their own self-interest, as is often the case when protesters use violence, outsiders tend to be reluctant to support them. For example, in the autumn of 2019, in response to a fare increase of thirty pesos—equivalent to four US cents—an estimated one-million Chileans took to the streets of Santiago and destroyed areas of the city, including large parts of the city's subway system.² This strategy raised an important question: why would individuals damage and destroy something that is so vital to them? For many disadvantaged citizens, public transportation is a lifeline that aids them in living their daily lives; thus, those destroying the subway would be the ones most affected by its closure for repairs.³ In addition, in order to find the funds for the

extensive repairs, those in charge of the government transportation system were likely to increase fares—the very exigency that sparked the initial protest. This approach of protesters acting against their own self-interest and compounding the very problem against which they are protesting is likely to be unpalatable to an audience and can create “a counterproductive distraction from real efforts at political action.”⁴

Umbrella Revolution protesters’ commitment to nonviolent and nonthreatening strategies did carry some disadvantages. Potential allies may have been unconvinced by the participants’ insistence on essentially conforming to China’s desire for obedient, model citizens. Yes, Hong Kong’s pro-democracy supporters were protesting, but they were doing so in respectful and amenable ways—ways that aligned with the values and practices of China. Such conformity may have struck some potential external allies as collusion and complicity by the protesters with China and, as a result, may have discouraged them from intervening into the Hong Kong situation.

A second disadvantage of protesters’ commitment to nonviolent and nonthreatening strategies was that, for some observers, the approach did not match the power and strength of the entities that they were protesting: GovHK and, ultimately, the Communist Party of China. In short, for some observers, the nonthreatening and nonviolent strategies of Umbrella Revolution protesters might not have been the right approach toward the opponent being faced. Of course, protest movements throughout history have achieved success through nonviolent means. However, in the case of facing the Party, Umbrella Revolution protesters’ strategies did not have the necessary level of force to impact the Party and to persuade it to perhaps consider relenting to the demands of protesting Hong Kongers.

The nature of the protest ideology of *one world, one dream* had both positive and negative consequences that impacted the results of the Umbrella Revolution. On a positive note, the Umbrella Revolution received worldwide attention and plaudits for the protesters' efforts. These positive results, however, were minor and, ultimately, after seventy-nine days, the Umbrella Revolution concluded without GovHK or the Party having to give a single concession to the protesters. Thus, ultimately, a negative consequence of the ideology of the Umbrella Revolution's protest strategies that my analysis uncovered is that it did not aid the movement in achieving its intended objective. Umbrella Revolution protesters transported their home lives and everyday routines onto the streets of Hong Kong; used elements of integrated marketing communication theory to transform double-decker buses from mobile machine into static democratic billboards; and used images from childhood stories and popular culture to denigrate Hong Kong's then-chief executive, CY Leung, in such a way that made him an imposter in the city of which he was in charge. Each of these strategies was attention grabbing and designed to help the Umbrella Revolution's message reach an audience that extended beyond Hong Kong. Ultimately, however, the protest ideology of the Umbrella Revolution did not lead to genuine universal suffrage for Hong Kong.

The Hard Hat Revolution: Our World, Our Dream

The ideological tenets of the Hard Hat Revolution reveal that it was an inward-facing protest movement that sought to attract the attention of an internal audience. Hard Hat Revolution protesters communicated an ideology through their protest mechanisms that showcased and prioritized difference over similarity with the target audience. They thus were communicating to their audience that they were diametrically opposed to the system that the

audience represented and upheld. In short, Hong Kong's pro-democracy advocates were telling the audience: our fight is against you, and we no longer want to be controlled by you.

Five ideological tenets capture the ideology that characterized the protest strategies of the Hard Hat Revolution. Targeting an internal audience, Hard Hat Revolution protesters sought to destroy the system that the audience had created and continued to maintain. To achieve this, Hard Hat Revolution protesters employed confrontational and often violent protest strategies. In the sections that follow, after outlining the strategies that comprise each of the five tenets of the ideology of *our world, our dream* ideology, I will assess the benefits and limitations of each tenet to account for the outcomes of the Hard Hat Revolution.

The audience for the protest is potential internal allies within the site of resistance.

In the ideology I have formulated for the Hard Hat Revolution, the intended audience is an internal audience. The audience is composed of those within the site of resistance who are perceived as responsible for the conditions that created the need for protest. Strategies such as directing violence toward the audience, destroying infrastructure owned by the audience, and using gendered and sexualized scripts to denigrate audience members are used to target and harm the internal audiences for the protest and attempt to persuade them to relent to protesters' demands. In the case of the Hard Hat Revolution, Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters were communicating with the target audience—the Hong Kong police force, GovHK, and the Party—in an attempt to communicate their anger and their desire to end mainlandization and overhaul Hong Kong's political system. This use of violence as persuasion greatly contrasts with Umbrella Revolution protesters' enactment of persuasion through identification.

The first tenet of the ideology of *our world, our dream* carried both benefits and disadvantages for Hard Hat Revolution protesters. One advantage for protesters is that directly

targeting an audience that had the power to arrest them could garner more support for the cause and also be perceived as both a bold and courageous strategy that inspires other people to participate. Ultimately, however, this potential benefit of this tenet of the ideology of Hard Hat Revolution protests was also a limitation. The targeted audience had the means and tools to arrest and imprison Hard Hat Revolution protesters. Hard Hat Revolution protesters were targeting an audience who would never fully listen or be responsive to their desires or claims. Ultimately, the Party would not relent to the demands of protesters.

The actions of the protesters are designed to inflict harm on the targeted audience.

In the ideology of *our world, our dream*, protesters create division between themselves and the targeted audience. In this ideology, protesters communicate their differences by enacting strategies that are designed to harm the target audience. These strategies include attacking objects that are owned by or are important to the audience, such as damaging buildings, infrastructure, or other objects; using fluid tactics that seek to cause chaos and disruption, such as utilizing sporadic and unpredictable gatherings, thus ensuring the audience is permanently discombobulated and must constantly second guess the protesters' next moves; and denigrating audience members with the use of gendered and sexualized scripts that seek to remove power and influence from them.

In the case of the Hard Hat Revolution, protesters targeted and destroyed a number of government-owned properties and pieces of infrastructure, including the government headquarters, Hong Kong's subway system; the airport; and roads, tunnels, and bridges. These tactics sought to inflict financial damage on GovHK and the Party. Moreover, although not physical, Hard Hat Revolution, protesters used protest slogans and artwork to metaphorically

sexually assault the leader of Hong Kong. This strategy sought to disempower Carrie Lam and portray her as being unfit and unable to carry out her duties as Hong Kong's leader.

Enacting violence that directly affects the intended audience carried both benefits and disadvantages for Hard Hat Revolution protesters. As a benefit, the strategy of halting what are among the most efficient transportation networks in the world—namely the Mass Transit Railway system (MTR) and Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA)—led to a loss of face and damaged the reputation of GovHK and the Party, both of which pride themselves on running Hong Kong like a punctual and well-oiled machine. In addition, damaging government-owned objects and infrastructure caused financial harm to GovHK and, by default, the Party, through a lengthy period of renovation and rebuilding.

This strategy, however, also had its limitations. First, no matter what financial harm might be inflicted, it would not be enough to force GovHK and the Party to acquiesce to the demands of Hard Hat Revolution protesters. In fact, the strategy more than likely led to GovHK and the Party further digging in their heels and refusing to relent to protesters. Another disadvantage linked to this strategy reinforces the Chileans' decision to damage their subway system that I highlighted earlier. Hard Hat Revolution protesters' decision to enact violence against objects and infrastructure that were directly linked to GovHK also functioned to harm protesters the most. As a result of damage inflicted by protesters, large sections of Hong Kong's MTR were out of service for long periods of time, thus hindering the daily movement of Hong Kongers, including the protesters. Moreover, the closing of HKIA and a lack of arrivals into Hong Kong led to a huge financial loss for the city, especially for small, locally run business owners—who were among the people who were protesting. Consequently, damaging Hong

Kong's MTR, airport, roads, bridges, and tunnels saw Umbrella Revolution protesters acting against their own self-interest.

Protesters withdraw from the regime created and maintained by the target audience and create a new reality. In order to dissociate themselves from an audience, protesters generate signs and symbols that replace those bestowed upon protesters by the audience and that are contrary to those with whom the audience identifies. If this audience is comprised of government entities, nations, or other official institutions, protesters create alternative means of identification, such as new flags, anthems, languages, and essential services, that dissociate themselves from the existing regime and seek to create a new reality.

In the case of the Hard Hat Revolution, protesters created their own flag that did not reference any colors or symbols that related to the Chinese flag or the official Hong Kong flag; they wrote and recorded a "national anthem" to replace "March of the Volunteers," the anthem of mainland China; and they created their own nonverbal language to use during the protests. These strategies created a new reality in which Hong Kong was free of GovHK or Party rule and communicated Hong Kongers' desires to no longer be a part of China or, in fact, Hong Kong in its current form. In addition to creating new symbols of identification, Hard Hat Revolution protesters created their own military, fire, and emergency medical services, further withdrawing from the regime that the target audience had created and maintained. This strategy further communicated the desire of Hard Hat Revolution protesters to no longer be part of the regime created by the Party and maintained by GovHK.

A distinct advantage of implementing strategies to withdraw from the regime created and maintained by the target audience was that pro-democracy-supporting Hong Kongers were no longer confined to the system that was being maintained by GovHK and the Party. Protesters

thus had the potential to find creative and innovative ways to protest as well as to communicate that they no longer were dependent on China. In addition, by disengaging from the symbols and the systems of the regime created by GovHK and the Party, protesters were causing their audience to lose face. This loss of face, however, also had clear limitations for the protesters. Causing somebody to lose face is a sign of deep disrespect in Asian cultures and especially in Chinese culture. To cause somebody to lose face is to shame them. Thus, if the Party deems itself to be shamed, it is likely to act strongly against those it has perceived led to that loss of face.

Protesters scapegoat the targeted audience as rationale for protesters' actions. In this tenet of the ideology of *our world, our dream*, protesters remove blame from themselves for the violence they are enacting and instead direct it toward the targeted audience. Using false narratives or unsubstituted claims, protesters justify violent strategies enacted against the target audience and absolve themselves of guilt for damage by blaming the audience for the situation that is taking place.

In the case of the Hard Hat Revolution, protesters created and spread a number of narratives that were, at best, unsubstantiated and, at worse, completely untrue.⁵ In one example, Hard Hat Revolution protesters justified their violent actions at multiple MTR stations by accusing the Hong Kong police force of murdering a number of protesters who were inside Prince Edward MTR station. In addition to scapegoating the police, protesters turned on GovHK, accusing it of colluding with the police to cover up the supposed deaths. As far as Hard Hat Revolution protesters were concerned, their violence could be justified as acts of retaliation for murder by the police. As a second example, Hard Hat Revolution protesters defended their metaphorical sexual assault of the city's chief executive, Carrie Lam, by blaming Lam for the sexualized abuse that was directed toward her and for the violent actions of protesters. As

perpetrators would act toward a victim of an actual sexual assault, Hard Hat Revolution protesters used the strategy of victim blaming in an attempt to remove or redirect responsibility and guilt for their actions.

An advantage of the strategies employed in the ideological tenet of scapegoating was that it worked to absolve Hard Hat Revolution protesters of guilt. By scapegoating GovHK and its leaders, the Party, and the Hong Kong police, Hard Hat Revolution protesters were redirecting blame away from themselves and toward the audience, in essence, telling the audience that violent strategies were required and justified due to its own actions and behaviors. In addition, using fake or unsubstantiated narratives to scapegoat the police and government worked to diminish their authority, credibility, and *ethos*, and, consequently, led to a loss of face.

Scapegoating, however, also had the potential to serve as a limitation of this ideological tenet. If evidence were uncovered that Hard Hat Revolution protesters had been lying, this would have played into the audience's hands and, in turn, would have diminished the credibility and *ethos* of the protesters who would be perceived as just as untruthful, cunning, and fraudulent as the protesters portrayed GovHK, the Party, and the police. Furthermore, this revelation would have likely seen the police, GovHK, and the Party further dig in their heels and respond in a strong—and perhaps violent—way to protesters. With the authority of the target audience to arrest and imprison protesters, this was not a desirable path for protesters to follow.

Protesters create an inclusive environment in order to increase animosity toward the targeted audience. In order to increase animosity toward a targeted audience, protesters employ tactics that help to attract and include new participants. By allowing for and accepting different ideological viewpoints and perspectives with regards to protest strategies, protesters grow their base and thus turn more people against the target audience. A key method of

achieving a larger and more diverse base of protest participants is by eschewing leadership and ensuring that one person is not perceived to be leading the movement.

In 2014, Umbrella Revolution protesters were at pains to ensure that the protest movements stayed peaceful. In 2019, however, this position changed, and protesters began to openly accept diverse perspectives with regards to engaging in violent protest strategies. Improvised strategies and tactics meant that protesters utilized all corners of Hong Kong—referred to by protesters as the *be water* philosophy—and more people could take part. Moreover, the roles that protesters played were fluid and allowed individuals with different ideological perspectives and skill sets to participate in different ways. Thus, in addition to choosing whether to adhere to violent or nonviolent strategies, Hard Hat Revolution participants could be, for example, medical assistants. By not focusing on an individual leader or set of leaders, as had been the case in the Umbrella Revolution, Hard Hat Revolution protesters were allowed to participate as they chose in ways that were comfortable for them.

The strategy of creating an inclusive environment carried with it a number of advantages. One is that it allowed for greater numbers of people to participate, thus making clear to the audience just how many people were against them and felt animosity toward them. In addition, having more participants, especially participants who were willing to engage in violence, made the job of the audience more difficult. For the Hong Kong police force, more protesters meant that officers had more people to track and attempt to control and arrest. For GovHK and the Party, a dramatic increase in participants meant that the narrative of the Hard Hat Revolution was more difficult for the government to control as the situation became more chaotic. As the police, GovHK, and the Party responded with increasing levels of violence, a larger number of participants also meant that more people were exposed to and aware of the actions of the

audience. This tenet of the ideology of *our world, our dream*, however, also limited Hard Hat Revolution protesters. With a larger number of participants came a wide range of perspectives and ideological approaches to protest.

The nature of the protest ideology of *our world, our dream* had both positive and negative consequences that affected the results of the Hard Hat Revolution. On a positive note, Hard Hat Revolution did persuade GovHK to withdraw the planned extradition bill that had sparked the outbreak of the Hard Hat Revolution. This was celebrated by many Hong Kongers as a major victory and a huge step forward for the city's future.

In response to the victory, however, Hard Hat Revolution protesters' demands increased. They had achieved one success, and they wanted more. The demand to withdraw the extradition bill quickly morphed into the call for "five demands, not one." In addition to the full withdrawal of the extradition bill, Hard Hat Revolution protesters demanded the commission of an independent inquiry into alleged police brutality, especially on the night of August 31, 2019, when violence broke out between police and protesters at Prince Edward MTR station; the retraction of the classification of protesters as "rioters"; amnesty for arrested protesters; and universal suffrage for Hong Kong.⁶ After relenting once, however, GovHK would not do so again. Instead of accepting the withdrawal of the extradition bill as a victory and bringing the Hard Hat Revolution to a conclusion that would have enabled protesters to regroup and plan their next move, Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters continued to protest.

While the Umbrella Revolution woke a generation from its political slumber, the Hard Hat Revolution "criminalized an entire generation" to the point that Hong Kong had become an "orgy of violence."⁷ The violent and unpredictable tactics of Hard Hat Revolution protesters provided the Party with the ammunition it needed and, as GovHK failed to quell the protest, the

Party labeled as *terrorists* those who threatened the safety of the Chinese nation.⁸ Whatever victory had been achieved through the withdrawal of the extradition bill was dashed when, on June 30, 2019, the Party made an announcement that shocked the world. The Party bypassed GovHK and, as I will return to in my epilogue, essentially took full control of Hong Kong. Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters had been fighting for their future but, ultimately, their fight cost them that future.

Implications of Findings

This study makes contributions to new understandings in four major areas: (1) methods for studying protest movements; (2) ideology; (3) protest movements; and (4) Hong Kong. In the sections that follow, I outline previous understandings in these areas and explicate how my study transforms, expands, or challenges existing approaches to scholarship in them.

Methods for Studying Protests

In an ideal scenario, researchers would study a protest movement following a number of methodological guidelines. For example, a researcher would “be there,” witnessing events firsthand and gathering a variety of primary data. A researcher would be able to wait to analyze a protest movement until after the movement has concluded. A researcher would be able to speak the first language of the interviewees, and all interviews would be carried out using the same structure and format so that the data generated would be clearly comparable. In addition, a researcher would have the opportunity to interview a variety of interlocutors, including opponents of the protest movement, thus achieving a wide range of voices and perspectives. Images and other online data would be stable and thus would be accessible over a sustained period of time; they would not, for example, disappear from the internet. Having the opportunity

to engage in research in line with these methodological tenets would have allowed me to make different arguments than the arguments I have been able to make in this study.

A number of events that were outside of my control led to a number of unanticipated constraints that forced me to make methodical choices other than those that would have been ideal. These events included the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the introduction of Hong Kong's national security law, and the fact that the Hard Hat Revolution had no official or clear end date. I suggest, though, that despite these constraints, my study still yielded meaningful results.

Because I was not present in Hong Kong during any stage of the city's Umbrella Revolution in 2014, my analysis of that protest is entirely based on secondary and tertiary data. I was present in Hong Kong during the early stages of the Hard Hat Revolution; however, as I noted in chapter 1, I left Hong Kong hours before the first major act of violence occurred on July 1, 2019, and I was not in Hong Kong to witness the violence that unfolded during the second half of 2019. Although I analyze photographs in chapter 5 that I took in Hong Kong in the summer of 2019, in chapters 3 and 4, my analysis of the Hard Hat Revolution is also based on secondary and tertiary data.

Communication scholars Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Giorgia Aiello all have drawn attention to the fundamental methodological consideration of "being there" or "being through there" when studying an object.⁹ Although my lack of firsthand experience in the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions is a methodological limitation of my study, my time living in Hong Kong provided me with deep knowledge of the city on which I could draw in my analysis. In addition, not being in Hong Kong for the duration of the Hard Hat Revolution may have been advantageous to my study. Because of the decentralized and ad hoc nature of the

protest that engulfed all corners of the city, even being there in Hong Kong would not have enabled me to gather data and analyze all of the protesters' movements and strategies. Quite simply, I could not be everywhere at the same time. Not being in Hong Kong enabled me to view and consider a wide array of events that were taking place during the Hard Hat Revolution. For Blair, "being there" makes an object "real," but it is not better or worse than not being there, it is simply different and, moreover, a vital consideration for a researcher.¹⁰

One methodological adjustment I had to make involved the forced reduced sample size of what I planned to be my primary data set—interviews with Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters. In the summer of 2019, I was present in Hong Kong during the initial stages of the Hard Hat Revolution, and I interviewed a number of protesters at various locations across the city. After analyzing these initial data, my plan was to return to Hong Kong in the summer of 2020 to gather additional interview data. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, meant that I was unable to return to Hong Kong. I was still able to interview more Hong Kong protesters in the late summer and early fall of 2020, however, using technology. To navigate the obstacle that COVID-19 presented, my plan was to carry out these interviews using video-call software. However, as a result of the enactment of the national security law and the threat of potential arrest and imprisonment that the law posed, Hong Kongers who had agreed to speak to me stopped contacting me. Quite simply, they were afraid to speak about their roles in the protest.

Though various contacts in Hong Kong, I was able to find some Hong Kongers who were willing to speak with me. These new interviewees, however, only agreed to communicate with me through the encrypted messaging app Telegram and insisted that I delete all conversations as well as their contact details from my cell phone immediately after transcription. In fact, a number

of interviewees told me that they would delete the Telegram application an hour after our interview was completed. As a result, I had to transcribe interviews quickly and, furthermore, I was unable to contact interviewees after our initial discussions and ask any follow-up questions that arose during the transcription process. Finally, as a result of communicating via text messages, I was not able to build the same rapport with my interviewees over Telegram as I was with the Hong Kongers with whom I spoke face to face in the summer of 2019. Although my initial interview pool significantly shrank and I was forced to change from in-person to online/virtual interviews, this enforced move, in fact, pushed me to go into more detail with my interviewees and thus allowed me to achieve depth over breadth with regards to my interview data. For example, an in-person interview in Hong Kong usually lasted for around ten minutes, but an online/virtual interview often lasted between ninety minutes and two hours, thus producing significantly more data.

Because my sample size was so small—I was able to conduct only twelve of the fifty interviews that I intended to carry out—I had to increasingly rely on snowball sampling by asking interviewees if they knew of any friends or colleagues who would be willing to speak with me. My reliance on snowball sampling meant that I was speaking to acquaintances who, in most cases, held the same perspectives and ideologies as those who had referred them to me. My focus throughout this dissertation has been on Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters and the ideologies that characterize their approaches to protest. My study did not include analysis of the strategies of Hong Kong's pro-Beijing supporters in response to the protests. Although this group may comprise a relatively small number of people in relation to Hong Kong's population, it is important to note that the political leanings of Hong Kongers are not monolithic. Thus, studies such as mine would benefit from analyzing and understanding the ideologies and views of those

who feel a sense of loyalty to Beijing and are not supportive of an independent Hong Kong. Their responses, in fact, may have served as an exigency for the pro-democracy protests and would have provided important information about the trajectory of the protest ideologies. Nonetheless, my study offers important first steps in understanding the ideologies of some of Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters, even as I recognize that addressing the other side of the debate would provide additional insights.

The amount of visual data that I analyzed also continued to shrink as a result of unpredictable media sources. For example, images of CY Leung that I had begun to analyze in chapter 5 became unavailable online. In addition to entire pro-democracy blogs disappearing from the internet, stories on once-trusted Hong Kong news sites, such as the *South China Post*, were edited. Chinese state media outlets such as the *China Post* and the *People's Daily* continued to be unreliable. In relation to my study, however, these missing sources represented only minor data and were not consequential to my analysis of the outcomes of my study. When considering data collection, scholars conducting similar research may wish to consider ensuring that they do not rely on only one data source; my multiple methods allowed me to complete my study despite the constraints I encountered. Researchers should also be careful to save images that have been published online. My decision to use a variety of data meant that the problems I encountered with shrinking and disappearing data sources did not have a major negative impact on my study.

Another methodological consideration of my study centered around the fact that I do not speak Cantonese and could not communicate in the native language of my interviewees. Like many expatriates in Hong Kong, I moved to the city intending to learn to speak Cantonese. I quickly realized, however, that I did not need to learn the language because a majority of Hong Kongers, especially young people, speak great English and often want to practice their English-

speaking skills. While in Hong Kong, I did learn basic Cantonese words and phrases but not enough to put together sentences or hold a conversation. Unlike other Chinese cities such as Beijing, which is notoriously difficult to navigate without the use of a translation app, my life in Hong Kong as a non-native speaker was relatively easy. Thus, when interviewing Hong Kongers in face-to-face situations, via video call, or via messaging apps, no additional translation was needed for this project. Consequently, although some may perceive my lack of Cantonese language skills to be a constraint of my study, I did not feel that it hindered me. Furthermore, my position as an English academic who studies in the United States was received favorably by Hong Kong protesters, and both were identity markers that enhanced my *ethos* much more than speaking Cantonese ever could.

The fact that I did not analyze the protest strategies of the entire Hard Hat Revolution constituted another methodological consideration for me. In December 2014, the appearance of bulldozers to clear campsites signaled a definitive end to the Umbrella Revolution's seventy-nine-day on-street occupation. My analysis of the revolution's strategies thus encompassed the complete movement. The end of the Hard Revolution, however, was not so conclusive. In fact, as I write this in April 2021, the Hard Hat Revolution has not officially ended, and pro-democracy-supporting Hong Kongers continue to protest sporadically. Scholars including Meaghan Morris and Lawrence Grossberg have wrestled with how to "stabilize" an object of analysis when "every event is potentially evidence, potentially determining."¹¹

With a dissertation to complete, graduate study funding coming to an end, and a student visa close to expiring, I was forced to decide on a cut-off date for my analysis of the Hard Hat Revolution—December 31, 2019—which means my analysis does not capture the entirety of the Hard Hat Revolution. However, despite not studying the entire Hard Hat Revolution, the number

of days of the protest movement that were included in my study (203 days) far exceeds the seventy-nine days of analysis of the Umbrella Revolution that were considered in my analysis. Despite not covering the entirety of the Hard Hat Revolution, my analysis does cover significant events in the protest movement and, after my cutoff date, events such as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic; the Chinese New Year celebrations; and, later in the year, the enactment of Hong Kong's national security law saw the protests greatly reduce in number and frequency. Despite not meeting the ideal methodological guidelines for studying a protest movement, the adjustments and alternative methodological choices that I was forced to make still enabled me to conduct a study that allowed me to answer my two research questions and yield important insights into the study of ideology, protest movements, and Hong Kong.

Ideology

Much of the existing literature that explores ideology and protest movements focuses on the exigency that leads people to protest—the *why* of protest. In the case of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, however, I was well aware of the reasons and the ideologies that led Hong Kongers to protest—the overarching issue of mainlandization and, more specifically, the right to vote for the city's chief executive (2014) and opposition to the proposed extradition bill (2019). In contrast, the ideologies uncovered through my analysis are ideologies that derive from *how* people protest, not *why* they protest. My study reveals that ideologies can also derive from *how* people choose to protest and thus encourage researchers to rethink or reapproach the study of protest movements to contribute this important piece to an understanding of where ideologies are located and the ways in which they function.

My study shows the potential for examining protest movements in categories or genres. Often, a researcher analyzes a small number of strategies or mechanisms in one protest

movement to uncover its ideology. Although useful and insightful, this approach of studying single strategies and single ideologies in isolation from other movements offers a narrow lens through which to analyze a protest. Consequently, larger ideological patterns about protest phenomena are not uncovered. My study, however, offers a new approach to understanding protests because it suggests that ideologies may fall into types or genres of protest strategies that provide a useful lens for understanding protests more generally and comprehensively. I uncovered two such types in my study, but there undoubtedly are many more. This new understanding of and approach to studying ideology can aid not only in identifying and categorizing the ideologies of different protests but can provide insight into what ideologies and strategies might be transferrable to other places and protests. In addition, such ideologies provide options that could be useful for protesters seeking to select the most effective strategies for a particular protest.

Protest Movements

My study adds to an area of the study of protest that is largely unexplored. As I drew attention to in chapter 1, scholars typically explore protest movements by examining the different stages of movements, protest strategies, the role of leadership, and media framing of a protest. My study suggests that a comprehensive understanding of a protest movement should also include an examination of the ideologies of protest strategies—it highlights the need for the ideologies of protest strategies to figure more prominently in studies of protest movements.

My study raises questions about the link between ideologies of protest strategies and the outcomes of a protest movement. Scholarly literature on protest has tended to assume a clear link or correlation between protest strategies and their outcomes. It is easy to assume that if protesters find a magical combination of strategies rooted in a particular ideology, they will be successful

in achieving their goals. My analysis of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, however, points to a disconnect between strategies and outcomes—the strategies and ideologies chosen by protesters in the two revolutions were significantly different, but neither worked to help protesters in Hong Kong achieve their ultimate objectives. For example, while the strategies I uncovered did lead to some small, often-fleeting perceived successes of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions—such as the resignation of CY Leung in 2016 and Carrie Lam’s decision to withdraw the controversial extradition bill in 2019—the two movements did not produce any significant tangible results. The potential for such a disconnect between the objective of a protest movement and the ideologies and strategies chosen by participants should be a consideration in the study of protests.

My study also highlights that there could be other factors that explain the outcomes produced by protest strategies. Scholars of protests (and, indeed, protesters themselves) tend to assume that protest ideologies and strategies will ultimately result in change—either of the people responsible for the undesirable conditions or of witnesses and potential allies. A number of disciplines, including communication studies and psychology, have investigated the processes by which society, individuals, and organizations change, but those who study protests generally do not explore these change theories in relation to protest movements.¹² Such theories might provide major insights as to why many protest strategies are ineffective—they do not take into account the processes by which individuals change. To my knowledge, displaying a sign or burning a building do not align with any theories of how change occurs, but they continue to be commonly used strategies. In short, the incorporation of change theories into the study of protest movements could be used to assess the likely outcomes of the two ideologies both in terms of recruiting participants to the protest and in encouraging the target audience to change.

My study has brought to light how more attention should be paid to the role of the audience in a protest ideology. Protest-movement scholarship tends to focus on protest participants; however, my study has highlighted that the intended audience of a protest movement and the strategies employed to communicate with the audience should be a major point of consideration for a researcher. At least in the case of my study, attention to the audience helped to illuminate why protesters chose to protest in the ways that they do. In 2019, the intended audience for the Hard Hat Revolution was individuals and entities that researchers might expect to be targeted by protesters—individuals, organizations, or institutions responsible for creating the conditions that led to the protest. Researchers cannot always assume, however, that this is the case. Indeed, my analysis of the Umbrella Revolution revealed that the primary intended audience was envisioned as potential supporters and allies outside of Hong Kong. Thus, an implication of my study is that researchers should carefully consider the intended audience to whom a protest is directed and, moreover, that there may be multiple audiences.

Hong Kong

My study on Hong Kong's Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions encourages a rethinking of two aspects of the site of my study, Hong Kong. Hong Kong has long been renowned as the "City of Protests."¹³ The Umbrella Revolution and the movements that went before it were predominantly "family-friendly" affairs where children could be seen being carried on their parents' shoulders, strapped to their chests or backs, or being pushed in strollers adorned with protest slogans or signs.¹⁴ These protests thus aligned with prominent Hong Kong values such as respect, orderliness, and nonviolence. Indeed, the Umbrella Revolution was often referred to as *creative, humorous, innovative, imaginative*, and the "sweetest, politest, and least threatening mass mobilization on record."¹⁵ My analysis of the Hard Hat Revolution, however, points to a

dramatic shift in the Hong Kong identity. Although the initial days of the Hard Hat Revolution were more in line with Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters' historical approach to protest, regular violence enacted—and often initiated—by protesters slowly unraveled and eroded the very fabric of the Hong Kong identity. Quite simply, my study of the ideologies of the protest strategies in the two movements suggests that the Hong Kong identity has significantly changed. It is more antagonistic and aggressive, and many Hong Kongers are unapologetic about their opposition to mainlandization. In effect, Hard Hat Revolution protesters fought fire with fire, thus adhering to the ancient Chinese proverb, “Use the barbaric way to fight against the barbarian” (以夷制夷).

My study has also exposed the futility of Hong Kong protests. Umbrella Revolution protesters were confident that their actions would lead to change. Indeed, the Umbrella Revolution received overwhelmingly favorable media attention, garnered the support of a global audience, and even won awards for its creativity. Although these were positive outcomes, the protest mechanisms of the Umbrella Revolution failed to enact the changes that Hong Kong's pro-democracy advocates desired. My study has revealed that both major approaches to protest used in the two revolutions failed to achieve their objectives and to enact the desired change. As I reference in the epilogue to this study, the enactment of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region—known more commonly as the *national security law*—has highlighted the Party's complete control over Hong Kong and gives the Party carte blanche to quell all forms of Hong Kong protest, no matter what tactics are used. Protest in Hong King is now futile and carries the threat of arrest, imprisonment, and possible extradition to the mainland. Hong Kong can no longer

claim the label of the “City of Protests”—protesting cannot achieve the changes protesters desire and, in fact, is very dangerous to the well-being and very lives of Hong Kongers.

Furthering a Theory of the Ideology of Protest Strategies

The findings of my study have led me to consider four ways through which the theory of the ideology of protests strategies can be further developed and explored: (1) measuring the success and failure of Hong Kong protests; (2) speaking to pro-Beijing-supporting Hong Kongers; (3) applying my research questions to non-Hong Kong-focused studies; and (4) questioning the role that violence plays in protest.

In my three analytical chapters, I pointed to the small, often-fleeting perceived successes of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions, such as the resignation of CY Leung in 2016 and Carrie Lam’s decision to withdraw the controversial extradition bill in 2019. In this study, however, my concern has not been with the exigency or exigencies that led Hong Kongers to protest; thus, I have not sought to draw links between protest ideologies and the outcomes of the protest. Consequently, devising a measurement of success and failures that links to the exigencies and intended outcomes of different genres of protest ideologies could aid in providing further insights into my theory of the ideologies of protest strategies.

My focus throughout this study has been on Hong Kong’s pro-democracy supporters and the ideologies that characterize their approaches to protest. Thus, I did not include analysis of the strategies of Hong Kong’s pro-Beijing supporters in response to the protests. Although this group may comprise a relatively small number of people in relation to Hong Kong’s population, it is important to note that the political leanings of Hong Kongers are not monolithic. Thus, analyzing and understanding the ideologies and views of those who feel a sense of loyalty to Beijing and are not supportive of an independent Hong Kong or, in addressing non-Hong Kong protest

movements, speaking with critics of a movement could help to provide further insights into theories of the ideologies of protest strategies of opponents and may uncover important information about the trajectory of the protest ideologies.

My analysis has focused on Hong Kong's Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions and thus could be viewed as an emic-centered approach to research that, as Sarah J. Tracy explains, is specific to one context and one culture. Even within the context of Hong Kong, however, my analysis has focused on one specific group of Hong Kongers—predominately young pro-democracy advocates—and I have been careful to suggest that the political allegiances and opinions about a democratic Hong Kong are not monolithic. Despite the study's Hong Kong focus, however, its findings have led me to consider how scholars might approach the study of protest ideologies around the world. While geographic politics may be distinct and specific to each location, underlying issues of inequality, perceived political corruption, and a rise of populism and nationalism link the protests in Hong Kong, Chile, India, Mexico, Germany, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Myanmar, the United States, and other places.¹⁶ Many of these global protests have replicated numerous strategies and tactics from the Hard Hat Revolution's "playbook."¹⁷ In Portland, Oregon, for example, protesters used traffic cones and metal bowls to cover tear gas canisters before dousing them in water, just as protesters did in Hong Kong. In Detroit, Michigan; Kansas City, Missouri; and Madison, Wisconsin, protesters were photographed carrying leaf blowers to divert tear gas.¹⁸ Although my study is Hong Kong focused, it provides a broader etic value to help researchers analyze other protest movements around the globe.¹⁹

Finally, my analysis of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions has led me to question the role that violence plays in protest. The former was nonviolent, while the latter was violent, but both failed to achieve their objectives. Activists and scholars differ on whether violence is

effective in protests. Civil rights activist John Lewis, for example, told Black Lives Matter protesters in Atlanta, Georgia, that they “must continue to teach the way of peace, the way of love, the philosophy and the discipline of non-violence.” For Lewis, “rioting, looting, and burning” was not the answer. “Organize. Demonstrate. Sit-in. Stand-up. Vote,” he implored.²⁰ Scholars such as Brent Simpson, Robb Willer, and Matthew Feinberg argue that nonviolence is the best means for raising awareness of an issue, achieving identification with and support from “ordinary citizens” and facilitating the positive public perception of a movement.²¹ Political scientist Erica Chenoweth also suggests that the results of nonviolence are superior to those of violence—countries in which protests rely on nonviolence are ten times more likely to transition to democracies within a five-year period of those protests.²² In contrast, others argue that violent protests produce greater results than nonviolent ones. Violent protests “bring urgency” to an issue and prompt a wider audience to take note of an injustice, argues political scientist Daniel Q. Gillion.²³ Moreover, peaceful protests in the twenty-first century have been found to be more likely to fail when compared to violent protests.²⁴ Because there is “no consistent answer” to the question of whether violence is effective in protest, I suggest that more research is needed to discover the role that violence plays in protest ideologies and the specific conditions under which it is effective.²⁵

In this chapter, I have addressed my two research questions by unpacking the features of the communication mechanisms and tenets of the ideologies that characterized the protest strategies of the Umbrella and Hard Hat Revolutions. Although this study on Hong Kong has provided a good foundation for identifying protest ideologies and how they communicate, the findings produced in this study provide only a first step in further theorizing the ideologies of protest strategies across the globe. I look forward to engaging in more research that focuses on

these protest ideologies beyond Hong Kong, and I hope others will join in the effort to understand this understudied aspect of protest movements.

To conclude this study, I provide an epilogue in which I trace events that took place in Hong Kong following the December 2019 cutoff date for my analysis, review some of the new threats that continue to further affect Hong Kong's relationship with mainland China, and consider how recent events in Hong Kong might affect me as a former and potential future resident of Hong Kong, scholar, and a global citizen.

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EPILOGUE

HONG KONG: 2020 AND BEYOND

Since the cutoff date of my analysis of December 31, 2019, much has happened in Hong Kong. Following the perceived success of Carrie Lam’s announcement to withdraw the planned extradition bill, mainlandization has increased across the city with such speed and in ways that nobody could have envisioned. The Hard Hat Revolution never officially ended, but, since the end of 2019, the actions of Hard Hat Revolution protesters have been impeded for multiple reasons.

At a meeting of the Chinese Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress in Beijing on June 30, 2020, the Communist Party of China (the Party) voted to pass a piece of legislation that would change Hong Kong forever. Hong Kong’s national security law gave Beijing the power to crack down on anybody deemed to be “a threat” to China’s national security. For some commentators, the timing of the enactment of the law in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic was an “ideal backdrop” for and a “golden opportunity” to “rob Hong Kong people of their human rights.”¹

Although Chinese officials declared that the national security law was directed at “a tiny number of criminals who seriously endanger national security,” others saw it as directed specifically at protesters.² Human rights organization Amnesty International, for example, noted that the sixty-six articles of the law were “dangerously vague and broad.”³ Indeed, the four major offenses included in the law—separatism, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign countries—are linked closely to a number of Hard Hat Revolution protest strategies. For example, under the national security law, acts such as damaging government buildings are

classified as acts of subversion, and sabotaging public transportation is deemed an act of terrorism; both offenses are punishable by life imprisonment.⁴ More tame acts such as displaying flags or banners or chanting slogans are also arrestable offenses under the law.⁵

Hong Kong's national security law could have implications that stretch far beyond the borders of Hong Kong. Indeed, the term "endangering Chinese national security" can mean "virtually anything."⁶ Thus, Hong Kong's national security law tightens control on researchers, educators, journalists, and anyone who seeks to comment on Hong Kong. In short, "anyone on Earth," regardless of location or nationality, technically can be deemed to be in violation of the law and can face arrest and prosecution in a Chinese jurisdiction, even if they are simply in transit through Hong Kong or China to another location.⁷ Thus, those who write or speak about the democratic plight of Hong Kongers face stark choices: stay silent; flee the city; or, if not in the city, seriously consider if they should gamble by daring to set foot on Hong Kong or Chinese soil.⁸

A major element of the national security law is that those suspected of threatening Chinese national security can be transferred to mainland China for questioning, handled within the mainland's criminal justice system, and tried under mainland Chinese law.⁹ This, of course, was the very essence of the proposed extradition bill that ignited the Hard Hat Revolution in the summer of 2019. In my analysis of perceptions of Hong Kong's leaders, I pointed to the perceived success of Hard Hat Revolution protesters when Carrie Lam announced her intentions to withdraw the proposed extradition law. That same law, though, has reappeared as a minor element of a much larger and more troubling piece of legislation. Thus, as is often the case with any strides made by Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters, perceived victories are only

fleeing. Hong Kongers may have won the battle when they forced Carrie Lam to rescind the extradition bill in September 2019, but nine months later, the Party had truly won the war.

Of course, the first victims of Hong Kong's national security law were the city's vocal pro-democracy advocates. In the first twenty-four hours after Hong Kong's national security law was implemented, 360 were detained at an "illegal rally," and ten people were arrested, including one man who was in possession of a flag proclaiming "Hong Kong independence."¹⁰ As 2020 drew to a close and Hong Kong entered a new year, police continued with daily raids to round up and arrest many who were perceived to be a threat to Chinese national security. In January 2021, attorney and human rights advocate John Clancey was one of dozens of pro-democracy activists who were arrested in a series of dawn raids across Hong Kong.¹¹ Disturbingly, former priest Clancey is a US citizen, thus highlighting how the national security law has far-reaching implications.¹²

In 2019, the Hard Hat Revolution began with the idea that change could be enacted in Hong Kong. These hopes, however, were dashed with the introduction of the national security law. Instead of the crossroads that Hong Kong faced after the Umbrella Revolution, Hong Kong now appears to be at a dead end. As I pointed out in chapter 2, full reintegration with China was supposed to occur slowly over the fifty-year period upon which the Party and Great Britain agreed. Moreover, the hope for some was that Hong Kongers could use those fifty years to encourage China to become more open, like Hong Kong.¹³ These hopes, however, have now been dashed. For Stephen Young, former US diplomat who served in Hong Kong and Taiwan, "the Chinese leopard" has "shown its spots."¹⁴ The one country, two systems framework that was supposed to guide Hong Kong's fifty-year transition is less than twenty-five years old but, as a result of the new national security law, one country, two systems is dead.

Mainlandization Revisited

When providing some of Hong Kong's contextual and historical background, I outlined seven facets of mainlandization—(1) plutocratization; (2) housing; (3) language; (4) education; (5) media; (6) politics; and (7) identity. I turn now to revisit the seven facets of mainlandization that I outlined earlier and provide brief examples to show that, following the Hard Hat Revolution, Hong Kong has now been fully mainlandized.

Plutocratization

For twenty-five years, Hong Kong topped the Heritage Foundation's annual ranking of the world's freest economies before it was finally toppled from the top spot by Singapore in 2019.¹⁵ Using twelve criteria that is grouped into four categories—rule of law (property rights, judicial effectiveness, and government integrity); government size (tax burden, government spending, and fiscal health); regulatory efficiency (business freedom, labor freedom, and monetary freedom); and market openness—the index ranks nations according to their economic freedom.¹⁶ Hong Kong's dethroning was assumed to be a brief episode that would be reversed, with the city rising again to the top of the index in 2020.¹⁷

As a result of the introduction of the national security law, in 2020, Hong Kong disappeared from the list. The Heritage Foundation now considers Hong Kong to be a part of China. China—and thus Hong Kong—sits in 107th place in the latest index, located between Uganda and Uzbekistan.¹⁸ According to the Heritage Foundation, individuals who lack economic freedom are condemned to a life of poverty and deprivation.¹⁹ As professor of public policy Donald Low explains, Hong Kong is “stuck in the inequality trap” that does not redistribute wealth. Moreover, worsening inequality makes it more difficult to establish much-needed

universal social programs due to the reluctance of the middle- and upper classes to assist through higher taxes.²⁰

Months of violent protests coupled with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic hit “the precariously employed hardest” and widened the inequality chasm across Hong Kong.²¹ The Hard Hat Revolution led to Hong Kong’s worst recession in almost two decades, and unemployment in Hong Kong is at its highest in years (6.6 percent).²² A city that is home to one of the highest ratios of billionaires per capita in the world and a city in which luxury cars emerge from multi-million-dollar mansions and zoom past impoverished elderly Hong Kongers collecting plastic and cardboard to recycle for cash, Hong Kong continues to be one of the most unequal cities in the world. It is now a Chinese “city of stark contrasts” where wealth and want coexist.²³

Housing

Despite the recession that followed the Hard Hat Revolution and COVID-19, the influx of mainland Chinese real estate investment that made Hong Kong unaffordable for a majority of Hong Kongers did not let up. A 30 percent drop in housing prices still did not make homes affordable for Hong Kongers, but it allowed mainland Chinese investors to “scour for bargains” and buy up more property.²⁴ In February 2021, a luxury Hong Kong apartment broke the Asian record for price per square foot, with the five-bedroom apartment selling for HK\$459.4 million (US\$59 million).²⁵

Although not directly linked to the national security law, when COVID-19 hit Hong Kong hard at the start of 2021, it exposed and further exacerbated the deep social and wealth inequalities that characterize the city that have resulted from mainlandization and plutocratization. When more than 160 cases of COVID-19 were found in the Jordan

neighborhood of Hong Kong, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (GovHK) responded by locking down over 10,000 residents across a sixteen-block area.²⁶ Although GovHK's approach mirrored that of many of governments around the world, the Jordan lockdown exposed underlying issues that plague such Hong Kong districts. In overcrowded residential buildings in densely packed neighborhoods such as Jordan and Yau Ma Tai, many apartments are divided into two or more smaller tenements in which kitchens double as bathrooms and, in many cases, family members take turns sleeping in the one bed. With an average living space of forty-eight square feet per person and dilapidated conditions that include mold and poor ventilation, that COVID-19 thrived in Jordan and surrounding districts was no surprise.²⁷ COVID-19 and the introduction of the national security law have left Hong Kong "traumatized and economically weakened." Consequently, the inequality that has shrouded Hong Kong for years is likely to continue to get worse.²⁸

Language

Although a full version of the national security law was released in Mandarin upon its enactment on July 1, 2020, a further three days passed before an English translation was proffered by the Party. The fact that a Cantonese or an English version was not immediately released highlighted the Party's desire to push Mandarin—the predominant language across mainland China—at the expense of Cantonese in Hong Kong. Upon releasing the English translation, an announcement was made that in the event of any "discrepancies," the Mandarin version of the national security law would take precedence over the English translation.²⁹ Commentators quickly pointed to differences between the Mandarin and English translations. For example, Article 9 of the national security law included the word *universities*, but the same word is nowhere to be found in the Mandarin version.³⁰ Ambiguities such as this led to confusion

as to what might constitute violations of the national security law and thus meant that the Party had carte blanche to enforce the law as it pleased.

Education

Article 10 of the national security law requires that GovHK “promote national security education in schools and universities.”³¹ Thus, Hong Kong school children as young as six are being taught about subversion and the dangers of colluding with foreign forces. A government-funded educational video that has been sent to schools outlines the loyalty that students should show toward the Party. In the video, an owl wearing glasses and a graduation mortarboard outlines the four main offenses of the national security law and their associated punishments and teaches young students how to sing and respect the Chinese national anthem.³² Schools are also encouraged to use puppet theatre and to design board games to “improve students' understanding of national security.”³³

The national security law also ended academic freedom for university professors in Hong Kong. Exposing the dangers that academics face, prominent democracy advocate and professor Benny Tai was targeted for persecution. A prominent figure behind the Umbrella Revolution, as a result of the national security law, Tai was charged and then granted bail for his role almost five years after the movement ended. Upon being charged, Tai was immediately removed from his position as professor of law at the University of Hong Kong.³⁴ GovHK and the Party regard Tai as a "hardcore troublemaker" and a separatist who poses a threat to the Chinese nation.³⁵

On April 14, 2021, Hong Kong held its first National Security Education Day. Kindergartens, schools and universities were mandated to hold a number of events, including singing the Chinese national anthem and raising flags.³⁶ To “celebrate” the day, school children were given national-security themed puzzles. However, the “education” of Hong Kong citizens

reached beyond campus gates of schools, colleges, and universities. However, the “education” of Hong Kong citizens has reached beyond campus gates of schools, colleges, and universities. The National Security Education Day is also designed to educate the public on the consequences of not adhering to the new law. Police stations open to the public and public drills take place during which an officer descends from a helicopter, scoops up a person on the ground and hoists them up in the air and into the helicopter, suggesting how easily Hong Kong citizens can be disappeared.”³⁷ Celebrations of the Party’s power continue as Hong Kong police officers “unveiled a new goose-step march, styled on mainland China’s force,”³⁸ Street-side stalls, meanwhile, sell national security law-themed merchandise, including keyrings, teddy bears dressed as riot police, and miniature figurines of police officers holding use-of-force warning flags like those displayed by police during the Hard Hat Revolution.³⁹

Media

In addition to Hong Kong’s educational system, under the national security law, the Party has targeted the city’s media as another sector that needs to be “brought to heel.”⁴⁰ In the early hours of August 10, 2020, police officers led a handcuffed Jimmy Lai out of his home and put him in a waiting police vehicle. Hours later, more than 200 police officers raided the offices of *Apple Daily*—Hong Kong’s only pro-democracy publication that was founded by Lai in 1995.⁴¹ Police officers searched the *Apple Daily*’s offices for evidence of crimes against the state. As a result, Lai was charged with “colluding with foreign forces” and thus “endangering national security.”⁴²

Since the clampdown on *Apple Daily*, GovHK and the Party have continued to inhibit news reporting in Hong Kong. In February 2021, Hong Kong broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong announced that it was ceasing to broadcast *BBC World Service* programming.⁴³

China's National Radio and Television Administration remarked that the *BBC* “harmed China’s national interests” by “seriously violating” broadcast guidelines that stipulate that news reporting should be “truthful and fair.”⁴⁴ Hong Kong’s supposed free press was eroding long before the enactment of the national security law; however, multiple articles in the national security law now directly address the media. According to Chris Yeung, chair of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, reporting on Hong Kong’s pro-democracy desires—even those written by foreign journalists associated with non-Hong Kong-based media organizations—can now be deemed a criminal offense. Thus, many fear that the national security law marked the end of unbiased and accurate reporting from, in, or about Hong Kong.⁴⁵

In April 2021, almost all Hong Kong newspapers—including English language publications the *South China Morning Post* and *The Stand*—carried front-page government-sponsored ads to promote Hong Kong’s National Security Day. Only one Hong Kong newspaper refused to carry the ad: *Apple Daily*. The following day, *Apple Daily*’s owner, Lai, appeared in court to face charges for his participation in two “illegal” protests in 2019. He was sentenced to fourteen months in jail.⁴⁶ Smuggled into Hong Kong from the mainland as a child, in his final interview before he was jailed, an emotional Lai spoke of his debt to the city. “I got everything I have because of this place,” said Lai. “If [going to jail] is the payback time, this is my redemption. If I’m in jail, I’m living my life meaningfully.”⁴⁷

Politics

The enactment of the national security law lay bare the Party’s complete control over Hong Kong. Disturbingly for Hong Kongers, the national security law was passed by the Party and circumvented Hong Kong’s local legislature to such an extent that the Party closely guarded the details of the law from GovHK until it was enacted.⁴⁸ Thus, the manner in which the national

security law was passed confirms what many have long assumed: GovHK is simply a puppet government and a proxy for the Party in Hong Kong.

As the Party tightened its influence in Hong Kong, some questioned the timing of the national security law, which was enacted at the height of the COVID-19 global pandemic that originated in mainland China and then spread across the globe in 2020. Although the city of Wuhan—the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak—is less than 600 miles from Hong Kong, Hong Kong remained relatively COVID-19 free in the first half of 2020. By the end of May 2020, Hong Kong had reported only four COVID-19-related deaths in a city of over seven-million people.⁴⁹ Despite Hong Kong’s apparent success in curtailing the pandemic, however, GovHK called a state of emergency and banned gatherings of more than four people, in essence attempting to force an end to the Hard Hat Revolution. With Hong Kong’s annual Tiananmen Square commemoration and the one-year anniversary of the outbreak of the Hard Hat Revolution approaching, the threat of COVID-19 was perceived as being used to “throttle” Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement. The Party began violating human rights in Hong Kong while the rest of the world was consumed and distracted by a global pandemic.⁵⁰

In addition to increasing Party influence, the enactment of the national security law effectively put an end to Hong Kong’s pro-democratic hopes by forcing democratic parties to question their future and reevaluate their viability. Studentlocalism and the Hong Kong National Front both announced the closure of their Hong Kong offices and their intention to establish overseas divisions instead.⁵¹ Within hours of the announcement of the national security law, Demosisto founders Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow, Jeffrey Ngo, and Nathan Law announced they were resigning from their leadership roles in the pro-democracy political party.⁵² Twenty-four hours later, Demosisto disbanded completely. Its leader, Joshua Wong, vowed to continue to

defend Hong Kong “until they silence, obliterate me from this piece of land,”⁵³ and weeks later, Wong and fellow Demosisto members Agnes Chow and Ivan Lam were arrested and jailed for thirteen months, ten months, and seven months, respectively.⁵⁴

Identity

As a result of the increasing mainlandization that is facing Hong Kong, many Hong Kongers feel that their distinct identity is being eroded and, if they were to remain in Hong Kong, they would be forced to abandon it altogether. Thus, perhaps the only way to maintain the Hong Konger identity is to remove it from Hong Kong. Consequently, in light of crippling and seemingly irreversible mainlandization, thousands of Hong Kongers of all ages have left or are planning to leave the city. In late 2019—more than six months before the national security law was announced—over 42 percent of Hong Kongers spoke of their desire to emigrate if the opportunity arose. Since the introduction of the national security law, more than 1 percent of Hong Kong’s population have left the city, seeking new lives in Australia, Taiwan, and Great Britain.⁵⁵ Some Hong Kongers have spoken of how they feel they are deserting the city and the imprisoned friends they have left behind.⁵⁶ This flight from the city suits the Party, of course, because it opens Hong Kong to greater Chinese influence. Quite simply, as Hong Kongers leave, they will be replaced by mainland Chinese citizens and, as Western organizations leave, they will be replaced by Chinese companies.⁵⁷ The national security law, then, is Hong Kong’s “death sentence.”⁵⁸ Hong Kong is now a fully functioning part of China.

Reflections

Under British rule, Hong Kong was always a “borrowed place on borrowed time.” Britain’s position as Hong Kong’s colonizer was only ever temporary and, as its 150-year lease of Hong Kong came toward an end, Hong Kong was placed in a situation that was “unique to

history.”⁵⁹ After the initiation of the fifty-year term that lay the foundations for Hong Kong’s handover in 1997, the city found itself in a period of simultaneous decolonization from Great Britain and recolonization by China. Thus, Hong Kong became “a great human drama, “a huge potential tragedy,” and “an ongoing news story with daily twists and turns.”⁶⁰

In truth, nobody knew what would happen in 2047 when Hong Kong’s full reintegration with the mainland was scheduled to take place. There were hopes, however, that the fifty-year period would offer the opportunity for negotiation and consideration about Hong Kong’s future. Indeed, Martin Lee, the so-called “father of Hong Kong democracy,”⁶¹ believed that instead of seeing Hong Kong assimilate into China, the fifty-year term would see Hong Kong help lead China to democratization. This, of course, did not transpire. Instead, Beijing “chipped away” at Hong Kong’s autonomy until, in the summer of 2020, the city finally “slid into authoritarianism” as a result of the enactment of the national security law.⁶² For many, the national security law tolled the death knell for Hong Kong and marked the “saddest day” in the city’s complicated and often colorful history.⁶³ One Hong Konger likened the national security law to a cancer to which Hong Kong had finally succumbed.⁶⁴

I began this study by regaling my experiences of being in Hong Kong during the initial days of what turned out to be the Hard Hat Revolution. When I left Edinburgh Place on that humid June night and met friends in a Wanchai bar, I drank to the end of the Hong Kong that I knew—the Hong Kong that I had fallen in love with after living in the city between 2011 and 2013. Although I was resigned to the fact that Hong Kong would never be the same again, I had no idea about what was to unfold and just how seismic and rapid that change would be. Since I began this study, the speed with which the Party has tightened its grip on Hong Kong has shocked me. A handover process that was supposed to have taken fifty years has been completed

in less than half that time. Moreover, the scale and terms of the handover are much more severe than I ever imagined. Cities constantly change, but I did not expect Hong Kong to change as drastically as it did in the nine months that it took me to complete this study. In fact, as I conclude this study, I am left with a sense of futility.

Throughout this study, my deep affinity with Hong Kong and Hong Kongers has been etched firmly in my mind. Indeed, writing this dissertation has not been easy and, at frequent points, I have become dejected while analyzing and then having to write about the situation in Hong Kong. In late 2014, Umbrella Revolution participants' creative and unique approach to protest drew me to study Hong Kong protests and the democratic desires of large sections of Hong Kongers. In a world of violent protests, Hong Kong protests were exciting and intriguing. Thus, to some extent, I am saddened and disappointed by the violent actions of some of Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters. Although I do understand why large groups of Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters felt the need to turn to extreme acts of violence in the Hard Hat Revolution, I do not condone their actions. In fact, I believe that, at times, Hong Kong's pro-democracy supporters have often been their own worst enemies, and I argue that Hong Kong's current situation and the enactment of the national security law are a direct result of Hard Hat Revolution protesters' actions in the second half of 2019.

When I began this study in a pre-COVID-19 world, I planned to return to Hong Kong on a regular basis, as I have done almost every summer since I stopped living there. I first planned to return in order to gather additional interview data not only for this study but for an entire career of Hong Kong-focused research that lay in front of me. In addition to gathering data, however, I also wanted to return to Hong Kong to eat char siu bao; climb the lookout tower in my favorite place in the city, Hong Kong Park; and meet up with friends whom I consider to be

family. However, as a result of the introduction of Hong Kong's national security law, I have been forced to reassess my career, my academic pursuits, and what I thought would be a life-long endeavor. As my study has progressed in parallel with some of the recent developments in Hong Kong, my ability to safely return to the city can no longer be taken for granted.

Throughout this study, I have analyzed the shift in the protest strategies and ideologies of Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters. However, the most onerous part has not been reflecting on what has been but considering what is to come not only for Hong Kong but for me. Do I continue to strive to be an engaged scholar and responsible global citizen who draws attention to the inequalities that result from the authoritarianism of hegemonic forces? If so, I risk not being able to again stand on the edge of Victoria Harbour and watch the ferries cross to Kowloon. Do I let my work suffer at the hands of mainlandization by continuing to overthink every sentence I write and thus staying silent about the erosion of Hong Kong's history and its way of life? These are the questions and dialectical tensions that I and every other scholar of Hong Kong and China or, indeed, every proponent of democracy must now consider. Hong Kongers continue to stress that their city is "not China" (fig. 42) but the Party would disagree. Hong Kong has changed forever.

We have tried and tried to make our voices heard.

Some sing hymns. Some forgo food. Some make signs.

Some cry in silence, trembling, nursing a lingering heartache.

Do we all have to imprint notes across the city, on its mountains and bridges and lampposts and shop fronts and park benches and walls, for us to be finally heard?

The bell tolls for us all. ("The Fall," Tammy Ho).⁶⁵

Figures



Figure 42: This is Hong Kong, Not China.⁶⁶

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