

RGC Ref. No.: UGC/FDS15/H12/19 <p>(please insert ref. above)</p>
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**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)

Completion Report
(for completed projects only)

<p><u>Submission Deadlines:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within <u>six</u> months of the approved project completion date. 2. Completion report: within <u>12</u> months of the approved project completion date.
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Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1. Project Title

Shifting Strategies and Coalition Dynamics of the Pro-Democracy Movement in Hong Kong:
The Role of Perceived Opportunities and Threats

2. Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Dr. LI Hang / Assistant Professor	Department of Sociology / Hong Kong Shue Yan University
Co-Investigator(s)	N/A	N/A
Others	N/A	N/A

3. Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval (must be quoted)
Project Start Date	1 January 2020	N/A	N/A
Project Completion Date	31 December 2021	31 December 2022	1 June 2021
Duration (in month)	24	36	1 June 2021
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31 December 2022	31 December 2023	1 June 2021

4.3 Please attach photo(s) of acknowledgement of RGC-funded facilities / equipment.

N/A

Part B: The Final Report

5. Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. To systematically trace the changes in the structure of political opportunity and threat in Hong Kong from 1997 to the early 2020s;
2. To examine the changes in perceptions of opportunity and threats among pan-democratic parties and activist groups in Hong Kong from 1997 to the early 2020s;
3. To analyze how structural and perceived opportunities (and threats) shape choices of movement strategies between institutional and extra-institutional politics among pan-democratic parties and activist groups;
4. To analyze how structural and perceived opportunities (and threats) facilitate or inhibit alliance formation or disintegration among pan-democratic parties and activist groups.

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: N/A

Reasons for the change: N/A

5.3 Realisation of the objectives

(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

All four project objectives have been fully achieved. The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in January 2020, and the subsequent delay of the 2020 Legislative Council election in Hong Kong, posed some data collection challenges for the principal investigator (PI). Despite this, the research project progressed well with a 12-month extension, moving the end date from 31 December 2021 to 31 December 2022.

The empirical evidence was gathered through archival research and in-depth interview. Data collected fell into the following categories: structural political opportunities and threats (Objective 1); political opportunities and threats as perceived by pan-democratic parties and activist groups (Objective 2); strategies used by these parties and groups (Objective 3); and records of coalition dynamics among them (Objective 4).

First, archival research was conducted to gather newspaper articles from WiseNews and other online news platforms relevant to the four categories of empirical evidence mentioned above. The analyzed articles, covering the period from mid-1997 to late 2021, include reports or interviews with over 70 politicians and activists in Hong Kong. Additionally, the project assembled 26 books published in Hong Kong, comprising biographies, autobiographies of activists, and protest records. To structure this archival data, I created ten chronological records for political parties and social movement organizations, documenting actions, events, and leaders' statements. Each record was coded for themes relating to structural and perceived political opportunities and threats, movement goals, tactics, factional conflicts, and other relevant themes.

Second, the PI conducted 45 in-depth interviews with politicians and activists from the pan-democratic camp. These interviews took place between September 2020 and July 2021.

They ranged in length from fifty minutes to two hours, averaging seventy-five minutes. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face, with three held over the phone. The interview questions focused on the interviewees' perception of political opportunities and threats, their evaluation of employed movement strategies, and their perceptions of other activists and political parties, among other topics.

In addition to the two primary data collection methods mentioned above, field research was proposed as a supplementary data collection method. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no field research was conducted. Since field research is merely a supplementary method in the research design, the absence of its data does not hinder the progress of the research.

Summary of objectives addressed to date

Objectives (as per 5.1/5.2 above)	Addressed (please tick)	Percentage Achieved (please estimate)
1. <i>To systematically trace the changes in the structure of political opportunity and threat in Hong Kong from 1997 to the early 2020s</i>	✓	100%
2. <i>To examine the changes in perceptions of opportunity and threats among pan-democratic parties and activist groups in Hong Kong from 1997 to the early 2020s</i>	✓	100%
3. <i>To analyze how structural and perceived opportunities (and threats) shape choices of movement strategies between institutional and extra-institutional politics among pan-democratic parties and activist groups</i>	✓	100%
4. <i>To analyze how structural and perceived opportunities (and threats) facilitate or inhibit alliance formation or disintegration among pan-democratic parties and activist groups</i>	✓	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome

(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

This research project, based on data from archival research and in-depth interviews, emphasizes the role of perceived political opportunities and threats in contentious politics. It also investigates how these perceptions affect movement tactics and factional conflicts. Two interrelated temporal dynamics were identified, summarized as follows:

- My findings illustrate the changing perceptions of opportunities and threats from a generational perspective, emphasizing the role of generational experiences in shaping strategic choices and coalitional dynamics. I discovered that the perception's mediating role is influenced by cohort-specific politicizing experiences. These findings suggest that the emergence of radical tactics in Hong Kong is not solely a structurally determined response to opportunities and threats. It is also a result of generational shifts in tactical preferences following a series of movement successes and failures over time. Traditional pro-democracy activists, who started their political journey amidst expanding political opportunities in the 1990s, advocate for “democratic reunification” with China. Conversely, the localists, who emerged during mass mobilizations in the 2010s, expressed skepticism towards the traditional camp’s optimism as democratic progress stalled over a long period. Political tensions within the pro-democracy movement persisted throughout the 2010s. However, the immense threats posed by the 2019 Extradition Bill controversy were sufficient to reduce perceptual differences between the two camps.
- My findings also indicate that the dynamics of strategic interactions influence activists’ tactical choices. Specifically, I explored how activists resolve different strategic dilemmas based on what they have learned from the ongoing interactions with other activists and their targets in the strategic arena. In the case study of the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement, my findings reveal that factional battles have opened and foreclosed different strategic possibilities. As interactions unfold, activists revisit their readings of the political context and revise the tactical plans accordingly. The use of disruptive tactics has gained traction as intra-movement conflicts unfold from the 2003’s July First demonstration to the 2019’s Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement. Alongside the consecutive defeats in advancing democratization, the young radical groups have gradually gathered steam by downplaying the moderate strategies employed by the traditional democrats. In face of these challenges, the traditional democrats have also revisited their optimism toward institutionalized politics and adjusted their tactics along the radical path.

The PI presented these findings at three international conferences between 2021 and 2023, as indicated in Table 9 of Part C. These conference papers reported preliminary results, providing the PI with opportunities to engage with international scholars in this field. Currently, the PI is preparing two manuscripts to submit to peer-reviewed journals, such as *Social Movement Studies* and *China Quarterly*. The first manuscript investigates the tactical shift in the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement from a strategic interaction perspective, while the second delves into the evolution of movement infighting across generations, as detailed in Table 8 of Part C.

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action (Maximum half a page)

This research has already sparked collaborations on two other interdisciplinary projects:

- The first project received funding from the IDS Collaborative Research Grant of Competitive Research Funding Schemes for Local Self-financing Degree Sector in 2019/20 (UGC/IDS(C)15/H01/19). The project's title is "Youth Identity Status and its Psychosocial Correlates: A Longitudinal Study in Hong Kong." As the co-principal investigator, I am responsible for the domains of civic and political engagement. Between 2020 and 2022, our research team collected four waves of quantitative data from secondary and university students in Hong Kong. The data includes identity status, civic and political engagement, and more. Using data from the first wave survey, we co-wrote a book chapter exploring the influence of social media use on civic and political participation among young people in Hong Kong. This chapter has been accepted for an edited volume titled *Mobile Media Use among Children and Youth in Asia*, to be published by Springer.
- The second project received funding from the IDS Collaborative Research Grant of Competitive Research Funding Schemes for the Local Self-financing Degree Sector in 2022/23 (UGC/IDS(C)15/H02/22). Titled "Human Resilience, Life Adversity, and Adaptation to Life Course Transitions from Early Adulthood to Late Middle Adulthood," this interdisciplinary project seeks to identify factors at individual, family, organizational, community, and social/cultural levels that contribute to human resilience. As one of the co-principal investigators, my responsibility is to understand how community engagement can enhance resilience at the community level. Data collection is currently underway, and we plan to collect two waves of quantitative data within the project period.

7. Layman's Summary

(Describe in layman's language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)

This research project focuses on understanding the strategic evolution and coalition dynamics of social movements. It does so through the lens of perceived opportunities and threats. The pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong serves as the case study. Using archival research and in-depth interviews, the study examines the impact of differing perceptions among activists on movement tactics and factional conflicts. The findings underscore two interpretive dynamics explaining shifts in tactics and coalitions: (1) a generational change in tactical repertoires preferences, and (2) strategic interactions concerning tactical dilemmas.

The significance of this project is twofold. First, it expands upon the deterministic application of political opportunity theory by exploring how political opportunities and threats are variously interpreted. Hence, it enriches the study of contentious dynamics by outlining the interpretive dynamics of tactical and coalitional changes. Second, it offers valuable empirical evidence from a case study of contentious politics in East Asia. This study therefore augments existing literature on contentious politics, which predominantly focuses on Western social movements. Consequently, these findings not only deepen the knowledge of scholars in social movement studies, but also aid in enhancing the teaching and curriculum design for courses in social movements and East Asian studies.

Part C: Research Output**8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) (denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)	Title and Journal / Book (with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance (For paper accepted but not yet published)	Under Review	Under Preparation (optional)						
N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	Li Hang*	"Dynamics of strategic interaction and tactical shift in the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement"	N/A	No	Yes	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	Li Hang*	"From Discord to Unity: Generational Infighting and Mobilization in Hong Kong's Pro-Democracy Movement"	N/A	No	Yes	N/A

9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered

(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)

Month / Year / Place	Title	Conference Name	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
June/2021/ Manchester (Online)	Generational perceptions of opportunity and threats: Shift in strategic preferences in Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement 2010-2019	Alternative Futures & Popular Protest 2021	No	Yes [Attachment 1]	Yes	No
Aug/2021/ Barcelona (Online)	Generational Divides in tactical tastes: The case of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement	The 15th Conference of the European Sociological Association 2021	No	Yes [Attachment 2]	Yes	No

July/2023/ Melbourne (Online)	Strategic interaction and tactical shift in the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement	The XX International Sociological Association World Congress of Sociology	No	Yes [Attachment 3]	Yes	No
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10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning

(Please elaborate)

N/A

11. Student(s) Trained

(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

12. Other Impact

(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)

N/A

13. Statistics on Research Outputs

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (please specify)	
No. of outputs arising directly from this research project	2*	3	N/A	N/A	Type	No.
					N/A	N/A

* Manuscripts in preparation for submission to peer-reviewed journals

14. Public Access Of Completion Report

(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	Reasons
N/A	N/A