

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Case Study

University: [The Education University of Hong Kong |

Unit of Assessment (UoA): [35 Area studies (e.g. Japanese studies, European studies, etc.), cultural studies and other arts/humanities |

Title of case study: [On generations and inter-generational conflicts in Hong Kong |

(1) Summary of the impact

[Since the beginning of his academic career, Lui Tai Lok has researched Hong Kong's culture and identity, examining, among other facets, its social movements, class structure, and social mobility. He has long since articulated his observations and analyses, delineating the development and dynamics of Hong Kong society in the light of inter-generational differences, tensions, and conflicts. His 55-page book *Four Generations of Hong Kong People* (Xidai Xianggangren), published in 2007, is a bestseller (up to now, 21 impressions). It has helped shape public discussion and debate in Hong Kong. Policy makers, key political agents, social leaders, and the general public, continue to refer to it to make sense of social changes in the Special Administrative Region since its return to China in 1997, and to better understand and analyze emerging social phenomena (such as the articulation of new political demands and changing forms of social conflict). |

(2) Underpinning research

[This impact case is built upon Lui's long-term research into Hong Kong society. It is produced as a popular pamphlet for ordinary readers, and therefore Lui does not cite his own research and other references in the text. However, the contents are based on his own research on the following issues:

- A) Social structure and social mobility: Lui has been a member of a research team on social mobility in Hong Kong (1989; Principal Investigator was Dr Thomas Wong). He also participated in a research project on the middle class in East Asia (1992; funded by the C.C.K. Foundation). In his book on Hong Kong's middle class (published in 2003)¹, he synthesized his observations to analyze the changing class structure and emerging moral order of contemporary Hong Kong. In 2006-07 (funded by the Research Grants Council and the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme)^{a b}, he revisited the topic, conducting a survey for gauging social mobility and carrying out intensive interviews with parents for understanding social mobility strategy, to map the changing social structure and to analyze how local families prepare their children for competition for upward social mobility. These two projects also highlighted changing mobility opportunities and growing anxieties.^{2, 3}
- B) The formation of Hong Kong society and a local identity: Based upon his analysis of the changing social structure (see Point A above) and the ever-changing interface between state and society, Lui analyzed how a local Hong Kong identity emerged and how the social perspectives of its citizens crystallized during the 1970s.^{4, 5} These perspectives were formed against the backdrop of a moral order arising from the socio-economic changes of the early post-war decades. As the socio-economic environment changed, the way people viewed Hong Kong and social order also inevitably changed.
- C) Economic restructuring: Lui has also studied Hong Kong's industrial relocation and economic restructuring in the post-War decades. His observations and analysis are summed up in a discussion of Hong Kong's status as a global city⁶ that addressed the implications and challenges arising from integration with China and from regionalization. With Hong

Kong becoming a part of China and turning into a Chinese global city, it is facing very different challenges from those of the early post-War decades. There are new and constant adaptations to be made by Hong Kong society and its people as they face a different socio-economic environment and newly emerging realities. |

(3) References to the research

¹ Lui, T.L., and Wong, C.C. (2003) *Xianggang Zhongchan Jieji Chujing Guancha* (Observations of the Situation of the Middle Class). Hong Kong: Joint Publishing. (in Chinese)

² Lui, T.L. (2014a) “A profile of Hong Kong’s middle classes: Continuities and discontinuities,” in M.H.H. Hsaio (ed.) *Chinese Middle Classes*. Abingdon: Routledge.

³ Lui, T.L. (2014b) “Getting uneasy: The changing psychology of Hong Kong’s middle classes,” in M.H.H. Hsaio (ed.) *Chinese Middle Classes*. Abingdon: Routledge.

⁴ Lui, T.L. (2003) “Rearguard politics: Hong Kong’s middle class.” *The Developing Economies*, Vol.XLI, No.2.

⁵ Mathews, G., Ma, E., and Lui, T.L. (2008) *Hong Kong, China: Learning to Belong to a Nation*. Abingdon: Routledge.

⁶ Chiu, S.W.K., and Lui, T.L. (2009) *Hong Kong: Becoming a Chinese Global City*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Research Grant Associated with the Impact Case:

^a Lui, T.L. (2005-07) “Social Class, Mobility Experience and Mobility Strategy.” funded by the Research Grants Council.

^b Lui, T.L. (2006-08) “Who Gets Ahead (or Stays Behind): Life Chances and Social Mobility in Hong Kong.” Public Policy Research Scheme. |

(4) Details of the impact

Lui’s initial thoughts on generational tensions and conflicts were published in the format of a series of short articles in *Mingpao*, a popular local newspaper, in September-October 2004. These essays were re-written as the contents of the book: *Four Generations of Hong Kong People* (published in 2007). An analysis of citations, including the number of times the book title is mentioned, in the databank of *Wiseneews* reveals it has had significant impact: inter-generational contradictions, conflicts and rivalries are now significant topics in public discourse.

Year	<i>Four Generations of Hong Kong People</i>	a) Generational Conflicts	b) Generational Contradictions	c) Generational Rivalries	a+b+c
2003	0	0	0	0	0
2004	0	0	0	6	6
2005	0	2	0	0	2
2006	0	0	1	1	2
2007	32	1	1	5	7
2008	61	1	1	12	14
2009	57	0	2	8	10
2010	163	8	19	36	63
2011	33	3	7	20	30
2012	25	5	3	20	28
2013	26	15	9	11	35
2014	28	15	49	99	163
2015	12	6	36	84	126

2016	10	15	97	124	236
2017	14	12	44	62	118
2018	3	6	35	56	97
2019*	3	3	25	36	64
Total	467	92	329	580	1001

Notes:

* Covering 1 January – 30 September 2019

Statistics reported above refers to the number of counts of the keyword in publications published in Hong Kong only

The above Table gives statistics of references to the book title and of discussion topics arising from related debates (e.g., generational conflicts [世代衝突], generational contradictions [世代矛盾] and generational rivalries [世代之爭]). This may be a somewhat simplified reflection of the book's impact on public discussion (as selected keywords cannot fully capture its influence in other areas), but it does suggest its importance as a major reference point in discussions on public and social affairs. Major political conflicts in which young people assumed leadership roles (e.g., the mobilization against speed rail construction in 2009 and the Umbrella Movement in 2014) have provided a political context for further discussion of generational conflict. They, in turn, reinforced the impact of the book.

Equally importantly, the book helped shape the Hong Kong SAR Government's policy agenda. Two Chief Executives (Mr Donald Tsang in September 2010 and Mr C.Y. Leung in December 2013 respectively)^{a, b} and one Financial Secretary (Mr John Tsang in January 2010)^c, cited this book in their blogs or on occasions when they were engaging the public. While they did not necessarily agree with all its formulations, they did respond to issues raised within it. In particular, concerns about young people's opportunity for upward mobility and overall personal development have since been taken up by Chief Executives. Since the government's first expression of concern for young people's frustration in the *Policy Address of 2009-2010*, measures addressing so-called generational contradictions have been incorporated into its annual Policy Address (e.g., under headings of social mobility in 2009-2010, youth development and multiple study pathways in 2010-2011, youth support in 2011-2012, youth development in 2013, etc.). From 2009-2010 onwards, youth development (especially regarding policy measures related to career development and housing needs) has constituted a separate section of the Chief Executives' speeches and been underlined as an area for special attention. On the other side of the political divide, social critics (e.g., popular social commentator Mr Wong Yuk Man)^d and leaders of the political opposition (e.g., former Legislative Council member Mr Alan Leong)^e have also referred to the book and its ideas to address social contradictions and issues of public concern. Its impact can be felt across a wide political spectrum.

The softer side of the book's impact is evident in a TV drama produced by Radio Television Hong Kong, Hong Kong's government-run public broadcaster. A drama entitled 'Reunion Dinner' (*Yichang Fanju*), an episode in the 2015 series of 'Below the Lion Rock' (*Shizi Shanxia 2015*)^f, was based on Lui's discussion of four generations in post-War Hong Kong and developed a storyline to reflect on social changes. Similarly, the themes of inter-generational differences and tensions were taken up by a local theatrical performance group, On and On Theatre. They organized a dialogue session, the details of which were transcribed into a report published in Cattle Depot Theatre Magazine (September 2009). This is one example of how assorted social sectors have responded to the agenda set out by Lui, articulating the discussion and analysis in the book from their own perspectives. The book's resonance in Hong Kong

society demonstrates how critical social analysis, presented in an accessible language and style, can inspire discussion and create momentum for public debate on a wide range of issues and interests.

The main impacts of this book are in three main areas: first, it sets out a new agenda – inter-generational differences in life course and personal development – for public discussion, highlighting the challenges to Hong Kong society and its people after an extended post-War period of rapid economic growth. Such a new agenda is informed by sociological research on the changing socio-economic environment, the transformation of the social structure, the changing opportunity structure, and social processes related to identity formation and growing anxieties in the context of socio-economic changes. Second, it informs public discourse by adding a new dimension of social changes (generational differences and tensions in the context of social and economic restructuring) to the popular understanding of contemporary Hong Kong society. Third, it inspired responses from different social sectors, each of which actively related the issues raised by the author to their own issues and concerns. In a sense, it facilitated dialogues at the societal level to reflect upon how different generations of Hong Kong people had different experiences and espoused different perceptions of on-going social changes. In short, the book facilitated public dialogue informed by critical social analysis, providing a notable example of how to effectively practice public sociology. |

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact

^a <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201009/10/P201009100295.htm>

^b https://www.news.gov.hk/tc/record/html/2013/12/20131223_162534.shtml

^c <https://www.fso.gov.hk/chi/blog/blog030110.htm>

^d https://hk.on.cc/hk/bkn/cnt/commentary/20140510/bkn-20140510000217318-0510_00832_001.html

^e <https://www.civicparty.hk/?q=node/824>

^f <http://app1.rthk.org.hk/php/tvarchivecatalog/episode.php?progid=930&tvcat=3> |