

The Disenfranchised Grief: An Analysis of Participation in the Anti-ELAB Movement

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■ ABSTRACT

This paper examines the dynamics of participation in the 2019 Hong Kong Anti-ELAB Movement. In particular, this paper probes the factors which affect participants' decisions to engage in and disengage from the movement. Drawing upon social movement literature, four categories of factors are selected for analysis of their influence on movement participation: cost-risk factors, structural factors, social-psychological factors, and biographic factors. Coupled with qualitative interviews with social movement academics, existing survey data, and journalistic reports, the paper discovers that all four factors, though to varying extents, influence participation in the Anti-ELAB Movement.

■ Questions and Hypotheses

Questions:

- What factors propelled Hongkongers to participate?
- What factors prompted them to leave?

Hypotheses:

- **H1:** Participation is lower if costs and risks that participants associate with participation higher
- **H2:** Participation is higher if participants have more network and organisational ties.
- **H3a:** Participation is higher if participants feel a stronger sense of collective identity.
- **H3b:** Participation is higher if participants experience higher sense of political efficacy.
- **H4a:** Participation is higher if participants have prior engagements in politics and social movements.
- **H4b:** Participation is higher if participants have a higher level of biographical availability.

■ Methodology

- 5 semi-structured interviews with academics
- Publicly available survey data: *Onsite Survey Findings in Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Bill* (Lee et al., 2019) and *Opinion Survey on the "Extradition Bill" Survey Results* (Chung, 2019)
- Journalistic reports: domestic/ international

■ Results and Discussion

Cost-risk factors

- **COVID-19:** risk of prosecution as government implemented provisions prohibiting public gatherings and risk of infection invoked fear from SARS pandemic
- **National Security Law (NSL):** risks intensified greatly due to **high penalties and widespread arrests**
- **Police brutality:** increased throughout the movement – routinised brutality made participants more afraid
- **Extradition bill:** created **risk of non-participation** as bill was perceived as a threat to Hong Kong's autonomy

Structural factors

- **Social media:** initially used to **mobilise and disseminate movement-related information**
- Near the end: communication about movement ideology declined, replaced by posting general information

Social-psychological factors

- **Common identity:** **Hongkonger identity threatened** by introduction of extradition bill
- **Younger generation** identified more as Hongkonger – pursue democracy to differentiate itself from China
- **Political efficacy:** **large initial turnouts** signalled political change feasible; efficacy declined as brutality escalated, Beijing intervened, and demands not met

Biographic factors

- **Prior engagement in politics/ movement:** many Anti-ELAB protesters also participated in **Umbrella Movement**
- **Biographical availability:** youth population dominated participation, yet participants in Anti-ELAB Movement were **more diverse than Umbrella Movement**

■ Conclusion

Hypothesis	Affect engagement?	Affect disengagement?
H1	Yes	Yes
H2	Yes	Yes, to some extent
H3a	Yes	N/A
H3b	Yes	Yes
H4a/ H4b	Yes, to some extent	N/A