

Seeking Love and Justice Amid Hong Kong's Contentious Politics

Sui Ting Kong ^{1*}, Stevi Jackson ², Petula Sik Ying Ho ³

Published: September 1, 2023

ABSTRACT

Hong Kong women activists' understanding of love and justice has shaped, and been shaped, by their political engagement under changing circumstances through two phases of mass protest: in 2014 and 2019. This article is focused on the sentiments of love and justice and how they evolved over time, from the peaceful protest of the Umbrella Movement in 2014 to the violent confrontations of 2019 in the context of the rise of ethno-nationalism. This shift reflects a changed understanding of justice – revenge against China – and a specific version of passionate love for Hong Kong and protective love for their comrades. Women activists' experiences offer insights into how a social movement has engaged women's emotional energies in particular gendered ways, while persistently marginalising gender issues. In the aftermath of the movement, when protest was effectively banned by both COVID-19 restrictions and the 2020 National Security Law, these women's emotions have found a new object of their fierce love for Hong Kong: the boy band Mirror, which has come to symbolise Hongkonger pride, belonging and resistance.

Keywords: Hong Kong protests, gender and social movements, popular culture as protest

INTRODUCTION

In June 2021 Sik Ying Ho hosted a reunion dinner of 'The Women Activists' Support Group,¹ which had begun as a Facebook group in 2015. It was set up by young women involved in the 79-day occupation of major thoroughfares in Hong Kong during 2014, known as the Umbrella Movement. It was so called because protesters used umbrellas to protect themselves from pepper spray and tear gas in skirmishes with the police preceding the occupation. The support group was a response to young women's felt need for mutual support after experiencing online and offline gender-based and sexual harassment within the movement. Sik Ying, despite being older, was invited to join them due to her reputation as a scholar-activist. The group met in person, from time to time, to share their experiences of social movement participation, to mobilise support for political prisoners, and to engage in various other forms of activism.

By the time of the dinner in 2021 these women were veterans of two major protest movements: the Umbrella Movement, which despite early clashes with the police, was largely peaceful, and the mobile and increasingly violent protests of 2019. They had not all met since the protests were at their height in late 2019 and the global pandemic had not yet taken hold. Since then they had lived through lockdowns, social distancing and travel restrictions for over a year and, in 2020, the Chinese government had imposed a draconian National Security Law on Hong Kong, which criminalised any open dissent, effectively outlawing protest. Over a long dinner, the conversation ranged from discussion of the recent protests, and how they differed from the Umbrella Movement, to the nature of populism and democracy.

Although none of the women apart from Sik Ying identified as feminists, they had always been concerned about gender inequality and injustice; but in recent conversations about Hong Kong politics, gender issues seem to have slipped away, rendered unimportant relative to the suppression of Hongkongers' democratic aspirations. Members of this group are not unusual in this respect. Elsewhere we have noted the same disregard of gender issues among other Hong Kong women activists – including those who *do* identify as feminists – to the extent that

¹ In order to protect these women's anonymity, the group's name is a pseudonym as are all the names of individual research participants.

¹ *University of Durham*, UNITED KINGDOM

² *University of York*, UNITED KINGDOM

³ *University of Hong Kong*, HONG KONG

*Corresponding Author: sui.t.kong@durham.ac.uk

they now often refuse to criticise the misogyny and homophobia openly expressed within some influential sections of the movement (Kong, Jackson and Ho, 2024). There is nothing new or unusual in gender issues being side-lined in the interests of a 'bigger struggle'. However, in the Hong Kong context, there is a discernible shift in women activists' politics, which is frequently articulated in terms of love and justice. This is what we seek to analyse in this article, explaining how and why understandings of love and justice have changed between the Umbrella Movement and the 2019 protests and their aftermath.

In the rest of the article, we briefly describe our methodology and the theoretical resources on which we draw, before providing some background on the postcolonial context in which the protests occurred. We then move on to discuss the two protest movements in turn, analysing the way love figures in women's accounts of them. Finally we consider the aftermath of the 2019 protest, in which love for Hong Kong found new outlets.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL NOTES

We (the three authors) are academics who have been researching the lives of women activists since the Umbrella movement as part of a series of projects exploring the impact of political involvement on personal life (Jackson, Ho and Kong, 2018; Kong, Ho and Jackson, 2020; Ho and Li, 2021; Kong, Jackson and Ho, 2024).² We are two ethnically Chinese female Hongkongers and one white British woman with longstanding ties to Hong Kong and we all have direct experience of the movements we discuss here, with varying degrees of participation in them. As feminists we recognise that all knowledge is situated (Haraway, 1988). We are not disinterested observers; our analysis is coloured by our own social locations, experiences and preoccupations.

The accounts we draw on here include some from the Women Activists' Support Group and some from a larger sample of activists who have participated in our research (Ho, Jackson and Kong, 2018; Kong Jackson and Ho, 2024). We have followed the trajectories of a number of individual women who participated in both protests, involving them at different stages of the research. Since we wanted to investigate how activists made sense of their experiences, we have used a variety of qualitative methods, aiming to create diverse opportunities for activists to express their views and feelings. In addition to well-established methods, such as individual and group interviews and focus groups, we also experimented with some innovative approaches. In our collaborative focus group analysis, a focus group's discussions are observed by an academic 'reflecting team', followed by a reversal of roles, with the reflecting team providing an analysis of the focus group discussion observed by the original group, who are then able to speak back to the researchers and challenge their interpretation (Kong, Ho and Jackson, 2020). Additionally, we have combined this method with a multi-media theatrical performance in which women activists dramatised their experiences, finding new ways to convey their thoughts and feelings (Ho, Chan and Kong, 2017). Through maintaining contact with these activists over time, we have been able to chart changes in their political stances and gain insight into their shifting emotional investments in the democracy movement.

One lesson we learnt from enabling our research participants to talk back to us in 360-degree feedback exercises, as well as from ongoing contact with them, was the importance of emotions: they wanted us to understand what they *felt* about the protests, not just what they thought. Emotions have, in the past few decades, been recognised as an important aspect of social movements and especially of protest, 'a process overflowing with emotions' (Goodwin *et al.*, 2001:7). Feminists have made significant contributions to this 'affective turn' in their engagement with and critiques of mainstream social movement theory (Zemlinskaya, 2010; Holmes, 2012; Craddock, 2020). Most feminist social movement scholarship, however, has focused on women's, and especially feminist, activism (for an overview, see McKee and Crossley, 2018). All social movements, however, are gendered, regardless of their goals and the gender composition of their adherents (Einwohner *et al.*, 2000; Zemlinskaya, 2010; Craddock, 2020); they operate in gendered social contexts and 'movement participant, targets, and/or third parties (...) construct or manipulate gendered meanings' (Einwohner *et al.*, 2000: 692). In movements with a mixed gender composition, women have often been side-lined, their interests marginalised, and/or their contribution ignored or minimised (Zemlinskaya, 2010: 635-636).

In analysing women's experiences within such a protest movement, we must address the gendering of internal movement dynamics and, in order to do so, we take a relational approach (Holmes, 2012; Crossley, 2016; see also Kong, Jackson and Ho, 2024). Social movements, and people's subjective experience of them, are relational in a number of ways: they have a self/other dynamic, us and them, which is shaped by interaction amongst allies and with opponents; by relations between groups as well as individuals; and between individuals, groups and corporate or state entities. In the case of the Hong Kong protests, activists are oriented towards a variety of others: their comrades, friends and supporters, the idea of Hong Kong itself, and those cast as enemies: the Beijing and Hong Kong governments and (especially from 2019) mainland Chinese individuals and the police. A central motivation of women's involvement in these movements, especially in and since 2019, is the defence of the Hong Kong they

² These projects all had ethical approval from the University of Hong Kong and/or Durham University.

know and love against the threat posed by the Chinese government. How has their 'knowing' evolved through their embodied experience and perception of Hong Kong society, culture and politics as under threat? How has it affected their understanding of love and justice?

Feminism has a long tradition of theorising love, especially romantic love in heterosexual relationships (see Jackson, 2014), as well as love within families and among friends. Here, however, we are concerned with love in the context of a social movement where it is both interpersonal and directed towards collectivities: Hong Kong itself and the movement to defend it. In exploring these loves, we follow Jackson's past emphasis on the sociality of love (1993; 2014), drawing on Anna Jónasdóttir's theorisation of 'love power' (1994, 2009, 2011, and 2014) and Arlie Hochschild's (1983, 2003) conceptualisation of 'emotion management' and 'feeling rules'. Love is social in that its meanings are contextually, culturally and historically variable. It is associated with similarly variable socially patterned practices, some of which are subject to state regulation; it is relational, 'something one "does" and "feels" with others rather than a pre-existing emotion that one "has"' (Smart, 2007: 59); and it is also something made subjectively meaningful through reflexive processing of what we learn of love from our wider culture and through everyday observation and interaction.

Jónasdóttir's theory of love helps us to theorise the ways in which Hong Kong women's love has served the interests of both the democracy movement and their male intimate others. She applies a Marxist methodology to 'socio-sexual relations', or gender relations (Jónasdóttir, 2009), conceptualising love and love power, in Marx's terms, as 'practical human-sensuous activity' and 'a creative/productive – and exploitable – human capacity' (2011: 45). Love power is envisaged as comparable to, but distinct from and irreducible to, labour power. Jónasdóttir focuses on love in heterosexual relationships as an explanation for the persistence of male dominance, but she argues that the way heterosexual love is practised influences other love relationships and 'person to person relationships in other social contexts' (2011: 46; also 2009: 78-79). Of the two aspects of love she identifies – care and erotic ecstasy – only the former resonates with our data. Moreover, Jónasdóttir is more interested in relational practices and the macro-social structuring of love than subjective feeling – hers is 'not primarily a theory of the self or *subjectivity*' (Jónasdóttir, 2011: 13, emphasis in original). Love, however, must also be understood as a subjectively felt and often powerful emotion in order to do justice to the feelings of the women who participated in our research.

If we are to avoid universalising, essentialist assumptions, it is problematic to think of love as a natural pre-existent emotion and the social as merely moulding or constraining it. Feminist anthropologists have often emphasised the cultural specificity of emotions. As Michelle Rosaldo puts it: 'feelings are not substances to be found in our blood (...) They are structured by our forms of understanding' (1984: 143). Sociologists tend not to go so far, but Arlie Hochschild (1983) has suggested that when we are required to manage our emotions, such management contributes to the actual creation of them. More recently, writing of love, she argues that the 'feeling rules' appropriate to any given social context mean that 'some feelings are feelable and others are not.' Further, how love 'feels' depends on 'cultural dictionaries', which define what is 'pre-acknowledged, pre-named, pre-articulated, culturally available to be felt' (Hochschild, 2003: 121). It is important, however, not to forget the relational and interactional processes that mediate between cultural dictionaries and subjective feelings (see Jackson, 2014). In the context of Hong Kong's social movements, then, we should consider how the interactional setting of protest may require emotion management and/or engender particular feeling rules.

Before going on to consider how love (towards comrades, the movement and Hong Kong) is felt, and in what sense that love might be exploited, we need to provide some background on Hong Kong's peculiar post-colonial situation and the development and characteristics of the two protest movements. The aspirations and emotions of the women activists we worked with only make sense against this backdrop.

POSTCOLONIAL PECULIARITIES

The British colonisation of Hong Kong began after first Anglo-Chinese War or Opium War (1839-1841) whereby Britain forced China to accept the British East India Company's imports of opium from India. Under the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 Britain acquired Hong Kong Island and subsequently, after the second Opium War (1856-1858), the tip of Kowloon peninsula across the harbour. While these territories were ceded to Britain 'in perpetuity', the bulk of Hong Kong's landmass, known as the New Territories, was secured on a 99 year lease in 1898. The expiry of this lease determined the date when the whole of Hong Kong would be returned to China: 1997. The ending of British control did not come about through the will of Hong Kong's people: they were not consulted. Far from wanting to 'return to the motherland', being handed back to China was not, for most, a welcome prospect, despite the ills of colonialism. For most of its history, the British colonial administration had presided over a grossly unequal society and neglected local people, except to keep them under control. As late as the early 1970s, most of the population still lived in abject poverty and overcrowded substandard housing, labour

conditions were appalling and welfare provision was extremely limited.³ Things began to improve in the 1970s when, partly in response to major protests in 1967, the government initiated a campaign against corruption (which had previously been rife); a new public housing programme; better healthcare; the introduction of free compulsory schooling; and partial recognition of Cantonese as an official language (Carroll, 2007). These reforms were limited, but were enough to persuade the populace that the government 'had become relatively reasonable' (Cheung, 2009: 140). Local people continued, however, to have little political influence, with only a few members of local elites drafted into the otherwise exclusively European legislature. From the 1980s onwards, due to its increasing prominence as a global financial centre, Hong Kong became richer, and a growing middle class was sharing in the new prosperity even while inequality was increasing (Goodstadt, 2013). At the same time, popular culture began to flourish and a distinctive Hong Kong identity emerged, alongside the prospect of the inevitable return to China in 1997, finalised by the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984. The impending handover did prompt the colonial authorities to introduce a degree of democracy in the form of some indirectly elected representatives to the Legislature.⁴

In the final decades before the handover, the worst aspects of colonial rule had been ameliorated, helped by greater affluence, though poverty and inequality persisted. Hongkongers had come to see British rule in a positive light and to value the rule of law, a reasonably fair judicial system, relative transparency in government and a degree of freedom of speech unimaginable in the People's Republic of China (PRC). They therefore anticipated the return to China with some trepidation, heightened by the Tiananmen massacre of 4 June 1989. The provisions of the handover agreement, however, offered some reassurance: under the 'one country two systems' provision, Hong Kong was to be a Special Administrative Region (SAR), retaining its existing legal and political system, along with freedom of speech and assembly, for 50 years after the resumption of Chinese sovereignty. There were also pledges of future democracy, which were never honoured, providing the focus for a long campaign to achieve what had been promised.

As a result of its colonial history, Hong Kong is culturally quite different from the PRC. Hongkongers see themselves as more sophisticated, civilised and cosmopolitan than the mainland Chinese population. At the same time, they have their own local culture and language (Cantonese), which is valued and seen as worth protecting against mainland Chinese influence. This sense of distinctiveness increased as more Chinese 'mainlanders' (as they are called) came to Hong Kong as tourists or settlers after the handover. Even as China became richer and more powerful, Hongkongers continued to see mainlanders as inferior, although more threatening (Liu and Shi, 2021). Resentment of China and mainland Chinese people became more marked in the second decade of this century. The situation worsened after Xi Jinping's accession to power in 2012:⁵ China became more authoritarian and Beijing increasingly interfered in Hong Kong's internal affairs and, in particular, dashed hopes of future democracy. On 31 August 2014, China's National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) ruled that, instead of the promised democratic election of the SAR's Chief Executive (head of government), voters would only be able to choose candidates loyal to the Beijing regime selected by a nomination committee. The Umbrella Movement was a response to the injustice of this decision.

LOVE AND PEACE

The plan for an occupation was initiated by three veteran democracy campaigners (Benny Tai, Chan Kin-man and Chu Yiu Ming), advocates of non-violent civil disobedience, under the slogan 'Occupy Central with Love and Peace'. In the event, the occupation began after the police fired tear gas against students who broke into Civic Square, the site of the government complex, on 28 September 2014. The police action proved counter-productive, increasing support for the protest. Subsequently, until the occupation was cleared, the police adopted a low profile and the occupation remained peaceful. While the original trio stepped back and leadership was assumed by younger, mainly student-run, organisations, the commitment to non-violence remained. In addition to the tents provided by supporters and the banners flying from overhead walkways, the main site along a mile or so of dual carriageway included study spaces, stalls, and art exhibits. 'Love and peace' were still evident in the support protesters gave each other, the flow of donations from sympathisers and the care taken to ensure that the occupied

³ We have covered the history and legacy of the colonial era in much greater detail elsewhere (Jackson and Ho, 2020).

⁴ Indirect elections to the Legislative Council, known colloquially as the LegCo, were organised via 'functional constituencies' representing various, mostly business and conservative, interests. This situation persisted until after the handover, with the addition of some directly elected representatives – but the number of seats directly elected was reduced in 2021 to 20 out of 90, along with other measures to reduce democratic participation.

⁵ Xi became general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (and thus effectively paramount leader) in 2012 and has been president since 2013. He has since done away with restrictions on terms of office and, in 2022, secured a third term in office and now holds near absolute power.

space was kept clean and tidy. It was so safe, orderly and colourful that it became a tourist attraction; visitors strolled through with their cameras at the ready; gowned graduating students posed for photographs alongside their proud parents.

The peaceful ambience and cooperative relational practices allowed plenty of opportunities for political discussion and for raising wider issues of social justice, including gender inequality and LGBT+ rights (see Kong, Jackson and Ho, 2024). The leadership of the movement, however, remained male-dominated. Women, although centrally involved in a variety of organisational activities, rarely received due recognition, especially if their boyfriends were leading activists, as has been the case in many mixed-gender social movements (Einwohner *et al.*, 2000; Zemlinskaya, 2010).

The movement encompassed a range of political positions. While most focused on democracy and securing the autonomy granted to Hong Kong under the handover agreement and Basic Law (Hong Kong's mini-constitution), a small minority wanted to go further. These were primarily right-wing, nativist groups, who wanted China and mainland Chinese out of Hong Kong altogether. They did not embrace the ethic of love and peace; on the contrary, they sought to escalate political confrontation to bring about a revolution. Nativists used the derogatory term 'Left Plastic' to refer to the left, whom they saw as obstacles to revolution. In particular they attacked outspoken left-leaning women within the movement, unleashing a torrent of sexist abuse, sexual harassment and cyber-bullying against them, which continued in the years following the Umbrella Movement. Women activists were told to keep quiet and stay home. In online forums they were sexualised and objectified, with repeated comments on their breasts, vaginas and their sexual life: for example, they were called 'public toilets' (meaning promiscuous (Ho, Chan and Kong, 2017)). Such conduct is not unusual in the context of political protest, and nor is the trivialisation of the hurt caused by it (Einwohner *et al.*, 2000; Zemlinskaya, 2010). The Hong Kong women activists received limited support from male comrades, including from their intimate partners, who were, themselves, prominent activists. Even when these men were sympathetic, attacks on the women were deemed unimportant relative to the 'bigger issue' of Hong Kong democracy. Comments they received from these men included: 'Just ignore them, it doesn't hurt'; 'You should be able to tolerate it'; 'It's nothing' and 'You should focus on the big picture'. These experiences prompted some women activists to form a support group and to push back against their male comrades' attitudes. In the years that followed the Umbrella Movement, they had some success in having gender issues accepted, albeit sometimes grudgingly, as part of the political agenda and took pride in this achievement.

LOVE IN GENDERED SPACES

As women activists continued the struggle to find a place for themselves within Hong Kong politics, one was offered to them: a highly gendered space defined by their relationship with others. As some, mostly male, leaders of the movement were arrested and imprisoned, including friends and partners of the women activists we worked with, they faced pressure to step into these men's shoes and take up leadership positions. Yet they were seen as inferior and temporary proxies for the 'real' leaders. As Cora commented, despite her increasing political visibility, she was depicted as 'ONLY his girlfriend'. Women were also expected to take up the burden of care for imprisoned boyfriends, adding to their responsibilities and, in so doing, felt obligated to remain positive because, as Cora said 'I don't want to worry him [her imprisoned boyfriend]'. Gigi, who was also in this situation, discussed the way in which it had come to dominate her life. She told us:

Because I love him, my first reaction to his imprisonment was to devote myself to taking care of him. It reached a point when I felt I had lost myself. Should I really use all my time and energy on him? I could not concentrate on my work or study (...) even though it was him who was imprisoned (...) I also feel like I am in gaol.

In this context, these women's 'love power' was being appropriated, both by their boyfriends and the wider movement. While Jónasdóttir makes a distinction between love power and labour power, here labour and love appear to be fused. In the name of love women were doing a great deal of political work and emotional work (Hochschild, 1983), as well as the organisational work required to manage their multiple burdens. They were also having to engage in emotion management (Hochschild, 1983) to conceal the pressure they were under and the toll it was taking on them.

Those who belonged to the Women Activists' Support Group described in our Introduction, found within it a place where they could receive care and affirmation, where their suffering could be acknowledged, and mutual understanding enhanced. As Tammy put it: 'This is the first time I could hear a more complete self-articulation of themselves [other group members] although I have been very close to them. This process itself is very therapeutic.' Jónasdóttir argues that the care element of love power empowers the cared for, enhancing their self-actualisation.

In the support group, the mutuality of care had positive and creative effects. It made it possible to make personal experiences politically relevant, as Cora did when she argued that 'if the movement is supported by people, the pain experienced by them should be taken care of. The movement can then be sustainable.' Although the women could still be said to be engaging in feminine love practices, subject to feeling rules that encoded an ethic of care and self-sacrifice, they had begun to demonstrate a reflexive critical awareness of its gendered dimensions and dynamics and to question the way they were positioned as women. They were, then, developing a situated knowledge of love and an understanding of it as gendered. This knowledge was embodied and experiential (emerging from simultaneously managing personal relationships and political engagement), but also intellectual (deriving from individual and collective reflection).

We have characterised the love these women practised as protective love, directed towards promoting the wellbeing of others and shielding them from distress. This love is consistent with Jónasdóttir's conception of love as care, as an aspect of love power. The protective love these women demonstrated and articulated was carried into the 2019 protests, when it acquired new valences, new sources of legitimacy and new legitimating purposes, in combination with another form of love that features in their narratives, which we have conceptualised as passionate love for Hong Kong. Love for Hong Kong was always a factor, but gained a new urgency and ferocity in 2019. Pitted against the Beijing government's insistence that Hong Kong people should love China, it inspired the opposite: a hatred of all that China and Chineseness represented. This was to have an impact on the gendered politics of love, as we will explain.

LOVE, FEAR AND HATRED

The Umbrella Movement did not achieve its objective: no concessions were made by the Hong Kong SAR or Beijing governments. Hong Kong opinion was split between those who sought to promote democracy and protect Hong Kong's autonomy (known as 'yellow ribbons') and those who were pro-China (known as 'blue ribbons'). The situation worsened as leading activists faced prosecution and gaol terms and some pro-democracy members of the Legislative Council were disqualified from holding public office. In addition, five men who ran a bookshop selling scurrilous publications that were critical of Chinese Communist Party leaders were kidnapped and subjected to extra-judicial imprisonment in mainland China. These events added to the antipathy to China, intensifying sources of discontent that had been evident for a decade. China's moves to integrate Hong Kong more tightly into the mainland economy and an unabated influx of mainlanders exacerbated Hongkongers' anxiety about threats to their language, identity and way of life. They saw their city being transformed, as authentic *cha chaan teng* (local cafés), corner shops and hawker stalls gave way to high-end designer shops, jewellery stores and pharmacies catering for mainland Chinese tourists and parallel traders. This sense of loss lay behind the so-called 'fishball riots/revolution' during lunar New Year in 2016, when protesters came out on the streets to resist police efforts to clear hawker stalls from Mong Kok, leading to violent clashes.

This event presaged the change in politics and tactics that were to characterise the 2019 protests. The shift was fuelled by a 'politics of resentment', which, as Bonikowski (2017) has argued, underpins ethno-nationalist populism in many parts of the world. The fear that Hong Kong was in danger of being absorbed into China and overtaken by mainlanders intensified anti-Chinese sentiment. Mainlanders were already racialised as 'other', as in the infamous 2012 front page of *Apple Daily* depicting them as locusts. In the years between 2014 and 2019, localist feeling became increasingly nativist; the politics of belonging became a politics of exclusion, and democracy came to be envisaged as 'ethnocracy', for Hongkongers only (Ip, 2019), marking an ideological shift to the right. Among those who were attracted to this brand of politics, there was also a turn to violent tactics. In the eyes of radical nativists, the failure of the Umbrella Movement was attributable to its peaceful character and to its insufficiently radical aspirations. They wanted revolution, a Hong Kong for Hongkongers, and, in some cases, independence. Nativists had been small disruptive element in the Umbrella Movement, but in 2019 they became much more prominent, especially among newly-radicalised young people. Nativist groups had always expressed an antipathy to the left, and especially to feminists. At best, their supporters thought gender issues irrelevant; at worst, they were openly hostile to feminism (Choi et al., 2020). As Cho et al. note, sexism worsened in the years following the Umbrella Movement, with 'unequalled hatred and attacks against feminist activism' (2020: 100). Yet women, including feminists, remained active in politics and in the 2019 protests.

The extradition bill proposed in 2019 united people in Hong Kong across a wide swathe of political opinion. It was feared that the possibility of extradition to mainland China would both undermine Hong Kong's judicial autonomy and render its inhabitants vulnerable to politically-motivated prosecution under China's repressive legal system. The resultant protests started with huge marches, the largest drawing in two million participants (out of a total Hong Kong population of 7.5 million). Heavy-handed policing in response to early episodes of direct action initiated a spiralling rise in violence within fluid, mobile leaderless protests. Where protesters in 2014 had responded to police attacks defensively, in 2019 a substantial minority, who became known as the valiant, fought

back. Amid the escalating violence, the demands of the protests widened and anti-government and anti-police feeling intensified. This confrontational situation strengthened nativist sentiment; anyone with connections to mainland China or the SAR government came to be seen as the enemy, justifying vandalism against ‘blue ribbon’ businesses. Hostility towards Beijing extended to individual mainlanders, who became targets of xenophobic hate speech, threats, harassment and sometimes even physical assaults (Palmer, 2020). Yet support for the movement among the populace did not wane. The use of force by the police angered many bystanders, particularly through the excessive deployment of tear gas in residential areas and indiscriminate use of water cannons and other projectiles in the police armoury. These tactics reinforced the conviction that the police were enemies of the people and that protesters’ violence was both legitimate and in a just cause. The strength and resilience of support was made clear in the District Council elections in November 2019, the only truly democratic elections in Hong Kong.⁶ In the highest ever turnout, pro-democracy and anti-government candidates, including many young activists, won 17 out of 18 districts and 392 out of 452 seats, most by large majorities.

As this electoral activity indicates, not all pro-democracy activism in 2019 involved violent protest. Peaceful actions went on alongside more confrontational ones. Women participated in a number of ways. As well as attending the larger, mostly peaceful marches and vigils, some were frontline fighters, or supported the frontliners as first aiders. Some stood for election in the District Council and later Legco elections (most of whom were subsequently disqualified from public office). There were feminist-led women’s actions, such as the mothers’ protest against police brutality and protests against police sexual harassment. While those women who were active on the front lines earned respect within the movement, feminist events were only acceptable if they were seen as serving the movement’s aims and as long as feminists refrained from criticism of sexism and harassment within it. Sexism, and indeed misogyny, were most evident in attitudes to ‘the enemy’ – police, mainlanders and pro-government Hongkongers, for example in rape threats against male police officers’ wives and the joyous, champagne-fuelled celebrations of the death of pro-China female activist, Leticia Sze-Yin Lee. Racialised Sinophobia intersected with sexism in the denigration of mainland Chinese women, for example the public humiliation of *dai ma*, (older mainland women who enjoy dancing in public spaces in New Territories towns). To criticise such behaviour was to be a traitor to the movement and, if a feminist, to attract the same misogynist taunts and harassment as ‘enemy’ women (Ho, 2019; Ho and Li, 2021). Any activist who wanted to avoid vilification from within the movement had to prove their love for Hong Kong; and love for Hong Kong meant hatred of the enemy and of alleged traitors.

Where it had been difficult, but possible, to call out sexism and misogyny within the movement in earlier years, in 2019 it became dangerous to do so. A particular ethic of solidarity was developed early in the protests, which aimed to keep the movement together across left and right, peaceful protestors and the valiant, encapsulated by such slogans as ‘brothers climbing mountains, each offering their efforts’ and ‘going up and down together’ (Shum, 2021). While this did foster an impressive degree of cooperation within the movement and from sympathisers, it also had a darker side. Not only was empathy for comrades bolstered by enmity for hated others, but it became coercive; it was simply not possible to criticise violence or Sinophobia within the movement, or the pro-western rightward shift of its politics.⁷ In particular, the valiant were above reproach: they were brave defenders of the people, they risked injury and arrest in the pursuit of justice, their love for Hong Kong was beyond question; and any true Hongkonger should love them unconditionally. As Carmen put it: ‘I wouldn’t cut ties with them [the valiant] ... I just won’t. Even if they burned down the dogs’ hut [police family living quarters], I still won’t cut ties’.

PASSIONATE LOVE, PROTECTIVE LOVE AND VENGEFUL JUSTICE

Other women activists echoed Carmen’s unconditional support for the valiant. In doing so, Dorothy simultaneously referenced the change in attitudes that the 2019 protests had fostered: ‘in the past if they [protesters] physically attacked another person I would have condemned it publicly, but I won’t do it now.’ As Craddock (2020) notes, emotions matter, not only in mobilising political engagement, but also in sustaining it. Maintaining solidarity and commitment during the protests required harnessing feelings to the cause, expressed through attachment to the movement and hatred of its perceived enemies. This confrontational context engendered new feeling rules, in

⁶ These elections will, in future, no longer be democratic. In May 2023 Hong Kong’s Chief executive announced that 80% of District Council seats would be filled by those appointed by the SAR government, with only 20% elected.

⁷ The rightward shift is evident not only in xenophobic attitudes to Chinese people and widespread antipathy to feminists and ‘left plastics’, but in the aspiration to preserve Hong Kong as it is: a grossly unequal capitalist society. It is also demonstrated by glorifying the USA as defender of freedom, and in the widespread support for Trump, to the extent of buying in to his ‘stolen election’ narrative, and also in colonial nostalgia (Li, 2020). Both the US flag and the old colonial flag were visible in street demonstrations in Hong Kong and the latter in solidarity marches in the UK. Not all protesters supported such views and actions and most of the women activists we worked with did not, but there was a near-universal reluctance to challenge them.

Hochschild's (2003) terms, binding what it was possible to feel to the only social relations that mattered: the dynamic of 'us' and 'them'. It became both emotionally and morally possible to excuse violent attacks on individual mainlanders and government supporters that might otherwise be felt and thought to be abhorrent.

Many of the women activists articulated their feelings in terms of love. For example, Rosie, who served as a first-aider during street battles, said that love between the valiant and pacifists created an obligation for the latter to defend and care for the former. Such protective love, adapted to new circumstances, was commonly expressed towards fellow protesters, especially the young valiant street-fighters. It became fused with passionate love for Hong Kong, which, during the 2019 protests and the repression that followed, became conflated with love for the movement. The love we define as passionate was articulated as superseding all other loves, as when May asserted that her 'big love for Hong Kong' was greater than her love for her family: a powerful statement in a society that is so family-centred. The love the activists declared for Hong Kong was a fierce love, relying for its force on the hatred of all who stood in its way. The combination of passionate and protective love figured prominently in the accounts we heard from women activists.

One of the activists, Phoebe, exemplified the shift of sensibilities since 2014. She has a brother in the police force and, during the Umbrella Movement, had done her best to preserve their relationship. As she told us soon afterwards, she had written him a long, affectionate letter, explaining that her involvement in the protests was for the benefit of all Hong Kong people, including him and his family. In 2019 she became a front-line fighter, one of the valiant, and repudiated her brother completely in the name of love for Hong Kong, the movement and justice. She also voiced a strong commitment to protecting the young people in her small band of street-fighters.⁸ Phoebe attributed her changed stance to contempt for the government and anger towards the authoritarian regime, which also affected her political priorities. She is anti-capitalist, yet strategically pro-USA and pro-UK and explicitly subordinated equality to democracy: 'You people who are concerned about equality, please fix Hong Kong first, otherwise there is no way we can even talk about equal rights'.

May was as uncompromising in her political position as Phoebe, and as willing to adjust her perceptions accordingly. She depicted populism as 'a demon we have nurtured together.' She was well aware that the right-wing politics of Hong Kong's populism conflicted with her own leftist position, but was willing to accept it because it strengthened the movement: 'the winner takes all, and democracy is defined by power. You need to bring the power [China] down so that you can get a chance'. May has embraced a rather bizarre twist in passionate love for Hong Kong: the ethos of *laam chau*, mutual destruction or 'burnism', translated into the English slogan (derived from *The Hunger Games*) 'if we burn you [China] burn with us' (Chan, 2020; Chan, 2022; Manzoor and Liu, 2022). The aim is to undermine the economy on the assumption that, if Hong Kong were doomed, there was 'no need to preserve the value of Hong Kong as a global financial hub', which benefitted only elites and the Chinese party-state (Manzoor and Liu, 2022: 67). This objective came to justify much of the destruction during the protests; and also motivated lobbying foreign governments for sanctions against China and the Hong Kong government. While this can be seen as 'populist nihilism', fuelled by 'an exclusionary politics of rage' (Li, 2020: n. p.) and a desire for vengeance, May insisted that it was entirely rational. She claimed that the only hope for Hong Kong is to bring China to its knees; even if this does not happen immediately, for her the destruction of Hong Kong reveals the evils of China's authoritarianism to the world.

Whereas Phoebe and May appeared to have fully internalised the new feeling rules that emerged during the 2019 protests, others were engaged in emotion management, keeping any doubts in check, at least publicly. They were not so uncritical in their support for the valiant and the right-wing political agenda. Gill, for example, acknowledged the problems of populist sentiment but nonetheless reiterated her trust in 'the people', saying: 'I have chosen to be naïve.' Some were willing, in private, to raise questions about the pro-USA stance of the movement, or were aware of the coerciveness of unconditional love and solidarity. Cora had reason to fear being discredited within the movement and worried that evidence of her past commitment to peaceful protest might surface and lay her open to attack: 'the LIHKG [main protest online forum] might start saying stuff ... pointing fingers at me the damn left plastic'. Tammy was also aware of the need for self-surveillance, saying: 'It is the greatest mistake to criticise the People! ... I will never criticise the 2019 babies [young frontliners]. I am too nervous about doing so! I know I cannot afford the consequences!' Even for these women, however, fear of retribution was not the only factor that ensured their support for the movement: like other activists, their commitment was sustained by a sense of righteous anger and by their passionate love for Hong Kong and protective love for others in the movement.

These sentiments provided a rationale for judgemental and punitive attitudes to those seen as betraying the protest movement, which meant demonstrating insufficient love for Hong Kong. In the name of love, they silenced and trivialised the struggles of those who could not display the same level of loyalty to the movement, including

⁸ The valiant operated in small crews of trusted others and thus were anonymous to other bands of fighters: a tactic that offered some protection against informers and also fostered a sense of comradeship. Phoebe was referring particularly to these immediate comrades, who were mostly younger than she was.

those who had chosen to emigrate and remain silent after the implementation of the National Security Law. Lauren admitted to having been ‘an emigration Nazi’, saying, ‘I don’t know why people would just run away so quickly especially those who are not at high risk.’ Later, however, she came to be more accepting of the mass emigration, especially after confronting her own fears and seeing how many activists who stayed ended up in gaol. Her hostility towards the ‘traitors’ who abandoned Hong Kong had been unquestioned until she began to share the suffering of those who could not uphold the high standard of loyalty to the movement.

Such intolerance, which is widespread among Hong Kong activists, is reinforced by a hierarchy of victimhood: the perception that the real victims were those who were subjected to state and police violence and oppression (Ho and Li, 2021). Only they deserved love and empathy. Other forms of victimisation, including gender-based violence and harassment, lost their salience and became irrelevant in the face of the struggle against an authoritarian state. Whereas, in the period following the Umbrella Movement, these women had demonstrated some understanding of the gendered dynamics of movement politics, that understanding was no longer evident in their more recent reflections. It was as if the gender lens had been removed from their perception of the political landscape they inhabited.

Meanwhile, women activists continued to live gendered lives through the turbulence of the protest and its aftermath and to negotiate love in their personal lives, with many changes in their attachments. Some found themselves, once more, facing separation from loved ones through imprisonment: and this time the women activists themselves are facing the risk, prospect or actuality of gaol terms. Others, such as Gill, have once again taken up the care work of visiting imprisoned partners and comrades and ensuring that their needs are met. Detailed consideration of these women’s personal lives is beyond the scope of this article, but it is significant that when they discussed personal loves, it was never with the passion that they discussed love for Hong Kong, the movement, or their comrades.

FROM FORBIDDEN LOVE TO A NEW LOVE

Since Beijing’s imposition of the National Security Law on 30 June 2020, open expression of passionate love for Hong Kong, as an entity separable from China, or protective love for valiant fighters, is now forbidden. Since then, hundreds of pro-democracy politicians, journalists, lawyers and activists have been arrested; opposition political parties, trade unions and human rights organisations have been disbanded for fear of violating the law; pro-democracy newspapers and websites have been shut down. In a climate where no open dissent can be voiced, Hongkonger identity is sustained through cultural means. Many have found a new, seemingly safe, object of love: the boy band, Mirror, twelve young men who emerged from a local TV talent contest in 2018 and have attracted a huge following.⁹

Popular music has, for decades, contributed to Hong Kong’s cultural identity (see Ho, 2011), but the immense popularity of Mirror is something new. Whereas boy bands of this kind usually appeal primarily to pre-adolescent girls, Mirror have attracted a far wider range of enthusiastic, mainly female, fans. The South China *Morning Post* magazine, for example, quotes a 74-year-old grandmother who called them her ‘source of positive energy and happiness’ and a 40-year-old woman who expressed her pride in the band in a situation where Hong Kong citizens’ grievances cannot be aired (*SCMP*, 2021). Described as ‘the voice of a city under crackdown’, the band’s music ‘combines catchy beats, layered lyrics, and a hearty dose of pizzazz’ and has become ‘a source of entertainment and escape, but also a reflection of the city’s political consciousness’ (Hui, 2021). Mak and Poon (2023) similarly argue that the expanding fandom of Mirror is a form of political consumerism, which revives collective memories that cannot be articulated under the National Security Law. For example, the song ‘Warrior’, with its repeated refrain of ‘never give up’, became a great hit in 2021 due to its resonance with the revolutionary spirit of the 2019 protest movement. Tactics used during the protests were repurposed – where Telegram groups had been used to coordinate demonstrations and mutual support, now they served to raise money for promotional campaigns and to organise public gatherings to show support for the boy band.

Mirror, then, have attracted many erstwhile political activists among their fans, including some of the women participating in our research. These young women activists’ attachment to Mirror seems to have absorbed the love that went into the movement when it was at its height. We suggest that their love for Mirror incorporates the two dimensions of love previously manifested politically – it is both passionate and protective. It is passionate in that it expresses their fierce pride in Hong Kong, their sense of belonging and longing to belong to the city that they call home. It is thus also encompasses, in Vanessa May’s (2013) terms, cultural, relational and sensory belonging. Culturally, it expresses the value invested in Hong Kong’s local culture, way of life and people, especially as the

⁹ Mirror has a Facebook site available at: <https://www.facebook.com/MIRROR.WeAre> and a YouTube channel: [MIRROR – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMIRRORE). More information can also be found on Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirror_\(group\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirror_(group)) (All sites accessed 29 May 2023).

band, having won a talent contest, is seen as the people's choice. Fans can position themselves as part of 'the people' and part of a political community, albeit one that is otherwise silenced. In sensory terms, aside from the experience of the music itself, the band's performances evoke embodied feeling of comfort in a home that is known and loved. In using ostensibly apolitical cultural consumption, the reoccupation of Hong Kong's streets rekindles a place-based sense of belonging, of ownership of space, which the suppression of protest has taken away from many Hongkongers. Mirror thus capture all that Hong Kong means for activists as a place to be defended and preserved. Women activists' protective love is aroused by the image of these twelve attractive young men: their youth and their apparent vulnerability and humility. They represent Hong Kong people and stand in for the young valiant fighters who were previously the object of protective love.

In the present circumstances of political persecution, the women activists can express this love openly, without falling foul of the National Security Law or other repressive legislation. It may seem that they have displaced their love for Hong Kong and the protest movement on to a safer object, but they resist this interpretation. In a focus group where love for Mirror was discussed, May contested our suggestion that this was displaced love:

It's not a one-sided love or our displacement of love, it's a mutual support with an implicit understanding that it's an extension of a common love for Hong Kong! The boys know that they can never betray their fans by going to China to earn RMB [the Chinese currency]! Loyalty to Hong Kong and anti-China is the rule!

This love, however, is not unconditional. When she was challenged by other group members to compare her love for Mirror with that for her husband, May added:

I have only one husband and I do not intend to have a second one! But if one day Mirror decided to go to the Mainland to embrace our motherland, I will quit the group! I know very clearly what my love and hate is about! It could come and go really quickly.

Passionate and protective love, the product of political engagement and redirected towards Mirror is, it seems, different from everyday love. The passion of this love depends on its obverse, as in May's avowed knowledge of 'what my love and hate is about.' The love for Hong Kong that came to the fore from 2019 onwards is defined against all that seems to threaten the city, in particular China and the Chinese, and traitors to the movement – which Mirror would become if they went to China. The intensity and scope of this passionate and protective love is only understandable in terms of the rage expressed against the myriad injustices to which Hong Kong and its people have been subjected and the source of those injustices: China. Thus, while this love is protective of all that is deemed vulnerable and weak, it is selective; only some vulnerabilities are worthy of protection. Justice is no longer seen in terms of equality, but in terms of retribution: the hoped-for vengeance against China.

CONCLUSION

The women activists' participation in Hong Kong's democracy movement since 2014, and the changes in politics and strategy that have occurred along the way, have shaped their ideals and expressions of love. There are continuities in the protective dimension of love, but also discontinuities in its development in a more partisan direction: love for their comrades, whom they refer to as their hands and feet (extensions of their own bodies), is exclusionary and cannot be extended to those outside the movement. This, since 2019, has merged with their passionate patriotic love for Hong Kong, their imagined nation, a love forged in the heat of felt injustice at the treatment of Hongkongers by the police, the SAR government and, above all, the Chinese party-state. This leaves little room for any kind of justice, except the desire for vengeance against those who have harmed their beloved Hong Kong and comrades. Wider issues of justice, including gender and sexual justice, have disappeared from the agenda in consequence.

We have focused here on these women's knowledge of love as experiential, as emotionally driven as well as rationally justified, and as situated in a particular political context. These women have, on the one hand, made gender irrelevant in the public domain (by not criticising any aspect of a movement that sought to defend Hong Kong), while on the other, they have developed and embraced distinctively gendered and feminine ways of expressing their love through integrating protective and passionate love and ultimately transferring it to a safer object than the political movement. The understanding and knowledge of gender justice and gendered love that they demonstrated in the years after the Umbrella Movement has dissipated. It was situated in that particular moment and could not, it seems, survive the confrontational politics that emerged in 2019. Women activists' narratives and our observations of their practices suggest that women's love was, in Jónasdóttir's terms, productive/creative for the movement in sustaining solidarity and commitment, for the women themselves in making sense of their activism, and was appropriated both by individual men and in the service of the movement

as a whole. This appropriation often trapped them into traditional feminine caring roles, whether as lovers of male comrades or maternal protectors of young front-liners.

Recognising that all knowledge is situated, we need to acknowledge our own investments in the Hong Kong situation and how this shapes the way we represent the women activists and the politics of democracy in Hong Kong. Our own feelings about Hong Kong, along with our feminism, have shaped the knowledge we seek to produce. We are emotionally implicated. We empathise with the injustices Hongkongers have experienced and are deeply troubled by the repression they now face, but our emotions have taken a different turn since 2014. We began our research from a position of positive identification with the democracy movement during and after the Umbrella Movement, which survived into the early stages of 2019, followed by disillusionment with its rightward populist shift, culturally essentialist ethno-nationalism, xenophobic attitudes to mainland Chinese people, endorsement of US imperialism, disregard of wider forms of injustice in Hong Kong society and, of course, hostility to feminism. This article, then, should be understood as a product of our own situated knowledge.

REFERENCES

- Bonikowski, B. (2017). Ethnonationalist populism and the mobilization of collective resentment. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 68(S1), 181–213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12325>
- Carroll, J. M. (2007). *A Concise History of Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Chan, S. C. K. (2020). Some thoughts on the endgame of resistance: Ngo-Yiu Naam-Chau as terminal reciprocity. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 21(1), 99–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2020.1721110>
- Chan, S. Y. (2022). Decolonisation as egalitarian transformation: Hong Kong's unfinished struggle, in W. Liu, J. N. Chien, C. Chung and E. Tse (eds), *Reorienting Hong Kong's Resistance: Leftism, decoloniality, and internationalism* (pp. 73–92). Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-4659-1_6
- Cheung, G. K. W. (2009). *Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 riots*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741010000883>
- Cho, J. M. K., Ma, T. Y. T. and Kam, L. Y. L. (2020). Feminist activism in Hong Kong, in J. Liu and J. Yamashita (eds), *Routledge Handbook of East Asian Gender Studies* (pp. 95–105). London: Routledge.
- Choi, S. Y. P., Lai, R. Y. S. and Pang, J. C. L. (2020). Gender irrelevance: How women and men rationalize their support for the Right. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 45(2), 473–496. <https://doi.org/10.1086/705006>
- Craddock, E. (2020). *Living Against Austerity: A feminist investigation of doing activism and being activist*. Bristol: Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.56687/9781529205718-005>
- Crossley, N. (2016). Networks, interaction, and conflict: A relational sociology of social movements and protest, in J. Roose and H. Dietz (eds), *Social Theory and Social Movements* (pp. 155–172). Wiesbaden: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-13381-8_9
- Einwohner, R. L., Hollander, J. A. and Olson, T. (2000). Engendering social movements: Cultural images and movement dynamics. *Gender & Society*, 14(5), 679–699. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124300014005006>
- Goodstadt, L. F. (2013). *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence: How Hong Kong mismanaged its prosperity*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5790/hongkong/9789888208210.001.0001>
- Goodwin, J., Jasper, J. M. and Polletta, F. (2001). Introduction: Why emotions matter, in J. Goodwin, J. M. Jasper and F. Polletta (eds), *Passionate Politics: Emotions and social movements* (pp. 1–24). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226304007.003.0001>
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>
- Ho, P. S. Y., Chan, C. H. Y. and Kong, S. T. (2017). Expanding paradigm: Arts as performance and performance as communication in politically turbulent times, in R. Siegesmund and M. Cahnmann-Taylor (eds), *Art-Based Research in Education: Foundations for practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Ho, P. S. Y. (2019). On the Frontline: The Hong Kong Protests – on being in and against the crowd, *Discover Society*, 2 October 2019. Available at: <https://archive.discoversociety.org/2019/10/02/on-the-frontline-the-hong-kong-protests-on-being-in-and-against-the-crowd/>. (Accessed 14 April 2022).
- Ho, P. S. Y. and Li, M. M. (2021). A feminist snap: Has feminism in Hong Kong been defeated? *Made in China*, 6(3), 86–93. <https://doi.org/10.22459/MIC.06.03.2021.10>
- Ho, P. S. Y., Jackson, S. and Kong, S. T. (2018). Speaking against silence: Finding a voice in Hong Kong Chinese families through the Umbrella Movement. *Sociology*, 52(5), 966–982. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038517726644>
- Ho, W. C. (2011). Between globalisation and localisation: A study of Hong Kong popular music, in T. Langlois (ed), *Non-Western Popular Music* (pp. 153–157). London: Routledge.
- Hochschild, A. (1983). *The Managed Heart*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Hochschild, A. (2003). *The Commercialization of Intimate Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Holmes, M. (2012). 'Building on a firm foundation of tolerance and love?' Emotional reflexivity in feminist political processes, in P. Hoggett and S. Thompson (eds), *Politics and the Emotions: The affective turn in contemporary political studies* (pp. 115–136). London: Bloomsbury.
- Hui, M. (2021). 'Never give up?' A Hong Kong boy band has emerged as the voice of a city under crackdown, *Quartz*, May 31, 2021; updated July 20, 2022. Available at: <https://qz.com/2010206/hong-kong-boyband-mirror-is-the-voice-of-a-city-under-crackdown/#site-navigation>. (Accessed 25 July 2022).
- Ip, I. C. (2019). *Hong Kong's New Identity Politics: Longing for the local in the shadow of China*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367814465>
- Jackson, S. (1993). Even sociologists fall in love. *Sociology*, 27(2), 201–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038593027002002>
- Jackson, S. (2014). Love, social change and everyday heterosexuality, in A. Jónasdóttir and A. Ferguson (eds), *Love: A question for feminism in the twenty-first century* (pp. 33–47). New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315884783-10>
- Jackson, S. and Ho, P. S. Y. (2020). *Women Doing Intimacy: Gender, family and modernity in Britain and Hong Kong*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-28991-9>
- Jónasdóttir, A. G. (1994). *Why Women Are Oppressed*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Jónasdóttir, A. G. (2009). Feminist questions, Marx's method and the theorisation of love power, in A. G. Jónasdóttir and K. B. Jones (eds), *The Political Interests of Gender Revisited* (pp. 58–83). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Jónasdóttir, A. G. (2011). Love Studies: A (re)new(ed) field of feminist knowledge interests, in A. G. Jónasdóttir and A. Ferguson (eds), *Love: A question for feminists in the twenty-first century* (pp. 11–32). New York: Routledge.
- Jónasdóttir, A. G. (2014). What kind of love is 'love power?', in A. Jónasdóttir, V. Bryson and K. B. Jones (eds), *Sexuality. Gender and Power: Intersectional and transnational perspectives* (pp. 45–59). New York: Routledge.
- Kong, S. T., Ho, P. S. Y. and Jackson, S. (2020). Doing being observed: Experimenting with collaborative focus group analysis in post-Umbrella Movement Hong Kong. *Sociological Research Online*, 26(3), 485–504. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780420961400>
- Kong, S. T., Jackson, S. and Ho, P. S. Y. (2024). Problematizing Hongkonger political subjectivity: The struggle for, and over, democracy, in G. K. Bhambra, L. Mayblin, K. Medien and M. Vivero Vigoya (eds), *SAGE Handbook of Global Sociology*. London: SAGE.
- Li, P. (2020). It's time for Hong Kong to reckon with its far-right, *Lausan*, November 29. Available at: <https://lausancollective.com/2020/hong-kong-reckon-with-far-right/>. (Accessed 25 July 2022).
- Liu, S. D. and Shi, W. (2021). Why is reconciliation impossible? On the clash of emotions between Hong Kong and China, *Made in China*. Available at: <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2022/03/08/why-is-reconciliation-impossible/>. (Accessed 14 April 2022).
- Mak, V. S. W. and Poon, A. K. Y. (2023). Digital activism and citizenship: A case study of 'yellow' food influencers and political consumerism in Hong Kong. *Food, Culture & Society*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2023.2187574>
- Manzoor, N. and Liu, W. (2022). Decolonizing protest suicide: Performing life in Hong Kong, in W. Liu, J. N. Chien, C. Chung and E. Tse (eds), *Reorienting Hong Kong's Resistance: Leftism, Decoloniality, and Internationalism* (pp. 61–72). Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-4659-1_5
- May, V. (2013). *Connecting Self to Society: Belonging in a Changing World*. London: Palgrave. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-36726-6>
- McKee, H. H. and Crossley, A. D. (2018). Gender and Social Movements, in D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, H. Kriesi and H. J. McCammon (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (pp. 537–552). New York: John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119168577.ch30>
- Palmer, D. (2020). Block bloc against red China: Tears and revenge in the trenches of the new Cold War. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 10(2), 325–332. <https://doi.org/10.1086/709528>
- Rosaldo, M. (1984). Towards an anthropology of self and feeling, in R. Shweder and R. Levine (eds), *Culture Theory: Essays on mind, self and emotions* (pp. 137–157). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SCMP (*South China Morning Post*). (2021). K-pop no more? How Mirror led a Canto-pop comeback: As Korean and Mando-pop dominate, the 12-piece Hong Kong boy band became an icon of local pride, *South China Morning Post Magazine*, 21 August 2021. Available at: <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/style/celebrity/article/3145799/k-pop-no-more-how-mirror-led-canto-pop-comeback-korean>. (Accessed 25 July 2022).
- Shum, M. (2021). When voting turnout becomes contentious repertoire: How anti-ELAB protest overtook the District Council election in Hong Kong 2019. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 22(4), 248–267. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109921000190>
- Smart, C. (2007). *Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity.

Zemlinskaya, Y. (2010). Social movements through the gender lens. *Sociology Compass*, 4(8), 628–641.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00301.x>

Citation: Kong, S. T., Jackson, S. and Ho, P. S. Y. (2023). Seeking Love and Justice Amid Hong Kong's Contentious Politics. *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics*, 7(2), 19.
<https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/13547>

Copyright © 2023 by Author/s and Licensed by Lectito BV, Netherlands. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.