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Education and Principle-based Opinion A Study of the Right of Abode Controversy in Hong Kong

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Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

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Introduction

The right of abode (ROA hereafter) issue has given rise to one of the most heated controversies in post-handover Hong Kong. The huge impact of the issue on society has ensured a heavy dose of media coverage, which in turn has led to public attention to the fate of hundreds of thousands of mainland children and their families.

The controversy is extremely complicated. It involves detailed and technical matters regarding the operation of the legal system, as well as the proper interpretation of the Basic Law. The controversy reflects the difference between the legal tradition of Hong Kong and China. And the result of the controversy has important implications for the "one country, two systems" experiment. At the same time, if the Court of Final Appeal's original verdict, which gave the ROA to a large number of mainland children, had been maintained, what would have the real impact been on the economy and society? No one will ever be absolutely certain.

Despite all these complexities, the Hong Kong public did formulate its opinions about the issues and expressed them through different means. "Public opinion" was a contested arena in the ROA issue. While government pointed to poll findings to support their action, critiques argued that the government had attempted to manipulate "public opinion" by exaggerating the impact of the new immigrants on our society. Facing the public's apparent support for the government, some critiques argued that, when important socio-political principles were at stake, in this

case the legal autonomy of Hong Kong, we should not blindly follow the so-called "public opinion." (Lee, 1999).

It should be noted at the outset that what "public opinion" means is a matter of heated theoretical debate (Price, 1992; Bourdieu, 1979). Nowadays, many people would have taken "public opinion" as what opinion polls find, usually summarized into percentages standing on different sides of an issue. However, to what extent this "aggregation model" of public opinion really contributes to democracy is itself in contention among many scholars. Some argue that opinion polls restrict rather than encourage public deliberation and expression (Herbst, 1993; Salmon and Glasser, 1995), others argue for the positive impact of polls on political equality and democratic governance (Verba, 1996).

Thus, in this paper we do not assume that the polls necessarily reflect public opinion. Rather, the analysis is based on the premise that opinion polls reflect how people, as individuals, if not as *the public*, think about an issue. Then, how can we make sense of individuals' opinions as expressed through the polls? Or, what opinion polls can tell us about people's thinking about an issue?

The present study is based on the presumption that an understanding of people's opinions require us to focus on how people formulate their opinion. In the case of the ROA issue, how did people come up with their opinions? What were the concerns and considerations behind their opinions? The present study aims to answer these questions utilizing two opinion surveys conducted during the controversy under the auspices of the Faculty of Social Science, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Further, we expect that not all people formulate their opinions in the same way. Different people would have different considerations behind their opinions, and they would have different processes of reasoning and judgment making. Following past studies on political socialization and public opinion analysis in Western countries, education is chosen as a major factor leading to different kinds of considerations and reasoning processes. Thus, we expect people with different levels of education to have different opinions on the ROA issue, and we should be able to understand

their different opinions as the result of different considerations behind the opinions.

More specifically, we postulate that Hong Kong people's opinions on the ROA issue are likely to be affected by two types of concerns: (1) abstract liberal democratic principles, most notably the principle of legal autonomy, and (2) social and economic developments. In other words, people's opinions can be principle-driven or interest-driven to different extents. To what extent the Hong Kong public recognizes and acknowledges the importance of legal autonomy and sees it as at stake in the issue? To what extent they are concerned about the actual impact of a mainlanders' influx and base their opinions on their estimation of the impact?

Thus, the present study has two main goals. First, we want to understand Hong Kong people's opinions on the ROA issue by examining their considerations behind their expressed opinions. Secondly, we try to explore the differences between people with different levels of education; this can shed light on people's opinions on the ROA issue as well as advance some theoretical issues in the study of the political effects of education.

We start with a discussion of some theoretical perspectives on the relationship between education and people's opinion formation in a democratic society. Then, a discussion will be offered of the ROA issue and the likely effect of education on how people make sense of the issue. We will then analyze the data of two opinion polls conducted during the controversy to demonstrate empirically how people formulate their opinions. Explanations and implications of the findings will be discussed in the concluding part.

Acquisition of Democratic Principles

The relationship between education and people's political values and opinions has occupied many Western researchers' efforts. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the "enlightenment" view about the

role of education, formulated and supported mainly by researchers working on political socialization, has been dominant. According to this view, the major effect of education is to politically socialize citizens into the democratic system. Education is one of the major social institutions that are responsible for transmitting values and attitudes to the younger generation to enable them to "function properly" in the political system. More specific effects include the acquisition of democratic values and attitudes, participation in politics, respect for the country and the national tradition, as well as support for the political system, etc. (Ichilov, 1990; Dennis, 1973).

The educational system can achieve the above effects through several ways. The most obvious one is the formal curriculum on civic education. Norms, values and skills that are deemed to be important for a democratic citizenry are explicitly taught in civic education. As Levin (1990) points out, in the US,

Students are taught about the values of democracy and the executive, judicial, and legislative institutions of government that serve as checks and balances in the democratic system. The universal franchise is especially celebrated in the curriculum (p. 160).

Besides, education can increase one's awareness of political matters and current affairs, in addition to one's cognitive ability in reasoning and abstract thinking in general. In short, education increases one's sophistication. Political scientists and social psychologists have often regarded education as an important factor leading to, if not itself a component of, political sophistication (Fiske et al., 1990; Bobo and Licari, 1989). There is a large volume of research on political sophistication in communication and political science (see Luskin, 1987; Sniderman, 1993 for discussions). Length consideration does not allow us to summarize this here. Suffice it to say that sophisticated people exhibit differences in opinions and reasoning processes from the less sophisticated ones, and researchers have found that educated people do demonstrate the characteristics of sophistication, like attitude consistencies and higher levels of abstraction in political thinking

(Converse, 1964, 1975), higher levels of reception of the dominant norms and values in a society (McClosky and Zaller, 1984) and higher levels of reception of public and media discourse (Zaller, 1992).

It should be stressed that the socialization and sophistication studies are closely related to each other. Actually, increasing sophistication has usually been thought of as a part of political socialization. In a democratic society, the two processes are likely to work in the same direction and reinforce the effects of each other. Both of them point to the enlightenment in people's attitudes and values as a result of education. On the whole, the enlightenment view is very positive regarding the function of education in maintaining the democratic system. And there is no lack of evidence from past studies supporting such a view (see Hyman and Wright, 1979 for a discussion of the early research; see Westholm et al., 1990; Sniderman and Piazza, 1993 for recent examples).

However, there are critical views of the role of education in shaping citizens' beliefs and values. At the theoretical level, education can be seen as serving the government's interest in reproducing citizens to be ruled (Ginsberg, 1986).¹ At the same time, there are empirical studies which give a more complete view of the effects of education on people's values. In her influential article on "general and applied tolerance," Jackman (1978) finds that educated people are indeed more supportive of the abstract principle of racial integration in the US, but just for the abstract principle only! When they are asked about their support for particular policies that would implement racial integration, educated people do not demonstrate a particularly higher level of support, nor do they exhibit a stronger relationship between their support for abstract principles and support for a specific policy. Jackman argues that educated people's support for democratic principles are rather superficial, though not necessarily hypocritical, as she concludes:

When democratic principles are contemplated in isolation from other factors, the well educated are more

likely to recognize those principles, to know the “right” answers, and to *believe sincerely in those answers*. Such learning, however, is not very deeply embedded. In an applied situation, those principles are no more likely to influence the orientation of the well educated than of the poorly educated (pp. 322–23, emphasis added).

In another article, Jackman and Muha (1984) push the criticism further. They maintain that education may even fail to produce a superficial commitment to democratic principles. In a wide-ranging data analysis, the two authors find that educated people do not only remain similar to the less educated as to their views on policies, but their support for abstract principles is not necessarily stronger than the less educated. The exceptional cases are of principles related to the value of individualism, for which the educated people demonstrate a significantly stronger support. Jackman and Muha argue that the main effect of education in the American society is to promote the value of individualism, and the educated people’s response to survey questions is actually an ideologically refined set of answers that would justify rather than criticize inequalities.

The argument about the role of education in ideological reproduction, however, is not substantiated by empirical survey studies. Jackman and Muha (1984) acknowledge that their argument is largely speculative and that a detailed demonstration of the argument is difficult. However, the view of educated people’s “superficial democratic commitment” has received support from other studies (McClosky and Zaller, 1984; Kane, 1995), though the proper interpretation of superficial commitment is still debated in recent years (Schuman et al., 1997; Sniderman et al., 1991; McClosky and Zaller, 1984).²

There is no need for us to discuss further the details about the findings and analysis of these Western studies. What the discussion sensitizes us to is the possible effects of education on people’s political thinking, especially their acceptance and application of abstract principles that are valued by the society at large. However, the effect of education is likely to be dependent on the

context of the society. For instance, Weil (1985) has found that the effect of education on the acquisition of democratic values is dependent on two characteristics of the society: the length of history of the liberal-democratic regime, and the degree of religious heterogeneity in the country (which affects the degree of plurality of ideas in a society).

Obviously, Hong Kong is different from Western democratic countries in its short and incomplete history of democratization. The political system remains in many aspects undemocratic. At the same time, democracy has become an ideal that the absolute majority of the people, and even the government, have at least superficially become committed to, though people may have different understandings of what democracy means (Kuan and Lau, 1997). Also, civic education in Hong Kong schools has a very short history and is still deemed to be largely insufficient (Cheng, 1996; Tse, 1997). Thus, we can expect that the effects of education on democratic values in Hong Kong may not be exactly as predicted by either the enlightenment view or the superficial commitment argument. Explanations of the effects of education have to refer to both the theoretical arguments and the contextual factors of Hong Kong society.

When people formulate opinions about an issue, there is no reason for them to take into account only abstract principles. Other factors may also underlie their thinking about that issue. One particular important consideration to which people may refer is their own interests. Obviously, when people’s interests are not affected, it should be easy to adhere to abstract principles. A stronger test of whether people really would adhere to abstract principles is possible under the condition that their interests are likely to be affected if they insist on the principles. Education is also likely to be related to people’s sense of what their own interests are, as well as to their ability to relate their personal and social interests with the issue at hand. Therefore, when analyzing the effects of education on people’s opinion formation we have to take into account whether and to what extent education has affected

one's calculation of interests. The ROA controversy is a case for us to tackle these questions on the effects of education.

A Brief Review of the ROA Issue

The present study aims to understand the effects of education on people's opinions and opinion formation regarding the ROA issue. The ROA issue is appropriate for studying the effects of education, not only because of its prominence, but also because of its involvement with two conflicting concerns. On the one hand, many legal pundits and democrats thought that the legal autonomy of and the rule of law in Hong Kong were at stake. On the other hand, the Hong Kong government, as well as some other politicians, perhaps also a considerable portion of the public, seemed to be more concerned with the impact of the incoming mainlanders on the stability and development of Hong Kong. The Court of Final Appeal (CFA hereafter) ruled on 29 January 1999 that all the children of Hong Kong permanent residents who were staying in China at the time did have the ROA in Hong Kong, according to the Basic Law. Immediately, politicians and government officials, legal practitioners, political analysts and journalists started to debate the various points of and issues raised by the verdict. For instance, the verdict gave non-marital children the ROA and thus aroused the worry that it had become a recognition of some Hong Kong people's "second wives" in China. But above all the issues, two major "frames" emerged for people to make sense of the verdict. On the one hand, the verdict was hailed as a case demonstrating the legal autonomy of the Court. *Ming Pao's* coverage on 30 January contained two articles with headlines involving the phrase "re-gain confidence in the rule of law." *Apple Daily* also published an article on the same day headlined "The Verdict by the Court of Final Appeal Proved Legal Autonomy."

At the same time, the journalists and pundits were also contemplating what the verdict would mean for the development of Hong Kong society because the verdict had given the ROA to a

large number of mainlanders, estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands at the time. Therefore, while the media reported the triumph of the rule of law, they also reported about the potential trouble to come. As an *Apple Daily* article in the week after the verdict wrote,

CFA ruled last week that all Hong Kong people's children in the mainland have the right of abode, the number of new immigrants would increase sharply. At this time the Hong Kong economy is entering a painful adjustment period, a conservative estimation of the number of people getting the right of abode amounts to more than 300,000.... If they come to Hong Kong in a short time, it will definitely exert pressure on salaries and the already high unemployment rate. Optimists point out that the advantage is to quicken the adjustment in the Hong Kong economy; but sociologists generally worry that in the short term it will produce discrimination and division in society.

Besides Hong Kong people's worry about the negative impact of the influx, two additional points could be noted from this lead paragraph. First, there were "optimists" who did not think that the influx was one-sidedly bad for Hong Kong. However, as the issue evolved, the impact of the influx was almost equated with a negative impact. Optimists were soon on the defensive and they could only argue for a low-level negative impact rather than no negative impact. This relative negligence of the potential contribution of the new immigrants can be understood from the second point, that is, the verdict came at a time when the economy had been in trouble. This was a very important background behind people's worry about the negative impact, since there was the "already high unemployment rate" and other problems with which Hong Kong people had to contend. The coming of hundreds of thousands of new immigrants thus looked more like a threat than anything. We can also understand the prominence of the legal autonomy aspect of the issue by referring to the context of post-handover Hong Kong. While the public still needed to see action that could demonstrate the continuance of the rule of law,

the government's handling of some major cases, most notably the decision not to prosecute Sally Aw, had only worked to the opposite effect. Before the verdict, the rule of law in Hong Kong had apparently been in bad shape. Thus, the Court's verdict, which went against the will of the government, was understandably interpreted and hailed as an important indication of legal autonomy.

One week after the verdict, criticism from leftist politicians and legal professionals in mainland China started to surface. The question of legal autonomy changed from the autonomy of the Court from the Special Administrative Region (SAR) government to that of the Hong Kong legal system from China's. This further raised the concern over legal autonomy to a more serious level, since China's intervention in Hong Kong was what Hong Kong people had long feared.

There are certainly other concerns and issues behind the ROA controversy, but as the two aspects remained significantly related to the controversy, people's opinions on the issue were likely to be affected by their attitudes towards these two aspects. Considering the principle of legal autonomy and the rule of law, Hong Kong people should support the Court's verdict and oppose any solution that would undermine the autonomous status of the CFA. But, looking at the "practical" side, Hong Kong people would like to avoid the potential problems brought about by an unplanned influx of mainlanders and would support government action that would likely solve the influx problem.

The conflict between the two concerns drove the subsequent dynamics of the issue. At the end of February, the Hong Kong government, under pressures from the Chinese side, requested CFA to "clarify" the court's view of its power to interpret the Basic Law. While the CFA had "clarified" its original decision at the end of February, the government was still unsatisfied. The clarification at most was a response that could alleviate China's concern about the power the CFA thought it enjoyed, but it did not change the verdict and thus did not solve the "practical" problem. Discussion about how the government should cope with the impact of the

verdict continued, and various proposals, such as amending the Basic Law, were considered and debated.

On 30 April, the SAR government announced the results of its survey done in the mainland. It alleged that 1.67 million mainlanders had received the ROA as a result of the verdict and the government would have to spend an extra 710 billion Hong Kong dollars over 10 years if these people all came to the city. Many people were critical of the government's figures, arguing that the government was trying to intimidate the public to support its action. However, despite strong opposing views coming from the legal practitioners and democrats, the government succeeded in implementing its "solution" to the problem: to seek an interpretation of the Basic Law by the National People's Congress (NPC) of China. As a result of the NPC's interpretation of the Basic Law in late June, the number of mainlanders getting the ROA decreased from 1.67 million to only around 200,000, according to the government.

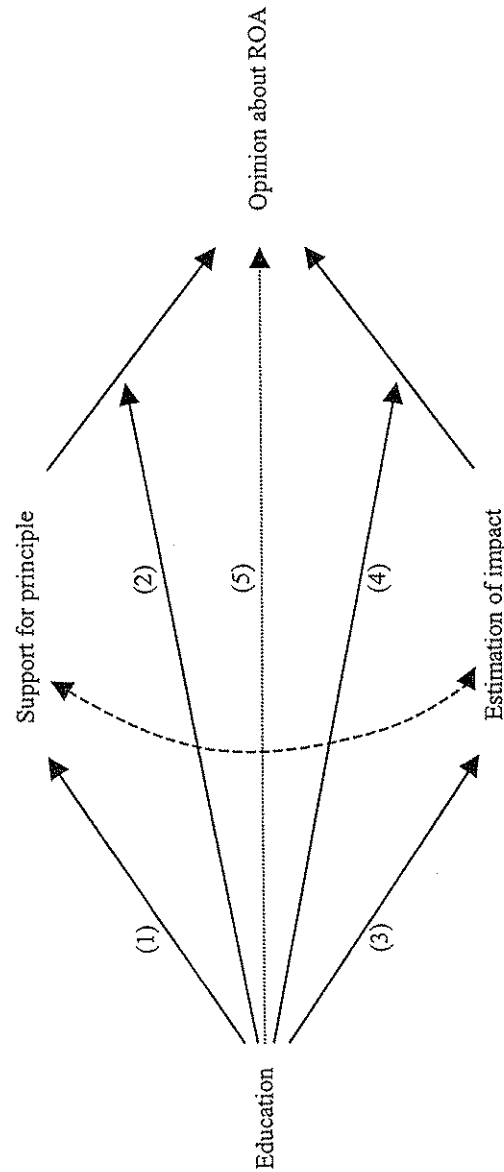
The above is certainly a cursory description of the issue. But the main point is that the concerns for legal autonomy and social and economic impact of the mainlanders' influx were two important concerns affecting the issue. Therefore, to understand how Hong Kong people thought about the issue, we must also understand how they thought about the principle of legal autonomy and the social and economic impact of mainlanders' influx, as well as how they related one concern and opinion to others as a whole.

Framework of Analysis

Based on the above discussion, a framework can be constructed for the analysis of people's opinions about the ROA issue. Education may have various effects on people's opinions, as summarized in Figure 1.

First of all, we expect that people's opinions about the issue, or more specifically, their opinions about the CFA's original verdict on 29 January (CFA's verdict hereafter) and government's

Figure 1 Effects of Education on Opinion about ROA



decision to seek an interpretation of the Basic Law by the NPC (government solution hereafter), are affected by their support for the principle of legal autonomy (legal principle hereafter) and their estimation of the impact of the influx (consequence of influx hereafter).

The effects of education on these elements are the focus of our study. Figure 1 shows in total five possible effects of education: (1) people's support for abstract principle of legal autonomy; (2) the extent to which their consideration of the abstract principle has affected their overall opinion; (3) people's evaluation of the actual impact of mainlanders' influx; (4) the extent to which their estimation of mainlanders' influx has affected their overall opinion; and (5) effects not mediated by the above ways, including the direct effect of education on opinion.

There are two main ways by which education can affect a person's opinion on issues. First, education may affect people's position on a particular concern behind an opinion. Past studies have focused on whether educated people are supportive of abstract democratic principles. Thus, we expect people with a higher level of education would have a higher level of support for the principle of legal autonomy. Besides, we also examine whether people with different levels of education have different estimations of the consequence of influx. This leads to the postulated main effects of education on the support for principle and to the estimation of impact in Figure 1 (arrows 1 and 3).

Secondly, education may also be related to whether people would use certain concerns as their basis for opinions. Past studies in the US have given rise to different perspectives about whether educated people are more likely to actually apply democratic principles. Here, we will also examine whether educated people are more likely to base their opinion about the ROA issue on their estimation of the consequence of influx. That is, if education does lead to people's application of the principles, we can expect a stronger relationship between support for principle and opinion about ROA for the educated people. This leads to the hypothesis

about the interaction effects between education and support for principle/estimation of impact in Figure 1 (arrows 2 and 4).

We cannot dismiss the possibility that education may have other effects on people's opinion about the ROA issue and, therefore, a direct effect hypothesis (or more precisely, effects not explained by the first four routes) is included in the framework (arrow 5).

A further point to note is that people's support for abstract principles is likely to be related to their estimation of impact. This relationship is not a main hypothesis in our analysis. But we have to take this possible relationship into account when studying the effects of education on the support for principle and the estimation of impact, since the relationship among the latter two may explain away the relationship between education and one of the two considerations.

Of course, people's opinions about the ROA issue are likely to be affected by other factors as well. However, the present study mainly focuses on the effects of education, except for a few demographic variables that would be included as control variables in later analysis. Other variables are left out for simplicity.

Data

The data analyzed in this study were derived from two opinion polls conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies under the sponsorship of the Faculty of Social Science, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The first survey was conducted between 5 and 7 March 1999, right after the CFA's clarification of its original verdict. The second survey was conducted on 31 May and 1 June, amid heated debate about whether the SAR government should seek an interpretation of the Basic Law by the NPC. For both surveys, phone numbers were randomly drawn from the updated residential telephone directories. In order to include numbers not listed in the directories, the last two digits of the phone numbers drawn were removed and then randomly

re-assigned. The population was Cantonese speaking Hong Kong residents over 18. In total, 954 interviews were completed for the March survey, with a response rate of 49.1%, and 857 interviews were completed for the second survey, with a response rate of 48.8%.³ We will refer to the two surveys as the March survey and the June survey, respectively. Questions about respondents' opinions about various aspects of the ROA issue were included in the surveys.

Before analyzing the effects of education on people's opinions, we should have a general overview of the opinions of our respondents about the ROA issue.

Table 1 summarizes the results to the major questions in the March survey. More than 60% of respondents supported the CFA's verdict as an act protecting the legal autonomy of Hong Kong and thought that the verdict was consistent with human rights principles. However, a similar percentage of people agreed that the verdict was "wrong" due to the undesirable consequences. Also, our respondents tended to agree that the influx of mainlanders would bring about negative consequences to Hong Kong's social and economic development, as between 56.7% to 64.7% of respondents agreed to three statements about the negative impact of mainlanders' influx. A possible positive consequence, alleviating the aging problem in Hong Kong, was agreed to by only about 40% of our respondents in March.

The ambivalence of the Hong Kong public was obvious. A considerable portion of our respondents supported CFA's action as demonstrating legal autonomy, while at the same time worried about the consequence of the influx. Of course, a possible problem was the acquiescence effect in opinion surveys, that is, people tend to agree with whatever the interviewer asks them. However, in Table 1 we see that various questions did elicit different levels of agreement. For instance, only 37.5% of our respondents agreed that the verdict destroyed the harmonious relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland. Therefore, we believe that the findings point to real questions about how people try to solve the

Table 1 Opinions about ROA in March Survey (%)

Statements	Disagree/ Highly disagree	Agree/ Highly agree
CFA's verdict on ROA:		
represents the legal autonomy of Hong Kong	22.3 (24.4)	60.7 (66.2)
realizes the principle of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong	21.5 (23.1)	65.1 (69.9)
destroys the harmonious relationship between Hong Kong and mainland after the handover	48.6 (51.4)	37.5 (39.7)
is consistent with the principle of human rights	24.6 (27.1)	56.6 (62.1)
is wrong, since allowing a large number of mainlanders to come to Hong Kong would increase the burden of the Hong Kong society and economy	23.1 (23.9)	66.0 (68.0)
CFA's verdict may lead to the influx of mainlanders to Hong Kong, if it is really the case, do you think that the following things will happen?		
Your confidence about the future of Hong Kong will decrease	28.2 (30.0)	60.9 (64.8)
Hong Kong's economy will worsen because of it	29.2 (31.7)	56.7 (61.5)
Development of various aspects of Hong Kong society will be slower	21.9 (23.7)	64.7 (70.0)
The aging problem of Hong Kong can be alleviated	41.3 (46.9)	40.6 (46.0)

Note: All questions were answered by using a 5-point scale, from highly disagree to highly agree. Entries are percentages and bracketed numbers are valid percentages (excluding no opinion).

conflict between the principle of legal autonomy and the impact of the issue. This is exactly the aim of our data analysis in the next section.

Table 2 summarizes the major results of the June survey. It shows that in June the majority of our respondents did support the government's solution (56.4%). Nearly 70% of our respondents thought that the government's solution was acceptable as a method to solve the problem of mainlanders' influx, even if it would harm the rule of law in Hong Kong. Also, more than half of our respondents thought that seeking the NPC to interpret the Basic Law could solve the problem effectively.

However, although our respondents seemed to be supportive of the government's solution, they did not necessarily hold very positive views of the government itself. Respondents were split roughly evenly on a number of questions. These included whether the respondents thought that the government's solution was following public opinion, and whether they thought that the government had intentionally exaggerated the estimation of the number of mainlanders to come and the amount of money to spend. Besides, there was still a considerable portion of respondents worrying about the negative effect on the legal system of the government's solution.

Since the two polls did not contain the same set of questions, we do not have direct evidence about whether and to what extent the Hong Kong public shifted their opinions towards the government's solution after hearing about the government figures. Tables 1 and 2 only offer limited evidence of opinion change. Even in March, there was already a large portion of people who thought that the CFA's verdict was wrong.

For a tentative test of opinion change in the period, in the June survey the respondents who supported the government's solution were asked whether they had supported the same solution earlier. Twenty-five per cent indicated that they had changed their opinion (and most of them indicated that they had been affected by the government's estimation). The finding is suggestive. However, the question was based on retrospective self-report, it did

Table 2 Public Opinion on the Government's Solution to Ask the National People's Congress to Interpret the Basic Law (%)

Statements	Disagree/ Highly disagree	Agree/ Highly agree
Do you agree or disagree with the Hong Kong government's proposal to request the NPC to interpret the Basic Law to solve the ROA issue?	30.8 (32.9)	56.4 (60.1)
The government's proposal to ask the NPC to interpret the Basic Law is following public opinion.	41.6 (44.2)	45.1 (47.9)
According to Hong Kong government's estimation, there are about 1.67 million mainlanders having the ROA, and 710 billion dollars will have to be spent. The government has intentionally exaggerated the figures.	41.0 (47.1)	39.4 (45.2)
Requesting the NPC to interpret the Basic Law would effectively solve the problems brought about by the ROA issue.	26.5 (28.7)	57.4 (62.1)
Even if it would harm the rule of law in Hong Kong, due to the expectation of the influx, a large number of mainlanders would cause great negative impact on Hong Kong, so requesting the NPC to interpret the Basic Law is acceptable.	23.5 (24.4)	69.9 (72.8)
NPC's interpretation of the Basic Law would serve as the first example for "NPC interpreting the verdict of CFA."	43.0 (46.2)	45.2 (48.5)

Note: All questions were answered on a 5-point scale ranging from highly disagree to highly agree. Entries are percentages and bracketed numbers are valid percentages (excluding no opinion).

not constitute strong evidence of opinion change during the period.

As pointed out earlier, people's opinions on the issue were likely to be affected by their support for certain democratic principles, especially about legal autonomy; several questions were asked in both surveys in this respect. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Respondents in March and June were asked to choose between either legal independence or social and economic development when the two were in conflict. The results show that in both surveys the percentage of respondents choosing either side is similar. An interesting point is that, when there was a change of opinions regarding support for the government's solution during the controversy, the percentage of people choosing legal independence over social and economic development did not change significantly. Actually, in June there was even a slightly larger proportion of respondents choosing legal independence instead of development.

In general, the two surveys provided a view of Hong Kong people's opinions that was largely consistent with similar poll findings reported during the period. The majority of Hong Kong people did express their support for government's seeking interpretation of the Basic Law by the NPC, and they worried about the negative impact of mainlanders' influx. At the same time, there was a considerable portion of the public who worried about the legal autonomy of Hong Kong and who supported CFA's verdict for its demonstration of juridical autonomy.

Some of the results not only showed ambivalence in people's thinking, but even strictly logical contradiction: in the March survey, more than 60% of people agreed that the CFA should consider the legal viewpoint only (Table 3), while at the same time more than 60% of people agreed that CFA's verdict was wrong due to its negligence of the social impact (Table 1).

This points to the need for us not to take every answer in isolation but to examine how an individual's answers to various questions — principles, worry about impact, support for govern-

Table 3 Public's Support for Principles (%)

	Development		Independence	
	Disagree/Highly disagree	Agree/Highly agree	Disagree/Highly disagree	Agree/Highly agree
If the development of Hong Kong society and economy is in conflict with maintaining legal independence, will you choose social and economic development or legal independence?				
(March)	47.4 (55.5)		38.1 (44.5)	
(June)	43.3 (52.0)		40.0 (48.0)	
Do you agree or disagree that the CFA should consider only the legal viewpoint? (March)	19.1 (21.6)		64.2 (72.6)	
In deciding whether Hong Kong people's children in mainland have the ROA, the legal viewpoint, human rights and social and economic interests all need to be considered, which one among the three do you think is the most important? (June)	Legal viewpoint 16.3 (18.3)	Human rights 16.2 (18.1)	Social interest 56.8 (63.6)	

ment, etc. — are related to each other. In the following, we will analyze how people with different levels of education formulate their opinions about the ROA issue according to the framework discussed above.

Analysis

Education and the support for the principle of legal autonomy

Our analysis starts with examining the relationship between education and support for the principle of legal autonomy. The question whether people should choose legal independence or social and economic development when the two are in conflict was repeated in both the March and June survey. Besides, the question wording did not involve the mentioning of CFA's verdict or any government's or politician's reactions. In other words, the question had been framed in a way that was largely isolated from the issue. Thus, this question is now chosen as the variable representing one's support for the principle of legal autonomy and is the focus of this section.

The results in Table 4 provide only partial support for the enlightenment view of education effect. In the March survey, as educational level increases a larger proportion of respondents chooses legal independence instead of social and economic development. The difference between the three educational groups is highly significant. In June, the difference between the three groups remains in the same direction. However, the difference is small and not statistically significant.

While Table 4 shows the bivariate relationships between education and support for the legal principle, we should also examine whether the findings are spurious. Education is closely related to demographics, such as gender, age, income, etc. Thus, a regression analysis is conducted to control the impact of these confounding variables.

Table 4 Education and Attitudes towards the Principles of Legal Autonomy

If development and legal independence are in conflict, choose:		Educational level (%)			χ^2
		Primary or below	Secondary	Tertiary	
(March) (N = 811)	Development	65.4	56.3	43.3	22.10***
	Independence	34.6	43.7	56.7	
(June) (N = 712)	Development	57.5	51.7	49.4	1.43
	Independence	42.5	48.3	50.6	

- Notes: 1. Percentages are valid column percentages. People who answered don't know or chose the middle category are excluded from the analysis.
2. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Since the support for principle is dichotomous, a logistic regression analysis is conducted. The dependent variable is the log-likelihood for a person to choose legal independence rather than social and economic development. Independent variables include age, sex, personal monthly income, educational level, and a variable, "education squared," to represent a possible non-linear relationship between education and the dependent variable. The original measurement scales of the independent variables in the surveys are used. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Regarding the effects of education on people's support for the legal principle, Table 5 has replicated the results of Table 4. That is, adding age, sex and personal income does not change the effect of education shown earlier. In both surveys, education is positively related to support for legal independence, but only the relationship in March is significant.

We will discuss and provide explanations for the results later in the discussion section. One point should be noted here first. In the March survey, we see that not only education, but also sex and

Table 5 Regression Analysis on the Relationship between Education and Support for the Legal Principle

Independent variables	Dependent variable	
	Legal independence vs. social/economic development (March)	Legal independence vs. social/economic development (June)
Education	.32***	.11
Education squared	.09	.02
Age	.02	.02
Sex	-.88***	-.24
Income	.06*	.00
% of cases correct	62.40%	53.54%
χ^2	67.58***	4.16
No. of cases	782	678

- Notes:
1. Entries are unstandardized logistic regression coefficients.
 2. "Education squared" is the square of "education — mean of education." It represents the curvilinear relationship between education and the dependent variable. Positive numbers show that people in the middle categories of education score lower than people at the two ends of levels of education.
 3. Dichotomous dependent variables are coded as: development = 1, legal independent (and human rights in one question) = 2. Sex is coded as: male = 1, female = 2.
 4. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

personal income are statistically significantly related to support for the legal principle. However, in the June survey, the effects of sex and personal income also disappear. Actually, in the June survey the five independent variables as a whole fail to have any significant explanatory power on whether people support the principle of legal autonomy (Model Chi-square = 4.16).

Education and estimation of impact of influx

Now we turn to consider people's estimation of the impact of mainlanders' influx. Do people with different levels of education evaluate the impact of the ROA issue differently?

A problem with the data is that the June survey does not include any question on people's estimation of the consequence of the influx of mainlanders. The closest one is whether the respondents thought that the government had intentionally exaggerated the estimation of the number of people having the ROA and the amount of money to be spent because of these people. Although respondents' answer to this question is likely to be affected by their belief in the consequence of the influx (since people who think the figures are exaggerated are likely to have a less negative estimation of impact), the answer also reflects other factors, such as a person's trust in the government. Since no indicator can be used as a substitute for estimation of impact in the June survey, our analysis of the relationship between education and the estimation of impact will be restricted to the March survey.

Table 6 shows that, in the March survey, people with higher educational levels were the least likely to think that the verdict would have a negative impact on Hong Kong. Though even among people with tertiary education the majority still believes in various negative impacts, the proportion of respondents holding such beliefs is smaller than that in the other two groups. Also, the question, whether the influx would cause a decrease in the respondent's confidence, shows a curvilinear relationship with education. The secondary education group has the largest percentage acknowledging the impact in this regard.

At the same time, respondents who are more educated are not particularly likely to acknowledge a possible positive consequence of the influx, that is, alleviating the aging problem in Hong Kong. The relationship between education and the answer to this question is curvilinear, with the secondary group the least likely to acknowledge the possible positive impact. But, the tertiary

Table 6 Education and Assessment of the Impact of the ROA Issue

	Educational level (%)			χ^2
	Primary or below	Secondary	Tertiary	
CFA's decision causes decrease in confidence about Hong Kong's future (March) (N = 842)				
Agree	69.3	73.2	59.2	12.33**
Disagree	30.7	26.8	40.8	
CFA's decision causes retardation of the economy (March) (N = 812)				
Agree	75.6	65.3	55.6	20.26***
Disagree	24.4	34.7	44.4	
CFA's decision would slow down the development of Hong Kong society (March) (N = 819)				
Agree	81.1	74.5	67.7	10.87**
Disagree	18.9	25.5	32.3	
CFA's decision can solve aging problem in Hong Kong (March) (N = 774)				
Agree	57.0	45.5	49.3	7.33*
Disagree	43.0	54.5	50.7	

Notes: 1. Percentages are valid column percentages. People who answered don't know or chose the middle category are excluded from the analysis.

2. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

group is also considerably less affirmative on this question when compared with the primary or below group.

As in the previous case, the results are put into a multivariate tests to control for the impact of other demographics. From Table 7 we see that age and sex are the two variables that exert considerable influence on people's estimation of the negative impacts of the influx. However, they have limited effect on the relationship between education and estimation of consequence. Education retains a linear relationship with whether people think that the influx would retard the development of Hong Kong and whether the influx can solve the aging problem in Hong Kong. It has a non-linear relationship with whether people think that the influx would lead to a decrease of their confidence in Hong Kong and whether the influx could solve the aging problem. These are replications of the findings of the bivariate analysis in Table 6. The only relationship that is explained away is the one between education and whether respondents think that the influx would negatively affect Hong Kong's economy. But, even in this case, the beta coefficient of education remains close to significant ($p < .10$).

The findings of the four regressions in Table 7 lead to two observations. First, all the linear relationships between education and estimation of impact are negative in sign, though only two of them attain statistical significance. We can argue that, on the whole, increase in education is related to a stronger belief in a weak impact of the influx, regardless of whether the impact is negative or positive. Secondly, the non-linear relationships between education and estimation of impact also demonstrate a certain consistency. The beta coefficients of the "education squared" variable in the first three columns of Table 7 are all negative, while in the fourth column, when the dependent variable is about a possible positive impact, the beta coefficient becomes positive. This shows that people with an intermediate level of education, approximately the secondary education group, are relatively more pessimistic about the mainlanders' influx.

Here let us focus on the negative impact of the influx, which is the main concern of Hong Kong people. People with higher levels

Table 7 Regression Analysis on the Relationship between Education and Estimation of the Impact of Mainlanders' Influx

Independent variables	Dependent variables			
	Decrease of confidence in Hong Kong	Negative effect on Hong Kong economy	Retard Hong Kong development	Solve aging problem
Education	-.07	-.08	-.09*	-.11*
Education squared	-.12**	-.06	-.05	.10*
Age	.08*	.17***	.15***	-.06
Sex	.14***	.20***	.19***	-.03
Income	.00	-.06	.00	.09*
R ²	3.4%***	9.2%***	7.1%***	2.4%**
No. of cases	854	840	844	800

Notes: 1. The dependent variables are the same indicators used in Table 6. They are measured by 5-point Likert scales.
 2. Entries are standardized regression coefficients.
 3. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

of education tend to be less concerned with these negative factors. However, the most important difference lies between people with a very high level of education versus people with a mid or low level of education. Actually, in Table 6 we can see that the differences between the tertiary group and the secondary group, when asked about their estimation of the negative impact of the influx, are always larger than the difference between the primary or below and secondary groups. Thus, to put it in a less precise but simpler way, people with tertiary education are less likely to be worried over the negative consequence of the influx than people with lower levels of education, but the difference between people with secondary education and people with even a lower level of education is not large.

As pointed out earlier, the effect of education on the support for principle and the estimation of impact may not be directly due to the relationship between the support for principle and the estimation of impact. For this purpose further analysis is conducted. The three questions about the negative consequence of mainlanders' influx are averaged to get an index for people's estimation of impact. This variable is then included into the logistic regression model of Table 5. The relationship of education and the support for legal autonomy remains significant. Also, a regression analysis is conducted by using estimation of impact as the dependent variable and the five demographic variables included, then people's support for principle is further added. The results show that education has a significant negative linear effect on the estimation of impact even when people's support for the principle of legal autonomy is controlled. Therefore, education does have separate effects on people's support for the principle of legal autonomy and on people's estimation of impact.

The application of principles and judgment making by the public

The above two sections have examined the relationship between education and the two factors — support for principle and estima-

tion of impact — that are supposed to be important to one's opinion about ROA. But, how do the two factors affect people's opinion on the CFA's verdict and the government's proposed solution? More importantly, how does education affect the way people formulate their opinion in light of one or both considerations?

Proponents and critiques of political socialization have debated whether education can lead to the application of democratic principles in actual situation. It is possible that educated people are more "serious" about the principles in the sense that their opinions are determined by principles to a larger extent. We can call those people who have a strong principle-issue-opinion relationship as "principle-oriented."

Also, there is the possibility that different people would attach different levels of importance to the estimated impact. We have already seen that educated people are in general having less pessimistic views about the negative impact of mainlanders' influx. There is an added possibility that they would base their opinion on their estimation of the impact to a lesser extent if they are more "principle-oriented" or, in other words, they are less "impact-oriented." As principle and impact are two competing concerns in the ROA issue, we can expect that the strength of the principle-opinion relationship to be negatively related to the strength of the impact-opinion relationship.

A regression model is designed to test the above mentioned relationships. The general form of the regression model is:

$$\text{Overall judgment} = a + b_1 \cdot \text{age} + b_2 \cdot \text{sex} + b_3 \cdot \text{income} + b_4 \cdot \text{principle} + b_5 \cdot \text{consequence}$$

The model is run separately for the three educational groups. Here, we need to define the variables "overall judgment," "principle," and "consequence" in the surveys.

The question on the balance between legal independence and social and economic interests is repeated in both surveys so it is used as the variable representing "principle."

The three questions in the March survey probing respondents' worry about the negative consequences of the influx (decreased confidence, slowed development and economic retardation) are averaged to get an index of estimation of the negative impact (Cronbach's alpha = 0.78). It is the variable representing "consequence."

The dependent variable for the March survey is an index computed from the respondents' answers to five statements (the first five shown in Table 1). The statements are first recoded so that they point in the same direction,⁴ with a larger value representing positive attitude towards CFA's verdict. Each respondent's answers to the five questions are then averaged to get an index of his/her opinion about CFA's verdict (Cronbach's alpha = 0.68).⁵

In the June survey, there was no question directly asking people's estimation of the consequence of the influx, and no surrogate is available. The consequence variable will be absent from the model of the June survey. In other words, we only test part of our framework in the June survey. The dependent variable is people's support for seeking an NPC interpretation of the Basic Law, which is the average of respondents' answers to two questions: whether they support government seeking an interpretation of the Basic Law by the NPC and whether they agree that seeking the NPC to interpret the Basic Law is acceptable given the negative impact of mainlanders' influx. The two statements have a reliability coefficient of 0.71.⁶

For both the March and June surveys, age, sex and personal income are included as control. The point of interest of the analysis is whether the relationship between principle/impact and the dependent variable will be stronger or weaker in one educational group than the others. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 8.

Table 8 provides some interesting results regarding the effect of education. Comparing the beta coefficients of the "principle" variable in the three groups, we see that in both surveys the same pattern emerges. People with tertiary education are most likely to

Table 8 Regression Analysis on the Basis of Judgment for People with Different Levels of Education

Independent variables	Dependent variable: Opinion on CFA's verdict		
	Educational level		
	Primary or below	Secondary	Tertiary
Age	.01	.18***	-.09
Sex	-.26***	-.05	-.13
Income	-.11	.09	.11
Development vs. legal independence	.20**	.15**	.36***
Consequence of influx	-.19**	-.36***	-.17**
No. of cases	230	349	201
R ²	17.3%***	22.8%***	26.0%***
Independent variables	Dependent variable: Support for government's solution		
	Educational level		
	Primary or below	Secondary	Tertiary
Age	.17	.06	.09
Sex	.18	.13**	.11
Income	-.18	.03	.01
Development vs. legal independence	-.37***	-.29***	-.44***
No. of cases	79	431	165
R ²	25.5%***	10.4%***	22.3%***

- Notes: 1. Entries are standardized regression coefficients.
 2. Development vs. legal independence is coded as: development = 1, independence = 2.
 3. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

have their opinion about the CFA's ruling and government solution affected by their support for the principle of legal autonomy (beta coefficients = .36 and -.44). However, the group that has its opinion least constrained by support for principle is not the primary education or below group (beta coefficients = .20 and -.37), but the secondary education group (beta coefficients = .15 and -.29).

Regarding the extent to which people's opinion about CFA's verdict is affected by their estimation of the negative impact, Table 8 shows that in the March survey the secondary education group demonstrates the strongest relationship (beta coefficient = -.36), while people with tertiary education has the weakest relationship in this respect, though the beta coefficient is only trivially smaller than that of the primary education and below group. This pattern is just the reverse of the pattern about principle-opinion relationship, and is consistent with the expectation that as people are more principle-oriented, they are less likely to be impact-oriented on the ROA issue.

The final analysis of effects of education on opinion about ROA issue

What Table 8 does not tell us is whether the differences in beta coefficients of the principle and consequence variables in the three groups are statistically significant. Also, there is a possibility of education having a direct effect on opinion about the ROA issue. In this last section of data analysis, we will give a test of the effects of education on different aspects together.

To recapitulate, we have posited that education may have effects on opinion about the ROA issue in five ways: (1) effect on support for abstract principle, (2) effect on the estimation of impact of the influx, (3) effect on whether the abstract principle will be applied, (4) effect on whether the estimation of impact will be used as a basis to formulate an opinion on the issue, and (5) effects not explained by the above four ways, including the direct effect of education.

Previous sections have tested the effects of education on the first four aspects separately. Here, regression analysis will be used to give an overall test. In the model, the dependent variables will be people's opinion on CFA's verdict in the March survey and their opinion on the government's solution in the June survey. Independent variables will be added to the model in three blocks. The first block consists of the five demographic factors used in Tables 5 and 7, i.e., age, sex, personal income, education and "education squared." The second block consists of the principle and consequence variables as defined and used in the previous section.

The third block includes four interaction variables: (1) support for principle and educational attainment, (2) support for principle and education squared, (3) estimation of impact and educational attainment, and (4) estimation of impact and education squared. The four interaction variables will test the phenomena as shown in Table 8 — whether people with different educational levels have their opinions affected by principles and concerns for consequence to different extents. If an interaction between educational attainment and support for principle (or estimation of impact) is significant, this means that, as education increases, support for the relationship of principle (or estimation of impact) with opinion about ROA issue becomes significantly stronger (or weaker). If an interaction between "education squared" and support for principle (or estimation of impact) is significant, this means that people with different levels of education do exhibit different levels of principle-opinion relationship (or impact-opinion relationship), but the relationship is the strongest (or weakest) for the people with intermediate levels of education.

Again, for the June survey the consequence variable, as well as the interaction variables including estimation of impact, are absent. Only part of the framework is tested in the June survey.

Table 9 summarizes the results. In the March survey, when only demographic variables are added, education is related to people's opinion about CFA's verdict significantly, with people

Table 9 Regression Analysis of Effects of Education on Opinions about ROA Issue

<i>March survey results</i>	Dependent variable: Opinion on CFA's verdict		
	Demographic factors only	Principle and consequence added	Full model
Independent variables			
Age	.04	.08*	.08*
Sex	-.21***	-.11***	-.11***
Income	.10*	.08*	.08*
Education	.13**	.07	.07
Education squared	.06	.03	.01
Development vs. independence		.22***	.18***
Consequence of influx		-.26***	-.33***
Interaction: education*principle			.08*
Interaction: education squared*principle			.06
Interaction: education*impact			.01
Interaction: education squared*impact			.11*
R ²	8.8%***	21.1%***	22.2%***
Change in R ²	8.8%***	12.3%***	1.0%*
No. of cases	780	780	780

Table 9 Regression Analysis of Effects of Education on Opinions about ROA Issue (continued)

June survey results	Dependent variable: Opinion on government's solution		
	Independent variables	Demographic factors only	Principle variable added
Age		.10*	.11**
Sex		.16***	.14***
Income		-.01	-.01
Education		-.11*	-.10*
Education squared		-.15***	-.15***
Development vs. independence			-.34***
Interaction: education*principle			-.06
Interaction: education squared*principle			-.08
R ²		5.1%***	16.3%***
Change in R ²		5.1%***	11.2%***
No. of cases		675	675

Notes: 1. Entries are standardized regression coefficients.

2. Interaction between education and principle/impact is calculated by:
(education – mean of education) x (principle/impact – mean of principle/impact)
Interaction between education squared and principle/impact are calculated by:
(education squared) x (principle/impact – mean of principle/impact)
The calculation methods adopted aim to reduce multi-collinearity.

3. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

having a higher level of education being more supportive. When the principle and consequence variables are added, the relationship of education with opinion about CFA's verdict becomes non-significant. This means that the effects of education on opinion about CFA's verdict are mediated by the principle and impact factors. In other words, people with a higher level of education were more supportive of CFA's verdict because they were more supportive of the principle of legal autonomy and less pessimistic about the impact of mainlanders' influx. This is what the analysis in the previous sections have shown.

The further addition of four interaction variables significantly increases the explanatory power of the regression model (the change in R² is significant at the 0.05 level). And two interaction variables are significantly related to opinion about CFA's verdict. The first one, the interaction between education and support for legal principle, means that people with a higher level of education tend to base their opinion on their support for principle to a larger extent. Although in Table 8 we find that the secondary education group is the least principle-oriented, the finding in Table 9 is that the interaction between "education squared" and support for principle is not significant. It suggests that the strength of principle-issue-opinion relationships for people with low and mid-level education does not differ significantly. Thus, we have to conclude that, for the March survey, people with a high level of education are significantly more principle-oriented than people with mid- and low-level education, but the difference between the latter two groups is not large.

The second interaction variable that is significant in the March survey regression is the one between "education squared" and impact. It suggests that the finding in Table 8 that people with secondary school education, that is, mid-level education, have the strongest impact-issue-opinion relationship is significant. That is, people with mid-level education are indeed particularly more impact-oriented than people with either a high or low educational level.

The results of the regression analysis for the June survey differ from the March model in some important aspects. People with a higher level of education are, in general, less supportive of the government, which is consistent with the findings in March. But, there is also a non-linear effect between education and opinion on government's solution. The negative sign of the effect suggests that people with mid-level education are actually the most supportive of the government's solution when other factors are controlled.

At the same time, the effects of education are not explained away by the addition of the three variables in columns two and three. Of course, we have already shown that in the June survey education is not significantly related to support for principle (Table 5), but in the regression we see that even the interaction variables are not significant. In other words, though Table 8 shows that the secondary education group is the least principle-oriented and the tertiary group the most, the differences in the strength of the principle-issue-opinion relationship for people with different levels of education are not significant. Therefore, we can conclude that in the June survey people's opinion on the government's solution is affected by their educational level but the effects are not mediated by support for the principle of legal autonomy, though support for the legal principle itself remains an important factor behind people's opinions on the government's solution.

Discussion

The findings of the data analysis may not perfectly fit into any single view of the effect of education on people's democratic values, as derived from the West. In the March survey, we see that educated people are more supportive of the principle of legal autonomy and also more likely to apply the principle in formulating their opinion about CFA's verdict. But, the most important difference lies between people with and without tertiary education. From Table 4, we can see that, though the secondary educa-

tion group is more supportive of the principle of legal autonomy than the primary education or below group, the difference between the two groups is smaller than the one between secondary and tertiary education groups. Also, Table 8 shows that people with secondary school education are actually the least "principle-oriented," though Table 9 shows that the difference between people with mid- and low-level education is not significant. Therefore, we argue that the findings from the March survey do lend support to the enlightenment view of the effects of education, but the major difference only lies between tertiary and non-tertiary education.

The effect of education on people's support and application of abstract democratic principles is not surprising. Education has long been thought as effective in making people more able to understand and apply abstract democratic principles. But in Hong Kong, civic education is only a recent development. As a colony in the past, primary and secondary education in Hong Kong did not have formal civic education before the mid-1980s. The formal curriculum in secondary schools also had very limited political content. It was only during the period of political transition resulting from the Sino-British negotiation over Hong Kong's future that the idea of a "democratic education" began to be proposed and curricula started to change (Lee and Bray, 1997). While civic education was proposed by the Hong Kong government in the mid-1980s, implementation remained a matter within schools' discretion, and not every school developed civic education formally (Cheng, 1996). Further, civic education in Hong Kong's primary and secondary schools has many defects that are awaiting for improvement. Tse (1997) points out that political education in secondary school in Hong Kong is generally lacking:

[T]here is a number of factors contributing to the failure of political education in schools. Among the most significant ones, are the lack of planning and implementation at school level; the moralization and depoliticization of political education; the lack of accompanied infra-structural support for teachers... as

well as a transmission approach and a submissive political culture fostered by the formal, informal, and hidden curriculum (p. 37).

With the background of civic education and the school system in Hong Kong, it is not surprising that people with secondary school education are not particularly more supportive of and "serious" about abstract democratic principles. But it does not mean that people with secondary education do not differ from those with primary education or below only. Most notably, people with secondary school education are particularly impact-oriented. What can be suggested about this effect of secondary school education is that education at this stage may have increased people's awareness of their personal interest and ability in relating these personal interests to opinions about public affairs. Thus, while people with secondary school education remain not particularly supportive of abstract principles, they become more "realistic" in their political thinking since they are better able to see where their interests lie. Of course, this explanation is largely speculative. The effects of education on people's concern for concrete interests, personal or societal, should be explored further in the future.

Thus far we have only tried to explain the lack of "enlightenment" in secondary school education, but why does tertiary education, which does not have formal civic education either, seem to have this effect?

The "enlightening" effects of tertiary education on political attitudes in Hong Kong, however, are not a newly found phenomenon. Cheung and Leung (1994) have found that tertiary students hold more democratic attitudes than secondary school students (p. 91). They point to three possible perspectives to explain their results. For the present study, the most relevant arguments are that people are exposed to a large number of political and social theories and viewpoints in tertiary education, especially in the social science or general education curriculum. Also, while Tse (1997) points to the submissive culture and transmission approach of learning in secondary schools in Hong Kong, tertiary

education certainly encourages more independent and critical thinking. As tertiary education provides students with the chance to encounter a heterogeneous set of ideas and encourage them to think, discuss and criticize, the students would come to recognize the importance of certain democratic values, like toleration, respect for others' freedom, etc. This would bring about the enlightening effects on the students.

At the same time, we have posited that education may also alter people's thinking about an issue by affecting how they take social and economic interests into consideration and how they estimate the impact of an issue on society and its economy. It is shown that as the educational level rises, one's estimation of the impact of mainlanders' influx also differ. If we focus on the estimation of the negative impact only, then people with tertiary education are less worried, while the difference between primary or below and secondary groups, again, is not substantial. There are several possible explanations. First, it can be that, consistent with the enlightening effect and whether people support the legal principle, people with tertiary education are less affected by the negative stereotypes of mainlanders and new immigrants. Also, people with tertiary education may be less likely to think that the influx will have any impact, positive or negative, because of a higher level of confidence they have in Hong Kong's economy and society. If people with a higher level of education have stronger beliefs in the ability of Hong Kong society to meet any challenge, they will also be less likely to acknowledge great impact of the influx on Hong Kong. Furthermore, people with different levels of education may have different calculation of interests. Apparently, the influx of mainlanders is more likely to compete and affect the interest of the less educated rather than the more educated. With a level of education that the mainlanders usually do not have, the tertiary educated are less likely to think that their personal interests are going to be affected, and less concern over personal well-being is likely to be projected onto the estimation of the well-being of society.

On the whole, the results of our March survey support the enlightenment view of the effect of education on whether people would support and apply democratic principles. However, the most important difference lies between people with and those without tertiary education. If we look at people's opinion about CFA's verdict represented by the index used in earlier regression analysis, the primary education or below group has a mean score of 3.02 on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. The secondary education group's mean is 3.09, that is, people with secondary school education are only slightly (and not statistical significantly) more supportive of CFA's verdict than people in the primary education or below group. The tertiary group has a mean of 3.34, significantly higher than the means of the other two. The difference between the three groups can be explained by their concern over principle and impact.

Then, what about our results in the June survey that education has no significant effect on the support and application of the principle of legal autonomy, while it has effects on people's opinion about the government seeking the NPC's interpretation of the Basic Law? It should be stressed that in the June survey the same pattern of relationship between education and the support and application of principles are found. People with a higher level of education are still more likely to support the principle of legal autonomy, and the secondary education group remains the least principle-oriented in its opinion formation. But the difference is not statistically significant. Thus, what we need to explain is not why education has a different effect in June but why the effects of education have diminished.

A possible reason for the diminishing effects on people's support and application of the legal principle is the "operation of the idea market," as described by Ginsberg (1986). Ginsberg argues that education and the media serve as idea markets; as people are exposed to such markets, they tend to hold less varied values and attitudes that are originally largely affected by their primary group affiliation. In other words, Ginsberg's (1986) argument about the operation of the idea market is that as education in-

creases and people's media exposure increases, opinions and attitudes are less likely to differ according to class, gender, ethnicity, etc. In the case of the ROA controversy, a similar argument can be constructed. In March, we see people with different levels of education treat the principle of legal autonomy differently. The difference is likely to be based on the differential access to and recognition of the legal principle as a result of different levels of education. The continued heated debate and widespread public discourse about the principle of legal autonomy and the relationship between the principle and the current issue would have made people to "converge" in opinion on these matters. It is because, before heavy coverage by the media, educated people are the ones who are particularly likely to have learned about the principles and understand the relationship between the principle and the current issue, and these are just the reasons why educated people are expected to be different from the less educated. But, as research about learning from news has shown (Zaller, 1992; Price and Zaller, 1993), heavy coverage would lead to diffusion of ideas to other people, and if the coverage is very salient then the diffusion will happen in a way that even the least educated group of the public will learn more about the message. Thus, the basis for differences between people with different levels of education would diminish.

It does not mean that all people will come to support or oppose the principle of legal autonomy; actually, continual debate about an issue can lead to either "mainstreaming" or "polarization" (Zaller, 1992). However, the important point here is that, after salient discussions about legal principles, people who support or do not support the legal principle are not likely to be differentiated by referring to basic demographic factors, including education.

By the same token, after several months of debate and especially after the government has announced the estimated number of mainlanders with the ROA, it is also possible for people with different levels of education to converge on their estimation of the impact of the mainlanders' influx. The logic is the same as above:

before the debate, educated and less educated people may have differential access to information and different pre-existing attitudes, but salient debate about the issue and provision of information may make education to be less important in determining people's estimation of the impact. However, without relevant data in the June survey we cannot test the validity of the argument.

The idea market explanation is speculative, and had the June survey included a variable on media exposure we may have been able to test further the argument of the operation of the idea market. However, one particular finding in our earlier analysis does lend some support to the explanation. In Table 5, we see that, in the June survey, not only has the effect of education become insignificant, but also the effect of sex and personal income, which are significant in the March survey. That is, in June, people's support for the principle of legal autonomy is no longer explained by any major demographic factor included in our earlier analysis. This is consistent with the argument that the operation of the idea market would make basic demographic characteristics less relevant in determining people's attitudes and opinions.

This idea market explanation, of course, requires further evidence. Most notably, the validity of the explanation is dependent on what kind of media and public discourse existed during the period. The above line of argument would be valid to the extent that discussions about or at least the simple mention of legal autonomy during the period from March to June were highly salient and frequent. A study of media coverage of the ROA issue during the period would provide a basis for examining the validity of the idea market explanation.

At the same time, even if a certain idea market has operated, education still has effect on the opinions about the government's solution in June. Except for the fact that in the June survey people's estimation of impact is not controlled for, the effects are also likely to be due to the effects of education on other factors. Actually, when the issue continued to evolve and when the government proposed to seek the NPC's interpretation of the

Basic Law, the issue became even more complicated than before. Indeed, seeking the NPC to interpret the Basic Law complicated people's consideration because it would involve factors like confidence and trust in the Chinese government and the SAR government. It should be noted that the argument about the idea market discussed above and the finding that education continues to have effect on opinions about the government's solution are not contradictory, since education may have effect on attitudes and opinions which are not the subject of salient coverage and heated debate. Again, our discussion points to certain characteristics of media and public discourse during the controversy that need to be examined if we want to substantiate the explanations given here.

In sum, in the June survey we find that education has effects on people's opinions about the government's solution, but not through its effects on people's support and application of the principle of legal autonomy. What the above discussion does not show is that, consistent with the findings in March, in June the most important difference in opinion about the government's solution still lies between people with and without tertiary education. People with primary education or below have a mean score of 3.51 (on a scale of 1 to 5) regarding their support of the government's solution, the secondary education group has a mean of 3.49, while the tertiary group has a mean of 3.17.

Conclusion

This study has tried to examine whether people with different levels of education would have different opinions about the ROA issue for different reasons. Our findings support the enlightening effect of education on people's support and application of democratic principles. However, the effect is restricted largely to our March survey, which was conducted at an earlier stage of the whole controversy. In the June survey, when it was near the end of the controversy, the effects of education on people's support and application of democratic principles have diminished to a

level of insignificance, though the direction of effects remains the same. Furthermore, we find that, regardless of support and use of principles or the overall opinions about CFA's verdict and government's asking the NPC to interpret the Basic Law, the most important difference is the one between people with and without tertiary education. For some, this may point to the need to further develop civic education in primary and secondary schools, which for various reasons remains insufficient (Tse, 1997).

One should be reminded that Hong Kong has never been and is not yet a fully developed democracy. The short history of democracy and democratic education has made the effects of education on people's political opinion formation not identical to the findings in Western democratic societies. Jackman's (1978) famous argument about the superficial democratic commitment, which was well documented by other studies in the US, is not found in the present case. The lack of "superficial commitment," ironically, is also attributable to the lack of formal civic education. Although this phenomenon does not exist in Hong Kong at present, proponents of civic education have to be aware of the possibility that their democratic education would produce people only superficially committed to democratic principles in the future.

This study, as stated at the beginning, is based on the premise that understanding people's opinions about public issues requires us to look at their reasoning behind. While many commentators are lamenting over the failure of public opinion to check the government's action and protect the legal autonomy of Hong Kong, this paper finds that an attack on the Hong Kong public as a whole may miss the differences between different groups of people. Theorists of public opinion have discussed about the notion of enlightened opinion (Zaller, 1994), which is defined as what people would want if they were fully informed. The basic idea behind the notion of enlightened opinion is that common people's opinions are not necessarily reliable as a basis for policy formulation. The quality of opinions has to be taken into account. Certainly, the argument of enlightened opinion is an elitist one.

Zaller (1994) also points to problems in equating enlightened opinion with opinion of the educated since it is sometimes possible that educated people are more subject to misleading perceptions or persuasions. In the ROA issue, it also depends on one's political standpoint to see which opinion is the "right" one, thus we cannot simply equate the educated people's opinions as the right or better opinions. However, the findings do produce questions for us to think about. With the proliferation of opinion polls in recent years in Hong Kong, how can we make sense of the polls? Do they constitute what public opinion is? Do they constitute what public opinion should be? Or can we ever talk about what public opinion should be?

The growth of the importance of public opinion in Hong Kong politics requires us to have a deeper understanding of the public opinion process and subtleties in people's formulation of opinions. Two directions of research efforts are important. First, researchers may design and make use of opinion poll with more theoretical guidance so as to explicate the process of individual opinion formation as a result of various psychological and social mechanisms. Secondly, there is the need to reflect upon what opinion polls are and to what extent and in what sense they can contribute to our understanding of the role of public opinion in Hong Kong. The present study can be considered as an effort in the first direction.

Admittedly, this study has various limitations and the explanations of the findings given are at times only suggestive. Further empirical studies are possible and needed. For instance, future research can focus on the effects of education on people's estimation of social and economic developments to see whether different people really have different estimations of the well-being of the economy and society in general and whether the differences could be explained by other social and psychological factors. The relationship between education, opinions and reception of media discourse also deserves attention from researchers. Last but not least, the findings in the present study that tertiary education has an enlightening effect on people's support and application of

democratic principles would need to be tested in cases of other political issues so that a more general argument about the effects of education on democratic values can be established.

Notes

1. Ginsberg (1986) argues that the main goals of education in Western societies are twofold: the "pacification of the dangerous and unruly urban proletariat and the creation of firm popular attachments to the state" (p. 33). He contends that the overall effect of schooling is not the furthering of democracy by the creation of a mass electorate that can more easily be ruled by the state. For instance, while supporters of civic education may point to the effects of education on the increase in participation in elections as a contribution to a democratic society, Ginsberg responds that the real effect is to equate participation with the act of voting and de-legitimize other kinds of political participation, like protests. Therefore, the state is the real beneficiary of civic education.
2. McClosky and Zaller (1984) argue that, although the effect of education is mainly on people's support for abstract principles, it is still a significant "enlightenment," since recognition of principles itself is important and educated people's support for policies can be brought in line with their support for principles if the "principle-policy" contradiction is pointed out. Schuman et al. (1997), on the other hand, advocate that people who support the principle may not support policies implementing the principle because the latter requires a stronger support for principle. Sniderman et al. (1991) argue that educated people's thinking is more sophisticated and their opinions are likely to be affected by a larger number of considerations. As a result, the impact of any single consideration, including support for an abstract principle, is likely to be decreased.

3. The response rate is calculated by dividing the number of successful interviews by the total of successful interviews and refusals.
4. That is, respondents' answers to the statements "CFA's verdict is wrong..." and "CFA's verdict has harmed the harmonious relationship..." are reverse-coded so that higher scores always mean supporting CFA's verdict.
5. Every single statement may contain a number of missing cases. To reduce the number of missing cases in the final index, the index is actually the mean of valid answers to the five statements, that is, if a respondent failed to give an answer to one of the five statements, his/her answers to the other four will be averaged. The same procedure also applied to every index calculation that involved averaging more than one statement.
6. Two points should be noted about the operationalization of the issue opinion variables. First, the variables in the March and June surveys involve a different number of statements combined together. The result is that the issue opinion measure in the March survey, as a combination of five statements, takes on more numerical values than the measure in the June survey. This may make significant findings more likely in the March than in the June survey when the issue opinion measure is involved. However, the two variables have similar reliability coefficients, and findings of our data analysis also show that the dependent variable in the June survey does capture the relationship between other variables and itself. Secondly, the operationalization of the issue opinion variables involve statements that capture the dimensions of support for principle and estimation of impact. In other words, the content of the issue opinion variable overlaps with the variables for support for principle and estimation of impact. This would inflate the relationship between these variables. However, the relationships among these variables are not the main concern of the study. Rather, it is the

comparative strength of these relationships among the different educational groups that is focused on. There is no particular reason for us to ask why the inflation problem would be more serious for one rather than the other education groups, thus the "impurity" of the issue opinion measure does not raise serious doubts about the major conclusions of the present study.

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Education and Principle-based Opinion

A Study of the Right of Abode Controversy in Hong Kong

Abstract

Education is one of the fundamental variables shaping people's political opinions. Past studies in the West have shown that education increases people's support for abstract democratic principles, but not necessarily for concrete policies implementing the principles. This paper examines the impact of education on opinion formation in Hong Kong. Do people with different educational levels hold different opinions regarding abstract social principles? How does people's support for principles and how does their calculation of concrete self-interests enter their opinions on policies? The right of abode controversy in 1999 provides a test case of these questions. Drawing on two surveys, we have found that in Hong Kong tertiary education has an enlightening effect on people's support for and application of social principles, especially during the early stage of the controversy. Tertiary education is also observed to be negatively related to people's concern for social interest. Another major finding of this study is that people with a secondary level of education have the weakest principle-opinion relationship and shows the strongest concern for social interest. The findings will be explained by referring to both theoretical perspectives and situational factors, such as the underdevelopment of democracy in Hong Kong and civic education in its school system.

教育與原則性意見

居港權爭議研究

陳韜文

周健林

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（中文摘要）

教育是影響人對政治及公共事務看法的一個基本因素。一方面，教育是政治社教化的一個重要渠道，使人認識及接受一些抽象的政治理念及原則。可是，西方研究指出，教育縱使能令人支持一些民主原則，也不一定能使人在具體的社會及政治事件中運用這些理念。另外，教育也可能令人對社會及個人利益的看法有所不同。基於上述原因，不同教育程度的人對政治事件因而往往持有不同意見。究竟在香港現時公民教育及民主發展情況之下，教育對人們政治意見的形成有何影響？本文以一九九九年終審法院判決居港權所引發的一場風波作為個案，研究教育程度與香港人政治意見之關係。通過對兩次電話問卷調查所得資料的分析，我們發現香港高等教育（大專及研究院）使人們更傾向支持司法獨立的原則，並應用此原則到是次事件上。亦即是說，高等教育具有西方類似研究中所謂「啟蒙」的作用。同時，具備高等教育的市民對新移民湧入香港所能造成的影響也估計較低。相反，具備中學教育程度的市民對是次事件的意見則最不受社會政治原則的影響，同時亦最看重社會實際利益可能受到的衝擊。