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University students' perceptions of 'good citizens' in Greater China: a comparative study of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and Mainland China

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ABSTRACT



The purpose of civic education is to prepare students to become 'good citizens' aligned with the policies and political purposes of the regime to which they belong. This exploratory study employed a mixed methods design to construct a typology of 'good citizens' to understand university students' perceptions of citizenship in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and Mainland China. It found that the university students' perceptions of 'good citizens' is constructed from two components: internal political efficacy and the connection between 'good citizens' and the regime. Students in these societies share a similar understanding of the first component but have significant divergences in the second component. These findings demonstrate a correlation between regime type and the perceptions of 'good citizens' and our typology could provide a conceptual framework to guide researchers in organising and conducting further comparative studies.

KEYWORDS

'Good citizens'; university students; Greater China; the typology of 'good citizens'

Introduction

The purpose of civic education is to prepare students to become 'good citizens' who align with the policies and political purposes of the regime to which they belong. As Galston (2001, 1) argued, 'a well-ordered polity requires the citizen [to have] appropriate knowledge, skills, and traits of character' to support its rule. Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau, despite similar cultural heritages, have different regimes which have produced different forms of civic education and students' civic attitudes in these four societies. Scholars such as Kennedy, Lijuan, and Ki (2015) utilised the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study data (ICCS) from 2009 to examine school role in influencing secondary student civic learning. Their findings indicated that school leaderships and students' civic attitudes in Hong Kong and Taiwan were influenced by socio-political context. Li (2021) conducted a comparative study on secondary students'

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perceptions of citizenship and civic education, particularly focusing on the concept of 'good citizens' in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Her findings demonstrated how the different political regimes of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China exert different effects on school-based citizenship/civic education and students' civic attitude. Law (2004) conducted a document analysis regarding globalisation, nation-state and civic education under education reforms in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Law indicated that both Hong Kong and Taiwan emphasise generic and transnational skills, and have developed a tripartite framework for civic education. Most of these studies have been conducted at secondary level with two or three societies (such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China), but insufficient studies have been done regarding these four societies at the university level. This exploratory study employed a mixed-methods design to examine university students' perceptions of citizenship in the above four societies.¹ Our research questions are as follows: 1) What are the university students' perceptions of 'good citizens'?; 2) What is the factor structure underlying university students' perceptions in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Mainland China?; 3) Is the factor structure invariance across the four societies?

We focus on Chinese university students because they as change agents are the potential force to engineer civil societies, so their voice and participation would facilitate the development of societies. Universities have social responsibilities to nurture students to become 'good citizens' and would be the last opportunity for formal education to serve as political socialisation to nurture students to conform to the existing sociopolitical order (Huang 2013). As the EFA results and interview demonstrated below, variances on the perception existed across the four societies. A common model is not applicable, we had to construct our own typology to summary the findings.

Brief descriptions of civic education and 'good citizens' in Greater China

Mainland China, Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan have all been influenced by Confucianism, but they have their own political history and ruling ideologies under different regimes. Taiwan was colonised by Japan from 1895 to 1945 while Hong Kong was colonised by the British from 1841 to 1997 and Macau was colonised by Portuguese from 1557 to 1999. These political histories have shaped the development of civic education in these societies. Moreover, the ruling ideologies of regimes have also been incorporated into school curricula which have influenced the aims and the outcomes of civic education.

In Mainland China, the term 'citizen' [公民], has had a chequered history ((Li and Tan 2018). It was first introduced in the late Qing dynasty and the early Republic of China, and its purpose was to replace the word 'subject' used in the old feudal society (Guo 2014). After the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, however, the term 'citizen' was rarely used, except in formal, legal, and propaganda documents (Tang 1986, 276). Since the 1980s, along with the transformation of the Chinese regime from totalitarian to authoritarian, the term 'citizen' has reappeared in Mainland China. Deng Xiaoping proposed that 'all people of China should be brought up as good citizens with self-discipline and a sense of responsibility, with knowledge and skills, with good mental and physical health and motivated by the noble ideals of socialism' (Deng 2002, 408). After 2000, citizens' morality was given considerable emphasis. In 2001 the Chinese

Communist Party Central Committee promulgated *The Implementation Outline on Morality Building for Citizens* (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee 2001). This document proposed 10 virtues of the ‘good citizen’ such as patriotism, law-abidingness, courtesy, integrity, solidarity, friendship (Lee and Ho 2005). As Tan (2011) indicated, the document includes the term ‘citizen’ in its title yet actually emphasises morality. With the re-emergence of ‘citizen,’ the Chinese authorities actively undertook curriculum reform to replace ideological and political education with a special form of civic education, ideological and moral education, to develop their desired ‘good citizens.’

Similar to Mainland China, Macau emphasises nurturing ‘good citizens’ with Chinese and Asian values. The major breakthrough came in 1987 as the authority initiated education reform to respond to widespread uncertainties in both civic consciousness and national awareness against the sealed destiny of Macau. Moral and Civic Education (MCE) was introduced in the early 90s and was formally structured in 1995. The syllabus was revamped again in 1999 to better suit the ongoing ‘social, economic and political changes’ by enforcing the ‘search for their roots of Chinese identity’ through ‘personal, social, political, legal, environmental, and daily life education’ (Tse 2012, 225–228). Civic education serves as a decolonising tool aimed at fostering ‘good citizens’ and ‘good children.’ The curriculum also holds that Confucian virtues are keys to sustain ‘social harmony,’ ‘self-cultivation,’ and ultimately, communitarianism; while these emphases are clearly reflected in the thematic arrangement of the curriculum: Chinese morality and identity, law-abiding citizens, environmental protection, interpersonal relationship, basic rules of the society, roles and responsibility, government, and political affairs. Closely allied with these modules, students are expected to equip themselves with three value clusters: Chinese tradition and Confucianism, rationality and individuality, and civic consciousness (Tse 2012). Compared with Hong Kong, Macau has been viewed as a model of ‘One country Two systems.’ Macau is better integrated with Mainland China than Hong Kong (Ieong 2020).

In Hong Kong, since the 1980s, there has always existed two opposing positions: the pro-democracy and pro-China positions. The pro-democracy position demands a fuller scope and faster pace of democratisation, while the pro-China position favours a slower pace of democratisation and accepts the degree of autonomy allowed by the Chinese Central government. Each position has its own views about the kind of civic education necessary to provide ‘good citizens’ for Hong Kong. The pro-democracy position used to believe that Hong Kong’s youth seemed ‘apolitical,’ showing indifference and aloofness to social and political affairs, with low civic participation (Leung and Yuen 2009). As a result, they placed greater emphasis on developing adolescents’ political knowledge, critical thinking, and civic participation, as reflected in the 1985 *Guidelines on Civic Education in School*, the 1996 *Guidelines on Civic Education in School*, and the 2012 *Civic Education Guidelines from Civil Society*. In contrast, the pro-China position advocated moral and national education to develop a ‘good citizen’ with morality, loyalty, and a strong sense of national identity (Morris and Chan 1997). A set of education reforms was implemented to strengthen Hong Kong’s national and moral education and to achieve the pro-China position’s requirements for being ‘good citizens.’ For example, in May 2011, the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong SAR commenced a consultation on *The Moral and National Education Curriculum Guide* that noted that ‘since the return

of sovereignty, promoting national education and enhancing students' understanding of their country and national identity has become a common goal of primary and secondary schools' (Curriculum Development Council 2012, 1). In short, 'good citizens' as advocated by the pro-democracy position seemingly contradict with 'good citizens' promoted by the pro-China position. The competing values of citizenship reflect the deep divisions within Hong Kong society. However, patriotic values are complementary with democratic values rather than conflicting (Wong and Lee 2019).

Similar to Hong Kong, 'good citizens' and civic education in Taiwan have changed over time. Citizenship has shifted from 'being proud of Chinese' to 'Taiwanese' with the regime transition from authoritarian to democratic and a continuing debate about its sovereignty (Li 2021). From the 1950s to mid-1980s, the teachings of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and Chinese culture heritage drove civic education, focusing on nurturing students' national spirit and moral values (*the Supplementary Statements on Education and Recreation for the Principle of Livelihood published by Chiang Kai-shek*, Doong 2008). The nationalistic citizenship curriculum aimed to develop patriotic, law-abiding 'good citizens' who respected the government's authority. From the mid-1980s to 1990s, a transitional citizenship curriculum stressed nurturing local identities and cultures rather than nationalistic education, emphasised political participation and thinking critically rather than instilling love for China and Chinese culture (*Curriculum Standard*, 1994). From 2000 to the present, the governing party has influenced the civic education curriculum: (a) emphasising the relationship between Taiwan and China under the Kuomintang party, or (b) focusing on democratic ideals and respect for ethnic and cultural differences under the Democratic Progressive party (Doong 2008; *Grade 1–9 Curriculum Guideline*, 1998). In short, 'good citizens' have shifted from being proud of being Chinese, patriotic and respecting the government to being participatory citizens with 'New Taiwanese' identities and emphasis on participation and responsibility.

Conceptual framework

'Good citizen' is both a prerequisite concept of civic education and the ultimate goal of civic education. But it is contested and debated in different contexts.

In western societies, various terms describe 'good citizens.' Scholars such as Mayne and Geißel (2018) employed the terms democratic commitment, political capacity and political participation as components/qualities of democratic citizens. McLaughlin (1992) employed a 'minimal' and 'maximal' model to characterise 'good citizens.' Loyalties and responsibilities with a law-abiding spirit were primary characteristics of minimal citizens, while maximal citizens questioned actively to achieve a 'distanced critical perspective on all important matters' (242). Bank (2008) proposed four kinds of citizen: legal, minimal, active, and transformative. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) used the typologies 'personally responsible citizen,' 'participatory citizen,' and 'the justice oriented citizen.' The personally-responsible citizen must have good character, and must be honest, responsible and a law-abiding member of the community. The participatory citizen is one who actively participates in civic affairs and the social life of the community at the local, state, or national level. The social justice citizen is referred to as one who addresses structural injustice after assessing the status quo, economic and political structures.

Compared to these typologies of the ‘good citizen’ in western societies, there are only some fragmentary descriptions of ‘good citizens’ in Chinese societies. In ancient Chinese society, five types of inter-personal relationship proposed by Confucius were considered characteristics differentiating human beings from animals, namely so called ‘loyalty, filial piety, tolerance, final finality, love and respect one’s elder brother, goodness’ (Yu and Kwan 2008). In the current studies, Lee (2009) indicated that citizens in Eastern societies tend to be relational, rather than focusing on state-individual (and political) rights and responsibilities as in Western society. In Eastern society one has to be a ‘good person’ in order to be a ‘good citizen.’ Lo and Man (1996) said that in Chinese society, if someone is considered to be a ‘good citizen,’ it is imperative that they also be a loyal citizen to the national-state. Keane (2001) indicated that in China ‘the make-up of a “good citizen” is in a state of flux, having shifted from the ideological to the pragmatic, from the collective and altruistic “Lei Feng spirit” to the productive and individualised energy of the entrepreneur’ (p. 5).

Through the above review, existing literature suggests that most existing concept frameworks of ‘good citizen’ are derived from the West. To what extent such concept frameworks can be applied in Great China is yet to be examined. It is the rationale behind this exploratory study which aims to understand the meaning of ‘good citizen’ in the Greater China Region. In other words, our purpose is to first pursue a conceptual framework which can be used to describe the perceptions of ‘good citizen’ in these four societies instead of applying a specific existing framework. The following terms are used to develop a typology of ‘good citizens.’ Political efficacy (external/internal) is defined as the competence and attribute of applying political knowledge, theoretical and contextual, to understand and to participate effectively in politics (Craig, Niemi, and Silver 1990). Post-materialism refers to the transformation of individual values from materialist, physical, and economic to new individual values of autonomy and self-expression. Guardianship democracy is defined as the concept of democracy with Chinese characteristics; the government provides substantive benefits to the people and takes charge of the people and provides substantive benefits to the people. Patriotism is defined as love and loyalty to the country, sense of belonging/attachment to the country. Localism is defined as political movements for preserving local values and identity (Wong et al. 2021).

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods design consisting of two distinct phases, quantitative followed by qualitative. A mixture of both could provide a holistic view to ‘generate a grounded theory’ (Punch 2009, 117).

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adapted from ICCS 2009 and Wong (2015) and serves as an initial measuring instrument to gauge the level of civic engagement and citizenship building among youths before the voluntary interview. The Cronbach’s Alphas of ICCS 2009 and

Wong (2015) are 0.70 and 0.976 respectively. For the convenience of the respondents, we offered both paper-based and online questionnaires. Due to the different social contexts, customised versions were designed to align the survey with the social context. For instance, in Mainland, China, ‘patriotism survey’ was used to fit the political sensibility, while in the case of Taiwan, ‘patriotic’ was expressed as ‘love China’ with an extra question (9T2) in ‘love Taiwan.’ As seen in Table 2, despite the regional and contextual differences, 13 out of 17 items are the same in the questionnaire. The questionnaire also includes demographic information of participants, and all items in the questionnaire were scored on a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree [1] – Strongly Agree [4]). The Cronbach’s Alpha in the four places is above 0.83, indicating good internal consistency and reliability.

Instrument trialing

The target audiences of this study are current university students in undergraduate and postgraduate programs (including doctorate students). All samples were collected in 2019 through convenience sampling. The sample size in Hong Kong is 420. In Taiwan, around 100 students completed paper-based questionnaires in Jan 2019. The survey was further modified according to Taiwan scholars’ comments. Another 100 students from different universities in Taiwan participated in an online modified survey, the total sample is 203. 283 respondents answered the questionnaire as the Mainland China sample. In Macau, we collected 459 samples. For Hong Kong, 362 students indicated a bachelor’s degree; 24 students indicated postgraduate coursework and 34 students did not indicate; among the 73 Mainland China born students, 27 of them were aged 18 years or more when they arrived in Hong Kong. For Macau, 301 students indicated a bachelor’s degree; 41 students indicated postgraduate coursework, and 127 students did not indicate; among the 159 students born in Mainland China, 82 of them were aged 18 years or more when they arrived in Macau. For Taiwan and Mainland China, we only collected data from undergraduate students. Demographic details of the four regions are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information in the four regions.

Societies	Total (missing)	Male/female (missing)	Age group (missing)	Birthplace (missing)
HK	420 (55)	116/276 (28)	16 - 21: 277 22 to 24: 93 Above 25: 20 (30)	HK: 302 CN: 73 *Others: 10 (35)
TW	203 (26)	90/90 (23)	18 to 21: 106 22 to 24: 43 Above 25: 29 (25)	TW: 169 Outside TW: 4 (30)
CN	283 (56)	40/190 (53)	16 to 21: 184 22 to 24: 46 (53)	Guangdong: 180 #Other provinces 33 (70)
MO	459 (55)	148/272 (49)	16 to 21: 226 22-24: 129 Above 25: 54 (60)	CN: 159 MO: 225 Others: 12 (73)

HK=Hong Kong; CN=Mainland, China; TW=Taiwan; MO=Macau; *Others in Hong Kong : Macau=3; Taiwan=1, Other=6; #Others in MO: Taiwan=3, Hong Kong=3, other countries=6.

Table 2. Perceptions of good citizenship in Greater China.

Items contributing to the perception of good citizenship (HK, TW CN & MC:Q1-17 & TW:T1-5)	HK			TW			CN			MO			Sig η^2
	M [#]	SD [#]	N [^]	M [#]	SD [#]	N [^]	M [#]	SD [#]	N [^]	M [#]	SD [#]	N [^]	
1 Knowledge of current events	3.21	0.52	406	3.34	0.67	203	3.22	0.58	278	3.12	0.63	459	.01
2 Participate in peaceful demonstrations	2.93	0.67	405	2.78	0.78	203	2.65	0.66	277	2.79	0.74	458	.02
3 Respect other opinions	3.49	0.52	406	3.67	0.57	202	3.56	0.55	277	3.48	0.55	456	.02
4 Participate in political discussions	2.97	0.59	406	2.98	0.71	203	3.00	0.61	278	2.84	0.66	456	.01
5 Behave morally and ethically	3.46	0.53	403	3.46	0.61	203	3.57	0.55	277	3.52	0.55	458	†
8 Learn Constitution & political system	3.10	0.61	403	3.40	0.62	202	3.37	0.56	278	3.12	0.58	459	.05
10 Being responsible to the family	3.28	0.61	406	3.29	0.67	203	3.54	0.58	278	3.36	0.61	456	.02
11 Avoid conflict of any kind	3.14	0.61	405	3.27	0.75	203	3.18	0.69	278	3.20	0.68	456	†
14 Participate in environmental conservation events	3.18	0.59	406	3.33	0.65	203	3.34	0.59	278	3.24	0.60	459	.01
15 Cast vote at public elections	3.36	0.58	406	3.43	0.68	203	2.97	0.75	276	3.24	0.61	458	.06
16 Tolerance to diversity	3.40	0.56	406	3.68	0.55	203	3.44	0.58	277	3.38	0.60	459	.03
17 Equipped with critical thinking	3.40	0.57	406	3.44	0.69	203	3.23	0.65	277	3.22	0.66	457	.02
6 Maintain national & regional security	3.10	0.64	405	2.34	0.98	195	3.49	0.59	277	3.22	0.61	459	.21
T1 Maintain security of Taiwan				3.38	0.72	202							.05
7 Uphold freedom of speech	3.40	0.53	405	3.70	0.55	203	3.37	0.56	276	3.34	0.58	459	.04
T2 Protect current systems in Taiwan				3.33	0.77	78							†
9 Be patriotic (to mainland China)	2.64	0.82	405	1.79	0.82	197	3.63	0.54	277	3.11	0.69	456	.39
T3 Love Taiwan				3.38	0.76	203							.21
12 Get to know the national history	3.03	0.68	404	2.58	0.87	201	3.32	0.59	277	3.05	0.64	455	.09
T4 Learning the history of Taiwan				3.30	0.72	201							.04
13 Show respect to the government	2.74	0.74	405	2.64	0.98	198	3.27	0.57	278	2.98	0.64	459	.09
T5 Respect the Government of Taiwan				3.35	0.74	200							.10

^Total number of valid responses.

*Likert scale employed: 1= Strongly Disagree (SD); 2 = Disagree (D); 3 = Agree (A); 4 = Strongly Agree (SA).

[#]M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

†stands for non-significant; η^2 : .01 small, .06 medium (bolded in the table), .14 large (bolded and underlined in the table).

Remark: 1. HK=Hong Kong, TW=Taiwan, CN=Mainland China, and MC=Macau.

2. The wording of questions (which are listed below) is different because of their area (TW): Q6: Maintain security of Greater China; Q9: Love Mainland China, Q12: Learning the history of Mainland China, Q13: Respect the Government of Mainland China.

Trialling of interview protocol

We interviewed 18 students through purposeful sampling between 2018 and 2019. A semi-structural interview was applied to collect the information which we were interested in while providing interviewees with autonomy to reflect their points of view. The interview took around 20–60 minutes depending on the interviewee's knowledge and understanding on the questions. For the consideration of political sensitivity, we did not conduct interviews with the students from Mainland China's university. But we successfully interviewed 7 mainland students who studied in Hong Kong and Macau, together with 6 from Hong Kong, 1 from Macau and 4 from Taiwan.

Data analysis

For the quantitative data, one-way ANOVA was conducted for each item to examine the differences in students' responses to the item between the four regions. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was then conducted to investigate the factors underlying the 17 items and parallel analysis was conducted to determine the number of factors using Mplus (version 8.0) for each location. Of note is that in the Taiwan version, there were twin items (one referring to China/Mainland China and the other one referring to

Taiwan) for some items, which is not the case in the other locations (referring to China/Mainland China). The Taiwan-related items were used for the EFA in Taiwan, whereas China/Mainland China related items were used in the other locations.

For the qualitative data, first interviews were conducted in Mandarin and Cantonese, transcribed verbatim and processed as text in Chinese. Second, we interpreted the interview record with reference to the research question and the results of factor analysis. Third, after the simplification of factor analysis from the survey data and further conceptualisation from the interview record, we are able to provide a typology of 'good citizens' to summarise our findings.

Findings

Descriptive statistics

SPSS 25 was employed to conduct descriptive data analyses (shown in Table 2). Students were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with 17 items as attitudes of 'good citizens.' An additional five items were Taiwan specific. The findings showed that students in Hong Kong perceived '*respect other opinions*' (mean 3.49) and '*behave morally and ethically*' (mean 3.46) as the most important attitudes of 'good citizens,' while '*show respect to the government*' (mean 2.74) and '*be patriotic*' (mean 2.64) as the less important attitudes of 'good citizens.' In Hong Kong, the standard deviation of '*be patriotic*' was 0.913 suggesting that the responses received in '*be patriotic*' are the most diverse and sparsely distributed from the mean. The students in Taiwan perceived '*protect and uphold freedom of speech*' (mean 3.70) and '*tolerance to diversity*' (mean 3.68) as the most important attitudes of 'good citizens,' while '*love Mainland China*' (mean 1.79) and '*learning the history of Mainland China*' (mean 2.58) as the less important attitudes of 'good citizens.' Students in Mainland China perceived '*behave morally and ethically*' (mean 3.57) and '*be patriotic*' (mean 3.63) as the most important attitudes of 'good citizens' while '*Participation in peaceful demonstration*' (mean 2.65) and '*voting in every election*' (mean 2.97) as the less important attitudes of 'good citizens.' Students in Macau perceived '*moral and ethical behaviour*' (mean 3.52) and '*respect other opinions*' (mean 3.48) as the most important attitudes of 'good citizens' while '*participate in political discussions*' (mean 2.84) and '*Participation in peaceful demonstration*' (mean 2.79) as the less important attitudes of 'good citizens.' The findings above suggest that contextual and social-political factors play a vital role in students' perceptions of 'good citizens.' These findings indicated that there were similarities and differences among university students' perceptions of 'good citizens' in these four societies.

One-way ANOVA was applied to compare the differences between each of the four regions regarding the 17 items of 'good citizens.' Among all the comparisons, 12 of them were direct comparisons as the items were expressed exactly the same when distributed to the four regions, while the other five items were 'twin comparisons' as they had twin versions (one referring to China/Mainland China and the other one referring to Taiwan; the item ID of the latter is denoted by 'T' in Table 2) in Taiwan, but a single version (refer to China/Mainland China) in the other three locations. For instance, Item 9 was '*be patriotic*' in Hong Kong, Macau, and Mainland China, but there were two corresponding items in the Taiwan version: Love China (coded as Item 9 in Table 2) and Love Taiwan

(T3 in Table 2). Among the 12 direct comparisons, results of one-way ANOVAs show 2 non-significant differences (Items 5 and 11) and 10 significant differences with small effect sizes ($\eta^2 < .06$). Results of one-way ANOVAs showed that the ten twin comparisons were all significant, except Item T2 (vs. Item 7 in Hong Kong, Macau, and Mainland China), 3 with large effect size (Item 6 and Item 9/T3; $\eta^2 > .14$), 3 with medium effect size (Items 12, and Items 13/T5; η^2 between .06 and .14), and 3 with small effect size (Item T1, Item 7, and Item T4; $\eta^2 < .06$). The statistical significant differences suggested that university students in Taiwan rated these items about Taiwan much higher (e.g. rated 'Get to know the national history' less than 'Learning the history of Taiwan'). Also, students in Taiwan put much higher values on 'freedom of speech' than those in Hong Kong, Macau, and Mainland China. The results of post hoc with Sidak/Bonferroni correction were obtained for Item 6 and Item 9. The results indicated that each region showed a significant difference in both items. However, these results are not the main focus of this paper, and related research should be conducted in a further study.

Factor analysis

We employed factor analysis to further examine holistic patterns in these four societies. The results of the parallel analysis and the factor analysis (see Table 3) revealed that Hong Kong and Macau can be simplified into 3 factors while Mainland China and Taiwan into 2 factors. As seen in Table 1 and 2nd column ('Factors & indicating item') of Table 4, some items are shared by more than one factor; for the purpose of simplification, the strongest factor loadings of each item are assigned to one factor, as shown in the 3rd column (Factors & indicating item [without sharing items]) of Table 4.

First of all, university students in these four societies share the same factor which could be named 'internal political efficacy.' As a widely used concept in measuring

Table 3. Factor analysis on the perceptions of 'good citizens' in Greater China.

Item	HK			MO			CN		TW	
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	1	2
I1	.53			.63				.42	.52	
I2	.60			.47				.33		
I3		.69			.69		.57		1.06	-.31
I4	.66			.65				.63		.35
I5		.59			.63		.72		.56	
I6/T1			.53			.45	.56			.55
I7/T2		.47			.58		.32	.30	.82	
I8	.32		.48	.46		.36	.36	.43	.41	.36
I9/T3			.61			.73	.80			.82
I10		.34	.41		.49		.82			.31
I11			.56			.35	.43			
I12/T4			.51	.34		.44		.57		.70
I13/T5			.79			.74	.38	.32		.52
I14			.30		.31		.38	.41		.46
I15	.37	.40		.50	.32			.67	.41	.42
I16		.60			.61		.37	.41	.78	
I17		.54		.44	.33			.49	.48	
Eigenvalue										
Sample	5.14	2.17	1.37	5.86	1.59	1.48	6.89	1.373	7.14	1.45
Simulated	1.38	1.30	1.24	1.35	1.29	1.22	1.46	1.365	1.55	1.43

HK=Hong Kong, TW=Taiwan, CN=Mainland China, and MC=Macau.

Table 4. Interpretation on factor analysis.

Region	Factors & indicating item	Factors & indicating item (without sharing items)	Factor Interpretation
HK	Factor 1: 1,2,4,8,15	Factor 1: 1,2,4,8	Factor 1: internal political efficacy
	Factor 2: 3,5,7,10,15,16,17	Factor 2: 3,5,7,15,16,17	Factor 2: post-materialism
	Factor 3: 6,8,9,10,11,12,13,14	Factor 3: 6,8,9,10,11,12,13,14	Factor 3: guardianship democracy
MO	Factor 1: 1,2,4,8,12,15,17	Factor 1: 1,2,4,8,12,15,17	Factor 1: internal political efficacy
	Factor 2: 3,5,7,10,14,15,16,17	Factor 2: 3,5,7,10,14,16	Factor 2: post-materialism
	Factor 3: 6,8,9,11,12,13	Factor 3: 6,9,11,12,13	Factor 3: guardianship democracy
CN	Factor 1: 3,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,13,14,16	Factor 1: 3,5,6,7,9,10,11,13	Factor 1: a mixture of patriotism + traditionalism
	Factor 2: 1,2,4,7,8,12,13,14,15,16,17	Factor 2: 1,2,4,8,12,14,15,16,17	Factor 2: internal political efficacy
	Factor 1: 1,3,5,7,8,15,16,17	Factor 1: 1,3,5,7,8,16,17	Factor 1: a mixture of post-materialism and internal political efficacy
TW	Factor 2: 3,4,6,8,9,10,12,13,14,15	Factor 2: 3,4,6,9,10,12,13,14,15	Factor 2: localism

Bold refers to the two highest correlation items; Italic refers to items sharing more than one factor.

political attitude, according to Niemi, Craig, and Mattei (1991), its definition is ‘referring to beliefs about one’s own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in politics.’ These findings imply that university students in the four societies believe that ‘internal political efficacy’ is an important attitude of ‘good citizens.’

Table 4 also suggests that Hong Kong university students’ perceptions of ‘good citizens’ are similar to Macau’s while Mainland China’s and Taiwan’s university students’ perceptions of ‘good citizens’ are different from other regions with distinguishing factors. Both Hong Kong and Macau have a 3 factors pattern, and share the highest correlation item, namely ‘*respect other opinions*’ in Factor 2. Hong Kong and Macau are widely recognised as post-industrial societies, thus it is not surprising to find students are inclined to post-materialism which emphasises self-expression, and thus people should respect others. Interestingly, the highest correlation items were ‘*be patriotic (to mainland China)*’ and ‘*show respect to the government*’ in Factor 3, in the context of Hong Kong and Macau, the interpretation of the factor will be that a good citizen has responsibility for maintaining the existing political order and obeying government, a kind of political culture in contrast to liberal democracy, which Jie and Shi (2015) described as ‘guardianship democracy.’ This discourse ‘intentionally downplays the role of institutions/procedures, particularly those that may constrain the discretionary power of the political leaders to follow their vision for advancing the public interest’. Finally, a difference between Hong Kong and Macau appeared in Factor 1. The highest correlation items in the former were ‘*participate in peaceful demonstrations*’ and ‘*learn constitution and political system*’, in the latter were ‘*knowledge of current events*’ and ‘*participate in political discussions*’. The above items all related to ‘internal political efficacy.’ Students in Hong Kong put more emphasis on taking actions like demonstration and assembly instead of simply knowing political affairs. Such perceptions of good citizen aligned

with the empirical observation that Hong Kong has a more mature civil society and more active social mobilisation mechanisms than Macau.

University students in Mainland China showed the strongest patriotism while university students in Taiwan drew a connection between ‘good citizens’ and ‘localism.’ First of all, one of the highest correlation items in Factor 1 from Mainland China students was ‘*be patriotic*.’ While the same item appeared in the case of Hong Kong and Macau, different meaning to the students among these societies because of the design of their education system and political propaganda, ‘be patriotic’ is closer to patriotism in Mainland China rather than simply respecting and obeying the government. Another highly correlated item in Factor 1 was ‘*being responsible to the family*.’ As Mainland China was the only region that significantly recognised the importance of family, which suggested students are influenced by Confucianism, we thus interpreted Factor 1 as a mixture of ‘patriotism and traditionalism.’ University students in Mainland China considered ‘*cast vote at public elections*’ as an important component even though national election does not exist in Mainland China. In other words, students in Mainland China know ‘good citizen’ is something more than simply ‘*participate in political discussions*’. Finally, Factor 2 in Taiwan also included ‘*be patriotic (Love Taiwan)*’ as one of the highest correlated items, but again we need to interpret the factor within the political context. After the transition to a democracy in 1992, there has been a growing strong Taiwanese identity in the past decades. With another highly correlated item ‘*get to know the national history (learning the history of Taiwan)*’, university students in Taiwan reflected a significant ‘localism’ in the perceptions of ‘good citizen’ that did not appear in other regions. If they are proud of the political system of Taiwan, then they could ‘*uphold freedom of speech (protect current system in Taiwan)*’ and ‘*respect other opinions*’ which received the highest correlation in Factor 1. As these are the essential components of democracy, we interpret the factor as ‘a mixture of post-materialism and internal political efficacy.’

Findings from interview

In the interviews with students from the four regions, we found the university students’ perceptions of ‘good citizens’ consistent with the quantitative findings from factor analysis. For example, Table 4 suggested all students shared the factor ‘internal political efficacy,’ and it was the baseline components most mentioned by all interviewees. A Hong Kong student, for example, said ‘In the context of Hong Kong, (good citizens) first of all should have knowledge of public affairs but also have critical thinking on them. Even in a passive version, (he should) obey law and have morality, like empathy. (He should also be) a mentally mature person which allows him to accept different points of view.’ A Taiwan student also mentioned ‘If a university student really intends to be a good citizen, he should know the meaning of election, human rights and how the government is running.’

Divergences appeared in the connection between ‘good citizens’ and the regime, and how the latter pose constraints on the former. Taiwan was the only democracy in the four regions where students showed the strongest connection between ‘good citizen’ and democracy. For example, when we asked ‘What is a good citizen in your opinion?’, one student mentioned ‘In Taiwan, you should at least know the difference between

democracy and non-democracy.’ In the question ‘Are there any social events that influenced your concepts of ‘good citizens’,’ another Taiwan student said ‘Actually I am not that keen about politics, but what comes to my mind is the Sun Flower Movement. It is civil disobedience. If citizens have their own thinking and enlightenment, are they good citizens? The government may not think so, that is why it chooses repression. But for the people in Taiwan, we need to know our own political rights and fight for them, though we should also obey the law. The incident makes me think about the above questions.’ The narrative is very different for students from Mainland China. The interests of the state/regime have priority and they are relatively passive in practising political rights. In response to the same question of what is a good citizen, one student pointed out ‘Students from Hong Kong and Macau, in my opinion, I think they are more concerned about local interests instead of the interests of the state or nation.’ Another student said ‘China’s well-being is the same as your well-being. Although injustice and helplessness exist, it is beyond my control, I can only take care of myself.’ But if the interest of ordinary people may not be guaranteed without check and balance, why do they still choose to support the priority of state or nation over individual rights? We received the following answer from one of the students when answering the question about what social events shaped his understanding of good citizens ‘some local government officials did a bad job, and the bureaucratic system is bloated. But the Chinese government is still the best choice for Chinese people even it is not perfect, and we make a right choice.’

Such strong and to some extent emotional connection between ‘good citizen’ and regime is less common among students from Hong Kong. University students in Hong Kong considered their civil obligations towards Hong Kong to be within the factor of ‘internal political efficacy,’ even some political events that happened in Hong Kong like the Occupy Central Movement in recent years shaped their perceptions of what is a good citizen as one student described:

Occupy Central Movement shaped my understanding of good citizen and the impression about China. My mind becomes clearer when I saw some classmates wearing yellow stripe and striking even with objections from classmates, family and teachers. But if you ask them what the background of the event is, they don’t really know. A restlessness emotion pushes them to resist China. I went to the protest site one time during the movement, but I was staring from distance instead of staying with protesters. Because I am afraid that I am not able to keep my rationality if I was in, there is no way for you not to be influenced by their emotion . . . I then realise there are other ways of political participation.

Finally, Macau is the case with the least region specific component of all the regions. Perhaps this is because students in Macau do not have similar civic engagements as life experience or do not receive a patriotic education like in Mainland China, so as a result they lack a strong emotional connection with neither China nor Macau government. On the other hand, unlike in the case of Taiwan and Hong Kong, perhaps it is because Macau also has not had a critical political event which is powerful enough to shape students’ mindset (Yeung 2017, 2019).

Discussion

Based on the results, we suggest the perceptions of ‘good citizens’ in Greater China is constructed by two components: a baseline component and a region specific component.

The first component which describes the shared understanding of what is a ‘good citizen’ at the individual level is internal political efficacy. The second component describes the connection between ‘good citizens’ and regime interests. The results indicate that students have a divergent understanding of the second component under different regime types. With the variation in the components, we are able to construct a typology of ‘good citizens’ in Greater China as a 2×2 matrix as illustrated in [Figure 1](#); the y-axis describes the first component while the x-axis depicts the second component. Mainland China falls into the first quadrant in which the interests of the regime/government have priority over individual rights which reflects the kind of patriotism students received in the education system. And as the political system poses substantial constraints for political participation, students’ ‘internal political efficacy’ is more inclined towards knowing public affairs even though they realise ‘good citizens’ should also fulfill civil responsibilities through participation (e.g. voting). While the interests of the regime also received emphasis in Taiwan’s students in the fourth quadrant, it appears as a kind of localism as students are proud of Taiwan’s democracy and regard it as a distinguishing feature in Greater China. This explains why students shared the consensus that ‘good citizens’ should have respect for others and defend individual rights through protest and demonstration as the above features are essential components of a democratic society. Hong Kong is in the third quadrant since students also considered that if people are ‘good citizens,’ they should be involved in political activities, however, those students did not construct a strong connection between the interest of regime/government and responsibilities of ‘good citizens.’ Finally, students from Macau in the second quadrant hold the most conservative and reduced form of understanding of ‘good citizens’ compared with the other regions. ‘good citizens’ simply means knowing public affairs and obeying the law.

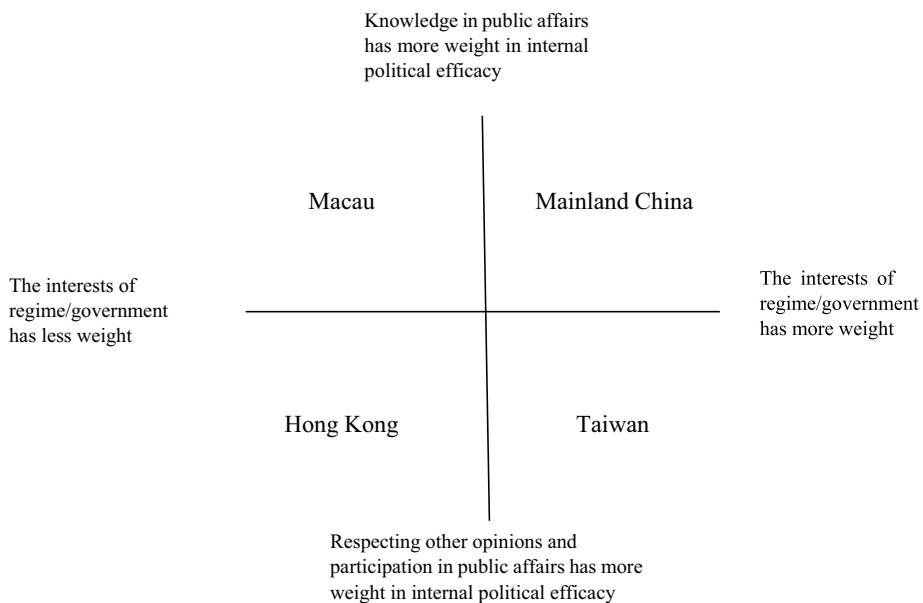


Figure 1. A typology of ‘good citizens’ in Greater China.

Although internal political efficacy is a shared factor among university students in these Confucius-heritage societies, their perceptions of ‘good citizens’ have significant differences. Students in Mainland China show the strongest patriotism and Taiwan students draw a connection between ‘good citizens’ and democracy, while Hong Kong’s and Macau’s students put less emphasis on the correlations between individual morality and behaviour and regime interests. These findings suggest that how young people construct meanings of ‘good citizens’ is influenced by various factors and regime types. Hong Kong is a hybrid regime; Taiwan is a democracy regime and Mainland China is an authoritarian regime (Li 2021) while Macau falls between authoritarian and hybrid regime. Individual relationships with society and nation are stressed through patriotism education in an authoritarian regime. Civic participation is valued for democratic development in a hybrid regime. Freedom of speech and individual rights are emphasised in a democracy regime. Although Macau, Taiwan and Hong Kong were colonised, islands are the unique geography positions of Taiwan and Hong Kong. The island effect would also help explain the differences in perceptions of ‘good citizens’ among university students in these four societies. Island effect is referred to people in Hong Kong and Taiwan used island imagery to construct their citizenship identity with distinctive cultures and values which distinguished from Mainland China (Abell, Condor, and Stevenson 2006). Moreover, Hong Kong and Taiwan as islands extended their connections with the outside world which influenced the university students’ perceptions of citizenship.

A typology of ‘good citizens’ illustrates that university students in Hong Kong and Taiwan place more weight on participation in public affairs as an attitude of ‘good citizens’ than university students in Macau. The rise of parallel student social movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan suggests some commonality in civic participatory influences on students’ civic engagements (Li, Kennedy, and Lamb 2016). A typology of ‘good citizens’ also illustrates that university students in Mainland China and Taiwan place higher weight than Hong Kong and Macau on the connection between ‘good citizens’ and regime interests but with different meanings. University students in Taiwan considered ‘*maintain security of Taiwan*’ and ‘*protect current systems in Taiwan*’ as important attitudes of ‘good citizens’ while university students in Mainland China considered ‘*maintain national and regional security*’ as an important attitude of ‘good citizens.’ These reflect the current political development in Taiwan Strait which is beyond the scope of this study.

Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of the present study is to examine university students’ perceptions of ‘good citizens’ in the Greater China Region. As most past studies are conducted in democracies and no universal consensus is shared in the understanding on the concept of ‘good citizens,’ we choose to first examine the survey data through EFA instead of assuming there is a common model that existed in the Greater China Region. The EFA results reveal a variance across the four societies as there are three factors in Hong Kong and Macau, and two factors in Mainland China and Taiwan. Accordingly, we developed a typology in order to capture the convergence and divergence in students’ understanding of the concept. The EFA and interview results suggested that university students’

understanding of ‘good citizens’ is composed of two components. The first one we called ‘baseline component’ related to internal political efficacy, while the second one is called ‘regional specific component.’ Students in the four societies share the consensus in the first component but demonstrated divergent perceptions in the second component. In other words, although students agreed a ‘good citizens’ should concern about political affairs and have civic responsibilities (e.g. political participation, obey the law and respecting others opinions). Regime type has a significant influence on how students correlated civic responsibilities with the political community. Because it is expected that Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan expect to develop different types of ‘good citizens’ through civic education, our findings could provide some substantive suggestions for the future development of civic education curriculum in Greater China. Moreover, as our findings enable us to construct a typology (in a 2×2 matrix) to describe the understanding on ‘good citizens’ in these four societies. Further studies may follow up to examine in what extent the Regime Theory and island effect could help explain the differences we reveal in the present study. Due to the convenient sample we used, our findings should not generalise to whole students; our typology, however, can serve as a conceptual framework for further studies.

Regarding the growing tendency of confrontation in social movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan in the recent years, we also suggested the concept of ‘good citizens’ needs to be re- conceptualised to include multiple citizenship forms which go beyond national community, value diversity (Horst, Erdal, and Jdid 2020) and emphasise student co-construction of citizenship. Traditional definitions of citizenship have failed to reflect students’ civic realities and aspirations. ‘The concept of citizenship encompasses contexts and experiences that help an individual situate, negotiate, and construct a unique understanding of citizenship (Alviar-Martin 2010, 46). Carretero, Haste, and Bermudez (2015) also indicated that current civic education, which cultivates obedient citizens to conform to ruling values, fails to prepare students for the ever-changing world. “New civics” is an approach to civic education that is grounded in recognising the actual civic experience of youth in diverse social-cultural contexts. It seeks to engage students in a hands-on reflective practice as a means to help them make and negotiate the meaning of civic issues, processes, and opportunities.’ To put it simply, civic learning must start from where the learners are, with their activities, interests, and perceptions of the characteristics of ‘good citizens’ (Li, Kuang, and Liang 2020). Governments and civil society need to recognise that problems that youth are going to face, now and in the future, are complex ones. Educational practices need to engage with notions of complexity in order to better prepare youth for those situations.

Note

1. University is all public in Mainland China, while they are mostly public in Hong Kong and Macau. While in the case of Taiwan, our sample is mainly from a public university. Therefore even the dataset includes university students both in public and private university, technically speaking our findings mainly reflect the perception from students in the former.

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