Panel Two
Title of paper

Social Institution and Political Participation

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Institutions and Political Participation in Three Chinese Societies

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Introduction

Participation in political activity differs among individuals and across nations in terms of level, mode, and quality. Such differences are the result of a number of forces. Four kinds factors that affect participation or mobilization are treated in this chapter. They are socio-demographic conditions, authoritarian beliefs, institutions, and cognitive competence.

Socio-demographic conditions are often regarded by social scientists as general and fundamental determinants of political attitudes and behavior. They are sometimes used as indicators of social cleavages. In the four nation study of Verba, Nie and Kim that has partly inspired our research, socio-demographic variables denote individual-level of resources that can be converted into participatory actions. In our study design, these same variables but especially education and modernization represent the forces of development and modernization that enhance the skills and action orientations of citizens that tend to favor political participation.

Secondly, we are also interested in the mobilization or de-mobilization potential of political culture for political participation. It is a tradition that can be traced back to the civic culture tradition of Almond and Verba. Our contribution lies in the development of an instrument to measure Chinese traditionalism. This instrument is not used in the chapter though. Instead we will examine the effect of authoritarian/democratic beliefs on political participation.

Thirdly, we wish to evaluate the impact of social (and secondarily political) institutions on political participation. It is a concern anchored in the hypothesis of institution-level of resources in study of Verba, Nie and Kim, but with an important supplement. Specifically, we recognize the growing importance of the mass media in modern political life and include them as an indispensable factor of explanation for political behavior in our societies. To the extent possible, we would also like to ascertain the influence of the systemic characteristics of the political institution as a whole on the level and modes of political participation.

Finally, related to the intermediation or (de-)mobilization role of the mass media, cognitive competence is regarded here as another important source of political participation/mobilization.

In other chapters of this volume, we have already examined the forces of modernization, the developmental trajectory of the political system, traditional and democratic values, and the social-psychological resources. The objective of this chapter is to ascertain the impact of social (and political in the secondary sense) institutions on political participation. Social institutions in this study consist of mass media and voluntary social organizations.

Modes of Political Participation

The three Chinese societies exhibit a very different pattern of political participation in terms of modes (Table 1). While voting and election-related activities are the most popular of all modes of political participation in all three societies, voting was almost universal among citizens in Taiwan where it is not compulsory. The prevalence of participation in voting may be due to the founding nature of elections in the wake of democratization in the late 1980s. In comparison, people in Hong Kong were extremely reserved about the legislative elections in 1991 when universal suffrage was introduced for the first time. Participation in voting was restrained because of the institutional limitation. As only 18 of the 60 seats were to be returned by universal suffrage, motivation to participate was low.

[Table 1 about here]

In Mainland China, voting was a prevalent political activity too, albeit to a much less extent than Taiwan. What however distinguishes Mainland China from the other two Chinese societies is the modes of particularized contacting and networking. With respect to the former, the level of participation is about three times higher in Mainland China than that in Taiwan and Hong Kong. In a context where delivery of goods and services was decentralized to the unit/village levels, the cultivation and use of relations are understandably significant strategies to satisfy needs for living.

True to the image of "attentive spectators", the people of Hong Kong were enthusiastic in none of the six modes of political participation. Yet, in comparative terms, they were remarkably fond of making adversarial appeal and taking part in protest. These strategies seem most rational, given their inability to change the political system but secured right to assembly and expression.

Mass Media in the Three Societies

Our interest in the role of the mass media is pretty much focused on the news system, as reflected in the ways we posed our interview questions. At the time of the sample survey (1993), the Hong Kong news media had already become much freer than the earlier colonial period when, despite the absence of press censorship, post-publication

penalty of unacceptable reporting could be harsh. The media were allowed to operate without much governmental supervision. Without the existence of any established political party, there was in Hong Kong no close parallelism between the press system and the party system (Seymour-Ure, 1974). Starting from the early 1990s, the mass media was increasingly dominated by the forces of market concerns. Politically speaking, the century-old tradition of involvement in Chinese politics between the leftist and the rightist press was gradually giving way to the ascendance of the centrist newspapers with reporting priority allocated to local issues. It is against such a paradigm shift that the mass media was going to exert a growing influence on local politics in Hong Kong in the years to come.

The Taiwan media were at one time tightly government-controlled, but the lid came off in the mid-1980s. In contrast to Hong Kong, the press in Taiwan before the abolition of the press ban in 1988 was dominant by the 14 newspapers run by the government or the ruling party *Kuomintang*, whereas the 17 privately owned newspapers could only play a subdued role. All newspapers were subjected to censorship and the publication limit of 12 pages per day except for festival dates. After 1988, the press system was flourishing to an astonishing degree, with no less than 288 newspapers (among them, 159 dailies) registered in 1994. License for new radio stations were issued in 1993, leading to the mushrooming of mass broadcasting of sound. The TV ban was lifted in the same year when cable TV was permitted, thereby breaking the monopoly of the three so-called private stations that were actually owned by the government, the *Kuomintang* and the army. All in all, Taiwan was recorded as one of the 63 countries with press freedom in the report of Freedom House in 1994(?).

The mass media in Mainland China registered the closest parallelism between the party system and the press system. It is duped a 'commandist media system' (Lee, 1990) According to Chinese Communist Party doctrine, the media serve not simply to provide information to the public, but to propagandize the masses, mobilize the masses, and organize the masses to carry out goals defined by the Party. From the time of its establishment, the People's Republic of China devoted a major effort to establishing a communications network to mobilize the loyalties and energies of its population. An early priority was to establish party-controlled national and local newspapers, circulate them at low cost through the postal system, and establish reading rooms in every village and factory. By the late 1950, China's villages were wired for loudspeaker transmission of local government stations' radio broadcasts. In the 1970s, the government invested in the production and distribution of private radio sets, and then television sets. Changes began to take place under Deng Xiaoping, especially after his "Southern Tour Talks" in early 1992. The crux of changes centered around the commercialization and marketization of news media, i.e. the suspension of governmental subsidy to the mass media organizations and concomitantly the infiltration of some elements of the market economy in the process of news making. A new trend of development was thus ushered with the following characteristics: a gradual decline in the authority of political ideology and the ideologues, the erosion of established news-reporting norms, and the growth of competition among media units. However, this long-term trend must be assessed against

the residual interest of the Party and the government to control the mass media, especially in 1993 when the survey was carried out.

In light of the above common trajectory of the development of media whereby the growing independence of the press system in the early period were by themselves the results of modernization forces and regime liberalization, it is unlikely that exposure to mass media would have too significant an impact on the level of political participation in the three Chinese societies, especially Mainland China where liberalization had been intermittent and haphazard. Before we examine this assumption, let us first look at the distribution of varying exposure in the three societies.

In our study, people in the three societies were asked about the use of radio, TV and newspaper in the acquisition of news about public affairs.[i] The results are presented in Table 2. As expected, TV turns out as the most important sources of political information in all societies[ii] and radio the least important.

Hong Kong people emerge as the heaviest user of all types of media, with 64% watching TV, 48% reading newspaper and 37% listening to radio everyday. Their brethrens in the Mainland stand in sharp contrast in every aspect. This big difference can be traced to a host of forces. Standard of living affects the ownership of radio and TV sets thereby reducing the degree of exposure. Modernization in the form of education and literacy has an influence on the ability to use newspapers. The quality of media content also matters. If media content were standardized to fit political-correctness, users may find nothing interesting to waste their time for. All these suggest that as the most modernized place and with the freest media news system at the time, Hong Kong must have the highest concentration of heavy media users.

[Table 2 about here]

Overall speaking, Taiwan is situated between Mainland China and Hong Kong. In terms of exposure to TV and newspaper, Taiwan is not too far way from Hong Kong. It is the use of radio that has a greater differentiating power between the two places. The people of Hong Kong listened much more frequently to radio news than their counterparts in Taiwan, despite the fact that there were more radio stations in the latter than the former.

Social Organizations in Three Societies

Chinese societies are said to be family-oriented and averse to joining secondary associations. On the other hand, secondary associations are regarded as important elements in social and political modernization. As described in the literature, social organizations can serve as intermediaries between the individual, society and the state by transmitting information within the socio-political system, nurturing the values, beliefs and attitudes of their members, and preparing them in their social and political roles. With respect to our cases, the traditional value of family orientation can only partially explain the low level of associational participation. The availability of voluntary social

organizations in an unfavorable political context is an equally, if not more, powerful alternative explanation. In fact, all three societies started in the 1980s to experience far-reaching economic and political transformation that would ultimately redefine the relationship between the state and society. Among the three, Hong Kong happens to be the luckiest, being endowed earlier with the right to freely form secondary associations beyond the family. About 21% of its current social organizations were established before 1949. (Still, 35% were introduced only after 1980.) In a colonial setting and given the nature of an immigrant society, social organizations in Hong Kong were, with a few important exceptions, principally concerned with philanthrophic objectives to serve people of relations based on clan, origin of residence and the like. The colonial legacy lingered on at the time when social movements emerged in the 1970s to produce public-spirited social leaders who pioneered a new type of groupings in the 1980s, becoming ready to benefit from the regime opening offered by the negotiated transition of sovereignty to China. For Taiwan and Mainland China, there were in the beginning a few secondary associations that owed a monopolistic existence at the mercy of the corporatist state in return for political loyalty. Thus, political transformation in Taiwan is the key to the upsurge of social groups there in the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially independent commercial associations and foundations. The same political driving force is generally true for the formation of secondary associations in Mainland China, although the process has been restrained, the types of groups are dominated by politically less sensitive, fraternity groups and academic/professional saloons, and the dependence of social groups on the Party state is still pronounced in most instances.

What has transpired so far is the fact that different political trajectories have largely informed the different patterns in the evolution of and the different kinds of secondary associations and their different manners in actual operation in our societies. It is a complex picture that our sample survey can only reveal a partial truth.

The present study of social organizations is limited by the space constraint of our questionnaire design. On the one hand, both political parties and social organizations were included for analyses, since it is difficult to differentiate between the two categories of groups for Mainland China, and on its own merit political parties can be important institutions in mobilizing or demobilizing certain parts of the populace into political activity. On the other hand, the questions we had administered have given us only information on membership in these political and social organizations and on the level of participation in activities of social groups. It is not known whether the specific groups our respondents belonged to were politicized and if yes how, whether during periods of electoral campaign or under other circumstances they approached their members or even the general public. Therefore, no direct inference can be drawn about the function of information communication or other intermediation roles of the institutions under study. With these caveats in mind, we can look at Table 3 for a summary of citizens' participation in social and political groups of our sample.

Overall speaking, Chinese in all three societies were rather reluctant to join secondary associations, as expected in the established literature. Furthermore, membership was no more than nominal and did not entail any significant level of

activism on the part of the members. This pattern does not of course preclude the possibility that the associations concerned can still exert considerable influence on what information the passive members obtained and on what action they took in navigating the political world.

[Table 3 about here]

There are marked differences across the societies under study. The social organizations in Taiwan stand out as the most vibrant, with 37% of the respondents having joined social organizations and 9% of them being active members. This should not be surprising given the momentum of early democratization and upsurge of associational formation in late 1980s and early 1990s. In contrast, Hong Kong had the least of people who were attached to secondary associations, notwithstanding its much longer tradition of associational development. Associational members in Hong Kong were not as active as their counterparts in Taiwan, but still much more active than those in the Mainland where membership was more prevalent. The difference in associational activism across the three societies can indeed be traced back to the assigned or self-conceived role of associations in the state and society in transformation.

As said before, this study is designed to ascertain the impact of social institutions on political participation. However, a prior question may be raised that these social institutions are the products of the forces of modernization. Tables 4A, 4B and 4C serve to answer this question in a limited sense. It is limited because the forces of modernization are reduced to the indicators of education and urbanization only. It turns out that for Mainland China modernization forces are, at first glance, strongly and significantly correlated with associational variables. Both education and urbanization are equally important predictors of exposure to mass media. Education explains better than the variations in political affiliation that includes both membership in the Chinese Communist Party as well as the Communist Youth League. In contrast and not unexpectedly, membership in trade union or women association is more prevalent in cities. For the category of social groups other than trade union and women association, all correlations are weak, albeit significant. Altogether, it can be argued that 'social organizations' are basically an urban phenomenon. There remains a crucial question on whether and how much modernization has indeed placed a role in the development of social organization in Mainland China. The answer is positive if we accept the hypothesis that rural areas in China has remained underdeveloped while all development has occurred in the cities. Otherwise, it could well be that the statistical patterns we have just seen are results of strategies of the Party to meet the need of governing the urban areas.

[Table 4A through 4C about here]

It is in light of the above question that the case of Taiwan is illustrative. Compared with Mainland China, both education and urbanization are only moderately related to media exposure. Group membership is weakly associated with education but interestingly not skewed in favor of urban areas as in the case of Mainland China. Further studies are required to verify the kinds of associations thrived in Taiwan in 1993 and

whether they were products of the government during the land reforms in the early 1950s. Only then can we tell whether the stronger presence of social groups in the rural than the urban settings reflects the influence of modernization or government policies in institutionalizing land reforms.

Hong Kong was already a modernized city in the early 1990s, but education did not enjoy a greater impact on either the exposure to mass media or associational membership. There was hardly any meaningful rural area in Hong Kong and no comparable statistics in this regard can be produced.

Social institutions, cognitive competence, and participation

We hypothesize that political participation is affected by the level of cognitive competence. By cognitive competence, we mean a set of cognitive skills and political-psychological orientations that enable their holders to take part in political activity. These set of skills and orientations include the awareness of the impact of the work of the government, interest in politics, the possession of political information/knowledge, and the sense of efficacy in its internal and external dimension.

The awareness of the impact of the work of the government ("government's impact" for short) is measured by a composite variable of the perceived effect of both the central and the local government on one's daily life. Government impact can provide citizens the motivation to become politically active.

Political interest is measured by an additive scale of a general interest in politics and the frequency of political discussion with others. This variable signifies the level of one's psychological involvement in political affairs.

To measure respondents' extent of political information/knowledge, we asked them to identify a series of political personalities. This series includes two parts. In the first part, respondents in all societies were asked to name the U.S. President (Bill Clinton) at the time, the Russian President (Boris Yeltsin) and the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (Jang Zemin). The second part consists of domestic politicians in the respective societies. In total, the Mainland respondents were requested to identify six names, Taiwan respondents seven, and Hong Kong respondents eight. To make scores comparable, we measure political knowledge as the percentage of right answers. We believe that political knowledge provides the skills necessary for the respondents to deal with complex world of politics.

The last indicator of cognitive competence is political efficacy. Internal efficacy is measured by two questions, one on the perceived ability to understand politics and the other on the perceived capability of participating in politics. External efficacy is measured by another two questions, one dealing with the perceived right to having a say in politics and the other with the perception about "officials don't care about people like me". Along with government's impact and political interest, political efficacy is widely believed to be an important psychological anchor for political participation.

To ascertain the impact of social institutions on political participation as compared to that of cognitive competence, we need to clarify the relationship between these two sets of independent variables. It is admittedly difficult sometimes to prove what comes first. For instance, it seems plausible that participation in social institutions and media use enhance the level of one's political knowledge rather than vice versa, whereas political interest may be the cause as well as the effect of social participation and media use. In the same vein, government's impact on the one hand and social participation and media use on the other may be mutually reinforcing, while political efficacy is likely the result of social participation and media use. This discussion raises the issue of which independent variables should be entered first in a multivariate regression analysis of political participation. To simplify the process, the set of cognitive competence variables will be entered as a group, so too the set of social participation and media use, and both sequence of entering the sets will be explored in subsequent analyses. Given the indeterminate nature of the sequence, it is useful to look at the zero order correlations between the two groups of variable at this stage.

As revealed in Table 5A for Mainland China, all variables of social participation and use of mass media are significantly and positively related with all indicators of cognitive competence. This is especially true with regard to political interest. The strength of relation is phenomenal, with a coefficient of .962 at a significance of .000. This is followed by membership in trade union or women association and the Party or the Youth League, in that order. This suggests that the trade union and women association may have greater power to mobilize the people than the Party or the Youth League.

[Table 5A about here]

The pattern in Taiwan is much less homogenous and impressive (Table 5B). As a whole, the association between cognitive competence on the one hand and party membership and media exposure on the other hand is consistent. In contrast to the findings about Mainland China, mass media exposure is most strongly related to political knowledge, rather than political interest and it is negatively related to perceived government's impact and sense of political efficacy. The nature of the relationship between party membership and cognitive competence also differs from that in the Mainland. Here, the strong effect of party membership is on knowledge rather than interest. And most surprisingly, party membership reduces respondents' perception of government's impact and sense of external efficacy. It is not clear why this is so. Social participation in terms of membership and activism is unrelated to half of the indicators of cognitive competence and, even if related, the strength of relation weak in most cases.

[Table 5B about here]

Compared to both Mainland China and Taiwan, the party system in Hong Kong was extremely underdeveloped. It is logical that there is no significant relation between party membership and cognitive competence. The relationship between media use and cognitive competence, especially political knowledge, is rather similar to Taiwan, albeit

to a lesser extent of strength. The effect of membership in social groups on political knowledge is stronger in Hong Kong than in Taiwan. This does not apply to participation in group activities though.

[Table 5C about here]

The general findings are twofold. First, to the extent the three societies are similar to one another, media exposure emerges as the most important source of political knowledge and there is a bi-directional influence between media exposure and political interest. Secondly, the difference between Mainland China on the one hand, and Taiwan and Hong Kong on the other is significant. In the former, the relation between media exposure and the indicators within cognitive competence goes in one single, i.e. positive direction whereas the relationship in the latter two societies goes in the negative direction when government's impact and external efficacy are involved. These findings imply that the mass media in the Mainland remained transmission belts of the Party and the government and hence partake in a similar relationship with cognitive competence as membership in the Party. In contrast, mass media in the free societies of Taiwan and Hong Kong were capable of being critical of the government and might serve as de-mobilizing agents in the process of political participation, as the malaise thesis of mass media in the West suggests (Ruedigger 2004). This understanding can also apply to the finding that group membership or activities do not affect people's sense of external efficacy in Taiwan and Hong Kong, in contrast to Mainland China, thus giving us an additional reason to treat the trade union and the woman association in Mainland China as members of the political group category together with the CCP and the Communist Youth League.

Correlates of Political Participation

We are ready to go into multivariate regression analyses of political participation. In terms of the dependent variable, we will focus on the overall scale of participation that adds all modes of participation together. Selected, but not all, modes of participation for each of the three societies will also be discussed. As posited in the introductory section, we have four sets of independent variables: socio-demographic, authoritarian beliefs, institutions, and cognitive competence. They will be entered in that order first and then with the sequence for the latter two reversed in a second run. The findings are summarized in Table 6A and Table 6B.

Two most general conclusions can be drawn from the findings. First is the low efficacy of the causal models. No matter which factor (cognitive competence or institution) is entered first, both models can, in terms of the cumulative R squared, explain no more than 17% of the variance in overall political participation in Hong Kong, 15% in Mainland China and 10% in Taiwan. The second general conclusion refers to the potency of the cultural factor in political participation. As revealed in the respective incremental R squared in both tables, authoritarian beliefs explain very little variance in the dependent variable, and the socio-demographic factor fares better but remains rather weak.

Now let's turn to the differences. If cognitive competence is entered before institutions, it emerges as the most influential factor of all four sources of participation/mobilization for the three societies (Table 6B). When cognitive competence is entered after institutions however (Table 6A), the three societies appear different from each other. Specifically, cognitive competence remains the most important in Mainland China. In Taiwan, institutions are much more important than the other three factors. For Hong Kong, the socio-demographic and institutional dimensions are equally important and they are more important than cognitive competence. In light of the differences in the trajectory of political development and the main characteristics of the political regime in the three societies, the second of these two models seems closer to the realities. This should become apparent after we have examined the coefficients for the significant variables in the causal models for overall participation and selected odes of participation in the three societies. This is a task that we now turn to.

Table 7A reports the findings for overall participation and contacting in Mainland China. Contacting is selected because it can best distinguish Mainland China from the others (Table 1). To simply interpretation, let us focus on the final model when all variables have been entered to obtain the cumulative R squared.

The first glance at Table 7A gives an impression that there is a larger host of significant factors of explanation as compared to the other two cases (Tables 7B and 7C). It suggests that the case of Mainland China is more complex than the others. It is also quite clear that both overall participation and the unique mode of particularized contacting have in common three most important factors of explanation: political interest, mass media, and internal efficacy. Among them, political interest really stands out. In fact, political interest is without exception important to all other modes of participation (Relevant tables not reported in this paper). The magnitude of the effect of political interest is very strong, leaving that of socio-demographic and institutional factors far behind. This is a picture radically different from the cases of Taiwan and Hong Kong. Mass media is the second most important factor and its impact is negative, again unlike Taiwan and Hong Kong. It is puzzling why this institution is a de-mobilizing vehicle. OrgMob, which stands for the combined effect of all political organizations (CCP, CYL, trade union, & women association), has only a weak influence. This implies that there is little residual effect of the Chinese mobilization regime. The remaining factors like sex, age and authoritarian beliefs can exert even less influence on the level of overall participation or contacting. The impact of sex is negative, indicating the lingering tradition of home-bound women, i.e. a modernization force in the negative sense is at work. Unlike the case of Taiwan and Hong Kong, both age and authoritarian beliefs have a positive impact on participation, a finding that runs counter to the modernization and the cultural thesis. Maybe it is the result of mobilization by the political institutions. Older people and people with authoritarian beliefs are more easily susceptible to mobilization by political organizations such as the Party. Taking all factors into consideration, we may conclude that cognitive competence as represented by political interest and internal political efficacy is the key to political participation in Mainland China, not modernization, political culture or social/political institutions.

Turning to Taiwan, we see a different pattern. There is a smaller number of significant variables and the cumulative R square as well as the individual coefficients are extremely weak. It suggests that there are other more important factors of explanation our causal models have missed. To the extent that these models are instructive, we see that the world of social organizations is the key to participation in Taiwan. The first most important variables for overall participation are political interest, participation in social group activities and the mass media, in that order. However, the difference between the first two factors is not as big as the case in Mainland China. What is more important is that political interest becomes much weaker when it comes to voting, a mode that Taiwan prides itself when compared with Mainland China and Hong Kong. Here, social participation and media exposure dominate the scene. There remains a puzzling finding where party membership and political knowledge have negative effect on overall and voting participation. Alienation could be a reason but does not seem very plausible. Can it be another story whereby those without party affiliation and with little political knowledge become the targets of mobilization by civic groups? The answer is beyond our findings and data.

In term of overall political participation, Hong Kong does not differ much from Taiwan. Three variables, i.e. political interest, social participation and mass media, qualify as the most significant factors of explanation. What is different from Taiwan is the much smaller gap in terms of relative strength among these variables. Thus, the role of social groups and the mass media as intermediary institutions in the political process seems more established in Hong Kong than in Taiwan. The surprise finding on Hong Kong is the effect of annual income on overall political participation. Its strength is not high at all but persists through all stages of the regressional analyses. In plain language, the level of participation is higher among the have-nots than the haves, probably under the influence of mobilization by social organizations and the mass media. The puzzle is that it is annual income and not education that has turned out to be a significant socio-demographic factor. That makes Hong Kong special, striking an early warning about the problem of a growing poverty gap that was to become more evident a decade later. The have-nots in Hong Kong did not rebel, but were mobilized to take part in voting and appeal activities. Protest is a mode of participation for the young. As witnessed in Table 7C, age is the third most significant factor for protest participation after social participation and political interest. Protest participation is what distinguishes Hong Kong from the other two societies. In a political setting where there is no democracy but freedom and where the political system can not be changed by the people, protest becomes a convenient mode of political participation. There has already been a steady increase in the number of protest events since 1976. In the year of 1988, the number socio-political conflict events reported in the newspapers jumped to 322 from 54 in 1976 when the first quantitative study about socio-political conflicts started to cover. The year of 1989 when the students' movement was suppressed at Tiananmen square on June 4, the China factor was brought onto the map of protest participation in Hong Kong. On the next day of the military action in Beijing, one million people, i.e. 1/6th of the total population, braced a typhoon to march on the streets of Hong Kong. Protest activities to commemorate June-4 have persisted to the present. The recorded number of conflict events for 1989 is 509 and the

figure comes down to 419 when the sample survey for this study was taken.[iii] The China factor is an important caveat when one tries to compare the protest mode of participation in Hong Kong with that in Taiwan and Mainland China. The general conclusion for Hong Kong is that modernization and social institutions together are the key to political development.

Discussion

This chapter has explored the patterns of variation across the three societies in the ways in which social institutions affect participation, controlling for other alternative explanations such as modernization, culture, and cognitive competence. It is found that cognitive competence is more important than social institutions in the participation calculus. Political interest in particular is most influential in all three societies. But social institutions and cognitive competence are embedded into each other and the correlation between mass media and political interest is over the .900 level.

Putting commonalities aside, our hypothesis of social-institutional impact is supported more in Hong Kong and Taiwan rather than Mainland China. Participation in activities of social groups to which one belongs goes a long way to explain the level of overall participation, the mode of protest participation, and the mode of voting in Hong Kong and Taiwan respectively. Social participation is altogether negligible for overall participation and all the different modes. The same is not true for the mass media that has a de-mobilizing effect. The weak impact of social groups should not be surprising, since 'civil society' was at most in the incipient stage in Mainland China and, in the operationalization of the concept of social institution, we have excluded trade union and women association, treating them rather as political institutions in the vogue of the Party and the Communist Youth League. What is interesting about Mainland China is therefore the fact that this group of political institutions does not seem to have exerted any decent amount of influence on the level of overall participation and all the specific modes except for the mode of participation in unit/village level election-related activities (Table not reported here). For voting in general and election-related activities in urban areas, not political institutions but the mass media has the dominant effect (Table not reported here). It appears therefore that the effects of social and political institutions are complicated, depending on the urban/rural context. This opens up a fertile line of enquiry in future. Going back to the theme of strong influence of cognitive competence and weak impact of social institutions, one wonders where does the cognitive competence of Mainland Chinese come from, if not a result of institutional working. A wild speculation points to experiential political learning, especially with regard to political interest. Living in a society where politics had dominated every facet of life, where dramatic experiences such as the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution had crept deep into one's memory, and institutionalized practices such as political study had lingered on, Mainland Chinese at the time of our survey not only did not have the freedom to escape from politics but also had every reason to be attentive to politics in order to stay alive and move ahead. This possible explanation of the importance of cognitive competence over institution can not be captured by our design. Maybe we need to use a country dummy variable in a merged dataset to figure it out.

The discouraging finding about Taiwan is the miserable power of explanation offered by our models. Giving our antecedent knowledge about the vibrant upsurge of social organizations in the early democratization period, the weak contribution of effects of social participation (and also membership in social groups that has not been reported in the tables) to the models is a bit disappointing. With regard to social organization, a possibly more refined enquiry can be conducted to explore the relation between specific types of organization and participation. For instance, trade union may be more important than all the rest. Another set of issues has to do with the original design. We have not devoted sufficient space in the questionnaire to capture information about communicative actions originated from the organizations themselves. Neither have we designed questions on specific media (which newspaper, broadcasting station or program). Given the limited explanatory power of the models, we can conclude that as compared to Mainland China, social institutions are indeed more important in accounting for overall political participation in Taiwan. They even suppress the effect of political interest in the mode of voting that is the most important mode of participation there.

Social institutions in Hong Kong seem more important than their counterparts in Taiwan. When compared with Taiwan, social groups in Hong Kong lacked behind in the image of youthfulness and energetic engagement in politics. They were less politicized and the political system was not amenable to change. Therefore, their energies were spent to cater for the welfare of their members and the general public and a tiny minority of the groups chose to focus on changing perceptions, attitudes and political behavior. The mass media in Hong Kong was set at the time of the survey to play an increasingly important role in the political process, giving the stagnation in political reforms. Such stagnation was accompanied by weak institutions for political representation, interest aggregation and education. As the legislature, the parties, the trade unions were all weak and other potential powerful social groups such as the church were not (or not yet) politicized, the mass media were advantaged to serve as an institution of political communication, intermediation, and advocacy. The media effect on political participation was thus more important than that of the social groups. The mass media in Hong Kong were also more influential than their counterparts in the other two societies. And our causal models applies better to Hong Kong than to the others.

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[i]. In the interest of limited questionnaire space, we neither asked about the amount of attention given to the media exposed nor the names of the specific media used. Therefore, our survey of mere exposure can not be supplemented by an analysis of content of messages received by the media users.

[ii]. We have yet to compare the rate of TV dependency across the three societies.

[iii]. Two questions were asked of the respondents. One general question on participation in protest activities such as demonstration, sit-ins, etc. was asked in connection with the common-to-all societies core set of questions about different acts of participation in the past three years. Another, separate question asked specifically about participation in demonstration on June 4, 1989 and commemorative activities since then. The responses to the latter question were not included in the construction of the mode of protest and the overall scale of participation for this chapter. However, the general question does cover commemorative activities in relation to June-4.

Table 1   Political Participation in Three Chinese Societies
(In percentage)

	Mainland China N=3296	Taiwan N=1402	Hong Kong N=892
Voting	71.2	91.0	29.6
Election-related activity	48.8	43.1	7.7
Contacting	41.4	14.4	13.7
Networking	21.9	7.9	6.3
Adversarial appeal	5.3	6.4	18.8
Protest	6.5	9.3	15.5

Table 2   Exposure to Public Affairs News in Mass Media
(In percentage)

	Mainland China N=3296	Taiwan N=1402	Hong Kong N=892
Radio			
None	73.8	61.2	42.7
Once/twice weekly	7.9	12.6	11.7
A few times	8.3	9.8	8.4
Almost everyday	10.0	16.5	37.2
Column Total	100.0	100.1	100.0
TV			
None	39.6	13.6	9.3
Once/twice weekly	15.2	13.3	9.6
A few times	17.1	23.5	17.6
Almost everyday	28.1	49.6	63.5
Column Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Newspaper			
None	75.8	32.6	24.7
Once/twice weekly	7.2	11.6	11.2
A few times	6.5	15.6	16.5
Almost everyday	10.5	40.2	47.5
Column Total	100.0	100.0	99.9

Table 3   Participation in Social and Political Groups
(In percentage of 'yes' answers)

	Mainland China N=3296	Taiwan N=1402	Hong Kong N=892
A. Join Any Party	18.1*	21.4	0.6
B. Join Trade Union or Woman's Group	19.5		
C. Join Any Social Organizations	3.1#	36.6	20.4
D. participation in activities of C above			
Never	97.1	72.8	83.0
Occasionally	0.7	14.0	7.0
Sometimes	1.1	4.3	3.9
Often	1.0	9.0	6.1

* The question in Mainland China asked about "political affiliation" that included the Communist Youth League, The Chinese Communist Party, and "Democratic Parties". The latter category received no return.
# In Mainland China, two separate questions were asked. One was about membership in the national associations of trade union or of women. The other was about membership in "any other social organization". In the other two societies, only one question on membership in any social organization was asked.

Table 4A   Modernization Forces and Social Institutions in Mainland China

	Education	Rural - Urban
Political affiliation	.359***	.191***
Trade union or women association	.290***	.505***
Other social group membership	.172***	.130***
Social group activities	.149***	.129***
CCP plus trade union & women association	.418***	.449***
Mass Media Exposure	.412***	.394***

Table 4B   Modernization Forces and Social Institutions in Taiwan

	Education	Rural - Urban
Party membership	.081**	.022
Social group membership	.156***	-.068*
Social group activities	.078**	-.005
Mass Media Exposure	.224***	.261***

Table 4C   Modernization Forces and Social Institutions in Hong Kong

	Education	Rural - Urban
Party membership	.005	NA
Social group membership	.025	NA
Social group activities	.043	NA
Mass Media Exposure	.118***	NA

Table 5A   Socio-political participation and cognitive competence in Mainland China
(Pearson's Correlation Coefficients, N=3296)

	Political affiliation	Trade union or women association	Other social group membership	Social group activities	CCP plus trade union & women association	Mass Media Exposure
Gov't Impact	.130***	.152***	.116***	.095***	.182***	.199***
Political interest	.337***	.406***	.195***	.178***	.479***	.962***
Political knowledge	.179***	.144***	.038*	.037*	.209***	.236***
Internal efficacy	.120***	.036*	.110***	.100***	.100***	.185***
External efficacy	.168***	.040***	.064***	.064***	.134***	.144***

Table 5B   Socio-political participation and cognitive competence in Taiwan
(Pearson's Correlation Coefficients, N=1402)

	Party membership	Social group membership	Social group activities	Mass Media Exposure
Gov't Impact	-.090***	.021	-.006	-.123***
Political interest	.233***	.085***	.161***	.496***
Political knowledge	.300***	.089***	.127***	.605***
Internal efficacy	-.035	.061*	.011	-.077**
External efficacy	-.098***	.022	-.044	-.244***

Table 5C   Socio-political participation and cognitive competence in Hong Kong
(Pearson's Correlation Coefficients, N= 891 or 892)

	Party membership	Social group membership	Social group activities	Mass Media Exposure
Gov't Impact	.020	-.089**	-.052	-.186***
Political interest	.035	.124***	.128***	.294***
Political knowledge	.032	.121***	.106**	.417***
Internal efficacy	.016	-.012	.023	-.004
External efficacy	-.031	-.032	-.010	-.129***

Table 6A   Correlates of Political Participation:
Multivariate Regression of Overall Participation Scale
with Incremental and Cumulative R^2

	Mainland China (N=3296)	Taiwan (N=1402)	Hong Kong (N=892)
Socio-demographic	.037	.029	0.47
Authoritarian beliefs	.009	.008	.012
Institutions	.052	.071	.040
Cognitive competence	.089	.036	.020
Cumulative R^2 (% of variance explained)	.147	.097	.168

Table 6B   Correlates of Political Participation:
Multivariate Regression of Overall Participation Scale
with Incremental and Cumulative R^2

	Mainland China (N=3296)	Taiwan (N=1402)	Hong Kong (N=892)
Socio-demographic	.037	.029	0.47
Authoritarian beliefs	.009	.008	.012
Cognitive competence	.083	.037	.058
Institutions	.082	.023	.049
Cumulative R^2 (% of variance explained)	.147	.097	.168

Table 7A   Correlates of Overall Participation and Particularized Contacting,
Mainland China, (Model Version A)

	Incremental R^2	Cumulative R^2	Significant Variables
Overall			
Soc-demographic	.037	.037***	Sex -.108, educyr .087, white .080, age
Authoritarian	.009	.046***	Sex -.101, auth .097, white .093, educyr, age
Institutions	.052	.096***	age, .055, sex -.097, OrbMob .123, auth .103, OrgPt .052, Media .188
Cognitive competence	.089	.147***	Interest .604, media -.384, internal .142, sex -.048, age .073, auth .076, OrgPt .035, OrgMob .085
Contacting			
Soc-demographic	.028	.028***	Sex -.091, White .071, blue .072
Authoritarian	.002	.030***	Sex -.089, white .076, blue .072, auth .052
Institutions	.022	.052***	Media .099, OrgPt .067, OrgMob .089, sex -.087, age .037, blue .043, auth .056
Cognitive competence	.026	.078***	Sex -.057, age .047, blue .043, auth .041, OrgPt .055, OrgMob .065, Interest .354, media -.242, internal .108

Table 7B   Correlates of Overall Participation and Voting
Taiwan (Model Version A)

	Incremental R^2	Cumulative R^2	3 most significant Variables
Overall			
Soc-demographic	.029	.029***	Sex -.094, white .106
Authoritarian	.008	.037***	Auth -.096, white .094, sex -.079
Institutions	0.40	.077***	White .063, OrgPt .128, Media .132
Cognitive competence	0.20	.097***	Interest .163, orgpt .116, media .085, whilte .056, ptynm -.071
Voting			
Soc-demographic	.003	.003	Nil
Authoritarian	.000	.003	Nil
Institutions	.008	.011	Blue .060, OrgPt .115, Ptynm -.057
Cognitive competence	.022	.033***	Orgpt .113, media .092, PolKnow -.078, blue .058, interest .065

Table 7C   Correlates of Overall and Protest Participation
Hong Kong (Model Version A)

	Incremental R^2	Cumulative R^2	3 most significant Variables
Overall			
Soc-demographic	.047	.047***	YrIncome -.130
Authoritarian	.012	.061***	Auth -.133, YrIncome -.115
Institutions	.071	.132***	YrIncome -.116, OrgPt .179, Media .196
Cognitive competence	0.36	.168***	YrIncome -.117, interest .177, internal .082, OrgPt .165, Media .160
Protest			
Soc-demographic	.041	0.41***	Age -.163
Authoritarian	.003	.044***	Age -.143
Institutions	.044	.088***	Age -.151, OrgPt .189, Media .079
Cognitive competence	.024	.112***	Age, -135, Interest .164, OrgPt .177,