

Voting with Their Feet The Relationship between Political Efficacy and Protest Propensity among Hong Kong Residents

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Abstract

Hong Kong, a quasi-democratic society, provides a unique context for the study of political participation. This study documents Hong Kong's political sentiments during a critical transitional period in its democratization process. A random-sample telephone survey examined Hong Kong residents' sense of political efficacy, their propensity to participate in protest activities under British and Chinese rule, and their response to the possible enactment of a national security bill before the controversial legislative process precipitated a political crisis in 2003. Results showed that people with a high degree of internal political efficacy and a low degree of external political efficacy were more likely to engage in protest activities. Such findings provide a reference point for future studies on Hong Kong's public opinion toward protest activities.

Key words: Political efficacy, protest, Hong Kong, public opinion.

Political participation, in its many forms, bears important implications in the process of democratization. For many political theorists, participation is seen largely as an instrumental act, one whose purpose is to hold leaders accountable, to advance individual interests or preferences, or to bring about desired policy outcomes.¹ Participation is intrinsically beneficial as it develops

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¹ Steve E. Finkel, "The Effects of Participation on Political Efficacy and Political Support: Evidence from a West German Panel," *Journal of Politics* 49, no. 2 (1987): 441-464, and Geraint Parry, "The Idea of Political Participation," in *Participation in Politics*, ed. Geraint Parry and Bryce Anderson (Manchester, UK: University of Manchester Press, 1972), 3-38.

many positive, democratic character traits, such as community-mindedness, political self-competence, and satisfaction with decision-making structures, institutions, and outputs.²

Among various forms of political participation, protests, assemblies, and mass demonstrations have played a central role in the political struggles of many democratization processes. These activities enable citizens to vent their grievances and generate collective pressure on politicians and governments to respond to their wishes. As an essential means of political participation,³ protest activities and demonstrations carry important implications for the development of civil liberties, especially in nondemocratic societies, where conventional forms of participation such as voting often are restricted. This study examines citizens' protest behavior in a quasi-democratic Asian community, Hong Kong, where the protest march is considered an important noninstitutionalized means of political participation due to the underdevelopment of the electoral system of this Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China.⁴ This study attempts to reexamine the relationship between political efficacy and propensity to protest, identified by previous research in Western contexts.

The Hong Kong SAR (HKSAR) provides a unique context for this study because its political environment has experienced drastic changes during the past decade and, recently, citizens have demonstrated a surprisingly high degree of political awareness.⁵ During British rule, arrangements were made for Hong Kong to become a Special Administrative Region of China under the "one country, two systems" scheme crafted by Deng Xiaoping, which would allow Hong Kong to retain its economic and judicial systems and its lifestyle for fifty years after the 1997 political reversion. Starting in 2002, the predicament induced by economic downturns, together with the government's attempt to enact a controversial national security law dealing with acts of treason, secession, sedition, and theft of state secrets, precipitated a serious political crisis by 2003. This study, conducted in late 2002, documented Hong

² Finkel, "The Effects of Participation," 441-464, and Young M. Kim, "Better Informed, No Say: Internet News Use and Political Efficacy," paper presented at the annual conference of the Association of Education for Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C., August, 2001.

³ Stuart Woolman and J. De Waal, "Freedom of Assembly: Voting with Your Feet," in *Rights and Constitutionalism: The New South African Legal Order*, ed. David van Wyk, John Dugard, Bertus de Viliers, and Dennis Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 292-337.

⁴ Ma Ngok, "Civil Society and Democratization in Hong Kong: Paradox and Duality," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 2 (2008): 155-175, and Alvin Y. So, "Hong Kong's Problematic Democratic Transition: Power Dependency or Business Hegemony?" *Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 2 (2000): 359-381.

⁵ Hong Kong is usually perceived as a capitalist society with a seemingly apolitical citizenry in the eyes of liberal democracy advocates; see Hsin-chi Kuan and Siu-kai Lau, "The Partial Vision of Democracy in Hong Kong: A Survey of Popular Opinion," *China Journal* 34 (1995): 239-264, and Patricia W. Tse, "The Impact of 1997 on Political Apathy in Hong Kong," *Political Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (1995): 210-220.

Kong residents' political sentiments during one of the most critical periods in the SAR's democratization process.

Specifically, this study explores whether Hong Kong residents' sense of political efficacy—internal and/or external—influenced their propensity to participate in protest activities before and after 1997, or to protest against the possible enactment of the national security bill.

Literature Review

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy as a construct has been widely discussed in the literature on political participation. According to Campbell and his colleagues, political efficacy is “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process...the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change.”⁶ The sense of political efficacy is conceptualized as a catalyst for political and community engagement and has been considered an important predictor of sociopolitical citizenship in a democratic system. Given that the essence of democracy relies heavily on citizens' autonomous control over political decision-making, the subjective perception of one's political efficacy has a fundamental influence on both political participation and system support in a democracy.⁷

The original construct of political efficacy was subsequently modified to distinguish between internal and external efficacy after decades of deliberation and examination.⁸ Internal efficacy refers to beliefs about one's own ability to understand and to participate effectively in politics, whereas external efficacy refers to beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizens' demands.⁹ In sum, internal efficacy indicates self-

⁶ Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller, eds., *The Voter Decides* (Evanston, IL: Row Peterson, 1954), 187.

⁷ Maurice Mangum, “Psychological Involvement and Black Voter Turnout,” *Political Research Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2003): 41-48, and Kim, “Better Informed, No Say.”

⁸ George I. Balch, “Multiple Indicators in Survey Research: The Concept ‘Sense of Political Efficacy.’” *Political Methodology* 44 (1974): 1-43; Stephen C. Craig, Richard G. Niemi, and Glenn E. Silver, “Political Efficacy and Trust: A Report on the NES Pilot Study Items,” *Political Behavior* 12, no. 3 (1990): 289-314; and J. Miller McPherson, Susan Welch, and Cal Clark, “The Stability and Reliability of Political Efficacy: Using Path Analysis to Test Alternative Models,” *American Political Science Review* 71, no. 2 (1977): 509-521.

⁹ Balch, “Multiple Indicators in Survey Research,” 1-43; Kenneth M. Coleman and Charles L. Davis, “The Structural Context of Politics and Dimensions of Regime Performance: Their Importance for the Comparative Study of Political Efficacy,” *Comparative Political Studies* 9 (1976): 189-206; Phillip E. Converse, “Change in the American Electorate,” in *The Human Meaning of Social Change*, ed. Angus Campbell and Philip E. Converse (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972), 263-373; Craig, Niemi, and Silver, “Political Efficacy and Trust,” 289-314; and McPherson, Welch, and Clark, “The Stability and Reliability of PE,” 509-521.

perceptions of personal adequacies in political participation, and its external counterpart assesses individual political powerfulness as a function of system attributes. The conventional wisdom regarding political efficacy is that citizens participate in politics more frequently when they perceive that they can influence government and when they believe that government is responsive to them.¹⁰ Political efficacy is largely established during the process of childhood socialization in Western democracies,¹¹ and it provides a sense of entitlement for citizen participation and demands for governmental responsiveness. However, because Hong Kong is a society undergoing restricted and gradual democratization, how its residents respond to a potential political predicament is worthy of scholarly investigation. In addition, the role of political efficacy in protest participation in such a society needs further examination.

Political Efficacy and Protest Propensity

The political turmoil that characterized the latter half of the 1960s in the United States gave rise to a number of scholarly attempts to explain the rise of numerous social movements and widespread civil disorders.¹² One of the most theoretically appealing propositions is that of Gamson, who contends that “a combination of high sense of political efficacy and low political trust is the optimum combination for mobilization—a belief that influence is both possible and necessary.”¹³ Considerable empirical research has been conducted on this trust-efficacy hypothesis of mobilization. Although it has received some degree of confirmation under certain circumstances,¹⁴ the hypothesis has proven unsatisfactory too often to be accepted as stated.

One of the obvious problems with the Gamson hypothesis is that it fails to distinguish the dimensional properties of political efficacy (i.e., internal vs. external efficacy). As a result, empirical studies either found it difficult to construct a measure of efficacy which was not contaminated by trust,¹⁵ or

¹⁰ Maurice Mangum, “Psychological Involvement and Black Voter Turnout,” *Political Research Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2003): 41–48.

¹¹ Paul R. Abramson, *Political Attitudes in America: Formation and Change* (San Francisco, CA: Freeman, 1983).

¹² Darren E. Sherkat and Jean T. Blocker, “The Political Development of Sixties’ Activists: Identifying the Influence of Class, Gender, and Socialization on Protest Participation,” *Social Forces* 72, no. 3 (1994): 821–842.

¹³ William A. Gamson, *Power and Discontent* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1968), 48.

¹⁴ For example, see Jeffrey M. Paige, “Political Orientation and Riot Participation,” *American Sociological Review* 36, no. 5 (1971): 810–820, and Martin D. Abravanel and Ronald J. Busch, “Political Competence, Political Trust, and the Action Orientation of University Students,” *Journal of Politics* 37, no. 1 (1975): 57–82.

¹⁵ For example, “Political Orientation and Riot Participation,” 810–820, and Mitchell A. Seligson, “Trust, Efficacy and Modes of Political Participation: A Study of Costa Rican Peasants,” *Journal of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (1980): 75–98.

suspected that political trust was itself a function of external efficacy.¹⁶ Balch was among the pioneers to employ the distinction between internal and external political efficacy and explored their relationship with the propensity to engage in protest behaviors. Results showed that those who were more externally efficacious than others were less prone to take part in political demonstrations. In terms of internal efficacy, exactly the reverse held: the more efficacious were more demonstration-prone.¹⁷ Although the findings demonstrated the “main effects” of internal and external efficacy on protest propensity, they failed to capture the interactive essence of Gamson’s hypothesis of mobilization.¹⁸

Reformulating the Gamson hypothesis by including an additional measure of external efficacy and operationalizing the existing political efficacy variable as internal efficacy, Craig and Maggioletto found that college students who were internally efficacious and externally inefficacious were more likely to accept or approve the use of political protest and violence.¹⁹ Although generalizability of the findings is limited due to the use of a student sample, this study clarified the confounding nature of the variables included in Gamson’s “trust-efficacy” hypothesis. Analyzing the data collected by the Center of Political Studies for the 1972 National Election Study, Pollock examined the interactive effects of internal and external efficacy and their relationships with different forms of political participation, such as voting, campaigning, contacting, and protest approval. As predicted, respondents who harbored high political competence (high internal efficacy) and who viewed the system as unresponsive (low external efficacy) were more likely to approve nonconformist participation.²⁰

With all evidence strongly indicating that political efficacy measures an attitude related to the external system and an internal personal dimension of belief, Zimmerman examined the relationship between political efficacy and measures of participation and proposed a theoretical typology of citizens based on four dichotomous (i.e., high vs. low) combinations of internal and external efficacy.²¹ According to this typology, individuals with both high internal and external efficacy might be elected officials. Those who score high only on the internal efficacy scale might be unconventional activists—those who

¹⁶ For example, Stephen Craig, “The Mobilization of Political Discontent,” *Political Behavior* 2, no. 2 (1980): 189-209.

¹⁷ Balch, “Multiple Indicators in Survey Research,” 1-43.

¹⁸ Gamson, *Power and Discontent*.

¹⁹ Stephen Craig and Michael A. Maggioletto, “Political Discontent and Political Action,” *Journal of Politics* 43, no. 2 (1981): 514-522.

²⁰ Philip H. Pollock, “The Participatory Consequences of Internal and External Political Efficacy: A Research Note,” *Western Political Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1983): 400-409. “Contacting: based on whether the respondent has ever (1) written a letter to any public official giving him/her an opinion about something that should be done; (2) written a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine giving any political opinions” (p.402).

²¹ Marc A. Zimmerman, “The Relationship between Political Efficacy and Citizen Participation: Construct Validation Studies,” *Journal of Personality Assessment* 53, no. 3 (1989): 554-566.

work outside the political system for social change and who are more likely to participate in protest activities. A high score on only the external efficacy scale might indicate a follower, while individuals who score low on both scales might be alienated and uninvolved. Since the present study attempts to reexamine the relationship between two dimensions of political efficacy and participation among the general public in a quasi-democratic society, this typology proves useful to present the political orientations of Hong Kong residents and to predict their possible nonconformist participation in the face of a political predicament.

Political Reality in Hong Kong

Having been handed over to China in 1997 by the British government, Hong Kong differs from Western democracies in its short and incomplete history of democratization.²² Most of its citizens support the abstract notion of democracy,²³ enjoy a relatively high degree of freedom,²⁴ and have entitlement to many civil liberties,²⁵ however, Hong Kong's political system remains in many ways quasi-democratic. For example, only 50 percent of the members of the Legislative Council have stood for direct election by the voting public. The rest have been elected by functional constituencies and election committees.²⁶ The Chief Executive of the HKSAR government is elected by a committee of eight hundred members who are appointed by the Central Government in China. Yet, Hong Kong remains an open society, and citizens still can organize public assemblies or demonstrations under the Public Order Ordinance.

Hong Kong used to be widely perceived as a quintessentially capitalist society, whose members single-mindedly channeled their energies and talents toward strictly materialistic goals.²⁷ However, this perception no longer corresponds to Hong Kong's political reality. Whether through a natural process of evolution, or as a result of several painful shocks administered by the People's Republic of China—most notably the crackdown on the Tiananmen

²² Joseph M. Chan, Kenneth K. L. Chau, and Francis L. F. Lee, "Abstract Principle versus Concrete Interest: A Study of Education and Political Opinion in Hong Kong" *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 14, no. (2002): 54-72.

²³ Hsin-chi Kuan and Siu-kai Lau, *Political Attitude in Changing Contexts: The Case of Hong Kong*, Occasional Paper, No. 64 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 1997).

²⁴ Joseph M. Chan and Clement Y. K. So, "The 'Third Party' Function of Media: The Evaluations of Hong Kong Citizens and Journalists," in *Society and Politics in Hong Kong: Continuity and Change*, ed. Siu-kai Lau, Ka-ying Wong, and Pao-san Ying (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 2004), 171-191.

²⁵ So, "Hong Kong's Problematic Democratic Transition," 359-381.

²⁶ Ma, "Civil Society and Democratization in Hong Kong," 155-175.

²⁷ Roda Mushkat, "Peaceful Assembly," in *Human Rights in Hong Kong*, ed. Raymond Wacks (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 410.

Square protests in June 1989²⁸—Hong Kong citizens have grown increasingly assertive and more willing to resort to confrontational tactics in pursuit of their political interests and values.²⁹ Since the 1997 handover, Hong Kong citizens have lost their political apathy and become more politically conscious and involved due to the region's unique but ambiguous "one country, two systems" political status and the predicament induced by economic downturns in the early 2000s.

Under its Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution promulgated by the National People's Congress in 1990 and enacted on July 1, 1997, Hong Kong was given the right to retain its economic and judicial system for fifty years after the handover. Article 23 of the Basic Law required the new Hong Kong government to make laws that prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, or theft of state secrets. In September 2002, the Hong Kong government released a proposal for a law on national security measures, targeted for final approval on July 9, 2003, after a three-month public consulting period that would end in December 2002. The bill was widely criticized for allowing arbitrary police raids and shutting down organizations affiliated with political and religious groups banned on the mainland. It also included language on divulging official secrets that could be used against journalists and whistle-blowers. Many feared the statute would give government officials sweeping powers to crack down on dissent, the press, and organized religions.³⁰

By the end of 2002, the debate on Article 23 had heated up, and the government's attempt to ram Article 23 through the legislature had raised both local and international concerns about the democratic development of Hong Kong. The political debates surrounding Article 23 provided the current study with a specific context for the examination of political efficacy's impact on the propensity of Hong Kong people to participate in protest activities. Previous studies³¹ tended to measure respondents' propensity to engage in protest behavior in a general sense, without specifying the context. However, without a specific context as a reference, error may be introduced into self-reports because individuals are likely to use different situations as referents, biasing their estimates of political efficacy and their attitudes toward protest behaviors. This is particularly relevant to Hong Kong, as its democratic development is still in transition. This study therefore examined propensity

²⁸ In protesting the military actions against the peaceful demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, an estimated one million Hong Kong citizens took to the streets to express their grievances.

²⁹ Mushkat, "Peaceful Assembly," 410.

³⁰ "Hong Kong Revolt: What It Means for China," *Business Week*, July 21, 2003, International Business Section.

³¹ For example, Balch, "Multiple Indicators in Survey Research," 1-43; Craig and Maggiotto, "Political Discontent and Political Action," 514-522; and Finkel, "The Effects of Participation," 441-464.

in relation to both internal and external efficacy in a specific context (i.e., the likelihood to participate in a protest march against a law widely perceived to be malevolent). The political climate at the time provided a specific point of reference for respondents to make more accurate judgments of their political competence and system responsiveness, which could produce findings with stronger validities.

This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What were Hong Kong residents' political sentiments during the law-making process of Article 23? How did they understand, support, and perceive the proposed law? To what extent were Hong Kong residents willing to engage in protest activities against the possible enactment of Article 23?

RQ2: What factors (political efficacy, political knowledge, media use, and demographics) influenced Hong Kong residents' participation in protest activities before 1997?

RQ3: What factors influenced Hong Kong residents' participation in protest activities after 1997?

RQ4: What factors predicted Hong Kong residents' propensity to participate in protest activities against Article 23?

RQ5: What factors predicted Hong Kong residents' support for Article 23?

Method

A telephone survey of Hong Kong residents aged fifteen or older was conducted between November 13 and 17, 2002—which was in the middle of the public consultation period for the Article 23 draft legislation—to investigate the general public's sense of political efficacy and its propensity to participate in protest activities against the possible enactment of Article 23 law.

Sampling

A systematic random sample was drawn from the Hong Kong phone directory using the “plus one” method, which adds one to the last digit of each number sampled, to ensure that every residential telephone (including unlisted and new numbers) had a near equal chance of being included.³² The sampled

³² E. Laird Landon, Jr. and Sharon K. Banks, “Relative Efficiency and Bias in Plus-one Telephone Sampling,” *Journal of Market Research* 14, no. 3 (1977): 294-299.

area included Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories, which represent a combined population of 6,815,000.³³

Data Collection

Graduate and undergraduate students in communication conducted 853 interviews after undergoing a training session. To minimize respondent selection bias, interviewers were asked to apply the “last birthday rule”—the one whose birthday was the closest to the data collection day—to select a respondent from a household. The sample size of 853 yielded a standard sampling error of ± 3.3 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level. The response rate was 44 percent. While the response rate is not high, it is not unusually low given the historical decline in telephone survey participation.³⁴ In fact, the response rate is consistent with recent studies on political topics conducted in the same region.³⁵

Survey Instrument

The survey took an average of fifteen minutes to complete. The survey instrument, developed and revised based on the results of a pretest, consisted of questions designed to assess respondents’ sense of political efficacy (internal and external), political knowledge, perception of and support for Article 23, propensity to participate in protest activities, media use (time spent watching TV, reading newspapers, and using the Internet, respectively), and demographic information (gender, age, education, and income). The appendix lists key variables and the associated questions and survey responses.

Data Analysis

Two indices were generated by averaging each set of the statements designed to assess internal efficacy ($\alpha = .71$) and external efficacy ($\alpha = .58$) respectively, each ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high).³⁶ In addition to the reliability test conducted to check the unidimensionality of the indices, the data were also

³³ Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, “Hong Kong Resident Population,” 2003, <http://www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/hkstat/index.html> (accessed October 4, 2005).

³⁴ Charlotte G. Steeh, “Trends in Nonresponse Rates, 1952-1979,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1981): 40-57.

³⁵ For example, Ka-ying Wong and Pao-san Ying, “The Practice of ‘One Country, Two Systems’ in Hong Kong: A Comparison of Citizens’ Receptivity for the HK and PRC Governments,” in *Society and Politics in Hong Kong: Continuity and Change*, ed. Siu-kai Lau, Ka-ying Wong, and Pao-san Ying (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 2004), 193-212.

³⁶ The alpha value for the external efficacy index is relatively low but alpha values below .7 can be expected when dealing with psychological constructs; see Paul Kline, *The Handbook of Psychological Testing*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999). In addition, the value of alpha is positively related to the number of items on the scale; see Jose M. Cortina, “What is Coefficient Alpha? An Examination of Theory and Applications,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 78, no. 1 (1993): 98-104. There are only two items on the external efficacy index.

factor-analyzed. Two separate factors (i.e., internal and external efficacy) could be extracted with specific items loaded with the originally designed two measures. Multiple regression analyses examined the relationship between political efficacy (internal, external, and interaction between the two) and propensity to participate in protest activities. Indices of internal and external efficacy were both centered when creating the interaction term to avoid the multicollinearity problem.³⁷

Results

Table 1 summarized the differences between the survey sample of 853 Hong Kong residents and the 2001 Hong Kong Census statistics in several demographic variables. The sample comprised slightly more females, as most telephone surveys do. The sample over-represented people aged 15-24 and under-represented those in the lowest education category. In terms of income, the sample was representative of the population. Although the sample is younger and better educated than the average population, weighting is not applied in the analyses because multivariate methods are used and the discrepancies are not extreme.

Political Sentiments in Hong Kong, 2002

The first set of research questions deals with general political sentiments, and the public's perception of and behavioral propensity to protest against the proposed national security bill that would fulfill Basic Law Article 23. When asked whether the government could effectively handle problems facing Hong Kong, 54 percent of respondents surveyed (N=853) disagreed, while only 17 percent agreed, indicating a lack of trust in the government's problem-solving capabilities.³⁸

Political knowledge about the Public Order Ordinance was low. The survey asked three questions to test knowledge about the Public Order Ordinance. Only 6 percent of respondents answered all three questions correctly, 29 percent answered two correctly, and 33 percent answered one correctly; 32 percent could not answer even one question (mean=1.09, SD=.91; the mean is significantly lower than 1.5, the mid-point of the scale, $t=-13.02$, $p<.001$).

Similarly, only 6 percent of respondents said that they understood the content of the proposed draft of the Article 23 bill, another 26 percent claimed to understand it somewhat, 36 percent said that they did not quite understand

³⁷ Jacob Cohen, Stephen G. West, Leona S. Aiken, and Patricia Cohen, *Applied Multiple Regression/Correlation Analysis for Social Sciences*, 3rd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003).

³⁸ When asked what was the most important problem facing Hong Kong, 78 percent of respondents mentioned economic issues; 4 percent said politics.

Table 1. A Comparison of the 2001 Hong Kong Census and Survey Sample Data

	Census (%)	Sample Respondents (%)	
Gender			
Male	48.6	45.9	$\chi^2(1, N=847) = 5.62$ $p < .05$
Female	51.4	54.1	
Age*			
15-24	16.4	28.1	$\chi^2(5, N=839) = 91.35$ $p < .001$
25-34	19.8	18.0	
35-44	24.3	21.2	
45-54	17.2	16.6	
55-64	9.0	7.5	
65+	13.3	8.6	
Education			
Elementary or less	28.9	16.1	$\chi^2(4, N=836) = 95.08$ $p < .001$
Forms 1-3	18.9	17.1	
Forms 4-5	26.3	31.8	
Forms 6-7	9.4	10.0	
Tertiary	16.4	24.9	
Monthly Income**			
1- 6,000	17.9	16.6	$\chi^2(5, N=452) = 5.33$ $p = .377$
6,001-10,000	24.8	24.3	
10,001-20,000	34.8	33.6	
20,001-30,000	11.3	13.7	
30,001-40,000	4.6	6.0	
40,001 or above	6.6	5.8	

Source: Hong Kong Census & Statistics Department (2003)

* Base = people aged 15 or above

** Base = people aged 15 or above with income.

Income is in HK dollars.

it, and 12 percent said they did not understand it at all. In terms of support, 38 percent of respondents said that they did not support legislation to enact Article 23; only 16 percent expressed support. Yet, 43 percent of respondents believed that legislation to enact Article 23 would restrict their freedoms and civil rights; only 18 percent did not think so. In brief, the proposed law was *not* well-understood and received very limited support, but it raised great concerns among Hong Kong residents. Such findings indicate the cynical political climate in Hong Kong at the time of the survey.

When asked to assess the likelihood of protesting against Article 23 if the bill were enacted, 36 percent said that they were likely or very likely to sign a petition against the bill; 12 percent said they were likely or very likely to

participate in a protest march. Such figures, given Hong Kong’s population of 6.8 million at the time of the study, translate into 2,448,000 residents willing to sign a petition and 816,000 willing to demonstrate against Article 23 enabling legislation.³⁹

Regarding political efficacy, results showed that Hong Kong residents had a relatively low degree of internal efficacy (mean=2.57, SD = .68; the mean is significantly lower than 3, the mid-point of the scale, $t=-145.03, p<.001$) and external efficacy (mean=2.46, SD=.85; the mean is significantly lower than 3, the mid-point of the scale, $t=-118.62, p<.001$).⁴⁰

As for the relationship between political efficacy and residents’ possible participation in protest activities, table 2 presents the dichotomous combinations of internal and external efficacy: 13.6 percent of the qualified respondent⁴¹ could be identified as nonconventional activists, while the majority (64.3 percent) might be classified as uninvolved.

Table 2. Participation Propensity by Political Efficacy

		Internal efficacy	
		High	Low
External efficacy	High	Elected officials n = 24 (4.9%)	Followers n = 85 (17.2%)
	Low	Unconventional activists n = 67 (13.6%)	Uninvolved n = 317 (64.3%)

Predictors of Participation in Protest Marches before and after 1997

The second and third research questions asked what factors influenced Hong Kong residents’ participation in protest activities before and after 1997, respectively. Results indicated that 74 percent of respondents had never participated in any protest march before the time of the study. The number of protest marches attended per resident is .47 (SD=1.21) before 1997 and .29 (SD=.77) after 1997. Considering that the post-1997 period was only five years long (1997-2002), the finding suggests a higher propensity to engage in protest marches after the handover.

³⁹ On July 1, 2003, about half a million Hong Kong citizens took to the streets, constituting one of the most significant political demonstrations in Hong Kong’s history.

⁴⁰ A later survey of Hong Kong residents conducted in September 2004 reported similar results— on a five-point scale, the level of internal efficacy is 2.86 and the level of external efficacy is 2.53. See Francis L. F. Lee, “Collective Efficacy, Support for Democratization, and Political Participation in Hong Kong,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 18, no. 3 (2006): 297-317.

⁴¹ Since internal and external efficacy were each measured on a five-point Likert scale, respondents selecting the “neutral” option were excluded from this typological analysis.

Multiple regression analyses examined whether factors such as demographics (gender, age, education, and income), media use (time spent watching TV, reading newspapers, and using the Internet), political knowledge, and political efficacy (internal, external, and interaction between the two) influenced Hong Kong residents' participation in protest activities before and after 1997. Table 3 shows that these two variables shared a similar set of predictors—internal efficacy, external efficacy, interaction between internal and external efficacy, as well as TV use influenced the number of protest marches in which respondents participated before and after 1997, respectively. Specifically, a high degree of internal efficacy, a low degree of external efficacy, and less time watching TV were associated with a high propensity to participate in a protest march. In addition, the significant interaction effect between internal and external efficacy corresponds with Gamson's hypothesis on mobilization (i.e., the cynical combination of high internal efficacy and low external efficacy).⁴²

Predictors of Participation in Protest Activities against Article 23 Enabling Legislation

The fourth research question asked what factors predicted Hong Kong residents' propensity to participate in protest activities (i.e., participating in a protest march or signing a petition) against Article 23 enabling legislation.

Multiple regression analyses examined whether factors such as demographics (gender, age, education, and income), media use (time spent watching TV, reading newspapers, and using the Internet), political knowledge, and political efficacy (internal, external, and interaction between the two) predicted Hong Kong residents' propensity to participate in a protest march or sign a petition against the possible enactment of Article 23 through new legislation.

Regarding factors that predicted the propensity to participate in a protest march against proposed Article 23 legislation, table 3 shows that age and internal and external efficacy are significant predictors—internal efficacy has a positive impact ($\beta = .13, p < .01$), while external efficacy has a negative impact ($\beta = -.28, p < .001$) on the propensity to march against the proposed legislation. The interaction effect is not significant but the regression coefficient is negative. These findings are consistent with previously cited analyses of Gamson's hypothesis.

Regarding the factors that predicted the propensity to sign a petition against proposed Article 23 legislation, external efficacy has a negative impact ($\beta = -.36, p < .001$), and so do age ($\beta = -.14, p < .01$) and political knowledge ($\beta = -.10, p < .05$).

⁴² Gamson, *Power and Discontent*.

Predictors of Support for Article 23 Enabling Legislation

The last research question asked what factors predicted Hong Kong residents' support for the proposed Article 23 legislation. Multiple regression analyses examined whether factors such as demographics (gender, age, education, and income), media use (time spent watching TV, reading newspapers, and using the Internet, respectively), political knowledge, and political efficacy (internal, external, and interaction between the two) predicted Hong Kong residents' support for the proposed Article 23 legislation. As shown in table 3, age, TV use, political knowledge, external efficacy, and interaction between internal and external efficacy all have a positive impact on respondents' support for the bill.

If one considers the effect size (based on regression coefficients), external efficacy is the strongest predictor across all five regression analyses. In comparison, internal efficacy does not have such a strong impact on the dependent variables. In other words, one's perception of system responsiveness is the major determinant of Hong Kong residents' protest behaviors.

Discussion

The telephone survey was administered just in time to document the cynical political climate at the end of 2002 in Hong Kong. A lack of trust in the Hong

Table 3. The Effect of Political Efficacy on Protest Propensity

Predictors	Protest march before 1997	Protest march after 1997	Propensity to march against Article 23	Propensity to sign against Article 23	Support for Article 23
Gender (female)	-.00	.04	-.00	.03	-.07
Age	.02	.10*	-.09*	-.14**	.15**
Education	.01	.07	-.01	.07	.02
Income	.18***	.05	.01	-.02	-.01
TV use (min)	-.08*	-.07*	-.04	-.04	.09*
Newspaper use (min)	.06	.031	.06	.05	-.07
Internet use (min)	-.03	-.01	.04	-.02	-.00
Political knowledge	.02	-.04	-.07	-.10*	.17***
Internal efficacy	.10*	.11*	.13**	.06	.02
External efficacy	-.23***	-.18***	-.28***	-.36***	.38***
Internal x external efficacy	-.16**	-.14**	-.07	-.08	.13*
Adjusted R ² (N)	11.3% (760)	7.4% (760)	9.4% (621)	14.9% (621)	18.0% (610)

Entries are standardized regression coefficients.

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Kong government's problem-solving capabilities and fairly negative reactions to the proposed security law characterized the public's political sentiments at a time when Hong Kong was struggling with a severe economic downturn. A random-sample survey conducted at such a critical period with such a specific political event in the Hong Kong context produced the expected results of high external validity.

Indeed, soon after the survey was conducted in November 2002, about sixty thousand Hong Kong citizens marched on December 15, requesting an additional white paper on the proposed Article 23 legislation and an extension of the public consultation period. By December 24, 2002, 190,000 people had signed petitions against the proposed enactment of Article 23 legislation. Even though such demands were widely supported throughout all sectors of society, the Hong Kong government insisted on implementing its original plan to pass Article 23 enabling legislation in July 2003. Amid all the political controversies surrounding Article 23 came the SARS outbreak, which hit Hong Kong's already fragile economy and propelled the unemployment rate to a record high of 8.3 percent.⁴³ The government's mismanagement of the epidemic was heavily criticized. So, half a million Hong Kong residents took to the streets on July 1, 2003, the sixth anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong by the British to rule by the People's Republic of China, to express their grievances about the antiterrorism bill and their general dissatisfaction with the government.⁴⁴ In the aftermath, two of the top appointed officials (including the Secretary of Security) resigned by mid-July and the bill was finally withdrawn in September 2003.

Scholars argued that events such as the July 1, 2003 protest march, sparked by policy fiascos, economic downturn, and fear of loss of personal freedom, all leading to a public outcry strong enough to shake the government, may be an important step in Hong Kong's democratization process.⁴⁵ Even though the majority of people (as seen in table 2) seemed likely to remain uninvolved when they were confronted with the unprecedented political predicament of the possible enactment of Article 23, it is the unconventional activists, as small as their proportion may be in Hong Kong, who will rise to the occasion to defend their economic, social, and civil freedoms, lobby for popular support, and appeal to the attention of the mass media so as to spur progressive democratization. Indeed, in recent years, these activists have been playing an important role in Hong Kong to undermine the claimed legitimacy of the undemocratic system

⁴³ Francis Markus, "Hong Kong's Sorrow-tinged Celebrations," *BBC News*, June 23, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3013042.stm> (accessed October 2, 2005).

⁴⁴ The police projected that 350,000 demonstrators participated in the protest march, but some argued that a more accurate estimate was between 460,000 and 510,000; see Clement Y. K. So and So-kuan Chan, "How to Calculate the Number of Demonstrators in the 'July 1 Protest March?'" *Media Digest*, July 2003, 6-8.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Ma, "Civil Society and Democratization in Hong Kong," 155-175.

and to promote democratic values in this transitional society. Of course, they cannot accomplish the task by themselves. Their strength lies in the development of an alliance with the grass-roots population both at the ballot box and through community mobilization.⁴⁶ That is why the protest march against the possible enabling legislation for Article 23 is considered one of the most significant events in Hong Kong's democratization process. This study captured the public's motivations, perceptions, and participation propensity in that process.

On the theoretical front, this study examined Hong Kong residents' propensity to participate in protest activities in relation to internal and external efficacy, the two distinctive dimensions of political efficacy. Results showed that individuals with a high degree of internal efficacy and low degree of external efficacy had a stronger propensity to participate in protest marches both before and after 1997. The interaction effect between external and internal efficacy was consistent with the hypothesis proposed by Gamson and empirical research conducted by others.⁴⁷ The combination of high internal efficacy and low external efficacy in fact corresponds with the behavioral and emotional implications of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy⁴⁸: When positive judgments of self (e.g., internal efficacy) are joined to negative judgments of the environment (e.g., external efficacy), the result is likely to be protest or milieu change, possibly accompanied by a sense of grievance. Such findings are comparable to those identified in Western contexts, suggesting that the relationship between one's sense of political efficacy and one's propensity to engage in protest activities is more universal than scholars may have anticipated.

Support for Article 23 legislation and the propensity to participate in protest activities against it also were examined. Across the board, external efficacy was the strongest predictor determining propensity to protest against or (lack of) support this bill. Therefore, protest behavior was induced by dissatisfaction with the system more than anything else. Such findings make sense in a context such as Hong Kong, where the electoral system is underdeveloped so that citizens have to express their grievances through protest activities. When the general public perceives a great threat to its survival or autonomy, as was the case when the government attempted to push forward national security legislation, they coalesce and rise for action. Of course, underlying the strong effect of external efficacy could be the public's anxiety about Hong Kong's

⁴⁶ So, "Hong Kong's Problematic Democratic Transition," 359-381.

⁴⁷ Gamson, *Power and Discontent*; Craig and Maggionto, "Political Discontent and Political Action," 514-522; Pollock, "The Participatory Consequences," 400-409; and Zimmerman, "The Relationship between Political Efficacy and Citizen Participation," 554-566.

⁴⁸ Albert Bandura, "Self-efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency," *American Psychologist* 37, no. 2 (1982): 122-147.

power dependence on China⁴⁹ and concerns about Hong Kong's political development.

Another key factor determining the public's support for Article 23 legislation is political knowledge. Surprisingly, the more knowledge about the Public Order Ordinance, the more support for the proposed Article 23 legislation. And there is no relationship between political knowledge and propensity to participate in a protest march against enabling Article 23. This suggests that the anti-Article 23 sentiment was not based so much on political knowledge as on negative perceptions of the political system. In short, Hong Kong government's lack of responsiveness to public demands was the major factor driving its own political crisis between 2002 and 2003.

Regarding age, the most important demographic variable determining support for and propensity to protest against Article 23 legislation, young people were less likely to support the bill and more likely to participate in protests against it. The development of political awareness among young groups deserves scholarly attention. Future studies may look into the influence of age and interpersonal socialization on political efficacy and the propensity to participate in less conventional political activities such as protest marches by different age groups.

This study focused on how political efficacy influences protest behavior. The impact of protest behavior on one's sense of political efficacy also is worth exploring. Participating in a protest march may very well influence one's political efficacy, as suggested by numerous anecdotes reported by those who participated in the historic July 1, 2003 march. The qualitative aspect and the effect of having been associated with the large public participation deserve scholarly attention as well.

Overall, this study unveiled a small piece of the complicated network of political process, orientation, perceptions, and participation in Hong Kong. Our findings provide a reference point for future studies on Hong Kong's public opinion toward protest activities. Future studies should look into the relationship between the sense of political efficacy and citizens' political participation behavior as Hong Kong continues its democratization process.

⁴⁹ Ma, "Civil Society and Democratization in Hong Kong," 155-175.

Appendix. Key Variables and Survey Questions

Variable	Survey question	Result
Internal efficacy	1) I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing Hong Kong. 2) Politics is too complex for someone like me to comprehend.	Index mean = 2.57* (SD = .68)
External efficacy	1) Public officials don't really care about public opinions. 2) The government is not concerned about the general public's interest.	Index mean = 2.46* (SD = .85)
Political knowledge	1) According to the Public Order Ordinance, the holding of any public gathering requires a license issued in writing by the Commissioner of Police. (True) 2) According to the Public Order Ordinance, the Commissioner of Police is granted the authority to prohibit the holding of any public gathering in any particular areas or premises or on any particular day if considered necessary. (True) 3) Amendments were introduced to the Ordinance while the last British-appointed Governor Chris Patten was in office before Hong Kong was handed over to China. (True)	Index mean = 1.09** (SD = .91)
Propensity to protest	1) How many times did you participate in protest marches before 1997? 2) How many times had you participated in protest marches after 1997? 3) Is it likely that you would participate in a protest march against the possible enactment of Article 23? 4) Is it likely that you would sign a petition against the possible enactment of Article 23?	Mean = .47 (SD = 1.21) Mean = .29 (SD = .77) Very likely (2.7%) Likely (8.9%) Unlikely (24.4%) Very unlikely (27.1%) Neutral/DK/Missing (36.9%) Very likely (14.9%) Likely (20.8%) Unlikely (17.4%) Very unlikely (8.8%) Neutral/DK/Missing (38.3%)
Support for Article 23	Do you support the HKSAR government's effort to enact Article 23?	Strongly support (2.5%) Support (13.8%) Do not support (24.7%) Do not support at all (12.8%) Neutral/DK/Missing (46.2%)

* Some variables were recoded to unify the directionality among all measures. Results were based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree."

** This index was based on a three-point scale, ranging from 0 to 3.