The Political Subcultures of University Students in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan

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Political culture in this article is defined as citizens' subjective attitudes toward politics. Based on questionnaire surveys, this study compares the orientations of university students in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan toward the general political system and the individual self as a participant in politics; it also compares their conceptions of democracy. The findings indicate that despite a common Confucian heritage, the political subcultures of university students in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are quire distinct from each other. Macau students appear to be more traditional in outlook and eager to have an omnipotent government that takes care of citizens' interests, while a plurality of Taiwan students prefers a strong, authoritarian regime to restore political and social order in Taiwan. Hong Kong students are inclined to accept the democratic values introduced by the British colonial government.

Keywords: political culture, political participation, socialization, democratic values, civic competence

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The political climate of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau has changed immensely since the early 1980s. Elections have been held for legislative seats and officials for local city or district councils in the three territories. Many citizens of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau have cast their first votes and participated actively in politics. Nearly a century and a half after the West had forced China to open its door by gunboat diplomacy, the Western theory and practice of democracy has finally landed in China, albeit in Chinese territories which either resist the call for reunification or are still under foreign administration. In particular, university students in the three territories are inspired by the opportunities to participate in politics. Compared to older citizens, university students are in general more liberal, open-minded,

and receptive to new ideas. Yet most of them were raised in traditional Chinese families and received education in Chinese schools, and are caught and perplexed by the conflicts between Chinese and Western values. To what extent have Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students deviated from traditional Chinese culture? Are they well-prepared for democratic development? This article will systematically analyze the above issues and their implications for Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan's political development.

We relied primarily on questionnaire surveys for data collection, using both structured and open-ended questions. The questionnaire surveys were conducted in Hong Kong and Macau in October 1994 and Taiwan in March 1995. In Hong Kong, the survey was conducted at the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). HKBU was chosen over other tertiary institutions in Hong Kong primarily due to convenience, as the author was teaching part-time at HKBU when the survey was conducted. The author must admit, therefore, there is certain limitation to the representativeness of the sample. On the other hand, there is no reason to suspect that HKBU students are unique or different from students in other local tertiary institutions. Strictly speaking, however, our data from HKBU students can only be treated as a case study of university students' subculture in Hong Kong. We sent out 400 questionnaires and received 314 completed questionnaires, a response rate of 78.5 percent.

In Macau, the choice was simple, as the University of Macau (UM) is the only university in Macau. We sent out 500 questionnaires and collected 347 completed questionnaires, a response rate of 69.4 percent.

In Taiwan, the survey was conducted at the National Taiwan University (NTU) in Taipei. We chose NTU partly because it is located in Taipei, the political and cultural center of Taiwan, and partly because it is a comprehensive university with students from various regions of Taiwan. We conducted the surveys in the Roosevelt Road main campus and the College of Law campus located on Hsuchow Road. We sent out 500 questionnaires and received 354 completed questionnaires, a response rate of 70.8 percent.

Due to insufficient funding, we did not randomize our samples. We hired student helpers to distribute questionnaires to their schoolmates. Yet our data indicate that our samples are not unrepresentative. As indicated in table 1, our HKBU sample was quite even on sex ratio while the UM and NTU samples had slightly more female than male students. In terms of age, the majority of our respondents

Table 1
The Sample Profile (in Percent*)

	HKBU (N=314)	UM (N=347)	NTU (N=354)
Sex: Male	50.5	46.1	44.4
Female	49.5	53.9	55.6
Age: 17 or below	—	1.7	—
18-19	27.5	20.2	37.9
20-21	58.5	49.7	41.7
22 or above	14.1	28.3	20.4
Year: First	57.5	24.0	30.9
Second	25.9	34.4	43.6
Third	16.3	18.8	12.6
Fourth**	—	21.4	11.2
Others	.3	1.4	1.7
Department:			
Engineering and Natural Sciences	7.2	5.1	17.8
Social Sciences	54.6	51.5	35.8
Business Administration	15.3	27.4	11.5
Others	22.9	16.0	34.9
Number of brothers/sisters (including oneself):			
1	7.3	6.1	3.2
2	28.8	31.7	30.8
3	30.7	32.3	37.8
4	19.5	13.3	20.1
5	7.7	7.2	7.8
6 or more	6.1	9.5	.3
Length of residence in Hong Kong/Macau:			
2 years or less	—	.6	—
3-10 years	2.6	8.7	—
10-15 years	8.3	18.2	—
15 years or more	8.6	22.5	—
Born and grew up in Hong Kong/Macau	80.5	50.0	—

*The percentages given in the table are round-off figures and hence may not add up to 100 percent.
**HKBU adopts a three-year undergraduate program; it therefore does not have fourth-year students.

were twenty years old or above and in their first or second year at the university. The Taiwan sample was comprised of a fairly even number of students in various departments, although social science students were overrepresented. This partly explains the higher pro-

portion of female students in the Taiwan sample. The majority of Hong Kong and Macau respondents, however, were social science students.[1] Most of the respondents came from small families; over 60 percent had two brothers/sisters or less. It is important to note that while 80.5 percent of our HKBU respondents were born and grew up in Hong Kong, only 50 percent of UM respondents were local-born. (We do not have the corresponding figures for NTU students, although presumably most of them were local-born.) Yet we must point out that, due to the nonprobability sampling, findings from this study are only indicative, not conclusive.

In this study we adopted Almond and Verba's definition of political culture[2] as subjective, psychological orientations toward political objects and political participation.[3] In this study we compared the orientations of HKBU, UM, and NTU students toward the general political system and the individual self as a participant in politics. We also compared their conceptions of democracy.

A number of empirical studies on the political socialization of Taiwan's primary and secondary school students and university

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[1]Both HKBU and UM are relatively small universities with less than five thousand enrolled students. The UM has a small Faculty of Science and Technology while HKBU has a relatively small Faculty of Science. The majority of HKBU and UM students are enrolled in Social Sciences and Business Administration. In comparison, NTU is a large, comprehensive university with considerable strength in all disciplines and areas of studies.

[2]Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

[3]Ibid., 15. When Almond and Verba's classic study was first published in the early 1960s, it was hailed as a landmark in political culture studies. Yet at the same time, it was severely criticized for its vague concept of political culture, the alluded causal relationship between political culture and political structure, and the lack of methodological rigor. Despite its critics, *The Civic Culture* remains one of the most frequently cited works in the field and its definition of political culture and research design has been emulated by numerous researchers, who have applied Almond and Verba's theoretical framework to specific country studies. As Almond and Verba remarked in their edited book *The Civic Culture Revisited* (Sage Publications, 1989, p. 394), two decades after *The Civic Culture* was first published: "[O]ne gratifying aspect of much of the comment on the book is that it has been constructive. Critics have rarely been content to dismiss the work as wrong or irrelevant; they have used it as a basis for going several steps further." In the last three decades, interest in political culture has had its ups and downs but never died out. Cultural variables have often been used to explain the problems of democratic movement; indeed, there has been a strong resurgence of interest in political culture studies in recent years. See, for example, Ronald Inglehart, "The Renaissance of Political Culture," *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 4 (December 1988): 1203-30; Aaron Wildavsky, "Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation," ibid. 81, no. 1 (March 1987): 3-21; Harry Eckstein, "A Culturalist Theory of Political Change," ibid. 82, no. 3 (September 1988): 789-804; and Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky, *Cultural Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990).

students were conducted in the 1960s and 1970s by American and Taiwan scholars.[4] They concluded that Taiwan children were raised in traditional, authoritarian family and social environments and that Taiwan students, compared to American students, have a distinct authoritarian personality. In the 1980s, however, Taiwan scholars focused their studies on the transformation of Taiwan's political culture under the relatively more open and democratic Chiang Ching-kuo regime.[5] Among Hong Kong scholars, the works of Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi are relevant to our present study. Lau and Kuan argue, based on their 1985, 1986, and 1992 surveys, that Hong Kong has a mixed political culture with characteristics resembling traditional Chinese political culture and those "imported" from the West.[6] Yet no Hong Kong scholars have focused their studies on the political subculture of the enclave's university students. In Macau, Yee, Liu, and Ngo conducted surveys among secondary school and university students in 1991 and 1992[7] and also suggested that the political subculture of Macau students is a mixture of Western and Chinese values. It is perhaps more important to note that Yee, Liu, and Ngo argue that the political attitudes of Macau students are shaped to a large extent by the social and political environment of Macau. To the best of my knowledge, however, no published books or articles have done an empirical, comparative study of political attitudes of university students in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. This article is thus an exploratory study of the subject in the field.

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[4]See, for example, Richard Wilson, *Learning to Be Chinese: The Political Socialization of Children in Taiwan* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1970); Sheldon Appleton, "The Political Socialization of Taiwan's College Students," *Asian Survey* 10, no. 10 (October 1970): 910-23, and "Silent Students and the Future of Taiwan," *Pacific Affairs* 43, no. 2 (Summer 1970): 227-39; and Chen Yi-yen, *Taiwan diqu daxuesheng zhengzhi shehuihua zhi yanjiu* (A study of the political socialization of Taiwan's university students) (Taipei: Decheng shudian, 1979).

[5]See, for example, Peng Huai-en, *Zhongguo zhengzhi wenhua de zhuanxing* (Transformation of Chinese political culture) (Taipei: Fengyun luntan chubanshe, 1992).

[6]Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1988), and their more recent article entitled "Public Attitudes Toward Political Authorities and Colonial Legitimacy in Hong Kong," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 33, no. 1 (March 1995): 79-102. See also Jermain T. M. Lam and Jane C. Y. Lee, *Research Report on the Political Culture of the Voters in Hong Kong*, Part I, *A Study of the Professional Constituencies of the Legislative Council*, and Part II, *A Study of the Geographical Constituencies of the Legislative Council* (Department of Public and Social Administration, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, April 1992).

[7]Herbert S. Yee, Liu Bo-lung, and Ngo Tak-wing, *Aomen Huaren zhengzhi wenhua* (The political culture of the Macau Chinese) (Macau: The Macau Foundation, 1993).

Attitudes Toward the General Political System

We would expect university students, the better-educated portion of the population, to be aware of the political relevance of government activities. Our findings confirm this expectation. Our survey showed that 84.4 percent of HKBU, 76.1 percent of UM, and 74.8 percent of NTU respondents believed that government activities had an "effect" or "great effect" on their day-to-day lives; only 14.1 percent, 21.6 percent, and 24.6 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents respectively felt that government activities had little or no effect on their day-to-day lives. On the same question, 85 percent, 73 percent, and 70 percent of the American, British, and German respondents believed government activities had an "effect" or "great effect" on their day-to-day lives.[8] Clearly, the degree of political awareness of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau university students is comparable to citizens in Western democratic states.

Whether citizens regard government activities relevant to their daily lives indicates the salience of public affairs as an important issue.[9] Our findings indicate that Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students are rather concerned about public affairs. Of HKBU respondents, 60.5 percent indicated that they followed the news on television, in the press, or on radio "every day" or "often"; the corresponding figures for UM and NTU students were 72.2 percent and 64 percent, respectively. By comparison, in two separate 1991 surveys conducted among Macau and Hong Kong citizens, 66.7 percent of Macau respondents and 73.4 percent of Hong Kong respondents followed the development of public affairs in the mass media "every day" or "often."[10] Our findings suggest that our respondents were not bookworms; they were concerned with affairs outside the university.

Yet, we were slightly disappointed to find that university students in Hong Kong and Macau are quite reluctant to discuss public affairs with other people. Only 5.4 percent of HKBU respondents and 3.5 percent of UM respondents "often" discussed public affairs with rela-

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[8]Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, 80.

[9]Bradley M. Richardson, *The Political Culture of Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 31.

[10]See Yee, Liu, and Ngo, *Aomen Huaren zhengzhi wenhua*, 30; and Lam and Lee, *A Study of the Professional Constituencies of the Legislative Council*, 27.

tives or friends; 35 percent of the former and 31.7 percent of the latter did so only "occasionally." In fact, about 60 percent of HKBU and UM respondents "rarely" or "never" discussed public affairs with others. Taiwan students appear to be more willing to discuss public affairs with other people. About 19 percent of NTU respondents "often" and 33.6 percent "occasionally" discussed public affairs with relatives and friends; however, 46.4 percent of NTU respondents "rarely" or "never" discussed public affairs with others. By comparison, in a 1991 survey conducted among Macau residents, 5.4 percent of the respondents "often" and 22.8 percent "occasionally" discussed public affairs with other people. In another survey conducted in Hong Kong the same year, only 5.5 percent of the respondents "often" discussed government policies with friends or relatives; 28.1 percent "occasionally" did so.[11] There thus appears to be an inclination to avoid discussing public or political affairs among Chinese communities.[12] This is probably inherent in traditional Chinese political culture, as even well-educated university students are affected by this deep-rooted phenomenon.

An individual's attitude toward politics and political participation is, to a large extent, affected by the political environment. As pointed out by Max Weber, social attitudes or values must be related to the mode of social organization they help to legitimate and out of which they emerge.[13] In order to better understand Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students' political subcultures, we have therefore attempted to investigate the students' attitudes toward the political system and the political environment. Our findings indicate that very few Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students have high regard for their respective political systems. Only 19.7 percent of Hong Kong, 2.9 percent of Macau, and 4.2 percent of

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[11]Yee, Liu, and Ngo, *Aomen Huaren zhengzhi wenhua*, 30; and Lam and Lee, *A Study of the Geographical Constituencies of the Legislative Council*, 54.

[12]In a nationwide survey conducted in 1987 in mainland China, 50.7 percent of respondents agreed: "Don't discuss politics with other people because someone may criticize you and inform the government authorities"; 62.4 percent of respondents indicated that they were very cautious in discussing political issues with others; 63.7 percent believed that "it is better not to be involved in politics at all." The above findings suggest that Chinese citizens' confidence in political participation is not high and many try to avoid being involved in politics. See Min Qi, *Zhongguo zhengzhi wenhua: Minzhu zhengzhi nanchan de shehui xinli yinsu* (The Chinese political culture: Social-psychological elements in the difficult birth of democratic politics) (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1989), 122.

[13]As quoted in Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky, *Cultural Theory*, 162.

Table 2
Evaluative and Affective Orientations Toward the Political Systems (in Percent*)

Are you proud of:	Yes	No	Don't know/ no opinion
1. Hong Kong/Macau/Taiwan's political system?			
HKBU students (N=314)	19.7	46.5	33.8
UM students (N=347)	2.9	57.9	39.2
NTU students (N=353)	4.2	80.7	15.0
2. Hong Kong/Macau/Taiwan's judicial system?			
HKBU students (N=314)	40.8	24.8	34.4
UM students (N=347)	3.5	50.7	45.8
NTU students (N=346)	4.9	70.8	24.3
3. Hong Kong/Macau/Taiwan's freedom of speech and publication?			
HKBU students (N=314)	61.8	21.7	16.6
UM students (N=347)	28.5	34.9	36.6
NTU students (N=342)	37.7	36.8	25.4

*The percentages given in the table are round-off figures and hence may not add up to 100 percent.

Taiwan respondents were proud of their respective political systems (see table 2). Hong Kong students were not happy with the "executive-led" administration which often ignores public opinion; many resented Chinese and, to a lesser degree, British interference in local politics. Likewise, Macau students were also resentful against the executive-dominated Portuguese administration and its undemocratic decision-making process; they had little esteem for the corrupt and inefficient colonial government. Among the three groups, Taiwan students were most critical of their political system, as 80.7 percent of NTU respondents were not happy with Taiwan's government. Many stated that the Taiwan government is corrupt, inefficient, undemocratic, and irresponsible and that the political scene is dominated by the Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist Party of China) while other opposition parties often use violence in political power struggles. Some students pointed out that Taiwan is controlled by money politics and under-

ground societies, while ordinary citizens are left with little protection.

Taiwan and Macau students are also highly critical of their respective judicial systems; only 4.9 percent of NTU and 3.5 percent of UM respondents were proud of their respective judicial systems. Both Taiwan and Macau respondents pointed out defects such as low efficiency, corruption, and the interference of politics and underground societies, which affect judicial justice and independence. By comparison, a plurality (40.8 percent) of HKBU respondents was proud of Hong Kong's relatively just judicial system.

Regarding the general political environment and freedoms such as speech and publication, Hong Kong university students were in general quite satisfied: 61.8 percent of HKBU respondents indicated that they were proud of Hong Kong's freedom of speech and publication. By comparison, only 28.5 percent of UM and 37.7 percent of NTU respondents were proud of Macau/Taiwan's freedom of speech and publication. Macau students pointed out that Macau media are controlled either by pro-China or pro-government forces; there is little room for independent voices. Likewise, Taiwan students also felt that there are not enough independent voices in Taiwan's media. Taiwan's major presses are still controlled by mainstream political forces, while the small independent presses do not have the financial resources to compete.

In sum, in terms of political awareness and concerns about public and governmental affairs, there is not much difference between Hong Kong and Macau university students. Taiwan students, however, are more willing to discuss public affairs with other people. Yet, in their attitudes toward their respective political environments, Hong Kong students are inclined to have more positive views than their counterparts in Taiwan and Macau.

Orientations Toward the Individual Self as a Participant in Politics

In Almond and Verba's model, the propensity to participate in politics is affected by: (1) whether people think that they have certain political roles in society; (2) whether they believe that they have the capacity to influence government decisionmaking; (3) whether they have the confidence in dealing with the government authorities; and (4) whether they trust their fellow countrymen. These four questions form the people's political orientations toward the individual self as the subject in a system. Willingness to participate and the belief in

one's capacity to influence the government form the core of the participant political culture, which forms one of the main pillars of a democratic society. As Almond and Verba write: "Democracy is thus characterized by the fact that power over significant authoritative decisions in a society is distributed among the population. The ordinary man is expected to take an active part in governmental affairs, to be aware of how decisions are made, and to make his views known."[14] How much Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students believe in their political role in society thus has far-reaching implications for the development of democracy in the three territories.

There are local elections held at fixed intervals in the three territories. University students in Hong Kong and Taiwan are inclined to believe that such elections are meaningful. Of HKBU respondents, 77.1 percent indicated that the District Council and Legislative Council elections are meaningful or very meaningful; only 18.5 percent believed that the local elections have little meaning and 2.2 percent believed the elections are meaningless. Likewise, 75.8 percent of NTU respondents believed that elections held in Taiwan are meaningful or very meaningful. In comparison, 54.4 percent of UM respondents indicated that the elections held for the City Council and Legislative Assembly in Macau are meaningful or very meaningful; 38.6 percent felt that the elections have little meaning or are meaningless. Our findings suggest that a significant portion of Macau students are skeptical about the representativeness of City Council and Legislative Assembly members.

Despite the fact that there is only limited democracy in Hong Kong and Macau, most of the university students in the two enclaves have positive views toward political participation: 77.4 percent and 81.5 percent of respective HKBU and UM respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "a good citizen has the obligation to vote in the election"; only 15.6 percent of HKBU and 11 percent of UM respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Moreover, an overwhelming majority of HKBU respondents (82.8 percent) and UM respondents (86.5 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that "it is the responsibility of a citizen to express his opinions regarding public affairs to the government." Clearly, both Hong Kong and Macau university students are highly aware of their political rights and duties. Taiwan

[14]Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, 162.

students' attitudes were quite similar, as 81.3 percent and 91.8 percent of NTU respondents respectively agreed or strongly agreed that a citizen has the obligation to vote and that one should advise the government on public affairs.

On the other hand, citizens' perception and understanding of politics and political activities to a large extent affect their predilections toward political participation. Traditional Chinese political culture tends to give a negative evaluation of politics, equating it with "power struggle" and generally regarding politicians as those who are indulged in power struggle for personal gain. After the establishment of Communist China in 1949, numerous political campaigns, especially the unprecedented Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, have deepened the traditional Chinese fear of becoming involved in political activities. Although the majority of Hong Kong and Macau university students were born and raised in the two enclaves, their orientations toward political activities have also been to a certain degree affected by mainland China's political climate.

In general, both Hong Kong and Macau university students do not have high esteem for political activities. Only 14.3 percent and 22.5 percent of respective HKBU and UM respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "political participation is a noble and respected job"; 69.8 percent of HKBU and 58.8 percent of UM respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. On the other hand, slightly more than half of HKBU respondents and 41.5 percent of UM respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "to be involved in politics is dangerous." Nevertheless, many university students, including those who believe politics is dangerous, tend to agree that the risk of involving oneself in political activities in Hong Kong or Macau is not high because the two enclaves are ruled by law and citizens' freedom of speech and publication is protected by law. Many students recognize, however, that being involved in mainland China politics is very risky and may pose a threat to physical safety because, unlike Hong Kong and Macau, mainland China is to a large extent ruled by man. This factor has encouraged some Hong Kong and Macau university students not to participate actively in politics. By comparison, Taiwan students are equally cynical about the nature of politics: only 17 percent of NTU respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "political participation is a noble and respected job." In fact, 65.1 percent of Taiwan respondents, a much larger portion than those in Hong Kong and Macau, believed that "to be involved in politics is dangerous." This negative attitude toward politics among university students will

certainly keep some of the best minds in Taiwan away and have a negative impact on the island's political development.

Civic competence is another factor that may affect a citizen's propensity to participate in politics. If a citizen has confidence in influencing government policies, he or she is likely to have more interest in political participation and vice versa. Our findings indicate that only 15.3 percent of HKBU and 9.8 percent of UM respondents believed that they could or definitely could influence government policies, while 64.3 percent of HKBU and 74.4 percent of UM respondents felt that they had little or absolutely no influence on government policies. It is worthy to note, however, that although Hong Kong and Macau university students' civic competence is low when compared to citizens of Western states, it is a great improvement over older generations of Chinese.[15] This sense of inefficacy toward government policies is also common among Taiwan students. Of NTU respondents, 15.5 percent believed that they could or definitely could influence government policies; 82.8 percent felt that they had little or no influence. This feeling is deep-rooted in traditional Chinese political culture, resulting from thousand years of despotism and authoritarian rule; it is also partly a result of longtime authoritarian and undemocratic rule in the three territories.

Yet, despite the general low civic competence of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students, they are not always submissive to the government's will, especially when the latter's policies are harmful to their personal interests. Our findings indicate that 31 percent, 32 percent, and 29.6 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents would most likely or would definitely take actions to oppose a government policy that seriously affected their interests; only 17.6 percent, 19.6 percent, and 23.8 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents indicated that they would most likely or surely not take any actions; more than 40 percent of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan

[15]In a 1991 survey conducted among Macau's citizens, only 3.7 percent of respondents believed that they could influence government policies. Likewise, in a 1986 survey conducted by Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi in Hong Kong's Chinese community, 87.9 percent of respondents replied negatively when asked if they had any power to change the government's actions. By comparison, in Almond and Verba's 1959 survey, 75 percent of Americans and 62 percent of the British believed that they could do something about an unjust government policy or regulation. For the Macau data, see Yee, Liu, and Ngo, *Aomen Huaren zhengzhi wenhua*, 68-69; for the Hong Kong data, see Lau and Kuan, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese*, 94-95; for the American and British data, see Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, 185.

respondents indicated that they would "perhaps" take political actions to fight for and protect their own interests.

In actual political actions, however, university students in the three territories were inclined to take moderate actions: 40.4 percent, 38.6 percent, and 48 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents indicated that they would choose to write to or call up the local press, radio, or television stations to point out their respective governments' wrong policies or doings. The next common channel of complaint among Hong Kong and Macau students was to go directly to the concerned government agencies or departments: 31.5 percent of HKBU respondents and 25.9 percent of UM respondents would choose this channel. Yet, only 19.8 percent of NTU respondents would choose this channel of complaint. This reflects the general lack of trust among Taiwan students toward their government. Instead, a plurality (43.6 percent) of NTU respondents indicated that they would ask political parties or other interest groups for assistance. This is understandable, as political parties and interest groups are better established in Taiwan than in Hong Kong or Macau. By comparison, only 12.1 percent of HKBU respondents and 10.1 percent of UM respondents would ask political parties or interest groups for assistance. It is interesting to note that 20.1 percent of NTU and 15.9 percent of HKBU respondents would choose more radical actions such as demonstration, protest, petition, or sit-in, while only 3.2 percent of UM respondents indicated that they would choose such radical actions. This indicates that Macau university students, compared to Taiwan and Hong Kong university students, are more conservative and less inclined to take radical political actions.

Subject competence is another important aspect of the individual self as a political object. It is different from civic competence in that the latter refers to a citizen's capacity to influence government decisionmaking, while subject competence refers to a citizen's confidence in dealing with administrative officials according to a set of regular rules. Subject competence is the sine qua non for a civic and democratic society. As subjects of a country, citizens should feel capable of informing the administration of their grievances and have confidence in an administration which is controlled by law and, ultimately, by the people. Our findings indicate that the subject competence of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students is quite low: only 10.2 percent, 5.2 percent, and 4.7 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents believed their respective government authorities would surely or most likely help them to solve problems if they asked for

help, while 20.1 percent of HKBU, 34.5 percent of UM, and 40.4 percent of NTU respondents believed the government authorities would most likely or surely not help them. The majority of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan respondents, however, were either unsure of or did not know whether they would receive government assistance. Clearly, a majority of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students, especially the latter, do not have confidence in their respective governments. In fact, individual citizens' subject competence reflects to a large extent the degree of openness and democracy of a particular government.

Interpersonal trust is another important aspect of orientation toward the individual self as a political object. Interpersonal trust and cooperation refer to a person's perception of relations with others and are the basic psychological infrastructures on which a true and lasting democracy can be established. A plural democratic society needs the involvement of different groups representing multilevel interests in the policymaking processes, and this can only be realized when people among and between different groups trust each other and cooperate with each other. The game of democracy can only be played by those who respect and observe the rules of the game and can trust and be trusted by others. Harold Lasswell argues that the "democratic community" is associated with a "democratic character" and that the central property of the democratic character is an "open ego," or a capacity to relate to others and share values with them, a sense of confidence in the benevolence of the human environment, and relative freedom from anxiety.[16]

Table 3 shows that only 17.6 percent and 29.1 percent of HKBU and UM respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "most people in Hong Kong/Macau are sincere, reliable, and trustworthy," while 59.3 percent of the former and 44.6 percent of the latter disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement. The findings thus suggest that both Hong Kong and Macau university students, the former in particular, are inclined not to trust their fellow citizens. Moreover, of HKBU respondents, 72.9 percent believed that one can easily be used by other people in Hong Kong society; in comparison, only 47.6 percent of UM respondents indicated that one can easily be used by other people in Macau society. Different attitudes toward inter-

[16]As quoted in Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, 261.

Table 3
Interpersonal Trust and Social Cooperation (in Percent*)

Do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
1. Most people in Hong Kong/ Macau/Taiwan are sincere, reliable, and trustworthy.					
HKBU (N=314)	1.0	16.6	47.5	11.8	23.2
UM (N=347)	.9	28.2	35.7	8.9	26.2
NTU (N=354)	3.1	38.8	35.7	7.6	14.7
2. In Hong Kong/Macau/Taiwan society, one can easily be used by other people.					
HKBU (N=314)	8.9	64.0	18.8	.6	7.6
UM (N=347)	7.8	39.8	31.7	1.4	19.3
NTU (N=354)	5.8	65.7	19.3	1.4	7.8
3. Don't quarrel with people, be patient and reconcilable whenever possible.					
HKBU (N=314)	1.0	13.1	56.7	18.2	11.1
UM (N=347)	1.7	18.2	50.4	18.2	11.5
NTU (N=354)	1.1	21.5	54.7	16.1	6.5
4. We shall always fight for what we believe in.					
HKBU (N=314)	23.6	65.6	5.4	.3	5.1
UM (N=347)	19.3	63.7	9.2	.9	6.9
NTU (N=354)	21.4	59.3	14.5	.9	4.0

*The percentages given in the table are round-off figures and hence may not add up to 100 percent.

personal trust between Hong Kong and Macau university students could be partly explained by the different social environments of the two cities. Hong Kong is a large, cosmopolitan city where human relations are highly sophisticated and impersonal. On the other hand, Macau, despite rapid changes in the past decade, is still a small-sized city with relatively few industries or commerce, and social relations are characterized by personal relations. It is thus understandable that Hong Kong university students, compared to their Macau counterparts, are less inclined to trust others.

By comparison, the attitudes of Taiwan students are quite peculiar. A plurality (41.9 percent) of NTU respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "most people in Taiwan are sincere, reliable, and trustworthy," yet 71.5 percent of NTU respondents also believed that one

can easily be used by others in Taiwan society. NTU respondents were probably considering different reference groups when replying to the two questions. Many respondents apparently believed that ordinary people or the mass public in Taiwan are generally trustworthy, while at the same time they distrust wealthy businessmen or people who have power and influence in society.

Patience is generally regarded as a virtue in social relations in Chinese culture. In a 1991 survey conducted among Macau citizens, 53.5 percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "Don't quarrel with people, be patient and reconcilable whenever possible."[17] Yet the majority of Macau's youths do not accept such a Chinese cultural heritage: only 19.9 percent of UM respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement (see table 3). Similarly, only 14.1 percent and 22.6 percent of HKBU and NTU respondents accepted the above statement; more than two-thirds of Hong Kong and Taiwan respondents rejected the statement. Clearly, university students in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan have abandoned the traditional virtue of unlimited and sometimes unreasonable patience. Unlike the Western sense of patience, which means biding time before acting and waiting for something to come about, the Chinese meaning includes a submissive "going along" with authority and bitter fate.[18] Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau students' rejection of such a "virtue" is, in effect, a step forward toward democratization.

In fact, an overwhelming majority of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan university students will fight for their own interests. Table 3 indicates that 89.2 percent, 83 percent, and 80.7 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "We shall always fight for what we believe in"; only 5.7 percent of Hong Kong, 10.1 percent of Macau, and 15.4 percent of Taiwan respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The above statement implies both Chinese and Western values. Many heroes, patriots, and sages in traditional China subscribed to the view that one should fight for one's beliefs, uphold one's moral integrity, and not yield to external pressures and threats. Western democratic values, on the

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[17]Yee, Liu, and Ngo, *Aomen Huaren zhengzhi wenhua*, 78.

[18]Albert H. Yee, *A People Misruled: Hong Kong and the Chinese Stepping Stone Syndrome* (Hong Kong: API Press, 1989), 107.

Table 4
Conceptions of Democracy (in Percent)

What is a democratic government?	HKBU (N=314)	UM (N=347)	NTU (N=354)
A government elected by the people	60.2 (1)*	45.8 (4)*	35.4 (3)*
People have freedom of speech	56.4 (2)	46.1 (3)	32.8 (5)
Listens to public opinion and takes care of citizens' interests	49.7 (3)	57.1 (1)	60.9 (1)
A government structured on the principle of "checks and balances" among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches	42.0 (4)	28.2 (5)	11.0 (7)
A just and noncorruptive government	40.4 (5)	51.9 (2)	54.5 (2)
A government which acts according to law	29.9 (6)	24.5 (6)	32.5 (6)
An efficient government	11.5 (7)	19.6 (7)	35.4 (3)
Others	2.2 (8)	.6 (8)	9.9 (8)

*The number within the bracket indicates the ranking of the element.

other hand, insist that everyone should be given the chance to fight for what one believes in a fair and open competition. In any case, a predisposition toward fighting for one's beliefs implies that many Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau university students could become, given the right political climate, active participants in politics.

Conceptions of Democracy

In traditional Chinese political culture, individual citizens in general expected the government authorities to look after them and take care of their interests. Table 4 indicates that 57.1 percent of UM respondents believed that a democratic government should listen to public opinion and take care of citizens' interests. Second on the list is "a just and noncorruptive government," with 51.9 percent of UM respondents choosing this criterion as one of the crucial elements of democracy. It was then followed by freedom of speech (46.1 percent), a government elected by the people (45.8 percent), a government structured on the principle of "checks and balances" among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches (28.2 percent), a government which acts according to law (24.5 percent), and an efficient government (19.6 percent). In other words, Macau university students' conceptions of democracy are still very traditional. They rank a

government that listens to public opinion and takes care of citizens' interests above other elements of democracy. Their stress on the importance of a just and noncorruptive government reflects their concerns about prevailing corruption in Macau's government. We were surprised that "a government elected by the people" only ranked number four on the list, with less than half of UM respondents choosing this crucial element of democracy. We were even more surprised to find that only 28.2 percent of respondents recognized the importance of "separation of powers" in a democratic government. This inclination to stress the "results" rather than the "process" of democracy reflects that traditional Chinese culture is still deep-rooted among Macau's university students.

Taiwan university students' conceptions of a democratic government are quite similar to Macau students. Of NTU respondents, 60.9 percent indicated that a democratic government should listen to public opinion and take care of citizen's interests, while 54.5 percent believed that a democratic government must be a just and noncorruptive government. Third on the list was an efficient government (35.4 percent) and a government elected by the people (35.4 percent). Like Macau students, Taiwan students also stressed the results rather than the process of democracy, as they were chiefly concerned about corruption and inefficiency in the Taiwan government. It is important to note that only one-third of NTU respondents chose election as a crucial element of democracy. This suggests that Taiwan students are not quite happy with the prevailing corrupt election campaigns on the island.

In comparison, Hong Kong university students appear to have a better understanding of Western democracy. "A government elected by the people" was chosen by most of HKBU respondents (60.2 percent) as an important element of democracy, followed by freedom of speech (56.4 percent), a government that listens to public opinion and takes care of citizens' interests (49.7 percent), a government structured on the principle of separation of powers (42 percent), a just and noncorruptive government (40.4 percent), a government which acts according to law (29.9 percent), and an efficient government (11.5 percent). In other words, unlike Macau and Taiwan students, who stress the results rather than the process of democracy, Hong Kong students pay attention to both the results and process of democracy. Hong Kong students' conceptions of democracy are quite similar to citizens of Western democratic states and appear to be less influenced by Chinese traditions.

Table 5
Attitudes Toward Democracy and Government Performance (in Percent*)

Do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
1. It really does not matter if a government is democratic or not as long as it can improve people's livelihood.					
HKBU (N=314)	4.1	29.6	47.8	11.5	7.0
UM (N=347)	4.0	34.6	49.3	6.3	5.8
NTU (N=352)	2.6	23.6	56.3	14.5	3.1
2. We should obey the government because the government is always concerned about us.					
HKBU (N=314)	1.3	6.4	55.7	30.6	6.1
UM (N=347)	1.2	4.9	53.6	28.5	11.8
NTU (N=350)	.3	3.1	54.0	37.4	5.1
3. Under certain circumstances, dictatorship is better than a democratic government.					
HKBU (N=314)	2.8	42.4	18.5	8.3	28.0
UM (N=347)	4.3	35.2	22.8	5.5	32.3
NTU (N=348)	8.6	51.7	19.3	12.4	8.0

*The percentages given in the table are round-off figures and hence may not add up to 100 percent.

People who have a proper understanding of Western democracy realize that there is not always a direct relationship between democracy and government performance. A government elected by the people may not always perform satisfactorily or efficiently. Democracy is highly cherished because people have the right to choose their own government, including the sacking of a poorly performed or a low efficiency government. Citizens with a low or incomplete democratic culture are inclined to stress government performance while ignoring the democratic process. Thus, citizens' correct understanding of the relationship between democracy and performance reflects their confidence in democratic politics. As indicated in table 5, 59.3 percent, 55.6 percent, and 70.8 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: "It really does not matter if a government is democratic or not as long as it can improve people's livelihood." Only 33.7 percent, 38.6 percent, and 26.2 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents agreed or

strongly agreed with the above statement. This suggests that a clear majority of respondents, including some of those who are more traditional in outlook, recognize the importance of democratic process. This is a big improvement over older generations of Chinese.[19]

Moreover, an overwhelming majority of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau university students discarded the traditional submissive subject mentality. Only 7.7 percent, 6.1 percent, and 3.4 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "We should obey the government because the government is always concerned about us." By contrast, 86.3 percent, 82.1 percent, and 91.4 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents rejected the above statement (see table 5). In comparison, the traditional submissive subject mentality is still very strong among Macau citizens. On the same question, 55.8 percent of Macau citizens who were interviewed in 1991 agreed or strongly agreed that citizens should obey the government because the government always cares for the people.[20] It is important to note that UM students, despite their relatively conservative outlook, are unambiguous toward government-people relations. They clearly understand that in a truly democratic society, citizens should not always remain submissive to the government authorities.

In sum, our findings indicate that in their respective understandings of democracy, Taiwan and Macau students are inclined to accept traditional Chinese cultural values while Hong Kong students are inclined to accept Western democratic values. In their attitudes toward the relationship between democracy and government performance, however, there is not much difference among Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau students. The majority of university students in the three territories are inclined to reject a nondemocratic but "good" government.

Yet, after a prolonged period of living under a nondemocratic, authoritarian government, neither Taiwan, Hong Kong, nor Macau university students' understanding of democracy is deeply rooted in

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[19]On the same question, 66.1 percent of interviewed Macau citizens agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Likewise, in another survey conducted among Hong Kong citizens, 71.2 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "a good government should try its best to improve the livelihood of its citizens and should not pay too much attention to long-term political ideals or isms." See Yee, Liu, and Ngo, *Aomen Huaren zhengzhi wenhua*, 39-40.

[20]Ibid., 39.

a democratic culture. When asked if they agree "under certain circumstances, dictatorship is better than a democratic government," 45.2 percent, 39.5 percent, and 60.3 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; only 26.8 percent, 28.3 percent, and 31.7 percent of HKBU, UM, and NTU respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (see table 5). Many respondents believed that a dictatorial government, compared to a democratic government, can more effectively handle social unrest or political turmoil. Only a few respondents indicated that a dictatorship, regardless of situation, always puts its interests before or above the interests of the citizens and therefore is undesirable under any circumstances. Apparently, despite their exposure to Western democratic values, traditional Chinese authoritarian culture is still deep-rooted among university students in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. Yet we should not be over-alarmed. Most students accept dictatorship only as an expedient, temporary measure to deal with turmoil in unique political and social situations. As one Taiwan student put it: "When the country is in a turmoil, only a powerful government can prevent the breakdown of social order. We thus need a transitional authoritarian government. As soon as the social order is restored, we should revert to democracy." Nevertheless, students seem to have underestimated the difficulties of reverting to democracy after an interlude of authoritarian rule.

Conclusion

University students are the future elite of society. Their orientations toward politics and political participation are therefore likely to affect future political development. Our findings suggest that Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau students possess the major ingredients of what Almond and Verba call a "civic culture." Our respondents had a fairly high level of political awareness. They were concerned about public and government affairs, positive toward political participation, and fairly knowledgeable about what makes a Western democratic political system work. They have discarded the traditional Chinese submissiveness to authorities and accepted the Western value of open and fair competition. Yet, partly because our respondents have grown up under an undemocratic, authoritarian government, they did not generally have high esteem for their respective governments. Taiwan and Macau students in particular tended to distrust their respective governments. This, in turn, affects the civic competence (i.e., con-

fidence in personal ability to influence government policies) and subject competence (i.e., confidence in asking government agencies for help) of our respondents. Compared to citizens in Western democratic states, our respondents' civic competence and subject competence were relatively low.

On the other hand, the influence of traditional Chinese culture lingers. Like older generations of Chinese, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau university students do not have high esteem for those who are actively involved in politics. They are inclined to equate politics with power struggle. A plurality of our respondents, Taiwan students in particular, believed that to be involved in politics is dangerous, and thus shy from politics. Many students are even reluctant to discuss public affairs with relatives or friends. In fact, most of our respondents, particularly Taiwan and Macau students, are still deeply affected by Confucian tradition and expect their respective governments to be omnipotent and take care of citizens' interests. Furthermore, a plurality of our respondents, Taiwan students in particular, still possesses the traditional Chinese authoritarian personality. They believe an authoritarian regime or dictatorship can sometimes be more efficient and effective in restoring political and social order than a democratic government.

Perhaps more importantly, this study shows that political culture is highly susceptible to political and social environments. Despite a common Confucian heritage, the political subcultures of university students in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau are quite distinct from each other. Among the three groups, Macau students are most traditional in outlook. They are less willing to participate in politics and more eager to have an omnipotent government that takes care of citizens' interests. This can be partly explained by the authoritarian Portuguese administration in Macau. Compared to its counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the Macau government is less benevolent to its citizens and more authoritarian in decisionmaking. It is thus understandable that Macau students long for a benign government and are reluctant to participate in politics. By comparison, among the three groups, Taiwan students are most active in participatory politics, thanks to the rapid democratization process that began in the early 1980s; yet they are also very cynical about political and judicial processes in Taiwan. They are also highly critical of the corrupt, inefficient political and judicial systems. Indeed, a plurality of Taiwan students prefers a strong, albeit authoritarian, regime to restore political and social order in Taiwan. Compared to the others,

Hong Kong students are happier with their government's performance, efficiency, and above all, their government's "clean" image. In a sense, they are more Westernized than their counterparts in Taiwan and Macau. They are inclined to accept the democratic values introduced by the British colonial government. In due time, they may become the main pillar of stable democracy in this enclave.