

# Mass Political Culture in Macau: Continuity and Change

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*Political culture in this study is defined as citizens' subjective orientations toward politics. Based on two surveys of Macau residents conducted in 1991 and 1999 respectively, this article compares citizen concerns about public affairs, conceptions of democracy, orientation toward political participation, and political efficacy in the two periods. The findings indicate that there are both continuity and change in Macau's political culture. As in the early 1990s, the current political culture is a mixture of traditional Chinese values and Western democratic values. Yet the overall democratic consciousness of the populace has increased, with an emphasis on the value of elections. Macau is in a transition from subject to participant orientation.*

**KEYWORDS:** political culture; political participation; political efficacy; democratic values

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Since the signing of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on the question of Macau in April 1987, Macau has been in a transition from a Portuguese colony to a Special Administrative Region (SAR) under the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Macau SAR's Basic Law, which was endorsed by the PRC National People's Congress in March 1993, granted the enclave political autonomy under the banner of "one country,

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two systems." As of December 19, 1999, the Portuguese colonizers will hand over governing authority to the Macau people themselves. Are the Macau people prepared for self-rule? What is the political culture of the Macau masses? Is the mass political culture conducive to democratization in Macau?

Macau has a population of approximately 425,000 residents.<sup>1</sup> About 97 percent of the population is ethnic Chinese. The Macanese, who are Macau-born people of mixed Portuguese and Chinese blood, constitute about 3 percent of the population. Most local Chinese residents came from the neighboring counties in Guangdong province, especially from Zhongshan. A significant minority, estimated to be around 50,000, came from the province of Fujian. Very few local residents are descendants of the original residents of Macau. When the Portuguese first landed in Macau in 1553, they found only a few hundred inhabitants. In fact, less than one-third of Macau's adult residents are local-born. To a large extent, therefore, Macau's mass political culture is a microcosm of Chinese political culture and, in particular, the culture of Guangdong and Fujian. Even local-born Chinese are greatly influenced by their parents and grandparents who were born in China.

Almond and Verba define political culture as psychological orientation toward political objects.<sup>2</sup> They classify societies into three different political cultures according to their respective political orientations, namely, the "parochial," "subject," and "participant" cultures.<sup>3</sup> In a "parochial" culture people do not separate their political orientations from their religious and social orientations. The masses in a parochial culture have little understanding of, feelings for, or expectations from the political system.<sup>4</sup> In a "subject" political culture, people are primarily concerned with the political system and its output objects and pay little attention to the input

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<sup>1</sup>Official statistics of Macau, data provided by the Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Macau.

<sup>2</sup>Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 15.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

objects and the self as an active political participant.<sup>5</sup> Citizens are merely passive subjects and rarely voice their opposition to the political system. By comparison, the "participant" political culture is one in which members of society tend to be explicitly oriented toward the system as a whole and toward both the input and output aspects of the political system. Citizens tend to be oriented toward an "activist" role of the self in the polity, although their feelings and evaluations of such a role may vary from acceptance to rejection.<sup>6</sup>

First published in the early 1960s, Almond and Verba's classic study was hailed as a landmark in political culture studies. At the same time, however, the study was severely criticized for its vague concept of political culture, alluded causal relationship between political culture and political structure, and 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, many of whom have applied Almond and Verba's theoretical framework to specific country studies. Cultural variables have often been used to explain the problems of democratic movement.<sup>7</sup> However, Inglehart argues, despite the renaissance of studies of political culture, we do not yet have sufficient data to sort out the causal linkage between political culture and democracy in any conclusive fashion.<sup>8</sup>

This paper shares the assumption that political culture affects a populace's subjective orientation toward politics. In this study, the author partially adopts Almond and Verba's theoretical framework. Compared to *The Civic Culture*, however, which is a comparative study of political cultures in America, Britain, Germany, Italy, and Mexico, this study merely focuses

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>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 Changes," *ibid.* 82, no. 3 (September 1988): 789-804; and Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky, *Cultural Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990).

<sup>8</sup>Inglehart, "The Renaissance of Political Culture," 1219.

on the political culture of the Macau masses. It makes no explicit attempt to investigate the causal linkage between political culture and democracy. Our objective is modest. We are interested in finding out whether there is a "civic culture" among the Macau populace, which, according to Almond and Verba, is a necessary condition for a stable democracy.

The findings of a 1991 survey indicate that Macau has a mixed political culture, representing a combination of subject and participant orientations.<sup>9</sup> This culture is a mixture of traditional Chinese values of respect for authority, patience, and tolerance with the modern, Western value of open competition.<sup>10</sup> What are the special features of the current mass political culture in Macau? Is it similar to or different from the culture of the early 1990s? This article examines continuity and change in Macau's mass political culture in the 1990s and implications for the city-state's political development.

### **Research Method**

The data for this analysis is based on two surveys of Macau residents conducted in 1991 and 1999 respectively. Both surveys included all Macau residents above eighteen years of age who had resided in Macau for no less than one year. The 1991 sample was a systematic selection from a full list of the addresses of all living quarters in Macau.<sup>11</sup> The survey was conducted during a seven-month period from April to October of 1991. Our interviewees approached the living quarters and randomly selected one qualified person from among those living in the residence. The number of successful interviews was 663. The successful response rate was 65 percent. The 1999 survey was a telephone survey conducted in January. Telephone numbers were systematically selected from the local Telephone

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<sup>9</sup>Herbert S. Yee, Liu Bo-long, and Ngo Tak-wing, "Macau's Mass Political Culture," *Asian Journal of Public Administration* 15, no. 2 (December 1993): 177-200.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Excluding squatters who constitute less than 2 percent of the enclave's population. For a detailed description of the sampling method used in the 1991 survey, see *ibid.*, 180.

**Table 1**  
**Sample Profile and Macau's Population Profile (in Percent)**

	Sample Profile		Population Profile*	
	1991	1999	1991	1999
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	50.2	51.6	48.5	48.0
Female	49.8	48.4	51.5	52.0
<b>Age</b>				
18-19	4.2	—	3.7	—
20-29	26.5	28.7**	27.7	20.0
30-39	32.5	30.2	31.1	29.1
40-49	16.8	28.1	14.8	25.8
50-59	7.7	9.9	8.0	10.4
60 and above	12.3	3.0	14.7	14.6
<b>Education</b>				
No education	7.6	2.0	11.5	9.2
Some primary school	14.7	5.4	15.2	12.5
Finished primary school	18.0	17.3	29.4	27.4
Form 1 – Form 5	27.8	20.8	26.7	27.0
Finished high school	27.1	37.7	11.1	16.1
University	4.8	16.7	6.1	7.8

\*The population profile is based on the 1991 population census data and the 1998 (estimated) data, provided by the Census and Statistics Department, Government of Macau.

\*\*This age group includes those who are eighteen and nineteen years old.

Directory and one qualified person from the residence was randomly selected by the Kish Grid method. The number of successful interviews was 496. The successful response rate was 60 percent. Change in research methodology from a face-to-face interview to a telephone survey was necessary because of insufficient research funding. As Macau has a very high rate of telephone installation,<sup>12</sup> it is very unlikely that any societal groups are being excluded in a telephone survey.

Our two samples are quite representative of the population of Macau. Table 1 indicates that in terms of sex distribution, the male respondents

<sup>12</sup>In 1996, there were already 200,000 telephone lines. That is, on the average every two persons have a telephone. Huang Hanjiang and Hu Zhiliang, eds., *Aomen zonglan* (A general survey of Macau) (Macau: Macau Foundation, 1996), 290.

**Table 2**  
**Concerns about Public Affairs (in Percent)**

Q: Do you follow the news on television, in the press, or on radio?

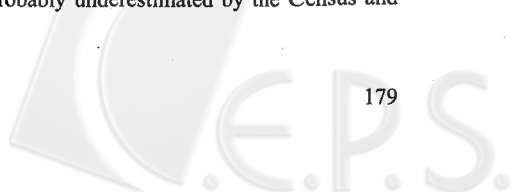
	Everyday	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	No Opinion	N
1991 Survey	41.8	24.9	22.8	10.3	0.2	662
1999 Survey	48.6	22.8	21.8	6.8	-	496

were slightly overrepresented by 2-3 percentage points. In terms of age distribution, old people aged sixty and above were underrepresented in the 1999 survey. Many old people failed to complete the twenty-minute telephone interview because of difficulties in hearing over the telephone. More difficult is comparing the educational level of our sample respondents to the population because of the different ways of composing the figures.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, people from different levels of education are well represented. Moreover, indirect comparison of income distribution also suggests that people from different income groups were well represented in the two samples.

### **Concerns about Public Affairs**

Both the 1991 and 1999 surveys indicate that the Macau residents are quite concerned with public affairs: 66.7 percent and 71.4 percent of the respondents in 1991 and 1999 respectively followed "everyday" or "often" the news on television, in the press, or on radio (see table 2). Interesting to note, however, is that the Macau people have tended to engage more in discussing government affairs with their friends and relatives than before (see table 3). One probable explanation is that the impending return of Macau

<sup>13</sup>For example, the statistics on university education provided by the Census and Statistics Department only include those who have received formal tertiary education. It is estimated that in 1998 about 10 percent of the adult population had received tertiary education through distance learning, including degree programs offered by the local open learning institutes, and mainland and overseas universities. Thus the proportion of those attaining university education among Macau citizens is probably underestimated by the Census and Statistics Department.



**Table 3**  
**Discussion of Government Affairs with Friends and Relatives (in Percent)**

Q: Do you discuss government affairs with your friends or relatives?

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	No Opinion	N
1991 Survey	5.4	22.8	32.9	37.5	1.4	663
1999 Survey	6.3	32.9	34.7	26.2	—	496

to China has aroused public interest in and concerns about government affairs. Nevertheless, discussion of public affairs among private circles are still quite uncommon: 60.9 percent of those surveyed in 1999 "rarely" or "never" discussed government affairs with friends and relatives. By comparison, in a survey conducted in Hong Kong in 1991, only 5.5 percent of the respondents "often" discussed government policies with friends or relatives; 28.1 percent "occasionally" did so.<sup>14</sup> In a nationwide survey conducted in 1987 in mainland China, 62.4 percent of respondents indicated that they were very cautious in discussing political issues with others.<sup>15</sup> There thus appears to be an inclination to avoid discussing public or political affairs among Chinese communities.

### Conceptions of Democracy

A correct understanding or conception of democracy among citizens is essential to a stable democracy. In the 1991 survey, high on the list of conceptions of democratic government was the traditional Chinese expectation of a good government: 30 percent of respondents believed that a democratic government is one that "listens to public opinion and takes care

<sup>14</sup>Jermain T. M. Lam and Jane C. Y. Lee, *A Study of the Geographical Constituencies of the Legislative Council*, Part 2 of *Research Report on the Political Culture of the Voters in Hong Kong* (Department of Public and Social Administration, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, April 1992), 54.

<sup>15</sup>Min Qi, *Zhongguo zhengzhi wenhua: Minzhu zhengzhi nanchan de shehui xinli yinsu* (The Chinese political culture: Sociopsychological elements in the difficult birth of democratic politics) (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1989), 122.

**Table 4**  
**Conceptions of Democracy (in Percent)**

Q: What is a democratic government?\*

	1991 (N = 663)	1999 (N = 496)
A form of government whereby:		
1. The government listens to public opinion and takes care of citizen interests	30.0	26.0
2. The people have freedom of speech	21.2	22.9
3. The government is elected by the people	9.6	32.3
4. The government is just and clean	8.1	10.9
5. The government acts according to law	4.8	3.4
6. The government is efficient	4.8	0.9
7. The government is structured on the principles of "checks and balances" between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches	3.0	1.7
8. The decision-making process is open	—	10.0
9. The government is responsible	—	2.9
10. The government respects human rights	—	2.0
11. Others	13.3	18.5
12. Don't know/no opinion	39.6	34.5

\*In the 1991 survey this was a close-ended question which listed nine items including "others" and "don't know/no opinion"; respondents were allowed to choose several items. In the 1999 survey this was an open-ended question.

of citizen interests." Second on the list was freedom of speech, with 21.2 percent choosing this Western concept as one of the crucial elements of democracy. Third was a government elected by the people, with only 9.6 percent choosing this important Western concept (see table 4). Apparently our respondents were more concerned about the performance of a government than the process of democracy. In the 1999 survey, however, the ranking of democratic values was almost reversed. High on the list was an elected government which is the hallmark of Western democracy: 32.3 percent of respondents chose this concept. Second was the traditional Chinese value of an omnipotent government which takes care of citizen interests, with 26 percent choosing this concept. Third was freedom of speech, with 22.9 percent choosing this concepts (see table 4). The new emphasis on an elected government by the Macau residents is a big step forward in Macau's democratization. After three elections of the Legislative Assembly in the



1990s,<sup>16</sup> which had drawn high voter turnouts,<sup>17</sup> the Macau residents have apparently attained a new election culture.

Nevertheless, like the earlier survey, the recent survey indicates that very few Macau citizens have realized the importance of the principles of "checks and balances" between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches in a democracy: only 1.7 percent of the respondents chose this concept in the 1999 survey. The Macau people are probably influenced by Beijing's propaganda against the Western concept of "separation of powers" and its blunt rejection to introduce such a concept to China and Hong Kong/Macau. Beijing keeps selling the idea that only an "executive-led" government is suitable to Hong Kong/Macau and to the local people. It is also important to note the high percentage of "don't know" or "no opinion" in both the 1991 and 1999 surveys. This partly reflects that quite a significant portion of the Macau people do not know much about democracy or that they simply do not care about democracy. Indeed, many respondents were quite reluctant to answer questions pertaining to politics. This reflects the lingering Chinese tradition of political disinvolvement. Another strong, lingering tradition is the stress on the instrumental value of governance. Like the survey of the early 1990s, over 60 percent of the respondents in the 1999 survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "it really does not matter if a government is democratic or not as long as it can improve people's livelihood." In short, despite an emerging election culture, the Macau people, like their parents or grandparents, are still more interested in the output or performance of the government than the process of governing.

However, one should be cautious in interpreting the data in table 4. In the 1991 survey the question asked was a close-ended question which listed nine items including "others" and "don't know/no opinion"; respondents were allowed to choose several items. In the 1999 survey this was an open-

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<sup>16</sup>The three elections for the legislature were held in 1991 (by-election), 1992, and 1996, respectively.

<sup>17</sup>The voter turnout rate for the 1991 by-election was 18.6 percent. However, the 1992 and 1996 elections had drawn 59.3 percent and 64.5 percent registered voters to vote, respectively.

ended question. The switch in question design is partly due to the change in research method from face-to-face interview to telephone survey and partly because the researcher wanted to minimize the effect of "desired" or "guided" response. For instance, "listens to public opinion and takes care of citizen interests" was listed as the first item while "government elected by the people" as the third item in the 1991 questionnaire. It is possible that some respondents in the 1991 survey were misled to believe that the first item in the list was the most "desirable" answer. The change in conceptions of democracy as indicated in the 1999 survey could thus be partly a result of change in questionnaire design.<sup>18</sup> In any case, since the question on conceptions of democracy was asked differently in the two surveys, the problem of comparability cautions that one must treat the findings as indicative, not conclusive.

### **Orientation toward Political Participation**

The Portuguese have ruled Macau for more than four hundred years. The Macau government, however, does not have a popular mandate to rule Macau. It derives formal and legal authority to rule from the authorities in Lisbon; the President of the Republic of Portugal appoints Macau's governor. Moreover, unlike Hong Kong, the sovereignty over the territory of Macau was never ceded to Portugal by a treaty; the Sino-Portuguese Treaty of 1887 only transferred administrative rights over the territory to the Portuguese. The exact boundary of the enclave was never demarcated. The legitimacy of the Portuguese governance of Macau was constantly challenged by the mainland Chinese authorities and local residents.<sup>19</sup> Partly due to the language barrier there was little direct communication between the ruling Portuguese elite and the Chinese community. The colonial

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<sup>18</sup>"Separation and balance of executive, legislative, and judicial branches" was listed as the second item in the 1991 survey, yet it was chosen by only a few respondents. This suggests that a close-ended question may not necessarily cause "desirable" answers.

<sup>19</sup>Hu Zhiliang, *Shengcun zhidao: Lun Aomen zhengzhi zhidu yu zhengzhi fazhan* (The way of survival: A study of Macau's political system and political development) (Macau: Macau Adult Education Association, 1998).

government had to rely on the Macanese (the Eurasians), who can speak both Chinese (Cantonese) and Portuguese, as the intermediary between the government and the local Chinese elite. The Chinese masses were virtually ignored and forgotten by the colonial government. However, the signing of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration in 1987 has changed the relationship between the colonial government and the local Chinese residents. The process of localization has promoted young and capable local Chinese to high-ranking government positions to replace the departing Portuguese expatriates. The language barrier between the government authorities and the general public has been gradually broken. The mass public are now in a much better position to criticize government wrongdoing and to lodge complaints against government authorities.

Largely due to the inflow of capital from Hong Kong and mainland China, Macau's economy began to take off in the late 1970s. It recorded double-digit growth throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1994, Macau's per capital gross domestic product (GDP) reached US\$16,164,<sup>20</sup> ranked number five in East Asia behind only Japan, Brunei, Singapore, and Hong Kong. However, the collapse of the real estate market in 1995 and the subsequent financial crisis in Hong Kong and other East Asian countries have plunged Macau into economic recession. Macau has recorded negative growth since 1996 with no recovery yet in sight. Meanwhile, partly due to the decline of tourism from Hong Kong and other Asian countries,<sup>21</sup> competition is keen and severe among local casinos. Underground societies which have great interest in casinos often choose to use force to settle their conflicts. Since 1996 killings and street gun-fightings between opposing triads and gangs have taken place almost every week, sometimes two or three days in a row. The colonial government appears to be helpless in maintaining public order or in turning the economy back on track. Most Macau citizens are disappointed with the incompetent colonial government, which thus affects citizen attitudes toward political participation.

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<sup>20</sup>Huang and Hu, *Aomen zonglan*, 166.

<sup>21</sup>In 1997, Macau recorded a 14 percent drop in overall tourism and a 20 percent drop in tourism from Hong Kong. Data provided by the Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Macau.

One major difference in the findings between the two surveys is Macau citizens' attitudes toward the colonial government. In the 1991 survey, 55.5 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "We should obey the government because the government is always concerned about us." In the 1999 survey, however, only 14 percent of the respondents would let the colonial government have a free hand to do the job because they believed that the government is always concerned about its citizens; 73.3 percent of the respondents thought the opposite (see table 5). The finding suggests that: (1) the Macau people no longer trust and have in effect cast a vote of no-confidence on the incompetent colonial government; and (2) Macau citizens are no longer the traditional, obedient "subjects" of the government. In fact, according to findings in another recent telephone survey, the Macau people are very disappointed with the colonial government's failure to develop the enclave's depressed economy and to maintain public order.<sup>22</sup>

Partly because of their disappointment with the colonial government, the Macau people in general do not have high esteem for politicians. Table 5 shows that only 31 percent of the respondents in the recent survey agreed or strongly agreed that "political activity is a clean and noble job," a drop of 13.9 percentage points from the 1991 survey. Like their counterparts in the beginning of the decade, our recent survey indicates that a plurality of Macau citizens are still hesitant to be personally involved in political activities. Nevertheless, 61.4 percent of respondents believed that all Macau citizens, regardless of social and economic status, should have equal right to participate in politics, while 79.5 percent believed that a good citizen should vote in the election.

Interpersonal trust and cooperation are the basic psychological infrastructure by which a true and lasting democracy could be established. The game of democracy can only be played by civilized people who respect and observe the rules of the game and who can trust and be trusted by others.

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<sup>22</sup>The telephone survey was conducted in December 1998 under this author's supervision. The sample was randomly selected. We successfully completed 588 telephone interviews. The respondents were most worried about the worsening public order as well as the depressed economy which has shown negative growth in the last three years.

**Table 5**  
**Orientation toward Political Participation (in Percent)**

Q: Do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	N
1. An ordinary citizen should not participate in politics						
1991 Survey	0.8	24.0	54.8	1.8	18.7	663
1999 Survey	0.2	20.0	57.4	4.0	18.4	496
2. Political activity is a clean and noble job						
1991 Survey	0.8	44.1	28.7	1.4	25.1	663
1999 Survey	1.0	30.0	37.2	1.2	30.6	496
3. A good citizen has the obligation to vote in election						
1991 Survey	5.7	79.5	3.3	0.2	11.3	663
1999 Survey	9.5	70.0	8.1	0.2	12.3	496
4. To be involved in politics is dangerous						
1991 Survey	3.6	40.1	31.0	0.8	24.5	663
1999 Survey	2.2	37.4	29.7	0.0	30.7	496
5. We should obey the government because the government is always concerned about us						
1991 Survey	2.6	52.9	26.8	0.9	16.7	663
1999 Survey	0.4	13.6	65.8	7.5	12.8	496
6. In Macau's society, one can easily be taken advantage of by other people						
1991 Survey	1.2	47.2	31.4	0.2	20.1	663
1999 Survey	2.0	34.7	42.2	0.8	20.2	496
7. Most people in Macau are sincere, reliable, and trustworthy						
1991 Survey	1.2	56.3	25.0	0.9	16.6	663
1999 Survey	3.8	51.1	24.6	1.6	18.8	496
8. We shall always fight for what we believe						
1991 Survey	5.3	77.0	7.6	0.2	10.0	663
1999 Survey	8.9	70.8	6.9	0.0	13.5	496
9. Don't quarrel with people, be patient and reconcilable whenever possible						
1991 Survey	2.4	51.0	33.9	1.2	11.5	663
1999 Survey	2.8	47.5	30.2	2.2	17.2	496

Another noted continuity in Macau people's attitudes is their trust toward their fellow citizens, belief in competition, and tolerance of different opinions. Despite economic recession and worsening public order, Macau people's trust toward and patience with their fellow citizens have not shown any sign of significant decline. As indicated in table 5, 51.1 percent of respondents agreed and 3.8 percent strongly agreed that most people are sincere, reliable, and trustworthy. In answer to a different question, however, 36.7 percent (a 11.7 percentage point drop from the 1991 survey) of respondents cautioned that one can easily be taken advantage of by other people in Macau society. It is possible that our respondents were referring to different societal groups while answering the two questions. Apparently, many believed that most ordinary people, or *laobaixing*, are trustworthy, while one has to be cautious in dealing with strangers. The above proportion is comparable to figures in Western democratic states: about half of the American and British respondents agreed that "most people can be trusted."<sup>23</sup> In addition, the Macau people appear to be quite tolerant of different opinion: 47.5 percent agreed and 2.8 percent strongly agreed that one should not quarrel with people and should always be patient and reconcilable. Yet at the same time, 70.8 percent of respondents agreed and 8.9 percent strongly agreed that people shall always fight for what they believe. In short, similar to the early 1990s, the Macau culture of the late 1990s is a mixture of traditional Chinese value of patience, tolerance, and trustfulness with the modern, Western value of fighting for what one believes.<sup>24</sup>

### Political Efficacy

Political efficacy is an important indicator of participant political culture. Only when citizens are confident in the impact of their political ac-

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<sup>23</sup> Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, 367.

<sup>24</sup> The statement that people shall fight for what they believe may imply 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 pressure and threat. Nevertheless, Western values insist that everyone should be given the chance to fight for what one believes in a fair and open competition.

**Table 6**  
**Civic Competence (in Percent)**

Q: Can you influence government policies?

	Definitely Can	Most Likely	Occasionally	Rarely	Definitely Cannot	No Opinion	N
1991 Survey	0.5	3.2	2.0	18.2	76.1	—	658
1999 Survey	0.2	1.6	3.2	17.8	67.9	9.3	496

**Table 7**  
**Subject Competence (in Percent)**

Q: If you ask some government departments for help, do you think they will seriously help you to solve your problem?

	Definitely	Most Likely	Perhaps	Most Unlikely	Definitely Not	No Opinion	N
1991 Survey	1.5	12.5	32.5	19.7	11.0	22.8	661
1999 Survey	0.5	11.7	30.7	31.9	9.3	15.8	496

tions on government policies will they incline to take such actions. Political efficacy has two aspects: civic competence and subject competence. The former refers to a citizen's capacity to influence government decision-making while the latter refers to a citizen's confidence in dealing with administrative officials according to a set of regular rules. Findings in our 1991 survey suggested that the Macau people were low in both civic and subject competence.<sup>25</sup> Has political efficacy among Macau citizens increased over the last decade? Tables 6 and 7 indicate that there is little change in either civic or subject competence of Macau citizens in the last decade. Like the earlier survey, only a very small proportion (1.8 percent) of respondents in the 1999 survey felt that they definitely or most likely could influence government policies, while 85.7 percent felt that they had little or no influence at all. Likewise, only 12.2 percent of respondents were confident that if they asked government departments for help the concerned departments would seriously help them to solve problems, while

<sup>25</sup>See Herbert S. Yee, Liu Bo-long, and Ngo Tak-wing, *The Political Culture of the Macau Chinese* (Macau: The Macau Foundation, 1993), 68-77.

**Table 8**  
**Possible Actions against Government Wrongdoing (in Percent)**

Q: What possible action would you take against government wrongdoing?\*

	1991	1999
1. Complain to government departments	19.0	59.7
2. Ask legislators for help	11.3	41.3
3. Write or call up the local press, television and radio stations	20.1	38.8
4. Ask social and citizen groups for help	9.1	28.1
5. Protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, and strikes	13.2	11.2
6. Other actions	25.6	6.5
7. Don't know/no opinion	24.2	18.9

\*This is a multiple choice question. The sum of the percentages is thus larger than 100 percent.

41.2 percent did not have such confidence in government departments. Apparently, the Macau people have little confidence in dealing with the Portuguese colonial government which, in the eyes of Macau citizens, has lost the will and capability to govern over the final years of the colonial rule. Indeed, interesting will be to find out if the political efficacy of Macau citizens will increase after the return of Macau to China when the enclave, according to the Basic Law of the Macau Special Administrative Region, is supposed to be ruled by the Macau residents themselves.

The Macau people's disillusion with the colonial government is reflected in the significant decrease in the proportion of residents who are willing to deal with the government. When asked whether they would take actions to oppose government wrongdoing that had seriously affected their personal interest, only 22.7 percent of respondents in the 1999 survey indicated that they would definitely or most likely take action, a drop of 13 percentage points from the 1991 survey. However, interesting to note is that those who did indicate that they would take action against government wrongdoing in the 1999 survey would opt to use more channels to voice their grievances than their counterparts in 1991. Table 8 indicates that in the 1999 survey more than three times the respondents in the 1991 survey would complain to government departments and ask legislators or societal and citizen groups for help. Those who would write or call up the local press, television or radio stations were also doubled. Thus, if we divide the



Macau population into two groups—those who would take action to oppose government wrongdoing (or political activists) and those who would decline to do so (often referred to as the "silent majority"), the latter have apparently increased in proportion since the early 1990s. Yet Macau's political activists, although decreasing in proportion, are increasingly more aggressive and opt for a wider range of options to oppose government wrongdoing. Nevertheless, also important to note is that, like political activists in the early 1990s, few current political activists would opt for such radical action as protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, and strikes. Compared to their counterparts in Hong Kong, Macau's political activists are far more conservative and restrained.

### Background Variables

In the 1991 survey, we found that women, as compared to men, have less time to read the newspaper or to watch television news. Yet women, like men, were highly critical of government policies; they also held a positive attitude toward political participation and believed that one shall always fight for what one believes. The 1991 data clearly indicated that Macau's women were no longer passive or apathetic toward political participation.<sup>26</sup> The 1999 survey tends to confirm the trend of increasing women participation in politics. There is still a gap between men and women regarding concerns about public affairs, but this gap has considerably narrowed: 75 percent of our male respondents followed the news from the radio, television, or newspaper "everyday" or "often" (same as in the 1991 survey), while 67.6 percent of the female respondents did so (a 9 percentage point increase over 1991). In attitudes toward such other aspects of politics as government performance, political participation, tolerance of dissenting opinion, and belief in open and fair competition, this research has found no significant difference between our male and female respondents in the most recent survey. A new generation of active, sophisticated,

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<sup>26</sup>Yee, Liu and Ngo, "Macau's Mass Political Culture," 194-95.

**Table 9**  
**Age and Attitude toward Patience**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Do you agree with the statement that "one should not quarrel with people but be patient and recon- cilable whenever possible"?						
Age: 18-29	1	56	30	52	2	141
30-39	6	43	33	63	3	148
40-49	2	39	15	77	6	139
50-59	1	10	4	33	1	49
60 and above	1	1	1	9	2	14
Total	11	149	83	234	14	491

Gamma = 0.248; significance = 0.000

and independent-minded women has gradually replaced the passive, naive, and dependent-minded older generation of women. Increasing active women participation in politics is an irreversible trend in Macau politics.

In our 1991 survey, we found that young people, as compared to the older generation, were more critical of government performance, more active toward political participation, more willing to fight for what they believe, yet tended not to trust others and were less tolerant of dissenting opinions.<sup>27</sup> In our 1999 survey, we still found a significant gap between the younger and older generations toward the traditional virtue of unlimited patience: of our respondents, 71.4 percent of those aged fifty and above agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "one should not quarrel with people but be patient and reconcilable whenever possible," while only 38.3 percent of those in the eighteen-nineteen age group did so (see table 9). There is clearly a significant relationship between the two variables (gamma = 0.248, significance = 0.000). However, in attitudes toward other aspects of politics we have found no significant difference in the 1999 data across different age groups. In other words, there is a tendency toward convergence of political attitudes between the older and younger generations.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 196-97.

One possible explanation is the impending return of Macau to China and the disappointing performance of the colonial government have generated a consensus among Macau citizens—across the age groups—toward political issues.

Our findings in the 1991 survey supported a positive relationship between education and political development. The better-educated and hence better-informed respondents were more critical of government performance and tended to be participant-oriented. They also tended to reject the traditional values of passivity and submissiveness to authority and social harmony, preferring instead a more open and competitive polity.<sup>28</sup> Our 1999 findings tend to reconfirm the 1991 findings: of the respondents, 83 percent of the university graduates followed the news from the radio, television, or newspaper "everyday" or "often," while only 55 percent of those who received primary school or no education did so. At the same time, 50 percent of the former and 19 percent of the latter groups discussed government affairs with their friends and relatives. More importantly, 82 percent of the university-educated disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "one should obey the government because the government is always concerned about its citizens," 30 percent higher than the lowly-educated group (see table 10). There is a significant relationship between the two variables ( $\gamma = 0.349$ , significance = 0.000). The better-educated also tend to have a better understanding of Western democracy and a higher level of civic and subject competence. Table 1 indicates that the educational level of the Macau people has significantly increased over the last decade. It is thus quite accurate to say that Macau citizens are more politically participant-oriented than a decade ago.

Another important background variable is length of residence in Macau. Our findings indicate that there is a positive relationship between the length of residence and the concerns about public and government affairs. In our 1999 survey, for example, 75 percent of those respondents who were born and grew up in Macau followed the news from the radio, television, or newspaper "everyday" or "often," while only 51 percent of

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

**Table 10**  
**Education and Attitude toward Government**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Do you agree with the statement that "one should obey the government because the government is always concerned about its citizens"?						
Education:						
Illiterate	0	5	1	3	1	10
Some primary school	0	10	4	13	0	27
Finished primary school	0	26	11	46	3	86
Form 1 – Form 4	2	11	15	65	9	102
Finished Form 5	0	10	22	139	16	187
College/university	0	5	10	59	8	82
Total	2	67	63	325	37	494

Gamma = 0.349; significance = 0.000

those who have lived in Macau less than ten years did so (see table 11). At the same time, 45 percent of the former "often" or "occasionally" discussed government affairs with others, while only 17 percent of the new immigrants did so. In the 1991 population census only 40.1 percent of the Macau residents were local-born. This increased to 44.1 percent in the 1996 interim population census; estimates hold that at the turn of the twenty-first century close to half of the current Macau population will be local-born.<sup>29</sup> The future Macau SAR government will likely confront an informed, concerned, critical, and participant-oriented public.

### Continuity and Change

Almond and Verba distinguish three levels of orientation toward the political system—the cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Data provided by the Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Macau.

<sup>30</sup>Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*, 15.

**Table 11****Length of Residence and Tendency toward Discussing Government Affairs with Others**

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Total
Do you discuss government affairs with your relatives and friends?					
Length of residence in Macau:					
1-5 years	1	0	2	8	11
6-10 years	1	8	21	18	48
11-20 years	4	40	47	37	128
20 and more years	12	38	30	27	107
Local-born	13	75	70	39	197
Total	31	161	170	129	491

Gamma = -0.219; significance = 0.000

Findings from our 1991 and 1999 surveys suggest that Macau citizens' cognitive orientation is positively linked to education. The better-educated are normally better informed and hence more knowledgeable about the structure and functions as well as the performance of the political system. The more they know about politics, the more they are concerned about public and government affairs and tend to discuss public affairs with friends and relatives. As the overall educational level of the Macau people has significantly increased over the last decade, our findings confirm our expectation that the local residents are better informed and more concerned about public affairs than a decade ago.

Evaluative orientation is also positively linked to education. The better-educated tend to be more critical of government performance. We are thus not surprised to find that Macau citizens are more critical of government policies than before. We must point out, however, that education is not the only and, in the case of Macau, not the most important variable that affects a citizen's evaluative orientation. The incompetence of the Portuguese colonial government as indicated by the depressed economy and worsening public order has greatly disappointed Macau citizens from all walks of life. Indeed, increasing criticism against government perfor-

mance in recent years is largely a result of government incompetence.

Affective orientation is more complicated. A citizen's affective orientation or feeling toward the political system is partly affected by the performance of the government. In the 1999 survey, only 35 percent of our respondents were proud of being Macau citizens, a drop of 18 percentage points from the 1991 survey. In the early 1990s, the Macau people were proud of the enclave's double-digit economic growth as well as social and public stability. In the recent survey, many of our respondents indicated that they could find nothing to be proud of. Yet many still have a strong feeling toward Macau. These include those older residents who have spent most of their life in Macau, as well as the local-born who have an emotional attachment to their birthplace.

It is important to note that a new election culture has emerged in Macau. After experiencing three legislative elections in the 1990s, many Macau citizens have begun to realize the importance of an elected government in their conceptualization of democracy. "An elected government" has replaced a government that "listens to public opinion and takes care of citizen interests" as the foremost essential element of democracy in the minds of many Macau citizens. In other words, the traditional instrumental value of an omnipotent government is no longer the dominant value of the local residents. Their understanding of democracy is converging with Western democratic values.

Yet some deep-rooted traditional values remain strong among the local populace. The Macau people in general have low esteem for politicians and are inclined to believe that to be involved in political activities could be dangerous. Like their grandparents or great-grandparents in traditional Chinese society, they do not think they themselves can influence government policies. Few would thus take actual political action to oppose government wrongdoing. Moreover, the traditional virtue of unlimited patience and tolerance toward personal relations and authority is still highly respected among the local populace.

Political culture is a result of a long process of socialization. An individual's orientation toward politics is affected by the family environment, education, and the political atmosphere of society. An earlier study indicates that traditional big families in Macau are fast vanishing, being re-

placed by small nuclear families.<sup>31</sup> Most nuclear families are no longer man-centered or father-dominated; family decisions are usually made by both parents after consultations with their children. Many children do feel they have some influence on family decision-making.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the newer generation is growing up in modern, democratic families. As they are usually better educated than their parents and grandparents, they are also better informed, more concerned about public affairs, participant-oriented, and more receptive of Western democratic values. Furthermore, the global and regional wave of democratization, such as the Taiwan and Hong Kong experience, will no doubt have some degree of impact on Macau citizens' attitudes toward politics. We therefore expect the trend toward a participant culture among the Macau populace to continue in the future.

### **Implications for Political Development in Macau**

Findings from our two surveys, especially the 1999 survey, have implications for Macau's future political development as well as policy implications for the future SAR government. First and foremost, our findings suggest that the Macau people are very unhappy with the colonial government: they distrust the Portuguese government and have low esteem for government officials. Indeed, the legitimacy of the colonial government is in doubt. The foremost task of the SAR government is thus to restore the legitimacy of the government among the Macau populace by restoring public order and leading the enclave out of economic recession.

Second, the SAR government should open the policy decision-making process to the public, hold more formal and informal consultations with citizen and societal groups on policy issues, and hold more open forums or public hearings on political and social issues. Macau is merely

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<sup>31</sup>Herbert S. Yee, *The Political Culture of China's University Students* (New York: Nova Science Publisher, 1999).

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

a small city-state with a population less than half a million and an area of about twenty square kilometers. There is no conflict of regional interests. As the overall educational level of its citizens increases and a participant culture emerges, Macau may be an ideal city-state able to practice a direct participation style of democracy. Due to restraints imposed by the Macau Basic Law, the future SAR government will not be popularly elected and will hence be weak in legitimacy. To encourage Macau citizens to directly participate in politics is one way to increase the legitimacy of the SAR government.

Third, the SAR government should, in 2009 the year for reviewing, according to the Basic Law, greatly increase the proportion of directly elected seats from the current one-third to two-thirds of the total seats in the Legislative Assembly and abolish the appointed seats. In the 1999 survey, 94 percent of respondents indicated that their ideal political system is democracy and 75 percent believed that a democratic political system is suitable to Macau. To increase the proportion of directly elected seats or, indeed to make all legislative seats to be elected through universal suffrage, is the only way to meet the political aspirations of Macau citizens.

Last but not least, the traditional "consensus politics" in the Chinese community which is based on compromises between the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, trade unions, neighborhood or *kaifong* associations, and other professional, citizen, societal, and religious groups may no longer be viable in the post-1999 Macau SAR. Politically aspired citizens and the emerging election culture will challenge the traditional institutions that mediate between the mass public and the government. The Macau people may no longer be satisfied with a passive political role. They may increasingly prefer to deal directly with the government. Moreover, they would like to elect their own leaders who are accountable to them. In any case, traditional community leaders are losing their influence in the increasingly pluralistic society. Hong Kong style party politics may be introduced to the enclave in one or two decades. The days when one or two community leaders can change the course of Macau's politics are gone for ever.

