

Mobilization and Protest Participation in Post-handover Hong Kong

A Study of Three Large-scale Demonstrations

Abstract

Post-handover Hong Kong has been marked by the occurrence of huge demonstrations, notably on July 1, 2003, January 1, 2004, and July 1, 2004. Drawing on a general public survey and onsite surveys of the afore-mentioned demonstrations, this paper examines the social and psychological factors behind the participation of individuals in demonstrations. It also analyses the processes of mass and interpersonal communication that led to the formation of the large-scale demonstrations.

Both the population survey and the onsite surveys demonstrate that the power of social and political organizations to mobilize people to participate in the three demonstrations was limited, although they did provide a rallying point for the public. The participants in the 2003 July 1 demonstration were found to have been driven overwhelmingly by their negative opinions of the Hong Kong government and political system. The results support the deprivation approach to protests rather than the resource model.

The evidence regarding the importance of social networks is mixed. On the one hand, the population survey shows that network capital is not a significant factor in predicting the participation of citizens in demonstrations. On the other hand, the onsite surveys indicate that many participants joined the demonstrations with, and in some cases at the suggestion of, their acquaintances. Taken together, these seemingly conflicting findings imply that social networks are embedded in the mobilization process, although they are not exclusive to mobilization. Given that both the "opinion leaders" and "opinion followers" among the demonstrators held negative opinions

of the Hong Kong government, we can conclude that these social networks were more of a conduit through which people with similar opinions came together to participate in the demonstrations than a channel through which their opinions were altered. In other words, social networks served as facilitators, instead of generators, of the formation of demonstrations.

The onsite surveys show that the processes of mobilization involved a mix of mass and interpersonal communications. The organizers of the demonstrations and other leaders of social and political groups provided messages of mobilization to the mass media which then served as an important source of information for the group of "opinion leaders," who in turn transmitted the information to the "opinion followers." This stepwise process was most apparent in the 2004 January 1 demonstration, in which opinion leaders were found to pay significantly more attention to the news media and were more likely regard the mass media as the most important source of influence. The followers rated interpersonal influence as the most important. However, this pattern of findings is less clear-cut in the other two demonstrations. Taken as a whole, the findings suggest that the role of the mass media in the build-up to social protests will differ according to the scale of the protests and the social atmosphere prevailing at the time. For smaller protests, organizational mobilization tends to play a more important role, while the mass media have limited influence. In contrast, in larger protests and controversies, the mass media's role in the transmission of information and messages of mobilization is larger, especially among the "opinion leaders" in society.

香港回歸後的社會動員與抗議參與

三宗大型示威的研究

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(中文摘要)

大型示威在回歸後的香港此起彼伏地發生，其中最惹人注目的要數發生在二〇〇三年七月一日、二〇〇四年一月一日和同年七月一日的三次。本文通過一項全港性問卷調查及幾項在上述大型集會現場進行的問卷調查，檢視個人參與抗議行動背後的社會及心理因素，並分析促成該些大型集會的大眾及人際傳播過程。

上述全港性問卷調查及現場問卷調查均顯示，社會及政治組織雖然起著登高一呼的號召作用，但它們實質動員公眾參與該三次示威的能力有限。調查發現，二〇〇三年七一遊行的參與者，絕大多數是由他們自己對香港政府及政治制度的負面看法所驅使，此結果顯示「剝奪理論」(deprivation theory)比「資源模型」(resource model)更能解釋這些大型抗議行動。

在社會網絡對示威動員是否重要的問題，調查得到較參差的證據。全港性問卷調查顯示，網絡資本並非公民參與抗議行動背後的顯著因素。但現場問卷調查卻指出，很多參與者跟相識的人一起參加集會，一些參與者更是在相識的人提議下參加的。綜合來看，這些看似矛盾的發現意味示威動員大體上都經過社會網絡進行，雖然網絡的存在不會必然導致動員的結果。基於示威者中的「意見領袖」和「意見追隨者」均對香港政府持負面意見，我們可以推論，這些社會網絡似一條將擁有相近意見的人集合以參與示威的導管，多於似一條將人們的意見改變的管道。換言之，社會網絡在抗議行動的形成過程中，主要起促進而非生成的作用。

現場問卷調查顯示，動員過程涉及大眾及人際傳播的交集互動。示威組織者和其他社會及政治團體領袖向大眾傳媒提供動員信息，而大眾傳媒則是市民之間「意見領袖」的重要消息來源，「意見領袖」繼而再將消息傳遞給「意見追隨者」。這個逐級傳播的過程在二〇〇四年一月一日的示威中最是明顯。研究發現，該次示威中的「意見領袖」較留意新聞媒介，並更傾向視大眾傳媒為最重要的感召之源，而「意見追隨者」則較重視人際間的影響。但這模式在另外兩次示威則沒有那樣明確。綜合而言，這方面的研究結果意味著，大眾傳媒在社會抗議行動的醞釀過程中扮演那一種角色，是取決於抗議的規模和當時的社會氣氛。在規模較小的抗議行動中，組織性動員往往扮演更重要的角色，大眾傳媒的影響力有限；相反，在較大型的抗議和爭論中，媒介在傳遞消息及動員信息方面，則會扮演較為重大的角色——對社會的意見領袖而言，情況更是如此。