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**Public Opinion and Media Use in Hong Kong:  
The '1997' Question**

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of public opinion and mass media use has for the most part been done in the context of regularly occurring election campaigns in Western nations. While many of these campaigns contain high drama for some segments of the population in those nations, there is little question as to the nature of the government that will result from the election. The questions are ones of "more or less"; the directions are "liberal vs. conservative." Even where political parties labeled "socialist" have gained control of the political power structure through the ballot, there seems little concern that the new power holders will engage in wholesale dismantling of the existing political-economic structure.

Not so, it seemed, in Hong Kong in the fall of 1982 when British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's visit to Beijing brought forcefully to public attention the possibility that the world's least fettered economic system would come under the control of one of the world's most tightly controlled political-economic systems (Note 1). For a time, the indeterminacy of the situation was maintained by Britain's claims that the three 19th Century treaties that gave London control of Hong Kong were valid in international law, and China's insistence that the treaties were "unequal" and therefore invalid (Wesley-Smith, 1980). Until Thatcher visited Beijing in September 1982 the indeterminacy continued to simmer just below the surface of public discussion. During the spring and summer of 1982 there were stories in the Hong Kong press about '1997,' when Britain's lease on the New Territories expires, but it appeared to be an issue few wanted to discuss, at least in the press. Years earlier, Hughes (1976, p. 129) wrote: "It is virtually impossible to persuade Hong Kong's Government or Establishment to discuss the matter."

Public opinion in Hong Kong has not been widely studied, and even less attention was given to use of the mass media until the late 1970s. The most extensive documentation of media use (Allen, 1970) described the number of people reading newspapers and listening to or watching various broadcast programs. While it did not relate the media behavior to psychological or demographic characteristics of the user, it did show that Hong Kong's residents used print and broadcast media to learn about their political-economic environment. Chaney & Podmore (1973) reported that while the media were used by young people more for entertainment than for information, media use was conditioned by the attitudes of the individuals.

Conventional wisdom has held that Hong Kong's Chinese population has little interest in public affairs (Hoadley, 1970, 1973; Wong, 1970-71, 1972). Increased access to government over the decades by Hong Kong's Chinese largely appears to be a government reaction to internal pressures during periods of rapid expansion in the Colony. The catch-words for limiting political participation historically have been the need to maintain "stability and prosperity." Perhaps ironically, both London and Beijing have continued to use the term as their continued goal for the city.

Colonial policy has been to co-opt the economic elites among the Chinese population (Endicott, 1964; Harris, 1978; King, 1975) in part to reduce the potential for conflict between the Chinese community and the government. As Harris (1978, p. 27) notes, these appointed, unofficial members of the government's councils represent the most "loyal and substantial" of Hong Kong's residents. Whatever the conventional political wisdom, Hong Kong's ordinary people were not without political interests, although a substantial segment seems to have mistrusted the government (King, 1977).

Although freedom of speech has long been guaranteed in the Colony, only 41.3 percent of King's respondents felt they could freely discuss issues.

When the '1997' issue finally surfaced in September 1982, it did so in an economy that had already seen a dramatic fall in real estate values, a hint of rising unemployment, and a declining dollar (Note 2). How much of this was a direct effect of the indeterminacy of Hong Kong's future and what part can be attributed to the workings of speculators is not clear. However, it does suggest a nervousness in the Hong Kong economy that was not easily checked.

#### Interest in Public Affairs

King's study of Kwun Tong found that about half (49.1%) of the residents reported following public affairs at least from time to time. He also reported low levels of political efficacy, a situation not surprising given a Colonial administration. However, low efficacy, or the perception that one is unable to affect government decisions, should not be equated with a lack of interest in what the government does or plans to do. Nor does low political efficacy necessarily imply that government was unresponsive to the needs of the residents. It does suggest that the ordinary people did not perceive government as attending to individual requests and complaints. Lau (1982) also found substantial evidence for an interest in government as 62.1 percent of his respondents claimed they paid close attention to local affairs. Allen (1970) found 84 percent of the 3,000 Chinese respondents in his analysis reported reading a newspaper "yesterday."

Two other studies suggest substantial interest in public affairs information. Yu (1981) found over half of his respondents (57.5%) reported reading for current affairs information, and an additional 7.8 percent claimed reading for specific information. However, only one in five (20.7%)

said they watched television for current affairs information, and only three persons in 100 said they watched television for specific information. These differences may reflect audience perceptions of the amounts of public affairs information available in the two media as well as the obvious difficulty of seeking information from broadcast media where the seeker has no control over the schedules of availability. One can read a newspaper at one's leisure, but if one is working during the television newscast, there is no opportunity to view it later. Ho (1983) found 30 percent of her respondents said they deliberately turned on their television sets to watch the news. Thus, it would seem that there is a strong interest in public affairs in Hong Kong even if the ordinary people do not vote regularly on the selection of the Colonial officials.

One reason for this apparent interest in public affairs is that such information could have a strong utilitarian value to the people who wish to improve their socio-economic position and believe they can do so through their own actions. While many people may feel they cannot directly influence the government, perhaps if they know what the government intends to do they can adjust their own behavior to optimize outcomes for themselves. Some of this information may be obtained from the mass media. However, it is important not to take these reported information seeking behaviors too seriously as measures of strong and dedicated searches for useful public affairs information. Media use tends to be an habitual, passive activity rather than an active search process.

The habitual nature of media use suggests that any assessment of media use and public opinion should not expect strong relationships between perceptions, opinions, and reported media behavior. The safest assumption is that the threads are thin and weak, and the analysis of media use might

best be directed toward finding those individuals for whom specific interests in problematic situations lead to more systematic communication behavior than will be exhibited by other, less concerned individuals. However, even for those most interested in a situation, the associations between opinion and media use will be modest. While the "magic bullet" theory has received no support from the social research of the past 60 years, conventional wisdom and social and political theory about the nature of mass society have kept alive the assumption of widespread and direct effects of the mass media on a helpless and unsuspecting population. Those who expect to find such effects in Hong Kong will be disappointed.

In its classical sense, public opinion refers to the opinions of those who are concerned about a topic, who have knowledge about that topic, and who make their views known to the appropriate holders of political power (Davison, 1973). In the context of the studies reported here, the classic definition seems inappropriate because the data give no indication about the transmission of the opinions of members of the political power structure, nor is there evidence of knowledge among members of the opinion publics. This is not to say those individuals had no knowledge. There simply are no data on the question.

Pool (1973) noted that both "public" and "opinion" need defining before the concept "public opinion" can provide a meaningful context for discussion. Public opinion, he wrote, usually refers to (1) opinions publically expressed, (2) opinion about public issues, or (3) opinions held by the general public, not elites. The second and third definitions both seem appropriate for five of the six studies summarized here.

The remaining study, a content analysis of four Hong Kong newspapers, may speak less to the question of public opinion than to the matter of "published opinions" of elite and perhaps partisan spokesmen for various pressure groups (Noelle-Neuman, 1979). The opinions in the press clearly fit Pool's first definition as well as the third. And, almost by definition, those whose opinions are published regularly in the daily press become members (if they are not already) of an elite whose views are deemed sufficiently important to warrant news coverage.

As for the term "opinion," Pool distinguishes it from "attitude." While

the two terms are frequently used interchangeably, and opinion, Pool (1973, p. 780) wrote,

is cognitive; an attitude is evaluative. An opinion is a proposition, while an attitude is a proclivity to be pro or anti something.

In that context, three of the studies use the term opinion only to denote the recognition of '1997' as a problematic situation. Two studies use the pollster's definition of public opinion, e.g., the distribution of responses to questions about public issues, while the content analysis describes elite opinions. Thus, these studies make use of more than one definition of the concept of public opinion in an attempt to define the dimensions of the problem, if only partially, and relate problem perception to communication behavior.

What people talk about, what they believe, and what they know is learned from a wide variety of sources, of which the mass media can be an important component. Because the '1997' question, and other issues, are socially constructed situations, mass communication can play an important role in both the definitions of the situation and alternative solutions. As Wright (1984, p. 34) notes:

These communication processes are reflected in the cognitive models associated with the situations. Although cognitive processes are often associated with individuals, cognitive models are social in origin and distribution like language. The concept of social cognition integrates the individual and the structure.

Creating public awareness of problems and the dimensions of those problems is usually considered a surveillance function of the press (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1959). In addition, the press can serve as a conduit for the public expression of opinion and values other than those

typically disseminated by those invested with the responsibility of conducting public affairs. However, the extent to which media pay attention to the public varies dramatically with local conditions. For example, Kueneman and Wright (1975) found that during times of crisis such as disasters, radio (in the U.S.) tends to provide access to nearly anyone wishing to ask questions or give opinions. Under normal conditions, however, only the elite, especially the political elite, have access to the mass media for expression of their views.

While conditions in Hong Kong during the fall of 1982 can hardly be defined as a disaster, there was substantial ambiguity about how Britain and China would resolve the question of Hong Kong's future. To help clarify the context during those months, two studies were conducted. One analysis explores the content of four newspapers published between 1 September and 31 December. The other study assesses public opinion midway through the fall.

#### Newspaper Content: September-December 1982

The study reported here is one of several to explore how the Hong Kong press reported the '1997' problem (Chan, 1983; Cheung, 1983; Chung, 1983; Lee, 1984; Wong, 1984). This study describes the kinds of items four quite different newspapers carried, who were the sources cited, and what were the primary attributes of the problem as defined in the news and other items. All items were classified into four general categories, straight news, editorials, columns, and letters to the editor. Because these data constitute the universe of items, statistical tests are not appropriate. The differences given are absolute values, and it is generally left to the reader to determine how important they may have been. Because the opinion survey fell midway in the content analysis period, the findings are reported separately for September-October and November-December.

#### What Types of Items Did the Papers Print?

The four newspapers together printed 398 items about '1997' during the four months, 237 (59.5%) during September-October and 161 (40.5%) during November and December. In the first period about seven of every 10 items about '1997' were straight news (70.8%), nearly two in ten (17.3%) were editorials, and slightly less than one in ten (8.9%) was a regular column in the newspaper. Only the South China Morning Post carried letters to the editor, seven in each time period. During the November-December period the content patterns of the Morning Post, Sing Tao Jih Pao, and Ta Kung Pao were unchanged from the earlier period. However, in the second period the Hong Kong Times divided its '1997' coverage almost equally among news stories (10, 33.3%) editorials (9, 30.0%), and columns (11, 36.7%) a substantial departure from the early period in which 66.7 percent of its items were straight news.

#### Who Were the Papers Quoting?

The question here is one of who the newspapers thought were important enough to have access to the news columns. The four newspapers were selected because they represented different political perspectives, and it is likely that they would emphasize the pronouncement of different sources of information. Do the rightist Hong Kong Times and the leftist Ta Kung Pao cite the same sources as the less obviously political Morning Post and Sing Tao Jih Pao?

In the first time period three of the four newspapers cited official sources of China, Britain, and Hong Kong in slightly more than one-third of the stories (36.9%). However, in September and October Ta Kung Pao cited official sources in a clear majority (54.5%) of its stories about '1997.'



That figure fell to 34.8 percent during November-December. In the early period 29.4 percent of the '1997' items in the Hong Kong Times were unattributed. This proportion jumped to 43.3 percent during the second period.

The proportion of unattributed items also rose in the other three papers from the first to the second period, but the increases were substantially smaller than for the Times. At the same time, editorials as a proportion of items about '1997' in the four papers declined from 17.3 percent in September-October to 13.7 percent in November-December. In the early period, 36.6 percent of the '1997' editorials contained no external source of information, and this figure climbed to 81.8 percent during November-December.

The decline in the proportion of editorials, where lack of attribution is common, and the increase in the proportion of news stories without attribution results in readers being given presumed "facts" and opinion without the opportunity to judge the reliability of the materials' authors. In effect, the newspapers themselves became the primary sources and in so doing added the weight of their own credibility to whatever weight the messages themselves had with the readers.

In both periods the Morning Post attributed about three stories in ten (31.9%) of its '1997' coverage to various Hong Kong groups and individuals, nearly twice as many as in Ta Kung Pao (18.6%) and nearly three times as many as in the Times (11.8%). While Sing Tao Jih Pao gave a plurality of references (35.7%) to official sources in the early period, it printed an equal number of items attributed to official sources and unattributed items, nine each, in the second period. The unattributed items included five editorials and four news stories.

In the early period slightly more than four columns in ten (42.9%) dealing with '1997' cited information from various Hong Kong groups; this declined to only 19.0 percent in November-December. Five of the seven letters published by the Morning Post during September-October cited Hong Kong groups as did all seven of the letters in the second time period.

What Was the Substance of These Items?

In both periods nearly seven items in 10 focused on economic prosperity, although there were substantial differences among the various sources in terms of what they emphasized and between time periods. In both time periods Hong Kong groups and individuals were most likely to emphasize political issues and were least concerned with economic issues.

In the early period the four newspapers exhibited similar patterns of issue emphasis, about seven in 10 items in each paper were concerned with prosperity. In the second period, three of the four papers maintained that emphasis while Ta Kung Pao's concern for economics declined by 20 percentage points. While a clear majority of the paper's items about '1997' (52.2%) in the second period were about economics, the proportion of items about miscellaneous topics increased from only 9.1 percent in September-October to 30.4 percent in November-December.

In September-October a clear majority of all sources, as well as the unattributed items, emphasized prosperity. Media sources gave equal, secondary emphasis to the question of sovereignty and other political issues such as freedom of travel and freedom of speech and of the press (15.0% each). Officials sources gave secondary emphasis (13.0%) to the sovereignty question while seven in ten items attributed to officials (70.1%) emphasized prosperity.

In the second time period the emphasis on prosperity increased in the

unattributed items (from 68.3% to 80.0%) while prosperity questions dropped 10 percentage points from 53.8 percent to 43.5 percent for Hong Kong groups. Media interest in prosperity declined even farther, 15.6 points, from 60.0 percent in September-October to 44.4 percent in November and December.

Regardless of the source of information, all types of items in both periods emphasized prosperity, 67.1 percent in September-October and 62.1 percent in November-December, and the proportions were essentially the same in both periods for all types of items except letters. Four of the seven letters in the early period emphasized economics while only one was concerned with sovereignty and two with other political matters. In the second period there was equal emphasis, although only two letters each, about sovereignty, other political questions, and economics.

What might be concluded about coverage of '1997' in these four papers? Perhaps the clearest finding was the overall similarity of these four newspapers in terms of issue emphasis and sources of information. These newspapers defined the question of '1997' primarily in economic terms. The overriding question was that of maintaining the prosperity of the city. To a lesser extent the question was a political matter, primarily that of sovereignty, although questions of citizenship, freedom of travel, and freedom of speech and the press were occasionally raised. The two elements of sovereignty and prosperity were frequently combined, especially in the statements of officials as they sought to define the issue as one of maintaining economic prosperity through political stability.

The newspapers, as to be expected, covered the situation primarily in news stories followed by editorial comment and a smattering of comment in columns. The only letters appeared in the Morning Post. In addition, the

Morning Post was the only newspaper to emphasize the voices of unofficial, special interest groups and individuals.

Media coverage of the '1997' issue as represented by the 398 items in these four newspapers may suggest widespread interest and concern in Hong Kong over the potential return of the city to China's control. However, these items were spread across four newspapers for 122 days. This means slightly less than one item per day in all four papers during the fall of 1982. Further, as becomes clear in the following section, there was something less than wide-spread concern in Hong Kong about '1997' during the fall of 1982.

The First Opinion Survey: November 1982

Overall, only 6.3 percent of the 1,219 respondents said they had been paying "a great deal" of attention while nearly eight respondents in ten (77.7%) said they paid no attention to the '1997' news. Proportionally, more men (81.8%) than women (72.7%) said they not were paying attention to the issue, and proportionally more men (65.0% than women (59.2%) reported they had not thought about the question. Thus, while the overall proportion of Hong Kong residents with an apparent interest in or concern for the issue is quite small, it also appears that more women than men were concerned about the future.

For most people, their sources of information about public problems are severely limited. While a small amount of information can be obtained from personal sources through direct contact with government officials and others who have access to official channels, most of the information the

Table 1. Number and proportion of men and women paying attention to and thinking about the '1997' question.

| Group | Pay Attention |      |      |       | Think About 1997 |      |      |       |
|-------|---------------|------|------|-------|------------------|------|------|-------|
|       | None          | Some | Much | Total | None             | Some | Much | Total |
| Men   | n 553         | 93   | 30   | 676   | 439              | 153  | 83   | 675   |
|       | % 81.8        | 13.8 | 4.4  | 55.4  | 65.0             | 22.7 | 12.3 | 55.4  |
| Women | n 396         | 102  | 47   | 545   | 322              | 124  | 98   | 544   |
|       | % 72.7        | 18.4 | 8.6  | 44.6  | 59.2             | 22.8 | 18.0 | 44.6  |
| Total | n 949         | 195  | 77   | 1,221 | 761              | 277  | 181  | 1,219 |
|       | % 77.7        | 16.9 | 6.3  | 100.0 | 62.4             | 22.7 | 14.9 | 100.0 |

Chi squared (df=2)= 16.27, p < .001

8.29, p < .02

ordinary person obtains must necessarily come through the mass media. To the extent that the media provide useful information, the residents may be well informed. However, even if the media carry substantial quantities of issue specific information, there is no guarantee that the public will be well informed (Paisley, 1981). In the case of the '1997' question in Hong Kong in early November 1982, it appears that whatever publicity the issue had received it was not, at that time, sufficient to create wide-spread interest.

What was available on television, radio, and in magazines and newspapers may not have attracted much attention among the ordinary people, and, as the content analysis indicated, coverage of the issue was not extensive. Only newspapers and television appear to have been important sources of news, and use of these media differs for men and women.

Proportionally more men (85.4%) than women (61.0%) reported reading about '1997' in newspapers. Thus, overall, three of every four respondents received at least some news about the issue from newspapers. On the other hand, proportionally more women (75.3%) than men (67.7%) reported obtaining '1997' news from television. Only 19.0 percent of the respondents reported hearing about the issue on radio, and a miniscule 7.6 percent reported reading about it in magazines. As noted above, other people often serve as sources of information as they pass along items they have learned from official sources, or, as is often the case, from the media (Atkin, 1972).

About four respondents in 10 reported talking about '1997,' and again there is a difference between men and women. Proportionally more men (47.0%) than women (38.3%) reported talking with others. However, in response to other questions, there were no differences between the proportions of men and women (13.5%) who reported obtaining information about '1997' from other people. Substantially more respondents reported

talking about the issue than reported obtaining information from others. This suggests that the bulk of the conversations were simply repetitions of what the parties had already gotten from other sources.

What kinds of newspapers did the respondents read? Are there differences between men and women in the number and type of newspapers read? One of the questions asked the respondents to name the newspapers from which news about '1997' had been obtained. These responses were classified into "rightist," "leftist," and "neutral" papers. Neither rightist or leftist

newspapers appear to have been substantial sources of '1997' news. More than nine in ten of the respondents reported not reading the leftist (94.7%) or the rightist (95.8%) press. However, seven in ten respondents reported reading a neutral newspaper with a significantly larger proportion of men (79.5%) than women (59.5%) reading one or more centrist newspapers.

Table 2 summarizes the findings of 11 issues regarding public opinion about '1997.' In only four cases are there significant differences between men and women, and in those cases proportionally more men than women agree with the statement. Generally, the men appear to be more confident in the outcomes of the Sino-British negotiations than do the women.

Table 2. Proportions of men and women agreeing with statements about '1997' issues.

| Issue   | Men  | Women | Sig. |
|---|------|-------|------|
| British should continue to administer Hong Kong if China regains sovereignty. | 54.8 | 49.7  | n.s. |
| Governor should be a Hong Kong Chinese.                                       | 44.7 | 39.7  | n.s. |
| Governor should be elected.   | 49.9 | 48.5  | n.s. |
| China should regain both sovereignty and administrative control.              | 26.0 | 15.7  | .001 |
| Hong Kong would be prosperous under China's administration.                   | 19.3 | 16.7  | n.s. |
| Personal living conditions would be better under China's administration.      | 1.8  | 1.2   | n.s. |
| Hong Kong's currency should be abolished.                                     | 11.8 | 6.4   | .05  |
| British legal system should be retained.                                      | 38.0 | 29.3  | .001 |
| Have confidence in the outcomes of Sino-British negotiations.                 | 44.7 | 35.8  | .001 |
| Negotiators should include representatives of Hong Kong citizens.             | 87.1 | 88.8  | n.s. |
| Would leave Hong Kong if China takes over.                                    | 27.2 | 25.5  | n.s. |

OPINION PUBLICS AND INFORMATION SOURCES: THREE STUDIES

Introduction

One of the purposes of these studies was to explore the applicability of situational communication theory (Grunig 1983, 1976, 1975, 1973; Grunig & Disbrow, 1977) in describing perception of a critical event and the sources four a priori opinion publics use in acquiring information about that event. As described above, there appears to have been relatively little attention paid to news about '1997' during the last four months of 1982. There also appears to have been rather clear-cut opinions about the issue held by a substantial number of Hong Kong residents. However, the expression of an opinion does not necessarily mean the respondent has a meaningful basis for that opinion or that the opinion is systematically related to communication behavior. The mid-Fall study was a journalistic opinion poll conducted from a largely atheoretical basis. While such polls ordinarily have "news value" and can point to areas of public knowledge and ignorance, they rarely provide the kinds of information that advance knowledge about relationships between opinions, opinion groups, and information sources (Note 3).

The situational theory is a cognitive model rather than an attitudinal or value model. To be sure, attitudes and values enter into the assessment of the problem, but they are not the primary considerations in the construction of the opinion publics. The theory holds that communication behaviors, both active information seeking and passive information processing, vary as a function of membership in opinion publics that differ in their perceptions of a specific situation.

In the situational model, basic opinion publics are defined in terms of problem and constraint recognition that produces a four-fold matrix. The

individual either does or does not define a situation as problematic and does or does not recognize one or more potential solutions (or feel capable of affecting the outcome). The four basic publics are defined in Table 3.

Table 3. Definition of Opinion Publics.

| Opinion Public | Problem Recognition | Constraint Recognition |
|----------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Constrained    | High                | High                   |
| Problem Facing | High                | Low                    |
| Fatalistic     | Low                 | High                   |
| Routine        | Low                 | Low                    |

The situational model was developed as a response to the failure of cross-situational attitude models to consistently relate communication behavior and attitudes. As Grunig (1983, p. 1) noted:

The principal theory used to explain that behavior has been the classical cross-situational theory of attitudes. Attitude theory holds that behavior in specific situations is a function of attitudes that a person carries from situation to situation and that predispose him to behavior in each situation in a way consistent with his attitudes.

This view treats attitudes as an intervening variable that operates between the stimulus and the behavioral response. However, the attitude-behavior literature shows no consistent relationship between the two constructs (Festinger, 1964; Seibold, 1975; Wicker, 1969). This suggests that other variables are more important than attitudes in determining behavior. Gross & Niman (1975) note that the three most popular "other variables" are the personal characteristics of the individual, situational constraints, and methodological inadequacies. Wicker (1969) reported situational variables correlated highest with behavior,

Grunig (1983, p. 9) defined the rational for his choice of situational factors over personal and methodological considerations as follows.

As a situational theory it assumes that both external constraint and internal intent affect behavior, but that the relative effect of each will depend upon the situation. People exercise free will in situations that permit it or in which they think rational judgment is necessary. In other situations they must conform to authority, social rules, or physical limitations. In still other situations, people move serendipitously because the movement simply does not mean that much to them.

Two other variables, level of involvement and a criterion referent, are also integral to the theory. Involvement is a measure of the extent to which the individual feels the problematic situation is personally important. The referent criterion is a measure of the extent to which the individual has experience with or information about similar situations. Because of the unique configuration of the '1997' problem, it is assumed there is no referent criterion.

The situational communication model holds that high levels of personal involvement lead to information seeking, usually from specialized sources, while low levels of personal involvement lead to passive information processing whenever appropriate information is located during routine use of the media. While Yu (1981) and Ho (1983) found small proportions of their respondents claimed to actively seek information from the mass media, it seems likely that the vast majority of respondents in these studies are fundamentally information processors.

However, that does not mean no differences may exist in media use among the four Opinion Publics. Recall that King (1977) reported that nearly one-half of his respondents claimed to follow public affairs at least occasionally, and that Lau (1982) reported that about six in ten of his

respondents (62.1%) claimed they paid close attention to local affairs.

In addition to mass media as sources of information, people do talk to each other, and as indicated by the November 1982 survey, at least some of Hong Kong's residents talked to each other about the '1997' question. Again, there is no reason to expect everyone to talk about '1997.' Those who do not consider it a problem would be less likely to be interested than would be those who did consider it a problem, and the higher the level of personal involvement the more likely the individual would be to report mass media and interpersonal communication about the problem.

Summarizing from the work of Grunig and his colleagues, the expected communication behaviors of the four opinion publics defined in Table 3 would be as follows. Members of the Constrained public will acquire information only to the point where they perceive the constraints which will prevent them from using the information. Problem Facers should be the most communication oriented and will actively seek information as well as passively process it as they engage in routine media use as part of their process of acquiring information for the evaluating alternatives. Fatalistic respondents not only do not see the situation as problematic, but also feel constrained. They should report the lowest levels of communication, both active information seeking and passive information processing. Fatalistic persons not only do not see a problem, but they have given up trying to affect situational outcomes. Members of the Routine public should also exhibit relatively low level of information seeking, although they may report relatively high levels of passive information processing.

In the context of Hong Kong, there is little to limit the individual's information seeking aside from personal interest in the problem and the extent to which the individual might believe information is available.

Those who are least interested or believe information is not available would be least likely to seek new information. Those most likely to seek information about '1997,' according to situational theory, are those who define a situation as problematic, feel personally involved and who believe something can be done about the situation.

In the three studies reported here, the measure of problem recognition was whether or not the respondent considered '1997' as a problem for Hong Kong. In the February 1983 survey, constraint recognition was defined in terms of whether or not the respondent could offer a solution, any solution, for the problem. In the May 1983 and January 1985 studies, political efficacy was used as the measure of constraint recognition. Those scoring high on political efficacy were defined as low in constraint recognition. The problem solution question was not asked in the latter two surveys. While this precludes the possibility of direct comparisons between the first and the other two studies, it does provide a test of a second variable, political efficacy, that is commonly used in Western political analysis.

Across the 23 months spanned by these three studies the proportions of respondents who considered '1997' a problem for themselves and their families varied significantly and there were significant differences among the four opinion publics (Table 4). Overall, there was a significant decline of 16.2 percentage points ( $z = 5.13, p < .01$ ) from mid-February to early May 1983. Between May 1983 and January 1985 the proportion increased 14.4 points ( $z = 4.81, p < .01$ ). There was no significant difference in overall levels of involvement between February 1983 and January 1985.

As is clear from Table 4, there is a significant interaction between opinion public and level of involvement in the February and May data. In

Table 4. Number and proportion of respondents in each opinion public in high and low involvement conditions in each survey.

| Opinion Public | February 1983 |      |       | May 1983 |      |       | January 1985 |      |       |
|----------------|---------------|------|-------|----------|------|-------|--------------|------|-------|
|                | Low           | High | Total | Low      | High | Total | Low          | High | Total |
| Constrained    | n 24          | 37   | 61    | 66       | 110  | 176   | 61           | 102  | 163   |
|                | % 39.3        | 60.7 | 11.8  | 37.5     | 62.5 | 34.9  | 37.4         | 62.6 | 27.9  |
| Problem Facer  | n 27          | 32   | 59    | 27       | 69   | 96    | 35           | 80   | 115   |
|                | % 45.8        | 54.2 | 11.4  | 27.1     | 71.9 | 19.0  | 30.4         | 69.6 | 19.7  |
| Fatalistic     | n 48          | 138  | 186   | 108      | 28   | 136   | 80           | 108  | 188   |
|                | % 25.8        | 74.2 | 36.0  | 79.4     | 20.6 | 27.0  | 42.6         | 57.4 | 32.2  |
| Routine        | n 86          | 124  | 210   | 62       | 34   | 96    | 45           | 73   | 118   |
|                | % 41.0        | 59.0 | 40.8  | 64.6     | 35.4 | 19.0  | 38.1         | 61.9 | 20.2  |
| Total          | n 185         | 331  | 516   | 263      | 241  | 504   | 221          | 363  | 584   |
|                | % 35.9        | 64.1 | 100.0 | 52.2     | 47.8 | 100.0 | 37.8         | 62.2 | 100.0 |

Chi squared(df=3)=13.38,  $p < .05$ ; 83.80,  $p < .01$ ; 4.47,  $p > .05$

February, proportionally more Fatals (74.2%) than Problem Facers (54.2%) reported high involvement. In May, the pattern was reversed with proportionally more Problem Facers (71.9%) than Fatals (20.6%) reporting high involvement. There were no differences in proportions of high involved respondents among opinion publics in January 1985 when nearly two-thirds of all groups reported a high level of personal involvement.

Across time there are significant changes within opinion publics in the proportions of respondents reporting a high level of involvement. Only among the Constrained does the proportion (about six respondents in ten) of highly involved remain constant across the three studies. Among Problem Facers there is a significant increase (chi squared = 5.0,  $p < .05$ ) in the proportions of high involved respondents from February (54.2%) to May

(71.9%), but there was no difference between the proportions (about seven in ten respondents) of highly involved Problem Facers from May 1983 to January 1985.

Among the Fatalistic public there was a significant decline of high involved respondents of 53.6 percentage points from February (74.2%) to May (20.6%; chi squared = 90.4,  $p < .001$ ). This was followed by a significant increase in highly involved Fatalistic respondents (36.8 points, chi squared = 48.4,  $p < .001$ ) in January 1985. However, the January figure (57.4%) is significantly smaller than the February 1983 percentage (74.2%; chi squared = 11.7,  $p < .01$ ).

These shifts suggest that as the problem became more clearly defined and perhaps redefined over time, perceptions of personal involvement also changed. Shortly after the Agreement was signed in December 1984, nearly two-thirds of all respondents had concluded that '1997' was important to them.

February 1983

#### How Big Was The Problem?

Almost by definition '1997' had become a problem for Hong Kong long before the February survey was conducted. However, media and "expert" definitions of a problem provide no information about how the general public defines a situation. Thus, one of the major goals of the February study was to establish the extent to which recognition of a "problem" had diffused throughout the general population. To establish this context, respondents were asked to nominate what they thought were the major problems facing Hong Kong. Up to three responses were recorded.

Altogether, 1,102 separate problem responses were given by the 516 respondents. When more than one problem was mentioned, the respondent was asked which was the most important problem. Of these 516 items, 120 (23.2%) were '1997,' the single largest number of references. The 516 items were then content coded into according to two different schema. One system reflected traditional topical categories often used in content analysis -- political, economic, and social. Slightly more than four problems in ten (221; 42.8%) were economic issues and 33.5 percent (174) were social problems. The remaining problem, a complaint about District Boards, was classified as political problems along with '1997.'

Edelstein (1981, 1984) has pointed out that classification of issues into the traditional topical content categories provides only marginal information about the effects the issues are perceived to have by the public. He argues that what "problems" mean to the general public is quite different from what those problems typically mean to those who investigate public reactions to the problems. If the public is asked what the problems mean the assessment reflects behavioral outcomes rather than topics.



Following Edelman's schema, the 516 issues were reclassified as (1) a lack of value, (2) a loss of value, (3) an indeterminate situation, and (4) other (Note 4). A problem defining a lack of value implies the respondent wants something but for some reason has been unable to attain it. In Hong Kong, one such common situation is the lack of satisfactory housing. Loss of value implies that the individual at one time had something of value that has since been lost, e.g., a good job. Indeterminate situations are conditions in which the individual is unable to either clearly define the problem or know what to do about it. The "other" classification includes primarily crime and public security problems (conflicts and systems failures).

Table 5. Opinion public by nature of the problem.

| Opinion Public |   | Lack of Value | Loss of Value | Indeterminate Situation | Other | Total |
|----------------|---|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|
| Constrained    | n | 0             | 10            | 44                      | 7     | 61    |
|                | % | 0.0           | 16.4          | 72.1                    | 11.5  | 11.8  |
| Problem Facers | n | 1             | 13            | 39                      | 7     | 60    |
|                | % | 1.7           | 21.7          | 65.0                    | 11.7  | 11.6  |
| Fatalistic     | n | 36            | 123           | 18                      | 9     | 186   |
|                | % | 19.4          | 66.1          | 9.7                     | 4.8   | 36.0  |
| Routines       | n | 41            | 118           | 31                      | 19    | 209   |
|                | % | 19.6          | 56.5          | 14.8                    | 9.1   | 40.5  |
| Total          | n | 78            | 264           | 132                     | 42    | 516   |
|                | % | 15.1          | 51.2          | 25.6                    | 8.1   | 100.0 |

Chi squared = 175.74,  $p < .001$

There were significant differences among opinion publics in the nature of the problems reported (Table 5). Two-thirds of the Problem Facers (65.0%) and 72.1 percent of the Constrained described the '1997' problem with phrases implying an indeterminate situation. Two in ten of the Problem Facers (21.7%) and 16.4 percent of the Constrained reported the problem, as a loss of value. Just six Constrained and seven Problem Facers described the problem as a conflict between two systems. Clearly, in the Hong Kong context, the indeterminate situation of '1997' could lead to a serious loss of value for many of the inhabitants. Unfortunately, because of the lack of panel data, the extent to which the indeterminacy was later perceived as a loss of value after the Joint Declaration was signed cannot be determined.

Nearly seven in ten of the Fatalistic respondents (66.1%) and more than five in ten of the Routines (56.2%), the two opinion publics that did not consider '1997' as Hong Kong's most important problem, were concerned primarily with economic problems which they described in ways that indicated a loss of value. Another 20 percent of those groups described conditions, primarily housing, as a lack of value, and fewer than one in ten suggested other kinds of problems.

Nearly seven in ten (68.6%) of the 121 political problems were described as indeterminate situations (Table 6). However, nearly one respondent in five (19.0%) defined '1997' as a loss of value. These losses included such items as the freedom to travel and freedom of speech. Eight in ten (79.6%) of the 221 economic problems were described in the context of a loss of value, primarily jobs but also including real estate values and the stock market. Just one respondent in ten reported economic matters as a lack of value. For the most part these respondents wanted employment but were unable to find it. Social problems were divided more evenly between the

Table 6. Classification of problem content categories by nature of the problem.

| Content Category | Lack of Value      | Loss of Value       | Indeterminate Situation | Other              | Total                |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Political        | n = 1<br>% = 0.8   | n = 23<br>% = 19.0  | n = 83<br>% = 68.6      | n = 14<br>% = 11.6 | n = 121<br>% = 23.4  |
| Economic         | n = 23<br>% = 10.4 | n = 176<br>% = 79.6 | n = 18<br>% = 8.1       | n = 4<br>% = 1.8   | n = 221<br>% = 42.8  |
| Social           | n = 54<br>% = 31.0 | n = 65<br>% = 37.4  | n = 31<br>% = 17.8      | n = 24<br>% = 13.8 | n = 174<br>% = 33.7  |
| Total            | n = 78<br>% = 15.1 | n = 264<br>% = 51.2 | n = 132<br>% = 25.6     | n = 42<br>% = 8.1  | n = 516<br>% = 100.0 |

Chi squared = 252.05, p < .001

loss of value (37.4%) and lack of value (31.0%) classifications. Fewer than two in ten described social problems in the context of an indeterminacy.

#### Level of Involvement

Proportionally more respondents reported talking about '1997' with persons with whom they had strong ties than with those with whom they had weak ties (Table 7). Slightly more than four times as many respondents in the high involvement condition reported discussions with good friends (50.8%) as with ordinary friends (11.9%), and nearly four times as many reported discussions with colleagues (43.9%). Nearly three times as many reported discussions with family members (32.6%). In the low involvement condition, three times as many respondents report discussions with good friends (34.8%) and colleagues (31.9%) as with ordinary friends (10.9%).

Table 7. Proportions of respondents reporting hearing about 1997 from media and interpersonal sources and helpfulness of sources, high and low involvement conditions.

| Source             | Level of Involvement |      |      |      | Chi squared | p <  |
|--------------------|----------------------|------|------|------|-------------|------|
|                    | High                 |      | Low  |      |             |      |
|                    | Yes                  | No   | Yes  | No   |             |      |
| <u>Talk/Heard</u>  |                      |      |      |      |             |      |
| Good Friends       | 50.8                 | 49.2 | 34.8 | 65.2 | 12.18       | .001 |
| Colleagues         | 43.9                 | 56.1 | 31.9 | 68.1 | 7.04        | .01  |
| Family             | 32.6                 | 67.4 | 19.6 | 80.4 | 10.02       | .01  |
| Radio              | 32.9                 | 67.1 | 20.0 | 80.0 | 9.68        | .001 |
| <u>Helpfulness</u> |                      |      |      |      |             |      |
| Radio              | 23.3                 | 76.7 | 11.4 | 88.6 | 10.95       | .001 |

Twice as many low involvement respondents reported discussions with family members (19.6%) as with ordinary friends (9.8%), although the latter figure may suggest little more than frequency of association.

Level of involvement was related to just five of the 26 communication variables. For three of the four discussion variables, family, colleagues, and good friends, proportionally more respondents in the high involvement condition than in the low involvement condition, reported discussions about 1997. Two of these three groups, family and good friends, reflect strong ties. The discussions with colleagues may reflect proximity and opportunity for discussion more than strength of the association, and the lack of association between involvement and discussion with ordinary friends may reflect a lack of opportunity for discussion. It seems likely that these discussions served more to construct some meaning for the situation and

form a stable interpretation for the the '1997' problem than to provide substantive information. What little information respondents in the four publics had most likely came from the mass media.

Only two of the 15 passive information processing variables, recall '1997' news from radio and perceived helpfulness of radio news, showed significant differences between respondents in the two levels of personal involvement.

#### The Problem Facers

Theoretically, respondents who were high in problem recognition and low in constraint recognition, the Problem Facers, should show the highest levels of both information seeking and processing. However, only three of the 11 information seeking variables are involved and only one, magazines, reports use. Neither of the two information processing variables reports use but indicates perceived helpfulness of media content. Table 8 summarizes the outcomes.

As expected, proportionally more Problem Facers reported reading about '1997' in magazines. And proportionally more of them judged discussions with colleagues and ordinary friends helpful in understanding the problem. Fatalistic respondents were least likely to report magazine use or say that discussions with ordinary friends were helpful. Constrained respondents were least likely to report discussions with colleagues helpful. Contrary to expectations, Routines were most likely to report newspaper and television stories helpful in understanding the problem. Constrained respondents were least likely to do so.

The importance of weak ties as a source of information for Problem Facers is also reflected in the correlations between discussions and the

Table 8. Proportion of respondents in each opinion public for variables with overall significant differences.

| Opinion Public | Seeking       |             |                  | Processing  |      |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------|
|                | Used Magazine | Helpfulness |                  | Helpfulness |      |
|                |               | Colleagues  | Ordinary Friends | Newspapers  | TV   |
| Constrained    | 16.4          | 11.5        | 3.3              | 27.9        | 14.7 |
| Problem Facers | 39.4          | 30.0        | 8.6              | 35.6        | 40.4 |
| Fatalistic     | 14.5          | 18.3        | 1.6              | 28.6        | 33.5 |
| Routines       | 18.6          | 23.0        | 6.7              | 44.8        | 43.1 |

perceived helpfulness of these talks in understanding the '1997' problem. For Problem Facers, the correlation between talking about '1997' with ordinary friends and the perceived helpfulness of the talks is 0.90. This is significantly larger ( $t = 4.41, p < .01$ ) than for Routines (0.67). Further, for Routines the correlation between talking with ordinary friends and perceived helpfulness of those talks is significantly larger ( $t = 2.02, < .05$ ) than for either Constrained ( $r = 0.47$ ) or Fatalistic respondents ( $r = 0.45$ ).

This suggests that ordinary friends provide information Problem Facers do not get from the mass media or other interpersonal contacts. It seems likely, as the weak ties hypothesis suggests (Granovetter, 1973), that information from close associates is redundant because all are exposed to the same external sources. Note that Problem Facers are the only public for which the correlation between discussions with family and helpfulness of the discussions was smaller than were the correlations for other groups.

Problem Facers also show a greater degree of "connectedness" among their communication behaviors than do the other three publics. There are significant correlations between reading about '1997' in the newspaper and hearing about it on television and all four of the interpersonal communication variables. Hearing about '1997' on radio is correlated with discussions with family and ordinary friends. For Constrained respondents, use of the newspaper is correlated with talking with family, colleagues, and good friends, and use of magazines is correlated with talking with colleagues and good friends. There are no associations between media use and interpersonal communication for Fatalistic respondents. For Routines, use of newspapers is associated with talking with colleagues while radio and television are associated with talking with good friends. Use of the mass media "today" is unrelated to other communication variable.

In summary, the evidence suggests that those who perceive a high level of personal involvement are more likely to communicate about '1997' than are those who do not feel personally involved. Among the four opinion publics the Problem Facers reported the highest levels of communication, both passive information processing and active information seeking, while the Fatalistic respondents reported the lowest levels of communication about '1997.'

#### Structure of the Variables

The opinion publics were defined by combining the problem recognition variable with political efficacy as the measure of constraint recognition. The higher the individual's level of political efficacy the lower the constraint recognition. Thus, Constrained respondents recognize '1997' as Hong Kong's most important problem and are low on political efficacy. The Problem Facers, also recognizing the importance of '1997,' are high on political efficacy. Fatalists and Routines do not recognize '1997' as the most important problem, and Fatalists are low and Routines are high on political efficacy.

The perceived utility of information obtained from the mass media will be assessed in keeping with Atkin's (1972) conceptualizations. Extrinsic utility is characteristic of information that contains decision-making value. In the journalistic sense, extrinsic utility is related to the surveillance function of the media. Intrinsic utility is characteristic of media content that is primarily entertaining or fun to read or watch.

Schramm (1947) has characterized decision-making content, that with extrinsic utility, as having a delayed reward because such material tends to be useful over time. Media content of primarily intrinsic utility Schramm labeled entertainment (i.e., features) immediate reward news because its primary value is in the gratifications obtained from its consumption.

The third utility variable, communicatory utility, is characteristic of content that is useful in interpersonal communication. These functions need not be orthogonal. Any item can have both decision-making and pleasure-giving qualities as well as be a topic of a future conversation.

A fourth construct, that of the perceived relevance of information about the actions of government, is conceptually related to extrinsic utility. Both constructs refer to decision-making qualities of information, but relevance, as used here, refers only to information about government while extrinsic utility refers to all information with decision-making qualities.

Because the variables defining these constructs are composed of two or more items, factor analysis was employed to determine if the hypothesized structure did indeed exist in the obtained data. The outcomes are given in Table 20, in Note 5. The analysis indicated that the items comprising the political efficacy, extrinsic and intrinsic utility, and relevance clustered as anticipated. However, the communicatory utility variable appears as part of the set of variables forming intrinsic utility and will be considered in that context.

Theoretically, Problem Facers and those who feel personally involved should score highest on extrinsic utility because decision-making information should be useful to them in assessing the '1997' problem. For the same reasons these groups should also score highest on relevance of information about government plans and actions. On the other hand, Fatales, because of their lack of problem perception and perceived high constraint should score low on extrinsic utility and information relevance. Fatalistic respondents should score high on intrinsic utility. However, it is possible that the Constrained respondents might score highest on intrinsic utility if they have given up searching for information that could reduce the perceived constraint. There seems to be no theoretical reason for intrinsic utility to be related to either high or low involvement.

#### The Importance of '1997'

The data from the November 1982 and February 1983 studies indicated a

low level of interest in the '1997' question with fewer than one respondent in five nominating the issue, in February, as an important problem for Hong Kong. In the May survey the respondents were not asked to suggest problems but were asked how important '1997' was as a problem. Just over five respondents in 10 (51.9%) said it was a very important problem while an additional 28.8 percent said it was somewhat of a problem for the city. More than four respondents in ten (46.6%) indicated it was a problem for them and their families, and the perception of the problem's importance varied with membership in the four opinion publics (chi squared = 83.8,  $p < .001$ ). Seven in ten of the Problem Facers (71.9%) said '1997' was a personal problem as did 62.5 percent of the Constrained. The figures are nearly the reverse for Fatalistic and Routine respondents with 79.4 percent of the Fatales and 64.6 percent of the Routines saying '1997' was not a personal problem. The product-moment correlation between reporting '1997' as a problem for Hong Kong and personal involvement was 0.43 ( $p < .001$ ).

#### Communication Utility

There were no significant differences between opinion publics in level of extrinsic utility (Table 9). However, respondents who reported a high level of personal involvement scored higher (5.52) than did those who said '1997' was not a personal problem (5.30). There was no significant interaction between opinion public membership and level of involvement.

There were no significant differences in intrinsic utility scores for the opinion publics or by level of involvement. Both opinion public and level of involvement are related to perceived relevance of information about what the government plans to do. The mean score on relevance is significantly lower for Fatales (4.82) than for Routines (5.26), Constrained

Table 9. Mean scores on communication utility variables by level of involvement for each opinion public.

| Opinion Public                | Extrinsic |      |      | Intrinsic  |      |      | Relevance      |      |      |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------|------|------------|------|------|----------------|------|------|
|                               | High      | Low  | Mean | High       | Low  | Mean | High           | Low  | Mean |
| Constrained                   | 5.46      | 5.39 | 5.43 | 5.93       | 6.26 | 6.05 | 5.29           | 5.12 | 5.23 |
| Problem Facer                 | 5.54      | 5.29 | 5.46 | 5.96       | 5.26 | 5.76 | 5.33           | 4.93 | 5.22 |
| Fatalistic                    | 5.43      | 5.33 | 5.35 | 6.11       | 6.00 | 6.02 | 5.07           | 4.76 | 4.82 |
| Routine                       | 5.65      | 5.18 | 5.34 | 6.06       | 5.74 | 5.85 | 5.56           | 5.10 | 5.26 |
| Total                         | 5.52      | 5.29 | 5.40 | 6.01       | 5.82 | 5.95 | 5.31           | 5.02 | 5.12 |
| Involvement F = 4.40, p < .05 |           |      |      | 0.08, n.s. |      |      | 11.77, p < .01 |      |      |
| Public F = 0.33, n.s.         |           |      |      | 0.62, n.s. |      |      | 3.86, p < .05  |      |      |
| Interaction F = 0.54, n.s.    |           |      |      | 1.46, n.s. |      |      | 1.34, n.s.     |      |      |

(5.23), and Problem Facers (5.22). Respondents who reported a high level of personal involvement scored higher on information relevance (5.31) than did those for whom '1997' is not a personal problem (5.02).

The findings suggest that it is primarily those who feel personally involved who said they read newspapers and watched television news to obtain information that would be useful in later decision-making (extrinsic utility). At this point in the development of the '1997' question it appears that within involvement levels none of the opinion publics felt more than did other publics that useful material was available from the news. However, relevance of information about what the Hong Kong Government was planning was deemed more important by the Constrained, Problem Facers, and Routine Publics than it was by the Fatales.

#### Interpersonal Communication and Media Use

Interpersonal communication was limited to just one question in the May

study. It asked whether or not the respondent recalled hearing about the problem from friends. There were no differences either for opinion publics or by level of involvement in the proportion (15.8%) reporting hearing about '1997' from friends. Quite likely that dimension of communication was not adequately tapped by the questionnaire.

Among those with high personal involvement, Fatales were least likely to report having read about '1997' in a newspaper. Eight in ten of the Fatales (80.0%) and 60.4 percent of the Constrained reported not reading about the issue. Six in ten of the Problem Facers (63.0%) and Routines (66.7%) said they had read something about '1997' in a newspaper. Of those reporting low personal involvement, there were no significant differences among opinion publics, and nearly six in ten (58.9%) reported not having read about '1997' in a newspaper. There were no significant differences among high involvement opinion publics in proportions reporting hearing about '1997' on radio, on television, or reading about it in a magazines.

In the low involvement group, proportionally more Problem Facers (33.3%) reported hearing about '1997' on radio compared with only three percent of the Fatales and 9.1 percent of the Routines (Table 10). About one in four of the Constrained respondents (26.1%) also reported hearing about '1997' on radio. In the high involvement condition more than six in ten of the Routines (66.7%) and Problem Facers (63.0%) reported reading about '1997' in a newspaper compared with just two in ten of the Fatales (20.0%) and 39.6 percent of the Constrained. While there are significant, and therefore theoretically important differences among the opinion publics in Table 10 there are relatively few respondents involved. Only 187 respondents said they recalled hearing anything about '1997' from any source, mass media or interpersonal.

Table 10. Number and proportions of respondents hearing about 1997 on radios and reading about it in newspapers.

| Opinion Public | Radio             |      |       | Newspapers         |      |       |
|----------------|-------------------|------|-------|--------------------|------|-------|
|                | (Low Involvement) |      |       | (High Involvement) |      |       |
|                | No                | Yes  | Total | No                 | Yes  | Total |
| Constrained    | n 17              | 6    | 23    | 29                 | 19   | 48    |
|                | % 73.9            | 26.1 | 25.6  | 60.4               | 39.6 | 49.5  |
| Problem Facer  | n 8               | 4    | 12    | 10                 | 17   | 29    |
|                | % 66.7            | 33.3 | 13.3  | 37.0               | 63.0 | 27.8  |
| Fatalistic     | n 32              | 1    | 33    | 8                  | 2    | 10    |
|                | % 97.0            | 3.0  | 36.7  | 80.0               | 20.0 | 10.3  |
| Routine        | n 20              | 2    | 22    | 4                  | 8    | 12    |
|                | % 90.9            | 9.1  | 24.4  | 33.3               | 66.7 | 12.4  |
| Total          | n 77              | 13   | 90    | 51                 | 46   | 97    |
|                | % 85.6            | 14.4 | 100.0 | 52.6               | 47.4 | 100.0 |

Chi squared (df=3) = 9.97, p < .05

8.60, p < .05

There were no differences among the opinion publics at either level of involvement in the proportions reading a newspaper or magazine "today" or listening to radio news, nor were there differences among Publics in frequency of reading newspapers. More than six in ten (64.0%) said they read a newspaper every day. There was a difference in the type of newspaper read among respondents in the low involvement group. Significantly more of the Problem Facers (41.7%) reported reading an elitist paper while more than eight in ten (85.1%) of the other three opinion publics reported reading papers of the popular press. Of those reporting high personal involvement, significantly fewer of the Problem Facers (55.2%) than Constrained (76.4%) reported watching television news "today." Six in ten

of the Fatalis (60.7%) and Routines (60.6%) also reported watching television news "today."

There were significant differences among opinion publics at both levels of involvement in what respondents reported to be the most useful content of newspapers (Table 11) and television (Table 12). Among those saying '1997' was not a problem for them and their families, 68.8 percent of the Problem Facers compared with just 27.1 percent of the Fatalis, reported news about current issues as the most useful newspaper content. The reverse pattern was found for those who said '1997' was a personal problem. Of the high involvement group, 73.7 percent of the Fatalis considered issue information most useful compared with 34.5 percent of the Problem Facers.

Table 11. Number and proportion of respondents in each opinion public by most useful newspaper content for each level of involvement.

| Opinion Public | Low Involvement |         |       | High Involvement |         |       |
|----------------|-----------------|---------|-------|------------------|---------|-------|
|                | Current         | Other   | Total | Current          | Other   | Total |
|                | Issues          | Content |       | Issues           | Content |       |
| Constrained    | n 19            | 29      | 46    | 43               | 43      | 86    |
|                | % 41.3          | 58.7    | 25.6  | 50.0             | 50.0    | 45.0  |
| Problem Facer  | n 11            | 5       | 16    | 20               | 38      | 58    |
|                | % 68.8          | 31.2    | 8.9   | 34.5             | 65.5    | 30.4  |
| Fatalistic     | n 19            | 51      | 70    | 14               | 5       | 19    |
|                | % 27.1          | 72.9    | 38.9  | 73.7             | 26.3    | 9.9   |
| Routine        | n 19            | 29      | 48    | 16               | 12      | 28    |
|                | % 39.6          | 60.4    | 26.7  | 57.1             | 42.9    | 14.7  |
| Total          | n 68            | 112     | 180   | 93               | 98      | 191   |
|                | % 37.8          | 62.2    | 100.0 | 48.7             | 51.3    | 100.0 |

Chi squared (df=3) = 10.33, p < .05

10.29, p < .05

Table 12. Number and proportion of respondents in each opinion public by most useful television program type for each level of involvement.

| Opinion Public |   | Low Involvement |       |       | High Involvement |       |       |
|----------------|---|-----------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|
|                |   | Educ.           | Other | Total | Educ.            | Other | Total |
| Constrained    | n | 15              | 32    | 47    | 43               | 39    | 82    |
|                | % | 31.9            | 68.1  | 26.0  | 52.4             | 47.6  | 45.8  |
| Problem Facer  | n | 14              | 12    | 26    | 24               | 23    | 47    |
|                | % | 53.8            | 46.2  | 14.4  | 51.1             | 48.9  | 26.3  |
| Fatalistic     | n | 20              | 48    | 68    | 4                | 14    | 21    |
|                | % | 29.4            | 70.6  | 37.6  | 19.0             | 81.0  | 11.7  |
| Routine        | n | 23              | 17    | 40    | 15               | 14    | 29    |
|                | % | 57.5            | 42.5  | 22.1  | 51.7             | 48.3  | 16.1  |
| Total          | n | 72              | 109   | 181   | 86               | 93    | 179   |
|                | % | 39.8            | 60.2  | 100.0 | 48.0             | 52.0  | 100.0 |

Chi squared (df=3) = 11.65, p < .01

7.96, p < .05

Regarding content of television, among those for whom '1997' was not a problem, only three in ten of the Fatalis (29.4%) and Constrained (31.9%) considered educational programs useful. Nearly six in ten of the Routines (57.5%) and 53.8 percent of the Problem Facers reported that educational programs were the most useful television content. Among high involvement respondents, only among Fatalis did a majority not consider educational programs the most useful compared with just over half of the respondents in each of the other three opinion publics.

This low level of media use suggests that there may have been a low level of information in the media and what was in the news may have been redundant from one day to the next. Possibly media coverage of the problem

did not rise above the level given during the Fall of 1982. Only 67 of the 524 respondents (12.8%) said that what they had read helped them better understand the '1997' problem.

In summary, it appears that the communication utility variables are not related to the four opinion publics. However, information relevance, as expected, is associated with the Problem Facers. And, as expected, the high involvement respondents scored higher than did low involvement respondents on both extrinsic utility and information relevance. Why Problem Facers did not score high on extrinsic utility is not clear. Possibly the focus of the extrinsic utility variable is too broad to be associated with these Publics which are directed to a specific problem. Relevance, on the other hand, is concerned with information about the actions of government, and as a result relevance focuses on the one institution most directly concerned with the '1997' problem.



January 1985

#### Changes in the Opinion Publics

The data collected in January 1985 were obtained less than one month after the signing of the Joint Declaration by Chinese and British authorities. Hong Kong had been guaranteed another 50 years of capitalist economics and its accompanying lifestyle. The immediate post-agreement period provides an opportunity to reassess, in a changed context, the applicability of the situational model, the communication utility variables, interpersonal communication, and media use, and opinions about satisfaction with the agreement by the four opinion publics. Before looking at those items it may be useful to review changes in the size of the four opinion publics. The proportions of respondents in the four groups for the three surveys is given in Table 13.

Table 13. Proportion of respondents in each opinion public.

| Opinion Public | Feb. 1983 | May 1983 | Jan. 1985 |
|----------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Constrained    | 11.3      | 34.9     | 27.9      |
| Problem Facer  | 11.9      | 19.0     | 19.7      |
| Fatalistic     | 36.1      | 27.0     | 32.2      |
| Routine        | 40.7      | 19.1     | 20.2      |

Overall, interest in the '1997' question increased significantly ( $z = 10.59$ ,  $p < .01$ ) from February 1983 (23.2%) to May 1983 (54.6%) and then declined to 46.2 percent in January 1985. The decline is statistically significant ( $z = 2.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ). While the data do not point directly to a cause of the decline in problem recognition between May 1983 and January 1985, it seems likely that it is a result of signing of the agreement. All

of the decline in problem recognition occurred within the Constrained Public where the proportion of respondents saying '1997' was Hong Kong's most important problem fell from 34.9 percent in May 1983 to 27.9 percent in January 1985 ( $\chi^2 = 6.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests that a substantial proportion of the Constrained respondents availed themselves of the opportunity to reduce the conflict between their recognition of the problem and their perceived inability to do anything about it by redefining the situation and eliminating the problem. The proportional decline in the Constrained Public (7.0%) was not quite matched by the increase in the size of Fatalistic Public (5.2%) from 27.0 to 32.2 percent. Note that the shifts in proportions occur within the two high constraint perception publics. There was no change in the proportions of Problem Facers and Routines during the 20 months between the two studies.

There are also significant differences in terms of amount of attention respondents reported paying to the '1997' question. Of those reporting a high level of personal involvement, proportionally more Problem Facers (90.0%) than Fatalists (70.4%) reported paying at least some attention to news about '1997.' Eight in ten Constrained (80.4%) and 84.7 percent of the Routines reported paying at least some attention to news about '1997.' There were no differences in attention level among low involvement groups. Overall, 62.9 percent of the low involvement respondents said they paid at least some attention to '1997' news.

Slightly more than six in ten (65.3%) high involvement respondents reported reading at least some of the Joint Declaration, but there were no significant differences among opinion publics. There is a significant difference among Publics in the low involvement condition. More than eight in ten of the Routines (82.5%) reported reading some of the agreement while

just 49.3 percent of the Fatalists reported doing so. Nearly seven in ten of the Problem Facers (68.5%) and 61.4 percent of the Constrained group also reported reading at least some of the document.

#### Communication Utility

The analysis of variance indicated no between-groups differences in levels of extrinsic utility for the four opinion publics. However, there was a significant difference between-groups difference ( $F=12.13, p < .01$ ) between those respondents who reported a high level of personal involvement (5.39) and those low on personal involvement (5.05). The interaction between opinion public and level of involvement was not significant. Thus, it appears that those who feel they have a greater stake in the '1997' question are more likely to read newspapers and watch TV news for decision-making information than are those who feel less personal involvement with the issue. These outcomes are identical to those of the May 1983 study.

In contrast to the May outcomes, there was a significant interaction between opinion public membership and level of involvement for intrinsic utility (Table 14). Neither the opinion public nor involvement group main effects was significant. Low involvement Constrained respondents had the highest intrinsic utility score (9.38) while Problem Facers in the high involvement condition had to lowest intrinsic utility score (8.11).

The fact that the primary difference occurred between the two groups of problem recognizers suggests that respondents functioning under high perceived constraint may seek entertaining media content because it can provide relief from frustrations of problem/constraint recognition. In a sense, high use of entertaining media content may be a form of escape from an unwelcome contingency situation. On the other hand, Problem Facers show significantly less interest in entertaining media content. Recall however,

Table 13. Mean scores on extrinsic and intrinsic utility and relevance of government information for high and low involvement respondents in each opinion public.

|                 | Extrinsic      |      |      | Intrinsic     |      |      | Relevance      |      |      |
|-----------------|----------------|------|------|---------------|------|------|----------------|------|------|
|                 | Involvement    |      |      | Involvement   |      |      | Involvement    |      |      |
|                 | High           | Low  | Mean | High          | Low  | Mean | High           | Low  | Mean |
| Opinion Public  |                |      |      |               |      |      |                |      |      |
| Constrained     | 5.25           | 5.12 | 5.16 | 8.66          | 9.38 | 8.93 | 5.17           | 4.61 | 4.98 |
| Problem Facers  | 5.61           | 5.17 | 5.48 | 8.11          | 8.83 | 8.33 | 5.46           | 5.00 | 5.32 |
| Fatalistic      | 5.31           | 4.91 | 5.14 | 8.93          | 8.29 | 8.65 | 5.06           | 4.62 | 4.87 |
| Routines        | 5.37           | 5.11 | 5.27 | 8.62          | 8.33 | 8.51 | 5.21           | 5.21 | 5.21 |
| Mean            | 5.39           | 5.05 | 5.22 | 8.58          | 8.71 | 8.64 | 5.22           | 4.87 | 5.05 |
| Interaction F = | 0.21, n.s.     |      |      | 3.17, p < .05 |      |      | 0.42, n.s.     |      |      |
| Involvement F = | 12.13, p < .05 |      |      | 0.14, n.s.    |      |      | 3.48, p < .05  |      |      |
| Public F =      | 2.32, n.s.     |      |      | 1.60, n.s.    |      |      | 12.56, p < .05 |      |      |

that Problem Facers are no more likely to see media content with extrinsic utility than are the other opinion publics. Problem Facers do not see the media as sources of useful information to any greater extent than do other opinion publics. All groups scored high on extrinsic utility (mean = 5.22, maximum = 6.0).

Perceived relevance of information about what the government is doing and plans to do is related to both opinion public membership and level of involvement. As with extrinsic utility, those with high involvement scored higher in relevance (5.22) than did those with low involvement (4.87). And, respondents in the Problem Facer opinion public scored significantly higher (5.32) on relevance than did the Fatalistics (4.87). The interaction of opinion public and involvement was not significant. The theoretical

expectation of higher perceived relevance of information about government plans and actions was supported for both those with a high level of involvement and those with a high level of problem recognition and a low level of constraint recognition.

#### Interpersonal Communication and Media Use

The situational theory holds that people who feel a high level of involvement with a problem will engage in information seeking to a greater extent than will those who do not feel highly involved. Further, as discussed with regard to the February 1983 data, those who recognize the problem but who are low on constraint recognition will also exhibit higher levels of information seeking than will those who do not recognize the problem but are high on perceived constraint recognition.

As was the case with the February data, the interpersonal communication and magazine variables are used as indexes of information seeking while use of newspapers, television, and radio are considered indexes of passive information processing.

Table 15. Proportions reporting talking with others (high involvement condition).

| Opinion Public | Home | Work | Phone | Store |
|----------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Constrained    | 41.2 | 48.0 | 13.7  | 39.2  |
| Problem Facer  | 61.3 | 61.3 | 28.8  | 55.0  |
| Fatalistic     | 37.0 | 41.7 | 13.0  | 34.3  |
| Routines       | 46.6 | 54.8 | 20.5  | 47.9  |

Chi squared = 11.93 7.85 9.62 9.39

The proportions of respondents in each opinion public who reported interpersonal communication about '1997' are given in Table 15. These data

are only for respondents who reported the problem was very important for them and their families (high involvement). In all four situations proportionally more Problem Facers than Fatalistic respondents reported interpersonal communication about the '1997' problem. Perhaps most interesting are the figures reporting talking about '1997' on the telephone. It would not seem unusual to discuss the issues at home with one's family or at work with one's colleagues, and the overall proportions indicated much higher levels of discussion in those situations than in the telephone situation. More than one in four (28.8%) of the Problem Facers reported discussing the situation on the telephone. Fewer than half as many Fatalistic respondents (13.0%) reported talking about '1997' on the phone. This suggests a high level of interest in the issue and may represent a substantial amount of information seeking at the interpersonal level.

There were no differences among opinion publics in either high or low involvement conditions in the proportions reporting reading a newspaper today, watching television news today, or reading a magazine today. Further, there was no difference among opinion publics in either involvement condition in frequency of reading newspapers. Nearly seven in ten respondents at both levels of involvement (67.7%) reported reading a newspaper every day. However, among respondents reporting a high level of personal involvement, proportionally more Problem Facers (56.3%) than Constrained respondents (33.3%) reported listening to radio news today.

#### Opinions About The Agreement

Respondents were asked how they felt the agreement would affect eight areas of Hong Kong life ranging from maintenance of Hong Kong's economic strength to support for medical services. Differences were found only for two areas, economic strength (Table 16) and political stability (Table 17),

Table 16. Will agreement keep Hong Kong economically strong (high involvement respondents)?

| Opinion Public |   | No   | Not Sure | Yes  | Total |
|----------------|---|------|----------|------|-------|
| Constrained    | n | 18   | 27       | 56   | 101   |
|                | % | 17.8 | 26.7     | 55.4 | 27.9  |
| Problem Facers | n | 17   | 16       | 47   | 80    |
|                | % | 21.3 | 20.0     | 58.8 | 22.1  |
| Fatalistic     | n | 10   | 35       | 63   | 108   |
|                | % | 9.3  | 32.4     | 58.3 | 29.8  |
| Routine        | n | 6    | 13       | 54   | 73    |
|                | % | 8.2  | 17.8     | 74.0 | 20.2  |
| Total          | n | 51   | 91       | 220  | 362   |
|                | % | 14.1 | 25.1     | 60.8 | 100.0 |

Chi squared = 14.98, df=6, p < .05

the two topics most reported in the press. And, these differences occurred only among those with a high level of personal involvement. In both areas, more than seven in ten of the Routine public said the Agreement would keep Hong Kong economically strong (74.0%) and politically stable (75.3%). Only 55.4 percent of the Constrained public reported believing the Agreement would keep Hong Kong economically strong as did 58.8 percent of the Problem Facers and 58.3 percent of the Fataals. Two Problem Facers in ten (21.3%) said that the Agreement would not keep Hong Kong economically strong compared with only eight in 100 of the Routines (8.2%).

Regarding political stability, 75.3 percent of the Routines compared with only 58.8 percent of the Problem Facers said the agreement would keep Hong Kong politically stable. Just over six in ten of the Constrained (62.4%) and the Fataals (63.9%) said they believed political stability would be maintained. Six in ten of all low involvement respondents said

Table 17. Will agreement keep Hong Kong politically stable (high involvement respondents)?

| Opinion Public |   | No   | Not Sure | Yes  | Total |
|----------------|---|------|----------|------|-------|
| Constrained    | n | 21   | 17       | 63   | 101   |
|                | % | 20.8 | 16.8     | 62.4 | 27.9  |
| Problem Facer  | n | 12   | 21       | 47   | 80    |
|                | % | 15.0 | 26.3     | 58.8 | 22.1  |
| Fatalistic     | n | 8    | 31       | 69   | 108   |
|                | % | 7.4  | 28.7     | 63.9 | 29.8  |
| Routine        | n | 5    | 13       | 55   | 73    |
|                | % | 6.8  | 17.8     | 75.3 | 20.2  |
| Total          | n | 46   | 82       | 234  | 362   |
|                | % | 12.7 | 22.7     | 64.6 | 100.0 |

Chi squared = 16.17, df=6, p < .05

the agreement would keep Hong Kong economically strong (60.7%) and politically stable (61.6%). The question of political stability has been a major point of concern by both British and Chinese governments before and during the negotiations.

In the summer and fall of 1984, the Hong Kong Government published two papers entitled "The Further Development of Representative Government in Hong Kong." Whether or not these papers stimulated interest in greater self-government cannot be determined from these data. However, to explore opinions about elected officials, respondents were asked whether or not they believed the forthcoming (March 1985) District Board elections were more or less important than previous Board elections.

Again, differences among opinion publics were found only for those in the high involvement condition. Nearly eight in ten (78.2%) of the Problem Facers said the forthcoming elections were more important than earlier

District Board elections and none of the Problem Facers said they were less important. Just six in ten (60.0%) of the Fatalists said the March 1985 elections were more important; 3.2 percent said they were less important. About seven in ten of the Constrained (67.8%) and Routines (71.9%) said the forthcoming elections were more important than past elections while 6.3 percent of the Routines and 6.9 percent of the Constrained said they were less important than past Board elections.

#### Summary

These three studies explored the usefulness of Grunig's (1983) situational communication theory in assessing media use and interpersonal communication for information and opinions about the '1997' problem. The May 1983 and January 1985 studies also explored the relationships between the four opinion publics and three theoretical communication utility variables — extrinsic and intrinsic utility and the perceived relevance of information about government plans and actions. A fourth hypothesized variable, communicatory utility, did not appear in the factor structure.

Generally, the situational opinion publics proved useful in distinguishing among different levels of both active information seeking from interpersonal sources and magazines and passive information processing from newspapers, television, and radio. For the most part, proportionally more Problem Facers, those who were high on problem recognition and low on perceived constraint, sought information, especially from individuals with whom they had weak interpersonal ties.

There was no relationship between extrinsic utility and opinion public in either the May or January surveys. The relatively high mean score (5.22 on a scale of 2 to 6) suggests all four opinion publics look to the media

for information that will be useful. However, those in each opinion public who felt personally involved with the problem were more likely than were the less involved to report using media for useful information,

Intrinsic utility was not related to either opinion public or level of involvement in the May 1983 survey. In January 1985 there was a significant interaction between opinion public and level of involvement in which the low involved Constraineds had the highest mean intrinsic utility score (9.38) and the high involved Problem Facers had the lowest intrinsic utility score (8.11). One interpretation, following situational theory, is that over time the Constrained opinion public gave up trying to find a way out of its dilemma and reduced its use of media for problem-oriented information. This reduction could have been accompanied by an increase in consumption of entertainment content in the media. This interpretation is supported by the finding that there was a statistically significant decline in overall mean extrinsic utility score for the Constrained Public from May 1983 (5.43) to January 1985 (5.16;  $t = 2.18, p < .05$ ). There was no significant difference in extrinsic utility scores for the other opinion publics between the May and January surveys. Because intrinsic utility scores in the two surveys were based on different numbers of questionnaire items (Table 20), no tests of mean differences were attempted.

Fatalistic respondents, as expected from situational theory (see p. 21), reported the lowest levels of active information seeking and passive information processing. Routines exhibited low levels of information seeking but indicated high perceived helpfulness of newspapers and television news in understanding the '1997' problem. Routines were the most confident that the Sino-British Agreement would keep Hong Kong politically stable and economically strong (Tables 16 and 17). Overall, it appears that the findings fit reasonably well with the theoretical expectations.

## IMAGES OF THE FUTURE

The final study reported here takes a different approach to the '1997' problem. Two questions are considered. The first question asks: What do people think Hong Kong will be like after China regains control? Involved in that questions are matters of living conditions, such as housing, transportation, and public security; economic conditions including markets, investments, and employment; and political conditions including freedoms of speech and travel and control of the mass media. It seems reasonable to assume many, if not most, Hong Kong residents have beliefs about what life will be like under Beijing's control. It also seems likely there is more than one set of beliefs involved as it is unlikely that any one belief structure would suffice for a city as diverse as Hong Kong.

The second question asks: How do attitudes about the future change as a result of the intrusion of a major political event? The intervening event was the initialling of the Draft Agreement by representatives of Britain and China on 26 September 1984. Release of the details of the Agreement put an end to much speculation by outlining how the transfer of power would take place. It clearly ended wishful thinking that the transfer might not occur, at least not until long after '1997.' Involved here are questions about the structure of the attitudes and whether people became more positive or less positive about life in Hong Kong after the transfer of power.

Attitude, as the term is used here, refers to a hierarchy of belief statements. Each statement addresses a particular condition and could be prefaced with the words "I believe." This use of the term attitude fits closely with Rokeach's (1969) use of the term and is an ordering of belief statements along a continuum of acceptance and rejection, rather than the

more conventional point estimate and measure of dispersion, the mean score and its standard deviation. The exploration of the patterns and changes in these patterns should provide useful information about how a selected set of Hong Kong residents perceive the future.

To explore patterns of attitudes and attitude change toward the future of Hong Kong, 26 students, faculty, and clerks at The Chinese University of Hong Kong were asked to Q-sort 54 statements about the future. Each respondent sorted the statements twice, before and after Britain and China initialled the Draft Agreement of 26 September 1984. By using a panel it is possible to observe change in responses from the first to the second sort. However, because the conditions of the study do not apply the necessary controls, it will be impossible to directly attribute any observed attitude change to the content of the Draft Agreement.

The statements were developed from more than 1,300 responses to two open-ended questions asked during the November 1982 public opinion survey. Respondents were asked "What do you think would be some advantages of having Hong Kong administered by China?" and "What do you think would be some disadvantages of having Hong Kong administered by China?" Up to three responses were recorded for each question. The 498 responses listing advantages and the 848 responses giving disadvantages were coded into three categories — political, economic, and social.

From this universe of items, 54 statements were constructed to represent the totality of advantages and disadvantages. The statements form a 3 x 2 Fisherian matrix (political, economic, social by favorable and unfavorable) with nine statements in each cell. The statements are given in Table 19. Each respondent sorted the statements along an 11-point, quasi-normal continuum once prior to the signing of the Agreement and again following widespread media publicity about the content of the Agreement after it had

been initialled. These ipsitative response patterns from both time periods were submitted to principal axis factoring with rotation to Varimax criteria.

By including both sets of data in the same analysis it is possible to observe shifts from one attitude pattern to another between time periods. Respondents who sorted the statements in essentially the same pattern both before and after the initialling of the agreement will be found in the same factor at both times. Those who changed their response pattern will be found in different patterns. And, because each person is represented twice in the same matrix, the correlations between the first and second sorts can be compared.

The response patterns for each type were obtained by summing the products of weighted factor loadings for each person on a type and the raw score for each item and then summing across all individuals on each item. The distributions were then standardized to provide direct comparisons between types. For purposes of this analysis any item for which there was no z-score difference as great as plus or minus 1.0 across all types is defined as a Consensus Item. Strong agreement/disagreement with an item is defined as a z-score with an absolute value of 1.0 or more. Differences of 1.0 or more between Types on any statement will be treated as a substantial difference.

#### The Respondents

There are no apparent relationships between age, passport holding, sex type and whether the respondent is a student, clerk or faculty member. The respondents included 14 men and 12 women. Two of the men were faculty, one holds a U.S. passport. Three of the women were clerks at The Chinese University; the other respondents are students. Two women hold Portugese

(Macao) passports. Six others, three men and three women, reported holding British (Hong Kong) passports.

The factor analysis isolated three basic attitude patterns. Twelve respondents appear in Type I in both pre- and post-test. Type I is probably best described as Hopeful about the future. Of the 17 statements with which the strongly agree or strongly disagree, nine are favorable to China's administration of Hong Kong and eight are unfavorable. Five respondents appear in Type II in both time periods. These Optimists have the most favorable images of the future. Of the 18 statements with which the Optimists strongly agree or strongly disagree, 17 are favorable to China and only one is unfavorable. Four respondents appeared in Type III at both time periods. These Pessimists have the least favorable perceptions of life in Hong Kong under China's administration. Of 20 statements with which they strongly agree or strongly disagree, seven are favorable to China and 13 are unfavorable.

The remaining six respondents, all students, changed attitude type from pre- to post-test; two were women. One woman and two men shifted from Type I, Hopeful, to Type II, Optimist; one male shifted from Pessimist Type III to Optimist Type II. One woman shifted from the moderately favorable Hopeful Type I to the least favorable Type III, and one male made the opposite move from the least favorable to moderately favorable. Five of the six changers moved from less to more favorable positions while only one shifted from more to less favorable. Thus, in the final analysis there are 13 respondents in Type I, nine in Type II and four in Type III. It appears that the favorable content of the Agreement and the resulting publicity may have induced five of the initially doubtful to develop more favorable images of the future. As expected, more changers shifted from less to more favorable than from more to less favorable in their images of the future.

## Future Freedoms

The extent to which the three attitude types believe various freedoms will change for the average Hong Kong resident is given in Table 18.

Overall, Pessimistic Type III anticipates the most bleak future while Optimistic Type II appears to anticipate little change from the present system. The Hopeful Type I generally falls between the two more extreme types. It is interesting that the Hopeful Type I is the only one of the three to strongly feel that life will become less democratic after 1997. The other two types agree only slightly. Type I's global evaluation seems a bit inconsistent given its more modest responses to the other five items.

Type I also seems inconsistent in that it agrees fairly strongly that freedom of speech will be curtailed but does not feel that the city's newspapers will be shut down, that foreign publications will be banned, or that foreign pop culture in the mass media will be controlled. Apparently Type I appears to not see an association between freedom of speech and freedom of the media. An alternative explanation, of course, is that Type I may perceive newspapers primarily as entertainment. Or the Hopefuls may believe that newspapers will print only certain approved content.

Type II, the Optimist, shows none of the contradiction apparent in the response of Type I. Type II strongly disagrees with statements that freedom of speech will be curtailed, that newspapers will be shut down and foreign publications banned, or that foreign pop culture will be restricted. And, Type II disagrees slightly with the statement that freedom of travel will be restricted.

Type III, the Pessimist, believes strongly that Hong Kong residents will lose their freedom of speech after 1997. In an apparent anomaly, Pessimists disagree moderately with the statement that Hong Kong's newspapers will be closed, but they agree moderately with statements that foreign publications

Table 18. z-scores for each type on future freedom items.

| No. | Item Description  | z-score for Type |      |      |
|-----|---|------------------|------|------|
|     |   | I                | II   | III  |
| 10. | The people of Hong Kong will lose their freedom to travel to other countries after China regains control of Hong Kong.                            | -0.1             | -0.5 | 0.6  |
| 11. | The people of Hong Kong will lose their freedom of speech after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | 0.9              | -1.0 | 1.1  |
| 15. | Life will be even less democratic than it is now after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | 1.7              | 0.4  | 0.4  |
| 51. | Almost all of Hong Kong's newspapers will be shut down after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | -1.4             | -1.7 | -0.6 |
| 52. | Almost all foreign publications will be banned after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | -0.8             | -1.5 | 0.7  |
| 53. | Foreign popular culture in the movies and on radio and television will be banned or strictly controlled after China regains control of Hong Kong. | -0.5             | -0.9 | 0.7  |

will be banned and foreign pop culture will be banned or controlled. This suggests the Pessimists are distinguishing between locally produced and easily controlled media and imported publications. The Pessimists also feel, although only moderately, that Hong Kong residents' freedom of travel will be restricted.

## The Response Types

There are moderate, positive correlations between response patterns of Type I and both Type II (.43,  $p < .05$ ) and Type III (.46,  $p < .05$ ). The correlation between Types II and III is not significant (.11,  $p > .05$ ). The



three Types strongly agreed with these two statements that reflect the colonial status of Hong Kong.

4. An important benefit of China regaining control of Hong Kong is that Chinese will be ruling Chinese.
7. The people will feel united again after China regains control of Hong Kong.

Both items reflect political considerations and both are favorable to China's governing of Hong Kong. Both speak to the correction of historical inequities inflicted by foreigners. The two statements with which all types strongly disagreed are:

42. An advantage of administration by China is that almost all religious activity will be banned.
34. Most people who own property will lose almost everything they have after China regains control of Hong Kong.

While there are significant correlations between Types I and Types II and III there are also substantial differences.

Hopefuls vs. Optimists.— These types differ on 21 statements, nine about economics, six about politics, and six about social issues. The Hopefuls are more concerned about a declining Hong Kong economy than are the Optimists, and this difference is reflected in these two economics statements showing the greatest difference between the types. The Hopefuls agree with these statements; the Optimists disagree.

29. Many investors will take their money out of Hong Kong when China regains control.
35. Hong Kong will lose its status as an international financial center after China regains control.

The following two statements with which the Hopefuls agree and the Optimists disagree show the strongest differences between the two types on the political items.

11. The people of Hong Kong will lose their freedom of speech after China regains control of Hong Kong.
12. Many intellectuals will leave Hong Kong for other countries when China regains control of Hong Kong.

The greatest difference between Hopefuls and Optimists on social issues is on these two items. The Hopefuls disagree with item 40 and agree only moderately with item 44. The Optimists agree with item 40 and agree very strongly with item 44.

40. The legal system will be better for the Chinese residents of Hong Kong after China regains control.
44. There will be a big improvement in support for the traditional Chinese arts and culture after China regains control of Hong Kong.

What the Optimists really mean by their agreement with item 40 is not easy to guess. Hong Kong's current legal system is British. The financial structure is built on this British legal system. If the legal system is changed to somehow be more "favorable" to the Chinese residents of Hong Kong, the affect on the financial system may not at all be what these Optimists expect. The Optimists may not recognize the ramifications of changes in the legal system on the economic system.

Hopefuls vs. Pessimists.— Of the 18 statements which most clearly differentiate Types I and III, nine are political items, five are economic items and four reflect social considerations. The two political items with the greatest difference between Hopefuls and Pessimists are:

2. Regaining control over Hong Kong will restore China's dignity.
14. There will be an increase in corruption among officials after China regains control of Hong Kong.

The Hopefuls agree very strongly with item 2. while the Pessimists express no opinion. The Pessimists disagree strongly with item 14. while the Optimists, in an apparent contradiction, agree moderately. Whether the

Pessimists feel current corruption levels are too high to be exceeded or that there will be greater control of corrupt practices cannot be determined from these data.

On economics, the Hopefuls strongly disagree with item 21 while the Pessimists agree only slightly. Pessimists disagree strongly with item 26 while Hopefuls agree only moderately.

21. The gap between the rich and the poor will be almost completely eliminated after China regains control of Hong Kong.

26. There will be more food available after China regains control of Hong Kong.

It appears from the responses to item 21 that the Hopefuls have dreams of something more favorable for themselves than economic equality. As far as item 26 is concerned, Hong Kong imports almost all of its food from China, and perhaps the Hopefuls anticipated even greater shipments than are now made. The two social items that show the greatest difference between Hopefuls and Pessimists are ones with which the Hopefuls disagree and the Pessimists agree.

41. An important benefit of China's control of Hong Kong will be the closing of a lot of bars, nightclubs, and other undesirable businesses.

52. Almost all foreign publications will be banned after China regains control of Hong Kong.

There are a great many bars and nightclubs in Hong Kong. Many of them depend heavily on the tourist trade. The Pessimists also agree strongly with the statement that:

46. There will be less entertainment for most people after China regains control of Hong Kong.

For the Pessimists this position is consistent with the anticipated control of the mass media after 1997. (See items 52 and 53, Table 19.)

Optimists vs. Pessimists.— Of the 23 statements that differentiate

these two attitude types, 10 are political items, six are economic, and seven are social. Generally it appears that the Optimists have greater hope on the political items while the Pessimists record stronger favorable reactions to China along economic lines. The latter perhaps on the assumption that China will maintain Hong Kong's economy for China's own benefit, if for no other reason. The two political statements with the greatest differentiation between types are given below. The Optimists agree very strongly with item 2., but Pessimists express no opinion. Optimists agree only slightly with item 9. while Pessimists disagree very strongly.

2. Regaining control over Hong Kong will restore China's dignity.

9. Hong Kong's people will adjust easily to administration by Chinese authorities.

The two economics items that reflect the greatest differences between the Optimists and the Pessimists are ones with which the Optimists agree only moderately but with which the Pessimists disagree strongly.

24. Hong Kong will be more prosperous under China's planned economic policies.

26. There will be more food available after China regains control of Hong Kong.

Given the known economic disparity between Hong Kong and China, it is difficult to imagine agreement with either item. However, the Optimists also strongly agree with other statements indicating Hong Kong will be economically stronger after 1997 (see items 27, 35, and 36, Table 19). The social statements showing the greatest differences between Optimists and Pessimists are:

40. The legal system will be better for the Chinese residents of Hong Kong after China regains control.

52. Almost all foreign publications will be banned after China regains control of Hong Kong.

The Optimists agree with item 40 and strongly disagree with item 52. The Pessimists strongly disagree with item 40 and agree with item 52.

#### Conclusions

As expected, the primary response pattern (13 of 26 respondents: 23.8% of the variance) is an ambiguous pattern. This conclusion is based on both the number of favorable and unfavorable items Type I felt strongly about and the apparent internal contradictions in the pattern such as strong agreement that life would become less democratic and that freedom of speech would be lost but that the media would not be strictly regulated.

This pattern suggests that there is considerable indecision as to what the future holds. Yet, one can (must) hope for the best, which would be the fulfillment of the Agreement and maintenance of the status quo. The contradictory beliefs in the Hopeful's attitude pattern quite likely induces substantial psychological discomfort. One way to reduce that discomfort is to change one's belief pattern, which is what six of the respondents did.

Five of the six changers shifted from less to more favorable patterns. If one holds contradictory beliefs about the future one can resolve the conflict by accepting at face value the language of the Agreement. It is not difficult to imagine why five of six changers opted for attitude revisions depicting a more desirable future. Why then did the one individual move from a more to a less favorable position? The reasons for this change are far less clear, but perhaps the document's language is too good to be true.

Table 19. Item descriptions and z-scores for each attitude type.

| Item Description  | Type |      |      |
|---|------|------|------|
|   | I    | II   | III  |
| 1. (PF) An advantage of having China administer Hong Kong is that we will get rid of the British.   | 0.5  | 1.1  | -1.1 |
| 2. (PF) Regaining control over Hong Kong will restore China's dignity.  | 2.3  | 2.3  | -0.0 |
| 3. (PF) Hong Kong will become a classless society after China regains control.  | -2.3 | -0.8 | -0.3 |
| 4. (PF) An important benefit of China regaining control of Hong Kong is that Chinese will be ruling Chinese.  | 1.8  | 1.5  | 2.1  |
| 5. (PF) An important benefit of China regaining control of Hong Kong is that the unequal treaties will be eliminated.   | 1.5  | 2.3  | 0.1  |
| 6. (PF) There will be less corruption among officials after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | -1.2 | 0.2  | -0.3 |
| 7. (PF) The people will feel united again after China regains control of Hong Kong  | 0.7  | 1.5  | 1.6  |
| 8. (PF) Life will be less tense for the average worker after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | 0.0  | 0.4  | 0.5  |
| 9. (PF) Hong Kong's people will adjust easily to administration by Chinese authorities.   | -0.9 | 0.4  | -2.0 |
| 10. (PU) The people of Hong Kong will lose their freedom to travel to other countries after China regains control of Hong Kong.                                 | -0.1 | -0.5 | 0.6  |
| 11. (PU) The people of Hong Kong will lose their freedom of speech after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | 0.9  | -1.0 | 1.1  |
| 12. (PU) Many intellectuals will leave Hong Kong for other countries when China regains control of Hong Kong.   | 1.7  | -0.7 | 0.9  |
| 13. (PU) The people of Hong Kong will have a very difficult time adjusting to the authoritarian system China will impose after it regains control of Hong Kong. | 0.9  | 0.2  | 1.3  |
| 14. (PU) There will be an increase in corruption among officials after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | 0.7  | 0.0  | -1.6 |

## Item Descriptions continued

| Item Description   | Type |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|
|  | I    | II   | III  |
| 15. (PU) Life will be even less democratic than it is now after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | 1.7  | 0.4  | 0.4  |
| 16. (PU) Many of today's leaders in education, business, and public affairs will be sent to school to be 're-educated' after China regains control of Hong Kong. | -0.6 | -1.4 | -0.5 |
| 17. (PU) Hong Kong's relations with Macau will be less friendly after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | -0.9 | -0.4 | 0.2  |
| 18. (PU) Hong Kong's relations with Taiwan will be broken off after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | 0.2  | 0.4  | 1.4  |
| 19. (EF) The poor people won't have to work so hard after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | -1.1 | -0.5 | -0.2 |
| 20. (EF) All foreign exploitation of the people will be eliminated after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | -0.3 | 0.2  | -0.7 |
| 21. (EF) The gap between the rich and the poor will be almost completely eliminated after China regains control of Hong Kong.                                    | -2.1 | -0.6 | 0.4  |
| 22. (EF) There will be less job discrimination after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | 0.1  | 0.3  | -0.0 |
| 23. (EF) There will be less unemployment for the workers after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | -0.4 | 0.7  | 0.6  |
| 24. (EF) Hong Kong will be more prosperous under China's planned economic policies.  | -1.0 | 0.7  | -2.1 |
| 25. (EF) Prices for most things people buy will be lower after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | -0.5 | 0.3  | -0.0 |
| 26. (EF) There will be more food available after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | 0.6  | 1.4  | -1.3 |
| 27. (EF) As part of China, Hong Kong will be in a stronger position to negotiate with foreign countries over trade conditions.                                   | 0.1  | 1.2  | 0.3  |
| 28. (EU) Working conditions for most people will get worse after China regains control of Hong Kong because China lacks the necessary management skills.         | 0.3  | -0.3 | -0.3 |

## Item Descriptions continued.

| Item Description  | Type |      |      |
|---|------|------|------|
|   | I    | II   | III  |
| 29. (EU) Many investors will take their money out of Hong Kong when China regains control.  | 1.6  | -0.8 | 1.6  |
| 30. (EU) There will be a decline in foreign investment in Hong Kong after China regains control.  | 1.1  | -0.6 | 1.0  |
| 31. (EU) Most people will have fewer material things after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | 0.1  | -0.4 | 0.3  |
| 32. (EU) Many skilled workers will leave Hong Kong for other countries after China regains control.   | 0.8  | -0.7 | 1.0  |
| 33. (EU) China's unstable policies will result in a decline in Hong Kong's trade with the rest of the world.                                      | 1.4  | 0.6  | -0.0 |
| 34. (EU) Most people who own property will lose almost everything they have after China regains control of Hong Kong.                             | -1.5 | -2.0 | -1.9 |
| 35. (EU) Hong Kong will lose its status as an international financial center after China regains control.   | 0.7  | -1.2 | 0.8  |
| 36. (EU) There will be a big decline in Hong Kong's technological development after China regains control.  | -0.1 | -1.2 | -1.0 |
| 37. (SF) There will be better educational opportunities for the poor people after China regains control of Hong Kong.                             | -0.2 | 0.5  | -0.0 |
| 38. (SF) There will be better public order and less crime after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | -0.0 | 1.2  | 0.5  |
| 39. (SF) There will be better housing and health care for most people after China regains control of Hong Kong.                                   | -0.3 | 0.3  | -0.7 |
| 40. (SF) The legal system will be better for the Chinese residents of Hong Kong after China regains control.                                      | -0.8 | 0.9  | -1.6 |
| 41. (SF) An important benefit of China's control of Hong Kong will be the closing of a lot of bars, nightclubs, and other undesirable businesses. | -0.5 | 0.7  | 1.4  |
| 42. (SF) An advantage of administration by China is that almost all religious activity will be banned.  | -1.4 | -1.0 | -1.0 |

## NOTES

Item Descriptions continued.

| Item Description  | Type |      |      |
|---|------|------|------|
|   | I    | II   | III  |
| 43. (SF) There will be a big improvement in public transportation after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | -0.5 | 0.4  | -1.5 |
| 44. (SF) There will be a big improvement in support for the traditional Chinese arts and culture after China regains control of Hong Kong.                              | 0.8  | 2.2  | 0.8  |
| 45. (SF) Strict enforcement of birth control regulations will be an advantage of having China regain control of Hong Kong.  | -0.9 | -0.2 | -0.5 |
| 46. (SU) There will be less entertainment for most people after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | 0.2  | 0.1  | 1.1  |
| 47. (SU) There will be a big increase in people coming from the mainland making Hong Kong even more crowded after China regains control of Hong Kong.                   | 0.1  | -0.9 | -0.8 |
| 48. (SU) A lot of people will be sent back to the mainland to work after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | -1.1 | -1.2 | -0.5 |
| 49. (SU) Housing conditions will be even worse than they are now after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | -0.0 | -0.5 | -0.4 |
| 50. (SU) The quality of education at all levels will decline after China regains control of Hong Kong.  | -0.1 | -0.8 | -1.2 |
| 51. (SU) Almost all of Hong Kong's newspapers will be shut down after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | -1.4 | -1.7 | -0.8 |
| 52. (SU) Almost all foreign publications will be banned after China regains control of Hong Kong.   | -0.8 | -1.5 | 0.7  |
| 53. (SU) Foreign popular culture in the movies and on radio and television will be banned or strictly controlled after China regains control of Hong Kong.              | -0.5 | -0.9 | 0.7  |
| 54. (SU) Education in the arts, humanities, and social sciences will be required to fit the communist model of social realism after China regains control of Hong Kong. | 0.8  | -0.3 | 0.9  |

1. Indications as to the future of Hong Kong were raised at least three times during 1979. Hua Kuo-feng, then Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and Premier of China, told a press conference in Beijing in October 1979 that the problem of the lease of the New Territories of Hong Kong would be solved through negotiation between British and Chinese governments. Deng Xiaoping, then vice premier of China, told Sir Murray MacLehose, Governor of Hong Kong, during an official visit in 1979 that "Hong Kong investors can be at ease." However, Deng also asserted that China would not recognize any unequal treaties signed by the Manchurian regime in the 19th Century. Shortly after that, Huan Hua, then foreign minister of China, told a press conference in London that China would consider the interests of the Hong Kong investors when the British Colony is returned to China in 1997. (SCM Post January 23, 1986).

2. The Heng Seng Index fell from 1,118 points on September 20, 1982, to 676.3 points on December 2, a 442-point drop and a record low (The 1990s Magazine October 1982, p. 54).

3. The three studies reported next are based on data collected via telephone interviews from cross-section samples of Hong Kong residents. Telephone numbers were drawn using interval procedures from the three Hong Kong residential telephone books. Interviewers were students in the Department of Journalism and Communication who had been trained in interviewing techniques.

4. Edelman's (1984) classification scheme contains six categories three of which are collapsed in this analysis because there were too few instances to warrant separate coding and are combined in the "other"

classification. The categories not used and their definitions are:

a. Institutional breakdown.— Institutions such as the family, the church, education, and the mass media, among others, might not function adequately. All breakdowns represent a loss of value but on an institutional, not individual, level.

b. Conflict.— This could reside within the individual as the person attempts to make a choice among alternatives, or it could be the perception by the individual of social conflict. Trade problems and the nuclear arms race are examples of perceived social conflicts.

c. Creating alternatives.— This would be a situation in which the individual was inventing his/her own alternatives.

5. A critical issue in the construction of indicies is whether or not they can be reproduced meaningfully within different data sets collected at different points in time. Even more crucial in the present studies is the question of whether or not the indicies can be reproduced in a cultural setting different from the one in which they were developed. The political efficacy, communication utility, and relevance variables can be used to represent their constructs only if the questions upon which they are based consistently cluster together. Table 20 below reports the factor structures for the efficacy, utility, and relevance variables from the May 1983 and January 1985 studies.

The structures indicate that the efficacy, extrinsic utility, intrinsic utility, and relevance indicies are usable variables in both studies. The communicatory utility variable, defined by the TALK item is not a separate variable. Perhaps if more questions had been used to define it, it too would have been reproducible. One item, EXCITEWO (watch television news for the excitement of what is going on in the world) was not used in the 1983 survey. The first three items are political efficacy; items four, five,

six, and seven are intrinsic utility; items eight and nine are extrinsic utility; and items 10 and 11 are information relevance.

Table 20. Oblique (Direct Oblimin) factor structures for political efficacy, communication utility, and information relevance.

| Variable | May 1983           |      |      |      | January 1985 |      |      |      |
|----------|--------------------|------|------|------|--------------|------|------|------|
|          | 1                  | 2    | 3    | 4    | 1            | 2    | 3    | 4    |
| PROFIT   | -.02               | .12  | .38  | .02  | -.10         | .07  | -.02 | .38  |
| NOINFL   | -.12               | -.16 | .61  | -.17 | -.07         | .04  | .06  | .37  |
| WASTE    | -.00               | .21  | .41  | .14  | -.17         | .04  | -.14 | .31  |
| EXCITEHK | .04                | .29  | .13  | .07  | -.08         | .74  | -.07 | .10  |
| EXCITEWO | (not used in 1983) |      |      |      | .02          | .77  | .08  | .08  |
| RELAX    | .05                | .40  | .10  | -.04 | -.07         | .26  | -.05 | .25  |
| TALK     | -.02               | .68  | .07  | -.03 | .08          | .28  | .26  | .22  |
| ISSUE    | .18                | .02  | .05  | -.55 | .18          | -.03 | .55  | -.03 |
| GOVPLAN  | .34                | .09  | -.06 | -.49 | .42          | .00  | .56  | -.15 |
| KNOW     | .63                | -.04 | -.07 | -.23 | .77          | .02  | .25  | -.26 |
| PKNOW    | .59                | .07  | -.06 | -.20 | .69          | -.09 | .29  | -.13 |

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## 訪問港人在九七危機中的傳媒運用與資訊需要

(中文摘要)

本計劃對香港九七問題的探討共進行了六項研究：一項報章內容分析、四次電話訪問調查及一項重覆深入訪問來分析民意與傳媒運用的關係。

1982年秋對四份不同政治立場的報章——偏左的大公報、偏右的香港時報和較中立的南華早報、星島日報進行了內容分析，目的是了解它們在直接新聞報導、社論、專欄和讀者來函四方面有關九七問題的資料來源及着眼點。四份報章在9月1日至12月31日期間僅有398項涉及九七問題的報導，反映了香港前途問題在當時仍未受到廣泛的關注。內容分析的結果亦顯示四份報章無論在資料來源或着眼點上均非常相似——以報導官方發表及沒有註明來源的新聞為主；重點則置於如何維持香港的經濟繁榮。

82年11月進行的首次電話訪問亦同樣顯示一般市民仍未對九七問題產生關注。在1219位受訪者中，近八成沒有留意九七的新聞報導。他們大部份是從較中立的報章報導獲得有關九七問題的資料，其次是從電視，較少從電台、雜誌及他人交談。其中女性較留意和思考九七問題；男性則較多與他人談及九七問題和對中英協議有較大的信心。

83年2月、83年5月及85年1月進行的三次電話訪問主要是利用 Grunig 的處境傳訊理論來分析市民對九七問題的意見、個人的置身程度與傳媒運用及人際傳訊之間的關係。首先，基於受訪者是否視九七為問題和是否看到解決的方法兩方面而分為四類型的意見羣體——“感受限制者”、“面對問題者”、“認命者”及“常規者”；其次，傳訊的功能亦劃分為“外在”、“內在”及“訊息相關”三種。

83年2月的調查結果顯示在516位受訪者中，有四成屬“常規者”，近四成是“認命者”，而“面對問題者”及“感受限制者”各只略超一成。問及他們心目中香港最重要的問題時，只有23.2%認為是九七問題，其中大部份“面對問題者”及“感受限制者”認為九七的問題在於“處境的不明確”；而大多數“認命者”和“常規者”則認為是“價值的喪失”。此外，個人置身程度較高者較多與他人談及九七的問題；在四類型意見羣體中，“面對問題者”表現的傳訊程度最高——包括被動的“訊息處理”及主動的“訊息尋求”；“認命者”則是最低。

83年5月的調查，在504位受訪者中，有三成半屬“感受限制者”、近三成是“認命者”、而“面對問題者”及“常規者”則各略少於二成。問及他們九七問題的重要程度時，有五成認為九七問題是一重要的問題；逾四成，尤其是“面

對問題者”並視之為個人與家庭的問題。結果顯示雖然“面對問題者”是較重視傳媒的“訊息相關”，但總體上，不同意見羣體與他們重視的傳媒功能之變項並無顯著的相關；然而，個人置身程度較高者則如預期般較重視傳媒的“外在”及“訊息相關”等方面的功能。

85年1月的調查，在584位受訪者中，逾三成是“認命者”、近三成是“感受限制者”、而“面對問題者”及“常規者”則各約佔二成。結果顯示三分之二的受訪者已認為九七是一重要的問題，但他們對九七問題的興趣已比83年5月時為低。然而，他們大多數仍有留意有關九七的新聞和中英聯合聲明的內容。意見羣體的類型雖與傳媒的“外在”功能無明顯的相關，然輔以個人置身程度的因素後，則與“內在”功能顯出相關，其中以置身程度最低的“感受限制者”最傾向於重視傳媒的“內在”功能。而個人置身程度較高者是較重視傳媒的“外在”及“訊息相關”的功能。對中英協議能維持香港的經濟繁榮及政治穩定之意見上，“常規者”最有信心，“面對問題者”最沒有信心。

於84年9月中英草簽前及後進行的重訪法，目的是分析26位受訪者對54項有關香港前途有利及不利之設想命題的意見，以探討他們對香港前途之態度及態度的轉變。透過因子分析，受訪者可歸納為三類：“抱希望者”、“樂觀者”及“悲觀者”。結果顯示大部份的受訪者在測試前後的態度都保持不變——“抱希望者”有12位，“樂觀者”有5位，“悲觀者”有4位；至於態度在測試前後有轉變的共6位，其中5位對香港前途的看法轉好。但整體上，受訪者對未來的看法是相當含糊和有內在的矛盾，例如“抱希望者”會一方面認為1997年以後港人會喪失言論自由，但另一方面又不認為大眾傳媒會被嚴格管制！此現象大抵可反映出香港的未來對受訪者而言，仍僅是一模糊不確的揣測。