

Political Participation in Asia - The Case of Democratic Taiwan

by

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Abstract

Widespread citizen participation is a hallmark of democratic governance. Without extensive public engagement, a democracy lacks vitality, the legitimacy of the political order is problematic and the promise of political life remains unfulfilled (e.g., Almond and Verba 1963; Pateman, 1970; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Barber, 1984; Dalton 2009). Previous studies have demonstrated that participatory acts vary along a number of dimensions, and even that acts having similar dimensional profiles would constitute distinct modes of participation (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1971, 1978; Verba, et al., 1973). For instance, electoral campaigning was thought to encompass a variety of behaviors, including working for a candidate or party, trying to persuade someone how to vote, and making a campaign contribution. As various types of participation have been demonstrated in western democracies, this paper uses variables those are convertible to previous studies to delineate Taiwan's political participation. We confirm that participating in protest or other activities is not a substitution for voting, but rather facilitates Taiwan citizens to present their opinions by performing confirmatory factor analyses of participation items from the 2005 and the 2010 Asia Barometer Survey (ABS). We also find that a divided mind set, aggressive and passive citizen, may provide an explanation as measure of political participation motivation.

Key Words: Political Participation; Confirmatory Factor Analysis; Asian Barometer Survey

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Introduction

How do people in Asian new democracies engage in political activities? Do they engage in politics the same way as citizens in western advanced democracies? Undoubtedly, widespread citizen participation is a hallmark of democratic governance. Without extensive public engagement, a democracy lacks vitality, the legitimacy of the political order is problematic and the promise of political life remains unfulfilled (e.g., Almond and Verba 1963; Pateman, 1970; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Barber, 1984; Dalton 2009). Over the past several decades, alternative explanations of various types of citizen participation have been investigated in major studies conducted in Western democracies. However, much remains to be learned about the structure and determinants of citizen participation in developing countries, and similarities and differences in the nature and etiology of civic engagement in mature and emerging democracies remain to be delineated. Accordingly, this paper aims to explore how people in new democracies voice their opinions and whether new and mature democracies are alike.

In order to clarify the questions, this study analyzes data from Asian Barometer Survey (ABS 2005 and ABS 2010), using structural equation models that incorporate measurement error, specify multiple dimensions for the citizens' attitude toward political participation, and examine the political participation activities and outcomes

jointly. Results show that citizens' attitudes toward political participation incorporate with previous studies in other western democracies and that dimensions within each approach exhibit relationships with outcomes that differ in magnitude and direction.

I first employ confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (e.g. Bollen, 1989), and specify a five-factor model of political participation with separate, but inter-related factors for political contacting, protests, party activities, voting, and community activities (see Clarke et al., 2009 Ch.7). Using the 2005 and the 2010 Asian Barometer Survey data, this paper assumes that various types of political participation in Taiwan are mutual influenced. In addition, a second order model is used to demonstrate whether the attitude toward political participation is derived from two different mindsets, namely aggressive participation and passive participation.

In this article we propose to test previous models demonstrated in western democracies (Clarke et al, 2009.) to Taiwan. First, we review existing literatures on multi-dimensional political participation and explain how we derive the modes of political activities in the Taiwan context. Second, we hypothesize that engaging in politics in Taiwan is similar to in other advanced democracies by proposing a similar set of dimensions from which to derive the modes of political activities in Taiwan. Third, given the range of participatory activities/items included in our analysis, which is based on Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) 2005 and 2010 data set, we provide

empirical evidence for different types of participation by using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), a more methodologically appropriate test for the existence of modes of participation. In particular, we find that all types of political participation other than voting are not substitutions for election, but rather another way for Taiwan citizens to voice. Finally, we discuss these different types of political participation in Taiwan from a comparative perspective. Given our findings, we argue that citizens' attitudes toward political participation in new democracies, such as Taiwan, may be very similar to what we have seen in western democracies.

Literature Review: Theoretical Motivation and Previous Research

Preparatory to studying political participation in Taiwan in comparative perspective with Western democracies, I first review key aspects of the theoretical foundation of studies of civic engagement in those countries.

Two major theoretical perspectives, the 'elite competition' and 'participatory citizenship' theories, have guided much of the research on voting turnout and other forms of political participation in mature democracies (for useful summaries, see Held 1996; Dalton 2002). The elite competition theory is associated with the 'responsible government' school of thought (e.g. Almond and Verba 1963) and its core ideas are modern governments should be, or are necessarily, dominated by political elites. Citizen participation in such political systems is episodic and circumscribed.

According to the elite competition theory, limited citizen involvement is an adequate and appropriate method for ensuring that a democracy will have stable and effective government that is responsive to public needs and demands.

In contrast to the elite competition theory, the participatory citizenship theory contends that a defining characteristic of democracy should be ‘untidy’ governance attendant upon widespread public involvement in governmental processes. “Strong” democracy requires extensive—not minimal—citizen involvement (e.g., Barber, 1984; Pateman, 1970; Macpherson, 1977; see also Clarke et al., 2004). Participatory democracy theorists argue that expansive citizen involvement in political activities of various kinds enhances the effectiveness, openness and responsiveness of government, while bolstering citizens’ political interest, knowledge, efficacy and trust (e.g., Pateman, 1970; Macpherson, 1977). Widespread participation is an integral component of a “virtuous circle” of responsive governance and informed citizenship (Norris, 2000).

The two democratic theories delineate a sharp contrast regarding the desirable and possible scope of citizen involvement. Despite these consequential differences between the two theories, there are still important areas of agreement between them. Perhaps most fundamentally, both theories conceptualize ‘political participation as a voluntary activity done by an individual acting alone or with others’ (Clarke et al,

2004: 219). Such participation involves activities by citizens aimed at influencing the action of government by expressing attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about the ends and means of public policy. In this regard, Brady (1999) writes that political participation has four main elements and encompasses a wide range of specific activities. These four elements are: actions, citizens, politics, and influence (Brady, 1999). In the proposed project, I focus on the first element, actions and their antecedents, by studying political participation in contemporary Taiwan in a comparative perspective.

Starting in the 1970s, scholars initiated systematic investigations of citizen involvement in a diverse range of non-electoral political activities. The canonical cross-national comparative study of this genre is Barnes et al. (1979). A frequent demarcation point for these inquiries is the distinction between types (or “modes”) of political participation that are ‘conventional’ or ‘unconventional’ (Verba and Nie, 1972; Barnes et al., 1979; Inglehart, 1983; Dalton, 2002; Clarke et al., 2004, 2009). In addition to election-centered activities such as voting and campaign work, conventional activities encompass various kinds of community involvement in inter-election periods. As Verba and Nie (1972) state, community involvement includes citizens trying to solve local problems via contacting public officials and working with friends and neighbors in policy-advocacy and problem-solving roles. These activities can be seen as ‘elite supportive’ because they are peaceful and

implicitly recognize the legitimacy of existing governmental structures and processes. In contrast, ‘unconventional’ participation may range from ‘mild’ forms, such as signing a petition or joining a boycott of goods and services, to ‘strong’ ones, such as marches and demonstrations and protests that involve violence against people and property.

Prior empirical research on public political participation has delineated the nature and incidence of various types of activities in mature democracies. A key finding is that citizen political participation is *multidimensional*. In the U.S. context, Verba and Nie (1972) identified four basic types of participation—voting, campaign activity, contacting, and cooperative activity. The empirical utility of this typology has been demonstrated in subsequent studies (e.g. Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Brady, 1999). In Canada, Kornberg and Clarke (1992) used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to identify four main types of political participation—verbal persuasion, campaign activity, non-confrontational protest and confrontational protest (Kornberg and Clarke, 1992). Similar findings have been reported by scholars working in Britain. For example, Stewart (1987) (see also March 1977) used CFA to identify three participation dimensions—electoral conventional, mild unconventional and strong unconventional—in the British survey data gathered as part of Barnes, Kaase et al. Political Action Study. In later work, Parry, Moyser, and Day (1992) claim that

political participation in Britain has six dimensions: voting, party campaigning, collective action, contacting, direct action and political violence.

To date, existing studies of mass political behavior in Taiwan and other new Asian democracies have emphasized the determinants of voting in periodic national elections. The paucity of *theoretically driven* survey data collections focused on the determinants of different types of citizen political participation limits scholars' ability to use existing data sources to test competing models' explanatory power. In Taiwan, existing research has focused heavily, albeit not exclusively, on electoral behavior (see, e.g. Dalton, Chu, and Shin, 2008). Two noteworthy ongoing projects are the Taiwanese component of the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) and the Taiwan's Election and Democratization Survey (TEDS). The ABS project was first launched in mid-2000. Since then, the ABS has been increasingly recognized as the region's first systematic and most careful comparative survey of attitudes and orientations toward political regimes, democracy, governance and economic reform. In the present context, it is important to note that *existing ABS surveys do not contain a number of the variables needed to test all the competing theoretical models of various forms of political participation demonstrated in mature democracies. Similarly, the TEDS project data are specifically designed to study electoral behavior in Taiwan and thus, do not contain a full range of variables needed to investigate incidence and*

determinants of non-electoral forms political participation. In addition, there is a need to gather survey data that will facilitate *cross-national research* comparing factors affecting political participation in new and mature democracies.

Despite the ABS surveys do not have all the needed variables, couple similar indicators that are compatible with existing models still worth to be tested. As an exploratory study, this paper uses variables those are convertible to previous studies to delineate Taiwan's political participation. Accordingly, this research aims to deal with two questions: first, *what are the nature, structure and extent of citizen political participation in a new democracy such as Taiwan?* Second, *are the existing surveys in Taiwan sufficient for delineating political participation in Taiwan and verifying participation in various political activities in such a new democracy the same as or different from those in mature democracies?* To address these questions, a two level structure equation model is used to examine the research hypothesis.

Research Design

As aforementioned, this research uses the existing data collected from Asian Barometer Surveys (ABS). The centerpiece of this project was a cross-national survey which been conducted in both 2005 and 2010. As a preliminary study on Taiwan's political participation, this paper engages in a basic analysis that mainly focuses on: (i) delineating the structure of political participation in Taiwan, (ii) testing the

relationship between various types of participation, and (iii) testing the two attitude approaches hypothesis. In this regard, this paper uses Structure Equation Model (SEM - implemented by LISREL 8.8, see Clarke et al., 2009) to test the structure of citizen political participation in Taiwan and investigate how different types of political participation fit into the broader matrix of citizen engagement in Taiwan's new democracy. The SEM procedures are discussed below.

Analyzing A Multi-Factor Model of Political Participation:

This research begins by identifying five conceptually distinct forms of political participation. This conceptualization has guided recent research in Great Britain and other Western countries (see Clarke et al., 2004, 2009). The five forms of participation are: contacting, protesting, voting, party activity, and voluntary community-centered activities. I specify a corresponding five-factor model of political participation to determine how well this model fits the ABS Taiwanese data. To examine the structure of political participation and the adequacy of this five-factor model in Taiwan, I employ confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).¹ This analysis assesses the goodness-of-fit of the five-factor political participation in Taiwan, and it

¹ CFA tests hypothesized measurement models. In these models, the observed variables are assumed to be caused by latent factors (e.g. Joreskog and Sorbom, 1996). The CFA goodness-of-fit tests inform the researchers regarding to what extent a hypothesized measurement model reproduces the covariance structure of the observed data. The CFA tests provide important information about relationships between hypothesized latent factors because the correlations measured in CFA tests are population parameter estimates rather than arbitrary values. This is particular appropriate for our proposed research because our survey will collect the ordinal or dichotomous survey data and that may have skewed response distributions (further discussion see Clarke et al., 2004).

delineates the strength of relationships between different types of political participation in that country at the latent variable level. Furthermore, I develop a second order model to test whether the attitude toward political participation consists of two different latent factors, aggressive and passive. Participating in protest and party activities may be considered as aggressively engage in politics, whereas other forms of participation are relatively less aggressive.

For the purpose of this paper, these inter-factor correlations can calibrate relationships between the five types of political participation and the two latent attitude factors can describe the relationships between different attitudes and various types of political participation. The preliminary argument for the first five-factor model is that these inter-factor correlations should be negative. In other word, as people decided not to vote, they may opt for other modes of political participation as an alternative. The argument for the second order model is that people participate in protest and partisan activities are associated with their aggressive political attitude, whereas participating in other activities may be seen as having passive political attitude.

Preliminary Results

-----**Figure 1.1 and 1.2 Here**-----

Figure 1.1 and 1.2 summarizes key results of the confirmatory factor analyses of 12 political activities for Taiwan in both 2005 and 2010. The first thing to note is that the model fit well in both cases. The RMSEA fit statistics are very small, 0.027 in 2005 and 0.033 in 2010, with values of this statistic significantly below 0.05, indicating a good fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Furthermore, the strong, statistically significant factor loadings in both cases are very impressive as well. These strong loadings testify that – as measured by the ABS data gathered via the same survey questionnaire in different years – the structure of political participation remains the same in the two different years. In addition, the other interesting story told by this analysis is that all of the correlations between the voting factor and the other factors are *positive*.

-----**Table 1.1 and 1.2 Here**-----

In the 2005 data, these correlations, all of which are statistically significant, range from a low of 0.14 with the voting factor to a high of 0.88 with the political party activities factor (Table 1.1). Some comparable results present from the 2010 CFA model are 0.07 for the voting factor and only 0.38 for the party activities (Table 1.2). Although the correlations between voting and other forms of political participation are not strong, the *positive* testify that there is no individual-level evidence of a substitution effect whereby people are not going out to vote for other

types of participation. In this regard, conventional believe that people in new democracies may less likely to engage in other forms of political participation due to the unfamiliarity may not be truth in Taiwan. Moreover, the array of significant inter-factor correlations in this Taiwan confirmatory factor model testifies that people who are politically active in the traditionally way, namely partisan activities, tend to be active in other political activities as well.

Accordingly, I further extend the search for substitution effects between voting and other types of political participation to investigate whether there are different personal attitudes toward participation associated with the five participation factors. The two hypothesized personal attitudes/traits are categorized as aggressive and passive. The former personal trait refers to those who may be more interested in politics and therefore they tend to participate in more aggressive political activities where they believe their voice will be heard, such as protesting and partisan activities. On the contrary, for people who hold passive attitude toward politics, engaging in political activities is not for making their voice been heard, but rather a civic duty. In this present work, voting, participate in community activities, and contact their representatives were viewed as passive activities.

-----**Table 2.2 Here**-----

Table 2.2 summarizes both the key results of the first-order confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) of 12 political activities and second-order model of 2 political attitudes for Taiwan. More specific, it reports analyses of interrelationships between various types of political participation and intra-relationship between personal political attitudes. For purposes of comparison, I report results for the two first-order approaches as well as the two second-order attitudinal approaches. Results for the first-order approaches exhibit a clear pattern in which each indicator is strongly related to its corresponding participation factor. These results from the first-order model also show that the positive relationship between various types of political participation. Thus, the substitution effect does not exist in both 2005 and 2010 Taiwan data.

To facilitate comparison, I report statistics for all first-order and second-order models for both the 2005 and the 2010 data. As indicated in Table 2.1, the 2005 and 2010 first-order models yielded a very good fit, with CFI values approaching .97 and RMSEA values of .027 and .033, respectively. Consistent with the findings of Clarke et al. (2009), the first order 5-factor model exhibited a very similar pattern from the two sets of ABS data.

-----**Figure 2.1 and 2.2 Here**-----

Moreover, the second-order model clarified relationships for the personal attitude approaches. Further inspection of the second order model in both cases revealed that the two attitudinal factors also achieve discriminate validity, as evidenced by all factor correlations are statistical significant. Taking the first-order factors are as indicators of the second-order factors, the second order model for each case thus contained 5 first-order factors (i.e., protest and party activities on the Aggressive factor, contact, voting and community activities on the Passive factor) that exhibited loadings on their assigned factors (see 2005 and 2010 result in Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 respectively) along with highly positive correlations between the two political attitudes that suggested the two political attitudes coexist rather than conflict.

Specifically, the relationship between the aggressive personal attitude approach and political activities is due almost entirely to *protest*, and the relationship between the passive political attitude approach and participation is driven by *contact*. Overall, these models exhibited quite strong fit, with the RMSEA value range from 0.027 to 0.043 (Table 2.2), and this present approach further disclose a possible structure of political participation in Taiwan.

Discussion

This study provides a constructive replication and extension of previous research on the structure of political participation in Western democracies. This paper is

designed to explore Taiwan's political participation with existing data gathered from Asian Barometer Surveys (ABS). In this preliminary study, the five-factor model testing in Taiwan's political participations indicates that Taiwan's political participation have very similar pattern with western mature democracies. Previous studies on political participations in UK and other European democracies shows that people who are politically active in one way tend to be active in other ways as well (Clarke et al., 2009). In the Taiwan context, both 2005 and 2010 data provides a similar result. That is to say, people in the new democracies also tend to involve those various types of political activities, new and mature democracies alike.

Moreover, this present work also demonstrates that the second-order political attitude approach could also explain Taiwan's political participation. The aggressive and passive attitudes indeed related to how Taiwan's citizens participate in politics. Yet, as mentioned above, the limitation and major concern about this preliminary approach is that Asian Barometer Surveys does not have all the variables needed for testing existing theoretical models. Thus, for future comparative researches, a theoretical driven national survey on political participation will be necessary. Due to the data is insufficient for a identical model comparison to western democracies, this preliminary result can only provide partial evidence on the nature and causes of citizen participation in political life in contemporary democracies, old and new are

alike. In this regard, placing the Taiwanese survey data in a cross-national comparative perspective using comparable data from major national surveys conducted in Great Britain, Canada and the United States would be able to concrete the argument.

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Figure 1.1 2005 Five Factor Model

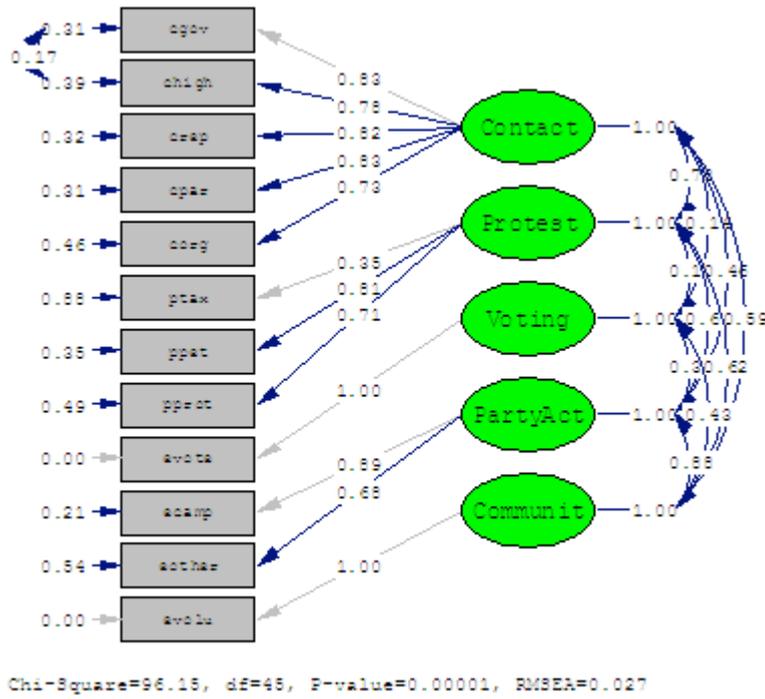


Figure 1.2 2010 Five Factor Model

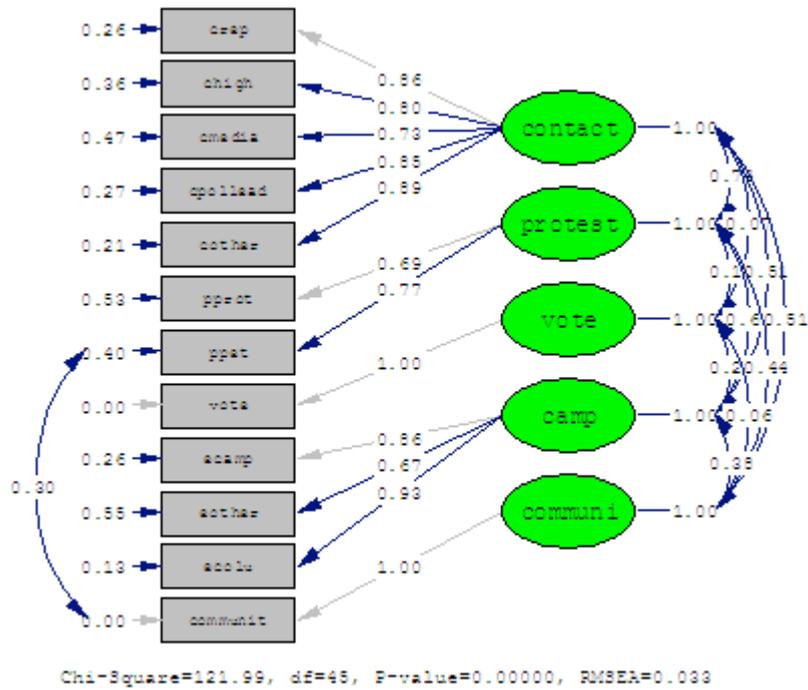


Figure 2.1 2005 Structure Equation Model of Political Attitude and Participation

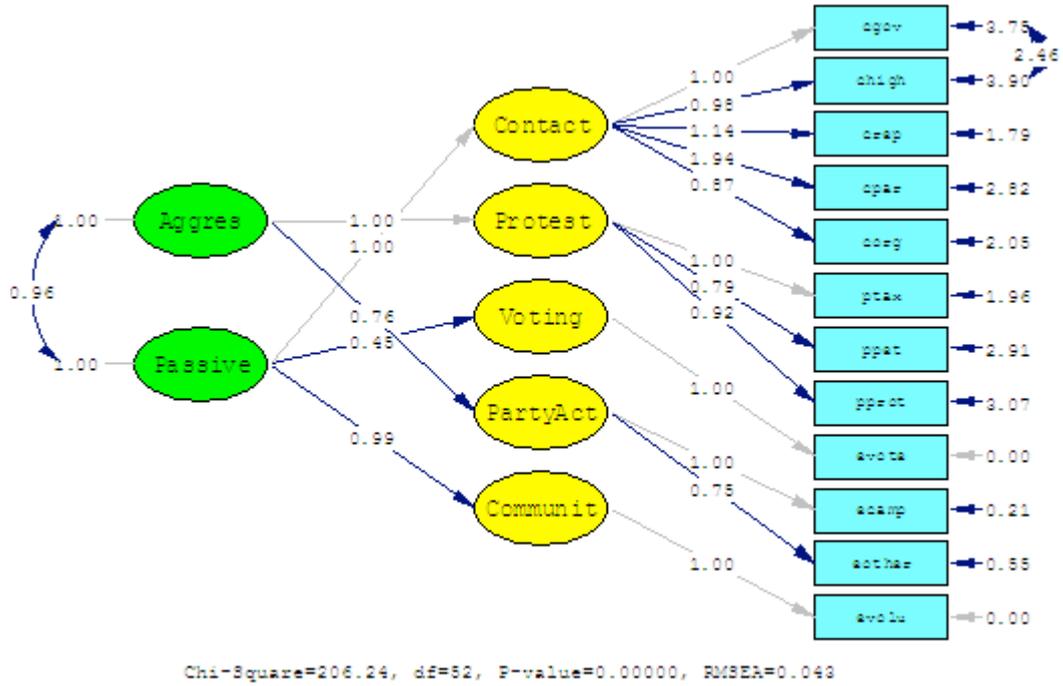


Figure 2.2 2010 Structure Equation Model of Political Attitude and Participation

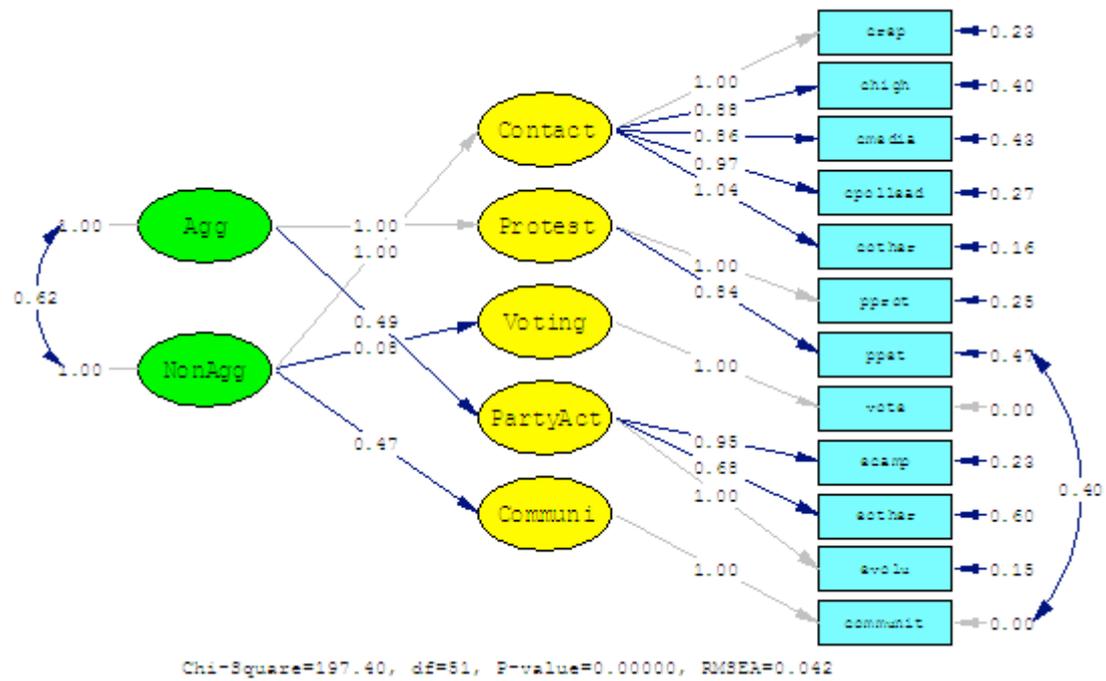


Table 1.1 The structure of political participation in Taiwan, 2005

Factors					
	Contact	Protest	Voting	Party Act	Community
Protest	0.78				
Voting	0.14	0.19			
Party Act	0.46	0.64	0.38		
Community	0.59	0.62	0.43	0.88	1.00

Note: inter-factor correlations are generated by confirmatory factor analyses summarized in Figure 1.1.

Source: 2005 ABS Data

Table 1.2 The structure of political participation in Taiwan, 2010

Factors					
	Contact	Protest	Voting	Party Act	Community
Protest	0.74				
Voting	0.07	0.15			
Party Act	0.51	0.61	0.27		
Community	0.51	0.44	0.06	0.38	1.00

Note: inter-factor correlations are generated by confirmatory factor analyses summarized in Figure 1.2.

Source: 2010 ABS Data

Table 2.1 Goodness of Fit Statistics Comparison

CFA Model	First Order Model		Second Order Model	
	2005	2010	2005	2010
Chi-Square (X^2)	96.15	121.99	206.24	197.40
Df (P- Value)	45	45	52	51
RMSEA	0.027	0.033	0.043	0.042
CFI	0.97	0.97	0.92	0.94
GFI	1.00	0.99	0.99	0.99
AGFI	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99
AIC	162.75	204.97	258.24	251.40