Communication, Community and Participation:
Exploring the O₁-S-O₂-R Model

SHEN Fei

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy

Principal Supervisor: Dr. John H. POWERS

Hong Kong Baptist University

May 2005
ABSTRACT

Despite well-documented links among psychological orientation, communication, information processing strategy and individual’s participation behavior, the vast stretch of “theoretical middle ground” between information and action is much less understood. In light of O₁-S-O₂-R model (Markus and Zajonc, 1985; McLeod, Kosicki & McLeod, 1994), the current research tries to predict civic and political engagement by psychological orientation, mass media consumption and information processing in a causal chain. Principally, the major research findings can be summarized in four aspects. First, in applying O₁-S-O₂-R model in constructing the causal relationships within the model, the current research not only replicates prior results but also discovers new patterns. Second, it was found that the individual-based relational phenomenon identified in Western countries has been consistent with those in Hong Kong under the situation that societal level indicators show diverging tendencies. Third, distinct routes of cognitive and affective elements leading to their behavioral expressions were found, signifying the power of affective factors without the assistance of information. In another words, this finding confirms that the suggestion that “Preferences need no inferences” (Markus, 1980). Fourth, the simplistic “time displacement” proposition made by Putnam (1995a, 1995b) was seriously qualified by the current data, showing psychological attachment as a sturdy buffer in conditioning the relationship of television viewing and its civic and political consequences.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION ...........................................................................................................i

ABSTRACT ...............................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS .........................................................................................iv

LIST OF TABLES ...................................................................................................viii

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................ix

CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION ...............................................................................1

1.1 Political Communication Reconsidered..........................................................1

1.2 Phenomenon and Bewilderment.................................................................4

   1.2.1 US Evidence.........................................................................................4

   1.2.2 Civic and Political Culture in Hong Kong.............................................6

   1.2.3 Theoretical Dilemma..........................................................................8

1.3 Research Question and Objectives...............................................................10

1.4 Chapter by Chapter......................................................................................11

CHAPTER 2  MODEL ELABORATION ...............................................................13

2.1 O₁-S-O₂-R Paradigm: The Cognitive Perspective.......................................13

2.2 Exogenous Variables: Demographics & Structural Anchoring......................16

   2.2.1 Demographics....................................................................................16

   2.2.2 Structural Variables..........................................................................18

2.3 O₁ Orientation: Community Orientation & Media Orientation.....................20

   2.3.1 Community Orientation.....................................................................22
2.3.2 Media Orientation.................................................................25
2.3.3 Cognitive & Affective Division.............................................29

2.4 Stimulus: Media Exposure & Attention.....................................32

2.5 O_2 Orientation: Reflection..................................................36

2.6 Multivariate Relationship: Mediating, Moderating or Independent Influencing..........................................................38

2.7 Summary..................................................................................39

CHAPTER 3  METHODS.................................................................40

3.1 Sampling..................................................................................40

3.2 Measurements.........................................................................41

3.3 Analysis Procedure.................................................................50

3.4 Summary..................................................................................54

CHAPTER 4  FINDINGS.................................................................55

4.1 Effects of Demographic & Structural Antecedents......................55

4.1.1 Gender................................................................................55

4.1.2 Age......................................................................................56

3.1.3 Education & Personal Income.............................................57

4.1.4 Length of Residence..........................................................58

4.1.5 Home Ownership.............................................................59

4.1.6 Marriage.............................................................................60

4.2 Relationships within O_1 Orientation........................................60

4.3 Predicting S: Media Exposure and Attention..............................61
4.4 Predicting Orientation:

Reflection………………………………………….64

4.4.1 O₁ Orientation…………………………………………........64

4.4.2 From O₁ Orientation to Reflection: Mediation Testing…………..67

4.4.3 Stimulus……………………………………………………..………67

4.5 Predicting R: Knowledge and Participation…………………………….68

4.5.1 O₁ Orientation…………………………………………..68

4.5.2 Stimulus………………………………………….71

4.5.3 O₂ Orientation…………………………………………………..72

4.5.4 From O₁ Orientation to Response: Mediation Effect Testing………..72

4.5.5 From Stimulus to Response: Mediation Effect Testing…………….75

4.6 Structural Model and Indirect Effects…………………………………..77

4.6.1 Predicting Political News Knowledge in SEM Model………………..79

4.6.2 Predicting Civic Participation in SEM Model……………………..81

4.6.3 Predicting Political Participation in SEM Model………………….81

4.7 Interaction Effects (Moderation Effect Testing)………………………82

4.8 Summary……………………………………………………………..87

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION………………………………………………….88

5.1 O₁ Orientation: Constraints and Motivations………………………..88

5.1.1 Surveillance: Informational Motivation’s Contribution………………89

5.1.2 Escape/Diversion: Intention & Behavior Bifurcation………………90

5.1.3 Interpersonal Utility: Indirect & Potential Benefit…………………..92
5.1.4 Media Dependence: Optimal When Being Modest.......................92

5.1.5 Psychological Attachment: Privatized but not Malaise..............95

5.1.6 Local vs. Cosmopolitan: Pro-civic Orientation Mediated by Reflection.................................................................97

5.2 Dual-Processes Influences: Cognitive vs. Affective....................98

5.3 Stimulus: Media Related Variables..........................................100

5.3.1 Qualifying Time Displacement: Viewing Television Affectively...101

5.3.2 Newspaper vs. Television: Media Form Accounts?...............103

5.3.3 Attention: Key Elements..................................................105

5.4 O₂ Orientation: Deep Information Processing..........................107

5.5 Summary...........................................................................110

CHAPTER 6  CONCLUSION.......................................................111

6.1 Major Contributions of the Current Research..............................111

6.1.1 Legitimizing the O₁-S-O₂-R Paradigm.................................111

6.1.2 Previous Findings Replications...........................................111

6.1.3 O₁ Orientation Division: Preferences Needs no Inferences.....113

6.1.4 Qualifying Television Time Displacement.............................113

6.2 Practical Implications..........................................................114

6.3 Research Limitations..........................................................116

REFERENCES.................................................................121

APPENDIX........................................................................134

Questionnaire Wording..........................................................134