

## **How Does Political Satire Influence Political Participation? Examining the Role of Counter- and Proattitudinal Exposure, Anger, and Personal Issue Importance**

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Research has shown that exposure to political satire elicits negative emotions, which in turn mobilize political participation. We conducted an experiment to extend this line of research by examining the type of exposure (i.e., exposure to counter- and proattitudinal political views) and investigating a specific negative emotion—anger—in influencing political participation. Although the literature has suggested that counterattitudinal exposure is likely to discourage political behaviors, results from this study document that exposure to counterattitudinal political satire is more likely than proattitudinal exposure to increase participation in issue-related activities through evoking one's anger about the political issue. More importantly, this indirect effect functions under the condition when people consider the issue to be personally important. We discuss the implications for the development of deliberative and participatory democracy in media genres that are emotionally provocative.

*Keywords: political satire, political participation, cross-cutting exposure, anger, personal issue importance*

As a type of entertainment-oriented political content that aims to criticize politics and reveal violations of social norms in an implicit and playful way, political satire has drawn scholarly attention in terms of whether it could play a significant role in facilitating a more engaged public. Much academic research has examined the potential impact of exposure to political satire on behavioral engagement. However, there are inconsistent results regarding the influence of political satire on political participation.

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Some researchers have documented that exposure to political satire such as late-night comedy could foster democratic engagement (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005), while others have suggested that political satire may undermine participation because it contributes to “a sense of alienation from the political process” (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006, pp. 362–363) and it intends to entertain rather than inform citizens (Prior, 2005). This study, therefore, aims to disentangle these incongruent results by examining three factors: (1) the political satire content feature, (2) the emotional factor of anger, and (3) the attitudinal factor of personal issue importance in the relationship between exposure to political satire and political participation. A moderated mediation model is proposed.

The emotional factor of anger is proposed as the mediator in the relationship between exposure to political satire and political participation based on research that adopts a process-oriented approach to explore how political satire indirectly affects participation in politics. The process-oriented approach, however, has not yet sufficiently explained the inconsistent results regarding the effect of exposure to political satire on political participation (e.g., Hoffman & Young, 2011; H. Lee, 2012; Lee & Kwak, 2014). Accordingly, this study not only extends the line of research by examining anger as the mediator but furthers the literature on cross-cutting exposure by taking into account the content feature of political satire—namely, exposure to *pro-* and *counterattitudinal* political satire—rather than merely studying the general frequency of exposure to political satire without distinguishing content features.

In addition, because the proposed relationships are issue-focused, we argue that the extent to which people are personally concerned about the issue should matter in how they process the satirical information. Thus, we propose a moderated mediation model to test whether and how the indirect effect of exposure to political satire on political participation through anger may be conditionally affected by personal issue importance.

### The Hong Kong Context

To understand how exposure to *pro-* and *counterattitudinal* political satire might elicit negative emotions and influence political participation, this study focuses on the issue of universal suffrage in Hong Kong’s 2017 Chief Executive Election given its prominence in public discussion and the ensuing debate on the development of democracy. The issue of universal suffrage in the 2017 Chief Executive Election traces back to the announcement by the National People’s Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) of the electoral framework in which candidates need to obtain support from more than half of the members of the nomination committee in order to stand in the popular election. This framework, however, empowers China with tight control over the formation of the nomination committee. The announcement raised the question of whether universal suffrage is “genuine” and contributed to the growth of the “Umbrella Movement” in late September 2014—an occupation that lasted for 79 days in several districts in Hong Kong.

With no concessions by China’s government to change the electoral framework, two polarized ideologies for electoral reform evolved. The pro-Beijing camp proposed accepting the electoral reform announced by the NPCSC first and negotiating the policy later, whereas the prodemocracy side proposed rejecting the electoral reform because there will be no space to negotiate with the NPCSC in the future.

Whether to accept or reject electoral reform has become a focal point of public debate in Hong Kong and has received a large amount of newspaper coverage. Due to the polarization and prevalence of the issue of universal suffrage in the 2017 Chief Executive Election, this issue provides an excellent opportunity to examine the effects of political satire.

This study examines political cartoons in Hong Kong as the satirical content, because the rising prodemocracy campaign and public divergence on what democracy is in Hong Kong have boosted the popularity of political satire. Unlike satirical TV programming, which is the most popular satirical media genre in the West, political cartoons are a common form of media discourse in Hong Kong. They possess distinct political ideologies (i.e., prodemocracy vs. pro-Beijing) depending on the political stances of the newspapers that publish them.

### **Political Satire and Political Participation**

Citizen participation is essential to the functioning of a healthy democracy (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944). A body of research has examined the effects of political satire on participatory behaviors; however, whether political satire can foster political participation remains open for debate (e.g., Cao & Brewer, 2008; Moy et al., 2005). Scholars have explored the mediating mechanisms and conditional factors to better understand these inconsistent results. For instance, Hoon Lee (2012) found that watching late-night comedy encourages political participation through interpersonal discussion and online interaction. Hoffman and Young (2011) also found that watching political comedy programs enhances participation through enhancing internal self-efficacy. More recently, Lee and Kwak (2014) advanced the Orientation-Stimulus-Orientation-Response (O-S-O-R) framework by testing negative emotions as a crucial mediator (i.e., the second O) between exposure to political satire and political participation. They found that exposure to political satire (S) encourages political participation (R) through negative emotions (the second O).

However, some scholars have voiced the concern that political comedy programs may indirectly demobilize participation through fostering negative evaluations of political candidates and eliciting cynicism toward the electoral system (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006). Given that findings concerning whether exposure to political satire encourages or demobilizes political participation are inconclusive, we propose a research question to examine whether exposure to political satire (vs. no exposure) could affect political participation before further investigating the potential influence of the other three factors (i.e., content feature, anger, and personal issue importance) in the relationship.

*RQ: Is there a significant relationship between exposure to political satire and political participation?*

### **Political Satire and Anger**

Studies have shown that people exposed to political satire are likely to have more negative perceptions of political candidates (e.g., lower trust) and exhibit more cynicism toward the electoral system (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006). Political satire also has been found to reduce political tolerance (Stroud & Muddiman, 2013). These negative consequences of exposure to political satire result from the

aggressive and unflattering tone of political humor given that political satire is used as a venue to critique wrongdoings of political figures, reveal failures of political processes, and show violations of social norms (Young, 2004).

Sarcastic humor in political satire is well positioned to trigger people's emotional responses (Jones, 2005). Although previous studies mostly emphasized the relationship between exposure to political satire and negative *attitude*, following this line of reasoning, Lee and Kwak (2014) argued that sarcastic humor about a public issue featured in a political satire program would elicit negative emotions toward a government policy. Combining worry and anger as an index of negative emotion, they found a positive relationship between exposure to political satire and negative emotions.

Building on this line of research, we specifically examine a negative emotion (i.e., anger) not only because political satire is likely to induce anger but also because it has been widely studied in public opinion and found to have a strong association with participatory behaviors (Bushman, 2002; Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011). In addition, rather than examining a combined index of negative emotions, we examine anger because other negative emotions may not play the same role in the relationship between exposure to political satire and political participation, which we explain in the next section regarding the relationship between anger and political participation.

While acknowledging that exposure to political satire elicits anger, we argue that whether the satirical content supports or challenges one's political views should matter in influencing emotional arousal given that political satire is less entertaining when it disagrees with one's views or criticizes a public figure one supports (Priest, 1966; Zillmann & Cantor, 1972). In addition, the literature on selective exposure has demonstrated that counterattitudinal content is likely to produce dissonance that makes people uncomfortable (Festinger, 1957). Studies of political discussion have also found that opposition in one's communication network may exacerbate rather than offset a state of anger (Bushman, 2002). Thus, to build on the line of research on political satire and negative emotions, we examine exposure to pro- or counterattitudinal political satire and propose that counterattitudinal satirical content is more likely than proattitudinal content to evoke anger.

*H1: Exposure to counterattitudinal political satire is more likely to elicit anger than exposure to proattitudinal political satire.*

### **Anger and Participation**

Emotions play an important role in democratic politics due to their power in motivating citizens to break out of the "cold" individual utility calculation and mobilizing them to engage in political life (Groenendyk, 2011). Emotions manifest individuals' appraisal of social situations and structure the kinds of action they may take in response to social contexts (Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993).

Research has shown that emotions are influential in information processing (e.g., N. Kim, 2016) and political participation (e.g., Valentino et al., 2011). When it comes to the structure of emotions, many

studies draw on the bidimensional (negative and positive) valence model (Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000; Rudolph, Gangl, & Stevens, 2000); however, some scholars have criticized this model for being oversimplistic and weak in predictive power. Instead, they have emphasized understanding affect with discrete-emotion approaches (e.g., Nabi, 2010).

Building on the affective intelligence theory (Marcus et al., 2000), which emphasizes the immediate, preconscious impact of emotional reactions, MacKuen, Wolak, Keele, and Marcus (2010) argue that anger is triggered by the disposition system as an emotional response to the conditions of known threat, which signals the need to confront an adversary.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, research on emotions assumes that positive emotions encourage reward-seeking ("approach") behaviors, and negative emotions promote danger-averting ("avoidance") behavior (Gray, 1990). Many scholars, however, consider anger as an approach emotion associated with goal-oriented action (N. Kim, 2016; Nabi, 1999). Based on the cognitive appraisal theory, which focuses on subsequent cognitive evaluations of emotional reactions (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986; Lazarus, 1991), Lerner and her colleagues (Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Lerner & Tiedens, 2006) argued that, compared with other negative emotions such as anxiety and fear, anger arises when threat can be attributed to a certain source and individuals are confident in their control over the environment. Thus, angry people tend to express optimistic risk estimates and engage in risk-seeking and problem-focused coping behaviors. In many studies, anger has been found to be the most consistent and powerful emotion that motivates political participation (Valentino et al., 2011; Valentino, Gregorowicz, & Groenendyk, 2009; Weber, 2013). Anger, together with high political efficacy, can motivate people to write letters to decision makers and join activist groups for a cause they are interested in (Turner, 2007). Therefore, we propose:

*H2: Anger is positively related to political participation.*

In addition to the direct relationship, we propose an indirect effect of exposure to counterattitudinal political satire on political participation through anger. Research has demonstrated the effect of exposure to satirical content and exposure to cross-cutting political views in triggering negative emotional response. The positive relationship between anger and political participation has also been well documented. Lee and Kwak (2014) successfully tested negative emotions as a crucial mediator between

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<sup>2</sup> Affective intelligence theory, or AIT (Marcus et al., 2000), a dominant paradigm of emotions in public opinion, posits a dual affective system (the disposition and surveillance systems) that produces emotional appraisals, which further influence cognition (e.g., information processing and deliberation) and behavior (e.g., media use and political participation). The disposition system triggers positive emotions, such as enthusiasm, where people can safely rely on previously learned habits. The surveillance system evokes negative emotions, such as anxiety and unease, where people rely less on habit and are motivated to engage in effortful information processing and careful consideration of situations, behaviors, and outcomes. More recently, MacKuen and colleagues (2010) argued that anger could also be triggered by the disposition system, in that when familiar aversive stimuli are encountered, people will count on previously learned routines to handle the situation. Integrating aversion in AIT signals the fact that not all negative emotions are stimulated by the same affective system, and discrete negative emotions can lead to different outcomes.

exposure to political satire and political participation with the O-S-O-R framework. Thus, proposing anger as the mediator with specific examination of the content feature (i.e., counter- vs. proattitudinal exposure) could advance the literature on political satire to help understand media effects beyond the conventional indirect effects models based on cognitive or attitudinal processes.

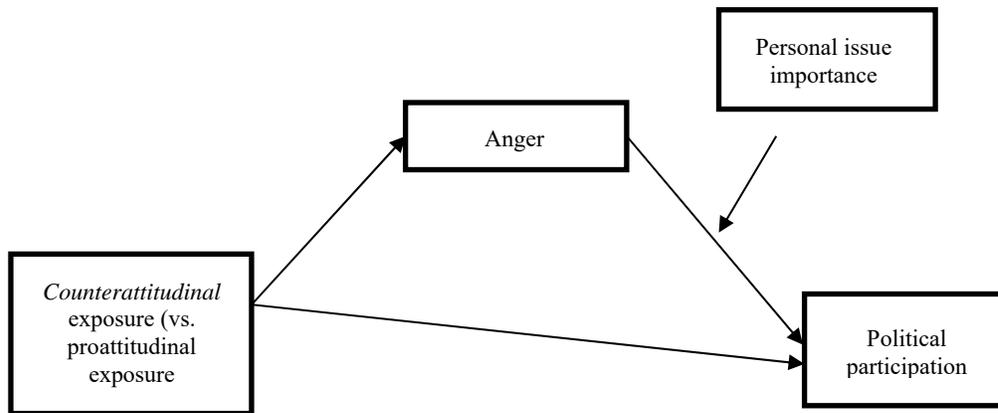
*H3: The relationship between exposure to counterattitudinal political satire and political participation is mediated by anger.*

### **Conditional Indirect Effect of Political Satire: The Role of Personal Issue Importance**

In addition to the indirect effect of exposure to political satire on participation through anger, we also argue that personal issue importance plays an important role in influencing the indirect effect conditionally. In particular, given that our study focuses on the issue of universal suffrage in the 2017 Chief Executive Election, those who attach personal attitude importance to this issue (i.e., personal issue importance) have a substantial commitment to and investment in the issue, which would affect how they process the information and further engage in issue-related activities.

Krosnick (1990) defined personal *attitude* importance as “the degree to which a person is passionately concerned about and personally invested in an attitude” (p. 60). Personal *issue* importance is a similar concept that puts greater emphasis on one’s attitude toward a particular issue. Krosnick (1990) found that those who consider an issue to be personally important are likely to have greater cognitive and behavioral involvement. For instance, they tend to think about the issue, elaborate more extensively on issue-relevant information, have a better memory for that information, and organize that information more complexly in memory (Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, Visser, & Boninger, 2005). In addition, personal issue importance is a powerful guide to political behaviors such as voting, writing letters to public officials, and making contributions to political organizations (Chen, 2012; Krosnick, 1988). Given the significant role of personal issue importance in influencing political participation, this attitudinal factor may interact with emotional factors (i.e., anger) in affecting individuals’ political behaviors. Although studies have not yet examined how these two factors interact, findings that emphasize the significant interplay between negative emotions and political sophistication in promoting political participation (Brader, 2006; Valentino et al., 2011) may shed light on the mechanism by which individuals’ personal issue importance moderates the mobilizing effect of exposure to humor through anger. For example, Valentino et al. (2011) found that anger substantially boosts political behavior when people have high political interest, efficacy, skills, and recourse (as a combined index). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis that personal issue importance may moderate the indirect path from exposure to counterattitudinal political satire to participation through anger (see Figure 1):

*H4: The indirect effect of exposure to counterattitudinal political satire on political participation through anger is conditional on personal issue importance such that the effect is stronger for those who have higher personal issue importance.*



**Figure 1. Proposed conceptual research model: The indirect effect of exposure to political satire on political participation through anger is conditionally affected by individuals' personal issue importance.**

### Method

To address the research question and hypotheses, an online experiment was conducted using the research software Qualtrics. Panel members in Hong Kong received an e-mail asking them to participate in the study. The participation session consisted of a presurvey, random assignment to a condition, postsurvey questions, and debriefing information. After providing their consent, participants were asked to answer several questions about their attitude toward the issue (i.e., issue position), the personal issue importance, and their affinity for political humor. After the presurvey, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (1) exposure to political satire cartoons supporting a pro-Beijing political ideology (prodemocracy is the target of sarcasm); (2) exposure to political satire cartoons supporting a prodemocracy political ideology (pro-Beijing is the target of sarcasm); and (3) a control condition (i.e., no exposure). In the control condition, participants were not exposed to political satire cartoons and only answered the survey items. Participants in the other two conditions were exposed to political satire cartoons that support either pro-Beijing or prodemocracy political ideology. After viewing the cartoon, participants in the two exposure groups could click a "Continue" button to proceed to the postsurvey session, where they were asked about their emotional responses to the issue and about their political participation. Questions about demographics (i.e., age, gender, income, and education), political predispositions (i.e., political interest and political knowledge), and news media use were included at the end of the survey.

### Participants

Adults over age 18 who were born and currently living in Hong Kong and have access to the Internet participated in the study ( $N = 713$ ). The sampling firm Qualtrics recruited the sample using an opt-in panel, and the data were collected October 16–29, 2015. A total of 241 participants were randomly assigned to the condition that exposed them to political satire supporting pro-Beijing political ideology,

223 participants were in the group exposed to political satire supporting prodemocracy political ideology, and 249 participants were in the control group. More participants than needed were recruited given that those who answered neutral in the issue position question were expected to be excluded from the analysis so that exposure to pro- or counterattitudinal political satire could be identified. A detailed explanation is provided later in the Measures section (exposure to pro- and counterattitudinal satire cartoon). The sample was diverse in terms of age ( $M = 35.06$ ,  $SD = 11.01$ , range = 18–68), gender (male 43%), and education (26.5% high school or less, 61.7% college or professional degree, and 10.6% postgraduate). Cross-tabulations and analyses of variance were used to determine whether random assignment to a condition was successful. In the three conditions, there were no significant differences in demographics, attitude importance to the issue, and political predispositions.

### Stimuli

Four political satire cartoons from two Hong Kong newspapers focusing on the issue of universal suffrage in the Chief Executive Election in 2017 were used. The two cartoons from *Wen Wei Po* represent pro-Beijing ideology, and the two from *Ming Pao* demonstrate prodemocracy ideology. For the condition of exposure to political satire supporting pro-Beijing political ideology, the two cartoons from *Wen Wei Po* were the stimuli, and for the exposure condition supporting prodemocracy political ideology, the two cartoons from *Ming Pao* were the stimuli. The cartoons were subjected to a pretest to ensure that they were perceived as intended. For instance, the political stance of the two cartoons from *Wen Wei Po* should be perceived as significantly different from the two cartoons from *Ming Pao*, and there should be no significant difference between the two cartoons within the same newspapers. Twenty-two participants were recruited for the pretest and asked to indicate what political ideology each satirical cartoon represents on a scale from 1 (*strong pro-Beijing*) to 7 (*strong prodemocracy*). As shown in Table 1, the cartoons were perceived as having unambiguous issue stances.

**Table 1. Pretest Results on Ideological Perceptions of Presented Political Satire Cartoon.**

	Political ideology		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> test
Pro-Beijing1 vs. prodemocracy1	2.21	1.13	-7.18 (18)***
	6.00	1.29	
Pro-Beijing1 vs. prodemocracy2	2.21	1.13	-15.56 (18)***
	6.47	0.61	
Pro-Beijing2 vs. prodemocracy1	2.44	0.78	-10.13 (17)***
	5.94	1.31	
Pro-Beijing2 vs. prodemocracy2	2.44	0.78	-18.70 (17)***
	6.44	0.62	
Pro-Beijing1 vs. pro-Beijing2	2.22	1.17	-0.75 (18)
	2.44	0.78	
Prodemocracy1 vs. prodemocracy2	5.95	1.23	-1.41 (19)
	6.40	0.68	

\*\*\* *t* values indicate that means differ at  $p < .001$ .

### *Measures*

#### *Exposure to Pro- and Counterattitudinal Satire Cartoon*

In the presurvey, before exposure to the satirical cartoons, participants were asked about their attitude toward the Hong Kong electoral reform for the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive Election based on the decision made by the National People's Congress Standing Committee of the People's Republic of China. Participants could choose (1) to accept the electoral reform proposed by the NPCSC first and negotiate the policy later (pro-Beijing ideology, 31.3%,  $n = 145$ ), (2) to reject the electoral reform proposed by NPCSC because there will be no space to negotiate with NPCSC in the future (prodemocracy ideology, 32.1%,  $n = 149$ ), or (3) to be neutral (36.6%,  $n = 170$ ).<sup>3</sup> Participants who identified themselves as neutral on the questions were removed from the analysis. *Exposure to proattitudinal satire cartoons* included (1) those who accepted the electoral reform and were exposed to pro-Beijing political satirical cartoons and (2) those who rejected the electoral reform and were exposed to prodemocracy cartoons. *Exposure to counterattitudinal satire cartoons* included (1) those who accepted the electoral reform and were exposed to prodemocracy satirical cartoons and (2) those who rejected the electoral reform and were exposed to pro-Beijing cartoons. The measurements were constructed by dummy-coding counterattitudinal exposure (1) and proattitudinal exposure (0). Overall, 51.4% ( $n = 151$ ) of the participants were exposed to proattitudinal satirical cartoons, and 48.6% ( $n = 143$ ) were exposed to counterattitudinal ones.

#### *Anger*

Participants were asked to rank on a 7-point scale how angry and how disgusted they feel about the issue of universal suffrage in the Hong Kong Chief Executive Election after being exposed to the stimuli (MacKuen et al., 2010). The two items were averaged to generate a measure of anger (Spearman-Brown coefficient = .82,  $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ). This is a plot-referent emotional response to the issue of universal suffrage in the Hong Kong Chief Executive Election after exposure to the stimuli (Dunlop, Wakefield, & Kashima, 2008).

#### *Political Participation*

Participation measures in the experiment asked about respondents' behavioral intention rather than actual participatory behavior given that it is difficult to measure actual behavior in a controlled setting. Focusing on the issue of universal suffrage in the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive Election, participants were asked whether they planned to engage in any of the following online political activities: "post pictures or write an article about the issue on social media," "share video about the issue," "join a group that is supporting or against the issue," "comment on or respond to a post about the issue," "sign a petition," and "contact a politician or government officer." Response options ranged from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*) for each item. An index was constructed by averaging the six items ( $\alpha = .88$ ,  $M = 2.56$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ; Valenzuela, Kim, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2012).

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<sup>3</sup> The two statements represent the most significant opinion climates from pro-Beijing and prodemocracy coalitions before and after the Hong Kong Legislative Council's decision.

### *Personal Issue Importance*

Participants were asked to indicate how important the issue of universal suffrage in the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive Election was to them personally (Holbrook et al., 2005; Y. M. Kim, 2009). Response options ranged from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*extremely important*;  $M = 5.47$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ).

### **Statistical Analysis**

Because the independent variables include categorical (i.e., exposure vs. no exposure; counter- vs. proattitudinal exposure) and continuous variables (i.e., anger), regression analyses were employed to test the research question and H1 and H2. Although the random assignment was successful, this study included several control variables to avoid confounding effects, including political interest, political knowledge, affinity for political humor, personal issue importance, and news use (Hmielowski, Holbert, & Lee, 2011; MacKuen et al., 2010).<sup>4</sup> To assess the indirect effect of exposure to political satire on political participation through anger (H3), Model 4 from Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro was employed. In addition, Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro with Model 14 was conducted to assess the conditional indirect effect (H4), in which the indirect effect of exposure to political satire on participation through anger is conditionally affected by personal issue importance.

## **Results**

### **Manipulation Check**

The literature suggests that humor is less entertaining when it demeans ideas with which a person agrees (Priest, 1966; Zillmann & Cantor, 1972). An independent sample *t* test confirmed that participants exposed to proattitudinal political satire cartoons found the cartoons funnier and more amusing than those who were exposed to counterattitudinal cartoons (for funny, proattitudinal exposure:  $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = 1.66$  and counterattitudinal exposure:  $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ,  $t = 5.93$ ,  $p < .001$ ; for amusing, proattitudinal exposure:  $M = 4.93$ ,  $SD = 1.61$  and counterattitudinal exposure:  $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ,  $t = 4.75$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### **Exposure to Political Satire, Anger, and Participation**

The research question asks whether exposure to political satire has a significant relationship with political participation. Results from the regression analysis indicate that exposure to political satire does not significantly influence political participation ( $B = -0.14$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $p = .12$ ). This result implies that simply asking about the general frequency of exposure without distinguishing the content feature (i.e.,

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<sup>4</sup> MacKuen and his colleagues (2010) stated that some psychological mechanisms might generate spurious links between emotions and political outcomes and should be considered carefully. They included attitude strength, political interest, and news use as controls in their models to avoid false inference. Given that political knowledge is documented to have a significant relationship with cognitive elaboration (Eveland, 2001), and affinity for political humor is a significant predictor of political satire viewing (Hmielowski et al., 2011), political knowledge and affinity for political humor were also included as controls in the analyses.

exposure to counter- and proattitudinal political satire) may not be sufficient to understand the effect of political satire on political behaviors.

Hierarchical regression analyses were employed to examine the influence of exposure to counterattitudinal political satire on anger (H1) and the influence of anger on political participation (H2). As shown in Model 1 in Table 2, the coefficient indicates that those who were exposed to the counterattitudinal political satire were angrier about the issue after the exposure compared with those who were exposed to the proattitudinal satire ( $B = 0.44$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ), supporting H1. Results shown in Model 2 in Table 2 also support H2. People who are angrier about the issue are more likely to participate in political actions related to the issue ( $B = 0.10$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Results from the two regression models also suggest a potential indirect effect of exposure to counterattitudinal political satire on political participation through anger, which was further analyzed with Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro with Model 4 (H3).

**Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Investigating the Effect of Exposure to Political Satire on Anger and the Effect of Anger on Political Participation.**

	Model 1: Anger	Model 2: Political participation
	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
Block 1: Control variable		
Political interest	0.06 (0.08)	0.39 (0.06)***
Political knowledge	0.09 (0.08)	-0.16 (0.06)**
Affinity for political humor	0.66 (0.12)***	0.29 (0.09)**
News use	-0.08 (0.10)	0.21 (0.07)**
Personal issue importance	0.29 (0.08)***	0.10 (0.06) <sup>#</sup>
Incremental $R^2$ (%)	26.1***	35.4***
Block 2		
Exposure to counterattitudinal political satire (vs. proattitudinal)	44 (0.18)*	-0.03 (0.14)
Anger	—	0.10 (0.04)*
Incremental $R^2$ (%)	1.4*	1.1 <sup>#</sup>
Total $R^2$ (%)	27.6***	36.5***

<sup>#</sup>  $p < .1$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

H3 posits that anger mediates the relationship between exposure to counterattitudinal political satire and political participation. Results from the mediation analysis show that the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval with 5,000 bootstrapped samples for the indirect effect was .003 to .113 ( $B = 0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ). Given that the confidence interval did not include zero, there is an indirect effect of exposure to political satire on participation through anger. In addition, the coefficient indicates that exposure to counterattitudinal political satire is more likely than exposure to proattitudinal political satire to elicit individuals' anger about the issue, which in turn encourages political participation.

### The Conditional Indirect Effect: The Role of Personal Issue Importance

A moderated-mediation analysis with Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro Model 14 was conducted to assess the conditional indirect effect (H4), proposing that the indirect effect of exposure to political satire on political participation through anger is conditionally affected by personal issue importance. As shown in Table 3, exposure to counterattitudinal political satire significantly encouraged political participation through increased anger among those who had middle ( $b = 0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.001, 0.109]) and high levels ( $b = 0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI [0.002, 0.180]) of personal issue importance, as the 95% confidence intervals do not include zero. However, the indirect effect was not significant for those who had low levels of personal issue importance ( $b = 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI [-0.024, 0.066]). Taken together, the indirect effect of exposure to counterattitudinal political satire in mobilizing political participation through anger is contingent on the extent to which a person considers the issue personally important. For the indirect effect to function, a person should at least be concerned about the issue at an average level; the effect becomes stronger when the concern is greater.

**Table 3. Moderated Mediation Model: The Indirect Effect of Exposure to Counterattitudinal Political Satire on Political Participation Through Anger With the Relationship Between Anger and Political Participation Moderated by Personal Issue Importance.**

Mediator	Conditional indirect effects			
	Condition (personal issue importance)	$b$	$SE$	Bootstrap 95% CI
Anger	Low (4.05)	0.01	0.02	[-0.024, 0.066]
	Middle (5.46)	0.04	0.03	[0.001, 0.109]
	High (6.87)	0.07	0.04	[0.002, 0.180]

*Note.* Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Bootstrap resample = 5,000. Conditions for the moderator (issue importance) are the mean and plus/minus one standard deviation from the mean. Proattitudinal exposure is the reference group. Estimates were calculated using the PROCESS macro Model 14.

### Discussion

This study advances the understanding of how exposure to political satire contributes to participatory democracy by examining three important factors: different types of exposure to political satire (i.e., exposure to pro- or counterattitudinal political views), anger, and personal issue importance. Focusing on the issue of universal suffrage in the 2017 Chief Executive Election in Hong Kong, results from this study suggest that exposure to counterattitudinal political satire is more likely than exposure to proattitudinal political satire to elicit viewers' anger about the issue, which in turn mobilizes political participation. In addition, the moderated mediation analysis revealed that the indirect effect of cross-cutting exposure on political participation via the negative emotion of anger operates when individuals consider the issue personally important on an average level or higher.

These results first advance the debate on whether exposure to political satire facilitates political participation by arguing that whether the satirical content is like-minded or attitude-challenging matters to the relationship. As the findings suggest, there is no significant relationship between exposure to political satire and political participation if the content feature is not distinguished. Whereas researchers have found that negative emotions can motivate people who are exposed to political satire to participate in politics (Lee & Kwak, 2014), our study further suggests that exposure to counterattitudinal political satire can elicit anger about the issue, and the anger, in turn, motivates people to participate in issue-related activities.

The findings also contribute to the literature on the relationship between cross-cutting exposure and political participation. Research on partisan media has documented that exposure to proattitudinal news increases participation (Dilliplane, 2011; Dvir-Gvirsman, Garrett, & Tsifti, 2015; Knobloch-Westerwick & Johnson, 2014); however, when it comes to exposure to cross-cutting political views, whether the incongruent information encourages or discourages political participation has been a hotly contested topic. Some scholars have argued for the deliberative-participatory paradox that cross-cutting exposure makes people uncertain of their own positions about issues or candidates, which in turn demobilizes political participation (e.g., Mutz, 2002). However, other scholars did not find a negative relationship between cross-cutting political discussion and political participation (e.g., Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004) and contend that the influence of exposure to political difference on political participation depends on other conditional factors, such as the measurement of disagreement (Eveland & Hively, 2009; Nir, 2011) and the form of participation (F. L. F. Lee, 2012). Our study advances this area of research by focusing on political satirical content and provides evidence for a positive role of cross-cutting exposure in influencing political participation when it comes to political humor. It documents that exposure to cross-cutting political satire can play a positive role in stimulating participation when the exposure results in negative emotional arousal (anger as a mediator) and is conditionally affected by the extent to which one is concerned about the issue (personal issue importance as a moderator).

Although the positive relationship between cross-cutting exposure and political participation seems to provide an enlightening connection between deliberative and participatory democracy, we should note that the relationship is bridged by individuals' anger. Severe anger may provoke undesirable and irrational displays of behavior, such as aggression and riot. It may also cause defensive information processing, in which the viewer processes preferred information and avoids attitude-challenging information. Some scholars, however, have documented that anger is associated with a goal-oriented action (N. Kim, 2016). Taking an action in an attempt to change the situation often requires "a careful assessment of its features, an analysis of their causal links, detailed explorations of possible mechanisms of change and anticipation of the potential outcomes of any action that might be initiated" (Schwarz & Clore, 2007, p. 395). In a deliberative setting, anger can be a compelling force that motivates people to be well informed and politically active and contributes to both deliberative and participatory democracy. Accordingly, the question becomes how to bring angry citizens to a deliberative stage. Future research may incorporate both the emotion-based mediation model and the conventional mediation models, drawing on cognitive factors to understand how and under what conditions negative emotions can pair with deliberative elements (e.g., understanding of others' viewpoints, taking diverse perspectives into consideration, and respecting differences of opinion) in influencing political participation.

This study also explores the important factor of personal issue importance in moderating the indirect effect of exposure to cross-cutting political satire on political participation through anger. Results suggest that not all people who are exposed to political satire challenging their political views on the issue will be angry and then participate in issue-related behaviors. Only when people consider the issue to be personally important (at a middle or higher level) will their negative emotion be triggered by satirical content, which mobilizes them to participate in politics. This finding highlights the fact that citizens are not completely ill informed or apathetic about politics. Rather, they may pay attention and respond to a small number of public issues that trigger their concern and interest. This is linked with Converse's (1964) idea of the issue public—the pluralistic groups of individuals whose interest and involvement are in specific issues. Citizens' interest and involvement in a small number of issues ensure their ability to contribute to democratic accountability.

Although this study advances our understanding of the effect of exposure to political satire on participatory democracy, several limitations invite us to interpret the findings cautiously. First, because the experimental setting randomly assigned participants to pro-Beijing or prodemocracy political cartoons, individuals' choice to select information is not incorporated in the research design. Future researchers could manipulate the aspect of choice environment to see how and why people choose pro- or counterattitudinal political satire cartoons (i.e., selective exposure). However, even without choice, it is possible that people would encounter either counter- or proattitudinal political cartoons in everyday life (i.e., incidental exposure), and results from this study provide evidence for how different content features in political satire may influence emotions and behaviors differently.

Second, a condition of exposure to both pro-Beijing and prodemocracy political satire cartoons can be included, as exposure to two-sided information may result in different outcomes from exposure to pro- or counterattitudinal information only. However, in reality, it is unlikely that a person would encounter both pro-Beijing and prodemocracy political cartoons at the same time. Third, our study examines political cartoons as the satirical content given that this is the most prevalent type of political satire in Hong Kong, where there are no late-night comedy or comedic news programs such as *The Tonight Show* or *The Daily Show*. The specific type of satirical content examined in this study, however, limits the generalizability of the results to other satirical content, because researchers have argued that different satirical presentations can have unique effects (e.g., Hoffman & Young, 2011).

Last, political participation was measured with behavioral intention rather than actual behavior. An ideal research design for this study would be to recruit the same participants after a time gap and ask about their actual behaviors in political activities related to the issue of universal suffrage in the Chief Executive Election. However, it is worth noting that asking participants how likely or how willing they would be to take part in activities is the most adopted measurement to capture one's behaviors in an experimental setting (e.g., Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995).

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study contributes to the literature on political humor and political participation through the proposed moderated mediation model. The model suggests a path for how political satire influences political participation while considering content features and emotional and

attitudinal factors. When people consider an issue personally important and anger serves as a motivating factor, exposure to cross-cutting political satire can transform people into active citizens.

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