

Mass Production of Individualized Services: Machine Politics in Hong Kong^{*}

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Abstract

Political machines are built to distribute spoils, buy support, and influence election outcome. Existing research argues that political machines target poor and illiterate voters because their votes are cheap to acquire with non-programmatic benefits. Using the case of Hong Kong, we critically examine the extent to which the ruling coalition utilizes non-programmatic benefits in elections where votes are generally too expensive to purchase. Using interviews with local councilors and data from the 2015 Hong Kong Election Study, we find that: (1) pro-Beijing parties tend to specialize in the provision of highly individualized services; (2) demand for these services tends to come from non-poor citizens; and (3) unable to monitor individual votes, pro-Beijing parties use services and benefits to influence the turnout of the recipients, rather than their vote choice. These findings suggest that the growing electoral strength of pro-Beijing parties in Hong Kong reflects their responsiveness to constituent demands.

Keywords: constituency services, non-programmatic benefits, Hong Kong elections, machine politics, pro-Beijing parties

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I. Introduction

In 2014, a large-scale pro-democracy street protest, which is commonly known as the Umbrella Movement, broke out in Hong Kong. The participants of the protest occupied major downtown areas for 79 days. According to two independent estimates, more than one million citizens went to the occupied sites during that period. The Umbrella Movement was not an isolated event. Hong Kong people have organized numerous pro-democracy protests since 1997, the year of the city's sovereignty transfer.

Given the consistently strong public demands for democratization, one would expect that electoral support for pro-democracy opposition parties is rising in the city. Surprisingly, it is the pro-Beijing camp that has experienced a dramatic increase in voter support across elections since 1997 (Wong 2015). What explains the pro-Beijing camp's electoral success?¹ Some posit that the pro-Beijing camp capitalizes on its superior resource advantage over the opposition to develop a political machine that helps itself cultivate local support (Kwong 2009; Wong 2014).² This "machine politics" hypothesis is consistent with anecdotal accounts that pro-Beijing parties dole out a large number of gifts to impress voters (see, for example, *HK01*, August 23, 2018).³

The "machine politics" hypothesis hinges upon two basic premises. The first is that many Hong Kong voters have a demand for those giveaways, and the second is that those who receive the gifts of pro-Beijing parties would vote for them. None of these premises has been critically examined in extant works. In this article, we present an argument that qualifies the "machine politics" hypothesis. Our central contention is that while many pro-Beijing parties in Hong Kong deploy political machines to strengthen their electoral support, they are able to do so not because of the distribution of basic consumable goods, but the delivery of individualized services, which meet strong demand among middle-class citizens, rather than their low-income counterparts. In addition, given the secret ballot, political machines in Hong Kong can leverage their resource advantage only to influence turnout, rather than vote choice. We evaluate key empirical implications derived from our argument using data gathered in interviews with more than thirty

¹ In this article, we use the terms "pro-Beijing camp" and "pro-establishment camp" interchangeably.

² A recent study shows that gerrymandering is another factor that explains the pro-Beijing camp's electoral success at the District Council level (Wong 2017).

³ Zhizhi Lee, 2018, "Elevated Gifts Pro-Establishment Groups Distribute Cash in On Tai Estate," *HK01*, August 23, <https://www.hk01.com/社會新聞/225950/同區議會選舉有關-蛇齋餅糴升級版-安泰邨建制組織派錢> (accessed November 4, 2018).

District Councilors,⁴ numerous personal communications and a large representative survey (the Hong Kong Election Study) that provides data on voting behavior in the 2015 District Council election. The survey data provide strong support to our argument.

This article is intended to contribute to two strands of literature. The first is the studies of Hong Kong politics. Despite intense confrontations between the establishment and the opposition in recent years, voting behavior remains an understudied subject in the field of Hong Kong politics. A major puzzle, as mentioned, is the growing electoral strength of the pro-Beijing camp despite consistently strong public demands for democratization. We hope that this article will make a small step toward solving this puzzle. We also hope to engage a broader literature on machine politics. Existing research is largely based on evidence from developing countries where the votes of poor citizens are inexpensive to purchase. However, non-programmatic benefits also exist in developed countries, where the marginal utility to the recipients of immediately consumable goods is paltry. Under such circumstances, how political machines adapt themselves to court political support deserves more scholarly attention. Because Hong Kong is a highly developed economy, the findings of this article will shed new light on the studies of machine politics.

The rest of this article is divided into five sections. In the next section, we first provide an overview of theories on machine politics, followed by a section on the Hong Kong case. In Section V, we present empirical evidence for hypotheses generated from the Hong Kong case, using the election survey data. The final section summarizes key findings and discusses their implications.

II. Machine Politics in Comparative Perspectives

A political machine is an organizational vehicle for building electoral support. It consists of an extensive network of political brokers mediating between a political party and local residents. These brokers can be party employees, village chiefs, and local elected officials, performing two key functions. The first is to distribute non-programmatic benefits to local residents,⁵ while the

⁴ Most interviews were conducted in 2012 and 2013, and seven more were done at the time of the 2015 District Council election.

⁵ In this article, we follow Dixit and Londregan (1996, 1132) to define programmatic redistribution as a policy that is “carried out using income taxes and the general social welfare system.” Such redistribution programs usually persist a long period of time and change “only when there is a major ideological shift

second is to monitor their vote choice (Schaffer 2007; Wang and Kurzman 2007) and turnout (Hidalgo and Nichter 2016; Nichter 2008). As Stokes (2005, 315) points out, machine politics is essentially an implicit contract “whereby the machine distributes goods and the recipient vote for the machine.”

Such a contract may appear less problematic, to the extent that the non-programmatic goods involve merely constituency service. In fact, studies in American politics posit that constituency service embodies representation and keeps elected officials responsive to the constituents (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Fenno 2002). However, scholarly works that examine machine politics draw cases disproportionately from less developed countries (see, for example, Auyero 2001; Cruz 2019; Lust-Okar 2008; Wantchekon 2003). The non-programmatic goods being distributed through political machines in those countries often include material items such as beverages and garments or nonmaterial benefits such as government jobs and public projects. For this reason, machine politics is often considered as a bad form of democracy (Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni, and Weingast 2003); voters cast their vote to maximize their narrow interests, while corrupt elected officials can stay in power by “keeping constituents poor and dependent (Hicken 2011, 290).”⁶

There is a reason why developing countries capture the lion’s share of scholarly attention in the studies of machine politics: the goodies that political machines offer meet strong local demand at low levels of economic development (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Extant works highlight several causal mechanisms behind this strong local demand. First, the marginal utility of non-programmatic benefits is negatively correlated with the income of the recipients. A free meal is a lot more important to the jobless than to those with a decent job. In studying the electoral authoritarian regime of Egypt under Mubarak, Blaydes (2006) finds that illiterate residents are more likely to vote than their literate counterparts, because the votes of the former are cheaper to purchase.

Second, at low levels of development, local economies are less complex and more self-

in the population.” By contrast, non-programmatic redistribution is more idiosyncratic, tactical, and is carried out on a case-by-case basis. Political actors who adopt such programs aim to court short-term political support from specific groups or individuals. In the context of elections, which is the focus of this article, the political support manifests itself in voting.

⁶ A well-cited historical example of political machine is Tammany Hall, a political force that dominated the New York city in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries (Stokes et al. 2013). Tammany Hall is a synonym for patronage, hierarchical controls, and corruption.

sufficient such that most residents are subject to clientelistic linkages based on patrimonial relationships (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Local bosses can more easily impose political support as a selection criterion for private benefits than is the case in settings with more developed economies. The lack of both occupational and physical mobility increases the difficulty of weakening patron-client relationships (Kitschelt et al. 2010).

Third, urbanization and industrialization together may weaken interpersonal ties (Durkheim 1965). Using survey data from the Philippines, Cruz (2019) shows that political machines exploit social ties to monitor local residents, who may renege on vote buying agreements given that ballots are secret. Presumably, such network-based monitoring is more effective in rural settings than in cosmopolitan cities, where neighbors may barely know each other.

Fourth, poor residents tend to value non-programmatic benefits more than the rich, probably, because the former are more risk averse (Scott 1977). In particular, risk aversion induces poor residents to prioritize immediately consumable goods over programmatic redistribution available in the distant future. Finally, in poor countries, the bureaucracy is likely too weak and inefficient to deliver programmatic goods, such that local residents have to depend on clientelist exchanges to satisfy their needs.

Recent studies challenge some of these views. Keefer (2006) argues that non-programmatic redistribution is actually more likely to occur when the bureaucracy is efficient and politically neutral, because politicians then need to rely on non-programmatic benefits to claim credits. Keefer (2006) analyzes cross-national data that include more than 100 countries and finds empirical support for his argument. In addition, other studies show that machine politics is not confined to poor countries. Although some mature democracies such as the United Kingdom and the United States have witnessed a decline of electoral clientelism (Camp, Dixit, and Stokes 2014), machine politics remains very much alive in developed countries such as Japan and Italy. As for non-democracies, Ong (2015) provides an interesting account of how the Singaporean government utilizes constituency service to entrench authoritarianism. These examples suggest that when one party dominates the provision of patronage, machine politics can persist at high levels of per capita income.

Maintaining a political machine is a heavy investment. The presence of machine politics in high-income countries suggests that political machines are able to perform important electoral functions that justify their cost. What exactly can these political machines achieve in a setting where votes are no longer cheap to purchase? This remains an underexplored question in extant

studies.

III. Our Argument

Our central argument is that at high income levels, political machines need to offer more personalized services to constituents, as immediately consumable goods unlikely impress voters. Their personalized services meet stronger demand among middle-class residents than their low-income counterparts, partly because the former tend to be more conscious of their rights and partly because they have more complex and idiosyncratic socio-economic needs that the bureaucracy is unable to address, however efficiently it delivers programmatic goods.⁷ In addition, at high income levels, social network-based monitoring cannot be easily used to enforce compliance in the presence of the secret ballot. For this reason, the resources that political machines spend are more likely geared toward turnout buying, rather than vote buying.

We illustrate our argument using the case of post-1997 Hong Kong. We will first present an anecdotal account of machine politics in the city. We will then derive testable implications concerning voter attitudes following from our argument.

IV. Machine Politics in Hong Kong

1. Supply Side: What Parties Offer

Anticipating Hong Kong's sovereignty transfer in 1997, Beijing promised to grant the city a high degree of autonomy based on a principle known as "one country, two systems." After the transfer of sovereignty Hong Kong would be ruled by its citizens rather than by officials from the mainland (Ma and Choy 2003). Hong Kong also would be allowed to preserve free market capitalism, civil liberties and limited political freedom manifested in the popular election of representatives to seats in the legislature (the Legislative Council—LegCo) and the District Councils.

To contest these elections effectively, mainland China needed to cultivate pro-Beijing elements in Hong Kong. The first pro-Beijing party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment

⁷ For instance, in many countries, low-income citizens are less likely to own a vehicle. For this reason, the lack of parking spaces in the community would not be a concern to them.

and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB), was established in 1992. The electoral performance of pro-Beijing parties was unimpressive in the 1990s, largely because the Chinese government's reputation was severely tarnished by the Tiananmen Square incident (Ma and Choy 2003). Operating in an adverse political environment, pro-Beijing parties (collectively known as the pro-establishment camp) adopted a more pragmatic strategy; they downplayed grand ideological narratives and focused on socio-economic appeals involving bespoke non-programmatic benefits delivered by political machines (Wong 2015).

The inner workings of Hong Kong's pro-establishment political machines are opaque, especially when it comes to the role played by the Liaison Office, the highest government agency of the Central Government in Hong Kong, which is widely believed to be the city's "shadow government" (Lo 2008; *Reuters*, June 30, 2014).⁸ Au (2015) provides a fascinating anecdotal account of how in every election the Liaison Office regulates the competition within the constituent parties of the pro-establishment camp in order to maximize the camp's overall electoral chances. The organization power of the pro-establishment political machines manifests itself in the sophisticated intra-camp vote allocation across District Council constituencies during the Legislative Council elections (*Ming Pao Online News*, September 11, 2016).⁹

Our focus in this paper lies not in their vote coordination, but in their interaction with voters, particularly the distribution of non-programmatic benefits. It is worth emphasizing that many pro-democracy opposition parties (the pan-democrats) also distribute goods and benefits to constituents. However, the pan-democrats' political machines pale in comparison with those controlled by pro-Beijing parties, partly because the latter enjoys resource advantages and partly because opposition parties increasingly rely on new social media to target voters. The strategy of pro-Beijing parties has proved successful, as evidenced by their growing strength in the District Councils (see Table 1).

⁸ G. Torode, James Pomfret, and Benjamin Kang Lim, 2014, "Special Report: The Battle for Hong Kong's Soul," *Reuters*, June 30, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-china-specialreport-idUSKBN0F62XU20140702> (accessed May 21, 2019).

⁹ D. Chen, 2016, "Data Journalism: How to Win an Election: A Simulator for Vote-rigging 2016 LegCo Election," *Ming Pao Online News*, September 11, <https://news.mingpao.com/pns/副刊/article/20160911/s00005/1473531083144/> (accessed May 21, 2019).

Table 1 Results of District Council Elections by Political Camp: 2003-2015

Year	Elected DC Seats	Seat Share of Pro-Beijing Parties	Seat Share of Pan-Democratic Parties	Seats Won by Pro-Beijing Parties	Seats Won by Pan-Democratic Parties
2003	400	26.25	33.00	105	132
2007	405	36.30	23.95	147	97
2011	412	47.82	20.15	197	83
2015	431	45.94	22.04	198	95

Source: Electoral Affairs Commission and Authors' Calculation.

Notes: The above figures likely underestimate actual power of the pro-Beijing camp, because they do not include pro-Beijing politicians without a clear party affiliation.

What accounts for the success of the pro-establishment camp? Hong Kong has a vibrant market economy. Unlike many developing countries where the state is a main job provider, Hong Kong citizens are predominantly employed in the private sector. Pro-Beijing parties are unable to make economic security contingent on political loyalty. Nevertheless, they have superior resource advantages over their pan-democratic competitor—pro-Beijing parties can swamp constituents with material benefits. Conventional wisdom suggests that their electoral success is *all* about small giveaways. However, in interviews with District Councilors, we have often heard that small giveaways are insufficient to gain voter support for the following reasons:

- (1) Voters are no longer impressed by small gifts: consumption of small giveaways is no different from the consumption of other goods dictated by the law of diminishing marginal returns.¹⁰ Moreover, unsolicited offers of goods, especially in large quantities, may be perceived as harassment rather than gestures of goodwill;
- (2) Loyalties are uncertain: voters actually seek material benefits from both political camps. Also, Councilors may find it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of material gifts;
- (3) Distribution methods may have unintended consequences: unless a Councilor can supply a popular good to every interested constituent, s/he may upset those who fail to get the item.

A more efficacious way to gain support is to help people with problems they are unable to solve independently. To do so, some Councilors endeavor to develop a “niche” assistance market. For instance, a pro-establishment District Councilor we interviewed regularly offered tutorial courses to teenagers. “Are they eligible voters?” we asked. “Nope, but their moms are,”

¹⁰ A pan-democratic District Councilor used these economic terms to describe the plight of the resource-rich pro-establishment parties.

he replied.¹¹ In another case, a rising star in the Democratic Party established a reputation as a fighter against collusive tendering (*weibiao*) in the renovation of residential buildings. His image is so well-known that residents from other districts seek his assistance (*Inmediahk*, May 17, 2016).¹²

The literature on electoral choice features two major alternative theories of party competition. Downsian theories hold that parties maximize support by positioning themselves at the “ideal point” of the largest segment of the population (Downs 1957). However, Stokes argues that parties typically compete primarily on valence issues where large majorities of voters favor a particular end of public policy (Clarke et al. 2004; Stokes 1963; 1992). The canonical example is a healthy economy. Other important policy areas also are heavily valenced, with substantial majorities demanding easily accessible, high quality health and educational services and high levels of national and personal security. Debate on valence issues focuses not on the “what to do,” but rather on “how to do it” and, especially, “who can do it best.”

A two-time Hong Kong District Councilor we interviewed argues that neither of these models aptly describes how he approaches his constituents.¹³ He does not target a specific ideological segment of his constituency. Nor does he focus on a few valence issues. Instead, he provides bespoke services to multiple groups. For instance, he organizes Chinese opera shows for the elderly and Japanese language courses for people fond of Japanese culture. He even introduced a new “zorb” football game for young people in his district.

Oftentimes, Councilors offer personal help to constituents. One interviewee recounted how he helped a widow pursue compensation for her husband’s death. “I also helped her hold the funeral,” he added.¹⁴ Such personal contacts are analogous to the “deep insertion into voters’ social networks” that Stokes (2005) describes. Those who have received the Councilor’s help likely become loyal supporters. They vote for him and volunteer to help during election campaigns.

However, District Councilors cannot establish strong bonds with every constituent and the secret ballot means that Councilors cannot identify who actually votes for them. The latter is not a serious problem. Although individual support is unknown, aggregate vote shares can

¹¹ Interview March 1, 2013.

¹² Cheuk-ting Lam, 2016, “Anti-collusive Tendering,” *Inmediahk*, May 17, <http://www.inmediahk.net/node/1042391> (accessed May 21, 2019).

¹³ Personal communication October 30, 2015.

¹⁴ Interview March 7, 2013.

be gauged. A DAB District Councilor illustrates how this works.¹⁵ The number of votes he can bring for the LegCo candidate he supports signals constituents' approval of his work: "If I could transfer 80% of those who voted for me to the LegCo candidate, I am in a good shape. If I can only get 50%, I need to worry about my re-election," he explains. These percentages can be estimated with considerable accuracy because the ballot-counting results of Legislative Council elections are available at the polling station level. Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) note that ballot data disaggregated at low levels make *collective monitoring* feasible. With aggregate polling station results, political machines can make fairly accurate assessments of the efficacy of their resource allocations.

Levels of personal interaction between District Councilors and constituents also are correlated with the latter's social class backgrounds. Middle-class people tend to demand more attention from District Councilors. There are two reasons: first, middle-class persons are more capable of articulating their needs and discontents than are poor, uneducated people. Second, requests from relatively well-off residents usually involve more than help to make ends meet. Problems they encounter can be challenging. Indeed, they frequently try to solve problems by themselves first because they value their privacy and do not want the Councilors to know about their affairs. In fact, many of our interviewees agreed that it is not always pleasant to take care of middle-class districts. One junior DAB District Councilor confided that initial interactions with her constituents were stressful because many of them were engineers, doctors, accountants, and lawyers. She said these people gave her little respect, partly due to her young age.¹⁶

Another young pan-democratic District Councilor had similarly unpleasant experiences. He has been queried more than once by residents living in his middle-class district about his education qualifications. Undeterred, the Councilor found that well-off residents have a weak link: time. When bombarded with condescending questions he would first humbly admit his ineptitude. Then he would raise a question, "I know you are smart and capable, but do you have time? I have plenty, and I am here to help you."¹⁷

Indeed, time is often the most important asset of a District Councilor. A pro-establishment Councilor shared an experience with us.¹⁸ Homeowners of two buildings disputed which side

¹⁵ Interview March 1, 2013.

¹⁶ Personal communication February 3, 2016.

¹⁷ Personal communication February 3, 2016.

¹⁸ Interview February 23, 2016.

should be held responsible for removing stagnant water between their buildings. The Councilor was invited to solve the issue. Because both sides were her constituents, she needed to be careful. She spent two weeks pounding the doors of various government departments to determine ownership of the alley at issue. Middle-class residents of the buildings likely had neither the interest nor the time to engage with the problem.

The Councilor's time spent on resolving the issue pales in comparison with another story we heard from a two-time pro-establishment winner. Some residents living in his district were affected by the construction of a new, high-rise hotel. It took him two years to negotiate with different authorities to reduce the height of the hotel from 16 to 6 stories.¹⁹ These examples illustrate how the supply of Councilors' personal assistance meshes with constituent demand.

In sum, the use of political machine is not unique to the pro-establishment camp. What sets the two camps apart is the amount of resources available for building the political machine. The war chest of the pro-establishment camp is far more enormous than that of pan-democratic parties. Pro-establishment parties, however, do not invest their resources solely in the supply of material benefits, because such benefits are not sufficient to impress voters who live in an affluent society. Rather, they focus on the distribution of individualized services,²⁰ which are the key to develop strong bonds with the constituents.

2. Demand Side: How Voters React

The preceding section examined how Hong Kong parties formulate strategies to attract voters through gifts and services—the “supply side” of non-programmatic benefits. In this section, we examine the “demand side”—how voters react to non-programmatic benefits District Councilors provide. Using a large representative post-election Internet survey conducted after the 2015 District Council election, we study relationships between machine politics, political attitudes and voting behavior. In particular, we focus on three substantively important questions:

(1) Who Are Recipients of Non-Programmatic Benefits?

No matter how many non-programmatic benefits political parties provide, the benefits would not affect voting behavior if there were no demand for them. Therefore, it is important to determine the origins of demand. As discussed, existing studies in developing countries demonstrate that poor and illiterate voters are the main targets of machine politics because they

¹⁹ Interview March 10, 2016.

²⁰ It is important to point out that the pan-democratic parties also provide personalized services.

value non-programmatic benefits more than wealthier citizens. In contrast, in Hong Kong the demand for District Councilors' services is not confined to poor people. As discussed above, relatively affluent citizens also seek help from Councilors when existing government services fail to address their needs. This observation suggests two sets of alternative hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Income level is positively correlated with demand for non-programmatic benefits.

(2) How Do Recipients of Non-Programmatic Benefits View Policies/Politics?

In our argument, recipients of non-programmatic benefits are not necessarily different from non-recipients with respect to ideologies. They receive these benefits, especially the personalized services, simply because they have difficulty solving their everyday problems by regular bureaucratic means. There is no theoretical reason to expect that these problems are ex ante correlated with one's political ideology. Our position stands in stark contrast to the common perception of the recipients of non-programmatic goods. Previous research on machine politics assumes that these citizens exchange their votes for material benefits. According to Stokes (2005, 315), machine politics involve an "implicit deal whereby the machine distributes goods and the recipient votes for the machine." This observation implies that recipients value the goods received, at least more than policy or ideological concerns; otherwise, such an exchange would not occur in the first place (see also Aidt and Jensen 2017; Hidalgo and Nichter 2016; Kam 2017; Lawson and Greene 2014). This conventional wisdom leads us to derive the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. There are significant ideological differences between recipients of non-programmatic benefits and non-recipients.

(3) Does the Distribution of Non-Programmatic Benefits Influence Voting Behavior?

By voting behavior, we refer to both *vote choice* and *turnout*. Conventional wisdom suggests that Hong Kong's pro-Beijing parties use non-programmatic benefits to garner political support, although in our interviews we found that parties from both political camps delivered non-programmatic benefits in exchange for votes. Pro-Beijing parties clearly have a resource advantage over their pan-democratic counterparts (Wong 2014; 2015). Thus, we hypothesize that these parties should benefit more from distribution of non-programmatic benefits than pan-democratic parties.

Hypothesis 3. Recipients of non-programmatic benefits are more likely to vote for pro-Beijing parties than pan-democratic parties.

Nichter (2008) argues that machine politics often are intended to buy turnout rather than votes because the secret ballot means that political machines are unable to monitor how recipients vote (see also Aidt and Jensen 2017; Hidalgo and Nichter 2016; Kam 2017; Lawson and Greene 2014). His argument is consistent with our observation in the field; numerous Councilors mentioned the impossibility of ascertaining the effect of their gifts and services on individual vote choices. Yet, as noted, parties can estimate the aggregate effect of their efforts by examining turnout rates of likely supporters. This provides important information parties use to adjust the level of non-programmatic benefits, and hence the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. Recipients of non-programmatic benefits are more likely to vote than non-recipients.

V. Data Analysis

1. Survey Data

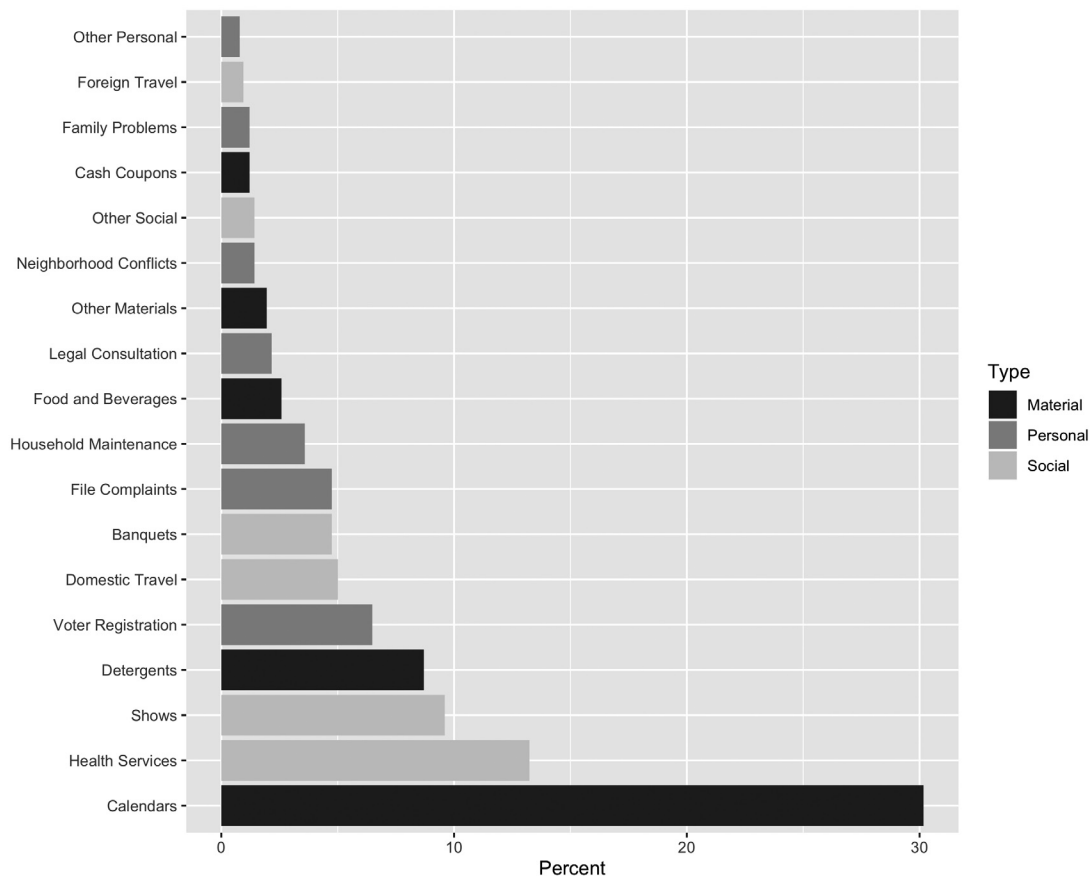
Our survey of the Hong Kong electorate was conducted immediately after the November 2015 District Council election (see Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2014; Sanders et al. 2007).²¹ The survey data include information on 2,160 respondents whose socio-demographic characteristics are displayed in the Appendix, alongside population distributions. A post-stratification weight based on gender, age, and region is used in the regression analyses to adjust for sample bias.

Measurement

Non-programmatic benefits are key variables in our analysis. To measure consumption of these benefits, we focus on three classes of goods: (1) material gifts, (2) social activities and (3) personalized assistance. Social activities include domestic and foreign travel, banquets, health services, concerts and other performances. Material gifts consist of items such as food and beverages, cash coupons, calendars and detergents. Personalized assistance refers to specialized requests such as legal consultation, filing complaints, resolving neighborhood conflicts, tackling family issues, household maintenance, voter registration, and miscellaneous other problems. Across all survey respondents, 51% received at least one of these non-programmatic benefits.

²¹ Fieldwork was conducted via the Internet by YouGov, using an online sample of YouGov panel members in Hong Kong. Extensive comparative analyses indicate that the Internet and in-person surveys yield very similar results in multivariate analyses of turnout and party choice.

The distribution of material, social, and personal benefits is summarized in Figure 1.



Sources: Hong Kong Election Study.

Figure 1 Percentages of Various Kinds of Material, Personal and Social Non-Programmatic Benefits Distributed to the Hong Kong Electorate

Several variables pertaining to non-programmatic benefits are employed in the regression analyses. First are dichotomous variables with the value 1 if a respondent has consumed any social activity, material benefit or personal assistance, respectively, and 0 otherwise. We also construct a summary variable that takes a value 1 if any of the three types of benefits has been consumed and 0 otherwise. In addition, because it is likely that the quantity of goods consumed affects voting behavior, we estimate the amount of benefits received. If one person has participated in day trips, banquets, and free health checks organized by his/her District Councilor, whereas another has only attended Chinese opera shows, we assume that the first person has consumed more benefits than the second.

2. Results

(1) Income Levels and Receipt of Non-Programmatic Benefits

To test Hypothesis 1, we include a number of demographic variables as statistical controls. Existing theories suggest that education and income are strong predictors of the receipt of non-programmatic benefits, partly because the votes of illiterate and poor citizens are cheaper to buy (Blaydes 2006), and partly because such citizens may depend on the largess of political machines. Another factor closely related to income is home ownership. The property market of Hong Kong is historically volatile. Low-skilled workers can become rich by taking advantage of the boom-bust cycle in the property market. Income-rich, asset poor people fare no better than the income-poor, asset-rich (Wong and Wan 2018).

In Hong Kong, there is a popular impression that the political machines of pro-establishment parties target senior citizens, who are more “gullible.” New immigrants also are considered an easy catch for pro-establishment parties because they face challenges in assimilating into society and many lack helpful social connections (Wong, Ma, and Lam 2016; 2018). Based on the above concerns, we include the following predictors in the regression specifications: income, age, gender, education, home ownership, and birthplace. The outcome variable of interest is non-programmatic benefits received by the survey respondents, if any. We report seven regression specifications based on different measures of non-programmatic benefits. We apply a logit regression if the outcome variable is binary and an ordered logit regression if it is an ordinal variable. Table 2 presents the results of the analysis.

As may be seen from the table, the only variable that is statistically significant is income ($p < 0.05$). Consistent with our theoretical expectation (Hypothesis 1), the coefficients on the income variable are positive, suggesting that high-income respondents are more likely to receive non-programmatic benefits. Our finding challenges the conventional wisdom that non-programmatic benefits appeal to low-income citizens more than to the wealthier ones. Note that the effect is also of substantive interest. Converting the coefficient of Specification (1) in probability terms, the chance that high-income respondents (with a monthly income greater than HK\$60,000) receive non-programmatic benefits is 13% higher than low-income respondents (with a monthly income between HK\$10,000 and HK\$19,999).

Table 2 Predictors of Receiving Non-Programmatic Benefits

Estimation Strategy	Logit						
	Nonprogram (Dummy) (1)	Material (Dummy) (2)	Social (Dummy) (3)	Personal (Dummy) (4)	Material (5)	Social (6)	Personal (7)
Income	0.106* (0.041)	0.102* (0.041)	0.208** (0.041)	0.117* (0.051)	0.095* (0.041)	0.209** (0.043)	0.118* (0.050)
Age	0.016 (0.049)	0.017 (0.049)	0.022 (0.053)	-0.112 (0.068)	0.008 (0.048)	0.056 (0.054)	-0.115 (0.068)
Male	0.046 (0.127)	0.158 (0.130)	-0.065 (0.135)	0.049 (0.169)	0.164 (0.127)	-0.044 (0.136)	0.080 (0.167)
Education	-0.052 (0.049)	-0.051 (0.048)	0.043 (0.051)	0.026 (0.057)	-0.035 (0.047)	0.048 (0.052)	0.037 (0.059)
Home owner	0.053 (0.136)	0.142 (0.140)	0.061 (0.147)	0.301 (0.179)	0.222 (0.136)	0.095 (0.150)	0.337 (0.176)
Born in Hong Kong	-0.349 (0.199)	-0.304 (0.200)	-0.291 (0.213)	-0.232 (0.259)	-0.356 (0.196)	-0.279 (0.214)	-0.240 (0.260)
Constant	0.107 (0.325)	-0.612 (0.327)	-1.296** (0.356)	-1.650** (0.410)			
Cut point 1					0.608 (0.323)	1.510** (0.348)	1.743** (0.405)
Cut point 2					2.324** (0.333)	2.160** (0.348)	2.777** (0.392)
Cut point 3					3.431** (0.348)	3.023** (0.356)	3.556** (0.398)
Cut point 4					4.268** (0.401)	4.134** (0.369)	4.369** (0.417)
Cut point 5						5.422** (0.465)	5.244** (0.512)
Cut point 6							5.510** (0.584)
Number of observations	2,140	2,160	2,131	2,145	2,160	2,160	2,160

Sources: Hong Kong Election Study.

Notes: We apply post-stratification adjustment to correct for sample bias. Standard errors are in parentheses. * <.05, ** <.01.

(2) *Ideological Differences between Recipients and Non-Recipients*

Hypothesis 2 is concerned with the ideological differences between recipients and non-recipients of non-programmatic benefits. We focus on five areas: (1) views on democracy, (2) attitudes toward immigrants, (3) attitudes toward mainland China, (4) civic attitudes, and (5) local identity. We measure “views on democracy” using two survey questions asking the respondents to evaluate the following statements: “*Hong Kong has a democratic political system*” and “*Western-style democracy is not suitable for Hong Kong.*” There are also two statements that gauge the respondents’ attitudes toward mainland China: “*Hong Kong has too many immigrants coming from Mainland China*” and “*Closer integration with Mainland China will benefit Hong Kong.*” The former statement is also related to their attitude toward immigrants. As for civic attitude, we use their answer to the statement: “*I would be seriously neglecting my duty as a citizen if I didn’t vote in elections.*” Finally, we measure their local identity using the question that asks them to self-report their identity; we assign a value of “1” if a respondent classifies himself or herself as “*Hong Konger*” and “0” otherwise. Together we have six regression specifications. In all but the last specification, the outcome variables are ordinal, and we estimate them with ordered logit regressions. We apply a logit regression on the last specification, which is concerned with local identity, a dichotomous variable.

We regress each of these attitudes on non-programmatic benefits received, along with other control variables in order to reduce omitted variable bias. Because we have already seen that income is a strong predictor of who receive non-programmatic benefits, we control for respondents’ income. We also control for their age, education, gender, birthplace, home ownership, and political orientation. The regression results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Ideological Differences between Recipients and Non-Recipients of Non-Programmatic Benefits

Dependent Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Hong Kong Has a Democratic Political System	Western-Style Democracy Is Not Suitable for Hong Kong	I Would Be Seriously Neglecting My Duty as a Citizen If I Didn't Vote in Elections	Hong Has Too Many Immigrants Coming from Mainland China	Closer Integration with Mainland China Will Benefit Hong Kong	Self-Identified Hong Kongers	Hong Kong Has a Democratic Political System	Western-Style Democracy Is Not Suitable for Hong Kong	I Would Be Seriously Neglecting My Duty as a Citizen If I Didn't Vote in Elections	Hong Has Too Many Immigrants Coming from Mainland China	Closer Integration with Mainland China Will Benefit Hong Kong	Self-Identified Hong Kongers
Material (Dummy)	0.390** (0.124)	0.008 (0.137)	0.025 (0.132)	0.099 (0.140)	-0.031 (0.139)	0.286 (0.171)						
Social (Dummy)	0.065 (0.143)	0.382** (0.145)	0.233 (0.144)	-0.365* (0.153)	0.256 (0.150)	-0.284 (0.195)						
Personal (Dummy)	0.284 (0.175)	0.122 (0.175)	0.290 (0.157)	0.089 (0.168)	0.015 (0.172)	0.392 (0.225)						
Material							0.189* (0.082)	0.036 (0.100)	0.059 (0.075)	0.114 (0.088)	-0.024 (0.095)	0.216 (0.116)
Social							0.094 (0.077)	0.087 (0.078)	0.105 (0.058)	-0.157 (0.083)	0.130 (0.079)	-0.103 (0.095)
Personal							0.117 (0.129)	0.103 (0.090)	0.112 (0.076)	0.046 (0.078)	-0.004 (0.091)	0.128 (0.109)
Pan-democrat supporter	-0.946** (0.162)	-1.328** (0.152)	1.250** (0.146)	0.804** (0.154)	-1.220** (0.153)	1.027** (0.190)	-0.964** (0.160)	-1.318** (0.152)	1.248** (0.144)	0.799** (0.153)	-1.203** (0.153)	1.015** (0.189)
Pro-Beijing camp supporter	0.893** (0.159)	1.120** (0.192)	0.443** (0.165)	-0.769** (0.158)	1.257** (0.194)	-1.329** (0.209)	0.865** (0.160)	1.128** (0.192)	0.403* (0.167)	-0.763** (0.156)	1.255** (0.193)	-1.280** (0.210)
Born in HK	-0.003 (0.195)	-0.012 (0.178)	-0.100 (0.165)	0.755** (0.195)	0.031 (0.200)	0.498* (0.223)	0.010 (0.190)	-0.001 (0.173)	-0.091 (0.161)	0.783** (0.187)	0.077 (0.198)	0.585** (0.217)
Age	0.125** (0.045)	0.165** (0.049)	0.100* (0.042)	-0.088* (0.044)	0.186** (0.051)	-0.260** (0.055)	0.121** (0.046)	0.161** (0.049)	0.092* (0.042)	-0.080 (0.044)	0.179** (0.051)	-0.257** (0.055)
Male	-0.118 (0.115)	-0.052 (0.122)	0.280* (0.113)	-0.294* (0.121)	0.158 (0.123)	-0.327* (0.147)	-0.118 (0.114)	-0.070 (0.122)	0.291* (0.113)	-0.286* (0.121)	0.141 (0.123)	-0.312* (0.146)

Dependent Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Hong Kong Has a Democratic Political System	Western-Style Democracy Is Not Suitable for Hong Kong	I Would Be Seriously Neglecting My Duty as a Citizen If I Didn't Vote in Elections	Hong Kong Has Too Many Immigrants Coming from Mainland China	Closer Integration with Mainland China Will Benefit Hong Kong	Self-Identified Hong Kongers	Hong Kong Has a Democratic Political System	Western-Style Democracy Is Not Suitable for Hong Kong	I Would Be Seriously Neglecting My Duty as a Citizen If I Didn't Vote in Elections	Hong Kong Has Too Many Immigrants Coming from Mainland China	Closer Integration with Mainland China Will Benefit Hong Kong	Self-Identified Hong Kongers
Education	-0.032 (0.048)	-0.074 (0.047)	0.101* (0.045)	-0.018 (0.048)	0.034 (0.048)	-0.128* (0.053)	-0.037 (0.048)	-0.076 (0.047)	0.098* (0.045)	-0.010 (0.046)	0.035 (0.048)	-0.117* (0.052)
Income	0.033 (0.039)	-0.008 (0.039)	0.001 (0.041)	-0.001 (0.041)	0.062 (0.040)	0.094* (0.045)	0.027 (0.039)	0.002 (0.038)	-0.000 (0.040)	-0.006 (0.040)	0.068 (0.040)	0.087 (0.045)
Home owner	0.153 (0.122)	0.151 (0.138)	0.304* (0.126)	-0.140 (0.128)	0.394** (0.139)	-0.346* (0.152)	0.158 (0.121)	0.117 (0.136)	0.309* (0.125)	-0.151 (0.127)	0.371** (0.137)	-0.337* (0.150)
Constant						1.431** (0.361)						1.301** (0.353)
Cut point 1	-2.466** (0.341)	-1.585** (0.315)	-1.867** (0.324)	-4.503** (0.465)	-1.242** (0.338)		-2.552** (0.338)	-1.646** (0.303)	-1.917** (0.319)	-4.412** (0.448)	-1.245** (0.331)	
Cut point 2	-1.031** (0.331)	-0.202 (0.313)	0.023 (0.303)	-2.935** (0.350)	-0.361 (0.329)		-1.120** (0.328)	-0.257 (0.302)	-0.005 (0.299)	-2.829** (0.337)	-0.347 (0.325)	
Cut point 3	0.852** (0.325)	1.845** (0.321)	1.515** (0.303)	-1.331** (0.329)	1.424** (0.335)		0.779* (0.323)	1.788** (0.311)	1.498** (0.298)	-1.219** (0.316)	1.446** (0.331)	
Cut point 4	3.479** (0.356)	3.837** (0.364)	3.672** (0.331)	0.471 (0.326)	3.773** (0.367)		3.427** (0.353)	3.793** (0.354)	3.662** (0.326)	0.586 (0.313)	3.792** (0.364)	
Number of observations	2,084	2,070	2,075	2,089	2,082	2,122	2,119	2,103	2,110	2,125	2,115	2,160
Estimation strategy	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Ordered Logit	Logit

Sources: Hong Kong Election Study.

Notes: We apply post-stratification adjustment to correct for sample bias. Standard errors are in parentheses. * <.05, ** <.01.

As may be seen from the table, the coefficients on the variables of interest are statistically insignificant in general. Here we report only coefficients that are statistically different from zero. Recipients of material benefits are more likely to agree that Hong Kong has a democratic political system, regardless of whether we measure material benefits as a dummy or an ordinal variable. Those who participated in social activities organized by District Councillors are more likely to believe that democracy in the West is not suitable for Hong Kong. They also tend not to agree with the statement that Hong Kong has too many immigrants from mainland China. Note that none of the other coefficients on the variables of interest is a significant predictor of political attitudes. When estimating the effects of interest using ordinal non-programmatic benefits, only the coefficient on material benefits is statistically significant in one specification (Specification (7)). Taken together, we find little evidence for Hypothesis 2.

As for the control variables, income is generally not correlated with the political attitudes that we examine. The coefficient on this variable is significant in only one specification that is related to local identity. By contrast, political orientation and age are strong predictors of political attitudes. The coefficients on these variables are consistent with expectations. In particular, pan-democrat supporters and younger people are less likely to view Hong Kong's political system as democratic, more averse to mainland immigrants and economic integration with mainland China, and more likely to identify themselves as Hong Kongers. The obverse is true for the supporters of the pro-Beijing camp and older citizens.

(3) Non-Programmatic Benefits and Voting Behavior

We first examine whether receipt of benefits influences voting measured as turnout and support for pro-democratic and pro-establishment candidates. The turnout variable takes a value of 1 if a respondent voted in the 2015 District Council election and 0 otherwise. Similarly, the two vote choice variables have a value of 1 if a respondent voted for a pro-establishment (pan-democratic) candidate and 0 otherwise.

For each outcome variable, we run three specifications, which differ in how the variables of interest measured. The first specification lumps all non-programmatic benefits together as a single category, while the second one includes finer categories of these benefits as dummy variables. The last specification uses an ordinal variable for each type of non-programmatic benefits. To reduce omitted variable bias, we control for political orientation and the same set of demographic variables as in Table 3.

Model parameters are estimated with logistic regression and results are presented in Table 4

(Mitchell 2012).²² To begin, it is noteworthy that the benefit variables are significant predictors of voter turnout. Regardless of how we measure non-programmatic benefits, the benefit variables have sizable and statistically significant effects on electoral participation. Converting the coefficient on the benefit variable in model 1 into probability of voting shows that, *ceteris paribus*, those who obtained non-programmatic benefits are 21% more likely to go to the polls than are people who did not receive any benefit. This finding is consistent with Hypothesis 4.

²² Analyses are performed using Stata 14's *svy* logistic regression procedure. Probabilities of voting are computed using Stata's *MARGINS* command with each predictor variable varied across its range while other predictors are held at their mean values.

Table 4 Non-Programmatic Benefits and Voting Behavior

Dependent Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Turnout		Vote Pro-Establishment			Vote Pan-Democratic			
Non-programmatic benefits	1.144** (0.146)			0.186 (0.216)			-0.329 (0.210)		
Material (dummy)		0.529** (0.176)			-0.133 (0.261)			-0.351 (0.231)	
Social (dummy)		0.822** (0.204)			-0.056 (0.291)			0.113 (0.238)	
Personal (dummy)		1.141** (0.238)			0.609* (0.283)			-0.176 (0.244)	
Material			0.367** (0.130)			0.073 (0.137)			-0.211 (0.127)
Social			0.516** (0.117)			-0.061 (0.104)			0.122 (0.108)
Personal			0.624** (0.207)			0.157 (0.114)			0.038 (0.116)
Pan-democrat supporter	1.296** (0.165)	1.318** (0.170)	1.300** (0.169)	-2.181** (0.340)	-2.147** (0.337)	-2.187** (0.343)	1.827** (0.217)	1.825** (0.217)	1.814** (0.214)
Pro-Beijing camp supporter	0.893** (0.235)	0.828** (0.244)	0.843** (0.245)	2.246** (0.253)	2.282** (0.257)	2.248** (0.256)	-1.679** (0.399)	-1.670** (0.397)	-1.688** (0.397)
Born in HK	-0.107 (0.227)	-0.165 (0.229)	-0.108 (0.228)	-0.880** (0.310)	-0.835** (0.305)	-0.862** (0.307)	-0.046 (0.324)	-0.044 (0.325)	0.009 (0.325)
Age	0.339** (0.058)	0.366** (0.060)	0.359** (0.060)	0.087 (0.083)	0.105 (0.084)	0.107 (0.082)	-0.094 (0.081)	-0.095 (0.080)	-0.096 (0.080)
Male	0.334* (0.146)	0.316* (0.149)	0.343* (0.146)	0.210 (0.224)	0.192 (0.227)	0.187 (0.226)	-0.077 (0.204)	-0.047 (0.203)	-0.062 (0.202)
Education	0.073 (0.055)	0.046 (0.056)	0.043 (0.055)	-0.056 (0.079)	-0.064 (0.081)	-0.066 (0.080)	-0.045 (0.077)	-0.044 (0.077)	-0.038 (0.077)
Income	0.024 (0.048)	0.015 (0.048)	0.004 (0.048)	0.043 (0.067)	0.055 (0.067)	0.048 (0.066)	0.034 (0.064)	0.025 (0.063)	0.013 (0.064)
Home owner	0.681** (0.160)	0.628** (0.162)	0.601** (0.161)	0.187 (0.227)	0.104 (0.234)	0.143 (0.234)	-0.441 (0.225)	-0.409 (0.223)	-0.437* (0.223)
Constant	-2.262** (0.374)	-2.140** (0.375)	-2.109** (0.372)	-1.016 (0.612)	-1.033 (0.597)	-0.983 (0.595)	-0.460 (0.588)	-0.529 (0.587)	-0.641 (0.584)
Number of observations	1,928	1,915	1,941	1,208	1,200	1,210	1,208	1,200	1,210

Sources: Hong Kong Election Study.

Notes: We apply post-stratification adjustment to correct for sample bias. Standard errors are in parentheses. * <.05, ** <.01.

Another noteworthy finding is that among all non-programmatic benefits, the most powerful predictor of turnout is personal benefits. Material benefits have the smallest effect, a finding consistent with our qualitative fieldwork indicating that material benefits fail to impress many Hong Kongers. Also, as demonstrated by Specification (3), the quantity of non-programmatic benefits obtained matters. All coefficients for the variables of interest are positive, indicating that the more non-programmatic benefits that one receives, the more likely one would go to the polls.

As for the control variables, political orientation is also a strong predictor of turnout. Respondents with a clear political orientation are more likely to vote than those without, a result that is not surprising. Turnout is also higher among male respondents, homeowners, and older respondents, as the coefficients on these variables are all positive and significant. Birthplace, income, and education levels have little predictive power.

Next, we consider the effects of non-programmatic benefits on vote choice. As observed, pro-Beijing parties enjoy resource advantages over their pan-democratic counterparts. If pro-Beijing parties provide more non-programmatic benefits than other parties and those who receive such benefits are more likely to vote, one would expect a significant relationship between non-programmatic benefits and voting for pro-Beijing parties. As may be seen from the table, Specifications (4), (5) and (6) provide limited support for the idea that pro-establishment candidates are advantaged by non-programmatic benefits more their pan-democratic counterparts—the only predictor with a significant coefficient is personal benefits (Specification (5)). When we measure personal benefit as a polychotomous variable, its coefficient is no longer significant (Specification (6)). Other coefficients are not significant and some do not have the expected (positive) sign. Thus, we find little empirical evidence for Hypothesis 3. In Models 7, 8, and 9, the dependent variable is pan-democratic voting. Again, there is no consistent sign for the coefficients on the variables of interest and their estimated effects are not statistically significant ($p > .05$).²³

For the control variables, political identification is again a significant predictor. Table 3 shows that voters who identify themselves with the pan-democratic camp are less likely to support pro-establishment parties, and vice versa ($p < .01$). Birthplace matters as well—native Hong Kongers are less likely to vote for pro-establishment parties, the result of which is

²³ To check robustness of the results, we analyze the data in Table 3 using multinomial logit regression. The results, which are available upon request, are highly similar. In particular, non-programmatic benefits, no matter how we measure them, are significant predictors of turnout only.

consistent with the findings based on other survey data (see Wong, Ma, and Lam 2016; 2018).

The results in this subsection support our argument that in an affluent society such as Hong Kong, where votes are too expensive to purchase, non-programmatic benefits distributed by political machines can at most encourage voter turnout. It is unlikely that they can change the recipients' vote choice. In addition, some non-programmatic benefits are more useful than the others in buying turnout. Immediately consumable goods are the least attractive ones, while social activities and personalized services show larger effects.

VI. Conclusion

Existing studies in machine politics often portray voters as passive, pliable, and ready to sell their votes for perks and privileges, food and liquor. Political machines are characterized as powerful organizations penetrating deep into voters' social networks, providing largess that voters would otherwise not have. At times, these organizations may be able to punish disloyal supporters by withdrawing benefits. This portrait of machine politics is largely based on studies of impoverished developing countries where voters, especially those in rural areas, tend to be poor and uneducated. How do political machines operate in more affluent societies? How do such regimes use its resources to co-opt urban or middle-class voters? Above, we have attempted to answer these questions using the District Councils in post-1997 Hong Kong as a case study to illustrate the dynamics of machine politics in an affluent non-democracy.

A striking feature of the Hong Kong case is that the power relationship between voters and the ruling coalition is quite different from that observed in previous studies. Because non-programmatic benefits offered by political machines are not vital to Hong Kongers' livelihoods, these grassroots organizations typically cannot coerce people to vote, let alone require them to support particular candidates. This is not an argument that the distribution of non-programmatic benefits in Hong Kong is ineffective. Rather, to attract sizable numbers of voters, Hong Kong parties organize a diverse set of social activities and offer highly customized personal assistance to forge close connections with their constituents.

An important finding is that levels of income and education have little predictive power in analyses of receipt of non-programmatic benefits. This is also related to the affluence of Hong Kong's society, where basic welfare is accessible to many low-income citizens such that they need not depend on the largess of political machines. Government agencies provide regular and

formal channels to help less well-off persons make ends meet. In contrast, middle-class people often need to turn to District Councilors to solve idiosyncratic problems that lack simple, one-stop solutions. Indeed, our survey data testify that the probability of seeking personal help from District Councilors is positively related to income level.

In addition, we find that receipt of non-programmatic benefits is strongly correlated with turnout, but not vote choice. Because the ballot is secret and voters' livelihoods are not dependent on non-programmatic benefits, the ruling coalition faces challenges in securing compliance. It is almost impossible to ensure that someone who receives goods from a party machine actually votes for that party. Recognizing this, some earlier studies have argued that a rational strategy is to distribute goods to groups containing large proportions of likely loyalists. In effect, non-programmatic benefits are used to buy turnout among groups of probable supporters, rather than individual-level votes. Our analyses are consistent with this argument.

Viewed generally, present findings shed light on important developments in Hong Kong politics. The increasingly volatile pro-democracy struggle, highlighted by the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2016 Mongkok riot, has attracted strong media and scholarly interest (Cheng 2016; Yuen 2018). However, little attention has been paid to the growing strength of pro-Beijing parties in local elections. Pro-democracy media and activists alike tend to attribute their rival's electoral success to the provision of material benefits, with pro-Beijing parties capitalizing on their overwhelming resource advantage to distribute small giveaways to large numbers of politically apathetic and gullible voters. This interpretation is problematic. As we show in this article, the most effective tool to increase electoral support is not material gifts, but individualized constituency services. If constituency services are considered as a good democratic practice that embodies the ideal of representation, the findings of this article suggest an inconvenient truth that confronts members of Hong Kong's opposition elite—their pro-Beijing rivals are adapting to the game rules of democratic elections, using a legitimate means (i.e. constituency services) to develop solid, possibly increasing support among politically influential segments of the electorate.

Finally, a caveat is in order. We do not claim that the machine politics is the sole reason behind pro-Beijing parties' success in District Council elections. Wong (2019) provides empirical evidence that gerrymandering has also undermined the electoral performance of opposition parties. In addition, the empirical analysis in this article is based on a public opinion survey conducted after the 2015 District Council election. We would not rule out the possibility

that non-significant results are due to the limited scope of the data and the idiosyncratic shock pertaining to that particular election. Researchers may verify the claims that we make here with more data collected in future elections.

* * *

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Appendix A Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Survey Sample and Hong Kong Population

Age	Gender	Voting Population					Sample				
		HK Island	Kowloon West	Kowloon East	New Territories West	New Territories East	HK Island	Kowloon West	Kowloon East	New Territories West	New Territories East
18-25	M	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%
	F	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	5%	4%
26-35	M	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%	3%
	F	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	3%
36-45	M	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%
	F	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	3%
46-55	M	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%
	F	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%	3%
55+	M	4%	3%	3%	5%	5%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	F	4%	3%	4%	5%	5%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Note: sample size N = 2,160.

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大量提供個人化服務：香港的「機器政治」

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《本文摘要》

政治機器的建立，是爲了利益分配、爭取支持和影響選舉結果。現有的文獻認爲政治機器一般會籠絡貧窮與教育水平低的選民，因爲他們的選票相對便宜。本論文以香港爲例，審視當地的執政聯盟有多大程度在選舉中利用非政策綱領的利益 (non-programmatic benefits)，來爭取貴得難以收買的選票。通過訪問當地的議員和分析 2015 年《香港選舉研究》的數據，我們發現 (1) 親北京的政黨傾向提供高度個人化的服務；(2) 需要這些個人化服務的市民，一般都不貧窮；(3) 因爲不能監控個人如何投票，親北京的政黨只能利用服務和利益來影響收益者投與不投的決定，而不是投給誰的選擇。這些發現反映親北京政黨長期的得票增長，是來自他們回應了特定選民的訴求。

關鍵詞：特定選民服務、非政策綱領的利益、香港選舉、機器政治、親北京政黨

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