



## *Social Work and Social Change*

### *A Profile of the Activist Social Workers in Hong Kong*

Chack-kie Wong

#### Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

The Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies was established in September 1990 to promote multidisciplinary social science research on social, political and economic development. Research emphasis is placed on the role of Hong Kong in the Asia-Pacific region and the reciprocal effects of the development of Hong Kong and the Asia-Pacific region.

Director : Yeung Yue-man, PhD(*Chic.*), Professor of Geography

Associate Director : Lau Siu-kai, PhD(*Minn.*), Professor of Sociology

HK\$30.00

ISBN 962-441-027-5

香港亞太研究所

**Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies**

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Shatin, New Territories

Hong Kong

**Social Work and Social Change**  
**A Profile of the Activist Social Workers**  
**in Hong Kong**

Chack-kie Wong

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Shatin, New Territories  
Hong Kong

### About the author

Chack-kie Wong is a Lecturer in the Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

### Acknowledgements

I have to thank the Social Science and Education Panel of The Chinese University of Hong Kong for funding this research project. I also wish to thank Dr C.K. Law for his advice on the questionnaire and data analysis, Dr D.L. Shek for his comments on an earlier version of this manuscript and Ms S.M. Hsu for her assistance in data processing. Last but not the least, the assistance and cooperation of social work agencies and social workers in returning their staff-lists and the completed questionnaires respectively are very much appreciated.

Opinions expressed in the publications of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies are the authors'. They do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute.

© 1993 Chack-kie Wong  
ISBN 962-441-027-5

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the author.

## Social Work and Social Change A Profile of the Activist Social Workers in Hong Kong

### Abstract

These are the main findings of a questionnaire research exploring work attitudes of social workers in Hong Kong. Social work activism was used as the theme for discussion about the relationship between social work and social change. The research identified a fairly strong support of the use of non-institutionalised conflict strategies for social change amongst Hong Kong's social workers. Those social workers who perceived their working responsibility as organising client groups by the use of contest and disruptive tactics, a non-institutionalised conflict strategy, were not penalised for their commitment to social change; and they were equally satisfied with their job and career prospects as their fellow members of the profession. This manuscript looks into the professional, agency and societal contexts for the explanation of the unprejudiced environment for activist social workers, and further explores the prospect of social workers as social advocates in Hong Kong.

### Introduction

This is a report of a questionnaire research on social workers' work attitudes conducted in early 1992. The research aims at understanding social workers' attitudes towards welfare, intervention strategies, agency context, job satisfaction and career prospect. The report has used social work activism as the theme to relate to all these areas of exploration. Social work activists are identified and singled out to compare with other social workers in an attempt to unveil their differences. Social work activism was selected on the basis that social work has a historic commitment to social reform and the poor. However, as some research findings in the West have suggested that social work innovators, particularly social reformers, are not rewarded for their missionary zeal, the

fate of social work activism has always been an issue of interest in the social work profession.

The research extends the exploration about social work activism into social workers' personal use of organisational skills and the kind of agency they are working for. Such an extension postulates that the environment in which social workers are working and the ways social workers interact with it should be influential in affecting their job and career. In presenting the collected data, this report has also placed social work activism into Hong Kong's political and economic context. Thus, the working environment in which social workers are contextualised does not only include their employing agencies; the society also plays a significant part in affecting how they adopt their intervention strategies. With this contextualisation, it is postulated that social work activism has its root in the society.

### Agency Constraints on Social Work Practice

Social workers are predominantly working within an agency context, they often lack the autonomy enjoyed by independent professional practitioners such as doctors or lawyers. For instance, they might have to be accountable to their donors who are less agreeable to their radical social change strategies. This suggests that they have an inherent incapacity for professional autonomy (Reisch and Wenocur, 1986, p.76). In this regard, it seems that social workers are confronted by a paradox between meeting the survival need of their working agency and meeting their clients' need through social reform. That being the case, social workers might not readily accept their colleagues who endorse the use of radical social change strategies, despite social work profession having grown out of social reform movements (Wilensky and Lebeaux, 1965; Fabricant, 1985): Activist social workers might be seen as rocking the boat of the social work profession as well as damaging the funding source of their employing agency. Henceforth, activist social workers might not be welcomed by their

colleagues. Thus, there is a high possibility that activist social workers do not have a promising job and career prospect. As an illustration, Wagner's (1989, p.13) ethnographic study found that social workers with idealism had experiences of negative career history and tended to limit their goals for upward mobility. In other words, activist social workers might be penalized for their commitment to social change. Then, it is not surprising to know that the National Association of Social Workers of the United States once reported that only 2% of the Master of Social Work graduates were serving in projects related to the elimination of poverty (Hardcastle and Katz, 1979).

Apparently, the above discussion has polarized social workers' commitment to social change with their agency's survival need. This might be a simplistic assumption. Indeed, social workers can be both reform-minded as well as accepted by their agency. There are three possible conditions which lead to such a compromising position. Firstly, the funding bodies might regard social reform as a plausible strategy for pacifying social grievances or preventing social problems from happening. Secondly, the social work profession might accept social reform activities as a legitimate part of its practice. Thirdly, agencies which employ activist social workers are liberal enough to accept the radical social change strategies.

On the basis of the above discussion, it seems that despite the predominantly conservative nature of the funding for social work services, activist social workers might not be necessarily stigmatized by their colleagues and have poor job and career prospects.

### Contextualising Hong Kong Social Workers' Reform Orientations

In the 1970s and 1980s, social workers in Hong Kong were characterised by their radical means in confronting the colonial establishment for the betterment of the poor and the deprived sector.

Numerous resident groups were formed to articulate lower class interests in a political system dominated by a small group of government bureaucrats in collaboration with a few selected local elites. Since the early 1980s, the development of representative government in this city-state has become a formal agenda as an effort to enable local participation in preparation for the transition to 1997. The first direct elections of Hong Kong's legislature were held in 1991 as a result of which one-third of the councillors were popularly elected. Nevertheless, radical social actions are still regarded as an essential non-institutionalised means to convey the interests of the deprived and lower socio-economic classes.

On the economic front, Hong Kong has gained enormous achievements: in 1992 it became the tenth leading exporting country; its GDP per capita was estimated to reach US\$16,000, which is an amount likely to surpass Singapore, Australia, New Zealand in the Asia Pacific rim and some countries in South Europe. However, social development has lagged far behind its economic growth. For instance, in 1991 the Gini-coefficient was recorded at 0.48, a figure much worse than the 0.45 in 1981 (*Ming Pao*, 3 December 1992). In terms of distribution of household income, in 1991 the bottom 20% of households shared only 4.3% of the total income as compared with 4.6% in 1981; whilst in 1991 the richest 20% of households had 52.8% of the total income as compared with 50.4% in 1981. Moreover, in 1991 the richest 20% households got 12.28 times the income of the bottom 20% of households; whilst in 1981 they only had 10.96 times (*ibid.*). Despite the fact that Hong Kong had attained enormous economic growth, social inequality worsened over the last decade. Within such a political and economic context, social workers might find their activist colleagues more acceptable. Social change strategies might be regarded as an effective means in changing the environment for the betterment of the poor and the lower socio-economic classes. This is on the assumption that radical social change strategies are justified in a society with enormous social inequalities.

Apart from this, the colonial government might use social

workers' reform activities as an indirect control mechanism in preventing social grievances from worsening. An indicator of this latter mechanism is Hong Kong government's sponsorship of non-governmental organisations' reform-oriented community organisation projects, known as Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects, to serve designated deprived areas such as squatter areas, cottage areas, government-built temporary housing areas. In January 1992, there were 51 such projects, each staffed by three community organisers, serving 105 deprived areas with a population of 233,347, which was about 4.2% of Hong Kong's total population. It seems that state-funded community organisation projects in Hong Kong have not shared the fate of the British community development projects in the 1970s. The latter were closed down when they turned to criticism of their government sponsors (Corkey and Craig, 1978; Loney, 1981, p.65).

It can be argued that social inequality might sensibly justify the use of radical social change strategies. The state's patronizing of community organisation projects provides an important arena where social workers are involved directly in social change activities. This might also have a positive effect on how social workers in Hong Kong perceive their activist colleagues: social work activism is a legitimate part of social work practice. Undoubtedly, the acceptance of social reform as a part of social work commitment by the social work profession is important for reform-oriented social workers. If activist social workers are working within a professional environment unprejudiced to their practice strategies, their job and career situations will less likely be affected.

## Defining Activist Social Workers

Modern societies usually provide institutionalised channels for the processing of conflict and discontent through formal and legitimate structures. For those who do not believe in or those who have exhausted the existing structures, they can resort to

non-institutionalised ones. For both kinds of channels, social workers can either use conflict- or consensus-oriented strategies. Altogether, social workers can use four types of social change strategies: institutionalised consensus, non-institutionalised consensus, institutionalised conflict and non-institutionalised conflict (Epstein, 1968). Assuming that consensus and institutionalised strategies are more likely to be accepted than conflict and non-institutionalised ones, social workers who use both conflict and non-institutionalised strategies can be classified as activist social workers. In more specific terms, they can be defined as those social workers who support and organise client groups in the attempt to influence the process and outcome of the distribution of social resources, status and power through contest or disruptive tactics such as holding petitions and protesting at the authorities concerned. Organising client groups for social change is one of the non-institutionalised conflict strategies in Epstein's (1968) typology; whereas supporting client groups for social change is another. Nevertheless, the latter is a rather mild form of non-institutionalised conflict strategy because the support that social workers offer can be in the form of advice without being themselves involved in the direct organisation. Thus, they can be less "activist" in terms of observable action. Henceforth, a more stringent criterion should be chosen in defining activist social workers to the use of the strategy of organising client groups.

Furthermore, activist working responsibility should not be equal to activist attitude. Activist social workers should be those who perceive their working responsibility as organising their client groups by the use of contest and disruptive tactics, but social workers with activist views may work in an agency committed to conservative social work practice. Practicing activist social workers might just regard their social change activities simply as a working responsibility which might not be congruent with their personal value orientations. If that were the case, it would be interesting to see to what extent activist social workers believe in their radical social action.

Activist social workers are working within an environmental

context to which they are not only reactive but can also have a choice in the way they interact with it. In this light, what they regard as desirable may affect their use of radical social change strategies. Thus, social values generally regarded as organising principles in affecting people's behaviours and actions come to play. However, there is always a discrepancy between social workers' social values and their actions. This discrepancy can be explained by many factors, such as their relationships with superiors and peers, the service orientation of their employing agency as well as their skills in handling these relationships. If activist social workers are skillful enough in handling their relationships with superiors and peers or if they are working in an agency with flexible orientation towards client needs, their radical social change strategies are more likely to be accepted. Moreover, activist social workers are likely to look for employment in an agency with a change-facilitative orientation. Otherwise, it would be difficult for them to perform their duty. Last and most important of all, if activist social workers do have a non-prejudiced working environment, they would have job satisfaction and career prospect similar to their fellow colleagues.

### Identifying Activist Social Workers in Hong Kong

A self-administered questionnaire research was conducted to explore the above areas. The target group of this research was practicing social workers in Hong Kong at various ranks with a degree in social work (including post-graduate diploma in social work).<sup>1</sup> In this questionnaire research, respondents were asked in their actual working situation, to what extent they saw it a part of their responsibility to meet the needs of client by Epstein's typology of various social change strategies (Table 1.1). Admittedly, the respondents' perception of working responsibility might be different from those of their agencies or their supervisors. Besides, their perception might also be affected by their social values. Apparently, it is a limitation of this method. Thus, we have to be

cautious not to fully equate their perception as their "actual" working responsibility.

**Table 1.1** Perception of Social Change Strategies as a Working Responsibility (%)

| Questions  | Agree<br>(St.A/A/SA)    | U/N  | Disagree<br>(SD/D/St.D) | (N)   |
|--|-------------------------|------|-------------------------|-------|
| <b>Institutionalised consensus</b>   |                         |      |                         |       |
| The strategy of knowledge:   |                         |      |                         |       |
| Identifying new evidence of social needs and social problems for the consideration of concerned authorities.                   | 86.1<br>(5.1/50.3/30.7) | 6.9  | 7.1<br>(4.2/2.5/0.4)    | (961) |
| <b>Non-institutionalised consensus</b>   |                         |      |                         |       |
| The strategy of lobbying:  |                         |      |                         |       |
| Communicating with concerned officials through letters or using personal contacts with them.                                   | 79.9<br>(4.3/43.1/32.5) | 9.9  | 10.2<br>(5.1/4.4/0.7)   | (959) |
| <b>Institutionalised conflict</b>  |                         |      |                         |       |
| The strategy of political campaign:  |                         |      |                         |       |
| Involvement in the campaign of political candidates for working through political parties/groups that favour proposed reforms. | 31.9<br>(0.7/11.6/19.6) | 25.2 | 43.0<br>(17.3/18.9/6.8) | (960) |
| The strategy of filing complaints:   |                         |      |                         |       |
| Encouraging clients to file complaints through formal channels to concerned authorities.                                       | 79.6<br>(5.8/44.8/29.0) | 9.5  | 10.9<br>(4.6/4.8/1.5)   | (961) |
| <b>Non-institutionalised conflict</b>  |                         |      |                         |       |
| The strategy of supporting client groups:  |                         |      |                         |       |
| Offering support to client groups that request help in organising petitions and protests to concerned authorities.             | 52.6<br>(3.0/21.9/27.7) | 19.2 | 28.2<br>(11.8/12.3/4.1) | (959) |

**Table 1.1** (Continued)

The strategy of organising client groups:

|   |                         |      |                         |       |
|---|-------------------------|------|-------------------------|-------|
| Actively organising client groups to conduct petitions and protests to concerned authorities. | 29.6<br>(1.7/10.2/17.7) | 27.6 | 42.8<br>(14.8/19.5/8.5) | (957) |
|---|-------------------------|------|-------------------------|-------|

Alpha Reliability = 0.7976.

St.A/A/SA = Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat agree.

U/N = Uncertain/Neutral.

SD/D/St.D = Somewhat disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

In this sample of respondents, 86.1% agreed that they perceived the strategy of knowledge, an institutionalised consensus strategy, as their working responsibility (Table 1.1). The strategy of lobbying as another consensus strategy, but a non-institutionalised one, was perceived by 79.9% of the respondents as their working responsibility. Generally speaking, a strong majority of the respondents perceived both kinds of consensus strategy as their working responsibility. However, a much lesser percentage of 31.9 respondents agreed to the use of political campaign, an institutionalised conflict strategy, as their working responsibility. On the contrary, the strategy of filing complaints, as another institutionalised conflict strategy, had a much higher agreement rate of 79.6%. The difference between both kinds of institutionalised conflict strategies could be explained by the closed political system of Hong Kong at the time of the survey: political groups and parties were new establishments and social workers were not accustomed to using them as a viable channel for social reform. Under the category of non-institutionalised conflict strategies, the first one being the strategy of supporting client groups, only 52.6% of the respondents agreed that they perceived it as their working responsibility, whilst a much lower percentage of 29.6 of the respondents agreed that they perceived the second strategy of organising client groups to conduct petitions and

protests as their working responsibility. It was this latter group of the social workers who were classified as activist social workers.

Table 1.2 provides the actual counts of the sample who perceived the strategy of organising client groups as their working responsibility. There were 283 (29.5%) of them who either strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed to this strategy as their working responsibility; on the other hand, there were 264 (27.4%) who chose the uncertain answer whilst another 410 respondents (42.6%) either strongly disagreed, disagreed or somewhat disagreed to the strategy. The latter two groups of respondents were classified in this study as the "other" social workers in order to distinguish them from "activist" social workers. However, it is necessary to note that some of these "other" social workers might support non-institutionalised conflict strategies but not this particular strategy of organising client groups.

**Table 1.2** Perception of the Strategy of Organising Client Groups as Working Responsibility

|                   | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Activists</b>  |           |            |
| Strongly agree    | 16        | 1.7        |
| Agree             | 98        | 10.2       |
| Somewhat agree    | 169       | 17.6       |
| Sub-total         | (283)     | (29.5)     |
| <b>Others</b>     |           |            |
| Uncertain         | 264       | 27.4       |
| Somewhat disagree | 142       | 14.8       |
| Disagree          | 187       | 19.4       |
| Strongly disagree | 81        | 8.4        |
| Sub-total         | (674)     | (70.0)     |
| Missing           | 5         | 0.5        |
| Total             | 962       | 100.0      |

In actual fact, there are other alternatives to define activist social workers. Apart from expanding the group of activist social workers to include those who perceive the strategy of supporting client groups as their working responsibility as well, activist social workers could be stringently interpreted as those who strongly agreed or agreed to the strategy of organising client groups. In adopting this latter approach, only 114 respondents (11.9%) of the sample (Table 1.2) would be defined as activist social workers, and the sample would become too small for cross tabulation.

Furthermore, if we go back to Table 1.1 which illustrates the perception of Hong Kong social workers about various social change strategies, only two strategies were perceived by less than 50% of social workers in the sample as a working responsibility: the strategy of organising client groups and the strategy of political campaign. The lower percentage regarding the strategy of political campaign has already been explained as attributed by Hong Kong's closed political system and its early stage of democratization. Thus, it was assumed that if Hong Kong were to have an open and democratic political system, endorsement rate of the strategy of political campaign as a common social change practice would be higher. In this light, what was left was the strategy of organising client groups which had the lowest endorsement rate of 29.5%.<sup>2</sup>

To conclude, given the above considerations, it was regarded as more appropriate to classify activist social workers by the strategy of organising client groups even though those social workers who perceived the use of the other non-institutionalised conflict strategy of supporting client groups as their working responsibility were left out.

### Basic Attributes of Activist Social Workers

On the basis of this definition of activist social workers, we move to examine their basic attributes. Table 2.1 provides an analysis of activist social workers by service types. They were ranked by the



**Table 2.1** Activist Social Workers by Service Types (%)

| Service Types  |     | Activists | Others | (N)      |
|--|-----|-----------|--------|----------|
| <b>Community work</b>                                    | Yes | 68.7      | 31.3   | (67)***  |
|  | No  | 26.7      | 73.3   | (881)    |
| (Chi-square=50.62770, D.F.=1, P=0.0000)                  |     |           |        |          |
| <b>Rehabilitation</b>                                    | Yes | 40.8      | 59.2   | (71)*    |
|  | No  | 28.7      | 71.3   | (877)    |
| (Chi-square=4.05685, D.F.=1, P=0.0440)                   |     |           |        |          |
| <b>Children and youth</b>                                | Yes | 38.9      | 61.1   | (265)*** |
|  | No  | 26.1      | 73.9   | (683)    |
| (Chi-square=14.40631, D.F.=1, P=0.0001)                  |     |           |        |          |
| <b>Other service types</b>                               | Yes | 29.0      | 71.0   | (31)     |
|  | No  | 29.7      | 70.3   | (917)    |
| (Chi-square=0.0000, D.F.=1, P=1.0000)                    |     |           |        |          |
| <b>Offenders/Drug abusers</b>                            | Yes | 26.9      | 73.1   | (67)     |
|  | No  | 29.9      | 70.1   | (881)    |
| (Chi-square=0.14237, D.F.=1, P=0.7059)                   |     |           |        |          |
| <b>Elderly</b>   | Yes | 24.0      | 76.0   | (50)     |
|  | No  | 30.0      | 70.0   | (898)    |
| (Chi-square=0.54522, D.F.=1, P=0.4603)                   |     |           |        |          |
| <b>Central administration/<br/>planning/coordination</b> | Yes | 22.4      | 77.6   | (98)     |
|  | No  | 30.5      | 69.5   | (850)    |
| (Chi-square=2.34010, D.F.=1, P=0.1261)                   |     |           |        |          |
| <b>Family and child welfare</b>                          | Yes | 19.6      | 80.4   | (326)*** |
|  | No  | 34.9      | 65.1   | (622)    |
| (Chi-square=23.14344, D.F.=1, P=0.0000)                  |     |           |        |          |
| <b>Medical social work</b>                               | Yes | 13.5      | 86.5   | (89)***  |
|  | No  | 31.3      | 68.7   | (859)    |
| (Chi-square=11.45615, D.F.=1, P=0.0007)                  |     |           |        |          |

\* P less than 0.05.

\*\*\* P less than 0.001.

percentages of activist social workers in each service type. Community work had the highest ranking, 68.7% of community workers in the sample were activists. It was followed by the rehabilitation and children and youth services which had 40.8% and 38.9% of their workers respectively as activists. These three service groups had a percentage higher than the 29.5% of activist social workers in our sample (Table 1.2). Of the remaining service groups, the percentages of activist social workers were 29% in the other service types, 26.9% in the offenders/drug abusers services, 24% in the elderly services; the two lowest ranking service groups were family and child welfare services (19.6%) and medical social work services (13.5%). There were statistically significant differences between activist social workers and other social workers in the first three highest ranking groups, i.e. community work, rehabilitation, and children and youth services. We also found statistically significant differences between activists and other social workers in the two lowest ranking groups: family and child welfare services and medical social work services.

In terms of ranking in the staff structure, amongst the frontline workers, 29% of them were activists as compared with 31.1% of the non-frontline workers. Statistically, there was no significant difference between the two groups. Of the supervisors, 38% of them were activists as compared with only 27.5% of those who were not at the supervisor rank. It was therefore clear that slightly more activists were working as supervisors. Statistically, there was a significant difference between the two groups. Amongst agency administrators, 27.9% were activists as compared with 29.9% of those who were not agency administrators. No statistically significant difference was found between the two groups.

**Table 2.2** Activist Social Workers by Rank (%)

| Rank                                   | Activists | Others | (N)     |
|--|-----------|--------|---------|
| Frontline worker                       |           |        |         |
| Yes                                    | 29.0      | 71.0   | (703)   |
| No                                     | 31.1      | 68.9   | (254)   |
| (Chi-square=0.29542, D.F.=1, P=0.5868) |           |        |         |
| Supervisor                             |           |        |         |
| Yes                                    | 38.0      | 62.0   | (187)** |
| No                                     | 27.5      | 72.5   | (770)   |
| (Chi-square=7.37412, D.F.=1, P=0.0066) |           |        |         |
| Agency administrator                   |           |        |         |
| Yes                                    | 27.9      | 72.1   | (179)   |
| No                                     | 29.9      | 70.1   | (778)   |
| (Chi-square=0.19534, D.F.=1, P=0.6585) |           |        |         |

\*\* P less than 0.01.

Note: Respondents could tick more than one choice, so the total of affirmative responses to those three ranks add up to more than the total sample size of 962.

In terms of length of service in social work, it was found that 30.2% of activist social workers had working experience of 5-10 years whilst only 24.8% of the other social workers had the same years of experience (Table 2.3). Apart from this, the percentages of both activist and the other social workers were quite similar in the other categories of service length in social work. Generally speaking, over 70% of the social workers in both groups had a length of service of less than ten years in social work. This suggests that social workers in Hong Kong are generally young.

**Table 2.3** Activist Social Workers by Length of Service in Social Work (%)

| Years of service | Activists | Others |
|------------------|-----------|--------|
| Below 2 years    | 17.8      | 18.6   |
| 2-5 years        | 28.3      | 30.7   |
| 5-10 years       | 30.2      | 24.8   |
| 10-15 years      | 14.2      | 12.2   |
| 15-20 years      | 5.8       | 6.7    |
| Over 20 years    | 3.6       | 7.0    |
| (N)              | (275)     | (657)  |

Table 2.4 illustrates activist social workers by age groups. This is indeed a supplement to the analysis of social workers by the length of service. There were apparent differences in the percentages of the 25-29 and 30-34 age groups between the activist social workers and the other social workers. Amongst the activist social workers, 22.7% were in the 25-29 age group whilst 37.4% were in the 30-34 age group. Amongst the other social workers, there were more in the 25-29 age group (30.4%) and less in the 30-34 age group (27.2%). Undoubtedly, more activist social workers were in their early middle-age group than the other social workers.

**Table 2.4** Activist Social Workers by Age Group (%)

| Age group | Activists | Others |
|-----------|-----------|--------|
| 20-24     | 12.5      | 13.1   |
| 25-29     | 22.7      | 30.4   |
| 30-34     | 37.4      | 27.2   |
| 35-39     | 15.4      | 14.8   |
| 40-44     | 7.3       | 7.2    |
| 45-49     | 3.7       | 4.7    |
| 50-54     | 1.1       | 1.1    |
| 55-59     |           | 1.4    |
| (N)       | (273)     | (654)  |

In terms of sex distribution, 31.9% of male social workers and a similar percentage of 28.1% of female social workers were activists (Table 2.5). There was no statistically significant difference between both groups in terms of sex distribution.

**Table 2.5** Activist Social Workers by Sex (%)

| Sex    | Activists | Others | (N)   |
|--------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Male   | 31.9      | 68.1   | (354) |
| Female | 28.1      | 71.9   | (601) |

Chi-square=1.36954, D.F.=1, P=0.2419.

In conclusion, it was found that there were more activist social workers in community work, rehabilitation services and children and youth services than in other service types; whilst medical social work, family and child welfare services had fewer activist social workers. It was also found that a great percentage of the

activist social workers were in the supervisory rank, with 5-10 years of service and in the early middle-age group of 30-34. It seems that activist social workers had established themselves quite well in the middle of the staffing hierarchy amongst social work agencies in Hong Kong.

### Social Values of Activist Social Workers

Social values are what is regarded as preferable and desirable. However, it is also clear that social values "tend to reflect what is in society" (Abbott, 1988, p.5). Therefore, the focus of this investigation into activist social workers' social values should be directed towards their relationship with Hong Kong's social context. As briefly discussed in the above section, Hong Kong has enjoyed enormous economic achievements; however, social inequality remains serious. Economic prosperity and social stability have been highly regarded by the colonial government and the business community as the predominant societal goals. In this regard, social equality has been sacrificed, and the poor are blamed for their own personal miseries. Therefore, it is important to understand how activist social workers explain the phenomenon of poverty in the society where they live. Apart from this, in view of the definition that activist social workers are those who perceive their working responsibility as organising client groups for radical social actions, thus attitudes towards social order would be most reflective of their anti-establishment stance. Furthermore, if they are working for the interests of the poor and the deprived, they are less likely to accept the thesis that benefits of economic development will trickle-down towards lower echelons. Henceforth, they tend to be in favour of the interventionist role of the state in welfare and its redistributive functions.

To conclude, in relating to Hong Kong's social context, social workers' explanation of poverty, their attitude towards social order, their preferred choice between economic development and welfare, and their stance towards the state's interventionist role

should be reflective of their social values.

### *Explaining poverty*

Explanation of poverty can be regarded as one of the indicators of people's belief in social justice. If people perceive poverty as a personal issue, then the poor will be blamed for their own miserable situations. In this sense, it is not the society, either its social or economic system, that is to be blamed. Conversely, if poverty is regarded as a structural issue, it will be justified for activist social workers to advocate their clients' interests by attacking the establishment for a redistribution of social resources, power and status. Taking a continuum view in the explanation of poverty, the individualist approach is at one end and the structuralist approach at the other. Between these two explanations, there is the pluralist approach in the middle. In actual fact, the pluralist view is another version of the individualist explanation, but it has a more humanistic flavour. It assumes that the system is fair: it offers opportunities for both the poor and the rich to compete for social resources. However, it gives some sympathy to the poor because they are less powerful than the established interest groups. Nevertheless, the poor have to be partly responsible for their lack of organisation. Besides the pluralist approach, other factors also explain poverty: one is the lack of expert knowledge and technique, another one is the lack of sufficient social resources. Henceforth, we can have five different approaches to explain the phenomenon of poverty, they are: individualist, structuralist, pluralist, technological and economic.

Respondents in this questionnaire research were asked about their attitude towards the individualist explanation: whether "the poor do not take the responsibility and seize the advantage of existing opportunities" was the most important factor for the existence of poverty in Hong Kong (Table 3.1, Statement 1). Only 15.1% of the activist social workers and 11% of the other social workers agreed. There was no statistical significance between the two groups of respondents. About the structural explanation,

respondents were asked whether poverty was "part of [their] social and economic system; unless [they] change it, it will stay with [them]" (Table 3.1, Statement 2). Nearly three quarters (74.1%) of the activist social workers and 65.2% of the other social workers agreed to this statement. Statistically the two groups showed significant difference in their answers. On the basis of the answers to these two explanations of poverty, it is clear that social workers in Hong Kong do not assign the responsibility for poverty to their clients. Undoubtedly, activists are more likely to regard it as a structural issue.

**Table 3.1** Activist Social Workers' Explanation of Poverty (%)

| Statement   | Agree<br>(St.A/A/SA)    | Un-<br>certain | Disagree<br>(SD/D/St.D)  | (N)    |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------|
| The most important factor for the existence of poverty in Hong Kong is that:                  |                         |                |                          |        |
| 1. the poor do not take the responsibility and seize the advantage of existing opportunities. |                         |                |                          |        |
| Activists   | 15.1<br>(0.7/4.9/9.5)   | 14.5           | 70.3<br>(15.2/36.7/18.4) | (283)  |
| Others  | 11.0<br>(0.3/3.0/7.7)   | 13.2           | 75.7<br>(24.1/39.0/12.6) | (672)  |
| (Chi-square=3.86042, D.F.=2, P=0.1451)  |                         |                |                          |        |
| 2. it is part of our social and economic system; unless we change it, it will stay with us.   |                         |                |                          |        |
| Activists   | 74.1<br>(8.8/36.0/29.3) | 10.2           | 15.6<br>(9.2/5.7/0.7)    | (283)* |
| Others  | 65.2<br>(3.7/31.4/30.1) | 15.6           | 19.1<br>(11.8/6.6/0.7)   | (671)  |
| (Chi-square=7.84460, D.F.=2, P=0.0198)  |                         |                |                          |        |

Table 3.1 (Continued)

3. the poor have not been organised to demand better treatment by society.

|           |                         |      |                         |          |
|-----------|-------------------------|------|-------------------------|----------|
| Activists | 56.6<br>(2.5/21.9/32.2) | 14.1 | 29.4<br>(16.6/11.7/1.1) | (283)*** |
| Others    | 40.6<br>(0.6/10.8/29.2) | 17.1 | 42.3<br>(23.9/16.0/2.4) | (674)    |

(Chi-square=20.84475, D.F.=2, P=0.0000)

4. our society lacks the necessary knowledge and techniques to alleviate it.

|           |                        |      |                         |       |
|-----------|------------------------|------|-------------------------|-------|
| Activists | 19.1<br>(0.0/6.4/12.7) | 12.7 | 68.2<br>(29.3/32.5/6.4) | (283) |
| Others    | 16.2<br>(0.3/4.0/11.9) | 14.7 | 69.1<br>(30.0/34.5/4.6) | (673) |

(Chi-square=1.55421, D.F.=2, P=0.4597)

5. our society has not been wealthy enough to have sufficient social resources for the alleviation of this problem.

|           |                        |     |                          |       |
|-----------|------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-------|
| Activists | 19.9<br>(1.1/7.1/11.7) | 4.2 | 76.0<br>(26.1/38.2/11.7) | (283) |
| Others    | 19.3<br>(1.2/6.3/11.8) | 6.1 | 74.6<br>(28.7/37.4/8.5)  | (669) |

(Chi-square=1.35054, D.F.=2, P=0.5090)

Alpha Reliability = 0.3258.

\* P less than 0.05.

\*\*\* P less than 0.001.

St.A/A/SA = Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat agree.

SD/D/St.D = Somewhat disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

The respondents were further asked about the pluralist explanation of poverty: whether "the poor have not been organised to demand better treatment by society" (Table 3.1, Statement 3). This statement was a modified version of the pluralist explanation because the responsibility for poverty was also partly the result of the lack of the organiser's activities. Given that the poor have generally a low self-image and are poorly educated, activist social workers tend to see themselves as having the mission to organise their client groups for social change. Thus, although this statement was sympathetic towards the poor, it remained a pluralist one. And so, 56.6% of the activist social workers and 40.6% of the other social workers agreed to this statement. There was a statistically significant difference between the responses of the two groups, the activists tending to be more in favour of this explanation.

Regarding the lack of knowledge and social resources as explanations of poverty, respondents answered with similar disapproval rates. When they were asked whether "[their] society lacks the necessary knowledge and techniques to alleviate it" (Table 3.1, Statement 4), 68.2% of the activist social workers disagreed whilst 69.1% of the other social workers took the same stance. Both groups also generally disagreed to the economic explanation that "[their] society has not been wealthy enough to have sufficient social resources for the alleviation of [the poverty] problem" (Table 3.1, Statement 5): 76% of the activist social workers and 74.6% of the other social workers disagreed. Both groups did not show statistically significant difference on the last two explanations.

On the basis of the above findings, it can be inferred that social workers in Hong Kong generally regard their social and economic system as unjust to the poor and the deprived groups who are usually their major sources of clientele. They believe that the poor have not been well organised and fairly treated by the society. These two views are particularly upheld by the activist social workers. Apart from these, social workers in Hong Kong do not generally believe that the poor should be held responsible for their

problem. They also believe that the advancement either in terms of knowledge, expertise or economic growth cannot alleviate the miseries of the poor. On the basis of these explanations of poverty, it can be concluded that the activist social workers in Hong Kong have a strong sense of justice with regard to the plight of their clients. This view is also largely shared by the fellow members of their profession.

### *Attitude towards social order*

Activist social workers' attitude towards social order can be another appropriate indicator reflecting their belief in social justice. Activist social workers already indicated that they regarded Hong Kong's societal system as unjust and unfair to the poor. Hence, in case of a choice between prosperity and stability on the one hand and social actions for the interest of their clients on the other, activist social workers should take the latter. With this positive relationship between unjust societal system and social actions in mind, the respondents in this questionnaire research were asked whether "the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong is fragile and could be easily undermined by social actions and social movements" (Table 3.2). Only 22.1% of the activist social workers and 28.8% of the other social workers agreed to this statement. There was no statistically significant difference between both groups.

**Table 3.2** Activist Social Workers' Attitude towards Social Order (%)

| Statement   | Agree<br>(St.A/A/SA)    | Un-<br>certain | Disagree<br>(SD/D/St.D)  | (N)   |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------|
| The prosperity and stability of Hong Kong is fragile and could be easily undermined by social actions and social movements. |                         |                |                          |       |
| Activists   | 22.1<br>(0.7/10.0/11.4) | 10.0           | 67.9<br>(17.4/35.6/14.9) | (281) |
| Others  | 28.8<br>(1.5/8.2/19.1)  | 10.4           | 60.9<br>(23.0/32.2/5.7)  | (671) |

Chi-square=4.97708, D.F.=2, P=0.0830.

St.A/A/SA = Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat agree.

SD/D/St.D = Somewhat disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

It seems that activist social workers' attitude towards social order is compatible with their belief in those explanations of poverty as discussed in the above. Activist social workers do not think that economic growth can alleviate their clients' poverty. The only way to improve their clients' poor conditions seems the resort to radical social actions. It can be argued that activist social workers have a strong belief in radical social actions as a means for attaining social justice. However, it would not be suitable to infer that radical social action as a means for justice is solely shared by activist social workers. As activists and their fellow members of the profession share similar views of the social order and the explanation for poverty, it can be suggested that social workers in Hong Kong are generally in favour of social actions for the interest of their clients.

### *Attitude towards economic development and welfare*

By contrasting economic development with welfare, social workers' belief in social justice could be further examined. In Table 3.3, respondents were asked whether "government should provide more welfare even at the expense of economic development," activist social workers were more in favour of this stance than their fellow members: 67.8% of the activist social workers in contrast with only 56.5% of the other social workers agreed to this statement. There was a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

**Table 3.3** Activist Social Workers Attitude towards Economic Development and Welfare (%)

| Statement   | Agree<br>(St.A/A/SA)    | Un-<br>certain | Disagree<br>(SD/D/St.D) | (N)     |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Government should provide more welfare even at the expense of economic development. |                         |                |                         |         |
| Activists   | 67.8<br>(34.4/27.0/6.4) | 17.4           | 15.0<br>(0.4/5.7/8.9)   | (282)** |
| Others  | 56.5<br>(31.5/22.2/2.8) | 17.3           | 26.2<br>(1.6/7.9/16.7)  | (672)   |

Chi-square=15.24558, D.F.=2, P=0.0006.

\*\* P less than 0.01.

St.A/A/SA = Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat agree.

SD/D/St.D = Somewhat disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

It seems that the trickle-down thesis is powerful enough to hold back a substantial number of social workers from the belief in welfare provision for social justice. Nevertheless activist social workers were more outstanding in their belief in welfare as contrasted to economic growth. Their belief in the unjust societal

system for the explanation of poverty might offer a plausible clue to their attitude in this area.

### *Attitude towards the state's interventionist role*

It has been established that activist social workers believe in social justice (drawn particularly from their structural explanation of poverty), and their way to alleviate poverty is through radical social action (drawn particularly from their pluralist explanation of poverty). On the basis of these generalisations, it can be further inferred that they tend to believe in a positive approach of the state in favour of social equality. Apparently, if social workers believe in individualist explanation of poverty, they will be less likely to look for any state action for the alleviation of the problem. They will work at the individual level, that is assist their clients to adjust to the environment. Conversely, activist social workers look for social change through organising their clients. The state is the obvious target of social actions for it has the power to coerce and redistribute social resources for social justice and equality. In this light, activist social workers' attitude towards the state's interventionist role can further indicate their beliefs in social justice and equality.

There were three statements presented about the state's role in welfare for the sake of social justice and equality: the first one was about the state's responsibility for the welfare of its citizens; the second and the third were about the state's responsibility, as a principle and as an operating policy, in narrowing the gap between the poor and the rich. Thus, 95.7% of the activist social workers and 93.5% of the other social workers agreed to the statement that "government has a responsibility to ensure the needs of its citizens are met" (Table 3.4, Statement 1). There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups of respondents. When they were further asked whether government should redistribute social resources for social equality as a principle (Table 3.4, Statement 2), there was equally high approval rates amongst the two groups: 96.8% amongst the activist social

workers and 92.3% amongst the other social workers. Statistically, a significant difference was established between them. When the respondents were asked about the state's role in promoting social equality as an operating policy by the means of progressive tax (Table 3.4, Statement 3), greater difference between the two groups of respondents was detected: 92.9% of the activist social workers agreed whereas only 87.3% of the other social workers agreed. There was also a statistically significant difference found between the two groups.

**Table 3.4** Activist Social Workers' Attitudes towards the State's Interventionist Role (%)

| Statement  | Agree<br>(St.A/A/SA)     | Un-<br>certain | Disagree<br>(SD/D/St.D) | (N)    |
|--|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------|
| 1. Government has a responsibility to ensure the needs of its citizens are met.          |                          |                |                         |        |
| Activists  | 95.7<br>(33.2/47.7/14.8) | 1.8            | 2.6<br>(1.1/1.1/0.4)    | (283)  |
| Others   | 93.5<br>(25.2/49.6/18.7) | 3.1            | 3.4<br>(2.4/0.9/0.1)    | (674)  |
| (Chi-square=2.00632, D.F.=2, P=0.3667)   |                          |                |                         |        |
| 2. Government should be responsible for narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. |                          |                |                         |        |
| Activists  | 96.8<br>(40.6/45.2/11.0) | 1.1            | 2.2<br>(1.1/0.7/0.4)    | (283)* |
| Others   | 92.3<br>(26.9/48.2/17.2) | 5.2            | 2.5<br>(1.5/0.9/0.1)    | (674)  |
| (Chi-square=9.14531, D.F.=2, P=0.0103)   |                          |                |                         |        |

**Table 3.4** (Continued)

|  |                          |     |                      |        |
|--|--------------------------|-----|----------------------|--------|
| 3. Government should redistribute income from the rich to the poor by progressive tax. |                          |     |                      |        |
| Activists  | 92.9<br>(29.8/43.6/19.5) | 2.8 | 4.3<br>(1.8/2.5/0.0) | (282)* |
| Others   | 87.3<br>(19.1/41.2/27.0) | 6.8 | 5.7<br>(3.7/1.9/0.1) | (674)  |
| (Chi-square=7.15194, D.F.=2, P=0.0280)   |                          |     |                      |        |

Alpha Reliability = 0.7261.

\* P less than 0.05.

St.A/A/SA = Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat agree.

SD/D/St.D = Somewhat disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

On the basis of these findings about the attitudes towards the state's interventionist role, it can be inferred that social workers in Hong Kong believe the state should provide procedural means for social justice and equality. Activist social workers are more keen on the belief that the state should be interventionist even in terms of operational policy.

### Activist Social Workers' Attitudes towards Agency Change

Now we turn to activist social workers' attitudes towards initiating changes within their employing agencies. One objective of the study in this area was to seek an external validity for the verification of activist social workers' social work activism. It was assumed that activist social workers should be equally reform-oriented within their agency as an extension of their social advocacy.

Billingsley (1964) is the fore-runner of the research into social



workers' innovative job orientation within their agency. He found that social workers in his research were more oriented to bureaucracy and profession, and less oriented to meeting their clients' needs. He assumed client orientation "as less conformist and less tied to the notion that agency policies and professional standards are invariably suited to the needs of... clients" (Billingsley, 1964, p.89). These assumptions are supported by a social work literature that has traditionally treated professionalisation as a conservatising force that reduce social workers' responsiveness to the needs of the low-income groups (Brager, 1967; Fabricant, 1985; Thursz, 1966; Wilensky and Lebeaux, 1965, pp.325-329).

Social workers are predominantly working within an agency setting; organisational impediments are the first hurdle that they have to overcome on the way to realize their social work commitments. Failure to overcome this hurdle might probably lead to negative job and career experiences. Henceforth, social workers' attitude towards agency change is an important aspect to explore whether social work activism should include an agency dimension.

In Table 4.1, the three statements intended to form a continuum of social workers' commitment to initiating agency change. The first statement asked whether social workers should meet the needs of their clients by "introducing new or modified services even if there is resistance in their agency" (Table 4.1, Statement 1), 76.6% of the activist social workers and 58.4% of the other social workers agreed. Statistically speaking, there was a significant difference between the two groups. As there was no specification of the kind of resistance they were anticipating, the statement was a general one intended to indicate the tendency towards agency change.

**Table 4.1** Activist Social Workers' Attitudes towards Agency Change (%)

| Statement   | Agree<br>(St.A/A/SA)    | Un-<br>certain | Disagree<br>(SD/D/St.D) | (N)      |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Social workers should meet the needs of their clients by:                             |                         |                |                         |          |
| 1. introducing new or modified services even if there is resistance in their agency.  |                         |                |                         |          |
| Activists   | 76.6<br>(2.1/37.6/36.9) | 14.2           | 9.2<br>(6.4/2.8/0.0)    | (282)*** |
| Others  | 58.4<br>(2.5/21.9/34.0) | 26.4           | 15.1<br>(9.8/4.9/0.4)   | (671)    |
| (Chi-square=28.53616, D.F.=2, P=0.0000)   |                         |                |                         |          |
| 2. making use of one rule or past practice over others to get what their clients want |                         |                |                         |          |
| Activists   | 62.1<br>(2.1/28.2/31.8) | 24.3           | 13.6<br>(8.6/4.6/0.4)   | (280)*** |
| Others  | 45.6<br>(0.7/14.7/30.2) | 35.9           | 18.4<br>(13.0/5.4/0.0)  | (668)    |
| (Chi-square=21.56519, D.F.=2, P=0.0000)   |                         |                |                         |          |
| 3. violating agency policies, guidelines or past practices whenever necessary.        |                         |                |                         |          |
| Activists   | 38.3<br>(0.7/12.1/25.5) | 20.2           | 41.5<br>(19.9/19.1/2.5) | (282)*** |
| Others  | 18.1<br>(0.1/4.5/13.5)  | 24.3           | 57.6<br>(25.8/25.1/6.7) | (674)    |
| (Chi-square=44.89781, D.F.=2, P=0.0000)   |                         |                |                         |          |

Alpha Reliability = 0.5177.

\*\*\* P less than 0.001.

St.A/A/SA = Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat agree.

SD/D/St.D = Somewhat disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

The second statement moved a little bit forward into an area which was not well defined in terms of work ethics. The respondents were asked whether social workers should meet the needs of their clients by "making use of one rule or past practice over others to get what their clients want" (Table 4.1, Statement 2). The responses were less favourable than in the first statement: only 62.1% of activist social workers and 45.6% of other social workers agreed to this statement. Evidently, a larger share of respondents took the uncertainty answer (24.3% of activist social workers and 35.9% of other social workers) when facing a statement which was seemingly controversial. Statistically, the two groups were significantly different from each other.

Statement 2 expressed a situation where social workers had to manipulate the bureaucratic rules and practices for their clients' interest. Nevertheless, this was not in clear confrontation with their agency. Statement 3 moved further into where social workers had to make a stark choice between the interest of bureaucracy and their clients' needs. The respondents were asked whether they should meet the needs of their clients by "violating agency policies, guidelines or past practices whenever necessary" (Table 4.1, Statement 3). Only 38.3% of the activist social workers and 18.1% of the other social workers agreed, and a substantial percentage of each group answered with uncertainty (20.2% amongst the activist social workers and 24.3% amongst the other social workers). Statistically, the two groups were significantly different from each other.

On the basis of these findings, it can be inferred that activist social workers are consistent in their attitudes towards changes without and within their agency. Nevertheless, in situations where there is a clear confrontation with agency rules and regulations, most of them may side with the bureaucracy as the other social workers do.

### Activist Social Workers' Perception of their Own Intra-organisational Skills

Organisational tinkering is something which social work students do not often learn about in their formal education. When they are first employed, they probably come to realize for the first time that bureaucratic structures, rules and policies are often obstacles to their "perceived" effective services. In this light, it seems that if social workers want to benefit themselves, their employing agency and their clients, they have to learn certain tactics of tinkering within their working organisations (Pawlak, 1976). This is especially the case with activist social workers who are supposed to hold radical views about their society and the way social resources are distributed. If they want to be effective according to their commitment to social change, activist social workers have to solicit support from their superiors and peers within their employing agency. Their effective use of intra-organisational skills may therefore be indispensable to securing their social change activities. Thus, it is important to see whether activist social workers are different from other social workers in this aspect.

In this questionnaire, the respondents were asked "to what extent [the statements] are true as personal factors relating to [themselves]" (Table 4.2). Of course, it has to be made clear that their perception of personal use of intra-organisational skills is not necessarily compatible with what other people think of them. The first question they were asked was whether they "refer to superior only about substantive decisions" (Table 4.2, Statement 1). This question was concerned with how social workers saw the extent of their work autonomy. Social workers are trained as professionals who can exercise discretions in their encounters with clients; indeed this is essential to social work practice. If social workers have to refer to superior on nearly every decision, they can hardly live up to the general expectation of a professional. In this light, we could expect a very positive result from the respon-

dents, and this was the case: 81.5% of the activist social workers and 82.3% of the other social workers agreed that they could exert work autonomy. Both groups had a very similar pattern of responses to the statement, and there was no statistically significant difference found between their answers.

**Table 4.2** Activist Social Workers' Perception of Effective Use of Intra-organisational Skills (%)

| Statement   | Agree<br>(St.A/A/SA)    | Neutral | Disagree<br>(SD/D/St.D) | (N)      |
|---|-------------------------|---------|-------------------------|----------|
| To what extent these are true as personal factors relating to yourself: |                         |         |                         |          |
| 1. Refer to superior only about substantive decisions.                  |                         |         |                         |          |
| Activists   | 81.5<br>(4.2/51.9/25.4) | 4.6     | 13.8<br>(9.9/3.2/0.7)   | (283)    |
| Others  | 82.3<br>(4.2/56.3/21.8) | 4.9     | 12.8<br>(9.1/3.6/0.1)   | (673)    |
| (Chi-square=0.20444, D.F.=2, P=0.9028)                                  |                         |         |                         |          |
| 2. Ability to persuade superior on substantive issues.                  |                         |         |                         |          |
| Activists   | 88.3<br>(2.8/52.5/33.0) | 7.1     | 4.6<br>(3.5/1.1/0.0)    | (282)**  |
| Others  | 78.1<br>(2.4/37.6/38.1) | 13.4    | 8.5<br>(5.8/2.7/0.0)    | (672)    |
| (Chi-square=13.43201, D.F.=2, P=0.0012)                                 |                         |         |                         |          |
| 3. Ability to organise co-workers' support for substantive issues.      |                         |         |                         |          |
| Activists   | 93.2<br>(3.9/55.3/34.0) | 4.3     | 2.5<br>(2.1/0.4/0.0)    | (282)*** |
| Others  | 75.1<br>(2.7/34.5/37.9) | 18.5    | 6.4<br>(3.7/2.7/0.0)    | (672)    |
| (Chi-square=41.99473, D.F.=2, P=0.0000)                                 |                         |         |                         |          |

**Table 4.2** (Continued)

|   |                         |     |                      |       |
|---|-------------------------|-----|----------------------|-------|
| 4. Ability to refer to professional knowledge and practices to support your case.             |                         |     |                      |       |
| Activists   | 94.7<br>(8.8/64.3/21.6) | 2.8 | 2.5<br>(2.1/0.4/0.0) | (283) |
| Others  | 95.1<br>(7.1/54.8/33.2) | 3.6 | 1.3<br>(1.2/0.1/0.0) | (672) |
| (Chi-square=1.86172, D.F.=2, P=0.3942)  |                         |     |                      |       |
| 5. Ability to make use of particular rules or past practice over others to support your case. |                         |     |                      |       |
| Activists   | 85.5<br>(3.5/56.2/25.8) | 9.5 | 5.0<br>(3.9/0.7/0.4) | (283) |
| Others  | 87.6<br>(2.7/44.5/40.4) | 9.7 | 2.6<br>(1.9/0.7/0.0) | (670) |
| (Chi-square=3.13372, D.F.=2, P=0.2087)  |                         |     |                      |       |

Alpha Reliability = 0.6078.

\*\* P less than 0.01.

\*\*\* P less than 0.001.

St.A/A/SA = Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat agree.

SD/D/St.D = Somewhat disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

Statement 2 asked respondents how they perceived their ability to persuade their peers and superiors on substantive issues. Social workers are often working in teams, they have to rely upon the support and cooperation of other teammates — either peers or superiors. Thus, their ability in persuasion is imperative for effective services. For the "ability to persuade superior on substantive issues," 88.3% of the activist social workers and 78.1% of the other social workers agreed that they possessed this personal factor (Table 4.2, Statement 2). Despite the fact that both groups per-

ceived themselves as having a highly persuasive ability, more activist social workers (93.2%) were confident about this personal factor when referring to the statement on their ability to organise co-workers' support for substantive issues, whereas only 75.1% of the other social workers consented that they had this interpersonal skill (Table 4.2, Statement 3). The difference between the two groups on both statements was statistically significant.

Statements 4 and 5 dealt with the effective use of intra-organisational skills for initiating change: one was the use of professional knowledge and practices in arguments whereas the other was the manipulation of agency rules and practices in one's favour. Both groups returned with similar responding patterns: 94.7% of the activist social workers and 95.1% of the other social workers considered that they had the ability to use professional knowledge to support their case. And 85.5% of the activist social workers and 87.6% of the other social workers thought that they had the ability to make use of particular rules or past practice over others in supporting their argument (Table 4.2, Statements 4 and 5). No statistically significant difference was found between the two groups on these last two statements.

On the basis of these findings, it can be inferred that social workers in Hong Kong have a high regard of themselves in terms of intra-organisational skills for effective services. Activist social workers are particularly confident about their ability to persuade their superiors and organise the support of co-workers on substantive issues.

### Activist Social Workers' Perception of Agency Focus

It has been found that activist social workers were not worse than their fellow colleagues in terms of intra-organisational skills; indeed they were better in some aspects. Nevertheless, they might tend to select agencies which were more reform-oriented for employment. It was therefore important to examine whether those agencies which employed activist social workers were

flexible or rigid in terms of agency focus. It was assumed that agencies with flexible organisational focus would allow their workers more autonomy; their bureaucratic structure, rules and regulations would be reviewed from time to time in order to adjust to changing environment; and they would regard each individual worker as an important and respectable person rather than just an employee.

Respondents were asked, according to their perception, whether the statements in Table 4.3 were true of the agency where they were working as social workers. Three pairs of questions, each with two supposedly polarized statements, were presented for respondents' selection. When asked about their perception of work autonomy in their agency, only 25.6% of activist social workers and 33% of other social workers admitted that "on most occasions, [they] have to refer to superior for decisions in [their] service area," whereas 69.4% of the activist social workers and 61.4% of the other social workers perceived that "on most occasions, [they] make the final decision in [their] service area" (Table 4.3, first pair of statements). The difference between the two groups of social workers was not statistically significant. It seems that social workers in Hong Kong are generally satisfied with their work autonomy. They have direct control over their service area. It may also reflect that social work agencies in Hong Kong are generally not too hierarchical; and they decentralise decision-making to their staff.

**Table 4.3** Activist Social Workers' Perception of Agency Focus (%)

| Statement   | Agree<br>(St.A/A/SA)    | Neutral | Agree<br>(SA/A/St.A)  | Statement  |
|---|-------------------------|---------|---|------------|
| <b>System Maintenance</b>   |                         |         | <b>System Flexibility</b>   |            |
| 1. On most occasions, I have to refer to superior for decisions in my service area.       |                         |         | On most occasions, I make the final decision in my service area.                    |            |
| Activists   | 25.6<br>(4.0/9.0/12.6)  | 5.0     | 69.4<br>(21.9/39.6/7.9)   | (N=278)    |
| Others  | 33.0<br>(2.6/13.7/16.7) | 5.7     | 61.4<br>(23.9/32.1/5.4)   | (N=666)    |
| (Chi-square=5.57723, D.F.=2, P=0.0615)  |                         |         |   |            |
| 2. Rules and procedures are strictly set to ensure a stable and efficient administration. |                         |         | Rules and procedures are frequently reviewed to facilitate the services to clients. |            |
| Activists   | 31.9<br>(4.0/14.5/13.4) | 8.3     | 59.7<br>(18.1/34.4/7.2)   | (N=276)*** |
| Others  | 46.8<br>(6.3/23.4/17.1) | 5.1     | 48.1<br>(21.8/22.5/3.8)   | (N=666)    |
| (Chi-square=18.86803, D.F.=2, P=0.0001)   |                         |         |   |            |
| 3. I am just another employee of the agency.  |                         |         | I feel respected and important in the agency.                                       |            |
| Activists   | 21.3<br>(2.9/7.6/10.8)  | 12.6    | 66.2<br>(28.4/32.0/5.8)   | (N=278)    |
| Others  | 27.7<br>(4.1/11.6/12.0) | 12.2    | 60.2<br>(30.2/26.5/3.5)   | (N=665)    |
| (Chi-square=4.34156, D.F.=2, P=0.1141)  |                         |         |   |            |

Alpha Reliability = 0.5930.

\*\*\* P less than 0.001.

St.A/A/SA = Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat agree.

Note: Only those respondents who ticked once in each polarized pair of questions were counted.

When asked about whether "rules and procedures [in the agency where they are working] are strictly set to ensure a stable

and efficient administration," 31.9% of the activist social workers and 46.8% of the other social workers agreed; however, 59.7% of activist social workers and 48.1% of the other social workers agreed that "rules and procedures [in the agency where they are working] are frequently reviewed to facilitate the services to clients" (Table 4.3, second pair of statements). A statistically significant difference was found between the two groups' answers. Clearly, activist social workers perceived their agency as more flexible and client-oriented; whereas less than half of the other social workers held the same view.

One of the basic principles in social work is to respect clients as unique persons. They are not just another number in the social worker's working file; similarly, one test of agency focus is to see whether social workers feel just being an employee of the agency. If a social work agency is operated as an impersonal bureaucracy, its staff will not feel respected and will not have a sense of belonging to the agency. Henceforth, the sense of belonging is an important indicator revealing the overall feeling of the staff towards the agency's arrangement of its bureaucratic structures, rules and procedures. In this questionnaire research, only 21.3% of the activist social workers and 27.7% of other social workers had a low sense of belonging to their agency (i.e. they were just another employee of the agency); whereas 66.2% of the activist social workers and 60.2% of the other social workers felt respected and considered themselves important to the agency (Table 4.3, third pair of statements). No statistically significant difference was found between the two groups of social workers. It seems that most social workers in Hong Kong have a strong sense of belonging to the agency in which they are working.

It can be concluded from the findings that the agencies where the activist social workers were employed were particularly flexible compared to those agencies where the other social workers were employed. However, activist social workers were similar to the other social workers in terms of substantial autonomy in their service area and strong sense of belonging to their agencies. Indeed, social work agencies are not monolithic in

their bureaucratic structures, they can be rigid in one area and flexible in another area.

### Job Satisfaction and Career Prospect of Activist Social Workers

In the above sections, we have found that activist social workers were agency innovators; they were equally skillful in intra-organisational tactics; and they were more likely to work in agencies with flexible service orientations. In this regard, it can be inferred that activist social workers in Hong Kong are working in an agency environment which is not prejudiced against their practice. Their job satisfaction and career prospect should be similar to other social workers. With this generalisation in mind, a set of questions on job satisfaction and career prospect were asked.

It was found that activist social workers and other social workers were equally satisfied with their job: 82% of the activist social workers and 80.8% of the other social workers agreed to feeling job satisfaction in their present job and no statistically significant difference was found between the two groups' answers (Table 5, Statement 1). They were equally satisfied with their career prospect in social work: 79.5% of the activist social workers and 77.9% of the other social workers agreed to this, and also no statistically significant difference was found between the responses (Table 5, Statement 2). However, activist social workers and the other social workers were less satisfied with their career prospect in the present agency than in the social work field: only 57.8% of the activist social workers and 57.9% of the other social workers agreed that they had a positive career prospect in their agency, and a significant minority in both groups (23.4% of activist social workers and 25.6% of other social workers) expressed uncertainty (Table 5, Statement 6). There seems to be a discrepancy between the career prospect in the present job and in the social work field amongst the social workers in Hong Kong.

**Table 5** Job Satisfaction and Career Prospect of Activist Social Workers (%)

| Statement  | Agree<br>(St.A/A/SA)    | Neutral | Disagree<br>(SD/D/St.D) | (N)    |
|--|-------------------------|---------|-------------------------|--------|
| 1. You are satisfied with your present job.  |                         |         |                         |        |
| Activists  | 82.0<br>(4.6/52.3/25.1) | 4.2     | 13.8<br>(8.8/4.6/0.4)   | (283)  |
| Others   | 80.8<br>(3.9/48.1/28.8) | 5.9     | 13.1<br>(7.7/5.3/0.1)   | (673)  |
| (Chi-square=1.14093, D.F.=2, P=0.5653)   |                         |         |                         |        |
| 2. You are satisfied with your career in social work.  |                         |         |                         |        |
| Activists  | 79.5<br>(8.5/46.3/24.7) | 5.7     | 14.8<br>(10.6/3.5/0.7)  | (283)  |
| Others   | 77.9<br>(6.7/45.8/25.4) | 7.3     | 14.8<br>(9.2/5.0/0.6)   | (674)  |
| (Chi-square=0.83273, D.F.=2, P=0.6594)   |                         |         |                         |        |
| 3. Your belief in social work and ways of doing things are consistent with those of your agency.   |                         |         |                         |        |
| Activists  | 73.5<br>(2.8/43.1/27.6) | 5.7     | 20.9<br>(13.1/7.1/0.7)  | (283)  |
| Others   | 68.4<br>(2.8/36.4/29.2) | 10.2    | 21.3<br>(16.6/4.3/0.4)  | (674)  |
| (Chi-square=5.48158, D.F.=2, P=0.0645)   |                         |         |                         |        |
| 4. Your belief in social work and ways of doing things are consistent with those of your superior. |                         |         |                         |        |
| Activists  | 68.4<br>(2.1/33.0/33.3) | 9.9     | 21.6<br>(13.1/6.7/1.8)  | (282)* |

**Table 5** (Continued)

|   |                         |      |                        |       |
|---|-------------------------|------|------------------------|-------|
| Others  | 60.2<br>(1.9/29.8/28.5) | 13.9 | 25.7<br>(18.8/6.2/0.7) | (674) |
| (Chi-square=6.06578, D.F.=2, P=0.0482)                  |                         |      |                        |       |
| 5. You have a positive relationship with your superior. |                         |      |                        |       |
| Activists   | 89.0<br>(5.0/60.6/23.4) | 7.1  | 3.9<br>(3.9/0.0/0.0)   | (282) |
| Others  | 87.1<br>(4.9/55.3/26.9) | 8.5  | 4.5<br>(3.9/0.6/0.0)   | (674) |
| (Chi-square=0.68335, D.F.=2, P=0.7106)                  |                         |      |                        |       |
| 6. You have a positive career prospect in your agency.  |                         |      |                        |       |
| Activists   | 57.8<br>(1.4/29.1/27.3) | 23.4 | 18.8<br>(12.4/5.3/1.1) | (282) |
| Others  | 57.9<br>(1.9/30.6/25.4) | 25.6 | 16.4<br>(8.0/7.1/1.3)  | (673) |
| (Chi-square=0.98309, D.F.=2, P=0.6117)                  |                         |      |                        |       |

Alpha Reliability = 0.7988.

\* P less than 0.05.

St.A/A/SA = Strongly agree/Agree/Somewhat agree.

SD/D/St.D = Somewhat disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

When respondents were asked whether "[their] belief in social work and ways of doing things are consistent with those of [their] agency," slightly more of the activist social workers gave a positive response than the other social workers: 73.5% of the former and 68.4% of the latter agreed to the statement; however, statistically no significant difference was found (Table 5, Statement 3). Furthermore, fewer respondents from both groups agreed that their belief in social work and ways of doing things were consistent with those of their superior: 68.4% of the activist social workers and 60.2% of the other social workers, and a statistically

significant difference between them was established (Table 5, Statement 4). However, much more favourable answers were recorded when both groups were asked about whether they had a positive relationship with their superior: 89% from the activist social workers and 87.1% from the other social workers (Table 5, Statement 5).

Coupled with the findings on the social workers' effective use of intra-organisational skills, it should not be surprising that social workers were having a very positive relationship with their superior. Together with the other findings in Table 5, it was established that activist social workers were similar to the other social workers in terms of job and career experiences, except that the former's belief in social work and their working patterns were more consistent with their superior. Although social workers in Hong Kong were generally satisfied with their job and career in social work, some of them were likely to change job from one agency to another for a better career prospect as well as for a better matching in terms of belief in social work and working patterns with their superior and agency.

## Conclusion and Discussion

### *Postulating a non-linear relationship between social work activism and job and career prospects*

The findings from this study confirm the postulation that, despite the conservative nature of social work agencies' funding sources, activist social workers are not necessarily penalized in their job and career. Activist social workers in Hong Kong were more likely to have better relationship with their superior. More of them were in their early middle-age and with 5-10 years of service. It seems that they were well-established in the profession and amongst social work agencies in Hong Kong. It can be inferred that the relationship between social work activism and work prospect is definitely not linear. The overall argument of this study is that the

relationship is mainly defined by the social context of social work practice.

Nevertheless, this study does not exclude the possibility that activist social workers might choose the agency which seems to offer them the best match with their practice orientations. Apart from this, it may be worthwhile to further elaborate the argument.

Indeed, the social context in this study can be further operationalised into three dimensions: the societal sub-context, the professional sub-context and the agency sub-context. In the societal dimension, it has been illustrated that the political and economic conditions in Hong Kong offered social workers a moral ground for their radical social action for social justice and equality. In an earlier section, Hong Kong was described as a society which had achieved enormous economic growth without fair redistribution. Social workers, as reflected in this questionnaire research, do not believe that economic growth will solve the problem of poverty. Activist social workers are more likely to believe in the structuralist and pluralist explanations of poverty. It can therefore be inferred that social work activism has its origin in the societal sub-context: social injustice and social inequality breeds social work activism.

Even if the activist social workers in this sample were generally more welfare-oriented than the other social workers, the latter had equally favourable responses to the questions on welfare and the interventionist role of the state for social justice and equality. For example, 93.5% of them agreed that government had a responsibility to ensure that the needs of its citizens were met (Table 3.4, Statement 1), 87.3% of them consented that government should redistribute income from the rich to the poor by progressive tax (Table 3.4, Statement 3), 56.5% of them agreed that government should provide more welfare even at the expense of economic development (Table 3.3). Thus, activist social workers were not alone in their stance on social justice and equality. It might not be without ground to argue that activist social workers in Hong Kong had been nurtured by a profession which supported social reform. Equally, it seems safe to conclude that they have been

working within a professional environment which has been unprejudiced against activism.

It was also found in the agency sub-context, activist social workers were particularly agency change oriented, and this was consistent with their social reform orientations. Nevertheless, they were equally satisfied with their job and were particularly having good relationship with their superior. It was also found that activist social workers were more likely than the others to serve agencies which were flexible and client-oriented. The findings from this research also suggested that activist social workers were particularly able to persuade their superior and organise support amongst co-workers. The effective use of intra-organisational skills should not be under-estimated as a factor which relates positively to changes within and without social work agencies.

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be concluded that social work activism does not necessarily induce negative job and career prospects. Hong Kong is a society with enormous economic wealth but without a fair redistribution; the situation seems to be the source of inspiration for activism in the social work profession. Apart from this, the effective use of intra-organisational skills is facilitating the development of an unprejudiced environment for activist social work practice.

### *The prospect of social workers as social advocates in Hong Kong*

Hong Kong at this point in time is an advanced capitalist society without a fully fledged western-style democracy. The prospect of its return to Chinese sovereignty offers little hope for any drastic democratisation process in the near future. It seems that a popular demand for a fairer redistribution of social resources is unlikely to be fully reflected in the political decision-making process. Apparently the present predominance of the economic policy over social policy will continue for some time. Under this welfare system, the society has to take care of itself either by the market distributive mechanism or by the family caring system with mini-



mal assistance from the state. Henceforth, welfare is primarily regarded as a matter of private concerns, that is essentially a family responsibility. The state's intervention has to be justified principally by the failure of the family or by the need of fulfilling certain basic social needs which are definitely beyond the capacity of individual families. This residual approach to social policy is in stark contrast to the social values held by social workers which we have identified in this research. On the basis of this analysis, it can be inferred that the discrepancy between government policy and social values held by social workers is likely to propel the social work profession in Hong Kong and maintain its advocacy role for social change for some time.

The focus so far has been on the use of radical social actions for social change; nevertheless there are other types of social change strategies which social workers of all service types and different rankings can employ. Table 1.1 illustrates clearly the strong approval rates for most social change strategies. This indicates that social change commitment as a working responsibility has become a part of the social work profession in Hong Kong. Even the strategy of supporting client groups which is a non-institutionalised conflict strategy was agreed to by 52.6% of all respondents (Table 1.1). Apparently, the commitment towards social change has a solid base in the social work profession in Hong Kong.

If activist social workers are assumed to provide the driving force of social work activism within the profession, the favourable indicator is that activist social workers have already relatively established themselves into the middle level management in social work agencies. Given their relatively good intra-organisational skills and equally good relationship with their superior, they are likely to establish themselves as higher level managers in the future. In this case, the profession will become even more receptive to social work activism. The unfavourable indicator is that activist social workers were unevenly distributed in the various age groups at the time of the survey: they were highly concentrated in the 30-34 age group (37.4%), and there were fewer of

them in the two younger age brackets (22.7% and 12.5% in the 25-29 and 20-24 age groups respectively) (Table 2.4). All being kept equal, the influence of activist social workers is likely to diminish as time goes by.

Nevertheless, the predictions of the above two indicators are based on the hypothesis that different age cohorts are affected by their different societal contexts. Social workers in Hong Kong in the late 1970s and early 1980s were characterised by their popular use of radical social actions (Wong, 1988, pp.9-11; Community Development Resource Book Editorial Board, 1988, pp.20-21). This coincided with the period when social workers of the 30-34 age cohort were receiving their social work training and were in their early years of practice. It was also the period when the colonial administration began to open itself up to more grassroots participation; the setting up of District Boards to absorb local opposition groups and their leaders into the establishment was an example. Besides, since 1977 the government has funded six community organisation projects every year; this has opened up enormous opportunities for grassroots organisations. All these have offered opportunities for social workers to support and organise their client groups for social change.

Nevertheless, this hypothesis that the cohort of social workers in the early middle-age group who have been particularly activist has been affected by its societal context has to be validated by a longitudinal study. Despite the lack of such a study, it can also be argued that activist social workers are less likely to leave the profession than the other social workers. Henceforth, more activist social workers in the early middle-age cohort in Hong Kong may be explained by their lower wastage rate. They are more committed to social change, and this orientation can be regarded as the driving force of their commitment to the social work profession. It seems that, on the basis of the above analysis, Hong Kong social workers' role as social advocacy will remain active for some time.

## Notes

1. Between November and December 1991, letters were sent to social work agencies requesting for relevant staff lists for dispatching the questionnaires; a total of 74 agencies responded with 1,290 names, and 4 agencies not willing to release their staff list promised to distribute the questionnaires to their 218 staff members. This represented a total of 1,508 subjects, i.e. 82.7% of 1,822 social work practitioners with a social work degree as recorded in the 1991 manpower survey (Social Welfare Department and Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1991). Between February and April 1992, three rounds of questionnaires with return-envelopes were sent directly to individual social workers or through their employing agencies at intervals of two weeks. A very favourable return rate of 69.6% (1,050) was achieved: 33.9% (511) were returned within the first two weeks, 24.7% (373) in the second two weeks and 11% (166) at the end of April 1992. A sample of 962 practicing social workers with a social work degree was used for analysis.

A seven point Likert-styled scale (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, uncertain/neutral, somewhat disagree, disagree and strongly disagree) was used to measure most of the indicators of social workers' attitudes. To simplify the analysis, they were grouped into three categories: agree, uncertain and disagree. Nevertheless, a full breakdown of the responses in each category was displayed in table forms. Questions on social change strategies and poverty were modified from Epstein's (1968) research on social action, and Reeser and Epstein's (1987) research on poverty and social action. Questions on attitudes towards agency change were modified from Billingsley (1964) and Patti's (1980) studies on social workers' innovative orientations. Questions on intra-organisational skills were modified from Pawlak's (1976) research on social workers. Questions on measuring agency service orientation were modified from Whatcott's (1974) research in the same area. All the questions were modified to suit the particular purposes of this research. Furthermore, nearly all of them were tested for their reliability as a scale in the research. Some of them did not have satisfactory results; however, they served the purpose of this exploratory study.

2. In Table 1.1, the percentage is 29.6 because of the exclusion of 5 missing cases.

## References

- Abbott, A.A. (1988) *Professional Choices: Values at Work*, Silver Spring: NASW.
- Billingsley, A. (1964) Bureaucratic and Professional Orientation in Social Casework, *Social Service Review*, Vol.38, No.4, pp.400-407.
- Brager, G.A. (1967) Institutional Change: Perimeters of the Possible, *Social Work*, Vol.12, pp.59-69.
- Community Development Resource Book Editorial Board, Hong Kong Council of Social Service (1988) *The Achievements of Community Work – The Residents' Perspective, Community Development Resource Book 1987 and 1988*, Hong Kong: Community Development Division, Hong Kong Council of Social Service, pp.20-21.
- Corkey, D. and Craig, G. (1978) CDP: Community Work or Class Politics? in Curno, P. (ed.) *Political Issues and Community Work*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp.36-66.
- Epstein, I. (1968) Social Workers and Social Action: Attitudes toward Social Action Strategies, *Social Work*, Vol.13, No.2, pp.101-108.
- Fabricant, M. (1985) The Industrialisation of Social Work, *Social Work*, Vol. 30, pp.389-395.
- Finch, W.A. (1976) Social Workers versus Bureaucracy, *Social Work*, Vol.21, pp.370-375.
- Hardcastle, D.A. and Katz, A.J. (1979) *Employment and Unemployment in Social Work: A Study of NASW Students*, Washington, D.C.: NASW.
- Loney, M. (1981) The British CDPs: Questioning the State, *Community Development Journal*, Vol.16, pp.55-65.
- Patti, R.J. (1980) Internal Advocacy and Human Service Practitioners: An Exploratory Study, in Patti, R.J. and Resnick, H. (eds.), *Change From Within*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp.287-301.
- Pawlak, E.J. (1976) Organisational Tinkering, *Social Work*, Vol.20, pp.376-380.
- Reeser, L.C. and Epstein, I. (1987) Social Workers' Attitudes toward Poverty and Social Action: 1968-1984, *Social Service Review*, Vol.61, pp.611-622.
- Reisch, M. and Wenocur, S. (1986) The Future of Community Organisation in Social Work: Social Activism and the Politics of Profession Building, *Social Service Review*, Vol.60, pp.70-93.

- Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong Government and Hong Kong Council of Social Service (1991) *The Social Welfare Manpower Planning System, Report No. 4*, Hong Kong: Joint Committee on Social Welfare Manpower Planning System.
- Taylor-Gooby, P. (1990) Social Welfare: The Unkindest Cuts, *British Social Attitudes, the 7th Report*, Aldershot: Gower Press, pp.51-76.
- Thursz, D. (1966) Social Action as a Professional Responsibility, *Social Work*, Vol.11, pp.12-21.
- Wagner, D. (1989) Fate of Idealism in Social Work in Professional Careers, *Social Work*, Vol.34, pp.389-395.
- Whitcott, W.E. (1974) Bureaucratic Focus and Service Delivery, *Social Work*, Vol.19, pp.432-437.
- Wilensky, H. and Lebeaux, C.N. (1965) *Industrial Society and Social Welfare*, 2nd edition, New York: Macmillan.
- Wong, Irene (1988) A Ten Year Review of Tenants' Movement - Contributions of Community Work, *Community Development Resource Book 1987 and 1988*, Hong Kong: Community Development Division, Hong Kong Council of Social Service, pp.9-12.

## 社會工作與社會改變： 香港積極社會工作者的剪影

王卓祺著

( 中文摘要 )

這是一份探索香港社會工作者工作態度問卷調查的主要報告。社會工作積極主義是作為討論社會工作與社會改變之關係的主題。這調查顯示香港的社會工作者一般都支持利用非建制的衝突策略改變社會。那些認為他們的工作責任是組織服務對象及運用抗爭和破壞式策略（一種非建制衝突策略）的社會工作者並沒有由於對社會改變的委身而受到懲罰；他們像其他社會工作者一樣對工作及事業的發展抱有滿足的態度。這文稿嘗試從專業、機構及社會背景解釋積極社會工作者沒有處於一個歧視性環境的原因，並進而探索香港社會工作者作為社會倡導者的前景。