

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

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INDICATORS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT : HONG KONG 1988

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Edited by

Lau Siu-kai Lee Ming-kwan
Wan Po-san Wong Siu-lun



Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

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Preface

THIS report is the product of a collaborative project undertaken jointly by researchers from the Centre for Hong Kong Studies (now the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies) of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Department of Applied Social Studies of the Hong Kong Polytechnic, and the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong. Being multi-disciplinary in nature, the research team is composed of political scientists, psychologists, social workers, sociologists and statisticians.

The aim of the project is to carry out a series of biennial social indicator surveys in Hong Kong. This report deals with the findings of the first survey of the series conducted in the summer of 1988. Prior to this, a pilot study was conducted in Kwun Tong in 1986-87 by the Centre for Hong Kong Studies of the Chinese University. The second survey is now in progress and the field work will be completed next month.

The focus of the survey is on subjective social indicators, that is, the perceptions, aspirations, and degrees of satisfaction of Hong Kong residents in different walks of life. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first is a core section to be answered by all respondents on the evaluation of quality of life and degree of satisfaction with different life domains. This core section will become the permanent feature of the biennial survey so that social trends in Hong Kong can be gauged. The second part consists of a number of modules on special topics which may be rotated or changed from survey to survey. Each module will be answered by a sub-sample of the respondents. In 1988, the Hong Kong Polytechnic team was in charge of module A on family life, social network and social welfare, and module B on housing, leisure, work, medical and health. The University of Hong Kong team was responsible for module C on social stratification, social mobility and religion. The Chinese University team handled module D on political and legal issues. The details of the research design are described in the technical appendix.

The value of social indicator surveys are by now well accepted by most social scientists and government agencies, and national reports of social indicators are issued in more than 30 countries. In Hong Kong, we have reached a level of economic development at which more academic and community attention should be directed to enhancing the quality of life of the inhabitants. During the period of transition before 1997, it is also important that the subjective perceptions and

sense of well-being of Hong Kong residents should be monitored together with the objective manifestations of behaviour and performance.

Through this survey series, we intend to achieve three main objectives. The first one is to provide systematic and comprehensive data on the social attitudes and expectations of Hong Kong inhabitants. The second is to identify aspects of social life in Hong Kong that merit in-depth investigation and public attention. The third and last one is to furnish empirical inputs for the formulation and implementation of social policies in Hong Kong.

This report consists of ten chapters written by different researchers. The first two chapters deal with the core questions. Chapters 3 to 9 examine the topics covered in the four specific modules. A summary of the major findings is contained in the last chapter. The technical details of the survey are provided in the appendix.

We would like to acknowledge the financial support provided by the Institute of Social Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Research Sub-committee and the Department of Applied Social Studies of the Hong Kong Polytechnic, the Research and Conference Grants Committee and the Run Run Shaw Research Fund of the University of Hong Kong. We are grateful to Mr. Lee Man-kwong, Assistant Commissioner for Census and Statistics, for his advice in questionnaire design; Ms. Diana Martin for editorial assistance; Ms. Day Wong and Shirley Yue for research assistance; and all the student interviewers for the strenuous field work undertaken.

Lau Siu-kai
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January 1991

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1 Satisfaction in Various Life Domains

Wong Siu-lun & Shirley Yue

THERE is a pervasive sense of well-being among the adult population in Hong Kong, as represented by the respondents in this survey. They have few immediate worries, and they are generally free of economic want. They are quite satisfied with various aspects of their life. The only notable exception is with their own educational attainments. In the pursuit of happiness, they place emphasis on health and personal freedom. At the same time, they still uphold the importance of traditional Confucian values such as peace of mind and filial piety. The majority of them feel that they have been enjoying a rising standard of living, and they are optimistic that such improvements will continue in the near future.

This general picture, of course, contains many internal variations. On closer inspection, it will soon be discovered that differences in attitude exist among the young and the old, the immigrant and the local-born, the cultivated and the unlettered, the rich and the poor and so on. In order to make sense of these variations, it is necessary for us to take note of the key objective features of the respondents first before we proceed to examine their level of satisfaction in different domains, their ideas on happiness, and their perception of living standards in Hong Kong.

Profile of Respondents

The target population of this study is all adults aged 18 or above living in Hong Kong. A random sample was drawn with the help of the Census and Statistics Department, and 1,662 adults were successfully interviewed. Since the technical details of the survey are examined in the Appendix, it will suffice to note here that the characteristics of our respondents are broadly in line with those of the general population as revealed in the 1986 By-Census. However, some minor deviations do exist, probably as a result of the nature of household surveys and rapid economic changes in Hong Kong. Among our respondents, there is apparently a slight over-representation of those who are in the age group of 25-44, married with medium household size, engaged in

professional and administrative jobs, with more education and higher income.

The population of Hong Kong is relatively young. This feature is reflected among our respondents of whom about 55 percent are in the age group of 25-44 and 21.8 percent are between 45 and 64 years old. Only 9 percent are aged 65 or over. They are balanced in sex ratio, and about 69.5 percent of them are married. Just a tiny 1.1 percent are separated or divorced, indicating a high level of marriage stability in the territory. The majority of them, around 62.4 percent, are living in households of a medium size with three to five members. More than half of them, about 58.2 percent, are residing in various forms of public housing.

Hong Kong is a city of immigrants, though the inflow of people into the territory has been subject to strict control since the early 1980s. In ethnic terms, it is essentially Chinese with a predominant Cantonese component. Among our respondents, about 52.9 percent were born in Hong Kong. For those who were born elsewhere, around 75.4 percent hailed from the adjacent Chinese province of Guangdong. However, few of them were recent immigrants. Only 15.5 percent had been living in Hong Kong for less than ten years.

Educational provisions have been increasing steadily in the community which depends mainly on manufacture and trade for livelihood. As one of the most prosperous regions in Asia, there is full employment and a relatively high level of income in Hong Kong. The GNP per capita amounted to US\$6,230 in 1986 which was the third highest in Asia after Japan and Singapore (The World Bank, 1987:4). As shown in our sample, nearly half of the respondents or about 49.7 percent have obtained a secondary education and around 10.4 percent have attended tertiary institutions. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents were economically active, and the unemployed constituted just 0.5 percent of the sample. For those active in the economy, 5.5 percent of them were employers, 16.3 percent self-employed, 14.1 percent employed in the public sector, and 61.7 percent employed in the private sector. In terms of industrial distribution, 31.3 percent of the respondents were engaged in manufacturing, 23.4 percent in services, 12.8 percent in trade, and 12.3 percent in the financial field. Occupationally, production workers formed the largest contingent with 34.2 percent. This was followed by service and sales workers with 22.9 percent. But there were substantial numbers of professionals and administrators among the respondents, making up 17.2 percent and 10.7 percent respectively. The majority of them, about 58.8 percent, were earning less than HK\$5,000 per month (US\$1 = HK\$7.8 in 1988). Few of them, a small

12.4 percent, were in the high income bracket of HK\$10,000 a month or more. However, when their income were pooled as a household, only 20.3 percent were having less than HK\$5,000, and 33.9 percent had a combined income of more than HK\$10,000. With such objective economic features, 24.3 percent of the respondents regarded themselves as belonging to the lower class, while 35.8 percent and 35.2 percent placed themselves in the lower-middle and the middle class respectively. Only 4.4 percent thought they were in the upper-middle class, and a tiny 0.3 percent said they belonged to the upper class.

Satisfaction in Various Domains

With these characteristics of the respondents in mind, we can now proceed to examine the extent to which they are satisfied with various aspects of their life. The general level of satisfaction is reflected in the worries they have. When asked whether they had any worries in the past six months, nearly half of the respondents or 48.4 percent said they had few or none at all. About 37.6 percent indicated that they were sometimes troubled by problems, and only 14 percent revealed that they had frequent worries.

Table 1.1. Type of Worries in the Past Six Months

Worries	Frequency	Percentage
Education/Work	233	27.7
Family matters	226	27.0
Financial problems	196	23.3
Health	67	8.0
Prospect	33	3.9
Interpersonal relation	30	3.6
Others	55	6.5
Total	840	100.0

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

As shown in Table 1.1, the major problems troubling them were not materialistic ones. For those who had occasional or frequent worries recently, the majority were troubled by matters related to their education, their work, or their family. Financial worries afflicted less than a quarter of them. When they were further asked whether their present household income was sufficient to cover ordinary expenditure, half of

them felt that it was sufficient and about 36.1 percent said that it was barely enough. Only 13.3 percent felt that they could not make ends meet.

Other worries mentioned by the respondents included those concerned with health, prospects, and interpersonal relations. The list of worries provides us with a useful guide to look at the other side of the coin, that is, their feeling of satisfaction in the different domains which is summarized in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Satisfaction with Different Aspects of Life

Aspects	Satisfaction (%)			N ¹
	Satisfied	Average	Dissatisfied	
Education	21.4	26.5 ²	52.1	1575
Work	59.0	25.1	15.9	1150
Family	74.8	19.9	5.3	1649
Status	51.7	31.4	16.9	1498
Health	57.4	31.4	11.3	1661
Housing	55.0	19.5	25.6	1649
Environment ³	44.8	25.2	30.0	1632
Television	44.2	42.0	13.8	1519
Radio	57.6	37.1	5.3	1196
Newspaper	71.2	26.5	2.3	1361

¹ Excluding those to whom the question was not applicable or those who did not give an answer.

² This includes 1.4% who gave other answers.

³ This refers to the surrounding of the living quarter, not the general environment of the territory.

Thirst for Education

When the respondents were asked directly whether they were satisfied with specific aspects of life, education stood out as the only domain about which massive dissatisfaction was expressed. As shown in Table 1.2, over half of the respondents or 52.1 percent were dissatisfied with their education attainment and were apparently keen to seek improvements. About a quarter of them were relatively neutral, and only 21.4 percent were contented with their academic qualifications.

In the previous section on the profile of the respondents, it is noted that 39.9 percent had achieved no more than a primary education, 49.7 percent had attended secondary schools, and only 10.4 percent had a tertiary education. It is to be expected that the degree of satisfaction is

positively related to the educational level of the respondents. Table 1.3 confirms that this is the case. But more significantly, the cross-tabulation reveals that the attitudes of those with primary and secondary educational attainments were very similar. More than half of them were unhappy with their academic achievements. Only those with tertiary education showed a different pattern of responses, with the majority indicating satisfaction. Therefore it appears that most of the respondents had set their target at a tertiary level of education. Any achievements below that level were regarded as deficient.

Table 1.3. Degree of Satisfaction with Educational Attainment by Educational Level (%)

Degree	Educational Level		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Dissatisfied	59.5	52.5	22.8
Average	23.4	27.1	22.2
Satisfied	14.3	19.8	53.9
Other	2.7	0.5	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(593)	(807)	(167)

P = 0.0000 (Level of significance in chi-square test)

Table 1.4. Education Aspirations for Sons and Daughters (%)

Aspiration	Sons	Daughters
Primary	0.2	0.4
Secondary	17.1	17.1
Tertiary	53.1	54.7
Post-graduate	8.8	7.4
Others ¹	20.7	20.2
Total	100.0	100.0
(N) ²	(905)	(846)

¹ Responses include no specific expectations, respecting the children's own decisions, and regarding qualifications as unimportant.

² The total includes only those who had children and who gave an answer.

This high level of educational aspiration is fully expressed in the respondents' expectations on their children. As can be seen in Table 1.4, about 61.9 percent of them wanted their sons to have a university or post-graduate degree. Probably because of rising affluence and the

adoption of a modern outlook, they had equally high hopes for their daughters without any hint of sexual discrimination. Around 62.1 percent of them would like their daughters to have at least a tertiary education. Furthermore, the large majority of the respondents believed that their children would have moderate to good chances of realizing those hopes. Only 23.2 percent of them were pessimistic about their children being able to live up to their educational expectations.

It is obvious that a sense of dissatisfaction with one's own academic attainment is engendered by a very high level of educational aspiration among the respondents. Why did they hold such high educational aspiration? It could be the manifestation of a strong Confucian tradition, or an astute assessment of the economic returns attached to credentials in Hong Kong, or a preference for 'cultural capital' in the form of knowledge and skills that are mobile and transferable, or a combination of all of these factors. This phenomenon is so striking that it calls for further in-depth studies to specify the causes, and to discover the behavioural consequences and the implications for government policy in the educational field.

General Satisfaction

Except for their educational attainment, the respondents were apparently quite satisfied with other aspects of their life. The level of satisfaction in family life was particularly high. An extremely small 5.3 percent expressed dissatisfaction in the family domain, and nearly three quarters of the respondents said that they were happy with their families. Such an expressed sentiment may well be a result of the traditional reluctance of the Chinese to reveal family problems to outsiders and a desire to present a good appearance. Yet the reluctance and desire in themselves were indications of the great importance still attached to the family among the Chinese inhabitants in Hong Kong. As shown in the recent population By-Census, the Hong Kong Chinese had a very high rate of marriage and low rate of divorce. In 1986, less than 10 percent of the males and 5 percent of the females aged 40 and above were never married, and less than 2 percent of the population irrespective of sex and age were divorced or separated (Census and Statistics Department, 1986:20-21).

On the work front, only 15.9 percent expressed dissatisfaction with their present job. Of course job satisfaction involves many elements which cannot be individually covered in this survey (for a detailed treatment, see Levin, 1990). One of these elements is the length of

working hours. In the past two decades, the working hours of employees have gradually decreased. By 1986, the median hours of work per week for male employees were 48 hours and those for female employees were 45 hours. But it should be noted that about 30.8 percent of the male and 15.6 percent of the female employees were still having long working hours of 55 and over (Census and Statistics Department, 1986:39). In line with this pattern of working hours, when our respondents were further asked whether they had sufficient leisure time, about 38 percent felt it was insufficient. But the large majority, about 62 percent, said they had adequate leisure time.

As for their own social status, over half of the respondents said they were satisfied and just 16.9 percent expressed discontent, even though around 60 percent of them believed that they belonged to the lower or lower-middle class. It is to be expected that a positive correlation exists between satisfaction with social status and self-declared class position. Still it is striking to find that the level of discontent among the lower class was relatively tame. About 22.9 percent of them were unhappy with their status, and this was the highest among all the classes. Nevertheless there were 37.2 percent of them who said they were satisfied with their social status, and a significant 11.6 percent of them apparently took a resigned view and said they had no opinion on the matter.

In terms of the health of its inhabitants, Hong Kong is ahead of most countries in the world. The life expectancy rate in the territory rose to 76 in 1987, and the infant mortality rate dropped to only 9 per thousand in the same year which was one of the lowest among the industrial market economies (The World Bank, 1987: data sheet for Hong Kong). Therefore when our respondents were asked about their subjective sense of physical well-being, only 11.3 percent felt that their health was poor while the large majority of about 57.4 percent said they were healthy.

The relatively good health of Hong Kong people is particularly striking given the scarcity of land and the crowded living condition in the territory. The public housing estates, which accommodated about 46.7 percent of the population in 1988, were planned with a density of around 2,500 persons per hectare. In the private housing sector, because of high land value, about half of the residential units were less than 40 square metres in area (Wong, 1989:230-235). With such crowded conditions, it is to be expected that relatively more respondents, 25.6 percent and 30 percent respectively, would be disgruntled about their housing situation and the surrounding environment. What is really surprising is that there is such a large proportion of 55 percent and 44.8 percent respectively who felt satisfied with these two aspects

of living. However, further analysis reveals that there is a difference in attitude between public and private housing occupants. In our sample, 51.7 percent of the respondents were living in public housing estates and the rest in private residential flats. When the two groups are compared, it is found that more public housing residents (31 percent) expressed dissatisfaction towards their housing condition than private housing occupants (19.8 percent). When the public housing residents are examined separately in detail (see Table 1.5), it is found that two particular groups stood out with high levels of dissatisfaction. They were those living in Type B housing estates which were older and where units were not self-contained, and those living in temporary housing areas waiting to be rehoused.

Table 1.5. Satisfaction with Housing Condition by Types of Public Housing (%)

Type of Housing	Level of Satisfaction		
	Satisfied	Average	Dissatisfied
Type A estates	53.7	22.1	24.2
Type B estates	38.6	15.2	46.2
Cottages	80.0	—	20.0
Temporary housing	31.9	10.6	57.4
Housing Society blocks	51.7	17.2	31.0

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

The congested living condition and lack of public space in Hong Kong lead to a pattern of leisure activities which is mainly home-based and dominated by the mass media. Hong Kong is served by two commercial television broadcasters, one public and one private radio station, and a large number of newspapers. Popular attitude towards these three media differs considerably. Among our respondents, they were least happy about the programmes provided by television with only 44.2 percent expressing satisfaction. A feeling of indifference seemed to prevail, with 42 percent giving an average response. This lukewarm attitude was reflected in the substantial decline in weekday prime time audience ratings which had dropped 17 percent between 1984 and 1988 (Chan & Choi, 1989:296). The radio service was more warmly received. About 57.6 percent of the respondents felt satisfied with it, and only 5.3 percent expressed dissatisfaction. But it should be noted that a substantial number of respondents did not answer this question, presumably because they were not in the habit of listening to the radio. The very high degree of satisfaction with local newspapers was striking. The

large majority, 71.2 percent, were happy with this printed media, and just 2.3 percent were dissatisfied with it. Hong Kong residents were avid readers of newspapers, and daily readership had increased steadily from 67 percent of the population in 1984 to 77 percent in 1987 (Chan & Choi, 1989:312). Why was there such a high level of satisfaction with the newspapers? Is it because of the quality of reportage? Is it because of the range of choice available to cater for diverse tastes? Or is it because of a traditional respect for the printed word? Further research is needed to answer these questions. What we do know is that respondents of different age, educational attainment, occupational background and so on had somewhat dissimilar views on the mass media and the other life domains already examined, and we would now turn to such variations in attitude.

Variations in Satisfaction

As shown in Table 1.6, respondents of different age groups had distinctive areas of discontent. The young ones were apparently more demanding and held higher expectations, thus proportionately more of them were unhappy with their present job, their social status, their housing condition and immediate environment, and with television and radio programmes. The middle aged were particularly dissatisfied with their educational attainment. As for the old ones, they tended to be less happy with their family life and their own health, and they had more worries and felt they did not have enough money to cover their daily expenditure.

Educational attainment is another key dimension along which levels of satisfaction vary. As shown in Table 1.7, respondents in different educational categories held dissimilar views on most of the aspects covered. The highly educated ones with tertiary or post-graduate qualifications were generally more satisfied with their academic achievements, their family life, and their health. A much larger proportion of them, some 75.2 percent compared to only 38 percent of the lowly educated, felt that they had more than enough financial means to meet their daily expenditure. They were apparently very happy with the local newspapers but had quite a dim view of television programmes. In this regard, it is clear that local television was much more to the taste of the unlettered sectors of the population including the old and the lowly educated. However, the less educated respondents were not always more disgruntled than the more educated. It is significant that relatively more of them were contented with their social status, or at

least more resigned to accepting their present standing in society as indicated by a substantial number of non-responses on this topic. More of them, about 54.8 percent as compared to 35.7 percent of the highly educated, felt that they had no worry in recent months. Some 68.6 percent of them also said that they had enough leisure time while only 45.8 percent of the highly educated said the same.

The respondents' educational attainment was closely correlated with their occupation, individual and household income, and self-declared social stratum ($p = 0.0000$ in all cross-tabulations among these variables). Therefore very similar patterns of satisfaction was found along the dimensions of occupation, income, and stratum. As an illustration, only the pattern by self-declared social stratum is shown in Table 1.8, partly to highlight the importance of this variable in accounting for differences in attitude. When the patterns by education and by social stratum are compared (Tables 1.7 and 1.8), it can be seen that there are only two notable deviations. The first is that while respondents of different education were rather homogeneous in their levels of satisfaction with their present job, different social strata displayed quite dissimilar attitude on this issue. About 80 percent of those in the upper-middle stratum said they were happy with their existing job whereas only 51.6 percent of those in the lower stratum expressed satisfaction. The second deviation is that a positive correlation exists between self-declared stratum and satisfaction with social status. About 76.1 percent of those in the upper-middle stratum were satisfied with their status while only 37.2 percent of those of the lower stratum had the same feeling. In contrast, some 48.5 percent of the lowly educated were happy with their status while only 45.2 percent of the highly educated were satisfied. Such a discrepancy may indicate the existence of a popular belief in Hong Kong that the more educated deserve higher social status while in reality some of the highly educated ones did not attain the commensurate levels of income, occupation and stratum, and they thus felt that they did not get the status and prestige which were their due. Among our respondents, for instance, even though educational attainment and self-declared social stratum were positively linked, there were nevertheless 6.5 percent and 17.3 percent of those with a tertiary or post-graduate education who placed themselves in the lower and lower-middle strata respectively.

In comparison with the dimensions examined above, it is surprising to find that place of origin and gender are not powerful explanatory variables of attitudinal differences. Locally born respondents and those born outside of Hong Kong diverged in their levels of satisfaction only with educational achievement, residential environment, health,

Table 1.6. Satisfaction with Different Aspects by Age

Aspects	Age*	Satisfaction (%)**				N	p***
		1	2	3	4		
Education	Young	23.3	27.1	49.3	0.2	446	0.0000
	Middle	19.7	23.4	56.0	0.9	864	
	Old	24.0	27.0	44.1	4.9	263	
Job	Young	51.6	32.1	16.2	---	364	0.0029
	Middle	62.8	21.3	15.9	---	675	
	Old	59.6	25.7	14.7	---	109	
Family	Young	78.1	16.0	5.9	---	456	0.0000
	Middle	76.7	18.9	4.4	---	894	
	Old	63.6	29.0	7.4	---	297	
Status	Young	38.9	37.1	19.1	4.9	450	0.0000
	Middle	51.8	27.1	15.2	5.9	877	
	Old	50.9	22.3	11.5	15.3	287	
Health	Young	58.6	33.7	7.7	---	457	0.0000
	Middle	60.8	30.5	8.7	---	897	
	Old	45.4	30.3	24.3	---	304	
Housing	Young	52.5	18.8	28.7	---	457	0.0022
	Middle	53.1	20.0	26.9	---	893	
	Old	64.3	18.5	17.2	---	297	
Environment	Young	36.4	26.0	37.5	---	453	0.0000
	Middle	44.5	25.9	29.5	---	887	
	Old	58.6	21.8	19.7	---	289	
Television	Young	38.9	38.6	16.8	5.7	453	0.0001
	Middle	38.6	41.5	12.6	7.3	887	
	Old	52.4	32.2	7.5	7.9	292	
Radio	Young	45.8	32.4	5.6	16.3	448	0.0051
	Middle	43.7	28.6	3.5	24.2	828	
	Old	47.1	23.6	3.5	25.9	259	
Newspaper	Young	64.5	24.3	3.6	7.6	445	0.0000
	Middle	66.7	23.0	1.3	9.0	852	
	Old	48.3	23.5	2.1	26.1	234	

* Young = 29 or below; Middle = 30-54; Old = 55 or over

** 1 = Satisfied; 2 = Average; 3 = Dissatisfied; 4 = Don't know

*** p = Level of significance (Chi-square)

Table 1.7. Satisfaction with Different Aspects by Education

Aspects	Education*	Satisfaction (%)**				N	p***
		1	2	3	4		
Education	Low	14.3	23.4	59.5	2.7	593	0.0000
	Middle	19.8	27.1	52.5	0.5	807	
	High	53.9	22.2	22.8	1.2	167	
Family	Low	68.6	25.3	6.1	---	652	0.0000
	Middle	78.6	16.4	5.0	---	817	
	High	81.7	15.4	3.0	---	169	
Status	Low	48.5	26.5	13.3	11.7	631	0.0000
	Middle	47.8	30.4	16.9	4.8	809	
	High	45.2	33.1	18.1	3.6	166	
Health	Low	50.1	32.2	17.8	---	659	0.0000
	Middle	62.0	31.1	6.8	---	822	
	High	65.1	28.4	6.5	---	169	
Environment	Low	50.5	23.6	25.8	---	639	0.0002
	Middle	40.2	25.7	34.2	---	814	
	High	45.8	30.4	23.8	---	168	
Television	Low	44.4	37.9	8.9	8.9	642	0.0000
	Middle	40.4	40.3	13.7	5.5	816	
	High	30.1	38.0	24.7	7.2	166	
Radio	Low	44.4	25.5	2.6	27.5	581	0.0000
	Middle	47.2	29.2	3.8	19.8	788	
	High	33.3	40.3	11.3	15.1	159	
Newspaper	Low	49.9	25.9	1.6	22.6	549	0.0000
	Middle	70.2	22.5	1.9	5.4	808	
	High	72.5	21.6	4.2	1.8	167	

* Low = Primary level & below; Middle = Secondary level;
High = Tertiary level and above

** 1 = Satisfied; 2 = Average; 3 = Dissatisfied; 4 = Don't know

*** p = Level of significance (Chi-square)

Table 1.8. Satisfaction with Different Aspects by Social Strata

Aspects	Strata*	Satisfaction (%)**				N	p***
		1	2	3	4		
Education	L	14.2	22.4	60.8	2.6	352	0.0000
	LM	17.7	24.4	57.0	0.9	532	
	M	26.1	28.8	44.2	0.9	532	
	UM	45.6	22.1	30.9	1.5	68	
	U	40.0	20.0	40.0	---	5	

Table 1.8. (Continued)

Aspects	Strata*	Satisfaction (%)**				N	p***
		1	2	3	4		
Job	L	51.6	25.8	22.6	---	248	0.0102
	LM	59.1	26.8	14.0	---	406	
	M	61.5	24.1	14.4	---	382	
	UM	80.0	12.0	8.0	---	50	
	U	66.7	---	33.3	---	3	
Family	L	60.6	31.5	7.8	---	371	0.0000
	LM	76.8	17.3	5.9	---	555	
	M	82.1	14.6	3.3	---	547	
	UM	89.6	9.0	1.5	---	67	
	U	75.0	---	25.0	---	4	
Status	L	37.2	28.4	22.9	11.6	363	0.0000
	LM	49.4	31.5	14.9	4.2	543	
	M	53.0	29.7	13.6	3.7	536	
	UM	76.1	13.4	9.0	1.5	67	
	U	75.0	---	25.0	---	4	
Health	L	52.4	29.6	18.0	---	378	0.0000
	LM	57.8	33.7	8.5	---	555	
	M	59.4	32.0	8.6	---	547	
	UM	64.7	27.9	7.4	---	68	
	U	100.0	---	---	---	5	
Housing	L	49.1	18.9	32.0	---	375	0.0018
	LM	51.6	21.1	27.3	---	554	
	M	59.4	19.3	21.3	---	545	
	UM	74.6	9.0	16.4	---	67	
	U	60.0	20.0	20.0	---	5	
Television	L	45.8	34.3	9.5	10.4	367	0.0000
	LM	37.3	42.5	15.0	5.2	553	
	M	42.4	38.7	13.0	5.9	538	
	UM	44.8	35.8	19.4	---	67	
	U	40.0	20.0	40.0	---	5	
Radio	L	49.4	25.7	3.6	21.3	338	0.0019
	LM	45.2	29.2	3.2	22.3	524	
	M	44.0	30.7	5.1	20.2	511	
	UM	40.6	35.9	7.8	15.6	64	
	U	20.0	20.0	20.0	40.0	5	
Newspaper	L	58.8	22.5	1.5	17.2	325	0.0000
	LM	65.2	24.2	1.3	9.3	528	
	M	65.4	23.3	3.3	8.0	523	
	UM	78.5	16.9	3.1	1.5	65	
	U	100.0	---	---	---	4	

* L = Lower; LM = Lower-middle; M = Middle; UM = Upper-middle;
U = Upper

** 1 = Satisfied; 2 = Average; 3 = Dissatisfied; 4 = Don't know

*** p = Level of significance (Chi-square)

television, and newspaper. Male and female respondents differed only with regard to health, status, television, and newspaper. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that far more women than men, 15 percent versus 7.7 percent, were dissatisfied with their health condition. It seems that the more disadvantaged groups in Hong Kong society tended to feel less healthy than others, and that subjective perceptions of physical and social well-being were probably intertwined.

Ingredients of A Happy Life

In order to find out the cherished values and life goals of the Hong Kong Chinese, our respondents were asked to identify the key element essential for a happy life from a list of ten items including money, love and marriage, serving society, materialistic enjoyment, career development, peace of mind, filial sons and daughters, good health, personal freedom, and any other items which they were to specify. After they had chosen the key item, they were asked to evaluate the importance of each ingredient in turn on a five point scale ranging from very important to very unimportant. Their responses are summarized in Tables 1.9 and 1.10 respectively.

Hong Kong inhabitants are often said to be materialistic in orientation. They spent a lot on clothing, recreational equipment, ornaments, and other items of personal consumption. Between 1980 and 1985, such spending constituted 53 percent of their household expenditure which was among the highest in the industrial market economies (The World Bank 1989, quoted in *Ming Pao*, 25 August 1990). It is well known that Hong Kong ranks first in the world in the per capita possession of luxury cars such as Rolls Royce and Mercedes Benz and the consumption of French cognac (see e.g. *Sunday Morning Post Magazine*, 8 July 1990:7-11; *Ming Pao*, 28 August 1990).

However, as shown in Table 1.9, our respondents did not regard materialistic values as the most important source of happiness. They treasured good health above all else. Nearly 40 percent of them selected this as the most important ingredient of a happy life. Money did come second, but at quite a distance after good health with 12.5 percent highlighting it. At least on the subjective level, the possession of money was not meant for personal enjoyment which was upheld by less than one percent of the respondents. When they assessed the importance of money separately, as shown in Table 1.10, its ranking dropped to fifth place. Why was there such a change in assessment? What did money mean to them? It is probable that the vital commercial

tradition of southern China had instilled in them an appreciation of the utility of money and the sophistication in handling it (Freedman, 1959). In addition, they might rely on the medium of money as a means of emotional expression (Wong, 1990). With their refugee mentality, they might also find the inherent liquidity of money as an economic asset attractive. In a word, it could be that the Hong Kong Chinese were money conscious without being overly materialistic.

Table 1.9. Most Important Ingredient of A Happy Life

Ingredient	Frequency	Adjusted %
Health	638	39.9
Money	200	12.5
Freedom	168	10.5
Love/Marriage	150	9.4
Filial piety	103	6.4
Peace of mind	101	6.3
Family*	80	5.0
Career	63	3.9
Serving society	10	0.6
Materialistic enjoyment	9	0.6
Others	76	4.8
Don't know	35	—
No answer	29	—
Total	1662	100.0

* This ingredient was not on the original list of precoded answers. It was suggested by the respondents themselves.

Personal freedom came third on the list of the most important ingredient of a happy life. It was chosen by 10.5 percent of the respondents. Its importance might have been heightened in their minds by the widespread apprehension about the curtailment of civil liberty after 1997. Whatever the reason, they clearly valued individual autonomy above collectivistic considerations. Less than one percent of them placed emphasis on the goal of serving society.

After personal liberty came the values on love and marriage, filial piety, peace of mind, and family relations which may be described as Confucian in nature (on Confucian values, see e.g. Chien, 1979; Yu, 1983). It should be noted that family relations were put forth by about 5 percent of the respondents on their own accord and would probably attract more choices if it had been on the original list of pre-coded

answers. Furthermore, when the items were individually considered, the importance attached to peace of mind and filial piety rose to third and fourth place respectively. In a way, the concern for health was also a Confucian trait because it was thought that one should take care of one's body as a form of respect for one's parents. Therefore the main thrust in the respondents' choices was to affirm the amazing resilience of the Confucian tradition among the Chinese in Hong Kong. In spite of the forces of colonialism, industrialization and westernization, the Hong Kong Chinese remained 'traditional', 'conservative', and Confucian at the core (see Wong, 1986; the survey on attitudes towards marriage and sex published in *South China Morning Post*, 27 August 1990).

Table 1.10. Importance of Individual Ingredients of A Happy Life (%)

Ingredient	Importance		
	Important	Average	Unimportant
Health	96.9	2.8	0.2
Freedom	91.8	7.7	0.5
Peace of mind	84.8	13.6	1.6
Filial piety	81.9	14.5	3.7
Money	74.3	19.6	6.2
Love/Marriage	70.0	20.5	9.5
Career	61.2	22.1	16.6
Serving society	54.3	33.2	12.4
Enjoyment	31.8	49.1	19.0

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Variations in Ingredients

When the respondents were divided into subgroups according to their objective personal characteristics, they displayed distinctively different patterns of emphasis on what they regarded as the key ingredients of a happy life. Differentiated by sex, male respondents tended to place more stress on money, freedom, and career development while female ones were relatively more concerned with love and marriage, and the need to have filial sons and daughters. In terms of age, young respondents seemed to value freedom, love and marriage, peace of mind, and career development more than the old who set greater store upon

money and filial children. According to place of birth, the indigenous respondents upheld the importance of love and marriage, peace of mind, and career more often than the immigrants who were more inclined to treasure money and filial piety.

Table 1.11. Key Ingredients of A Happy Life by Educational Attainment

Ingredient	Education (%)			p*
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	
Health	41.6	39.4	35.4	
Money	15.8	11.3	6.2	
Freedom	6.8	12.1	17.3	0.0032
Love/Marriage	7.9	10.2	9.9	0.0010
Filial piety	11.4	3.5	0.6	0.0288
Peace of mind	4.3	7.1	11.1	0.0001
Family	5.4	5.4	1.9	
Career	0.5	5.8	8.6	0.0000
Serving society	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.0000
Enjoyment	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.0000
Others	5.4	3.9	6.8	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0000

* p = Level of significance (Chi-square). The value for individual items represents the correlation when each item was assessed separately. Values that are insignificant are not listed.

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Since educational attainment, occupation, individual and household income, and self-declared social stratum were closely connected among the respondents, a consistent picture of variation emerged along these lines. The higher the ranking of the respondents, the more they were prone to value freedom, love and marriage, peace of mind, and career. Those who were lowly placed in the socioeconomic hierarchy tended to uphold the importance of money, filial piety, and family relations. As an illustration, the variation in terms of educational attainment was shown in Table 1.11. Among those who had a tertiary or post-graduate qualification, 17.3 percent placed emphasis on freedom, 9.9 percent on love and marriage, 11.1 percent on peace of mind, and 8.6 percent on career development. The corresponding percentages among those with no more than a primary education were 6.8, 7.9, 4.3, and 0.5 respectively. In contrast, for these lowly educated respondents, 15.8 percent valued money, 11.4 percent

treasured filial piety, and 5.4 percent upheld family relations while only 6.2, 0.6, and 1.9 percent of the highly educated ones did so.

It is interesting to note that the less advantaged groups tended to set greater store upon the cluster of values comprising money, filial piety, and family relations. Such a cluster suggests that family ties and filial children served the practical purpose of providing security to the less educated, the poor, and the manual workers in the community. It is also probable that they were more confined in the range of their social activities and were thus more inclined to find fulfillment in the close family circle.

Standard of Living

In this last section, we shall examine how the respondents assessed their standard of living in the recent past and in the near future, which aspect of their family life they wished to improve upon, and whether they were satisfied with the overall economic, social and political situation of Hong Kong.

Table 1.12. Change in Living Standard in Past and Next 3 Years (%)

Change	Past 3 Years	Next 3 Years
Worse	8.0	5.7
The same	27.7	22.6
Better	63.8	48.4
Don't know	0.5	22.0
No answer	0.0	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0
(N)	(1662)	(1662)

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Most respondents felt that there had been an improvement in their living standard. As shown in Table 1.12, over 60 percent of them said that their living standard had changed for the better in the past three years. About 27.7 percent felt it had remained more or less the same, and only 8 percent said it had deteriorated. When they were sounded about the future, there was still a strong note of optimism for continued improvement, though it was mixed with voices of uncertainty. Nearly half of the respondents anticipated further improvements in their standard of living in the next three years. About 22.6 percent believed

it would stay at the same level, and only 5.7 percent foresaw a worsening scenario. But a substantial number of them, some 22 percent, felt that the future was not for them to see and said that they did not know what the trend was going to be.

As is to be expected, different subgroups had dissimilar experiences and expectations about changes in their standard of living. The young, the local born, the well educated, the professional and administrators, and the high income groups tended to feel that their living standard had improved and it would continue to be better. On the other hand, more of the old, the immigrants, and those at the bottom rung of the socioeconomic ladder had experienced deterioration and were more apprehensive of what the future would hold. For example, 78.6 percent of the young respondents said that their living standards had become better and 67.6 percent of them believed it would continue to improve. In comparison, only 41.3 percent and 21.5 percent of the old respondents held the same views. For different income groups, 77.6 percent of those with a monthly household income of HK\$15,000 and above felt that their living standard had improved and 73.1 percent believed it would get better in the near future. The comparative percentages among those with a household income of less than HK\$4,000 per month were just 35.9 and 20.4 respectively.

When the respondents were asked which aspect of their family life they were most keen to improve upon, the first priority appeared to be their living environment with 37.2 percent of them highlighting it (see Table 1.13). The second priority was their financial situation which was emphasized by 19.5 percent. Lower down the list of priorities were family relations with 9 per cent, children's education with 8.6 percent, and other aspects with 4.3 percent. Some 8.3 percent seemed to be contented with their existing family life and saw no need for specific improvement. Subgroups differences did exist in the relative weights placed on various aspects, but they did not alter the general priority ranking.

Standard of living and desired improvements in one's livelihood are affected by the general economic, social, and political context. When asked about the overall condition in Hong Kong, the respondents were apparently satisfied with the economic situation, moderately contented with the social aspect, but clearly ambivalent towards the political scene. As can be seen in Table 1.14, more than half of them said they were satisfied with the economy and only 12.6 percent expressed dissatisfaction. On the social aspect, some 39 percent said they were happy with it and around 14.4 percent held the opposite view. As for the political situation, only 26.3 percent showed satisfaction and about 17.7

percent said they were not happy with it. A substantial proportion, some 28.7 percent, said they did not know how to assess the political situation.

Table 1.13. Most Desired Improvement in Family Life

Improvement Desired	Frequency	Percentage
Living environment	618	37.2
Financial situation	324	19.5
Family relations	149	9.0
Children's education	143	8.6
Others	71	4.3
None	138	8.3
Don't know/No answer	219	13.2
Total	1662	100.0

Table 1.14. Satisfaction with Economic, Social and Political Situation in Hong Kong (%)

Level	Economic	Social	Political
Very satisfied	3.9	1.2	1.1
Satisfied	53.4	37.8	25.2
Average	20.2	33.8	25.8
Dissatisfied	12.2	13.6	16.4
Very dissatisfied	0.4	0.8	1.3
Don't know	9.1	12.0	28.7
No answer	0.8	0.8	1.5
Total (N = 1662)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Significant variations in levels of satisfaction existed between men and women, the old and the young, the local borns and the immigrants, and the highly placed and lowly placed in the socioeconomic ladder. The patterns of these subgroup variations were quite consistent. As an illustration, the subgroup variations by age and by education are shown in Tables 1.15 and 1.16. With respect to age, it can be observed that the old respondents were less satisfied with the economic situation and less able to form an opinion on the economy than the young ones. A similar trend existed among the lowly educated respondents. When it came to the social and political situation, the old and the lowly educated were less prone to feel dissatisfied, but many of them were unable to make a

judgment particularly on the political scene. For instance, about 28 percent of the young respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the political situation while only 9.1 percent of the old ones did so. But there were 42.6 percent of the old respondents who said they did not know how they felt on the issue. The same pattern was found among the lowly educated. Only 10 percent of them felt dissatisfied with the political situation as compared to the 31.4 percent among the highly educated, but there were 44.1 percent of them who could not form an opinion on the matter. Therefore it seems that political discontent was largely a phenomenon affecting the younger sector and the upper socioeconomic strata. Many of the older and less advantaged respondents were either not interested in political issues or they felt rather confused by them.

Table 1.15. Satisfaction with Economic, Social and Political Situation by Age

Aspect/Level	Age ¹ (%)			p ²
	Young	Middle	Old	
Economic				
Satisfied	60.9	58.5	50.8	
Average	24.5	18.5	19.6	
Dissatisfied	8.6	14.9	12.3	
Don't know	6.0	8.1	17.3	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0000
Social				
Satisfied	34.4	41.5	40.6	
Average	39.9	33.2	27.5	
Dissatisfied	20.0	13.5	9.1	
Don't know	5.7	11.9	22.8	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0000
Political				
Satisfied	21.0	28.5	29.7	
Average	34.9	24.3	18.6	
Dissatisfied	28.0	15.9	9.1	
Don't know	16.1	31.3	42.6	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	

¹ Young = aged 29 or below; Middle = aged 30-54; Old = aged 55 or over

² p = level of significance (Chi-square)

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Table 1.16. Satisfaction with Economic, Social and Political Situation by Educational Attainment

Aspect/Level	Educational Attainment ¹ (%)			p ²
	Low	Middle	High	
Economic				
Satisfied	48.4	62.8	70.7	
Average	20.7	20.3	18.0	
Dissatisfied	14.4	12.1	9.6	
Don't know	16.4	4.9	1.8	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0000
Social				
Satisfied	40.6	40.9	29.8	
Average	27.0	36.9	46.4	
Dissatisfied	11.4	15.3	21.4	
Don't know	21.0	7.0	2.4	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0000
Political				
Satisfied	27.2	27.4	21.9	
Average	18.8	29.7	36.7	
Dissatisfied	10.0	21.3	31.4	
Don't know	44.1	21.5	10.1	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0000

¹ Low = Primary and below; Middle = Secondary; High = Tertiary and above

² p = level of significance (Chi-square)

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Conclusion

The respondents of this 1988 survey consisted of 1,662 adults aged 18 or over living in Hong Kong. Their demographic features were broadly in line with those of the general population as found in the 1986 By-Census.

About half of the respondents said they had no worries in the six months before they were interviewed. For those who had worries, they were mainly troubled by problems related to their education, work, or family. Less than a quarter of them were inflicted with financial problems.

A pervasive sense of well-being was found among the respondents who were generally satisfied with most aspects of their life. Educational attainment was the only exceptional aspect with which massive dissatis-

faction was expressed. Most of the respondents seemed to set the ideal target at the tertiary level for themselves and for their sons and daughters. Any attainment below that level was regarded by the majority as deficient and unsatisfactory. Such a thirst for educational qualifications deserves further investigation in order to specify the causes and to discover the behavioural consequences and implications for government policy.

Most of the respondents were satisfied with other aspects such as their work, family, status, health, housing, and the mass media. The level of satisfaction with the family was particularly high, reflecting the great importance still attached to this institution among the Hong Kong inhabitants. There was also a very high degree of satisfaction with local newspapers.

Different age groups showed significant variations in their satisfaction with most of the aspects covered. Subgroup differences were also found along the dimensions of education, occupation, income, and self-declared social stratum which were positively correlated with one another.

The respondents regarded good health, money, and freedom as three of the most important ingredients of a happy life. These were followed by a cluster of Confucian values such as peace of mind, filial piety and family harmony, indicating the amazing resilience of traditional Chinese values in Hong Kong.

The majority of the respondents felt that they had experienced an improvement in their livelihood in the three years before they were interviewed, and they anticipated that such improvement would continue in the next three years. They were most eager to seek improvements on their living environment, financial situation, family relations, and children's education, in that order. On the overall condition of Hong Kong, they were apparently quite satisfied with the economic situation, moderately contented with the social aspect, but clearly ambivalent towards the political scene.

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2 Attitudes towards Social Problems

Lau Siu-kai and Wan Po-san

SOCIAL problem is commonly defined as an alleged situation that is incompatible with the values of a significant number of people who agree that action is needed to alter the situation (Rubington and Weinberg, 1989:4). The nature and magnitude of social problems have direct impact upon people's well-being. Numerous objective statistics (like crime rate, unemployment rate, causes of death, and divorce statistics etc.), which are compiled by the Government, are invaluable information for the understanding and assessment of social problems. However, people's perceptions and evaluations of the seriousness of social problems, though may be inaccurate due to different values held by different people, or mediated perceptions resulted mainly from the filtering of mass media and the differential visibility of social problems, still play an indispensable role in exerting pressure on the authority to deal with the problem and facilitating voluntary participation to remedy the perceived problem. This section focuses primarily on (1) the respondents' evaluation of the degree of seriousness of twelve selected social problems, (2) their ranking of the most serious social problem, and (3) their assessment of the trend in public order.¹

Evaluations of the Seriousness of Selected Social Problems

In the survey, respondents were asked to evaluate the degree of seriousness of twelve different kinds of social problems. The results are listed in descending order in terms of the degree of perceived seriousness in Table 2.1.²

Among the twelve social problems presented, only six of them were perceived by over half of the respondents as a serious or very serious social problem.

Youth problem and environmental pollution ranked first and second. Three out of four respondents considered both as serious or very serious social problems.

Youth, as a transitional period from childhood to adulthood in modern society, has always been a difficult period. The ever-growing

Table 2.1. Evaluation of the Seriousness of Selected Social Problems (%)

	Degree of Seriousness						(N)
	Very Minor	Minor	Average	Serious	Very Serious	DK/NA*	
Youth							
1988	0.3	4.5	11.3	52.5	22.2	9.3	(1662)
1986	0.6	3.0	10.4	58.8	19.5	7.8	(539)
Pollution							
1988	0.4	7.3	12.9	51.0	23.9	4.4	(1662)
1986	0.2	8.0	20.6	52.1	9.5	9.6	(539)
Transport							
1988	0.5	14.6	18.7	43.0	20.2	3.0	(1662)
1986	0.4	21.5	33.0	36.7	4.1	4.3	(539)
Public order							
1988	0.4	14.1	24.4	46.2	11.5	3.5	(1662)
1986	0.2	8.0	21.2	56.0	8.5	6.1	(539)
Housing							
1988	0.3	16.8	21.5	44.9	11.9	4.5	(1662)
1986	0.0	9.3	18.7	54.0	9.8	8.2	(539)
Old age							
1988	0.4	11.5	26.7	42.7	9.7	9.0	(1662)
1986	0.4	9.1	22.8	51.6	4.6	11.5	(539)
Education							
1988	0.9	22.0	30.0	30.2	7.4	9.5	(1662)
1986	0.5	16.9	28.6	38.4	2.8	12.8	(539)
Health services							
1988	0.8	25.8	35.7	27.2	4.5	6.1	(1662)
1986	0.4	20.4	32.7	34.9	2.4	9.3	(539)
Social welfare							
1988	1.0	22.7	36.9	22.5	4.4	12.6	(1662)
1986	0.2	17.8	31.5	31.2	1.9	17.4	(539)
Poverty							
1988	1.0	30.9	34.9	19.7	5.2	8.5	(1662)
1986	0.0	22.6	30.6	33.0	2.6	11.1	(539)
Employment							
1988	3.9	44.3	27.7	14.4	1.9	7.6	(1662)
1986	0.4	21.7	33.0	30.2	2.2	12.4	(539)
Corruption							
1988	2.0	31.6	29.4	11.8	3.5	21.6	(1662)
1986	0.9	29.9	25.0	16.5	0.7	26.9	(539)

*DK/NA = Don't know/No answer

problem of juvenile delinquency is particularly a major public concern. Records of arrests and convictions from industrialized societies, e.g., Australia, England, Scandinavia, and the United States, indicate that criminality peaks in teenage years (Sutherland and Cressey, 1978:125). In Hong Kong, official statistics in the past decade also reflected a growing problem of juvenile delinquency. For example, the offender rates of young offender (aged 16-20) and juvenile offender (aged 7-15) have increased drastically from approximately 790 and 270 per 100,000 population in 1978 to 1,610 and 950 per 100,000 population in 1988, respectively. The offender rate of young offender remained the highest among all age groups since 1980, and the offender rate of juvenile offender climbed to the third since 1987 (Royal Hong Kong Police Review 1988:77-79). Therefore, it was not at all surprising to find that youth problem was rated by 74.7 per cent of the respondents as a serious social problem, while a mere 4.8 per cent considered it as a minor social problem.

There were also similar proportion of respondents who classified environmental pollution as a serious social problem. This increasing awareness of environmental problem and protection seemed to be a natural outcome of the visible environmental deterioration, the active involvement of environmental organizations, the attention of mass media, and the accelerating commitment of the government to tackle environmental problem during the past few years.

Transport support all socio-economic activities that involve movement of passengers, delivery of service, and goods. The availability and cost of transportation affect directly people's way and quality of life. In Hong Kong, the transport infrastructure and services are subject to the enormous pressure from the extremely dense population and the ever-growing socio-economic activities. Hence, the problem of transport, especially the problem of congested traffic and the increasing cost of public transport, rises up to be a major public concern. In the present survey, transport came third in the list of perceived seriousness. It was regarded as a serious social problem by 63.2 per cent of the respondents, while only 15.1 per cent held the opposite view.

Public order, which affects personal safety directly and probably is not under control by any individual, has always been one of the greatest human concern in any society. Majority of the respondents (57.7%) regarded public order as a serious social problem in Hong Kong whereas 24.4 per cent classified its seriousness as average and 14.5 per cent as minor.

Next in the list of seriousness came the problem of housing. Housing seems to be a perennial problem in Hong Kong. In 1988, though 13 per

cent of the government's Consolidated Annual Expenditure was spent on the development and maintenance of subsidized public housing, which has already accommodated nearly half of the Hong Kong population, 56.8 per cent of respondents still said that housing in Hong Kong was a serious social problem, as compared with 17.1 per cent who held the opposite opinion.

Old age was also regarded as a serious social problem by over half of the respondents (52.4%) while only 11.9 per cent classified it as a minor problem. As a result of the prolonged life expectancy, the declining birth rate (from 17 per thousand in 1978 to 13 per thousand in 1988) and the stable and low death rate (about 5 per thousand), the proportion of aged population (aged 65 and above) has risen from 6 per cent to 8.3 per cent in the past ten years (Hong Kong 1989:328). The increasing number of elderly population, together with the preference and prevalence of nuclear family, the changing role and status of the aged in family and society, the dwindling function of traditional social support network, and the inadequate provision of socio-financial support programmes for the elderly are part of the major factors contributing to the perception of old age as an alarming social problem in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong people place great emphasis on education. Though many studies indicate that one of the latent functions of the educational system is to preserve the class system and to perpetuate social inequality, 80.6 per cent of the respondents in the 1986 survey believed that education was a valid and effective channel for upward mobility. In the present survey, the degree of satisfaction with personal educational attainment was rather low. About half of them were dissatisfied with their own educational attainment. However, education was considered as a serious social problem by less than 40 per cent of the respondents, as compared with 30 per cent regarded its degree of seriousness as average and 22.9 per cent rated it as minor. This relative acceptance of the educational situation was possibly stemmed from their optimistic attitude towards their offsprings' educational opportunities. For example, more than 60 per cent of the respondents aspired their children to have a tertiary educational attainment and overall only 23.1 per cent of the respondents thought their children did not have much chance or no chance to achieve it.

Good health was perceived by nearly all respondents (96.4%) as an important quality of a happy life. It was also singled out by nearly forty per cent (38.4%) of the respondents as the most important quality. In Hong Kong, programmes of preventive, curative, and rehabilitative health services are provided to the public at nominal cost by the

government. Various health indices, for example infant mortality rate and life expectancy, also reflect a satisfactory level of health of the Hong Kong people. Though a sizeable proportion of respondents (31.3%) evaluated their health condition as average and 11.2 per cent rated unhealthy, the percentage of respondents who classified health services as a serious social problem was only 31.7.

As a result of the rising expectation and demand of the Hong Kong people toward public welfare services, the government's expenditure on social security and social welfare services had amounted to 3,607 million in the 1988-89 fiscal year. In the present survey, only 26.9 per cent of the respondents regarded social welfare as a serious social problem, while 36.9 per cent classified its degree of seriousness as average and 23.7 per cent as minor.

Although the overall growth rate of the Hong Kong economy has become moderate, its performance is still satisfactory. In 1988, the gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 7.4 per cent, domestic export by about 8.9 per cent, and total domestic demand by about 7.2 per cent in real terms (Hong Kong 1989:53). The seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate declined to a historic low of 1.3 per cent. Labour shortage also led to a considerable increase in labour income. As a result, both the problem of poverty and employment in Hong Kong were rated by a minority of respondents as serious social problems (24.9% and 16.3%, respectively).

The findings of the seventh opinion survey conducted by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) on public attitudes towards corruption and the ICAC indicated a rather positive evaluation of the problem of corruption in present Hong Kong. For example, about 90 per cent of the interviewees considered the performance of the ICAC as good, about one-half thought corruption was not prevalent in Hong Kong, and many of them believed that corruption in government departments was no longer a common practice (1988 Annual Report by the Commissioner of the ICAC:12-15). In the present survey, there was merely 15.3 per cent of respondents regarded corruption as a serious social problem in Hong Kong, as compared with 33.6 per cent who held an opposite opinion. However, a substantial proportion of respondents (21.6%) could not come up with a definite answer indicated the obscurity of this problem.

The Most Serious Social Problem

In the survey, respondents were further asked: 'What do you think is

the most serious social problem that should be solved right away?' and they were free to answer as they pleased. The results were presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Problem Listed as the Most Serious Social Problem (%)

Problem	1988	1986
Youth	17.6	16.3
Public order	14.4	22.5
Housing	14.2	10.6
Transport	14.0	2.6
Environmental pollution	10.2	0.0
Education	5.2	4.1
Old age	4.6	2.6
Social welfare	2.8	1.9
Health services	2.6	3.3
Poverty	1.6	3.5
Employment	1.3	4.6
Others	3.5	18.4
Don't know	6.3	5.4
No answer	1.6	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0
(N)	(1662)	(539)

Youth problem ranked top. It was rated as the most serious social problem in present Hong Kong by 17.6 per cent of the respondents. Following it were the problems of public order, housing, and transport. Each was rated as the most serious social problem by 14.4 per cent, 14.2 per cent, and 14 per cent of the respondents respectively. Though environmental pollution was regarded by the second largest proportion of respondents as a serious social problem, it was ranked fifth on the list. Other problems, such as education, old age, social welfare, health services etc., were all ranked by a small number of respondents as the most serious social problem that should be solved immediately. Apart from the answer 'Others', the problems of poverty and employment were also ranked at the bottom of the list of seriousness.

Variations in Evaluations among Population Groups

As a result of varying life opportunities, living conditions, social experiences, or standard of criteria for evaluations, different population

groups may vary in their evaluations on the degree of seriousness of social problems. On the whole, major socio-economic background factors, such as sex, age, educational attainment, income, and occupation were closely interrelated. Older people and females were more likely to be less educated, economically inactive or hold manual and less prestigious occupations, and tended to have a lower income. In view of this, only the variations related to the factors of sex, age, and educational attainment were presented.³

Gender differences in the evaluations of the seriousness of transport, youth, social welfare, health services, environmental pollution, and old age were not statistically significant. However, as indicated in Table 2.3, the percentages of women who classified public order, housing, education, employment, corruption and poverty as serious social problems in Hong Kong were significantly higher than men. For example, for those who gave definite answers, 69.4 per cent of female respondents regarded public order as a serious or very serious social problem with only 10 per cent of them thinking otherwise, whereas the respective percentages for male respondents were 50.6 and 19.7.

Table 2.3. Perceived Seriousness of Selected Social Problems by Sex (%)

		Degree of Perceived Seriousness*					(N)	p
		1	2	3	4	5		
Public order	Male	0.2	19.5	29.7	40.8	9.8	(826)	0.0000
	Female	0.5	9.5	20.5	55.3	14.1	(779)	
Housing	Male	0.2	20.2	23.8	43.5	12.3	(823)	0.0151
	Female	0.4	14.9	21.2	50.9	12.6	(764)	
Education	Male	1.6	26.8	35.6	30.1	6.0	(773)	0.0000
	Female	0.4	21.8	30.5	36.8	10.5	(731)	
Employment	Male	5.8	53.6	27.0	12.3	1.4	(808)	0.0000
	Female	2.5	41.8	33.4	19.4	2.9	(727)	
Corruption	Male	1.9	45.0	36.4	12.1	4.6	(720)	0.0003
	Female	3.4	34.5	38.8	18.7	4.5	(582)	
Poverty	Male	1.3	37.2	38.4	18.1	5.0	(795)	0.0021
	Female	0.8	29.9	37.7	25.1	6.4	(729)	

* 1 = very minor; 2 = minor; 3 = average; 4 = serious; 5 = very serious

p = level of significance (Chi-square)

As aforementioned, the factors of age and educational attainment were closely and negatively related. The younger in age was more likely

to have a higher level of educational attainment than the older people. Generally speaking, the younger and the more educated are in better positions in a wide spectrum of life domains. However, higher education often leads to higher expectation, consciousness, and hence more critical assessment of social conditions. The present findings indicated statistical significant age and education differences in the evaluations of the seriousness of social problems. On the one hand, the older and the less educated respondents were less likely to hold definite opinion on the seriousness of many social problems. On the other hand, notwithstanding their relative better social positions, the younger and the more educated respondents generally declared a more critical attitudes towards the social conditions than their counterparts.

For those who hold definite opinions, the percentages of the younger in age who considered housing, transport, education, youth, social welfare, and environmental pollution etc. as serious social problems were significantly higher than the older respondents (see Table 2.4). For example, 85.9 per cent of those aged 30 or below thought that youth was a serious social problem while only 73 per cent of those aged 55 or over held the same view. Nevertheless, the percentage of the older in age who regarded poverty as a serious social problem was higher than the younger respondents.

In a similar vein, the more educated showed a greater tendency to identify transport, education, youth, and environmental pollution etc. as serious social problems than the less educated respondents (see Table 2.5). No significant difference was found among respondents with various educational attainment with regard to their evaluation of the seriousness of housing problem in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the less educated tended to evaluate the problems of public order, employment and poverty more negatively than the more educated.

Comparison 1986/1988

Changes in the evaluation of the seriousness of social problems may originate from the objective changes in social situation and/or subjective changes in criteria for evaluation. A comparison of the 1986 data with the present findings revealed that the problems of youth, public order, and housing were still concerned by a majority of respondents as serious social problems, several changes were however quite obvious. It was found that the percentages of respondents who classified environmental pollution and transport as serious social problems had increased significantly while the percentages of those who evaluated

Table 2.4. Perceived Seriousness of Selected Social Problems by Age (%)

		Degree of Perceived Seriousness					(N)	p
		1	2	3	4	5*		
Youth	Young	0.4	2.5	11.2	61.4	24.6	(448)	0.0000
	Middle	0.2	4.5	12.2	56.4	26.7	(823)	
	Old	0.4	11.0	15.6	56.5	16.5	(237)	
Pollution	Young	0.2	3.8	10.2	55.8	30.0	(453)	0.0000
	Middle	0.3	7.7	14.6	51.5	25.9	(872)	
	Old	0.8	13.8	16.1	55.6	13.8	(261)	
Transport	Young	0.4	7.9	15.0	49.6	27.1	(454)	0.0000
	Middle	0.5	14.5	21.5	43.1	20.5	(884)	
	Old	0.7	28.7	19.5	39.7	11.4	(272)	
Housing	Young	0.2	9.9	22.2	51.3	16.3	(454)	0.0000
	Middle	0.2	19.8	22.1	46.5	11.3	(867)	
	Old	0.8	23.5	24.6	41.7	9.5	(264)	
Old age	Young	0.5	7.3	38.1	43.5	10.7	(441)	0.0000
	Middle	0.5	14.0	27.2	48.1	10.2	(810)	
	Old	0.4	17.6	21.1	49.0	11.9	(261)	
Education	Young	0.7	15.1	38.1	36.6	9.5	(443)	0.0000
	Middle	0.8	25.5	32.0	32.9	8.7	(830)	
	Old	2.2	37.1	27.5	29.3	3.9	(229)	
Health services	Young	0.4	15.3	49.3	30.0	4.9	(450)	0.0000
	Middle	0.8	31.3	35.1	28.6	4.2	(854)	
	Old	1.6	35.9	27.7	28.5	6.3	(256)	
Social welfare	Young	0.5	13.2	48.4	30.8	7.1	(438)	0.0000
	Middle	1.4	29.1	42.4	22.9	4.2	(781)	
	Old	1.3	39.9	30.0	25.8	3.0	(233)	
Poverty	Young	0.9	30.9	44.9	16.9	6.4	(437)	0.0019
	Middle	1.1	35.1	37.1	21.3	5.4	(834)	
	Old	1.2	33.7	29.8	29.8	5.6	(252)	
Employment	Young	3.8	38.6	40.0	15.9	1.8	(453)	0.0000
	Middle	4.3	52.3	26.1	14.9	2.4	(838)	
	Old	5.0	50.4	25.2	17.8	1.7	(242)	
Corruption	Young	1.7	33.4	44.1	16.8	3.9	(410)	0.0002
	Middle	3.2	44.1	35.5	12.1	4.9	(709)	
	Old	2.2	40.7	30.2	22.5	4.4	(182)	

* 1 = very minor; 2 = minor; 3 = average; 4 = serious; 5 = very serious

p = level of significance (Chi-square)

Young = aged 29 or below; Middle = aged 30 - 54; Old = aged 55 or over

Table 2.5. Perceived Seriousness of Selected Social Problems by Education (%)

		Degree of Perceived Seriousness					(N)	p
		1	2	3	4	5*		
Youth	Low	0.2	6.6	13.8	59.1	20.3	(557)	0.0022
	Middle	0.3	4.2	11.4	56.0	28.0	(778)	
	High	1.2	1.2	12.3	62.6	22.7	(163)	
Pollution	Low	0.3	13.2	17.2	49.7	19.6	(593)	0.0000
	Middle	0.5	5.1	11.8	54.7	27.9	(816)	
	High	0.0	0.6	8.9	59.5	31.0	(168)	
Transport	Low	0.8	20.1	18.9	43.7	16.5	(613)	0.0003
	Middle	0.2	12.8	19.0	44.5	23.4	(820)	
	High	0.6	8.9	20.2	45.8	24.4	(168)	
Public order	Low	0.3	14.2	23.6	47.5	14.4	(611)	0.0011
	Middle	0.4	15.1	23.6	49.6	11.4	(815)	
	High	0.6	14.9	38.7	40.5	5.4	(168)	
Old age	Low	0.5	15.9	23.3	47.6	12.6	(571)	0.0001
	Middle	0.5	11.8	31.8	46.8	9.2	(774)	
	High	0.0	4.5	39.7	44.2	11.5	(156)	
Education	Low	1.3	31.3	27.7	33.7	6.0	(546)	0.0000
	Middle	0.9	20.9	37.8	31.9	8.4	(783)	
	High	0.6	16.5	28.7	40.2	14.0	(164)	
Health services	Low	0.9	34.3	29.8	30.2	4.8	(583)	0.0000
	Middle	0.9	24.4	41.8	29.1	3.7	(803)	
	High	0.0	18.9	48.8	23.8	8.5	(164)	
Social welfare	Low	1.3	34.1	35.6	25.7	3.3	(522)	0.0000
	Middle	0.9	22.6	45.1	25.9	5.4	(760)	
	High	1.3	15.0	50.6	25.0	8.1	(160)	
Poverty	Low	0.9	28.7	33.7	29.4	7.3	(561)	0.0000
	Middle	1.4	36.7	38.7	18.0	5.2	(790)	
	High	0.0	36.6	49.4	11.0	3.0	(164)	
Employment	Low	3.8	45.6	27.0	20.9	2.7	(555)	0.0001
	Middle	3.7	49.9	31.4	13.2	1.7	(805)	
	High	8.5	46.7	33.9	9.1	1.8	(165)	
Corruption	Low	3.2	40.4	30.8	20.1	5.5	(438)	0.0000
	Middle	2.6	41.8	38.1	13.5	4.1	(704)	
	High	0.7	34.0	54.0	8.0	3.3	(150)	

* 1=very minor; 2=minor; 3=average; 4=serious; 5=very serious

p=level of significance (Chi-square)

Low = No schooling/Primary; Middle = Secondary/Matriculation/Technical Institute/School of Commerce/Polytechnic(Cert.or Dip.); High = Tertiary (non-degree or degree)/Graduate School

employment and poverty as serious social problems had decreased considerably.

The percentage of respondents who regarded environmental pollution as a serious or very serious social problem had increased from 9.5 in 1986 to 23.9 in 1988. And the percentage of respondents who rated it as the most serious social problem that should be tackled with immediately were 0 and 10.2 respectively. For the problem of transport, the percentage of respondents who classified it as a serious or very serious social problem had risen from 40.8 in 1986 to 63.2 in 1988. The percentage of respondents who rated it as the most serious social problem that should be solved right away was 2.6 and 14.0 respectively.

On the other hand, the percentage of respondents who felt that employment in Hong Kong was a serious or very serious social problem had dropped from 32.4 in 1986 to 16.3 in 1988 and it was regarded by only 1.3 per cent of respondents as the most serious social problem (the respective percentage in 1986 was 4.6). In a similar vein, the percentage of respondents who classified poverty as a serious or very serious social problem also decreased from 35.6 to 24.9.

Satisfaction with the Government in Handling Social Problems

Hong Kong people have adopted a growing dependency on government intervention in a wide spectrum of socio-economic affairs. The handling of social problems is definitely one of the principal functions of the government.

The satisfaction with the performance of the government has long been conceived as one of the major reasons for the widespread acceptance of the colonial rule by the people. However, the opinion of the respondents towards the government's performance in handling social problems was quite diverse. 29 per cent of the respondents said that they were dissatisfied with the government in handling social problems while 27.6 per cent held the opposite opinion. And nearly one-third (35.9%) of respondents declared their level of satisfaction as average (see Table 2.6).

Female respondents showed a greater tendency to resort to non-committal answers of 'Don't know' or 'No answer' than male respondents.

Age and education differences in degree of satisfaction with the performance of the government in handling social problems were very significant. On the one hand, the older and the less educated respon-

dents were more likely to give indefinite answers on this matter than other respondents. For example, 19.1 per cent of those aged 55 or over and 15 per cent of those with low educational attainment answered 'Don't know' or could not give an answer, as compared with 2.6 per cent of those aged 29 or below and 1.2 per cent with high educational attainment. On the other hand, the younger and the more educated respondents not only were more critical about the social situations, they were also more likely to be dissatisfied with the government in handling social problems than their counterparts. For example, 40.3 per cent of those aged 29 or below and 42.0 per cent with high level of educational attainment said that they were not satisfied with this aspect of governmental performance, the respective percentages for those aged 55 or over and those with low level of educational attainment were 13.8 and 20.6.

Table 2.6. Level of Satisfaction with Government in Handling Social Problems (%)

	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	DK/NA*	(N)
Total	29.0	35.9	27.6	7.4	(1662)
Sex					
male	29.8	36.2	28.8	5.2	(846)
female	28.1	35.7	26.5	9.8	(816)
Age					
29 or below	40.3	40.9	16.2	2.6	(457)
30-54	28.4	36.0	29.7	5.9	(898)
55 or over	13.8	28.3	38.8	19.1	(304)
Education					
low	20.6	30.6	33.8	15.0	(660)
middle	32.8	39.5	24.8	2.8	(822)
high	42.0	39.6	17.2	1.2	(169)

* DK/NA = Don't know/No answer

Perceived Trend in Public Order

'Hong Kong continues to be one of the safest cities in the world,' said the Commissioner of Police in his 1988 annual departmental review. Nevertheless, nearly six out of ten respondents declared that public order was a serious or very serious social problem in Hong Kong and it was rated by the second largest proportion of respondents as the most serious social problem that should be solved immediately. In the survey, respondents were asked to evaluate the changes in public order in the

past three years, and then to anticipate the changes in the next three years.

In the past three years, crime statistics recorded a substantial reduction in overall crime and the maintenance of detection rate as high as over 46 per cent. With regard to subjective perception, less than one-tenth of the respondents could not give a definite answer. However, the respondents were quite diverse in their opinions. One-third of the respondents said that the condition of public order was about the same in the past three years, as compared with 28.5 per cent of the respondents who thought that the present condition was worse, and 29.3 per cent regarded the present was better (see Table 2.7).

Table 2.7. Evaluation of Changes in Public Order in the Past 3 Years (%)

	Worse	Same	Better	DK/NA*	(N)
Total	28.5	33.3	29.3	8.9	(1662)
Sex					
male	23.0	35.6	33.2	8.2	(846)
female	34.2	30.9	25.2	9.7	(816)
Age					
29 or below	35.9	30.9	28.0	5.3	(457)
30-54	26.9	32.7	30.8	9.5	(898)
55 or over	22.4	38.5	26.6	12.5	(304)
Education					
low	26.2	32.9	30.0	10.9	(660)
middle	30.8	31.5	31.5	6.2	(822)
high	26.0	44.4	16.0	13.6	(169)

* DK/NA = Don't know/No answer

Different population groups varied significantly in their opinion. Generally speaking, the more educated respondents were more likely to feel that the condition of public order in the past three years was nearly the same than the less educated respondents. Besides, male respondents tended to hold a more favourable view than female respondents. For example, 23 per cent of men said the present condition was worse, as compared to 34.2 per cent of women. On the other hand, 33.2 per cent of men felt the present situation was better, whereas only 25.2 per cent of women had the same feeling.

The younger respondents (aged 29 or below) were more likely to have definite and more critical opinion on this matter than the older respondents. 35.9 per cent of them thought that the present condition

was worse whereas the respective percentage for those aged 55 or over were 22.4.

In respect to their anticipation of the future situation, over one-third of respondents could not come up with definite answers. Besides, the percentage of respondents who held a pessimistic view was higher. 24.3 per cent of respondents thought that the condition of public order would be worse in the next three years, whereas only 19.9 per cent said that it would be better and 21.3 per cent felt that it would be the same (see Table 2.8).

Table 2.8. Anticipation of Changes in Public Order in the Next 3 Years (%)

	Worse	Same	Better	DK/NA*	(N)
Total	24.3	21.3	19.9	34.5	(1662)
Age					
29 or below	34.4	24.5	19.3	21.9	(457)
30-54	23.8	20.9	22.0	33.2	(898)
55 or over	10.9	17.4	14.8	56.9	(304)
Education					
low	14.1	19.2	21.1	45.6	(660)
middle	30.4	21.5	21.2	26.9	(822)
high	35.5	28.4	8.9	27.2	(169)

* DK/NA = Don't know/No answer

No statistical significant gender difference was found in their anticipation of changes in public order in the next three years. However, the older and the less educated respondents were more likely to give non-committal answers than their counterparts. For example, 56.9 per cent of those aged 55 or over answered 'Don't know' or gave no answer while only 33.2 per cent of those aged 30 to 54, and 21.9 per cent of those aged 29 or below gave the same responses.

For those who gave definite answers, the younger and the more educated respondents expressed a gloomier view than their counterparts. For example, 44 per cent of those aged 29 or below and 48.8 per cent of those with higher educational attainment anticipated that the condition of public order would be worse in the next three years, while only 25.2 per cent of those aged 55 or over and 25.9 per cent of the less educated held the same opinion.

Conclusion

The perceived seriousness of social problems in descending order are: youth, environmental pollution, transport, public order, housing, old age, education, health services, social welfare, poverty, employment, and corruption.

The younger and the more educated respondents had a more critical attitudes towards the social conditions.

Respondents showed diverse opinions towards the government's performance in handling social problems and the perceived trend in public order.

A comparison with 1986 data indicated that (1) the problems of youth, public order and housing were still considered by a majority of respondents as serious social problems, (2) the percentage of respondents who classified environmental pollution and transport as serious social problems had increased significantly, and (3) the perceived seriousness of employment and poverty had decreased considerably.

Notes

1. However, the limitations of studying only what the public recognizes as social problems should always be borne in mind.
2. A Social Indicators Pilot Study was conducted by Dr. Lau Siu-kai in Kwun Tong District in the summer of 1986 with the objective of establishing a set of social measurement instruments which would then form the basic items for data collection on a continuous and systematic basis. The sampling frame was furnished by the Census and Statistics Department in April 1986, and consisted of 175,138 residential addresses. The size of the systematic sample was 800 residential addresses. During household visit, a person aged 18 or above and resided in the sampled address was selected at random for interview. The number of completed interviews was 539 cases.
The socio-demographic profile of the respondents was quite similar to the profile of the Hong Kong population. Thus, the findings of the 1986 survey were incorporated to compare with the 1988 data as an initial effort to grasp the subjective aspect of social change in Hong Kong.
3. Throughout this chapter, a relationship is said to exist between two variables when the Chi-square value is significant at 0.05 level.

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3 Family and Social Life

Lee Ming-kwan

THE family has often been portrayed in the media as a besieged institution: ripped apart by violence, weakened by the impassiveness of its members and de-stabilized by mistrust and conflicts. Negative depiction such as this creates the impression that the family is not as viable and as important as it once was. Is this a true or false picture? Has the family actually succumbed to the pressures induced by economic and social change? How then is family life organized? How do family members relate to one another and to the wider environment of kinship and social networks? Is the family standing in isolation, fighting lone battles, or is it still blessed with the good will and support from immediate kin and relatives whose assistance it can depend on in daily troubles or as a last resort in more difficult times? This chapter attempts to provide preliminary answers to these and related questions.

The Nuclear Family

Central to prevalent perceptions of the family and its problems is the view that Chinese families in Hong Kong are moving in the direction of the nuclear family (Wong, 1975). It is held that in this process of change, families give up structural features which characterize, or are believed to characterize, Chinese families in less industrialized settings. The families increasingly display features such as: small household size, independent households consisting of married couples and their unmarried children, weakened ties relating members of families to their relatives and immediate kin, weakened emphasis on honouring obligations to kin in need, acceptance of daughters' rights to descent and inheritance, equalitarian husband-wife relationships, and so on. An extreme version of this view of family change sees the nuclear family as becoming not just geographically but also structurally isolated. It becomes a weakened and vulnerable structure when left alone to do tasks and cope with crises by means of its limited resources. Its integrity hinges on the strength of the marital bond, hence also its fragility when the latter depends so much on the emotional involvement of the couple. In the light of such a caricature, family change in the direction of the

nuclear family is accompanied by social problems like rising divorce rates, reduced care of elderly people, inadequate attention given to pre-school children, especially among families with two working parents, and increasing incidents of family violence.¹

This report begins by examining, in the light of empirical data, the extent to which these descriptions are true.

Families in Hong Kong: A Profile

The family is defined in this study as a social group made up of members related to one another by blood or marital ties and usually constituting a household. Depending on who constitute the household, we identify four types of families: the nuclear family, stem family, extended family, and single-parent family.

Table 3.1. Types of Family (%)

Nuclear family	78.4
Single couple	7.1
Couple with unmarried children	66.2
Couple with husband's and/or wife's relatives	1.5
Couple with unmarried children and husband's and/or wife's relatives	3.6
Stem family	13.5
Couple with unmarried children and husband's father and/or mother	10.4
Couple with unmarried children and wife's father and/or mother	3.1
Extended family	1.6
Couple with unmarried children, husband's parents and his brother's/sister's family	1.3
Couple with unmarried children and husband's brother's family	0.3
Single-parent family	6.6
Total	100.1
(N)	(393)

It is very clear, from the survey, that the nuclear family is the most prevalent type of family in Hong Kong (Table 3.1). As many as 78.4% of the families are nuclear families. The majority (84.5%) of these are nuclear families with couples and their unmarried children. The next most prevalent type, about one in seven (13.5%), are stem families. Among these, stem families of parents living with a married son are three times as common as those of parents living with a married daughter. Extended families are, however, relatively rare. Altogether, only 1.6% of the families surveyed can be classified as extended

families. Somewhat unexpected, though, is the finding that as many as 6.6% of the families are single-parent families. Compared with the findings from a 1980 survey (Young, 1985:2), which identified only 3.3% of Hong Kong's households as single-parent households, this seems to signify an appreciable increase in about one decade.²

The overall profile is, however, generally in line with that yielded by the Censuses (Hong Kong, 1987:47). The nuclear family is unmistakably the most common and the extended family the least common family type in Hong Kong.

Family Values and Norms

Family life is of course not just a matter of cohabiting in a domestic household. It concerns also how the members relate to one another, how they regard and fulfill role obligations, and how they attach values and affect to what goes on among them. This section examines the normative dimensions of family life. The next two sections will look at how families relate to their kin and to one another.

A widely held view regarding family change in Hong Kong is that values and norms associated with the traditional Chinese family have been replaced by those more indicative of the nuclear family. In the survey, we try to find out whether this is true. More specifically, the survey tries to establish the attitudes of Hong Kong people towards the following traditional norms and values:

- a. Newly married couples should live with their parents;
- b. Children should not leave their elderly parents unsupported;
- c. Siblings should continue to give help to one another even after they have their own families;
- d. Daughters are different from sons because sooner or later they will be married and leave home. Sons remain ones' sons;
- e. Men go to work; the home is the rightful place for women.

It is commonly believed that traditional norms and ideals such as these have become eclipsed by an alternate set which favour neolocal residence for the newly married, reduced obligations to kin and relatives, equal rights for sons and daughters to descent and inheritance, and a more liberal attitude towards husband-wife sex-role differentiation.

These beliefs are not entirely confirmed by the findings (Table 3.2). As many as 62.1% of the respondents agreed that newly married couples should live away from their parents. There are, however, nearly a quarter (23.2%) of them who were not sure if this was always right, and one-seventh (14.7%) who disagree.

There is also split response to the statement: 'Children are not necessarily obliged to support their parents.' About half (54.2%) of the respondents disagree with the statement. There are, however, a quarter (26.3%) who agree and one-fifth (19.6%) who have the attitude that the norm is relative to situations.

The attitude towards fulfilling obligations to one's siblings is, on the other hand, unequivocal, as 93.1% of the respondents agree that married brothers and sisters should continue to give help to one another. Only 1.9% disagreed.

The majority (74.3%) of the respondents also disagree that sons and daughters should have different rights and statuses.

Lastly, on husband-wife sex-role differentiation, there is a split response. Two-fifth (40.8%) of the respondents support the more traditional thinking about the arrangement of sex roles, i.e. women attending to domestic matters and men to business matters. The rest either disagree (47.5%) or have second thoughts (11.8%) about this.

The picture emerging from these findings is that although the nuclear family is very much an ongoing reality, people have not entirely given up all traditional family norms and ideals. They expect siblings to perform obligations, but are less insistent about supporting their parents. Many believe that sons and daughters should not be treated differently, but would think twice when asked to depart from traditional sex-roles. Under the label 'nuclear family' there is therefore a complex mix of values and norms which do not entirely accord with one another. Thus possibilities of family conflict arise from value dissensus.

Mutual Service and Assistance

The previous section points out rather clearly that the traditional norm of performing obligations to immediate kin and relatives is still widely shared by the respondents. This section examines the extent to which they actually practise what they believe.

Married respondents were asked whether they had rendered to and received from their social networks (parents, siblings, relatives, neighbours and friends) financial and other kinds of assistance (services, help etc.) within the previous six months. Their responses are presented in Table 3.3.

The majority of the respondents (70.9%, 61.3%) reported that they had rendered firstly, financial and, secondly, other kinds of assistance to their parents in the previous six months. Only a quarter (26.5%) of them reported that they had received financial assistance from their parents. Nearly half (45.5%) had, however, received from their parents

Table 3.2. Attitudes towards Family Values and Norms (%)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	It Depends	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total (N)
Newly-married couples should not live with their parents	1.4	13.3	23.2	55.6	6.5	100.0 (414)
Children are not necessarily obliged to support their parents	6.0	48.2	19.6	24.6	1.7	100.0 (419)
Siblings should continue to give help to one another even after they have their own families	0.2	1.7	5.0	81.4	11.7	100.0 (420)
Daughters are different from sons because sooner or later they will be married and leave home. Sons remain ones' sons	6.8	67.5	4.4	20.1	1.2	100.0 (412)
Men go to work; the home is the rightful place for women	4.3	43.2	11.8	38.4	2.4	100.0 (417)

Table 3.3. Respondents Reporting Assistance among Kin, Relatives, Neighbours and Friends in the Last Six Months

Type of Assistance	Social Relations Rendering and Receiving Assistance			
	Rendering Assistance to Parents	Receiving Assistance from Parents	Rendering Assistance to Siblings	Receiving Assistance from Siblings
Financial assistance	70.9% (N=230)	26.5% (N=230)	40.6% (N=286)	26.8% (N=284)
Other assistance	61.3% (N=230)	45.5% (N=231)	46.3% (N=285)	39.8% (N=284)
			Assistance among Relatives	Assistance among Neighbours
			30.3% (N=307)	6.6% (N=427)
			38.2% (N=306)	38.4% (N=425)
				Assistance among Friends
				48.1% (N=428)
				59.5% (N=427)

other kinds of assistance. Mutual assistance between parents and married children appear therefore to be rather active, perhaps much more so from children to parents than in the reverse direction. The flows from children to parents are more frequently in terms of financial assistance than alternate kinds of assistance. These flows are reciprocated by their parents more frequently in terms of other kinds of assistance than financial assistance.

Mutual assistance among siblings is perhaps less active than that which occurs between parents and children, and, when it occurs, it is less often in terms of financial than other kinds of assistance. This pattern is also observed among the respondents and their relatives, among whom mutual assistance is also more frequently in terms of other kinds of assistance than financial assistance. These then perhaps indicate that while children feel financially obliged to support their parents, siblings and relatives have more flexibility in their ways of helping each other.

As expected, neighbours rarely render financial assistance to one another (Kan, 1974; Rosen, 1976). What is in a way surprising is that many (38.4%) do report incidents of other kinds of mutual aid. But what is most surprising of all is that friends should figure so prominently in the respondents' mutual aid networks. Nearly half (48.1%) of them reported financial assistance and 59.5% other kinds of assistance among them. Friends then seem to be, apart from parents, the most active partners in the mutual aid networks.

These results do not allow one to say whether one kind of assistance is more valuable than another kind. They merely indicate the existence, and the extent of prevalence, of the various kinds of mutual aid. The clear, overall picture emerging from these results is that families are related to their immediate kin and relatives through multilateral ties, with assistance flowing in both directions. These mutual aid networks are further complemented by supportive ties afforded by neighbours and friends. In this sense, the families are far from being structurally isolated.

Family Roles in Nuclear and Stem Families

The previous two sections report on how families relate to their relatives and immediate kin. This section looks at how family members relate to one another, in terms of family roles.

One important structural feature of the nuclear family is that married couples do not live with their parents or parents-in-law. In theory, this broadens the scope of autonomy enjoyed by the couple and enables

them to organize family activities in their own preferred ways. Would this then result in a more equalitarian pattern of family role differentiation?

This section compares and contrasts the ways by which nuclear and stem families in the sample organize family roles in relation to four types of family tasks: (a) household chores; (b) the making of important decisions; (c) supervision of children; and (d) budgeting daily expenses (Table 3.4).

(a) Household chores

Wives are, in both types of family, the principal home-makers. Husbands are rarely involved. What is perhaps unexpected and interesting about the findings is that when the couples live with their parents or parents-in-law, more wives are able to get away from routine household duties. Such duties have apparently shifted from the wives to the parents or parents-in-law.

(b) Important decisions

Wives are rarely the sole makers of important decisions. In most cases, they and their husbands together, or their husbands alone, make such decisions. What is interesting, though, is that when the couples live with the parents or parents-in-law, even fewer of the wives alone or together with the husbands, make decisions. More husbands alone, and more parents and parents-in-law come to make such decisions. The stem families appear then to remove the wives even further from the decision-making process.

(c) Supervision of children

The authority of exercising supervision and control over the children is in most cases either shared between the couples or left to the wives. With the presence of the parents or parents-in-law in the families, some interesting adjustments in this basic pattern can be observed. Husbands come forward more frequently to exercise this authority; so do the parents and parents-in-law. The stem families appear then to encourage a more diffused pattern of authority with regard to the supervision and control of children.

(d) Budgeting daily expenses

Wives are, in either type of family, the persons principally responsible for budgeting daily household expenditure. In quite a number of the stem families, however, this duty is taken away from the wives or from the wives and the husbands and given to the parents or parents-in-law.

Table 3.4. Persons Principally Responsible for Four Types of Family Tasks (%)

	Wife	Husband	Husband and Wife	Children	Parents	Servants or Maids	Relatives and Friends	Whole Family	Total	(N)
Household chores										
Nuclear family	76.8	3.3	8.8	2.0	2.3	1.6	0.7	4.6	100.0	(306)
Stem family	59.6	2.1	4.3	2.1	25.5	-	-	6.4	100.0	(47)
The making of important decisions										
Nuclear family	13.8	31.1	36.4	2.6	1.6	-	0.7	13.8	100.0	(305)
Stem family	8.5	36.2	21.3	4.3	8.5	-	-	21.3	100.0	(47)
Supervision of children										
Nuclear family	39.5	4.7	48.8	1.2	2.3	0.4	-	3.1	100.0	(258)
Stem family	31.0	14.3	35.7	2.4	9.5	-	-	7.1	100.0	(42)
Budgeting daily expenses										
Nuclear family	52.5	14.9	24.8	2.0	2.6	-	0.3	3.0	100.0	(303)
Stem family	43.8	14.6	16.7	2.1	16.7	-	-	6.3	100.0	(48)

These findings allow one to draw a number of conclusions. Firstly, the division of labour within the family is still very much along traditional lines: the familiar asymmetrical pattern. In most cases, wives assume most of the household duties: attending to chores, supervising children, and budgeting daily expenses. Husbands are not often involved in these activities. In many cases, though, the men are the ones who make important decisions. Secondly, the presence of parents or parents-in-law in the home, hence additional manpower and helping hands, enables some wives and some couples to free themselves from these duties. But as duties shift in one direction, authority shifts too. Wives lose any say over duties which they no longer have their hands on. Seen in this light, nuclear families are perhaps more equalitarian than stem families, in terms of (a) more frequently involving husbands and wives together in performing tasks and solving problems; and (b) involving wives in important and other decisions over household duties. But then the burden of household duties is more likely to remain with the wives.

Family Roles: the Actual versus the Ideal

The survey also asks the respondents to identify the 'ideal' persons to attend to the four types of family tasks. Contrasting the 'ideal' with the actual patterns (Table 3.5), one notices rather clearly the following points:

- The ideal pattern emphasizes more the co-operative involvement of the couple as well as the collectivistic involvement of all members of the family in performing family duties;
- The ideal pattern maintains the basic asymmetry in the allocation of tasks between the husband and wife but tends to reduce the extent of the latter's involvement.

There is then a gap between the actual and the ideal. This may, one suspects, become a structurally induced source of family conflict.

Satisfaction with Family Life

The image of the family as a 'besieged institution' conveys the impression that family life is unhappy and devoid of pleasure. If this is true, it would be most alarming. One cause is that the family may have come under a great deal of pressure from within or imposed from without, resulting in stresses and strain among family members. Furthermore, these pressures may have disrupted arrangements and processes which fulfill family functions and satisfy the needs of the family members, causing chaos, hardship and deprivation. Whether or not family members are satisfied with their family life therefore provides some impor-

Table 3.5. Actual and Ideal Persons Responsible for Four Types of Family Tasks (%)

	Wife	Husband	Husband and Wife	Children	Parents	Servants or Maids	Relatives and Friends	Whole Family	Total	(N)
Household Chores										
Actual	72.1	3.6	7.4	2.6	6.2	1.5	0.5	6.2	100.0	(390)
Ideal	58.2	3.1	14.3	2.2	3.4	4.1	-	14.7	100.0	(414)
The making of important decisions										
Actual	13.7	32.3	31.5	3.6	2.8	-	0.5	15.5	100.0	(387)
Ideal	8.9	32.5	34.6	1.0	2.6	-	0.5	20.0	100.0	(416)
Supervision of children										
Actual	38.3	6.4	45.1	1.5	3.7	0.3	-	4.6	100.0	(326)
Ideal	25.8	8.6	55.2	1.0	1.5	0.3	-	7.6	100.0	(395)
Budgeting daily expenses										
Actual	50.5	15.3	22.0	2.6	4.7	-	0.3	4.7	100.0	(386)
Ideal	41.3	15.2	32.1	0.7	2.7	0.2	0.2	7.5	100.0	(414)

tant indication of the cohesion and integration, or the lack of it, of the family.

This section reports the answers given by our respondents to two sets of questions aimed at revealing the extent of cohesion and integration among Chinese families in Hong Kong.

The first set of questions requires the respondents to say 'yes' or 'no' to eight statements which describe the states of inter-personal relationships in their family. The responses are presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6. How Members Relate to One Another (%)

	Yes	No	Total	(N)
Frequently quarrel over minor matters	38.3	61.7	100.0	(402)
Try their best to dine together on festive occasions	95.0	5.0	100.0	(403)
Try to be together on holidays	81.9	18.1	100.0	(397)
Help one another to solve problems	87.6	12.4	100.0	(395)
Do not talk to one another	27.6	72.4	100.0	(398)
Care for one another	97.7	2.3	100.0	(397)
Identify with the achievements of other family members	88.5	11.5	100.0	(384)
Feel comfortable and happy at home	95.2	4.8	100.0	(397)

The overall impression from Table 3.6 is that families are generally integrated and solidaristic. The overwhelming majority of the respondents enjoyed being together and made an effort to have a good time together, sought help from each other when necessary, expressed concern and care for one another, identified with the achievements of other members and found home a comfortable and pleasant place. A considerable number (38.3%) admitted, however, that they had frequent quarrels over minor matters. Also, a sizable portion (27.6%) admitted that they did not talk much to one another. These findings suggest then that while both types of processes – integrating and disintegrating – are at work, which is only normal, most families are likely to have experienced the former process more frequently than the latter process.

In the second set of questions the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they were satisfied with seven types of family and social relations: relations with spouses, parents, children, relatives, friends, co-workers, and neighbours (Table 3.7).

Table 3.7. Whether Respondents are Satisfied with Seven Types of Relations (%)

Relations with	Very Dis- satisfied	Dissatis- fied	Average	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total	(N)
Spouse	0.4	4.2	11.6	76.4	7.4	100.0	(284)
Parents	0.3	2.4	12.2	76.6	8.6	100.0	(337)
Children	1.1	1.1	8.9	78.1	10.7	100.0	(270)
Relatives	0.5	6.3	37.8	52.1	3.4	100.0	(413)
Friends	0.0	0.7	24.7	68.6	5.9	100.0	(421)
Co-workers	0.0	1.2	31.2	63.6	4.0	100.0	(321)
Neighbours	1.0	7.8	41.7	45.8	3.7	100.0	(408)

The responses are reassuring. Most respondents were, it seems, satisfied with these relations, particularly with marital relations, and relations with parents and with children. There are, however, relatively fewer respondents who said they were satisfied with relations with relatives, friends, co-workers and neighbours. It appears then that these responses fall into two categories: relations with family members and close kin, and relations with other relatives and non-kin. People were generally more likely to find the former satisfying. Among relations in the latter category, it is of interest to note that relatively more respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their relations with relatives and neighbours than with friends and co-workers. This then seems to reflect an underlying difference in these two types of relationships: relatives and neighbours are basically 'ascribed' or 'given' relations whereas friends and co-workers, especially friends, are chosen.

But if choice is a precondition to an interesting and satisfying relationship, it is the ascribed nature of one's relations with relatives which allows one to count on their support in difficult times. In the survey, we asked the respondents whom they would first turn to if their families were in financial trouble. The response was not unexpected (Table 3.8). Almost half (45.8%) of the respondents would try to find a way out by their own devices. Of the rest, three times as many respondents would turn to their relatives (33.3%) for help rather than to their friends (13.2%). A small proportion (6.4%) would resort to formal government or voluntary agencies. Help-seeking patterns such as this are consistent with the syndrome of 'utilitarianistic familism' (Lau 1982): the larger society and the polity are kept at a distance while familial groups are relied on as the principal agents for safe-guarding and furthering one's interests. The finding shows furthermore that there is one basic difference between relatives and friends: one is more

likely to enjoy one's friends, but relatives should be there when one needs them.

Table 3.8. Persons from Whom to Seek Help in Case One or One's Family Gets into Financial Troubles (%)

Oneself i.e. by one's own means	45.8
Relatives	33.3
Friends	13.2
Voluntary associations	0.2
Relevant government departments	6.2
Others	1.2
Total	100.0
(N)	(402)

Attitudes towards Norms and Values Related to Sex, Marriage, and Abortion

Implied in the image of the family as a 'besieged institution' is also this allegation: that the marriage institution is no longer as intact as it once was. In this view, what used to sustain marriage as an institution, the values which regulate and give legitimacy to the sexual relationship between a man and a woman — fidelity in and commitment to one's spouse, that sex is legitimated by reproduction, and so on — no longer engender unquestioned respect and acceptance. Symptomatic of this erosion in the normative basis of the marriage institution are, for example, rising divorce rates, an increasing incidence of pre-marital sexual relations and extra-marital affairs, and a much more permissive approach towards what occurs, in sexual terms, between two adults of the opposite sex or even the same sex. These then add up to a crisis that shakes the moral foundation of what regulates the sexual and reproductive activities of a society.

Hong Kong is said to be poised between East and West. While receptive to modern technologies and Western ways of life, Chinese people in Hong Kong are regarded as generally conservative in their overall attitudes towards matters related to sex. Such conservatism cushions marriage and family life against more permissive, hence corrosive influences, and enables Hong Kong to avert the moral crisis which pervades some Western industrial societies. This section reports on relevant findings from the survey and discusses whether, on the whole, this is a tenable point of view.

The respondents were asked to indicate their attitudes towards eight types of unconventional sexual relationships. The findings are as presented in Table 3.9.

It can be said that, on the whole and across the spectrum, the attitudes were conservative. With perhaps the exception of divorce, the majority of the respondents could not accept any one of these unconventional situations.

The case of divorce reflects perhaps a pragmatic attitude and is indicative of the actual extent of divorce as a 'social problem'. About half (47.1%) of the respondents could not accept divorce. But there were more who would either reserve making a judgement (30.9%) or simply accept it (22.0%). Attitudes towards pre-marital co-habitation and pregnancy were similar. Respondents were relatively more lenient towards these two types of behaviour than towards the other types. Though the majority of the respondents could not accept pre-marital cohabitation and pregnancy, as many as 26.7% and 27.6% respectively would be sympathetic. It would seem then that there is some degree of normative flexibility here. As long as pre-marital sex ends up in a responsible manner, i.e. in a marriage, 'wrong' behaviour may be judged in less negative terms. Such flexibility is not applicable to the other five deviant categories. Fewer than one-tenth of the respondents could accept casual sexual relations, affairs by married men or women, prostitution, and homosexuality. Most respondents viewed these with strong moral disapprobation. They were, however, relatively less indignant when these acts were committed by men than when they were committed by women. One-fifth of the respondents, for instance, would strongly disapprove of a man visiting prostitutes or having an affair. But even more of them (one-quarter) would strongly disapprove of a married woman having an intimate boy-friend. The very strong feelings expressed against homosexuality are, on the other hand, very much to be expected. Less than 5% of the respondents could accept homosexuality. This, once again, reflects the deep-seated disapprobation, combining scorn and uneasiness, in the Chinese attitude towards what is still a forbidden area in social life.

From these findings it appears that in general, Chinese people in Hong Kong have basically conservative attitudes towards sex and marriage. They disapprove of acts which depart from institutionalized patterns, but are ready to concede some flexibility when these have to do with divorce and pre-marital misdeeds. They are less severe with men's than with women's sexual excursions. As for homosexuality, the attitude is straight-forwardly negative. These findings allow one to say with some certainty that the moral crisis, if there is one in Hong Kong,

Table 3.9. Attitudes towards Sexual Norms (%)

	Very Much against Accepting	Against Accepting	It Depends	Accept	Very Much Accept	Total	(N)
Cohabitation marriage	9.4	48.8	15.1	26.0	0.7	100.0	(416)
Pregnancy before marriage	8.9	51.1	12.5	27.1	0.5	100.0	(417)
Sex with casual partners	18.0	70.1	7.5	4.4	0.0	100.0	(412)
Men having extra-marital relations	20.8	64.3	7.8	7.1	0.0	100.0	(423)
Women having extra-marital relations	25.7	64.6	5.9	3.8	0.0	100.0	(424)
Prostitution	20.0	56.4	16.4	6.7	0.5	100.0	(420)
Divorce	7.4	39.7	30.9	21.3	0.7	100.0	(418)
Homosexuality	38.7	53.9	3.8	3.6	0.0	100.0	(419)

Table 3.10. Attitudes towards Abortion (%)

	Should Not be Allowed by Law	It Depends	Could be Allowed by Law	Total	(N)
Pregnancy gravely affects health	11.2	10.5	78.3	100.0	(411)
Pregnancy as a result of rape	7.8	8.0	84.2	100.0	(412)
Abnormal fetus	7.3	7.6	85.1	100.0	(410)
Parents unable to rear an additional child	38.7	18.7	42.6	100.0	(406)
Unwed mother has no intention of getting married	48.9	18.6	32.5	100.0	(397)
Both parents agree on abortion	38.3	17.0	44.7	100.0	(394)
Mother herself decides on abortion	53.5	18.4	28.0	100.0	(396)

may be of much smaller proportions than is believed to be the case in some Western societies.

The same pragmatic though conservative approach appears also to characterize the respondents' attitudes towards abortion (Table 3.10). There is, it seems, no categorical rejection of legalized abortion. The majority (over 75%) of the respondents would concede to legal abortion when pregnancy gravely affects health, when pregnancy results from rape, or when the fetus has been found to be abnormal. Very few respondents (less than 12%) would still insist that, under these conditions, no abortion should be allowed. However, the respondents were less reluctant to make concessions when the reason for undertaking an abortion was phrased in economic terms or in terms of the parents' voluntaristic choices.

Underlying these attitudes towards abortion can be discerned, therefore, one very clear value position: the right to life is certainly not non-negotiable and it is negotiable when there are extenuating circumstances beyond an individual's control. The respondents are certainly non-dogmatic, or rather, reasonably pragmatic and flexible in their approach to an issue which, imbued with strong moral and religious overtones, splits apart some communities where there is a strong religious ethos.

Leisure and Leisure Associates

The last fifteen years have seen a steady trend in the reduction of working hours.³ There has been at the same time a sustained growth in the real income earned by workers in Hong Kong.⁴ These two tendencies have combined to yield a configuration not uncommon among affluent, industrial societies: not only do people have more leisure time, but they also have more economic means at their disposal to make use of such leisure time.

This section reports how the respondents spent and perceived the use of leisure time. As leisure activities fall within the orbit of family and social life, it is also pertinent, in the context of this chapter, to describe how leisure has been socially organized, in terms of selecting one's leisure associates.

The respondents were asked to report two activities which constituted their most frequent leisure activities. Their responses are as presented in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11. Frequent Leisure Activities (%)

Home-based	61.2	54.1
Watching T.V.	32.3	15.0
Playing 'mahjong'	7.5	6.5
House-keeping activities	6.0	4.4
Reading books	4.1	6.5
Taking a rest	3.6	5.6
Reading newspapers	2.9	7.9
Listening to music	2.7	2.3
Listening to the radio	1.9	5.0
Studying	0.2	0.9
Non-home-based	35.6	42.0
Going to movies	10.4	12.3
Participating in sport	8.9	5.0
Shopping	7.2	10.9
Going on picnics/trips	3.6	5.3
Eating out	2.9	4.4
Visiting people	1.4	3.2
Activities with voluntary organizations	0.7	0.0
Religious activities	0.5	0.9
Others	3.1	4.1
Total	100.0	100.0
(N)	(429)	(429)

It appears that the leisure activities of the respondents are mainly home-based. Of the two leisure activities mentioned by the respondents, 61.2% and 54.1% respectively have to do with activities which take place at home. Watching television, as expected, stands out as the most popular activity. As for leisure activities outside the home, going to the cinema, participating in sport and shopping are the more popular ones.

Respondents with manual occupations turned out to be much more home-bound than respondents with non-manual occupations (Table 3.12). They were more likely to be watching television, playing *mahjong*, doing household jobs or simply having a rest than non-manual respondents. Also, they seemed less inclined to participate in sport and to go on picnics or trips. These differences appear to be consistent with differences observed in some other industrial societies, and seem to reflect differences in resources — economic, intellectual, and social — and the nature of work between manual and non-manual workers (Berger, 1964; Sennett and Cobb, 1972).

Table 3.12. Frequent Leisure Activities by Occupations (%)

	Respondents with Non-manual Occupations		Respondents with Manual Occupations	
	First	Second	First	Second
Home-based	53.2	47.4	69.0	53.4
Watching T.V.	28.4	12.0	36.9	16.7
Playing 'mahjong'	4.2	5.4	8.3	6.7
House-keeping activities	1.6	1.8	9.5	6.7
Reading books	5.8	7.2	—	6.7
Taking a rest	3.2	3.0	8.3	5.0
Reading newspapers	4.2	6.6	3.6	8.3
Listening to music	3.7	3.6	1.2	—
Listening to the radio	1.6	6.6	1.2	3.3
Studying	0.5	1.2	—	—
Non-home-based	43.7	48.3	27.5	43.3
Going to movies	14.2	13.3	11.9	13.3
Participating in sport	12.1	6.0	4.8	6.7
Shopping	7.4	9.6	6.0	13.3
Going on picnic/trips	5.3	9.0	1.2	3.3
Eating out	3.2	3.8	1.2	5.0
Visiting people	0.5	4.8	1.2	—
Activities with voluntary organizations	0.5	—	1.2	—
Religious activities	0.5	1.8	—	—
Others	3.1	4.2	3.6	3.4
Total	100.0	99.9	100.1	100.1
(N)	(190)	(166)	(84)	(60)

The respondents were also asked to indicate their favourite leisure activities. The 'ideal' pattern (Table 3.13) contrasts interestingly with the actual pattern. There is clearly a preference for activities outside the home, of which going on picnics or trips stand out as the most preferred choices. There is also a clear shift away from television watching. This pattern applies equally to the manual and non-manual respondents (Table 3.14).

If given the choice, the respondents would, it appears, prefer to be less 'domestic' and less preoccupied with television. They would rather have more outdoor activities or, if possible, trips abroad. There is then, it seems, evidence of an awareness of and quest for quality leisure. Leisure could be other than what one receives relatively passively

though inexpensively from the domestic household. But then it also means more investment, in terms of initiative and economic resources.

Table 3.13. Most Preferred Leisure Activities (%)

	First	Second
Home-based	41.8	45.6
Watching T.V.	12.6	9.0
Listening to the radio	1.0	3.5
Listening to music	2.5	3.5
Reading and studying	7.6	12.6
Playing 'mahjong'	6.2	5.9
House-keeping activities	2.5	4.2
Taking a rest	9.4	6.9
Non-home-based	49.9	49.3
Going to movies	4.9	8.3
Participating in sport	10.1	8.0
Shopping	3.9	7.6
Going on picnics/trips	24.9	15.3
Eating out	2.2	4.2
Visiting people	2.2	5.2
Activities with voluntary organizations	1.5	—
Religious activities	0.2	0.7
Others	8.3	5.2
Total	100.0	100.1
(N)	(429)	(429)

Table 3.14. Most Preferred Leisure Activities by Occupations (%)

	Respondents with Non-manual Occupations		Respondents with Manual Occupations	
	First	Second	First	Second
Home-based	33.5	44.1	56.6	32.5
Watching T.V.	7.9	6.4	14.8	10.2
Listening to the radio	0.5	3.5	1.2	2.0
Listening to music	2.6	5.7	4.9	—
Reading	8.4	15.0	7.4	8.1
Playing 'mahjong'	4.2	5.0	7.4	2.0
House-keeping activities	0.5	1.4	7.4	8.2
Taking a rest	9.4	7.1	13.6	2.0
Non-home-based	57.6	51.1	35.8	65.3
Going to movies	4.7	5.0	6.2	26.5
Shopping	3.7	5.7	3.7	4.1

Table 3.14. (continued)

	Respondents with Non-manual Occupations		Respondents with Manual Occupations	
	First	Second	First	Second
Visiting people	2.1	4.3	—	8.2
Eating out	—	5.0	1.2	6.1
Participating in sport	12.6	10.6	6.2	8.2
Going on picnics/trips	33.0	19.1	14.8	12.2
Religious activities	0.5	1.4	—	—
Activities with voluntary organizations	1.0	—	3.7	—
Others	8.9	4.9	7.4	2.0
Total	100.0	100.1	99.9	99.8
(N)	(191)	(141)	(81)	(49)

Given this discrepancy between the actual and the preferred ways of spending leisure time, are people happy with what they have? The survey asked the respondents to rate their satisfaction with leisure arrangements. Their responses, presented in Table 3.15, show very clearly that the majority of the respondents (58.5%) were satisfied, and only a small percentage (11.4%) were not. On closer inspection, however, one notices that the 'dissatisfaction' responses are basically clustered among the 'younger' (aged 44 and below) respondents (Table 3.16). Physically more mobile, they are perhaps less ready than the 'older' respondents to reconcile themselves to domestic leisure. As can be inferred from Table 3.17, this seems indeed to be the case. While the majority (53.0% and 53.3%) of the 'younger' respondents would prefer non-home-based activities, many (49.6% and 52.8%) of the 'older' respondents would still stay with home-based activities.

Table 3.15. Satisfaction with Leisure Activities (%)

Very dissatisfied	0.5
Dissatisfied	10.9
Average	30.1
Satisfied	55.9
Very satisfied	2.6
Total	100.0
(N)	(422)

Table 3.16. Satisfaction with Leisure Activities by Age Groups (%)

	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Total	(N)
24 or below	13.3	17.8	68.9	100.0	(45)
25 - 34	15.8	30.2	54.0	100.0	(139)
35 - 44	13.6	27.2	59.2	100.0	(103)
45 - 54	7.3	25.5	67.3	100.1	(55)
55 - 64	2.5	55.0	42.5	100.0	(40)
65 or above	2.5	32.5	65.0	100.0	(40)

($\chi^2 = 24.7$; d.f. = 10; significant at 0.01)

Table 3.17. Actual and Preferred Leisure Activities by Age Groups (%)

	Below 45				45 & above			
	Actual		Ideal		Actual		Ideal	
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
Home-based	56.6	50.9	38.1	42.2	71.5	60.4	49.6	52.8
Non-home-based	39.6	46.0	53.0	53.3	28.0	33.1	43.3	40.7
Others	4.3	3.0	8.9	4.6	0.8	6.4	7.1	6.6
(N)	(282)	(232)	(280)	(197)	(133)	(109)	(127)	(91)

Whom do people most frequently spend leisure time with? The survey asked the respondents to rate the frequency with which they had contact with four categories of associates: relatives, friends, co-workers and neighbours. The responses are as presented in Table 3.18.

Table 3.18. Frequencies of Meeting Leisure Associates (%)

	Very Seldom	Occasionally	Very Frequently	Total	(N)
Relatives	49.6	27.6	22.8	100.0	(421)
Friends	23.4	45.2	31.4	100.0	(427)
Workmates	44.0	37.8	18.2	100.0	(325)
Neighbours	62.4	21.6	16.0	100.0	(425)

'Friends' stands out as the people with whom our respondents most frequently joined for leisure activities. 'Relatives' comes next, and 'neighbours', as expected (Kan, 1974; Rosen, 1976), comes last. That this is the case confirms again the importance of choice in social life (Gans, 1962). Leisure being an area of social life in which individual preference comes first, it is natural that friends become the most frequently contacted leisure associates.

'Workmates' do not figure significantly in the respondents' leisure life. This reflects, perhaps, an underlying instrumental attitude towards work and relationships at work. Asked whether they would still continue with the same job should they get a big fortune, only one-third (37.0%) of the employed respondents would say yes. The rest would either retire (32.7%), change to another job (11.0%), or even set up their own businesses (19.2%) (Table 3.19). If given the chance, two-thirds of the respondents would have given up their present jobs. This indicates, though necessarily in very broad terms, the extent of job satisfaction among the respondents. Yet, when asked to rate the various aspects of their jobs, the respondents indicated very clearly that they were in fact least dissatisfied with the relations with co-workers and with their 'bosses' (Table 3.20). Though these relations were generally 'satisfying', it does not mean that these would be of pivotal importance when the respondents consider whether or not to stay on in the jobs. Nor does it follow that these relations will overlap with their non-work social life. The two spheres of life are kept more or less separate. Looked at from another angle, it can be said that this follows basically from an instrumental attitude towards work. Workers derive satisfaction from their relations with co-workers or even with their superordinates, but these are, after all, part of work. They are seldom allowed to spill over into the workers' leisure life, and will be given up as soon as the workers give up their own jobs for better opportunities elsewhere.

Table 3.19. Career Change if a Big Fortune Befalls (%)

Continue with present job	37.0
Give up work altogether	32.7
Get another job	11.0
Start one's own business	19.2
Total	100.0
(N)	(281)

How important are voluntary organizations in people's after-work life? The survey asked the respondents whether or not they were members of trade unions and voluntary associations and if not, whether they would be willing to become members. Their answers are presented in Table 3.21.

Table 3.20. Satisfaction with Different Aspects of Work (%)

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total	(N)
Income	1.7	27.6	27.9	41.7	1.0	100.0	(290)
Job nature	0.7	13.3	32.2	52.4	1.4	100.0	(286)
Promotion system	2.6	33.5	38.7	23.6	1.6	100.0	(191)
Relations with co-workers	0.4	4.5	28.7	60.8	5.7	100.0	(265)
Relations with supervisors	0.8	7.6	36.0	52.1	3.4	100.0	(236)
Working environment	2.1	14.9	32.4	48.0	2.5	100.0	(281)
Job security	2.0	20.7	29.7	45.9	1.6	100.0	(246)
Welfare and benefits	2.5	24.3	33.1	38.9	1.3	100.0	(239)

Table 3.21. Participation in Voluntary Organizations (%)

	Yes	No	Total	(N)
Members of trade unions	11.4	88.6	100.0	(290)
Willingness to become members of trade unions	23.3	76.7	100.0	(227)
Members of voluntary associations	16.9	83.1	100.0	(426)
Willingness to become members of voluntary associations	27.4	72.6	100.0	(318)

The basic pattern is as expected. Few respondents were members of these voluntary organizations and the majority of those who were not members were not enthusiastic about joining.

These responses throw light on the limited functional importance of trade unions and voluntary associations in present-day Hong Kong society. They probably also reflect the basically instrumental orientations of Chinese people in Hong Kong towards these organizations, as found in other earlier studies (Lau, 1982: 92-95).

On statistical grounds, participation in voluntary organizations seem to vary with the number of years in education (Table 3.22). Respondents who have had nine years or more of education are somewhat more active in social participation than respondents with less than nine years of education. This seems to suggest, then, that education may have either made a difference in people's attitudes towards social participation or caused differential access to organizations that perform different services and functions for the participants.

Table 3.22. Participation in Voluntary Organizations (%)

	No	Yes	Total	(N)
Joining trade unions				
Nine years of education or less	93.6	6.4	100.0	(156)
More than nine years of education	82.8	17.2	100.0	(134)
$(\chi^2 = 7.23; \text{d.f.} = 1; \text{significant at } 0.007)$				
Joining voluntary associations				
Nine years of education or less	87.6	12.4	100.0	(251)
More than nine years of education	76.6	23.4	100.0	(175)
$(\chi^2 = 8.24; \text{d.f.} = 1; \text{significant at } 0.004)$				

Notes

1. The number of divorce cases handled by the courts rose from over 1,700 in 1977 to 5,753 in 1987. There were 465 reported child abuse cases in 1988. During 1987-8, 166 battered wives sought refuge at Harmony House, a retreat for abused women and their children. There were 824 cases of wife batteries in 1986.

(Sources: *Hong Kong Annual Report*, 1984 and 1988; Speech of Mr. Law Chi Kin, Acting Director of Social Welfare Department, at the 'Hong Kong Family Welfare Society 40th Anniversary Seminar on Family Service Policies and Approaches in Meeting the Changing

Needs of Chinese Societies in 1990s' held on 30th September 1989; *Annual Report of Harmony House 1987-1988*)

- According to the Acting Director of the Social Welfare Department, there were 36,000 single-parent families in 1986.
- The median hours of work per week of employees between 1976 and 1986 were as follow:

	1976	1981	1986
Male	51	50	48
Female	48	47	45

Source: *Hong Kong 1986 By-Census Main Report*, Volume 1, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1987, p.39.

- The median monthly incomes from main employment of working population, in 1986 prices, between 1976 and 1986 were as follow:

	1976	1981	1986
Male	1962	2475	3067
Female	1278	1775	2143
Both sexes	1697	2310	2573

Source: *Hong Kong 1986 By-Census Main Report*, Volume 1, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong, 1987, p.41.

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4 Housing and Social Welfare

James Lee

Housing

With a population of 5.6 million living in an area of 1,067 sq.km, housing has always been a problem in Hong Kong. In order to solve the problem of overcrowding, a massive building programme has been underway since the 1960s; new towns have been built in suburban areas while numerous urban redevelopment programmes have taken place. Nevertheless, with the growth of a burgeoning economy and a rapid increase in per capita income, aspirations for better housing and a higher quality living environment have always been high on Hong Kong's public agenda. Although Hong Kong is proud of having the second largest public housing programme in South-East Asia, in many urban areas life is still a daily hazard. In this section, we shall ask two pertinent questions to do with housing, namely: (1) How do people find their current housing? (2) What housing do people aspire to for the future?

Types of Housing

Table 4.1. Types of Living Quarters

	Frequency	Per Cent
Housing Authority rental blocks (A)	591	35.6
Housing Authority rental blocks (B)	187	11.3
Private residential	645	38.8
Housing Authority cottages	5	0.3
Housing Authority temporary housing	47	2.8
Housing Society rental blocks	29	1.7
Housing Authority Home Ownership Scheme	108	6.5
Housing Society Urban Improvement Scheme	1	0.1
Villas/Bungalows	17	1.0
Simple stone structure	1	0.1
Commercial/Manufacture/Office	2	0.1
Hostels	2	0.1
Staff quarters buildings	27	1.6
Total	1662	100.0

In our sample of 1,662 households, the proportion of people living in public housing and private housing is roughly the same, (51.7% for public rented units and 48.3% for various types of private housing. See Table 4.1). However, more successful responses came from people in public housing than in private housing. This was also true when the pilot study was conducted in Kwun Tong in 1987.

Of those living in private housing blocks, 78.6% are self-owned or on a mortgage. Compared with the pilot study in 1987, there is a slight decrease in home ownership; a slight increase in renting a whole flat; and there are very few room-sublettings (1.4%). This implies in general, that households in Hong Kong can afford a relatively higher level of family privacy when compared with the 1960s and the 1970s (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Tenure of those Living in Private Housing

Tenure	Per Cent
Self-owned/Mortgage	78.6
Rental for whole flat	17.1
Room subletting	1.4
Bed subletting	0.5
Others	2.4
Total	100.0
(N)	(429)

Housing Aspirations

While housing is generally accepted as a basic human need, it is important to distinguish between the desire to be satisfactorily housed and the desire to own one's home. Since in Hong Kong roughly 47% of the population are housed in government subsidized public housing, it could well be assumed that to a large extent the basic housing needs of the lower income strata are satisfied largely through the public housing system. In fact, in a study on income distribution in 1981, it was shown that people of the lower income strata in Hong Kong had benefitted considerably from public welfare, particularly through education and housing (Lin, 1985). While a majority of people from the low income strata enjoy low-rental public housing it would be interesting to know if they still have an aspiration to own their home even though they are already accommodated. The reason for the question is that people in different countries have different preferences of tenure. Continental

Europeans, for instance have a lower desire to own their homes than do people in the U.K. (Harloe, 1988).

Are people in Hong Kong satisfied with their present pattern of tenure?

In our survey, it was found that a majority of respondents would, if given the opportunity, opt to own their home instead of renting it (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Housing Aspirations

To Have:	Per Cent
Self-owned housing	75.6
Renting private flats	1.7
Public housing	6.4
Home Ownership Scheme	13.6
Government quarters	0.7
Others	2.0
Total	100.0
(N)	(405)

Our study indicates that there was an across-the-board high aspiration for ownership, for those who were already in the government home ownership schemes as well as those in private housing. There was also a statistically significant relationship between one's current housing condition and their housing aspirations ($\chi^2 = 23.74$; $df = 15$; $p \leq 0.05$) (see Table 4.4).

Level of Satisfaction with Present Housing Conditions

The condition of housing is undoubtedly an essential part of one's living condition, particularly in an overcrowded city like Hong Kong where everyone has to compete for space. In our findings, slightly more than half of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with their present living quarters. About 1/5 of the respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their living quarters.

It must be noted that, by and large, the level of satisfaction with living quarters is very much related to the type of living quarters they were in. The living condition and thus the level of satisfaction of people living in temporary housing tends to be lower than those living in public housing or private housing estates (see Table 4.5).

We found that, by and large, people in Hong Kong are satisfied with their living quarters, with those in private housing being more satisfied

Table 4.4. Current Housing Condition and Housing Aspirations (%)

	Housing Aspiration						Total (N)
	Self-owned	Renting Private Flat	Public Housing	Home Ownership Scheme	Government Quarter	Others	
Public housing	70.1	1.6	9.1	18.7	0.0	0.5	100.0 (187)
Private housing	79.7	2.2	4.4	9.3	1.1	3.3	100.0 (182)
Home Ownership Scheme	84.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	4.0	4.0	100.0 (25)
Temporary housing	81.8	0.0	9.1	9.1	0.0	0.0	100.0 (11)
Overall	75.6	1.7	6.4	13.6	0.7	2.0	100.0 (405)

Table 4.5. Level of Satisfaction with Living Quarters in Various Housing Types (%)

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total (N)
Public housing	2.0	20.2	31.8	44.4	1.5	99.9 (198)
Private housing	0.5	13.9	26.9	56.0	2.8	100.1 (216)
Temporary housing	18.2	54.4	18.2	9.1	0.0	99.9 (11)
Overall	1.6	17.9	28.9	49.4	2.1	99.9 (425)

than those in public housing. There is also a slightly higher percentage of dissatisfaction in public housing than in private housing. Not surprisingly, most dissatisfaction is expressed by those in temporary housing (72.6%). Our findings implied, to some extent, that the disparity in satisfaction between public and private housing is significant.

When we break down the level of satisfaction into six components: that is, lighting, ventilation, size, direction, anti-noise facility, kitchen and toilet facilities, it was found that the level of satisfaction varies. On the whole, people were satisfied with the lighting but very dissatisfied with the noise level. People were in general not satisfied with the size of their living quarters or with the kitchen/toilet facilities (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Level of Satisfaction with Living Quarters in Different Factors (%)

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total (N)
Size	6.8	36.6	18.9	35.4	2.3	100.0 (429)
Ventilation	2.6	22.1	22.4	49.9	3.0	100.0 (429)
Direction	2.4	23.3	27.8	43.3	3.3	100.1 (429)
Lighting	1.2	14.3	26.8	53.5	4.2	100.0 (429)
Noise level	5.9	41.8	23.8	26.6	1.9	100.0 (428)
Kitchen/Toilet	4.9	25.8	28.1	39.8	1.4	100.0 (428)
Overall	1.6	17.9	28.9	49.4	2.1	99.9 (427)

Table 4.7. Improvement Priority in Living Quarters (%)

Size	46.6
Ventilation	7.3
Direction	4.4
Lighting	2.6
Anti-noise facility	17.3
Kitchen/Toilet	16.7
Others	5.1
Total	100.0
(N)	(429)

As far as improvements were concerned, half of the respondents thought that they needed more space and hence a bigger apartment. Second in the improvement priority list were anti-noise facilities, with kitchen and toilet facilities come third. The housing scenario depicted in our findings was one which showed people living in small and cramped flatlets with poor anti-noise devices and kitchen/toilet

facilities. Although they are satisfied with their living environment for the time being, if given the opportunity, they would like to own their own accommodation. That perhaps also partly accounted for why people had high aspirations for house improvements (see Table 4.7).

Most people in Hong Kong live in flatlets, that is, a unit within a building block. This mode of accommodation is usual in an over-crowded metropolitan city. Therefore the level of satisfaction with the individual living quarter/unit might be different from that with the building. However, we found that half of our respondents were satisfied with their building block. In particular, people were quite satisfied with their neighbourhood and the lighting in the lobby and corridor. They were not satisfied with the level of building maintenance and lift maintenance. They were least satisfied with the degree of cleanliness within their buildings (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Level of Satisfaction with Building in Different Factors (%)

	Very Dis-satisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total	(N)
Management	3.3	26.4	29.7	39.8	0.8	100.0	(426)
Maintenance	4.1	29.0	31.9	34.2	0.8	100.0	(424)
Lighting	2.1	9.8	29.8	57.9	0.5	100.1	(423)
Cleanliness	6.1	23.1	31.3	38.6	0.9	100.0	(428)
Neighbourhood	3.5	13.9	37.3	44.0	1.2	99.9	(424)
Lift	7.0	29.0	23.9	40.0	0.0	99.9	(425)
Overall	1.9	12.3	35.7	48.7	1.4	100.0	(421)

Table 4.9. Overall Satisfaction with the Building in Various Housing Types (%)

	Very Dis-satisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total	(N)
Public housing	2.6	13.5	37.3	46.6	0.0	100.0	(193)
Private housing	1.6	10.7	34.8	50.3	2.7	100.1	(187)
Home Ownership Scheme	0.0	0.0	37.5	58.3	4.2	100.0	(24)
Temporary housing	0.0	45.5	18.2	36.4	0.0	100.1	(11)
Overall	1.9	12.3	35.7	48.7	1.4	100.0	(415)

On the other hand, people living in different types of housing have different levels of satisfaction with the various factors within the building. In general, it was found that people living in private buildings,

including those in home ownership schemes, are more satisfied than people in public housing, although the difference is only marginal (see Table 4.9) ($\chi^2 = 22.9$; $df = 12$; $p \leq 0.05$). Respondents living in home ownership schemes had the highest level of satisfaction, while respondents in temporary housing areas had the lowest level of satisfaction.

When putting improvements in the building in order of priority, people generally thought that the level of cleanliness should be at the top of the list, irrespective of the type of housing they were occupying. The other two areas on the priority list were lift maintenance and general management. Hence, our findings reflected that in general people are not satisfied with the general level of management of their building and have strong desire for a clean living environment (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10. Improvement Priorities in the Building (%)

Management	15.8
Maintenance	11.8
Lighting	3.9
Cleanliness	33.3
Lift maintenance	17.0
Neighbourhood	10.3
Others	7.9
Total	100.0
(N)	(330)

Sometimes the level of satisfaction with the living quarters and the building in particular could also be related to the district which one inhabits. Satisfaction with a certain quarter or a certain building may not mean satisfaction with a certain district. High satisfaction with a certain house could also mean low satisfaction with a certain district and hence a higher rate of moving from one district to another. As far as satisfaction with their district is concerned, it was found that in general people were more satisfied with the access to public transportation, the quality of the air and the adequacy of community facilities. They were not satisfied with the level of noise and the entertainment facilities. Population density and noise pollution stood out as the areas most objected to (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. Level of Satisfaction with the District (%)

	Very Dis- satisfied	Dissatis- fied	Average	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total	(N)
Hygiene	2.1	28.1	33.1	36.2	0.5	100.0	(429)
Transportation	4.3	21.3	20.6	51.3	2.6	100.1	(429)
Entertainment facilities	2.3	32.0	27.9	37.0	0.8	100.0	(426)
Community facilities	1.7	28.5	28.7	40.8	0.2	99.9	(427)
Air freshness	4.0	26.4	24.5	44.1	0.9	99.9	(428)
Noise pollution	10.0	34.0	27.2	28.3	0.5	100.0	(429)
Population density	5.3	29.1	36.1	29.3	0.2	100.0	(427)
Public order	2.4	19.9	40.5	35.7	1.5	100.0	(427)
Overall	1.2	11.3	40.4	46.6	0.5	100.0	(420)

High on the agenda for district improvement were public order, sanitation, transport, followed by noise pollution. Although no strong dissatisfaction was expressed for the last two areas, improvements were still considered desirable (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12. Improvement Priorities for the District (%)

Sanitation	17.6
Transportation	17.6
Entertainment facilities	4.8
Community facilities	9.4
Air freshness	7.1
Noise pollution	15.6
Population density	6.0
Public order	19.3
Others	2.6
(N)	(429)

The level of satisfaction with the districts could vary according to the present mode of housing. In our findings, satisfaction with a certain district does not necessarily have a relationship with the current mode of housing. This is understandable as satisfaction with a certain district can also be affected by other factors such as the location of the workplace, transportation, the individual's life history and so forth (Table 4.13).

Table 4.13. Level of Satisfaction with District in Various Housing Types (%)

	Very Dis- satisfied	Dissatis- fied	Average	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total	(N)
Public housing	1.0	11.0	41.9	45.5	0.5	99.9	(191)
Private housing	1.1	10.6	39.7	47.6	1.1	100.1	(189)
Home Owner- ship Scheme	0.0	12.0	44.0	44.0	0.0	100.0	(25)
Temporary housing	0.0	27.3	18.2	54.5	0.0	100.0	(11)
Overall	1.0	11.3	40.4	46.6	0.7	100.0	(416)

Another way to find out the level of satisfaction with a certain district is to see if an individual household would move if given the chance. We found that, although not surprisingly, 83.9% would move to a new dwelling if given the chance, 54.7% would choose to leave the district. One possible reason is that people in Hong Kong are by and large living in sub-optimal conditions and henceforth becoming more volatile with a certain tenure.

Concluding Remarks

Our survey findings indicated that although people were by and large satisfied with their housing, there was also a growing desire for improvements, such as for bigger apartments and improvements to the district. There was also a clear indication that people had a strong desire to own their home irrespective of whether they lived in public or private housing. Our survey did not go into the reasons behind the motivation to own. Our findings, highlighted three distinct areas for further research. First, the relationship between the provision of public housing and the desire to own a house. Second, the relationship of the property market development and the individual's desire to own/to invest in a dwelling. Third, the question of the psychological security of owning a dwelling. Until such questions are fully answered, we can never fully appreciate why so many people in Hong Kong desire home ownership even though they are already quite satisfactorily housed in public housing estates.

Social Welfare

While no one would regard Hong Kong as a welfare state, welfare expenditure has increased at a rate of 4.5% per year over the last two

decades. From 1974 to 1988, the annual welfare budget grew from HK\$136 million to HK\$3,618 million. Welfare services ranged from the provision of public assistance for very needy families, to marriage counselling for troubled couples. Although the potential clientele of social welfare services covers almost one fourth of the population, the production and distribution of welfare services are mainly the responsibility of the Social Welfare Department and numerous voluntary agencies employing professional social workers. The public seldom take part directly in the decision-making for welfare services that directly affects their daily well being. Welfare needs are always prescribed for the most part by professionals in the welfare field. Nevertheless, in the transition period before 1997, it is both interesting and important to know the general attitude of the public to the idea of welfare and the system of services, so that it can be used as a planning indicator. In our survey, therefore, we aimed at exploring answers to the following three questions, namely: (1) What is the public's attitude towards social welfare? (2) How satisfied is the public with the current welfare system? (3) How do the public think welfare should be financed?

The Attitude to Social Welfare

The idea of a welfare system first emerged in the West in the late nineteenth century. The welfare state had its origin in philanthropic activities based on mutual aid and an altruistic desire to help the needy. In Hong Kong, most of the current welfare services, particularly the voluntary welfare sector, has been influenced to some extent by the Western welfare system. Except for the two voluntary organizations with a long history, the Po Leung Kuk and the Tung Wah Groups, most welfare organizations, including the Social Welfare Department, have been in one way or the other heavily influenced by Western welfare ideas. For example, the Boys and Girls Clubs Association, the Salvation Army, the YMCA and the YWCA were mostly British and American welfare agencies. In Hong Kong, traditional Chinese values tend to be more oriented towards the family. When someone needs help, family members will be around to lend a hand. Another important source of mutual help is friends. Only when the family and the personal network fail to provide help or when they are non-existent would an individual turn to the social welfare system for help. But do the people in Hong Kong really seek help from the welfare system when they're in need? In our study, we found that 62.7% of our respondents claimed that they would. This finding questions one of the more conventional wisdoms

that Chinese people, because of their strong tendency to save 'face', would refrain from accepting welfare even when in real need. Further analysis of the educational background of those willing to apply for welfare indicated that the educational level of an individual might or might not be a significant factor in decision-making, because there seemed to be a high percentage of willingness to apply for welfare regardless of educational background. We can only say that there might be a relatively higher percentage of respondents with post-secondary education who are more willing to apply for welfare (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14. Educational Attainment and Willingness to Apply for Welfare (%)

	Very Un- willing	Unwill- ing	It Depends	Willing	Very Willing	Total (N)
Primary or below	0.6	21.0	18.5	55.4	4.5	100.0 (157)
Lower secondary	0.0	14.5	18.4	64.5	2.6	100.0 (76)
Upper secondary	0.8	10.6	20.3	65.9	2.4	100.0 (123)
Post-secondary	0.0	8.3	16.7	73.3	1.7	100.0 (60)
Overall	0.5	14.9	18.8	62.7	3.1	100.0 (416)

Assuming the public really would be willing to apply for welfare, the next question is: why would they be so willing? Is it because they regard it as a matter of a citizen's rights; like many people in the Western welfare states do? Or is it because they think that welfare services are meant only for those in real need? The issue here is the fundamental attitude to welfare; that is, whether welfare structure should only cover those who are least able to help themselves or should it be a matter of right. At present the welfare system in Hong Kong is clearly aimed at those who are least able to help themselves. In the survey, we found that 52.7% of our respondents thought that welfare should only be for the very needy while 47.3% thought that it should be as a matter of right. While we have no previous empirical evidence to merit a comparative analysis, the proximity of the two figures does ring a bell, that is, people in Hong Kong are beginning to see welfare much more seriously than in the 1950s and 1960s when welfare meant charity or emergency relief (Webb, 1977).

However, we can see that while a relatively higher percentage of our respondents with upper secondary/post-secondary education consider welfare as a matter of right, respondents with up to lower secondary education still consider welfare as mainly for the poor. As such there might be a statistically significant relationship between the educational

level and attitudes to welfare (see Table 4.15) ($\chi^2 = 52.9$; $df = 3$; $p \leq 0.05$).

Table 4.15. Educational Attainment and Welfare Values (%)

	Welfare is for the Poor	Welfare is Everyone's Right	Total	(N)
Primary or below	74.0	26.0	100.0	(146)
Lower secondary	50.7	49.3	100.0	(75)
Upper secondary	44.0	56.0	100.0	(125)
Post-secondary	22.6	77.4	100.0	(62)
Overall	52.7	47.3	100.0	(408)

Level of Satisfaction with the Welfare System

Although, the welfare budget in the past decades has been steadily increasing, this does not mean that people are satisfied with the welfare system. We constantly hear criticisms that public assistance does not meet a family's rising needs and that it does not match rising consumer prices. Since the public do have comments to make on the welfare system, it would be useful to know how the public in general feel about it. (Note: However, it must be stressed that the study only reflects the subjective views of individuals. There is always the possibility that these views do not reflect the objective state of the welfare system, because of erroneous facts or prejudice. Whether or not a certain welfare service truly meets the needs of its people depends on how the users actually feel about it; and such a study obviously goes beyond the boundary of our survey).

In the survey, we found that 32.1% of the respondents were satisfied with the welfare system, while 24.9% were not satisfied. The rest felt that the welfare system was just average (39.8%). However, when asked whether or not the welfare system inclined to be too piecemeal and therefore not really of much help to families in difficulty whether or that welfare was already too much so that people are becoming dependent on it, 67.3% responded that welfare was still not sufficient. Only 32.7% indicated that too much welfare would bring undesirable effects on society (see Table 4.16).

When such findings were correlated with the educational level of respondents, it was discovered that the majority of them, irrespective of their level of educational attainment thought the current level of social welfare might be too low and that it does not help those who really need it (see Table 4.17).

Table 4.16. Level of Satisfaction with Welfare System (%)

Very dissatisfied	2.6
Dissatisfied	24.9
Average	39.8
Satisfied	32.1
Very satisfied	0.5
Total	99.9
(N)	(389)

Table 4.17. Educational Attainment and Level of Welfare (%)

	Level of Welfare		Total	(N)
	Insufficient	Too Much		
Primary or below	71.9	28.1	100.0	(121)
Lower secondary	66.2	33.8	100.0	(71)
Upper secondary	64.1	35.9	100.0	(117)
Post-secondary	65.5	34.5	100.0	(55)
Overall	67.3	32.7	100.0	(364)

Welfare Responsibility and Financing

At present, the major source of financing for welfare comes from government revenue, with 19.5% of the total revenue spent on public assistance (HK\$706 million in 1987-88). Other than public funding, the Community Chest raised HK\$55 million in 1987-88 to supplement pioneering activities in the voluntary sector; roughly constituting 1.5% of the government welfare budget. Thus it is apt to say that more than 90% of the welfare budget comes from public money. Increasing the welfare budget could be done in two ways namely, by increasing taxation or by allocating more resources to welfare in the existing budget (and thus trimming other public expenditures). An increase coming from the latter, if it were possible, would certainly bring in a smaller amount than an increase from the former since it would mean an increase in the society's social welfare level.

It would be important, therefore, to know if the public would be willing to foot the increased welfare bills through fiscal policy, that is, an increase in tax rates. We found that 33.2% of our respondents would agree to an increase in tax while 36.6% would disagree. There were 25.4% who would prefer to decide according to the situation. On the whole, there seemed to be slightly more people objecting to financing welfare increase through taxation, but the difference was marginal.

One of the developments in modern industrial societies is that large industrial corporations are assuming more and more welfare responsibilities, to the extent that they eventually share the welfare budget with the state. In Hong Kong, thus far, industrial organizations do provide some form of welfare in terms of subsidized transportation, canteen facilities, subsidized medical care and so forth. However, what they provide represents only a very small fraction of total welfare. Hence, it would be interesting to know whether the public think large industrial corporations or big employers should take up welfare as part of their corporate responsibilities.

In the survey, we found that 40.3% of our respondents thought that government and employers should share the welfare responsibility equally, while 31.2% thought that welfare should be the sole responsibility of the employers. Only 16.6% thought that welfare should be wholly the responsibility of the government. Our findings revealed a striking difference between the public's expectations of employers and the actual welfare they are now providing. On the policy level, these expectations could create legitimate channels for the government to tighten its purse on welfare, and give sounder grounds for privatization. For the employers, this would mean a greater commitment to industrial welfare in the near future if they want to stabilize their dwindling work force and to maintain their level of productivity.

Attitude towards Social Workers

Coupled with the development of welfare in the past two decades has been the development of the social work profession. There are at present about 4,000 social workers employed at various levels and in the various sectors of the welfare field. About 27% of them have received professional training in social work. A substantial proportion of social work services is now delivered by social worker. It would be interesting to know how the public feels about the service of social workers.

Table 4.18. Attitude towards Social Worker's Ability to Help People to Solve Problems (%)

Impossible	0.3
Not very possible	23.9
Depending on situations	28.5
Possible	47.0
Very possible	0.3
Total	100.0
(N)	(368)

In the survey, we found that 47% of our respondents felt that social workers could help people to resolve their problems. There were 28.5% who indicated that the services of social workers would depend on the situation, while 23.9% were not satisfied with the work of social workers. Therefore, in general, it seemed that people in Hong Kong have a relatively high level of confidence in the services of social workers (see Table 4.18).

Concluding Remarks

On the whole, the survey shows that the people of Hong Kong, though to some extent satisfied with the current provision of welfare services, are increasingly interested in having a larger welfare budget. They also think that employers should have a greater role in workers' welfare in the coming years. With Hong Kong quietly slipping into the latter part of the 1997 transitional period, the question is how can the government and employers elicit more resources for welfare development in order to meet the aspiring needs of its people?

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5 Mental Health

Jenny Mak

Introduction

In Hong Kong, the planning of mental health services is frequently based on information derived from surveys conducted abroad, or of epidemiological research on foreign communities. There is in fact considerable interest in the unique cultural and societal characteristics of the local community and possible influence on the manifestation of mental health problems in the population. Locally, studies on psychological impairment have been conducted on various subgroups. These include a study of stress-coping patterns of Chinese working parents in Hong Kong; a study of mental health characteristics of secondary school students (Shek, 1987); and work stress among office workers in Hong Kong (Lam et al., 1985). These studies provided clues as to the morbidity pattern of specific groups yet they do not generate data depicting an overall picture of the state of mental health of the entire population in Hong Kong.

So far there has been no comprehensive and systematic study conducted locally on the prevalence of various form of mental illness in Hong Kong. The present survey represents an attempt to study mental health problems of the community, and is based on an assessment afforded by the screening instrument of D. Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire. This survey, the first of its kind conducted on a random sample of the local population, will provide opportunities for grappling with the difficult problem of estimating the prevalence and incidence of mental disorders and, their correlates of need for mental health services. Definition of the state of mental health of the population has also wide-ranging policy implications.

Definition of Mental Health

Mental illness, in its various forms and diagnostic categories, has been fairly easy to define but mental health is a much more controversial concept subject to varying interpretations based on different philosophical orientations.

The World Health Organization attempted a positive definition that 'health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. Health is allied to the concept of well-being, suggesting the notion of a satisfactory life-style, which includes successful adaptation to one's environment. Mental health is characterized by self-acceptance, positive self-esteem, the ability to communicate and enjoy satisfying relationships with others, and freedom from lengthy periods of severe anxiety and depressions.

It appears that health as a positive concept is more a regulative ideal. This may account for the difficulties surrounding attempts to define health operationally, though operational definitions of freedom from particular diseases are more available. It is reckoned that absence of disease constitutes a necessary if not sufficient criterion for health. Government authorities take fuller account of mental illness, or mental health problems in policies, financial provisions and legal jurisdictions than they do of positive mental health. Bureaucratic approaches to medicine and health care are directed at sickness rather than of health. The social and personal consequences of illness are readily identifiable and can be categorized. Corrective action can be taken to ameliorate or minimize negative consequences on the individual as well as on society.

The extent to which mental illness is seen to exist depends on the perspectives taken and the criteria used to identify its presence. If mental illness is viewed as the presence of a clearly established disabling condition, then the estimate of its occurrence is conservative. However, if mental illness is defined as the presence of psychosomatic conditions, anxiety, or any of a wide variety of problems in living, then we can characterize a large proportion of the population as having some form of mental illness.

The vast majority of mental health problems are related to the so-called neurosis, depressive and anxiety states which usually do not lead to long-term admission to psychiatric hospitals but significantly affect the individual's relationships and functioning in life, affecting in essence their capacity for happiness. The modern approach in psychiatry reserves the term 'mental illness' for severe disorders and chronic conditions and advocates the use of 'mental ill-health' for those less severe ones which result in emotional distress and maladjustment. Many individuals have mental health problems, or suffer from mental ill-health but have not progressed to the extent of being classified as mentally ill.

Various categories of severe and chronic mental illness are revealed by in-patient statistics of special and general hospitals. However, it is

difficult to assess the extent of various forms of psycho-pathology, which may vary in its rate of prevalence in different socio-economic or occupational groups or in different communities.

As the present study takes the form of a community survey, the investigation of severe or chronic mental conditions which are likely to be treated in specialized hospitals has been excluded. Instead, the survey sets out to assess the general state of mental health of the general population as an indicator of the quality of life of members of this community at that time. The screening instrument to be used is the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972) which serves to identify the number of individuals who are 'at risk', that is, those cases of potential pathology or with a propensity to psychiatric disturbance.

David Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire

In evaluating the state of mental health and the extent of psychiatric morbidity of the general population in Hong Kong, it is essential that community surveys be conducted at regular intervals for the purpose. A number of brief questionnaires are currently available for the purpose of identifying individuals with a psychological impairment. The most important feature in such questionnaires is their clinical validity, which may be defined as the efficiency of the screening instrument in identifying subjects who have been independently diagnosed by clinical psychiatrist as being psychological ill or well. David Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire is used in the present survey for the same purpose, namely, to identify potential at-risk cases of psycho-pathology and to assess the extent of mental health problems in Hong Kong.

The General Health Questionnaire is chosen for the present survey on the basis of its widespread use as a screening instrument in community settings and epidemiological studies in Britain, North America and Australia (Tennant, 1977). Its validity and other psychometric properties have also been established in a Chinese population in Hong Kong (Chan & Chan, 1983).

In its original form, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) consisted of 60 items of questions covering physical symptoms and overt psychiatric disturbances. The shortened version of 20 items, compiled and developed by D. Goldberg himself, have been constructed by excluding physical illness and balancing the number of positive and negative items. This shortened version is designed to assess individuals who currently experience symptoms of distress and

to identify those who are at high risk of psychiatric disturbance. The 20-item shortened version of the GHQ is administered in the present survey as a screening instrument.

The contents of question items of the 20-item version of the GHQ consists of questions on symptoms like abnormal feelings and thoughts, and patterns of overt behaviour, including questions testing respondents' ability to cope and to maintain interpersonal relations. These questions in the GHQ asked the respondents to evaluate his or her state of health as compared to that of a few weeks ago, whether there is a slight or marked deterioration. The test items are thus related to the current situation and pay no attention to how the individual's past feelings or behaviour. The GHQ is thus concerned with the severity of disturbance at the present, and has the effect of giving prominence to current symptoms rather than past behaviour patterns or long term personality traits. The questionnaire is not designed to detect cases of dementia, chronic schizophrenia or hypomania, or those with very long standing disorders, especially if the patient perceives himself as going through a good phase of his illness. It should therefore be pointed out that any appraisal of the estimated prevalence rate measured by the GHQ should be judged in this light. The fact is there is, in the main, broad agreement about the prevalence rates for major psychotic and chronic illnesses based on hospital statistics but there are widely varying estimates of the prevalence of neurotic illnesses and the extent of mental ill-health in the community. This is where the GHQ has important contributions as a screening instrument for epidemiological research in the community.

The GHQ is a comparatively efficient instrument for the screening of possible pathological cases in the community. It is relatively easy to administer; the nature of the question items are generally acceptable to respondents. The questions are fairly short, and objective in the sense that they would not require the person administering it to make any subjective assessment about the respondents. Also, it has been confirmed (Aldama, 1987) that the GHQ has reasonable sensitivity (ability to detect potential at risk cases) as well as specificity (ability to screen out non-psychiatric cases).

In the 20-item version, the recommended cut-off point is a score of four. That is, a respondent is classified as being at risk (suffering from psychological impairment) or regarded as being at risk of psychiatric disturbance if he or she responds positively to four or more question items. In other words, the cut-off point of four becomes significant as the watershed between psychological sickness and health. If a prevalence survey is aimed at missing as few cases as possible, one

would naturally lower the threshold so as to increase its sensitivity at the expense of specificity. On the other hand, if the threshold is raised, say to adopting 5 as the cut-off point, specificity would be enhanced. In the present survey, it is decided to adopt the criteria of 4 or more positive symptoms as originally recommended by Goldberg in the first making of his instrument. For those respondents who score higher than 4, their severity of neurotic impairment becomes obvious.

Prevalence of Mental Health Problems in Hong Kong

Mental health problems in general, and mental illness in particular, are in fact more prevalent than most people realize.

Traditionally, mental illness is estimated from hospital records which provide a crude measure of the number of patients and the rate of mental illness. As reflected in the 1984 Rehabilitation Programme Plan of the Hong Kong government, the estimated need of psychiatric hospital beds represents a ratio of 4 per 100,000 population. Needless to say, this figure should not be taken to represent the prevalence of mental illness in Hong Kong. Epidemiologists have long known that the cases in clinical care represent something like the tip of an iceberg, that below the clinical horizon there are several times as many cases that are not visible to the clinical facilities. Research consistently reports that large proportions, perhaps as high as 75%, of those suffering from clinical psychiatric disorders have never been in treatment and that furthermore these individuals differ in important respects from those who do receive treatment. In this connection, it is well recognized that the presentation of psychiatric illness often comes in the guise of physical complaints. Research studies in the United Kingdom (Freedman, 1984) have found that general practitioners refer only about one in twenty of the patients they diagnose as 'psychiatric' to psychiatric services, while psychiatrists treat three out of four of their patients on an out-patient basis. This means that simply counting the number of in-patients affords a gross under-estimation of the prevalence of various mental disorders in a community.

In addition, patient characteristics are known to have complex effects on the pathways to care. Women are known to be more inclined than men to seek medical help when they experience some form of psychological disturbance. Likewise, the characteristics of the doctor and his accuracy in recognizing the disorder affect the type of service and care offered. To decide which group of people have a sufficiently severe symptoms as to warrant being labelled as mentally ill inevitably

means making assumptions about what is a normal response to adversity and what is not. The attitude and value orientation of the clinician therefore becomes an important intervening variable in the entire treatment process of psychiatric illness.

Table 5.1. Distribution of GHQ Scores in the Sample

No. of Positive Score in GHQ Items	Nos. of Respondents	Percentage
0	138	33.3
1	71	17.2
2	49	11.8
3	47	11.4
4	33	8.0
5	20	4.8
6	11	2.7
7	16	3.9
8	10	2.4
9	5	1.2
10	5	1.2
11	4	1.0
12 & over	5	1.2
Total	414	100.0

The realization that much of the psychiatric morbidity of the population remains hidden has led to the community studies being conducted in this area. In the present survey, David Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire has been employed as a screening instrument to research psychiatric morbidity in the population and the prevalence of mental health problems in Hong Kong. Table 5.1 illustrates the distribution of GHQ scores amongst respondents of the sample. As discussed earlier in the report, high risk is defined as being positive on 4 or more GHQ items. This cut-off point is based on the analysis and recommendation of Goldberg himself. As can be seen from Table 5.1, 73.7% of the sample obtained positive scores in 3 or items less, that is, below the recommended cut-off point, and therefore should be regarded as free from any symptom of psychological impairment. However, 26.3% of the sample scored above the cut-off point of 4 and should be classified as the at-risk group. The significance and implications of being in the 'at-risk' group or 'potential case' is that the individual may be on the verge of breakdown which would most likely occur in the event of any overwhelming stress or crisis. A number of

studies (e.g. Benjamin, 1982) have provided confirmatory evidence that the General Health Questionnaire assesses a number of dimensions of psychopathology: anxiety, inadequate coping, depression, insomnia, and social dysfunctioning. These dimensions of psychopathology reflect the nature of mental health problems of 26.3% of the sample, randomly drawn from the population of Hong Kong.

By locating the cut-off point at 4, individuals can be arbitrarily classified as 'cases' or 'non-cases'. It has been confirmed that there is considerable predictive value of a high scorer being a case as other community surveys (for example, Aldama, 1987) involving two-stage designs reported significant correlation between high scorers in the General Health Questionnaire and subsequent diagnostic interviews by practicing psychiatrists.

The implicit assumption of unidimensionality of the GHQ and its additivity in the scoring system means that high scores reflect symptom severity and a deteriorated state of mental health. By adjusting the cut-off point, the extent of the severity of ill-health can be revealed. Hence, 13.5% of the sample scoring 5-6 symptoms could be regarded as moderately ill while 7% of the sample scoring 7 or more symptoms are supposed to suffer from serious forms of psychological sickness.

As the General health Questionnaire tends to miss chronic cases, the magnitude of mental health problems in the community is likely to be under-estimated by about 2-3%. Therefore, the prevalence of mental ill-health in Hong Kong should be placed in the region of 30% of the population.

The present finding of a high prevalence rate is not surprising. There is mounting evidence to show that mental illness covering a wide spectrum of conditions is increasing in urbanized, industrial communities.

Rapid social change, the competitiveness of the educational system, harsh work demands, the effects of environmental adversity, the stresses of modern living, and the expansion of the elderly population are all considered to contribute to a widening range of mental health problems in urban living (Lee, 1979).

Sex Differences in the Rate of Mental Ill-health

Table 5.2 shows the distribution of GHQ scores in the male and female group of the sample. The distribution does not indicate any sex bias in terms of the rate of mental health problems. This is an interesting

finding, rather contrary to general expectations and common experiences of clinical professionals in the mental health field.

Table 5.2. Prevalence of Mental Ill-health by Sex (%)

	Scoring 3 or Less Symptoms in GHQ	Scoring 4 or More Symptoms in GHQ	Total	(N)
Male	70.4	29.6	100.0	(213)
Female	77.1	22.9	100.0	(201)

Traditionally, official statistics of hospital records suggest trends of significant sex differences in the prevalence of different categories of mental illnesses. In general, women are known to produce higher prevalence rates of mental disorder. This applies in particular to cases of neurosis, depressive and anxiety states which usually do not lead to admission to psychiatric hospitals, but significantly affect the individual's relationships and performance in life. In Australia, women are estimated to be vulnerable to this kind of psychological sickness at twice the rate of men (Tennant, 1977). There are areas, where the physical fact of being a woman (such as areas related to childbirth, mood changes across the monthly cycle are obvious examples), plays a part in mental health. In the United Kingdom, too, a much larger percentage of women suffer from depression, working class women, in particular, are four times more likely to present with depressive illnesses (Al-Issa, 1980).

Various hypotheses have been put forward to explain women's vulnerability to mental health problems in the United Kingdom and other western countries (Gallagher, 1987). It has been suggested that the role of women as housewives has become less meaningful and less satisfactory in modern society. Housework becomes routine, homebound, lacking opportunities for creativity. In addition, family members may not express appreciation for the housework performed. Often, women are financially dependent and feel psychologically inferior. Because the role of housewife has a low ascribed status and does not fully utilize the competencies of modern women, it has the potential to generate frustration. The lack of formal structure and the invisibility of this role create a 'breeding ground' for psychological difficulties. Although many women supplement this role with paid work outside the home, the potential psychological advantages accrued were offset by the fact that women's work roles were often of low status and in conflict with their home roles.

The prevalence of stress symptoms in women across social or demographic categories may also be a result of a response bias. It is more acceptable for women than for men to be expressive about their personal difficulties. Women may not actually have more symptoms than men, but it is possible that they report more symptoms because of social factors. It has been suggested that a person's sex affects both the recognition and expression of illness, and his/her help-seeking behaviour in response to that illness. Women are taught to think of themselves as helpless. Whereas help-seeking is compatible with femininity, stoicism tends to be more compatible with masculinity, help-seeking comes more easily to women than men. Women, through their frequent contacts with health services such as nursing and child-care services are more receptive of the medical viewpoint; men tend to perceive illness as demoralizing and are thus reluctant to seek medical help unless in critical need. Another plausible explanation is differential labelling (Gallagher, 1987). Medical professionals perceive disorders presented by women in a different way to those presented by men. In general, doctors are less than willing to attach a label to men but tend to diagnose women as depressed.

The above suggestions have been applied to explain data from the medical services which reveal marked differences between men and women in the prevalence of stress symptoms. In the present survey, we have found that both men and women are equally susceptible to psycho-pathology. By adopting the General Health Questionnaire in a community survey, the present study has demonstrated that the prevalence of stress symptoms in both men and women are remarkably similar and that no significant sex difference can be detected.

How are we to explain this interesting phenomenon? Firstly, the findings lend further support to the fact that official statistics of the number of mental patients does not reflect the full range of mental health problems in the community. Secondly, it is possible that there are special social and cultural characteristics of the local community which renders Hong Kong a different case from that of the UK or Australia. The researcher would like to examine the possible influence of those characteristics.

In Hong Kong, people live in congested housing conditions with easy access from each other. In the recent decades, the community has witnessed a tremendous economic growth resulting in full employment. Unlike women in the UK or Australia, women in Hong Kong are rarely engaged in full-time housework; they obtain support from domestic helpers or close relatives who live nearby in relieving them totally or partially from housework duties. At the same time, most women can

find employment in the community. Women in Hong Kong are therefore in a much better position to secure economic independence. They are also less homebound and relatively free of the routine of household chores. Women's engagement in full or part time work outside the home gives them job satisfaction and promotes better mental health.

From another perspective, Chinese cultural expectations of male dominance is seen in areas where men are expected to achieve and excel in their work and career. In Hong Kong's keenly competitive society, occupational stress exerts great pressure on men. Fear of failure or 'loss of face' exerts additional psychological strain to a much greater extent than in women. Alternatively, it may well be that men set unrealistically high goals, akin to the adolescent's sensation-seeking for pleasure. Undoubtedly, this will place more stress upon men who wish to make an exceptionally outstanding career. Furthermore, if a high educational level combined with low occupational standing is a source of stress (Lee, 1979), the reverse, that is, a high occupational standing in spite of a low educational background, may possibly be stress-protecting. That could be one of the reasons why men in Asia are ever industrious and striving after targets.

The cultural belief that men are physically and emotionally strong may well be unfounded. It has been suggested that, for both animals and humans, males are more susceptible to stress than females. For example, in training situations, female rats learn faster than male rats to avoid an electric shock. The animal model seems to have its counterpart in the human world. Many psycho-physiological disorders such as ulcers, high blood pressure and heart attacks are more prevalent in men, suggesting an equally high susceptibility to stress (Al-Issa, 1980).

It thus appears that both men and women are vulnerable to different psycho-social forces which make them succumb to mental ill-health. The sources of stress for women have been well researched by studies overseas. Although the sources of stress for men may be cultural, it is high time to review cultural and social expectation of men and women and to seek measures to mitigate stress from differing sources.

Marital Status and Mental Health

Table 5.3 shows the influence of marital status on the prevalence of psychological illness. Of those who are married, 75.5% scored 3 or less symptoms in the GHQ while 34.7% of those who are not married, or were separated, divorced or widowed scored 4 or more symptoms, above the recommended cut-off point. The association is statistically

significant. This is consistent with findings of mental health studies in western countries such as UK and Australia. Various studies (Aldama, 1987) revealed that for both women and men, the married tend to have lower rates of mental illness than the unmarried.

Table 5.3. Marital Status and Mental Health (%)

	Positive Score in 3 or Less Items	Positive Score in 4 or More Items	Total	(N)
Single	65.3	34.7	100.0	(98)
Married	75.5	24.5	100.0	(298)

The presence of an intimate supportive relationship seems to mediate between major difficulties and the onset of illness. Stressful life events tend to cause disturbances only in the absence of intimate relationships. Similarly, the lack of such a relationship does not itself bring about disturbance without the presence of a major difficulty. Findings from experimental research on mental disorders also revealed that hospital admission rates were strongly related to indices of isolation and marital disruption. Generally speaking, the duration of hospitalization is shorter for married than for unmarried persons.

Findings of the present survey lend support to the general conclusion that marriage, or rather, a satisfactory marital relationship, has an insulating effect against mental ill-health. Comparing single women with single men, divorced women with divorced men, and widowed women with widowed men, the majority of studies found that it was the men who had the higher rates. However, the present study has not borne out any difference in the prevalence rate between the sexes.

Satisfaction with Family Life; with Housing Condition

Table 5.4 shows that satisfaction with family life was significantly associated with low scoring in the GHQ ($p < 0.05$). Of respondents who are satisfied or very satisfied with their family life 76.8% remain free from risks of psychological illness. This single question on satisfaction with family life elicits a general and direct response about the individual's feelings and attitude towards his or her family. It is subjective and represents the respondent's perception of positive interaction with family members. It does not really attempt to measure the 'reality' of a family's functioning or its competence. It falls short of identifying interactional variables within family systems which characterize

psychological healthy functioning. Nonetheless, this summing up of the individual's overall emotional experience in the context of the family is an important factor which has been shown to be significantly correlated with mental and psychological well-being. Conversely, respondents who are high scorers in GHQ symptoms are not satisfied with their family life.

Table 5.4. Prevalence Rate by Satisfaction with Family Life (%)

Experience of Family Life	GHQ Score 3 or Below	GHQ Score 4 or Above	Total	(N)
Very dissatisfied/Dissatisfied	50.0	50.0	100.0	(18)
Average	68.7	31.3	100.0	(99)
Satisfied/Very satisfied	76.8	23.2	100.0	(293)

($\chi^2 = 9.5$; significant at 0.05)

On the other hand, results of the study indicate that there is no significant correlation between a respondent's state of mental health and degrees of satisfaction with housing. In Hong Kong, housing is by and large unsatisfactory on account of overcrowding and lacking of adequate facilities. On the basis of demographic studies, there is some evidence relating crowding to psychiatric illnesses as a whole (Freedman, 1984). There is also the aspect of environmental noise and mental health. Noise causes a number of physiological reaction well documented in laboratory experiments. Yet it seems that the negative influences of overcrowding and noise operates through the mediation of psychological and constitutional factors of which little is known. The extent to which there is a direct causal link with pathological reactions is yet controversial.

Table 5.5. Prevalence Rate by Satisfaction with Housing Condition (%)

Satisfaction with Housing Condition	Positive Score in 3 or Less Items	Positive Score in 4 or More Items	Total	(N)
Very dissatisfied/Dissatisfied	66.1	33.9	100.0	(97)
Average	74.7	25.3	100.0	(87)
Satisfied/Very satisfied	77.3	22.7	100.0	(216)

Findings of the present survey indicate once again that any assumption of the direct influence of physical environmental conditions on mental health may not be indisputable. E. Anderson (1972) argued that the Chinese people have developed some cultural-social mechanisms for coping with crowded living conditions. The present study reveals no clear statistical correlation between dissatisfaction with housing condition and mental ill-health. It might be said that people of Hong Kong remain relatively immune to the negative forces of the environment. An alternative explanation is that people in general have come to accept unfavourable environmental conditions as inevitable and therefore do not attach as much importance to physical conditions such as housing. On the other hand, satisfaction with family life is significantly correlated with positive mental health. Perhaps, as the saying goes that 'a house is not a home'.

Job Satisfaction and Mental Health

Research into the value of work and occupation in the management and rehabilitation of clients with mental health problems have a long history (Olsen, 1984). Epidemiological studies have also revealed significant relationships between unemployment and mental disorder. Employment provides the individual with economic independence and social status. He or she experiences a sense of personal value and derives psychological satisfaction from being a useful and contributing member of the community. In recent years Hong Kong has witnessed full employment as indicated in the 1986 by-census. Therefore, unlike the situation in many western countries, the devastating psychological harm resulting from widespread unemployment does not affect Hong Kong people.

The present study attempt to look into a number of factors associated with work conditions and their bearing on the state of mental health of the respondents. For example, questions such as whether they were satisfied with the nature of job they were engaged in, the promotional system, the relationship with senior colleagues and so on were asked. We came to the conclusion that being satisfied with one's present job is indeed an important safeguard of mental health. Of respondents who claimed to be satisfied with their present jobs, 91.2% had relatively low score in respect of mental health problems. On the other hand, 41.2% of respondents who claimed not to be satisfied with their present jobs scored above the cut-off point of 4 symptoms in the GHQ.

Table 5.6. Job Satisfaction and Mental Health (%)

Degree of Job Satisfaction	Positive Score in 3 or Less Items	Positive Score in 4 or More Items	Total	(N)
Dissatisfied with				
Income	25.0	75.0	100.0	(84)
Job nature	41.2	58.8	100.0	(39)
Promotion system	41.3	58.7	100.0	(68)
Average satisfaction with				
Income	72.4	27.6	100.0	(76)
Job nature	70.1	29.9	100.0	(87)
Promotion system	79.2	20.8	100.0	(72)
Satisfied with				
Income	84.9	15.1	100.0	(122)
Job nature	91.2	8.8	100.0	(153)
Promotion system	88.9	11.1	100.0	(48)

(Satisfaction with Income and Mental Health significant at 0.001)

(Satisfaction with Job Nature significant at 0.01)

(Satisfaction with Promotion System significant at 0.005)

Therefore results of the present survey did suggest that the state of mental health is dependent on the degree of satisfaction with income, the nature of work, and the promotion system. These findings serve to reinforce the psychological importance of work and occupation. It also shows that aspects of their work life take high priority in the minds of people of Hong Kong. Promotion as a form of recognition is accorded importance in signifying one's status and ability — an issue close to the individual's sense of confidence and self-esteem.

Worries in the Past Six Months

Over half, 51.8% of the sample admitted that they frequently or regularly worried about something in the past six months. The object of their worries ranges from finance (23.3%), work/studies (27.7%), family/marriage (8.5%), children's problems (18.5%) to interpersonal relationships (8.0%), health and others (6.5%).

A cross-tabulation of worries with positive scoring in the GHQ (Table 5.7) shows that correlation was association between the two. In other words, of those who experienced worries in the six months preceding the interview, 43.1 % have progressed to a state of mental

ill-health. These findings are consistent with the general expectation that worries and anxieties constitute a major factor in mental health problems. Preoccupation with worries and anxieties in the past months signifies high symptom severity in the GHQ.

Table 5.7. Mental Ill-health and Worries in the Past Six Months (%)

Having Worries in the Past 6 Months	Positive Score in 3 or Less Items	Positive Score in 4 or More Items	Total	(N)
No/Very little	81.4	18.6	100.0	(199)
Sometimes	70.5	29.5	100.0	(149)
Always	56.9	43.1	100.0	(65)

($\chi^2 = 16.3$; significant at 0.001)

Another significant variable would be the coping ability of an individual. There are studies which deal directly with the issue of the coping ability. For example, a question may be asked as to whether the respondent has ever been unable to engage in work or other normal activities for one full day on account of an emotional problem. However, the researcher believes it will not be meaningful to apply such a question to a Chinese sample, as it has been observed that Chinese people have strong tendencies to somatize their problems, that is emotional problems are expressed in somatic symptoms. Therefore respondents may not be able to differentiate whether impairment in functioning was due to physical illness or emotional problems.

Significant correlation between having worries and high scoring in the GHQ provides further support to the reliance of GHQ as an overall indicator of the mental health state of the respondent, covering such key areas anxiety and emotional distress, pathological behaviour, interpersonal relationships and the coping ability. It is also worth noting the survey was conducted prior to the democracy movement in Beijing which has had a tremendous impact on Hong Kong. Following the events of June, members of the Hong Kong community, in particular the younger age-groups, have expressed grave concern over their predicament after 1997. A lot of psychic energy has been aroused with a wish to accommodate the uncertainties of the political future. Many people are facing a dilemma over plans to emigrate, which necessitates the possible giving up of career goals, uprooting present ties, and an adjustment to drastic changes in the future. Given the strong association between worries and mental ill-health as demonstrated by the

present study, the level of mental health of Hong Kong people is bound to have deteriorated since the present survey was conducted. In other words, one would expect that the prevalence rate of 26.3% of the population as the at-risk group would be an under-statement. In view of altered circumstances, the magnitude of mental health problems in the local community would have been far under-estimated by the present study.

Societal Attitude towards Mental Illness

When confronted with statements such as 'those who are mentally ill should be hospitalized', 'people who suffered from mental illness are basically dangerous', 65% of respondents of the sample agreed, 25% took a more moderate view; only 10% partially or totally disagree. It can be seen that, as expected, the attitude of the public towards mental illness and mental patients was not only stereotyped, but also very negative. Unfortunately, the attitude of the public towards ex-mental patients would inevitably jeopardize the successful rehabilitation of discharged patients into the community. Following the tragic incident at the Un Chau Estate in June 1982 when an ex-mental patient killed six children in a kindergarten, public antagonism is obvious from their opposition to the setting up of half-way houses in their estates. Unless the public attitude changes and becomes more acceptable to ex-mental patients, the goal of integrating them into the community will remain a long way off and there will continue to be problems in discharging mental patients from hospital.

Table 5.8. Attitude towards Mental Illness by Age
(a) Mentally-ill Patients are Dangerous

Age	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Depends		Agree/Strongly Agree		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
24 or below	22	50.0	11	25.0	11	25.0	44	100.0
25 - 34	38	27.5	35	25.4	65	47.1	138	100.0
35 - 44	41	40.6	19	18.8	41	40.6	101	100.0
45 - 54	13	23.6	10	18.2	32	58.2	55	100.0
55 or above	6	8.0	14	18.7	55	73.3	75	100.0
Total	120		89		204		413	

($\chi^2 = 60.66$; significant at 0.05)

Table 5.8b. Mentally Ill Patients Should be Kept in Hospital

Age	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Depends		Agree/Strongly Agree		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
24 or below	21	46.7	11	24.4	13	28.9	45	100.0
25 - 34	18	12.9	42	30.0	80	57.1	140	100.0
35 - 44	17	16.2	34	32.4	54	51.4	105	100.0
45 - 54	5	8.9	16	28.6	35	62.5	56	100.0
55 or above	4	5.1	9	11.4	66	83.5	79	100.0
Total	65		112		248		425	

($\chi^2 = 68.86$; significant at 0.05)

Table 5.8c. Mentally Ill Patients Can Never Full Recover

Age	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Depends		Agree/Strongly Agree		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
24 or below	29	65.9	7	15.9	8	18.2	44	100.0
25 - 34	56	41.2	34	25.0	46	33.8	136	100.0
35 - 44	50	48.5	22	21.4	31	30.1	103	100.0
45 - 54	23	41.8	18	32.7	14	25.5	55	100.0
55 or above	20	27.8	12	16.7	40	55.5	72	100.0
Total	178		93		139		410	

($\chi^2 = 52.06$; significant at 0.05)

Table 5.9. Attitude towards Mental Illness by Educational Attainment
(a) Mentally Ill Patients are Dangerous

Level of Educational Attainment	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Depends		Agree/Strongly Agree		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Lower secondary or below	58	24.4	48	20.2	132	55.5	238	100.0
Higher secondary or above	62	35.4	41	23.4	72	41.1	175	100.0
Total	120		89		204		413	

(significant at 0.0115)

Table 5.9b. Mentally Ill Patients Should be Kept in Hospital

Level of Educational Attainment	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Depends		Agree/Strongly Agree		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Lower secondary or below	31	12.4	59	23.7	159	63.9	249	100.0
Higher secondary or above	34	19.3	53	30.1	89	50.6	176	100.0
Total	65		112		248		425	

Table 5.9c. Mentally Ill Patients Can Never Full Recover

Level of Educational Attainment	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Depends		Agree/Strongly Agree		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Lower secondary or below	97	40.8	48	20.2	93	39.1	238	100.0
Higher secondary or above	81	47.1	45	26.2	46	26.7	172	100.0
Total	178		93		139		410	

Therefore, the task of public education requires the joint and concerted efforts of government, professional workers, members of the community and a well-informed and co-operative media, and has to be carried out regularly on a long term and on-going basis.

The present survey also shows that attitudes towards mental illness vary with age, sex and educational attainment. Mental health educational programmes will need to be quite diverse with respect to target groups, programme content, and educational formats used. There should be variations in the proportions of cognitive and affective components, and they can be addressed to different socio-demographic and cultural segments of the population.

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6 Religious and Supernaturalistic Beliefs

C. Harry Hui

SINCE the middle of the 19th century, Hong Kong has been influenced both by traditional Chinese values and Occidental thinking. Without much surprise we find in her inhabitants a unique blend of Chinese and Western religious and metaphysical beliefs. In this chapter, we shall consider the religious, and related, sentiments of Hong Kong people, and shall look at some of the correlates and consequences of such sentiments.

Religious Profile

Are people in Hong Kong religious? What religions do Hong Kong people believe in? Do they consider themselves devoted?

In the survey we asked our respondents to indicate their own religious pursuit. Responses to this question can be categorized into six groups, namely (a) 'No religion', which also includes non-responses to the question, (b) 'Chinese traditional folk religion', which includes Taoism and worship of local deities, (c) 'Buddhism', (d) 'Roman Catholicism', (e) 'Protestantism', and (f) others, which includes Islam. As the number of people in the last category was too small to be included for meaningful statistical computation and inferences (about 1% of the sample), this category was excluded from the following discussion.

Of the entire sample of 1644 respondents who could be placed into one of the five categories listed above, 58.3% said that they had no religious belief. Another 23% claimed to be practising Chinese folk religions. The percentages of Buddhists, Roman Catholics, and Protestants were 6.6%, 4.9%, and 7.2% respectively. In short, religious people constitute only a minority of the Hong Kong population.

Among those belonging to one of the four religious categories, a sample of 179 were also asked the question: 'Do you consider yourself a devoted follower of your religion?' Responses were given on a five-point scale (1 = Very undevoted, 5 = Very devoted). If we discount three persons who gave no answer, there were 2.7% who claimed to be 'very undevoted', 18.8% 'undevoted', 40.3% 'average', 28% 'devoted', and

10.2% 'very devoted'. The majority of religious people reported 'moderate' levels of religiosity. The overall average rating was 3.22. Further analysis showed no statistically significant difference among the four religious categories.

Demographic Profile of the Religious

Gender

There was a statistically significant contingency between gender and religious beliefs (Chi-square = 51.12, $df=4$, $p<.0001$). A larger proportion of males (66.4%) than females (49.9%) claimed not to believe in any religion. Believers in Chinese folk religions, Buddhism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism had an imbalance sex ratio. More females were represented in these groups. The distribution was most skewed in the case of Chinese folk religion: almost two-thirds of the followers were females. Details are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Religion (%)

Religious Group	Male	Female	Sub-total
No religion	33.9	24.5	58.3
Chinese tradition	8.6	14.4	23.0
Buddhism	3.0	3.5	6.6
Catholicism	2.4	2.6	4.9
Protestantism	3.2	4.0	7.2
Sub-total	51.0	49.0	100.0

Note: Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to the sub-totals.

Age

A statistically significant contingency also existed between religious belief and age (Chi-square = 214.51, $df=40$, $p<.0001$). Closer examination shows a steady decline in percentages reporting 'No religion' from the youngest group (below 20-year-old) to the elderly group. About 70 per cent of people in their teens and twenties reported believing in no religion, while only about 45 per cent of people over 50 reported so. There was also a steady increase over age in percentages reporting belief in Chinese folk religions, from 1.7% of people below 20, to 46% of people of 65 or above. As for Buddhism, the percentages

rose from about 5% of people below 30, to a peak of 11% of people in the age bracket 50-54, and fell back to about 6% of people over 60. Percentages of people believing in Roman Catholicism did not appear to vary with age. The age-trend of belief in Protestantism is quite different from that of the other religions. Of people below 20, 17.2% claimed to be Protestant. The proportion dropped steadily to about 2% for people above 60. Details are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Individuals in Each Age Group by Religion (%)

Religious Group	Below 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65 and above
No religion	70.7	72.9	70.1	64.1	55.1	58.5	53.3	40.0	45.3	49.2	40.7
Chinese tradition	1.7	4.1	8.5	17.8	26.7	24.5	28.6	37.0	38.4	41.5	46.0
Buddhism	5.2	4.1	5.4	4.6	8.2	8.2	8.6	11.0	7.0	4.6	7.3
Catholicism	5.2	4.1	4.5	7.1	5.3	3.8	5.7	5.0	4.7	3.1	3.3
Protestantism	17.2	14.7	11.6	6.4	4.5	5.0	3.8	7.0	4.7	1.5	2.7
Column total	3.5	10.4	13.7	17.1	14.8	9.7	6.4	6.1	5.2	4.0	9.1

Marital Status

There was a statistically significant contingency between marital status and religious belief (Chi-square = 199.65, $df=16$, $p<.0001$). This contingency analysis was conducted with the 'separated', 'divorced', and 'widowed/deserted' included. However, these three groups constituted only 5.1% of the total sample. These three groups were too small for further analyses, and were therefore excluded from the following discussion.

Looking at the singles and the married alone, we found that there were more singles (71.9%) than married people (55.3%) who did not believe in any religion. We also noticed that there were fewer singles (4.3%) than married people (28.1%) who believed in Chinese folk religions; slightly fewer singles (4.3%) than married people (7.2%) who believed in Buddhism; and more singles (13.9%) than married people (4.9%) who believed in Protestantism. Marital status had no effect on belief in Roman Catholicism. Given that the married are in general older than singles, the above trends are consistent with observations on the contingency between age and religious beliefs.

Place of Birth

A person's place of birth was also related to the religion he or she

adopted (Chi-square = 81.11, $df = 4$, $p < .0001$). This is probably due to the association of religion with age and socio-cultural characteristics of the places where a major part of the person's life has been spent. (On average, people born in Hong Kong were younger than people born in the Mainland). Over half (58.1%) of those without a religion were born in Hong Kong. About two-thirds (65.6%) of people believing in Chinese folk religions were not born in Hong Kong. Birth-places of Buddhists were evenly distributed between outside and inside Hong Kong (51.9% vs. 48.1%). Two-thirds (67.9%) of Catholics were born in Hong Kong. The same is true of Protestants (67.8%).

Years Spent in Hong Kong

People holding different religions had spent different lengths of time in the territory ($F = 8.26$, $p < .0001$). While no definite pattern can be observed, it can be noted that Protestants and people who reported no religious belief had on average spent about 24 years in Hong Kong, while believers in Chinese folk religions, Buddhism, and Roman Catholicism had been in Hong Kong for about five more years.

Education

We can observe a pattern of distribution of people reaching different educational levels over various religions in Table 6.3. Slightly over seventy per cent of those whose highest educational attainment was 'upper secondary' claimed that they had no religious belief, as did those whose highest educational attainment was 'matriculation'. But the percentage was lower for those who had had tertiary or postgraduate education. Over half (58.5%) of those with no formal schooling reported believing in Chinese folk religions. About 30% of those with a postgraduate (Master's) degree were Roman Catholics, and an equal number were Protestants. These two religions appeal to the more educated more than the other religions.

Scanning Table 6.3, one can readily notice that about half (52.2%) of the so-called non-religious were people whose highest educational attainment was either junior or senior secondary schooling. By contrast, believers in Chinese folk religions were mainly those who had received no (32.8%) or only primary education (35.4%). A sizeable proportion of Buddhists (41.1%) had received primary education. Many of the Roman Catholics (30%) had received upper secondary education. The distribution of educational attainment among Protestants was more even, although there was a slight concentration (28%) in those who had upper secondary education.

Table 6.3. Distribution of Respondents by Educational Attainment and Religion (%)

	No Schooling/ Kindergarten	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Matri- culation	Technical Institute	School of Commerce	Tertiary (non- degree)	Tertiary Graduate School	Others
No religion	7.0 31.6	24.3 52.3	21.1 63.8	31.1 73.1	4.2 76.9	0.7 58.3	1.9 62.1	3.9 58.7	5.2 58.8	0.4 33.3
Chinese tradition	32.8 58.5	35.4 30.2	16.9 20.3	10.3 9.6	0.5 3.8	0.3 8.3	0.5 6.9	0.8 4.8	1.9 8.2	0.5 66.7
Buddhism	12.1 6.1	41.1 9.9	24.3 8.3	12.1 3.2			0.9 3.4	2.8 4.8	4.7 5.9	1.9 12.5
Catholicism	2.5 0.9	21.3 3.8	15.0 3.8	30.0 5.9	3.8 5.8	1.3 8.3	3.8 10.3	7.5 9.5	8.8 8.2	6.3 31.3
Protestantism	5.1 2.8	14.4 3.8	10.2 3.8	28.0 8.1	5.9 13.5	2.5 25.0	4.2 17.2	11.9 22.2	13.6 18.8	4.2 31.3

Note : The upper number shows the percentage of people in the respective religious group who had attained a certain level of education. The lower number shows the percentage of people in an educational attainment group who were followers of a certain religion.

Socio-economic Status

In view of the differences in educational attainment reported above, it is not surprising that there were also differences in the social class of the various categories of religious people. Respondents were asked: 'Which social class do you feel you belong to?' As shown in Table 6.4, 15.2% of the Catholics and 13.2% of the Protestants reported that they were in the lower class, as opposed to about 30% in the other groups. About 30% of the Buddhists, those who did not have a religion, and those who believed in Chinese folk religions claimed that they were 'middle class', while over 40% of Catholics and Protestants made a similar claim. This contingency was highly significant (Chi-square = 59.70, $df = 16$, $p < .0001$). More specifically, an ANOVA showed that believers in Chinese folk religions reported a lower social class than did others ($F = 12.66$, $df = 4, 1534$, $p < .0001$). ANOVA on data collected on questions about household income confirmed this observation: Protestants and Catholics reported a significantly higher household income than the other groups did ($F = 16.20$, $df = 4, 1429$, $p < .0001$). Moreover, more Protestants than other groups reported that the family's total income was enough for daily expenditure ($F = 6.31$, $df = 4, 1611$, $p < .0001$).

Table 6.4. Distribution of Declared Social Strata by Religious Group (%)

Religious Group	Lower	Lower-Middle	Middle	Upper-Middle	Upper
No religion	22.9	36.6	36.6	4.2	0.3
Chinese folk religion	35.6	35.6	27.2	1.2	0.3
Buddhism	22.1	34.6	33.7	8.7	1.0
Catholicism	15.2	31.6	45.6	7.6	—
Protestantism	13.2	34.2	43.9	8.8	—

Of the employed, Protestants and Catholics earned significantly more than believers in Chinese folk religions or Buddhism ($F = 10.42$, $df = 4, 1100$, $p < .0001$). The median monthly earning of a Buddhist was about HK\$4,000, the median monthly earning of a believer in Chinese folk religions was in the range of HK\$3,000- 3,499; the median monthly earning of someone without a religion was above HK\$4,000. By contrast, the median monthly earnings of Catholics and Protestants were around HK\$5,000 and HK\$4,000 respectively.

Household Size

There was a statistically significant difference among believers of

various religions as to household size ($F = 5.01$, $p < .001$). People believing in Chinese folk religions had significantly larger families (average size = 4.48) than the Buddhists (4.25), non-religious (4.10), the Protestants (3.87), and the Catholics (3.81). These five groups, however, did not differ as to satisfaction with their family life.

Housing

People of the five religious groups were unevenly distributed among different housing types, as indicated by a highly significant cross-tabulation analysis (Chi-square = 65.47, $df = 20$, $p < .0001$). Table 6.5 shows the percentage of people living in each type of housing who were also believers of a certain religion. People living in the Housing Authority temporary housing areas were the least religious.

Table 6.5. Distribution of Individuals in Each Housing Type by Religion (%)

Religious Group	Housing Type					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
No religion	53.2	56.1	63.2	46.3	73.9	63.9
Chinese folk religion	29.4	29.9	16.1	22.0	19.6	19.4
Buddhism	7.0	5.9	6.0	12.2	6.5	4.6
Roman Catholicism	4.1	2.1	7.0	6.1	—	2.8
Protestantism	6.3	5.9	7.7	13.4	—	9.3

A: Housing Authority rental blocks (type A)

B: Housing Authority rental blocks (type B)

C: Private residential blocks

D: Housing Authority cottages, Housing Society rental blocks, villas, bungalows, simple stone structures, hostels, quarters

E: Housing Authority temporary housing

F: Housing Authority Home Ownership Scheme

Perhaps as a result of their relative affluence, Protestants and Catholics tended to have a more positive view of living conditions within their homes. When asked whether they felt that the conditions had improved over the past three years, Protestants gave a mean response of 2.76 (1 = deteriorated, 2 = no change, 3 = improved), which was higher than people in Chinese folk religions (2.52), the Buddhists (2.53), and those without a religion (2.56). The Protestants were, however, no different from the Catholics (2.59). The overall effect of religion was statistically significant ($F = 3.50$, $p < .01$). When asked further to make a prediction about their living conditions, both the Protestants and the Catholics gave a mean response of 2.67 (1 = will

deteriorate, 2=will not change, 3=will improve in the next three years). The mean response of the Buddhists was 2.41, believers in Chinese folk religions 2.50, and the non-religious 2.57. The overall ANOVA was significant ($F=3.21, p<.05$).

Psychological Characteristics of the Religious

Worries

As indicated in Chapter 1, about half of our respondents indicated that they had been worried about something during the six months preceding the interview. On a three-point scale (1=seldom or rarely, 3=often), the non-religious scored a mean of 1.62, believers of Chinese folk religions 1.64, and the Buddhists 1.69. These three groups reported fewer worries than did the Protestants (mean = 1.82) and the Catholics (mean = 1.84). The difference was statistically significant ($F=3.59, p<.01$). Cross-tabulating the occurrence of worries with religion showed a significant contingency (Chi-square = 27.52, $df=4, p<.0001$). A total of 69.1% of Catholics and 68.4% of Protestants reported that they had worried about something in the preceding six months, compared with 49.3% of the non-religious. The percentages were equally low among followers of Chinese folk religions (47.9%) and Buddhists (53.7%).

A cross-tabulation (Table 6.6) of worries with religious beliefs shows that, among the non-religious, matters arising from work or study caused the most worries (31%). Financial concern (24.7%) was also important. Among people who believe in Chinese folk religions, money (26%) was again the most pressing concern. So were problems to do with their children (26%). About one-third of the Buddhists (36.4%) had had worries about financial matters; another 21.8% about their children. As for Roman Catholics and Protestants, about 40% were primarily concerned with problems at work or school. The second leading concern was children. Such differences in the other three groups may be due to the general differences in the age and education of people practising the religions.

Desired Improvements in Family Life

What areas of family life would Hong Kong people most like to improve? Over 40% of respondents chose to improve their living environment. A breakdown of responses by religion is displayed in Table 6.7, and reveals some interesting differences. A larger proportion (28.2%)

Table 6.6. Things Most Worried about by People in Each Religious Group (%)

	Money Matters	Work/School	Family/Marriage	Children's Problems	Interpersonal Relations	Prospect	Health	Others
No religion	24.7	31.0	9.3	16.1	3.7	3.9	6.5	4.8
Chinese tradition	26.0	14.4	8.3	26.0	0.6	1.7	12.2	11.0
Buddhism	36.4	12.7	5.5	21.8	3.6	3.6	9.1	7.3
Catholicism	11.1	37.0	7.4	18.5	7.4	1.9	5.6	11.1
Protestantism	10.1	44.3	6.3	13.9	7.6	8.9	6.3	2.5

Table 6.7. Percentage of Each Religious Group Desiring Improvement in Various Areas of Family Life

Religious Group	Finance	Living Environment	Family Relations	Children's Education	Others	None
No religion	23.1	44.9	9.6	9.5	4.0	8.9
Chinese folk religion	22.2	39.9	7.6	10.4	4.7	15.2
Buddhism	23.6	39.3	12.4	12.4	9.0	3.4
Catholicism	28.2	35.2	11.3	8.5	5.6	11.3
Protestantism	13.0	42.6	23.1	10.2	7.4	3.7

of Catholics chose family finance as the area most needing improvement. Betterment of family relations was more often chosen by Protestants (23.1% of the group) than by other respondents. A fairly substantial portion of believers in Chinese folk religions (15.2% of the group) tended to say that there was nothing that needed to be improved.

Values

As indicated in an earlier chapter, respondents were asked to rate the importance of several items in a good and happy life (1 = very unimportant, 5 = very important). These included money, love and marriage, serving society, material enjoyment, career development, peace of mind, filial piety, health, and freedom. Religious beliefs appear to have bearing on ratings of most items, with the exception of 'love and marriage'.

One-way ANOVA showed a statistically significant effect of religion on rating of 'money' ($F = 4.78, p < .001$). The Protestants' mean rating was 3.61, which according to an LSD *post hoc* analysis was significantly lower than that of the Catholics (3.91), the non-religious (3.92), and the believers in Chinese folk religions (3.95). Mean importance rating given by the Buddhists was 3.80.

On the importance of 'serving the community', those without a religion gave the lowest rating (3.39). The other groups in order of increasing emphasis were the Catholics (3.48), the believers in Chinese folk religions (3.53), the Buddhists (3.57), and the Protestants (3.67). One-way ANOVA showed a statistically significant religion effect ($F = 4.98, p < .001$).

There was also a statistically significant effect of religion on importance ratings of 'material enjoyment' ($F = 4.20, p < .01$). Those without a religion scored highest on this item (3.22), and were statistically different from the Buddhists (2.95) and those believing in Chinese religions (3.10). The Protestants gave the item a mean rating of 3.09, and the Catholics 3.14.

Those practising Chinese folk religions seemed to be least concerned about 'career development' (3.34), as compared with those without a religion (3.65), the Protestants (3.67), and the Catholics (3.70). The Buddhists had a mean rating of 3.47. It should be pointed out that this phenomenon is attributable, at least in part, to the fact that many of those practising Chinese folk religions were past the age of career development. One-way ANOVA showed a significant religion effect ($F = 7.66, p < .0001$).

While 'peace of mind' received a generally high rating from all respondents (4.08), there was still a significant religion effect ($F = 2.57, p < .05$). The Protestants gave the highest importance rating (4.26) on this item.

As expected, 'filial piety' was accorded the highest rating by people holding Chinese folk religions (4.19). This group was significantly higher than the Catholics (3.94), the Protestants (3.97), and the non-religious (3.99), by LSD *post hoc* test, at .05 level of significance. This group was no different from the Buddhists (4.10). Overall one-way ANOVA showed a significant religion effect ($F = 5.57, p < .0005$).

'Health' was another item given very high importance ratings (4.47) by all respondents. People believing in Chinese folk religion appeared to emphasize this more than those without a religion (4.55 vs. 4.43). The overall religion effect was statistically significant ($F = 3.55, p < .01$).

The average rating of 'freedom' was 4.28. There was a statistically significant religion effect ($F = 4.85, p < .001$). The Protestants (4.42), the Buddhists (4.30), and the non-religious (4.30) were higher than those believing in Chinese folk religions (4.17). The Catholics gave this item a rating of 4.30.

Interest in Knowing about other Religions

Respondents who indicated that they had a religion were asked if they would be interested in knowing more about other religions. A majority of replies were negative, and a few lukewarm. On a three-point scale (1 = not interested, 3 = very interested), the mean rating was 1.32. However, there was a clear difference among religious groups in their interests ($F = 13.82, df = 3, 172, p < .0001$). Believers in Chinese folk religions were the least interested (1.14), followed by the Buddhists (1.45) and the Protestants (1.63). The Catholics were, by far, the most interested (1.78).

Data pertaining to the above findings can be presented in terms of percentages: Of those who practised Chinese folk religion, 86.6% reported that they did not have any interest in knowing about other religions. Of the 214 individuals who did not have a religion, 77.1% said that they were not interested in knowing about anything about religion. There was a small proportion of Buddhists who indicated that they might have some interest, yet the proportion that had no interest remained large (60%). Catholics and Protestants were more open, with 55.5% and 57.7%, respectively, indicating some interest in knowing about other religions.

Views on Societal Matters as a Function of Religion

It has been argued that religion is not confined to the place of worship, but has an impact on the believers' attitudes, feelings, and actions. Therefore, we should be able to see some differences of opinions among people of different religions about certain social issues.

Public Order

Catholics and Protestants were less optimistic than other people about public order. Respondents were asked the following question: 'Compared with three years ago, do you think that Hong Kong's law and order is better or worse?' Responses were made on a three-point scale (1 = worse, 2 = about the same, 3 = better). The Protestants were the lowest (1.64), followed by the Catholics (1.74). Others believed that the present situation would not change much (non-religious = 1.93, Buddhists = 1.95, Chinese folk religion followers = 2.10). The overall ANOVA was statistically significant ($F = 5.98, p < .005$).

Satisfaction with the Mass Media

Respondents were asked about their degree of satisfaction with three media of mass communication. There was no difference among people holding different religions in satisfaction with the radio and newspapers. However, the Protestants were the least positive about television. On a five-point scale (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied), the Protestants scored an average of 3.06, and the Catholics 3.26, which were, by an LSD *post hoc* analysis using an alpha level of .05, statistically different from the non-religious (3.30), the Buddhists (3.34), and people believing in Chinese folk religions (3.39).

Satisfaction with Circumstances in Hong Kong

Respondents were asked three separate questions on their satisfaction with the economic situation, the political situation, and the social situation in Hong Kong. A five-point rating scale (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied) was provided. There was no variation among people holding different religions on their satisfaction with the economic situation (although, as mentioned earlier, the Protestants and the Catholics were better off than other people). There was a small but statistically significant effect on rating of the social situation ($F = 2.79, p < .05$). Believers of Chinese folk religions had a higher satisfaction level than the Catholics and the Protestants with the social situation (3.38 vs. 3.12 and 3.15, respectively). On the political situation, the Catholics and the

Protestants were the least satisfied (2.72 and 2.86, respectively). The most satisfied were the followers of Chinese folk religions (3.33) and the Buddhists (3.29). The non-religious gave a rating of 3.10. The overall ANOVA showed a highly significant religion effect on satisfaction with the political situation ($F = 10.77, p < .0001$).

The Protestants' relative dissatisfaction with the political situation in Hong Kong may be a reason why they were more interested, in comparison to other groups, in political matters. Responses to the question 'Compared with three years ago, has your interest in Hong Kong politics increased or decreased?' showed that more Protestants had become interested in Hong Kong politics over the previous three years ($F = 3.94, df = 4,1405, p < .005$). The Buddhists scored lowest on this measure. Table 6.8 shows the distribution of responses by religious persuasion.

Table 6.8. Individuals in Each Religious Group Reporting Changes in Interest in Politics over the Preceding Three Years (%)

Religious Group	Decreased	Unchanged	Increased
No religion	10.2	48.0	41.7
Chinese folk religion	7.9	49.7	42.5
Buddhism	14.3	45.1	40.7
Catholicism	13.5	28.4	58.1
Protestantism	4.5	36.6	58.9

Confidence in Hong Kong's Future

A person's report about his or her confidence in Hong Kong is at least partly related to events occurring during or preceding the period of the survey. Taking this into account, and further assuming that people of different religions were interviewed during roughly the same time period, the data collected is still useful for revealing the impact of religious pursuit on confidence.

A question 'Do you have confidence in Hong Kong's future?' was asked. Data suggested that people with different religious beliefs did differ in their level of confidence in Hong Kong's future ($F = 5.02, df = 4,1336, p < .001$). About 54% of Roman Catholics and 59% of Protestants responded positively to the above question. About 67% of those without a religion, and 74% of Buddhists were also confident. Highest confidence was found among those believing in Chinese folk religions. About three-quarters of them reported confidence. Clearly, this trend can be understood in the light of educational attainment and

age of the five religious groups.

Believers in Chinese folk religions also reported that their confidence in Hong Kong's future had in fact increased over the preceding three years, while a substantial proportion of Catholics and Protestants reported a drop in their confidence. The difference was statistically significant ($F = 5.08$, $df = 4, 1475$, $p < .001$). Table 6.9 shows the percentages of people within each religious group who reported changes in confidence in Hong Kong's future.

Table 6.9. Individuals in Each Religious Group Reporting Changes in Confidence in Hong Kong's Future over the Preceding Three Years (%)

Religious Group	Decreased	Unchanged	Increased
No religion	27.6	37.4	35.1
Chinese folk religion	19.9	38.3	41.7
Buddhism	20.4	43.7	35.9
Catholicism	38.7	33.3	28.0
Protestantism	37.8	33.3	28.8

Trust in Governments

In our survey, we asked all respondents about their trust in the Hong Kong government, the Chinese government, and the British government. Responses were made on a five-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = a great deal). Statistically significant differences among religious groups on all three ratings were observed. First, the most trust in the Hong Kong government was found among believers in Chinese folk religions (3.60), followed by the Buddhists (3.40). The Protestants (3.12), the Catholics (3.24), and the non-religious (3.28) were rather low in their trust in the Hong Kong government. Overall ANOVA showed an F-value of 11.82 ($df = 4, 1544$, $p < .0001$).

Stronger trust in the Chinese government was again found among those with Chinese folk religious beliefs (2.83) and the Buddhists (2.75). The weakest trust was found among the Catholics (2.38) and the Protestants (2.46). The non-religious were in the middle (2.66). Overall ANOVA showed an F-value of 5.70 ($df = 4, 1443$, $p < .0005$).

Similarly, trust in the British government was highest among believers in Chinese folk religions (3.28). The non-religious gave an average rating of 2.93, which was not statistically different from 3.28. The Protestants (2.73) and the Catholics (2.76) were the lowest. The Buddhists were in the middle (2.90). Overall ANOVA showed an F-value of 11.49 ($df = 4, 1421$, $p < .0001$).

In short, believers in Chinese folk religions and the Buddhists were the most trusting of all groups, although their level of trust varied from target to target. The Protestants and the Catholics were, by contrast, more sceptical. Their level of trust was lowest regardless of target. Such across-target consistency suggests an interesting hypothesis, that trust reported was a function of certain characteristics of the religious groups concerned. Education and youthfulness, for instance, may be conducive to the formation of a 'healthy' degree of scepticism.

Perceptions of Social Problems

Literature in the West has shown interesting relationships between religious beliefs and people's views about social issues. In the present social indicator survey, we also attempted to look at correlations of this kind. As reported in an earlier chapter, all respondents were asked to rate the seriousness of 12 social problems on a five-point scale (1 = very minor, 5 = very important). The social problems included public security, housing, transportation, education, employment, youth, medical issues and health, social welfare, environmental pollution, the elderly, corruption, and poverty.

Statistically significant differences among religious groups were observed on seriousness ratings of housing ($F = 3.81$, $df = 4, 1564$, $p < .005$), transportation ($F = 2.96$, $df = 4, 1590$, $p < .05$), education ($F = 4.96$, $df = 4, 1481$, $p < .001$), youth ($F = 2.67$, $df = 4, 1486$, $p < .05$), social welfare ($F = 5.60$, $df = 4, 1431$, $p < .0005$), and environmental pollution ($F = 8.58$, $df = 4, 1565$, $p < .0001$). In all five cases, believers in Chinese folk religion were the lowest in their seriousness ratings, while the Protestants and Catholics were the highest.

The respondents were also asked if they were satisfied with the way the government handled social problems. As one would have expected, believers in Chinese folk religion were the most satisfied (3.20 on a five-point scale; 1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied). This value was statistically different from the ratings of the Protestants (2.85), the Catholics (2.88), and the non-religious (2.90), but was not too different from the ratings by the Buddhists (3.02). Overall ANOVA showed an F-value of 8.59 ($df = 4, 1517$, $p < .0001$).

In view of the above findings, it is tempting to describe believers in Chinese folk religion as complacent (or perhaps apathetic). Not only did these individuals have the most trust in the Hong Kong, Chinese, and British governments, they were also not seriously concerned about many social problems that worried the other groups.

'Church and State'

The relationship between church and state has been a subject of heated discussion in Europe and America. People there are divided as to whether the government should have any control over religious activities, on whether the church should have an active role in influencing government policies, on whether the government and the church should be completely separate from each other, and on other related issues. This subject has surfaced in the socio-political arena of Hong Kong, which is seeing an increase in the involvement of religious leaders.

We asked the following question: 'Do you think people in the religious circle should participate in political activities?' Nearly half of our respondents (45.6%) were in favour of political participation by members of religious institutions. Others were against it (20.1%), and some did not have a view (29.4%). To have a more thorough understanding of these figures, they should be compared with corresponding figures about political participation by lay citizens. Unfortunately, we did not ask this question in our survey.

Another indicator of attitudes to the 'church-and-state' issue is the responses to a question about government control over cult activities. Our respondents were mostly in agreement (84.6%) that the government should exercise stronger control over cults and sects in Hong Kong. Only nine respondents, representing 2.2% of the sample, gave a definite negative answer. Ten per cent of the sample were uncertain.

Chi-square analyses showed that responses to neither questions were contingent on a respondent's own religious belief.

Emigration

Overseas Residential Rights

About 4.5% of the sample had residential rights in a country other than Hong Kong. This small subset of Hong Kong residents have acquired foreign citizenship or residential rights mostly through studying abroad, family reunion, or investment. It is quite reasonable to speculate that they are comparatively better educated and financially more stable. As we have shown in an earlier section, Protestants and Catholics were highly represented in these groups.

Therefore, it is not surprising that people with overseas residential rights were unevenly distributed over the various religious groups (Chi-

square = 32.75, $df = 4$, $p < .0001$). Of the Roman Catholics, 13.6% had right of abode in another country compared to 10.2% of the Protestants. Percentages in the other three groups ranged from 2.1% (followers of Chinese folk religion) to 7.4% (Buddhists).

Plans to Emigrate

In our sample, 1,516 persons did not, at the time of interview, have any overseas residential rights. Did they plan to relocate to another country? Of the 293 individuals who responded positively to this question, 60.8% had no religious belief, 14.0% were believers in Chinese folk religion, 6.5% were Buddhists, 8.2% were Roman Catholics, and 8.9% were Protestants. Another 1.7% belonged to other categories of the religion variable. The above figures can be presented in another way: 29.6% of Roman Catholics and 22.0% of Protestants planned to leave, as opposed to 18.6% of those without a religion, 10.8% of believers in Chinese folk religion, and 17.6% of Buddhists who had similar plans. Religious beliefs thus appeared to be related, either directly or indirectly, to the intention to leave Hong Kong (Chi-square = 96.14, $df = 20$, $p < .0001$).

Ancestor Worship

A fair number of people (52.7%) practised ancestor worship, which is said to be the most prevalent religion in Chinese culture. This practice has its philosophical and ethical background in Confucianism, and its metaphysical and religious roots in Buddhism and Taoism.

Religion

As expected, a large proportion of people believing in Chinese folk religion (84.1%) had taken part in ancestor worship. Unquestionably this rite is one of the cornerstones of Chinese folk religion. That Buddhism had been sinicized into a popular form is corroborated by the fact that 81.8% of the Buddhists also worshipped their ancestors. But the practice does not seem to be confined to the religious. Among those who claimed to be believing in no religion, 44% reported participation in ancestor worship. What is even more interesting is that some (15.8%) Catholics and a smaller proportion (7.7%) of Protestants also engaged in this activity.

Gender

A chi-square test showed that there were approximately the same proportion of men and women who practised ancestor worship. The widely-held notion that women were more devout than men in ancestor worship is contradicted.

Age

Those who worshipped their ancestors were on the whole older than those who did not (Chi-square = 22.85, $df = 10$, $p < .05$). As shown in Table 6.10, less than half of those under 35 worshipped their ancestors, while over 70% of those above 55 did. This age trend is probably related to education, exposure to Western thoughts, and psychological modernity.

Table 6.10. Individuals in Each Age Group Who Practised Ancestor Worship (%)

Age Group	Percentage
< 20	44.4
20-24	50.0
25-29	34.0
30-34	44.4
35-39	58.0
40-44	61.3
45-49	54.8
50-54	56.5
55-59	76.5
60-64	69.2
> 64	73.5

Education and Socio-economic Status

Ancestor worshippers have received less education than their counterparts (Chi-square = 40.37, $df = 6$, $p < .0001$). Over 80% of those who have not received any formal schooling reported worshipping their ancestors, whereas only about 20% of those who had matriculated or had a higher qualification did (see Table 6.11). A t-test further showed that self-declared social stratum was significantly lower for the ancestor worshippers than for the others ($t = 2.33$, $df = 379$, $p < .05$).

Table 6.11. Individuals Practising Ancestor Worship by Educational Attainment (%)

Education	Percentage
No formal schooling	83.3
Primary	57.7
Junior secondary	47.8
Senior secondary	53.8
Matriculation	20.0
Tertiary	27.7
Graduate	20.0

Meaning of Life

A psychiatrist (Frankl, 1946/1965) once observed that to be concerned about the meaning of life is an innate desire springing from people's spiritual (or 'noogenic') faculty. However, in our survey of Hong Kong people, a substantial number (42.2%) has never pondered the question of the meaning and purpose of life. Another 7.6% said they did not understand what the interviewers meant by terms like 'destiny' and 'purposes'. These two groups of respondents made up almost half of our sample. The other half has been thinking about this metaphysical issue either occasionally (38.2%) or frequently (9.6%).

In the following sub-sections, we shall further demonstrate that the will to understand the meaning of life may not be totally innate. Some people have a strong desire to know the meaning of life, while others are less interested. It is reasonable to speculate that the intensity of the desire is influenced by, or associated with, a host of personal and social factors.

Religion

As expected, whether one had thought about the question of life's purpose was related to religious beliefs. As shown in Table 6.12, 42.5% of the non-religious had never considered this issue. Among those who believed in Chinese folk religion, 53.5% had never considered this question, with another 12.3% not understanding the meaning of the concept. These two groups of respondents were markedly different from the other groups. For example, 54.5% of Buddhists responded with 'occasionally', and another 18.2% with 'frequently'. Percentages of Protestants responding positively were fairly high too. Fifty per cent reported thinking about this issue 'occasionally', and 26.9% 'frequently'.

Table 6.12. Frequency of Thinking about the 'Meaning of Life' by People in Each Religious Group (%)

Religious Group	Never	Occasionally	Always	Don't Understand	No Answer
No religion	42.5	41.6	7.8	5.5	2.7
Chinese folk religion	53.5	28.1	3.5	12.3	2.6
Buddhism	22.7	54.5	18.2	4.5	—
Catholicism	36.8	26.3	26.3	10.5	—
Protestantism	19.2	50.0	26.9	3.8	—
Overall total	42.2	38.2	9.6	7.6	2.4

We recoded the 'don't understand the term' into 'never', as the two response categories have similar conceptual meanings. An ANOVA on this recoded frequency data again demonstrated that the Protestants were highest in frequency, followed by the Buddhists, the Catholics, the non-religious, and finally those believing in Chinese folk religions ($F = 8.74$, $df = 4, 386$, $p < .0001$). One plausible interpretation of the difference may be that the Protestant and Buddhist religions attempt to answer questions of an existential nature, which Chinese folk religions do not address.

Gender

A small but statistically significant difference was found between males and females (Chi-square = 10.43, $df = 4$, $p < .05$). A larger proportion of males (52.8%) than females (45.2%) occasionally or frequently thought about the question.

Age

A negative correlation ($r = -.25$, $p < .01$, $n = 397$) was found between age and the reported frequency of pondering over the meaning of life. Older people do not seem to be interested in this issue.

Education

Given that the reported frequency was negatively correlated with age (see last sub-section), and that young people in general were better educated than the older ones, it was reasonable to expect that the higher a person's educational attainment, the more frequently would he or she think over this problem of life. This hypothesis was supported with a positive correlation ($r = .38$, $p < .01$, $n = 397$) between the reported frequency and a variable derived from answers to the question

on the highest level of schooling.

Socio-economic Status

As expected, the reported frequencies of thinking about the issue was significantly related to self-declared social stratum ($r = .22$, $n = 376$, $p < .01$), monthly income from main occupation ($r = .14$, $n = 281$, $p < .05$), and monthly household income ($r = .17$, $n = 353$, $p < .01$).

Leisure and the Mass Media

Concerned about life's purpose was related to satisfaction with certain life events but not with others. More specifically, satisfaction with the printed media (e.g., newspapers) was not correlated with the frequency of this mental activity. However, the more satisfied a person was with television programming, the less likely he/she was to think about the purpose of life ($r = -.16$, $n = 338$, $p < .01$). A similar pattern of results was observed with satisfaction with the radio. The more satisfied someone was with the radio, the less likely he/she was to think about the question ($r = -.15$, $n = 260$, $p < .01$). One's time may be so fully occupied with TV and radio programming that no time can be spared for the existential question. The paralyzing effect of the electronic media cannot be ignored.

Ironically, people who felt that they did not have sufficient leisure time were more likely than their counterparts to think about the metaphysical question. A negative relation was found between thinking about life's purpose and satisfaction with the amount of time for leisure ($r = -.14$, $n = 395$, $p < .01$).

General Situation in Hong Kong

The frequency of reflection about the purpose of life was not related to one's satisfaction with the economic situation in Hong Kong. However, it was negatively related to satisfaction with the political situation ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$) and the social situation ($r = -.19$, $p < .001$).

On the whole, the more dissatisfied one is with circumstances in general, the more likely one is to think about the question: 'What is the meaning of life? Where am I going?'

Values

As mentioned above, respondents were asked to rate the importance of nine items to a good life. The frequency of thinking about life's purpose was significantly related to importance ratings of four items.

In short, those who had spent more time on the question of life's purpose considered important such things as love and marriage ($r = .11, p < .05$), career development ($r = .16, p < .005$), peace of mind ($r = .10, p < .05$), and freedom ($r = .14, p < .005$).

Geomancy

Over half of our sample held favourable attitudes towards 'fung-shui' or geomancy, a systematic study of metaphysical relationships between personal and physical forces in the environment. The statement 'Geomancy is knowledge about our living environment accumulated over the ages', produced 65.2% in agreement, and only 18.6% in disagreement. The statement that 'Geomancy is superstitious and absurd', produced an 52.5% in disagreement while 27.7% in agreement. Statistical tests showed no effect of religious pursuit and gender on acceptance of geomancy.

A composite score was formed from responses to these two statements to index acceptance/belief of geomancy. This index was used in analyses reported below.

Age

There was a negative correlation between age and acceptance of geomancy ($r = -.22, n = 407, p < .01$). To take a closer look, we broke down our sample by age and by attitude favourability. The latter was done according to whether the respondents had a positive, zero, or negative composite score described above. As shown in Table 6.13, there were more people in the younger age groups who held favourable attitudes towards geomancy than in the older age groups. About 70% of people in their twenties and thirties had a rather positive attitude. At 40 this favourableness in attitude declined. Along with the decline of acceptance of geomancy, people tended to become more and more neutral as they became older. Only 5.3% of people under 20 were neutral about geomancy. The percentage rose steadily to 48.6% for those over 64. People with unfavourable attitudes towards geomancy were concentrated in the age groups 30-34, 35-39, and 55-59.

Education

Surprisingly, there was a positive correlation between educational attainment and acceptance of geomancy ($r = .16, n = 407, p < .01$). One would normally have assumed that education dispels superstitious

beliefs and practices. However, educated people were in fact more open to geomancy than were the less educated. As shown in Table 6.14, less than 40% of those who had received no formal schooling were favourable towards geomancy. The percentage rose to 70% among those who had completed matriculation or tertiary education, although the figure dropped slightly for those who had a graduate degree. Corresponding to the increase in acceptance of geomancy with educational attainment, there was also a decline in percentages of people with a neutral attitude. Presumably the complex theories in geomancy are only comprehensible to the more educated, who can perform abstract thinking, and who have a higher level of sophistication.

Table 6.13. Individuals in Each Age Group by Attitudes towards Geomancy (%)

Age Group	Unfavourable	Neutral	Favourable
< 20	31.6	5.3	63.2
20-24	14.0	14.0	72.0
25-29	15.1	17.0	67.9
30-34	11.0	15.6	73.5
35-39	11.5	21.4	67.2
40-44	25.9	29.0	45.1
45-49	34.4	37.5	28.2
50-54	43.4	13.0	43.5
55-59	11.8	35.3	53.0
60-64	38.5	38.5	23.1
> 64	20.0	48.6	31.4

Table 6.14. Individuals in Each Educational Attainment Group by Attitudes towards Geomancy (%)

Education	Unfavourable	Neutral	Favourable
No formal schooling	27.2	36.4	36.4
Primary	19.5	27.4	53.1
Junior secondary	23.1	17.4	59.4
Senior secondary	14.8	18.5	66.6
Matriculation	10.0	20.0	70.0
Tertiary	12.7	17.0	70.3
Graduate	40.0	20.0	40.0

Socio-economic Status

People who were better off financially were more likely to endorse geomancy. Geomancy was observed to be positively correlated with self-declared social stratum ($r = .12, n = 384, p < .01$), personal monthly

income from main occupation ($r = .14$, $n = 284$, $p < .01$), and household income ($r = .09$, $n = 361$, $p < .05$).

Values

People who found geomancy acceptable were more likely to give high importance ratings to things such as love and marriage ($r = .13$, $p < .01$), materialistic enjoyment ($r = .09$, $p < .05$), career development ($r = .10$, $p < .05$), peace of mind ($r = .14$, $p < .01$), and freedom ($r = .13$, $p < .01$).

Worries

In terms of acceptance of geomancy, people who have had some worries in the preceding six months were different from those who have had none. The latter group was less positive ($t = 1.98$, $df = 405$, $p < .05$). While an inference of causal relationship cannot be confidently made at this point without further research, it is nevertheless reasonable to speculate that concerns in everyday lives may induce a person to resort to geomancy for an explanation or solution.

Among those who reported that they had worries in the preceding six months, no significant relationship was found between things worried about and acceptance of geomancy.

Other Life Events

No significant relation was found between acceptance of geomancy and satisfaction with other life events. However, those who reported higher job satisfaction tended to have a more favourable view towards geomancy ($r = .11$, $p < .05$).

As we can see from the above analyses, belief in geomancy should not be regarded as similar to ancestor worship or belief in Chinese folk religion. The people to whom geomancy appeals are not necessarily those attracted by the latter two.

Death Cognition

It has been rightly recognized that the question of death is primarily a religious question. The thought of the possibility (or rather inevitability) of death usually raises the question of purposes and destiny in life. Faced with death, human beings realize their own limitations. Death has the power to nullify what one has done, thereby bringing into question the true value of one's own accomplishments. How people think about death is therefore a subject worthy of thorough investiga-

tion.

Previous research (Hui, Chan, & Chan, 1989) has found that young Chinese in Hong Kong typically hold different but not mutually exclusive notions about post-death events. These notions included (1) Buddhist and Taoist Belief, (2) Just World Belief, (3) Naturalistic Belief, (4) Immortal Soul Belief, and (5) Protestant Belief. Although these five notions are based on rather incompatible world views, and may entail logically contradictory conclusions, previous research showed that they were by no means mutually exclusive to the people responding to items representing them. Likewise, in the present study, there were non-zero but small intercorrelations among these five notions.

Past research in death cognition involved a total of 30 items. However, to keep the interviewing session reasonably short, we used only two items for measuring each belief in the present survey. Percentages of individuals agreeing and disagreeing with each item are summarized in Table 6.15. Composite scores were formed from relevant items to indicate strength of a person's respective beliefs.

Table 6.15. Distribution of Agreement with Death Cognition Items (%)

	Agree	No comment	Disagree
They will become spirits	25.8	27.0	47.3
They will be reincarnated after a period of being in the form of phantoms and umbras	20.8	36.5	42.8
Those who do good work will ascend to heaven and resurrect; those who do evil deeds will descend into hell to suffer	36.0	27.5	36.5
Good people will go to a good world, and the bad will go to a horrible world	37.0	25.8	37.3
They will turn into ash and vanish from the world	64.0	16.3	19.8
Everything is over after a person dies	73.5	9.3	17.3
They will move into another world	45.8	29.0	25.3
They will have a different form of life	40.8	35.0	24.3
They will receive judgement on doomsday	19.0	32.3	40.0
Christians will go to Paradise	17.0	40.5	42.5

A person's composite score on each of the beliefs¹ can range, in theory, from 2 (strong disagreement) to 6 (strong endorsement). Average scores computed with our sample were:

Buddhist and Taoist Belief	3.57
Just World Belief	3.99
Naturalistic Belief	5.01
Immortal Soul Belief	4.37
Protestant Belief	3.45

As can be seen from the above figures, Naturalistic Belief was the most widely accepted. Yet there was also endorsement of Just World Belief and Immortal Soul Belief (which was inconsistent with the espoused naturalistic view). The two explicitly religious views (Buddhists and Taoist Belief, Protestant Belief) received the least endorsement.

Religion

As shown in Table 6.16, strength of beliefs in after-death events is a function of one's religion. On Buddhist and Taoist Belief, Protestants scored the lowest (2.69), followed by the Catholics. People practising Chinese folk religion scored the highest on this belief (3.84). An ANOVA showed a statistically significant religion effect ($F = 5.12$, $df = 4,395$, $p = .0005$).

Table 6.16. Mean Scores on Five Death Cognitions among People of Different Religious Beliefs

	No Religion	Chinese Folk Religion	Bud-dhism	Roman Catholicism	Protest-antism
Buddhist and Taoist Belief	3.57	3.84	3.59	3.00	2.69
Just World Belief	3.76	4.22	4.23	4.84	4.15
Naturalistic Belief	5.05	5.22	5.00	4.63	3.96
Immortal Soul Belief	4.28	4.21	4.91	4.84	5.04
Protestant Belief	3.18	3.46	3.59	4.11	5.08

Whether one practises ancestor worship was related to the strength of Buddhist and Taoist Belief. Those who worshipped ancestors scored higher than those who did not ($t = 3.48$, $p = .001$). The two groups of people did not differ on the other four components of death cognition described below.

Difference due to religion was found on Just World Belief ($F = 3.45$, $df = 4,395$, $p < .01$). The non-religious were the lowest on this belief (3.76).

Overall ANOVA showed a statistically significant religion effect on

Naturalistic Belief ($F = 5.52$, $df = 4,395$, $p < .0005$). Protestants were the lowest (3.96), while those who believed in Chinese folk religion were, ironically, the highest (5.22). The compatibility of Chinese folk religion with a naturalistic belief about death is an interesting topic worthy of further investigation.

On Immortal Soul Belief, Protestants were the highest (5.04), while believers in Chinese folk religion and the non-religious were the lowest (4.21 and 4.28, respectively). Overall ANOVA was statistically significant ($F = 3.24$, $df = 4,395$, $p < .05$).

On Protestant Belief, the Protestants were, as expected, the highest (5.08). This group was significantly higher than all the other groups. The Catholics came the second on the list (4.11), with the non-religious lowest on this belief (3.18). Overall ANOVA was statistically significant ($F = 17.33$, $df = 4,395$, $p < .0001$).

Age

Naturalistic Belief and Immortal Soul Belief were related to age. The older the person, the less likely he was to believe in an after-life ($r = -.27$, $p < .001$), and the more likely to have a naturalistic view of death ($r = .16$, $p = .001$). As one grows old, and sees more and more people die, the inevitability of death becomes all too clear. The person is continually reminded of the objective reality of death, while the notion of the immortality of the soul seems unfathomable. It is therefore understandable that people who have witnessed more deaths do not subscribe to the notion of the immortality of the soul.

The other three components of death cognition were not found to be related to age.

Gender

Males and females differed on four of the five death cognitions. Females were consistently stronger on Buddhist and Taoist Belief ($t = 4.62$, $p < .01$), Protestant Belief ($t = 3.77$, $p < .001$), Just World Belief ($t = 4.32$, $p < .001$), and Immortal Soul Belief ($t = 2.40$, $p < .05$). The two groups did not differ on Naturalistic Belief.

Education

Those who were very satisfied with their educational attainment were less likely than those who were not satisfied to endorse the naturalistic view ($r = -.13$, $p < .01$). Satisfaction with educational attainment did not, however, correlate with other components of death cognition.

While satisfaction with educational attainment was not extensively associated with death cognition, actual educational attainment was. The sample was subdivided into three categories according to the level of education received: low (no formal schooling or primary education), middle (secondary education, matriculation, technical institutes, schools of commerce, polytechnics), and high (university and graduate training). One-way ANOVAs clearly showed effects of education on three components of death cognition, namely, Buddhist and Taoist Belief ($F=7.41$, $df=2,404$, $p<.001$), Naturalistic Belief ($F=12.88$, $df=2,404$, $p<.0001$), and Immortal Soul Belief ($F=6.21$, $df=2,404$, $p<.005$). Mean scores on these three components are summarized in Table 6.17. Buddhist and Taoist Belief as well as Naturalistic Belief tended to be stronger among the less educated than the more educated. Immortal Soul Belief was strongest among those who had secondary education, and lowest among those with little or no education.

Table 6.17. Mean Scores on Three Components of Death Cognition Affected by Education

Death Cognition	Educational Attainment		
	Low	Middle	High
Buddhist and Taoist Belief	3.75	3.53	2.91
Naturalistic Belief	5.28	4.90	4.20
Immortal Soul Belief	4.09	4.62	4.36
(N)	(168)	(194)	(45)

Table 6.18. Correlations between Death Cognitions and Variables of Socio-economic Status

Death Cognition	Self-Declared Social Stratum	Personal Monthly Income	Household Monthly Income
Buddhist and Taoist Belief	-.04	-.19**	-.19**
Just World Belief	.09*	-.11*	-.12*
Naturalistic Belief	-.23**	-.00	-.13*
Immortal Soul Belief	.19**	.06	.09*
Protestant Belief	.02	-.17*	-.15*
(N)	(384)	(284)	(361)

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Socio-economic Status

A person's self-declared social stratum, personal monthly income, and

household income all appeared to be related to death cognition. As can be inferred from Table 6.18, socio-economic status was negatively related to Buddhist and Taoist Belief, Naturalistic Belief, and Protestant Belief. Socio-economic status was, however, positively related to Immortal Soul Belief. The relationship with Just World Belief was not clear.

Values

Death cognitions were not strongly related to values. The few significant correlations revealed that those who adopted a naturalistic view of death were also those who considered money to be important to a good life ($r = .13$, $p = .005$). Those who believed in an immortal soul considered career development important ($r = .15$, $p < .005$). They were the same people who considered good health less important ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$).

Family and Living Conditions

Are beliefs about the inevitable future in any way related to opinions held about various things in the present? Regarding family and living conditions, people high on Naturalistic Belief held a less favourable view. They reported a slight deterioration of living conditions during the preceding three years ($r = -.09$, $p < .05$), and anticipated further deterioration over the next three years ($r = -.14$, $p < .01$). On the other hand, people with an Immortal Soul Belief reported an improvement of living conditions during the preceding three years ($r = .13$, $p < .005$), and anticipated further betterment over the next three years ($r = .22$, $p < .001$). People high on a Protestant view of death were also optimistic about their living conditions in the three years to come ($r = .15$, $p = .005$).

Socio-political Attitudes

People with an Immortal Soul Belief reported less satisfaction with the political situation ($r = -.15$, $p < .01$) and social situation ($r = -.12$, $p = .01$) in Hong Kong.

Respondents were asked if their interest in politics had increased or decreased in the past three years. Correlational analyses showed that those who reported an increase tended to be those who were stronger on Protestant Belief ($r = .11$, $p < .05$), Just World Belief ($r = .10$, $p < .05$), and Immortal Soul Belief ($r = .11$, $p < .05$). These people were also lower on Naturalistic Belief ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$). Political interests

and a religious outlook on death appeared to be correlated.

Meaning in Life

Time spent thinking about the meaning of one's life was correlated with death cognition. Reported frequency of pondering over the existential question was associated with Protestant Belief ($r = .10$, $p < .05$) and Immortal Soul Belief ($r = .19$, $p < .001$). It was also negatively related to Buddhist and Taoist Belief ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$) and Naturalistic Belief ($r = -.26$, $p < .001$).

Worries

Contrary to expectation, a person's perceived health did not seem to be related to death cognition (though there was a small correlation with Immortal Soul Belief, $r = .10$, $p < .05$). Neither was death cognition related to worries in the preceding six months.

Spirits and Ghosts

Belief in spirits and ghosts has no cultural boundary. However, in Hong Kong, notions about spirits and ghosts are coloured by Chinese religious and philosophical views. Some of these beliefs can be traced to Taoist and popular Buddhist stories.

A cursory examination of our data suggests that a substantial portion of Chinese people in Hong Kong believe in spirits and ghosts. For instance, 47.1% of our respondents agreed with the statement that 'ghosts are invisible but are always around us'. Only 27% disagreed with this statement. Another statement which implied the existence of spirits and ghosts, 'ghosts can be either good or bad', was also endorsed by 58.6% of the respondents.

The Hong Kong Chinese's 'non-apprehensive' view of ghosts and spirits can be seen in the disagreement with the statement: 'ghosts are harmful to people'. Only 7.8% agreed, 69.1% disagreed, and 23% withheld judgment.

Finally, 53.7% of our respondents agreed that the subject of ghosts and spirits is not open to scientific enquiry.

Religion

Chi-square analyses showed that there was no contingency between reported religion and agreement with each of the four statements listed above. People of these religions have more or less similar views on this

topic. Possibly these people instilled their own meanings into the rather hazy concepts 'ghosts and spirits' while giving their responses. The ambiguity of the terms thus resulted in the items' lack of discriminability among people of different religions.

Education

On whether the belief in spirits and ghosts was scientific, half (49.1%) of those who had not received any formal schooling refused to comment. The other half was evenly split into two groups, one agreeing (25.5%) and the other disagreeing (25.5%) with the statement supplied. The proportion of agreement with this statement was fairly high (around 60%) among those with some education. However, those who had received more than secondary education were more likely to disagree with the statement (31.9% to 40%) than those who had only primary education (18.6%). A chi-square test showed significant contingency (Chi-square = 60.55, $df = 12$, $p < .0001$).

Responses to the statement 'ghosts are invisible but are always around us' were also affected by educational attainment (Chi-square = 47.92, $df = 12$, $p < .0001$). As above, half (56.4%) of the un-schooled did not indicate their opinion. The other half were, again, equally split between the two positions. Only 10% to 29.2% of those who had received some education declined to comment on this statement. The majority agreed with the statement.

Chi-square analyses of responses to the other two statements could find no effect of education.

Gender

There was no gender effect on responses to the statement 'ghosts are harmful to people'. However, a larger proportion of men (61.3%) than women (46.4%) agreed with the statement that the belief in ghosts and spirits was not scientific (Chi-square = 9.31, $df = 2$, $p < .01$). Correspondingly, more women (63.6%) than men (53.3%) agreed that 'ghosts can be either good or bad' (Chi-square = 6.88, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). There were also more women (50.2%) than men (43.7%) who agreed that 'ghosts are invisible but are always around us' (Chi-square = 9.10, $df = 2$, $p < .05$). This set of findings confirmed the general perception that women are more inclined to believe in supernatural matters.

Age

Age was related to views about spirits and ghosts. For instance, there

was declining agreement with age that 'ghosts are invisible but are always around us' ($r = -.20, p < .001$). Over 60% of respondents below 30 agreed with this statement, compared with 18.8% of people in the age bracket 45-49, and 23.1% of people at or over 60. Age was also negatively correlated with agreement with the statement 'ghosts can be either good or bad' ($r = -.14, p < .005$), and positively correlated with agreement that the belief is not scientific ($r = .15, p = .001$).

Projected Motivations for Folk Religious Practices

Although folk religion such as worship of Wong Tai Sin and Che Kung had existed in the territory long ago, the last few years saw a rapid proliferation of such religious practices. An increasing number of people, young and old, go to temples and shrines to pray for blessing and to have their future told. Some writers have speculated on the reasons for the growing popularity of folk religion, but the topic has not been taken up for serious social scientific study in Hong Kong.

In this survey, we attempted a preliminary understanding of people's own projected motivations for folk religious practices. To this end respondents were asked why people worshipped deities such as Wong Tai Sin. Eleven explanations were provided by the interviewers. The task of the respondents was to indicate whether they agreed with each explanation. Results are shown in Table 6.19. For instance, most people agreed with the explanation that 'they want peace of mind' (87.7%) and that 'they want to avoid disasters and mishaps' (76%). Only 16.2% of our sample considered 'they are frivolous and want to have fun' an acceptable explanation.

Gender

There were more males than females who agreed with the explanations that 'they want peace of mind' (91.5% vs. 84.2%), and that 'they want good fortune' (55.3% vs. 43.1%). However, more females (66.5%) than males (48.2%) agreed with the explanation that 'they [the deities] have particularly good stuff'.

Religion

The religious groups were not similar in their endorsement of explanations provided. For instance, there were more Protestants (69.2%) than believers in Chinese folk religion (40.4%) and Buddhists (40.9%) who agreed with the explanation that 'they want good fortune'. With the

Table 6.19. Acceptance of the Explanations as Function of Gender and Religion (%)

Agreeing with the Explanation	Overall	Gender		Religion				
		M	F	No Religion	Chinese Folk Religion	Buddhism	Catholicism	Protestantism
They want peace of mind	87.7	91.5	84.2*	89.5	85.1	95.5	94.7	80.8
Many people worship him, and others follow suit	48.5	49.7	47.4	50.2	43.9	36.4	52.6	65.4
They want to know future	54.4	56.8	52.2	54.8	48.2	59.1	68.4	61.5
They have a sense of loneliness and emptiness	43.1	45.2	41.1	43.8	36.8	40.9	52.6	61.5
Traditional and cultural practices	65.0	66.3	63.6	63.5	67.5	72.7	68.4	65.4
They want to avoid disasters and mishaps	76.0	76.4	75.6	74.0	78.1	77.3	78.9	84.6
They want good fortune	49.0	55.3	43.1*	51.1	40.4	40.9	63.2	69.2*
They are conservative and backward	42.6	43.7	41.6	44.7	45.6	31.8	15.8	50.5*
They are frivolous and want to have fun	16.2	16.6	15.8	16.4	13.2	9.1	10.5	38.5*
They have particularly good stuff	57.6	48.2	66.5*	48.9	74.6	54.5	78.9	50.0*
They are superstitious	55.6	56.3	55.0	53.9	53.5	54.5	47.4	88.5

* Significant ($p < .05$) contingency by chi-square test.

explanation that 'they are conservative and backward', more Protestants (50.5%) than Catholics (15.8%) agreed. Similarly, more Protestants (38.5%) tended to agree with the explanation that 'they are frivolous and want to have fun' than did the Buddhists (9.1%) and Catholics (10.5%). Another explanation, that 'they have particularly good stuff', was endorsed by a larger portion of believers in Chinese folk religion (74.6%) and Roman Catholicism (78.9%) than by the non-religious (48.9%) and the Protestants (50%). Attribution was affected by religious belief.

Education

As shown in Table 6.20, some explanations were preferred by people with a higher educational attainment. In brief, the less educated people endorsed the explanation 'they are conservative and backward' more often than the more educated. This was somewhat surprising but not unexplainable. The more educated people may have the openness to appreciate some wisdom in the worship.

Table 6.20. Acceptance of the Explanations as Function of Education (%)

Agreeing with the Explanation	Education				
	None	Primary	Junior Secondary	Senior Secondary	Matriculation or above
1	69.1	87.6	89.9	89.8	98.4
2	45.5	44.2	44.9	46.3	67.7
3	34.5	42.5	60.9	62.0	74.2
4	16.4	37.2	46.4	48.1	64.5
5	61.8	66.4	66.7	60.2	71.0
6	56.4	73.5	76.8	80.6	90.3
7	40.0	40.7	42.0	51.9	74.2
8	43.6	46.9	49.3	36.1	38.7
9	5.5	16.8	13.0	15.7	29.0
10	56.4	57.5	66.7	54.6	54.8
11	47.3	57.5	52.2	50.0	72.6

There were positive correlations between educational attainment with endorsement of the following explanations: 'they want peace of mind' ($r = .16, p = .001$); 'they want to know the future' ($r = .19, p < .001$); 'they have a sense of loneliness and emptiness' ($r = .17, p < .001$); 'they want to avoid disasters and mishaps' ($r = .16, p = .001$); and 'they want good fortune' ($r = .20, p < .001$).

Age

Correlational analyses showed that younger individuals were more likely than their older counterparts to endorse the following as explanations for worshipping deities: 'they want peace of mind' ($r = -.13, p < .01$); 'they want to know the future' ($r = -.12, p < .01$); and 'they want to avoid disasters and mishaps' ($r = -.16, p = .001$). These attributions may be due, in part, to the educational attainment of the younger generation.

Socio-economic Status

People who reported themselves as in a higher social stratum were more likely to explain others' deity-worshipping behaviours as fortune-seeking ($r = .13, p = .005$). People of higher personal and family income attributed such behaviours to the search for peace of mind, and rejected the explanation that the worshippers were conservative and backward.

Yuan

Yuan is a Chinese concept used to explain human relationships. It is said to determine whether two persons are or are not attracted and bonded to each other. People believe that it accounts for why some relationships have a good and happy ending, while others do not. Yang and Ho (1988) observed that *yuan* is supposed 'to exert its influence in virtually all interpersonal relationships, in folk legends as well as in real life. In this way, the belief in *yuan* offers a convenient cultural explanation for the formation of interpersonal relationships on the basis of predestined affinity or enmity' (p. 264). The conception of *yuan* has, however, not been extensively studied nor measured.

An earlier pilot study conducted by the author asked young people to respond to an open-ended question: 'What do you think *yuan* is?' About 200 responses were collected and sorted. After several stages of editing, eight non-overlapping statements were obtained. In the present survey, respondents were again asked the question: 'What do you think *yuan* is?' The eight statements were then presented to the respondents, who indicated their agreement or disagreement.

The first round of data analysis in this study included a principal component analysis to identify underlying themes in the eight statements. On the basis of eigenvalues and a scree plot, three factors were extracted and rotated to a simple structure. The three factors together

accounted for 60.2% of the total variance.

Factor 1 was loaded on two statements: 'Yuan has been determined in one's former life', and 'Yuan is the fate already determined in one's former life'. This factor is labelling *yuan* **predestination**. Factor 2 was loaded on three statements: 'Yuan is to be treasured', 'It is nonsense to talk about *yuan*' (negative loading), and 'Because of *yuan*, people will meet again no matter how far they are apart.' This factor reflects a **general belief in yuan**. The last factor was loaded on three statements: 'Yuan is arranged by human beings', 'Yuan can be mastered by oneself', and 'The so-called *yuan* is nothing but the result of mere coincidence'. This conception treats *yuan* not as a real cosmic and metaphysical force that brings people together, but regards interpersonal relationship as results of human work plus chance. It can be labelled **reservation about yuan**. In short, people's thinking about *yuan* can be broadly classified into these three major categories.

Descriptive analyses on the three separate components showed that people were somewhat unsure about whether *yuan* had been predetermined before they were born. On a scale ranging from 2 (disagree) to 6 (agree), with mid-point at 4, our sample scored an average of 3.81 on **predestination**. On a scale ranging from 3 (disagree) to 9 (agree), the average score on **reservation about yuan** was 6.60, slightly above the mid-point at 6. The above findings have to be qualified, however, with the observation that people did show a rather favourable view of *yuan* on the other factors. On a scale ranging from -1 (disagree) to 5 (agree), with mid-point at 2, average score on **general belief** was 4.02.

The following subsections examined the relations of these three categories of thinking about *yuan* to other variables of interest.

Religion

One-way ANOVAs were performed to examine the effect of religious pursuit on beliefs in *yuan*. No effect was found on **general belief** and **reservation about yuan**. However, people differ on **predestination** ($F=4.05$, $df=4,395$, $p<.005$). Followers of Chinese folk religion and Buddhism were much higher (4.22 and 4.18, respectively) than the Protestants (3.12). The Roman Catholics and the non-religious were in the middle (3.79 and 3.63, respectively). The observation that Protestants were less deterministic and fatalistic is consistent with the research literature on locus of control.

Gender

As with religion, the sexes did not differ on **general belief** and **reserva-**

tion about yuan. The females were, however, higher on **predestination** than the males (4.05 vs. 3.52, $t=3.34$, $df=406$).

Age

Age was negatively associated with the general belief in *yuan* ($r=-.17$, $p<.001$). It is possible that younger people, at an age of establishing and maintaining interpersonal (particularly heterosexual) relationships, are very much concerned about facilitative and hampering agents. Age was not associated with the other two factors.

Education

Educational attainment was not related to the **general belief** nor **reservation about yuan**. But it was negatively associated with the conception of **predestination** ($r=-.23$, $p<.001$). The more education one receives, the less one believes in predestination.

Socio-economic Status

Again, only the first factor, **predestination**, was associated with indices of socio-economic status. It had correlation coefficients of $-.11$ ($p<.05$) with monthly income, $-.13$ ($p<.01$) with household income, and $-.17$ ($p<.001$) with felt sufficiency of income. People who are on the lower rungs of the economic ladder tend to have a more deterministic outlook on life.

Other Metaphysical Views

The belief in *yuan* was not related to whether one had thought much about the meaning of life. But without much surprise, believers in geomancy had a positive attitude towards *yuan*. Correlation coefficients between endorsement of geomancy and **predestination**, **general belief**, and **reservation about yuan** were, respectively, $.11$ ($p<.05$), $.19$ ($p<.001$), and $-.11$ ($p<.05$). People who were high on **predestination** and **general belief** tended to indicate agreement on the items 'ghosts can be either good or bad' and 'ghosts are invisible but are always around us'. The correlation coefficients were all significant at the .005 level. Correlation between these two items and **reservation about yuan** were negative, although no statistically significant.

Death Cognition

The pattern of correlation between views about *yuan* and death cognition further demonstrated that beliefs in supernatural matters come in

clusters. First, as shown in Table 6.21, people who were inclined to have a deterministic view about human relationships were also high on all death cognitions except the Naturalistic Belief. Second, those who had a general positive view about *yuan* were high on Buddhist and Taoist Belief, Just World Belief, and Immortal Soul Belief. Finally, and quite naturally, **reservation about yuan** was positively correlated with Naturalistic Belief, and negatively with Just World Belief and Immortal Soul Belief.

Table 6.21. Correlation between Views on 'Yuan' and Death Cognition

	Predestination	General Belief	Reservation about 'yuan'
Buddhist and Taoist Belief	.33**	.10*	-.04
Just World Belief	.34**	.18**	-.09*
Naturalistic Belief	-.08*	.01	.20**
Immortal Soul Belief	.25**	.19**	-.12*
Protestant Belief	.20**	.01	-.04

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has revealed some features regarding religious and metaphysical beliefs in Hong Kong. The general profile is that over half of the Hong Kong people claim to have no religious belief, while another quarter or so believe in Chinese folk religion. About 10% would call themselves either Roman Catholics or Protestants. As a whole, Hong Kong people do not have a well-formed opinion on what the relationship between the government and religious institutions should be like. Few people are interested in knowing more about religion. Equally few people would describe themselves as very devout and committed to their religions. As such, Hong Kong can hardly be regarded as a religious and devout society.

Nonetheless we can still get a glimpse of what the religious people are like. In general, the female, the older, and the married are more religious than their counterparts. The Catholics and Protestants are better educated, and have a higher socio-economic status. By contrast, over half of the non-religious have an educational attainment at or below secondary level.

In terms of proportion, more Catholics and Protestants than others possess overseas residential rights. Among those who do not, more

Catholics and Protestants than people of other religions have plans to emigrate.

Compared with others, Catholics and Protestants have more worries, many of which are concerned with problems at work or school. In terms of values, the Catholics consider good health, freedom, money, and love and marriage the most important to a good life. For the Protestants, the basic ingredients are good health, freedom, and peace of mind. The rest of the sample also view good health as the most important. However, money comes second on the list.

Almost half of Hong Kong people have not thought about the meaning of life. Frequencies are even lower among the satisfied and contented, the less educated, the older, and the less well-off. However, the Protestants are higher in their reported frequencies.

Believers of Chinese folk religion see little need for improvement in their own family life. Compared with other people, this group (and in some cases, Buddhists as well) tend to be most contented and satisfied with many aspects of Hong Kong society, to have the most favourable views about the British, Hong Kong, and Chinese government, and to have the least interest in political matters.

While institutionalized religion is not popular in Hong Kong, ancestral worship is fairly prevalent, especially among believers of Chinese folk religion and among the old. Worshipers are usually less educated, and from a lower socio-economic stratum.

On the whole people are quite positive towards geomancy, although the older ones and the less educated may not be extremely enthusiastic. Those who have favourable views about geomancy are of a higher socio-economic status. They place high value on peace of mind, love and marriage, and freedom. They also have more worries.

A naturalistic view of death is widely held, although some people still believe in retribution and the immortality of the soul. As expected, views about death are related to religious beliefs, age, gender, education, socio-economic status, and frequency of thinking about the meaning of life.

Although Hong Kong people are generally unreligious, they presume the existence of ghosts and spirits. At the very least, these beings are not seen as malicious. Further analyses showed that such beliefs are related to the person's gender, education, and age.

Most people attribute the worship of deities like Wong Tai Sin to the need for peace in body and mind. They consider the worship as something solemn, and would not agree that such behaviour is frivolous and motivated by the pursuit of fun.

On the whole, the notion of *yuan* is closely associated with belief in

geomancy and a supernaturalistic (often Buddhist and Taoist) view of death. The average Hong Kong person does not reject this notion of *yuan* completely, although there are also reservations about it. Belief in determinism is stronger among believers of Chinese folk religion, Buddhists, the less educated, females, and those with a lower income. A general belief in *yuan* is more popular among the young than among the old.

We shall end this chapter as we began. Hong Kong is a pluralistic society where the East and West meet. Many people in this territory, though under unavoidable influences from religious and metaphysical teachings their fathers had passed onto them, have been exposed to some Judeo-Christian ideas. Adding further complexity to this hybrid is a fast-paced trend of secularization. The result is, we observe, a special breed of people who cannot or would not decide what religion they want to pursue, and what view of life they adhere. Instead, they come up with their own answer — an amalgamation of the apparently contradictory views about various aspects of life. This is the intriguing religious aspect of Hong Kong people.

Note

1. Buddhist and Taoist Belief = humans are regarded as existing after death, albeit in a different dimension. Many Buddhists believe that after a period of time, the post-death mode of existence will be transformed.

Just World Belief = emphasizes a discrepancy in the destinations of the virtuous and the evil-doers; good works as a meaning to salvation.

Naturalistic Belief = naturalistic or agnostic ideas about physical death.

Immortal Soul Belief = soul remains alive.

Protestant Belief = divine judgment; believers will go to paradise; theistic.

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7 Inequality, Stratification and Mobility

Thomas W. P. Wong

Introduction

As the beginning of a series of longitudinal studies, our research aims to provide a timely report or summary of findings on various subject headings. The goal is as much to lay the foundation for a long-term charting of the development of the society (in the form of subjective, perceptual indicators), as to discover and analyse the major issues affecting Hong Kong people as they enter the 1990s. For this reason, detailed analysis of the data and references to existing literature will generally be kept to a minimum. In some sections, previous findings or arguments on similar issues will be utilized discreetly, either for the purpose of contextualizing the issues, or for the purpose of raising questions about what our questions and data are actually about.

As sophisticated multivariate analysis is not our primary concern here, and is in any case made difficult by our relatively small sample size, the focus of the data analysis is to give some ideas on the main variables along which attitudes seem to be divided more or less steadfastly or consistently. The primary purpose is to reveal and describe differences. In this chapter, we are interested in the attitudes and perceptions in relation to the issues of inequality, stratification and mobility. More generally, we want to know how our respondents perceived their social position, the divisions of the society, inequality and conflicts, and the prospects of improving their situation. Before we proceed to the various subject headings, it will be useful to note some of the general characteristics of our respondents.

General Profile

Our sample population (N=408) is relatively young (nearly half are under 35 years old), two-thirds are married, and forming predominantly small households (more than 75% having 5 or fewer members). Slightly more than half (56%) were born in Hong Kong, while the majority of the rest, not surprisingly, emigrated from Guangdong province. Half of the population live in Housing Authority rental

blocks. Nearly 30% of the respondents have a monthly household income in the range of \$2,000-5,999 (as compared with 49% in the 1986 By-Census), 17% in \$10,000-14,999 (1986 By-Census:10%), and 19% earning more than \$15,000 (1986 By-Census:8%). Our sample also has a disproportionately large 'professional/technical and related workers' occupational group (Tables 7.1 and 7.2).

Table 7.1 Distribution of Respondents by Monthly Household Income

Monthly Household Income (HK\$)	%	%(1986 By-Census)
Under 2,000	2	10
2,000 - 5,999	29	49
6,000 - 9,999	33	23
10,000 - 14,999	17	10
15,000 and above	19	8
Total	100	
(N)	(361)	

Table 7.2. Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupational Category	%	%(1986 By-Census)
Professional/technical and related workers	15	8
Administrative and managerial workers	7	4
Clerical and related workers	9	15
Sales workers	4	12
Service workers	10	16
Agricultural workers and fishermen	0	2
Production workers	26	43
Not applicable	29	—
Total	100	
(N)	(408)	

Our respondents seem not unduly worried about their lives: 50% professed to have no or few worries, as compared with 13% who said they frequently worried about things. Indeed, one has the impression that they are relatively satisfied with what they have now: especially housing conditions (53%) and family life (64%). They regarded their living standard as having improved, compared with that of three years ago (64%), and they are on the whole optimistic that it will remain the same (18%) or even become better in three years' time (48%). Poverty, in their view, is not the most urgent social problem; indeed, with

employment and corruption it is one of the three *least* important social problems (respectively, only 2%, 2.2% and 0.2% of the respondents chose them as the most serious social problems).

Perhaps it is as a result of such optimism and contentment, together with the obvious influence of the political reforms the society has experienced in the last few years, that a sizeable number (45%) of the respondents revealed an increased interest in politics. But as a counterpoint to this, a clear majority (73%) expressed the view that there were no trustworthy political leaders in Hong Kong. Further, nearly all respondents (94%) felt their political efficacy to be non-existent: they feel they have no influence on government decisions (see also Lau and Kuan, 1988:53). When asked for their degree of satisfaction with the present political situation, 25% responded favourably. But more interestingly, nearly one-third answered 'don't know/no comments', which, one supposes, could be taken to mean a host of things: fatalism, ambivalence, and so on. But when asked for their degree of satisfaction with the present economic situation, the pattern is more definite and positive: 52% are satisfied as compared with 13% who are not. To a great extent, money, and pecuniary well-being, underlaid and coloured our respondents' sense of the quality of life. But naturally enough, the pursuit of money presupposes other ingredients: when asked to name the most important ingredients for good living, our respondents ranked the three most important ones as being 'good health' (43%), 'freedom' (12%) and 'money' (11%).

Social Stratification I: Self-Perceptions

Class and status are arguably the two dominant 'images of society' (Lockwood, 1975). However, whether the social consciousness tends towards conflict or towards deference is a result of the influences of work and community. As the present research focuses on attitudes and the degree of satisfaction, the objective information on work and community life is not available. Although the respondents were not asked specifically about this topic, there are data that could throw light on how the respondents perceived themselves with regard to class and status. Our assumption here is that when criss-crossed with occupation, education or other relevant variables, such self-placement along these two orders to some degree reflects, not so much subscription to the ideas of 'class' or 'status', as the 'predisposing' power of these variables on the choice of one order rather than the other. The ultimate question, one to which our present enquiry could not offer any answer, is of

course this: is it of 'class' or 'status' which represents the more relevant normative framework to our respondents?

When asked to which class they feel they belong, 65% answered 'working class', 23% 'middle class', and 6% 'capitalist'. The rest chose 'don't know' or did not answer. On the other hand, when asked to which social stratum they belong, more than 70% felt that they belonged to the middle strata (including lower-middle, middle and upper-middle), with only a very small proportion (4%) claiming membership of the upper-middle (Tables 7.3 and 7.4).

Table 7.3. Respondents' Self-Assigned Class Membership

Class	%
Capitalist class	6
Middle class	23
Working class	65
Don't know	4
No response	2
Total	100
(N)	(408)

Table 7.4. Respondents' Self-Declared Social Stratum

Stratum	%
Upper	0
Upper-middle	4
Middle	36
Lower-middle	32
Lower	23
Don't know	5
Total	100
(N)	(408)

One does not know, on the basis of such evidence, if the respondents' conception of 'class' is of a more dichotomous or at least more 'obvious' nature than that of 'status' (strata), which latter could be plausibly argued to have a more 'gradational', thus allowing finer 'placement', nature. One does not know if the finding is simply an artefact of the 'measures'. But if we cross-tabulate these two kinds of self-placement in the two main hierarchies with respondents' occupation, education and income, we could perhaps see what kinds of forces

are at work in determining or predisposing one kind of self-placement rather than the other.

Respondents who have primary or lower education are more likely than those attaining matriculation to see themselves as belonging to the lower stratum: 40% vs. 7%. Conversely, 18% of the high education achievers said they belong to the upper-middle stratum, while less than 1% of the low education respondents claimed to do so (Table 7.5).

Table 7.5. Self-Declared Social Stratum by Educational Attainment, Income and Occupation (%)

	Social Stratum					Total %	(N)
	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle	Upper Middle	Upper		
Educational attainment*							
Low	40	35	24	1	0	100	(148)
Middle	16	39	40	5	0	100	(191)
High	7	11	64	18	0	100	(94)
Monthly income from main occupation (HK\$)							
Under 3,000	30	38	30	2	0	100	(63)
3,000 - 5,999	30	40	28	2	0	100	(116)
6,000 - 9,999	14	34	38	12	2	100	(50)
10,000 - 14,999	4	26	59	11	0	100	(27)
15,000 and above	6	0	76	18	0	100	(17)
Occupation							
Prof/Tech and related	20	25	49	6	0	100	(61)
Admin/Managerial	3	31	56	10	0	100	(29)
Clerical and related	8	44	36	12	0	100	(36)
Sales	6	29	53	12	0	100	(17)
Service	36	33	28	3	0	100	(39)
Production and related	37	40	22	0	1	100	(96)

* The level of educational attainment is divided into the Low (No schooling/Kindergarten and Primary School); the Middle (Lower Secondary, Upper Secondary, Matriculation, Technical and Commercial Institute); and the High (Tertiary Education: degree and non-degree).

A similar picture emerges with regard to monthly income from main occupation. A substantial 30% of those earning less than \$3,000 a month placed themselves in the lower stratum, while of those earning \$15,000 or more, only 6% did so. For the latter income group, more than three-quarters of its members placed themselves in the middle

stratum, another 18% claiming upper-middle status. Half of those with income from \$6,000-9,999 described themselves as belonging to middle or upper-middle stratum. From these data, it seems plausible to argue that self-assigned stratum or status is clearly related with educational attainment and monthly income.

On the other hand, the relation between self-assigned stratum and occupation is somewhat different. Although it is not surprising to find more than one-third of production and related workers placing themselves in the lower class category, it is somewhat unusual to see one-fifth of the professional and technical people claiming the same. In comparison, the administrative and managerial occupational group is more in line with normal expectations, with more than half of its members claiming middle stratum position. It would seem that the professional and technical category, and perhaps even more generally, the Census occupational classification, is too diverse to be a good guide or proxy for (subjective) social status. That the professional and technical category is too heterogeneous could perhaps be shown by its income distribution: nearly half of its members earned less than \$6,000 a month; as a contrast, nearly half of the administrators and managers earned more than \$10,000 a month.

Turning to the relation between social class and social strata, one finds the expected pattern: more than three-quarters of the middle class claimed a middle or upper-middle stratum position, whereas the proportion is reversed in the case of the working class, most of which fell to the low or lower-middle position.

The relation between self-assigned social class and occupation is interesting. While it is not surprising to find 90% of the production and related workers assigning themselves to the working class, it is somewhat puzzling to see 54% of the professional and technical group choosing the same class, and a significant 35% of the administrators and managers doing likewise. We noted earlier that the professional and technical category is really too much of a gallimaufry to succeed as a precise occupational category, so perhaps that is why more than half of its members claimed the working class label. But if 35% of the administrators and managers — who seem to be a less problematic case — also perceived themselves as working class, could this perhaps suggest, not so much a vindication of the Marxist claim of proletarianization in a subjective sense, but the encompassing nature of 'class' as compared with the finer, 'gradational' distinctions of self-assigned 'stratum' or 'status' (Table 7.6)? If we collapse the occupational groupings into three 'objective classes' (professional/technical combined with administrators/managers to form Goldthorpe's 'service

class I', the clerical with the sales and service workers as 'service class II', and the production workers the 'working class'), we get this picture: a sizeable 44% of the 'service class I' see themselves as working class, as compared with 68% of 'service class II', and 93% of the manual class (Table 7.6).

Table 7.6. Distribution of Occupation* by Self-Assigned Class Membership (%)

	Self-Assigned Class Membership			Total	(N)
	Capitalist	Middle	Working		
Prof/Tech	8	38	54	100	(63)
Admin/Managerial	17	48	35	100	(29)
Clerical	9	37	54	100	(35)
Sales	12	29	59	100	(17)
Service	3	21	76	100	(37)
Production	3	7	90	100	(97)

* After collapsing the occupational categories (see text), the distribution is like this:

	Self-Assigned Class - Working Class
Service Class I	44
Service Class II	68
Working Class	93

This more 'encompassing' nature of 'class' is also reflected, albeit to a lesser extent, in the relation between monthly income and self-assigned class. While 85% of those earning less than \$3,000 see themselves as belonging to the working class, 11% of those earning \$15,000 and above, and more importantly, 37% of those earning \$10,000-14,999, also placed themselves in the same class. It is also noteworthy that 67% of the total cases (N = 274) see themselves as working class, and that of this group, 76% earned less than \$6,000 a month (Table 7.7).

Table 7.7. Self-Assigned Class Membership by Monthly Income from Main Occupation (%)

HK\$	Capitalist	Middle Class	Working Class	Total	(N)
Under 3,000	3	12	85	100	(68)
3,000 - 5,999	4	22	74	100	(111)
6,000 - 9,999	12	24	64	100	(50)
10,000 - 14,999	11	52	37	100	(27)
15,000 and above	22	67	11	100	(18)

Social Stratification II: Inequalities

Inequalities are often regarded as constituting and highlighting cleavages in the society. Discussions in the literature tend to encompass both the objective conditions of inequality and the subjective sense, the perceptions and views, of deprivation, welfare and conflict. In this section, we shall first consider if 'natural' factors such as age and sex entail differences in education, income and occupation, and then secondly see how life-chance components such as education and occupation affect income and other material resources. In the next section, we shall focus on the perceptions of inequality and the related issues, viz. social justice, the need for social welfare, social conflicts, and lastly, mobility opportunities. Due to the small sample size, detailed disaggregation into categories of the variables will be statistically unsound and will render the results quite meaningless. We have tried wherever possible to avoid this, and in certain chi-square tests, correction for continuity has been made (Blalock, 1972:285-6).

It is generally said that older people, regardless of sex, tend to have a lower level of education, are more likely to have menial jobs, and are generally poorly paid. Our findings on the whole support this. First, it is quite clear that the educational attainment of the aged is much poorer than the young: while only 15% of those below 30 have only kindergarten or primary education, this is the case for 89% of the '55 years old and above' group. Similarly, an impressive 73% of the young people in our sample attained secondary, up to matriculation level, education; for those from 30-54 years old and the '55 years and above', it was respectively 46% and 8%. The aged are also more likely to be found in service and production occupations: these two categories of occupation constitute more than three-quarters of the elderly group. In contrast, the young people are concentrated in, apart from production occupations, clerical and the professional/technical occupations. As regards income (monthly income from main occupation), the middle-aged group (30-54) is better off than the others; this is perhaps not surprising, for the other two age groups are either just beginning or just ending their careers (Table 7.8).

The inequalities resulting from sex are similarly obvious. While 30% of our sampled males only attained a low educational level, this is true for more than half the females. At the top end of educational attainment, the figures are 16% for males as compared with 7% for females. Concerning occupations, the situation is not so much the concentration of females in menial occupations (although 43% of the females are in the production worker category), as the disproportionate concentra-

tion in the clerical and service occupations, and a disproportionate scarcity in the higher white collar jobs, such as professional/technicians (14% as compared with 26% of the males) and administrators / managers (4% vs. 14%). Given such occupational differences, it follows that while only 8% of our sampled males earned less than \$3,000 a month from their main occupation, more than 50% of the females are trapped in this income category (Table 7.8).

Table 7.8. Age-Groups and Sex-Group by Educational Attainment, Occupation and Monthly Income (%)

	Age			Sex	
	Under 30	30-54	55 and above	M	F
Educational Attainment					
Low	15	42	89	30	52
Middle	73	46	8	55	41
High	12	12	3	15	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Occupation					
Prof/Tech	23	23	8	27	14
Admin/Managerial	7	12	8	14	4
Clerical	25	7	4	7	21
Sales	8	6	4	7	4
Service	7	14	32	13	14
Production	30	38	44	32	43
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Income (HK\$)					
Under 3,000	30	19	50	8	54
3,000 - 5,999	48	37	46	48	29
6,000 - 9,999	17	20	0	22	12
10,000 - 14,999	2	15	4	13	4
15,000 and above	3	9	0	9	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

One may query if greater chances for education or the ethos of equal pay for equal work has bolstered the position of women. If we control for the variable education, and compare the two sexes with regard to occupation, we find the following. The majority of females with lower education are in the service and production occupations. A

sizable 18% of their male counterparts, however, have professional/technical jobs (chi-square significance level however does not reach $p < 0.05$ level). A roughly equal proportion of males and females with higher education could be found in the professional/technician occupations, although it can be noted in for the administrative/managerial occupations, females were far fewer than males. It is, however, in those attaining middle educational level that we find the greatest difference between the sexes. Roughly half of the respondents of either sex are in non-manual occupations. Yet the pattern is quite clear with females more likely to be found in the lower stratum of these occupations, in particular, in the clerical jobs. Males of the same educational level still have the edge over females in finding upper professional, administrative and managerial jobs (Table 7.9) ($\chi^2 = 23.5$, $df = 5$, $p < 0.001$). It should, however, be noted that here we have only looked at the economically active respondents. In other words, we have not included home-makers, students or retired people in this discussion. Also, a full discussion of this point should also look at the specific career path of women; it could be that the intermittent nature of their career path may exert an equally important effect, as education, on their occupational status.

Table 7.9. Occupational Distribution of Sample Population by Sex and Educational Attainment (%)

	Educational Attainment*					
	Low		Middle		High	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Prof/Tech	18	5	22	13	53	55
Admin/Managerial	2	2	14	3	33	9
Clerical	0	0	12	38	3	18
Sales	4	3	10	6	7	0
Service	20	24	12	9	3	0
Production	56	66	30	31	0	18
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(50)	(41)	(101)	(55)	(30)	(11)

* See note to Table 7.5.

When we consider the bearing of education on income, we can again find important differences between males and females. At the lower educational end, we find the men generally earning more than the women, the majority of whom, as can be seen in Table 7.10, are in the

'less than \$3,000' bracket ($\chi^2 = 28.2$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$). The pattern for the middle and higher educational achievers is similar. It is particularly noteworthy that for the middle educational achievers, 86% of the women earned *less* than \$6,000 a month, whereas for the males, more than 40% of them earned *more* than \$6,000 a month ($\chi^2 = 32.2$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$). The findings for those with a high educational level are similar ($\chi^2 = 16.5$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 7.10. Income* Distribution of Sample Population by Sex and Educational Attainment (%)

HK\$	Educational Attainment					
	Low		Middle		High	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Under 3,000	15	77	8	43	0	27
3,000 - 5,999	64	20	50	43	13	0
6,000 - 9,999	17	3	24	9	23	55
10,000 - 14,999	4	0	11	5	31	9
15,000 and above	0	0	7	0	33	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(47)	(39)	(102)	(54)	(30)	(11)

* Monthly income from respondents' main occupation.

If educational attainment cannot place women in a better position with regard to occupation and income, what about the occupation itself? The broad occupational categories used in this study do not enable us to address directly and fully the problem of 'equal work, equal pay'. Nonetheless, we can make a start towards understanding sexual inequality by examining the sexual differences in income, controlling not so much for occupational tasks as occupational groups (primarily non-manual vs. manual). The findings suggest that for the production workers, the manual class, more than two-thirds of the women workers earned less than \$3,000 a month. Their male counterparts fared much better, with 70% of them earning \$3,000-5,999 a month ($\chi^2 = 32.9$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$). This sexual inequality persists for the non-manual classes. Whether it is the professional/technicians/administrators/managers group, or the clerical/sales/service workers group, the higher the income bracket, the fewer women we find (Table 7.11; For the former occupational group, $\chi^2 = 10.9$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$; for the latter occupational group, $\chi^2 = 25.5$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 7.11. Income Distribution of Sample Population by Sex and Occupation (%)

HK\$	Prof / Tech / Admin / Manag		Cler / Sales / Serv		Prod	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Under 3,000	4	26	12	54	11	65
3,000 - 5,999	29	16	50	36	68	30
6,000 - 9,999	27	32	18	10	18	5
10,000 - 14,999	22	21	14	0	2	0
15,000 and above	18	5	6	0	1	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(73)	(19)	(51)	(39)	(56)	(46)

Lastly, educational and occupational inequalities are important indicators of income differences. The findings reveal that more than 80% of those who had attained a high educational level earned more than \$6,000 a month. In contrast, more than 90% of the low educational achievers earned less than \$6,000. Income differences among the various occupational groups are of a similar pattern and magnitude: the watershed, as in the educational sub-groups, seems to be between the \$3,000-5,999 and the \$6,000-9,999 income groups. With the exception of the sales occupations, the majority of the respondents with clerical, service and production jobs had less than \$6,000 a month. The administrators/managers, however, enjoyed higher incomes, with more than one-fifth of them having a monthly income of more than \$15,000.

This section is not meant to be a comprehensive and rigorous survey of certain areas of objective inequalities. For obvious reasons, it cannot aspire to be. Rather, our purpose is to highlight some social issues that may become (or have indeed become) controversial and important in the society. Sexual inequality is one such issue, so is the 'pay-off' of education. Our enquiry attempts to take up these problems within a larger concern of charting the changing ethos of Hong Kong people. Thus another purpose of this section is to pave the way for our question: given such objective differentials in one's life-chance, how do Hong Kong people perceive their lot, their opportunities in society and their chance of advancement?

Perceptions of Inequality, Conflict, Welfare and Justice

Studies of perceptions are often, under theses such as 'culture of poverty' or 'relative deprivation', interested in the nature and influence

of perceptions and attitudes towards inequality and related issues such as social conflict, justice, and welfare. Although the present study does not address this problem specifically, and thus cannot generate all the necessary information, the following will nonetheless undertake a preliminary analysis of some issues related to inequality and its normative and attitudinal underpinnings, and the factors that have a bearing on those perceptions and attitudes.

When asked if there are many poor people in Hong Kong, most of the respondents suggested a moderate degree of poverty, with relatively few seeing 'very few', or 'many'. This perception, however, is affected by several factors. Women tended to see more poverty than men did; nearly half of the female respondents seeing 'quite a few' and 'many' poor people ($\chi^2 = 9$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$). Respondents with lower educational attainment also discerned more poor people than their more educated counterparts ($\chi^2 = 36$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.01$). Lastly, the lower income groups and the manual occupational groups likewise perceived more poverty. (For income groups, $p < 0.05$; for occupational groups, chi-square did not reach 0.05 significance level.)

On the other hand, sex, education, income and occupation do not make a difference to the respondents' opinions in respect of the reasons for poverty. The majority saw the state of the poor as their own, as distinct from caused by society. More importantly, a predominant proportion of the respondents perceived conflicts between rich and poor and saw these conflicts as unavoidable. Again, such attitudes are on the whole consistent, with very few choosing the non-committal response of 'it depends', and are not affected by differences in sex, education, income or occupation. (Although one must also note that quite a significant proportion 33% of the '\$15,000 and above' income group perceived no conflict between rich and poor. Similarly, the opinion of the administrative/managers occupation group on the existence of conflicts is nearly equally divided: 45% responded 'yes', and 48% 'no'.)

Even more significant and consistent is the respondents' attitude on the means of alleviating poverty. Those who held that poverty is attributable to personal reasons responded overwhelmingly that the government should provide assistance to the poor. Again, the 'it depends' option was scarcely ever chosen by the respondents. This suggests what Lau and Kuan termed 'the advocacy of obligatory welfare functions of the government' (Lau & Kuan, 1988:193-4). Thus although our respondents did not perceive an abject degree of poverty or gross inequality in the society, their attitude to inequality and injustice is far from complacent.

We have earlier looked at our respondents' self-placement with respect to the 'class' and 'status' order. But what is the normative basis underlying this self-perception? In other words, what kinds of criteria were invoked when our respondents assessed the significant differentials of the society, on the categories or scales of which they then placed themselves? Our data do not enable us to answer this question fully or directly.

We did, however, ask what our respondents perceived as the most significant determinant of social status. It comes out very clearly that wealth and education are considered the main determinants; together they accounted for more than 60% of the sample response. Further, irrespective of sex, age, educational, occupational, income and housing type differences, we find the same pattern of answer. In some cases (e.g., the lower white collar occupations or the highly educated), wealth was regarded as more determining of social status than education. The less educated, on the other hand, put more importance on education than on wealth, and among the (self-assigned) capitalist class, a noteworthy 18% considered family background to be the determinant. But taken as a whole, such differences are insubstantial; wealth, followed by education, are generally seen as the main determinants of social status (Table 7.12).

Table 7.12. Respondents' Perceptions of the Determinants of Social Status*

Determinants	%
Wealth	40
Education	26
Family background	8
Contribution to society	11
Power	8
Others	7
Total	100
(N)	(374)

* Question: In Hong Kong, what kind of standard do you think will determine one's social status?

How can one make sense of this finding? Lockwood has argued that money (or in our case, wealth) is, unlike status/prestige or power, not an inherent divider of people: one has *more* or *less* money than others. As a criterion in 'modelling' society, it belongs more to the attributional status system than to the interactional system. The resulting model of

society thus consists of amorphous aggregates of individuals differing in terms of the magnitude of income, possessions, etc (Lockwood, 1975). Does our finding that wealth (closely followed by education) is by far the most important determinant of social status support such a 'pecuniary' model of society? If so, would it have the same implications that Lockwood argued for this model: that the class structure is 'desocialized', in the sense that strata or classes are not active social formations? It would be impossible and, at any rate, unjustified, given our limited information, to give an answer to these questions. One needs to know more about the interactional patterns in the work and community context, and at the same time, delve deeper into the structure of 'model of society' by addressing systematically the dimensions of power and prestige.

Openness and Opportunities

If the discussions so far have suggested a hard realism on the part of our sampled population with regard to social issues like poverty and social conflict, one could equally detect a certain idealism in them when it comes to questions like opportunities and social openness. The majority of our respondents believed that there is room for improvement, that the society is open enough to allow for advancement endeavours, and above all, they believed in the importance of one's own efforts. Thus, for instance, 83% of our respondents believed that employees could become bosses (Table 7.13); 84% believed that in the past 10 years Hong Kong has provided more opportunities for personal advancements; and 94 % believed in the efficacy of their own endeavours. These beliefs are not affected by age, sex, occupation, education, income or years spent in Hong Kong. Different social strata shared these beliefs, perhaps suggesting that such optimism in opportunities and openness is not 'checked' by diverse 'status' or even 'class' claims or clings. Further, to the extent that we could regard our respondents' views on status determinants as representing or at least implying different 'models of society', we find that there is the same belief in openness and opportunities among the various (self-assigned) social strata, irrespective of their normative map of society. What would be interesting to know — and what future indicators research has to address — is, given such optimism, whether our respondents see self-advancement in basically harmless competitive terms (there are enough opportunities for everyone) or in exploitative, zero-sum terms. (Another related issue is of course whether this self-advancement is in

fact more a 'collective' advancement, supported by and in turn contributing to 'utilitarian familism'.)

Table 7.13. Respondents' Perceptions of Social Openness* (%)

A. An employee in Hong Kong has no way out but to remain as such for life	17
B. An employee also has the chance to become a boss	83
Total	100
(N)	(377)

* Question: Do you agree with the following statements?

Table 7.14. Qualities/Conditions Perceived as Most Important for Good Prospects (%)

Most Important Personal Quality	
Professional qualification	13
Educational attainment	33
Family background	6
Luck	8
Willingness to take risks	2
Hard-work	28
Others	10
Total	100
(N)	(385)
Most Important Social Conditions	
Equality of opportunity in education	18
Freedom to choose occupation	16
Certain level of social welfare	7
Free competition in society	58
Others	1
Total	100
(N)	(363)

But what sort of qualities or requirements are deemed necessary and important for attaining success? When asked for the most important personal qualities for 'attaining good prospects', our respondents saw the two most important criteria as educational attainment and hard work. The two requirements together accounted for 60% of those who believed that personal perseverance and efforts will pay off (Table 7.14). This finding should not surprise us, for Chinese society has always greatly valued education, just as it has always emphasized

diligence and industriousness. In common with other modern industrial societies, ascriptive qualities such as family background figured insignificantly in the answers. When further asked for the most important social condition which makes 'good prospects' possible, 58% of the respondents chose free competition, with equal opportunity in schooling (18%), and freedom to choose one's occupation (16%) somewhat trailing behind. The findings suggest that our respondents value freedom, in particular, freedom to compete and to make good, more than the more formal 'guarantees' of equal opportunity or social welfare (Table 7.14). The data here of course could not unequivocally support this claim, but as an indicator of the Hong Kong ethos, it obviously is an important area of further research. At least it points to the need to refine our thinking on valued goals such as freedom, equality and welfare, and on the methodological problems involved in studying them as components of an indicator index of a society's ethos.

It is clear that these perceptions of social openness and opportunities, and the belief that one's efforts will eventually result in advancement, pertain to general ideals or notions. Perhaps they give expression to, and at the same time underline, the impression that here in Hong Kong society, upward mobility is possible and is eagerly sought after. But views on statements like 'an employee also has the chance of becoming a boss' are very likely an amalgam of perception *and* aspiration. As one scholar has put it:

How a person assesses a particular objective attribute of a specific domain is dependent on two things: how he perceives that attribute and the standard against which he judges that attribute...(and) the individual's assessment may derive from any or all of the following bases of evaluation: aspiration levels, expectations levels, equity levels, reference group levels, personal needs, personal values. (Campbell, cited in M. Abrams, 1977)

Social openness and efficacy of one's own efforts could thus be ideals to which the majority of our respondents subscribed partly because they perceived that to be the case and partly because they wanted that to be the case. The question then is how realistic are they in judging *their own chance* for upward mobility.

When we come to the more immediate aspects of room for improvement for the respondents themselves, we find them having a more realistic, sceptical, perhaps even pessimistic, appraisal. Also, education, occupation and self-assigned status become important markers separating the confident from the rest. Taking work autonomy first, we

find that more than 70% of our respondents perceived either little or no autonomy in their work. More significantly, there is a great difference between the higher non-manual 'service' class (our class I, as defined earlier) and the manual class: while 36% of the former group enjoyed 'a lot' of work autonomy, only 6% of the latter claimed the same experience. (Or to put the point in a different way, 61% of the manual workers, as compared to 17% of the 'service' class, did not experience any work autonomy.) ($p < 0.001$)

It is difficult to know how perceived differences in work autonomy, as one of the aspects of work situation, will shape the social consciousness in general and the image of society in particular. But as pointed out by Lockwood, such differences must presuppose different sets of social relationships and structural constraints. The data on such social relationships and structural constraints in the work situation, and in, say, the community, will thus be essential for the construction of subjective social indicators — in the form of different types of social consciousness — with greater theoretical and conceptual rigour.

The perception of limited work autonomy coexists however with a moderately optimistic appraisal of promotion prospects. When asked to compare their present chance of job promotion with that of five years ago, half of our respondents said it is better now, with the rest answering 'about the same' or 'worse'. However, it should be noted that job promotion prospects is quite different from job mobility, or for that matter, career development, and our questions have been phrased and put to the respondents quite unambiguously. A moderately optimistic assessment of one's job promotion chance could be a logical result of the accumulation of work experience or seniority in a *specific* job. Indeed, whatever degree of optimism ascertained with respect to promotion chance is overshadowed by an unequivocally practical and realistic, if not pessimistic, assessment of job mobility and career development.

Three-quarters of our respondents saw the likelihood of job mobility (i.e., changing to a better job) as either none or very little. There is no significant difference between men and women, although the male respondents were slightly more optimistic (27% vs. 21%). Collapsing the occupational groups into our three objective classes, we could find class difference with regard to this assessment: while 12% of the upper non-manual class (class I) perceived no job mobility prospect, 43% of the manual producers expressed the same opinion (Table 7.15). One would have expected that those who perceived social fluidity and openness (responding affirmatively to the statement 'employee could become boss') would be more optimistic about the

chance of job mobility than those who did not. But there is no significant difference between the two groups: 70% of the optimists saw the chance of job mobility as 'not at all' or 'very little', compared to 86% of the pessimists (Table 7.16). The fact remains that when it comes to the immediate context of openness and opportunities, only a very small proportion of our respondents, concentrated in the upper non-manual occupations, is optimistic of the future.

Table 7.15. Respondents' Perceptions of Job Mobility¹ by Occupational Class² (%)

Class	Not at all	Very Little	Much	Average	Total
Service Class I	12	46	38	4	100
Service Class II	26	45	29	0	100
Working Class	43	46	10	1	100

¹ Working respondents were asked: 'With your current qualifications and working experience, do you have any chance of getting a better job?'

² Professional, technical and related occupations and administrative/managerial occupations are grouped as Service Class I; clerical, sales and service workers are grouped as Service Class II; production workers are grouped as Working Class. (See text)

Table 7.16. Perceived Job Mobility by Respondents' Perceptions of Social Openness¹ (%)

	Not at All	Very Little	Much	Average	Total
Pessimistic ²	44	42	12	2	100
Optimistic ³	27	43	29	1	100

¹ See Table 7.13.

² This refers to those who agree with saying A.

³ This refers to those who agree with saying B.

When asked about the chance of developing their career in the next ten years, our respondents on the whole are cautious and realistic. About one in three responded 'very little or little'; about the same proportion saw the chance as 'average'. Lastly, another third of the respondents saw the chance as 'great or very great'; it however should be noted that of this last group, only 7% perceived the chance as 'very great' (Table 7.17). When compared with the clear majority of respondents believing in the openness of the society, and in the efficacy of individual efforts in grasping opportunities, such figures with respect to perceived future career development are very modest indeed.

Table 7.17. Respondents' Perception of Career Development in the Next 10 Years* (%)

Very little	20
Little	15
Average	36
Great	22
Very great	7
Total	100
(N)	(277)

* Question: What are your chances of career development in the next 10 years?

Hong Kong Chinese have often been regarded as entrepreneurially motivated, with the goal of becoming one's own boss equivalent to socio-economic advancement. However, in tackling this motivational issue, we see too often a lack of distinction between the ideal route — regardless of context and circumstances — and the desired route which will be followed if the opportunities are there. We believe that this is an important distinction, and consequently, with regard to mobility routes, we have asked the respondents firstly their perception of what the best channel is, and secondly what they themselves would choose if given a choice.

Table 7.18. Respondents' Perception of the Best Upward Mobility Route* (%)

Securing a job with good promotion aspect	9
Acquiring professional qualification	39
Starting one's own business	41
Not much difference between options	11
Total	100
(N)	(377)

* Question: Which of the following ways do you think promises the most in terms of developing one's career?

With respect to the perceived best mobility route, two things emerge from our findings. Firstly, it is quite clear that *both* 'acquiring professional qualification' and 'starting one's own business' are most favoured, chosen by the majority (80%) of the respondents, with the latter option slightly more 'favoured'. Secondly, acquiring a job with good promotion aspects ranks very low (accounting for only 9%) as the best upward mobility route (Table 7.18). When the respondents are

asked for their preferred upward mobility route, more or less the same pattern prevails. There are more people (49%) opting for the entrepreneurial route, as compared with the 'credentials' or 'professional' route (37%). Again, the 'bureaucratic' route (developing career in large corporations) ranks lowest.

The above findings suggest that although a substantial proportion of our sample population did place high value on entrepreneurship as a general mobility strategy and as their preferred route, the importance and attractiveness of professional credentials are not to be underestimated. When we cross-tabulate their perceptions and preferences with the variable of occupation, we further find that the entrepreneurial motivation does not apply uniformly to all groups (Table 7.19). Our finding shows that clerical workers, and to a smaller extent, the professionals and technicians, placed much greater emphasis on professional qualifications. More than half of the clerical workers perceived the 'professional' route as the best strategy; and when asked to choose realistically for their own advancement, a similar proportion opted for the same answer.

Table 7.19. Respondents' Perception of the Best Upward Mobility Route* by Occupation (%)

	Job with Good Prospects	Professional Qualifications	Start Own Business	Not Much Difference
Prof/Tech	7	41	38	14
Admin/Managerial	14	28	48	10
Clerical	6	58	22	14
Sales	11	22	61	6
Service	13	29	42	16
Production	10	31	53	6

* See Table 7.18 for details.

Both the sales workers and the higher non-manual group of administrators and managers provide a contrast to the clerical group. In both cases, a clear majority wanted to start their own business and be their own boss. A similar pattern applies to the production workers and the service workers. Here we do not have the data for us to adduce the factors that could account for the differential attractiveness for the different occupational groups. However, it is possible that the work relations and experience of the clerical workers constitute one of the

factors predisposing them to the 'professional', vis-à-vis the 'bureaucratic' or the 'entrepreneurial', route (Table 7.19).

Perhaps we could conclude this section by noting the sexual difference with regard to the perceptions of mobility channels. There is a significant difference between men and women: our female respondents quite unequivocally perceived the acquiring of professional qualifications as the best mobility channel ($\chi^2 = 9.37$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.05$). The same applies to their more realistic, personal preference ($\chi^2 = 13.83$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$) (Table 7.20).

Table 7.20. Perceived Best Upward Mobility Route* by Sex (%)

	Job with Good Prospects	Professional Qualifications	Start Own Business	Not Much Difference	Total
Male	9	32	47	12	100
Female	9	46	33	12	100

* See Table 7.18 for details.

Inter-generational Mobility and Perceptions of Change

In the previous sections, we are mainly concerned about our respondents' perceptions of future change, whether it is about the likelihood of their finding a better job, or, more specifically, their choice of mobility route. In this section, we shall examine their perceptions of past change, in particular, their mobility experience. The more general issue involved here is of course the question as to whether, subjectively, the class structure of the society has changed.

As we are focusing on the subjective or perception side of class and its changes, we have defined class origin as the respondents' own description of their parents' social stratum (cf. earlier sections on self-perceptions). In common with most studies on objective social mobility, we have chosen the time when the respondents were 14 years old as their 'origin' and our reference point. (It has to be noted, however, that in the British Social Attitudes survey, on which this section is closely modelled, the reference is to the time the respondents started their primary school.)

Our findings show that the description 'lower stratum' was thought to be appropriate for 42% of the sample population when at the age of 14, but for 23% now (Table 7.21A). The descriptions 'lower middle stratum' and 'middle stratum' were more frequently used to characterize their present social position than to that of their 'class' origin, i.e.,

their parents' social stratum. Such findings could suggest that, in terms of 'origins and destinations', our respondents' subjective 'class' well-being has been enhanced.

Table 7.21A. Respondents' Social Status at Age 14* and At Present (%)

	Parents' Social Status when Respondent was 14	Respondents' Social Status At Present
Low	42	23
Lower-middle	23	32
Middle	23	35
Upper-middle	4	4
Upper	1	0
Don't know and others	7	6

* Question: 'When you were 14, which social class do you think your parents belonged to?'

Table 7.21B. Respondents' Change in Social Status (%)

		Self-Assigned Status at Age 14	
No Change	Upper and Upper-middle	1	45
	Middle	16	
	Lower-middle	10	
	Low	18	
Now Lower	Upper and Upper-middle	4	12
	Middle	7	
	Lower-middle	1	
Now Higher	Middle	2	44
	Lower-middle	14	
	Low	28	

Our findings also reveal that the distribution of self-assigned social strata has undergone some change, but not significantly so. After combining 'upper' and 'upper-middle' strata into one category, we find that nearly half (45%) of the sample saw themselves as belonging to the same stratum as their parents when they were 14. Another 12% saw their present status as lower than their parents', while 44% claimed to have moved upwards. In other words, as many people perceived an inter-generational advancement in their social status as those who saw

no change (Table 7.21B). As we do not yet have longitudinal, comparative figures, we do not know the full significance of this finding. But it is clear that this is an important indicator of people's sense of well-being, as it is wrought and shaped by their past experience, in particular that of inter-generational mobility experience. General findings about people's perceptions of social openness or opportunities could also be put into perspective by seeing how far people – in their own assessment – have travelled away from their origins, and in what direction. Future studies of social indicators obviously have to address this issue and perhaps further refine the conceptual framework of social strata.

Looking to the Future

We argued earlier that the overwhelming majority of our respondents see their society as open, fluid, providing more opportunities; they also believed personal endeavours will bear fruit eventually. Such optimism also pertains to their view of their children's future. Nearly 80% of the respondents thought that their children would be in the middle (54%) or the upper-middle (25%) stratum. The optimism did not seem to wane too much even if the future means 1997. The majority were of the view that the socio-economic status of their children would be better than their own both before and after 1997 (Table 7.22). The manual class (i.e., the production workers) was on the whole more optimistic than the non-manual class with respect to this question. It is interesting to note that quite a sizeable 30% of the non-manual respondents thought that their children's socio-economic status will become worse after 1997.

Table 7.22 Respondents' Perception of Their Children's Socio-Economic Status after 1997 (%)

Worse than now	25
Same as now	13
Better than now	62
Total	100
(N)	(210)

We also asked the respondents about their forebodings, as a collectivity, for the future. Firstly, we asked them which social class would be most affected in case of a recession. The majority (54%) thought it would be the working class; the capitalist class, comparatively, would

suffer much less (22%). That the middle class would be adversely affected was subscribed to by only 5% of the respondents. This pattern was, interestingly, reversed when the 1997 question was posed. Nearly half of the answers put the capitalist class as bearing the brunt of hardship after 1997. To a lesser extent, the working class will also be affected (24%); and again, our respondents thought the middle class would come out relatively unscathed.

The extent to which these opinions are held by different classes (self-assigned) is quite interesting. In the case of a recession, a clear majority of the capitalist class thought that they themselves would be affected most, while the working class, and to a greater extent, the middle class, predicted that the effect would be more evenly distributed ($\chi^2 = 16$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.05$). However, when it comes to the impact of 1997, the majority of our respondents, regardless of their self-assigned class membership, agreed that the capitalists would suffer most ($\chi^2 = 34.76$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.001$). Does this ultimately suggest that, for our respondents, the change of sovereignty in 1997, notwithstanding the 'one country, two systems' framework, will adversely affect Hong Kong's capitalist system and its social and political framework? We do not know the answer now, but it is imperative that we chart the development of such forebodings or 'predictions' as we draw near to 1997.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have been concerned with people's attitudes and sense of well-being, in relation to issues such as inequality, conflict, opportunities and mobility. Admittedly, these issues are relatively 'opaque', to use Berger's term, spheres of our respondent's daily experience, as compared with issues on health or family. Moreover, the lack of comparative data means that some of the findings discussed here are more useful for setting a benchmark than for testing claims or vindicating arguments. In any case, to carry out the latter tasks would require, *inter alia*, a larger sample size. For these reasons, our report must be seen as a preliminary, problem-raising, attempt.

In connection with this general point are two caveats. First, questions and data concerning 'degree of satisfaction' are to be treated with a certain caution. A general claim about being satisfied with pay or what-not is very difficult, if not impossible without further information, to understand fully if only because all such judgments are relative to the respondent's expectations and orientations (cf. Abrams and Brown (eds.), 1984). Moreover, in research of this nature, it is always possible

to get conformist favourable responses. Secondly, in this chapter, we have often made use of the term 'class', often in quotation marks, to refer to either broad occupational groupings or self-assigned class membership. However, as Brown has put it succinctly, 'no set of occupational categories could be regarded as a straight-forward division of the population into "classes" as the sociologist would understand that term' (Brown, 1984:135). If the connection between occupational categories and class is at best complicated and at worst tenuous or disjunctive, then what about more amorphous and murkier concepts such as 'social strata'? What could be their referents? It is problems of such nature that further work has to be done in order to refine the empirical basis of subjective social indicators.

In our research, we have found that our respondents perceived society as open, allowing competition. There are opportunities for self-advancement, and, subjectively, a significant proportion of them has undergone inter-generational mobility. Equally, the majority were optimistic about their children's future life-station. Among the requirements for 'making good', education and hard work were emphasized; and the society must be free so that efforts and perseverance would eventually bear fruit. These characteristics are of course the qualities one usually adduces when explaining Hong Kong's secret of success. They are also traditionally-held Chinese characteristics underlying a general belief in openness and mobility, and serving a modern end.

Existing alongside this optimism, however, is a set of real and immanent objective inequalities, separating the young from the old, men from women, the non-manual, service 'class' from the manual, production workers, and so on. It is perhaps these inequalities that explain the darker side of the optimism, namely the belief that conflicts between rich and poor are inevitable, and a sceptical, realistic view of the more immediate aspects of one's mobility prospects: work autonomy, job mobility and long-term career development. Hence, the belief in social mobility and in the efficacy of personal efforts in upward mobility – and the optimism it generates – has to be set alongside this more stoic view of the possibility of improving one's lot.

We are *not* implying, however, that one must therefore adduce, as a counterpart to a Spencerian, societal optimism, a sense of personal deprivation or fatalism. In fact, as we have noted earlier, most of the sampled Hong Kong people are forward-looking and are contented with what they have now. We are simply suggesting, perhaps tritely, that the objective differentials are real and important, and that it would be essential, in a social indicators research, to ground perceptions and attitudes solidly to a structure of such objective inequalities. Secondly,

we are suggesting that before claiming, in a self-congratulatory manner, that Hong Kong people are confident and optimistic about the prospects of improvement, we have to understand the perceptions and orientations which pertain to the more specific, and immediate, contexts and concerns of the Hong Kong people, and which obviously arise from specific inequalities. If Hong Kong is not tormented by serious racial and class prejudice and discrimination (as Britain is argued to be), it is nonetheless important for us to see if there is any tension between, on the one hand, those conflict-conducive, context-specific perceptions and, on the other, the more integrative, general/cultural orientations. By doing so, we can understand the extent to which a pervasive, and admittedly traditional, belief in social openness and opportunities would cope with the reality of inequalities in a modern society.

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8 Political Attitudes

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A relatively high level of political stability, rapid economic growth and urbanization are the salient features of the colony's recent history. However, despite the promise of the Chinese government, and constitutional measures designed to maintain the original social structure and lifestyle of Hong Kong under the formula 'one country, two systems' for fifty years after 1997, the awareness of the scheduled return of Hong Kong to China has nonetheless driven Hong Kong people into a state of uncertainty and anxiety. The occurrence of various political changes at both the structural and individual levels, mostly induced by the 'shock' of the 1997 issue, in the past few years, have disturbed and transformed the once tranquil political situation. The major emphases of this chapter are the political attitudes and orientations that are of critical importance to the maintenance of political stability and effectiveness: people's evaluations of the political situation; their identity and attitudes towards emigration; their attitudes towards the political system and the government; their political involvement; and finally their level of trust in the political establishment and political leadership.

Evaluation of the Political Situation

Since the onset of the Sino-British negotiations over the future of Hong Kong, the public's confidence in Hong Kong's future has become a critical issue in maintaining the stability and development of society. This section focuses primarily on two aspects: (1) the respondents' evaluation of the present political situation, and (2) their anticipation of the future situation and their attitudes towards it.

Evaluation of the Current Political Situation

When the respondents' degree of satisfaction with various social conditions was examined, the political situation was found to be least satisfactory and most uncertain. Over half, 57.3 per cent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the present economic situation.

Only 26.3 per cent were satisfied with the political situation and 25.8 per cent rated their degree of satisfaction as average. That a substantial proportion of respondents (30.2 per cent), who were more likely to be female, older and less educated, answered 'don't know' or gave no answer clearly indicates the uncertainty commonly felt towards the fast-changing political situation. Among respondents who held definite views on the current political situation, the younger, the more educated, those who distrusted the Hong Kong government and the Chinese government, and those who had no confidence in Hong Kong's future were more likely to be dissatisfied with the present political situation.¹

Table 8.1. Degree of Satisfaction with Present Political Situation (%)

	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Don't Know	(N)
Total	17.7	25.8	26.3	30.2	(1662)
Sex					
male	17.8	27.8	30.3	24.1	(846)
female	17.6	23.8	22.1	36.5	(816)
Age					
below 30	27.8	34.6	20.8	16.8	(457)
30 - 54	15.7	23.9	28.1	32.3	(898)
over 54	8.9	18.1	28.9	44.1	(304)
Educational level					
low	9.7	18.2	26.4	45.8	(660)
middle	21.2	29.6	27.3	22.0	(822)
high	31.4	36.7	21.9	10.1	(169)

Attitudes towards the Future Situation

With respect to the respondents' evaluation of the future situation, there was some inconsistency. On the one hand, certain optimistic and confident attitudes towards the future of Hong Kong were revealed. Slightly more than half of the respondents (55.5 per cent) expressed confidence in Hong Kong's future while only 26.1 per cent held the opposite view and 18.4 per cent gave no definite answer. When compared with three years ago, 32.2 per cent reported an increase in confidence, 33.7 per cent remained about the same, 24.1 per cent said their confidence had decreased and 10.1 per cent did not have a definite answer. As expected, the older and the less educated were less likely to have definite answers on these matters than others. Of those

with definite opinions, the younger and the more educated were not only more likely to be less confident but also to report a decrease, in the past three years, in their confidence in the future of Hong Kong. Moreover, the respondents' confidence in Hong Kong's future was closely related to their trust in the Hong Kong government and the Chinese government ($G=0.66$ and 0.82 respectively). Those who claimed 'Chinese' identity and satisfaction with the Hong Kong government were also more likely to have confidence in Hong Kong's future. In addition, the more they trusted the Hong Kong government and the Chinese government, the more likely were they to report an increase in their level of confidence in Hong Kong's future ($G=0.51$ and 0.57 respectively).

Table 8.2. Attitudes towards Hong Kong's Future (%)

	No	Yes	Don't Know	(N)
Confidence in Hong Kong's future	26.1	55.5	18.4	(1662)
Age				
below 30	31.5	53.2	15.3	(457)
30 - 54	26.9	54.9	18.2	(898)
over 54	15.5	61.2	23.4	(304)
Educational level				
low	18.6	56.8	24.5	(660)
middle	31.0	56.7	12.3	(822)
high	32.0	45.0	23.1	(169)
Worried about political instability before 1997	45.7	47.7	6.6	(396)
Sex				
male	52.0	43.1	5.0	(202)
female	39.2	52.6	8.2	(194)
Age				
below 30	42.2	51.0	6.9	(102)
30 - 54	43.1	52.1	4.7	(211)
over 54	58.0	32.0	9.9	(81)
Educational level				
low	49.7	42.6	7.7	(169)
middle	46.5	50.8	2.7	(185)
high	28.2	53.8	17.9	(39)

The above findings seem to vindicate the efforts taken by the governments and various bodies to restore the confidence of Hong

Kong people in the past few years. On the other hand, however, a rather gloomy picture emerged when respondents were asked to evaluate certain possible changes in various life situations before and after 1997.

In their evaluation of the future political situation, nearly half of the respondents (47.7 per cent) declared that they were worried about the occurrence of political instability in Hong Kong even before 1997, while 45.7 per cent were not. As indicated in Table 8.2, those who were not worried were more likely to be older and less educated. Those who distrusted the governments of Hong Kong and China and had no confidence in Hong Kong's future were also more likely to be pessimistic. For example, 60 per cent of those who distrusted the Chinese government were worried about the occurrence of political instability, as compared with 34.6 per cent of those who trusted the Chinese government.

Table 8.3. Evaluation of Future Situation (%)

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely	Don't Know	(N)
Reduction of civil rights	2.3	10.6	62.9	12.6	11.6	(396)
Reduction of individual liberty	3.0	14.1	62.6	10.6	9.6	(396)
Deterioration of living standard	2.5	16.4	54.0	12.9	14.2	(396)
Deterioration of legal system	2.8	16.9	52.5	8.6	19.2	(396)
Status quo unchanged for 50 years	15.7	25.5	37.9	4.5	16.4	(396)
A better and happier life	16.4	37.1	23.7	2.0	20.7	(396)

A more pessimistic perception of the future can be seen in the respondents' anticipation of several possible socio-economic changes after 1997. As indicated in Table 8.3, 75.5 per cent of respondents thought that it was likely or very likely that after the return of Hong Kong to China civil rights would be abridged. In addition, 73.2 per cent anticipated a reduction of individual freedom, 66.9 per cent expected stagnation or even deterioration of the living standard, and 61.1 per cent envisaged the deterioration of the legal system. Only 42.4 per cent thought that the status quo could remain unchanged for fifty years, and a mere 25.7 per cent were optimistic that the lives of Hong Kong people would be better and happier after 1997. A comparison with relevant findings in the 1986 survey² seems to indicate a gloomier attitude to the

future. Despite the slight increase in the proportion of respondents who were optimistic, those with no definite answer are fewer and the pessimists have increased significantly. For example, in 1986 only 60.3 per cent thought that individual freedom would be reduced after 1997, as opposed to 73.2 per cent in 1988.

Identity

The Hong Kong Identity

The disparity of development between Hong Kong and China in the past few decades has caused Hong Kong, as a social entity, to drift far from its motherland. A distinctive Hong Kong identity, hinging upon the demarcation between 'Hongkongese' and 'Chinese', has also developed gradually among the Hong Kong Chinese and was found to be particularly pertinent to their political values (Lau and Kuan, 1988: 178-87).

In this survey, the majority of respondents (63.6 per cent), when asked to choose between 'Hongkongese' and 'Chinese' as their primary identity, identified themselves as the former while 28.8 per cent still considered themselves as 'Chinese'. It is quite natural that the 'Chinese' identity was predominantly adopted by the older respondents, particularly those who were not born in Hong Kong, who have experienced a different socialization process. For example, 53.9 per cent of those over 54 years old considered themselves as 'Chinese', whereas only 21.4 per cent of those below 30 claimed the same identity.

Sense of Belonging to Hong Kong

In addition to claiming Hong Kong identity, which marks out Hong Kong Chinese as a distinctive group of Chinese, a substantial proportion of respondents also reported a strong sense of attachment to Hong Kong society. As shown in Table 8.5, 63.5 per cent of respondents declared that they had a very strong or strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong while a mere 8.9 per cent expressed very little or little sense of belonging.

Different socio-economic groups differed only slightly in their sense of belonging to Hong Kong. The two identity groups ('Hongkongese' vs. 'Chinese') are not significantly different in their self-reported level of sense of belonging. Ironically, in spite of the finding that the younger and the better educated were more likely to claim a Hong Kong identity, the proportion of the less educated who expressed a strong

sense of belonging to Hong Kong was higher than other educational groups. *Therefore, claiming a Hong Kong identity was not tantamount to having a strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong.*

Table 8.4. Identity (%)

	Hongkongese	Chinese	Neither	Don't Know	(N)
Total	63.6	28.8	2.0	5.6	(396)
Age					
below 30	78.6	21.4	0.0	—	(98)
30 - 54	71.9	25.6	2.5	—	(199)
over 54	42.1	53.9	3.9	—	(76)
Sex					
male	61.4	36.5	2.1	—	(189)
female	73.5	24.3	2.2	—	(185)
Educational level					
low	60.9	37.8	1.3	—	(156)
middle	73.7	24.6	1.7	—	(179)
high	61.1	30.6	8.3	—	(36)

Table 8.5. Sense of Belonging to Hong Kong (%)

	Low	Somewhat	Strong	Don't Know	(N)
Total	8.9	25.4	63.5	2.1	(1662)
Educational level					
low	5.4	24.9	69.8	—	(635)
middle	10.5	26.5	63.1	—	(812)
high	16.7	26.8	56.5	—	(168)

Emigration Propensity and Attitudes towards Emigration

Despite the widespread acceptance of Hong Kong as a homeland, the 1997 crisis has driven many Hong Kong Chinese to acquire a foreign passport or a residence permit in a foreign country. According to government's statistics, from 1980 to September 1987, the total number of Hong Kong people who emigrated amounted to 178,202. However, the number of people leaving Hong Kong rose to approximately 30,000 in 1987 and 46,000 in 1988. The alarming rate of emigration, which is producing serious problems of brain and capital drain, is aggravated by

the more open immigration policies of foreign countries and is expected to worsen in the coming years.

Table 8.6. Attitudes towards Emigration (%)

	No	Yes	Don't Know	Not Applicable	(N)
Overseas residential rights	94.7	4.8	0.5	—	(1662)
Emigration plan	74.3	17.6	2.8	5.3	(1662)
Will emigrate before 1997	70.4	8.5	15.8	5.3	(1662)
Trust in foreign passport holders	68.2	17.7	14.2	—	(396)

In the present study, a mere 4.8 per cent of respondents, who were more likely to have high educational achievement and the highest monthly income, had residential rights in a foreign country. Near three-quarters, 74.3 per cent, declared that they were not planning to emigrate, and a slightly smaller proportion (70.4 per cent) said that they did not think they would emigrate before 1997. Although a substantial proportion of respondents still preferred to stay in Hong Kong, there were striking differences among various socio-economic groups with regard to their propensity to emigrate. These are measured by their having or not having an emigration plan and a decision or not to emigrate before 1997. By and large, those with the highest emigration propensity were more likely to be younger, more educated, with higher income and higher occupational status. For example, 25.7 per cent of those below 30 years old, 36.8 per cent of those with high educational level, 44.2 per cent of those with a monthly income of more than ten thousands dollars, 36.9 per cent of the administrative and managerial workers, and 29.5 per cent of the professional and technical workers declared that they were planning to emigrate; while a mere 4.9 per cent of those over 54 years old, 8.6 per cent of those with low educational level, 16.1 per cent of those with a monthly income of less than four thousands dollars, and 12.7 per cent of the production workers reported emigration plans. Furthermore, respondents who were worried that there could be political instability before 1997, who distrusted the Hong Kong government and the Chinese government, who had little sense of belonging to Hong Kong, and particularly those who had no confidence in Hong Kong's future were more likely to have a higher emigration propensity ($G = 0.43, -0.38, -0.57, -0.40, \text{ and } -0.76$ respectively). For example, 43.8 per cent of those who had no confidence in Hong Kong's future were planning to emigrate as opposed to 9.7 per cent of those who had confidence.

Generally speaking, people were sympathetic to those whose fear of the return of Hong Kong to China made them want to emigrate. Only 21.2 per cent of respondents gave a negative answer to the following question: 'As the year 1997 is approaching, many Hong Kong people are emigrating. Do you think their action is right?' Just under a quarter, 24.2 per cent, indicated approval. 45.2 per cent neither approved nor disapproved and 9.4 per cent replied 'don't know' or gave no answer. Various population groups differed only slightly in their attitudes towards emigration. However, those with a higher emigration propensity naturally demonstrated a more approving attitude towards emigration than others. Hence, 50 per cent of those who were planning to emigrate considered emigration a right action and 38.9 per cent thought it was neither right nor wrong. The percentages of those who were not planning to emigrate but held the same views are 20.2 per cent and 52.2 per cent respectively.

Despite general acceptance of emigration, the political loyalty and credibility of those who 'deserted' Hong Kong were nevertheless doubted. Only 17.7 per cent of respondents declared that they would trust Hong Kong people who had foreign passports as Hong Kong's political leaders. Another 68.2 per cent clearly expressed their distrust in 'ex-Hongkongese' while 14.2 per cent could not give definite answers. Apart from those who had no definite idea on this matter, who were more likely to be female, less educated and older, no significant statistical difference was found among various socio-economic groups with regard to their evaluation of the political credibility of foreign passport holders.

Attitudes towards Political Independence

Unitary political ideology is considered one of the fundamental aspects of the Chinese political heritage. Since the onset of concern about 1997, we have found neither public objection to the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong, nor the emergence of the quest for political independence (which in fact is militarily and practically infeasible) as a way of solving Hong Kong's political future.

However, feelings of reluctance and anxiety about the scheduled Chinese takeover of the territory are obvious. It is noteworthy that in addition to the common perception of a conflict of interests between Hong Kong and China (56.3 per cent of respondents held this opinion while only 27.8 per cent thought otherwise), widespread distrust of the Chinese government, and the manifest problem of emigration, respondents were nearly equally split on their responses to the following

question: 'Some Hong Kong people think that Hong Kong should become an independent country instead of being taken over by China. Do you agree with this?' Disagreement or strong disagreement was expressed by 46.7 per cent of respondents with the idea of political independence, in comparison with 41.6 per cent who strongly agreed or agreed and 11.6 per cent who were undecided.

Table 8.7. Attitudes towards Political Independence (%)

	Disagreed	Agreed	Don't Know	(N)
Total	46.7	41.6	11.6	(396)
Sex				
male	61.9	31.2	6.9	(202)
female	30.9	52.6	16.5	(194)
Educational level				
low	36.7	48.5	14.8	(169)
middle	51.9	37.3	10.8	(185)
high	64.1	33.3	2.6	(39)

The different age groups seemed to vary little in their attitude towards the idea of independence. However, as indicated in Table 8.7, women and the less educated showed a greater tendency to support the political independence of Hong Kong. Besides, those who distrusted the Chinese government, had no confidence in Hong Kong's future, were worried that there would be political instability before 1997, already had plans to emigrate, perceived a conflict of interests between Hong Kong and China, and claimed a Hong Kong identity were also more likely to endorse the independence of Hong Kong rather than the takeover by China. For example, 75 per cent of those who did not perceive the existence of a conflict of interests between Hong Kong and China disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of independence, as compared with 43.8 per cent of those who perceived the existence of a conflict of interests.

Attitudes towards the Political System

Acceptance of the Political System

In line with previous studies, the present findings also indicate overwhelming endorsement of the existing political system. When respondents were asked the following question: 'Some people say: "Though

Hong Kong's political system is not perfect, it's already the best under the present circumstances." Do you agree?", 70.5 per cent of them agreed, and only 21.7 per cent answered in the negative. Moreover, the fact that only a minuscule 7.8 per cent resorted to non-committal replies, which were significantly fewer than the same responses on other political issues, might also reflect the certainty of popular acceptance of the existing political system. As shown in Table 8.8, the younger and the more educated were comparatively more inclined than other people to disagree that under existing circumstances Hong Kong's political system was the best they could get. The respondents' degree of acceptance of the present political system was positively related to their level of satisfaction with government performance ($G=0.52$). Besides, those who trusted the Hong Kong government and claimed a strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong were also more likely to endorse the existing political system.

Table 8.8. Agreement with 'Hong Kong's political system is the best under existing circumstances' (%)

	Disagreed	Agreed	Don't Know	(N)
Total	21.7	70.5	7.8	(396)
Age				
below 30	35.3	61.8	2.9	(102)
30 - 54	19.4	73.0	7.6	(211)
over 54	11.1	75.3	13.6	(81)
Educational level				
low	12.4	75.1	12.4	(169)
middle	26.5	70.3	3.2	(185)
high	35.9	53.8	10.3	(39)

Apart from the general acceptance of the existing political system, the effects of political reforms in the past few years were also positively affirmed. Slightly over half of the respondents (51.5 per cent) considered that, after a series of political reforms, the present political system was better than before. However, though only 9.4 per cent thought otherwise and 15.3 per cent regarded it as the same as before, still a substantial proportion of respondents (23.9 per cent), who were more likely to be female, less educated, and older, could not come up with definite opinions. For those who held definite opinions on this matter, the younger were less likely to consider the present political system worse than before. On the contrary, those who claimed to have

no confidence in Hong Kong's future and distrusted the Hong Kong government were more inclined than others to regard the existing political system, after political reforms, as worse than it had been.

Attitudes towards Democracy, Stability and Prosperity

Regardless of the diverse opinions on the course and the pace of political reform, it is commonly agreed that the overall direction of development of the political system is to maintain the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong society by promoting a more open and democratic government. When respondents were asked to state whether they wanted the Hong Kong government to become democratic or authoritarian, the former was obviously preferred. Some 71.2 per cent of respondents preferred the Hong Kong government to be democratic but not really strong and powerful while only 13.6 per cent wanted the government to be strong and powerful but not really democratic.

Despite the preference for a democratic form of government, the response of the Hong Kong people to the democratic appeals propagated in recent years has been neither active nor enthusiastic. This incongruity may plausibly be accounted for by Hong Kong people's usual apathetic attitude towards political matters, their preoccupation with social stability and prosperity, and their particular conception of democracy.

In the first place, in spite of its general acceptance, democracy was perceived as less important than social stability and prosperity. When respondents were asked to compare the importance of democratic government with stability and prosperity, 58.6 per cent considered the latter more important while only 17.2 per cent thought otherwise. Another 21 per cent, however, considered them equally important. Various socio-economic groups differed slightly in their opinions on this matter, but women were even more preoccupied with social stability and prosperity than men. The preference for social stability and prosperity over democracy is not at all surprising since democracy is a novel political ideal while social stability is a predominant social value, which is derived not only from traditional Chinese culture but also from the traumatic experience of social upheaval that drove many Chinese away from their motherland. Prosperity is the status quo that everyone yearns to maintain.

Furthermore, in maintaining stability and prosperity, the role of government authority is generally recognized. In addition to affirming the detrimental effects of the erosion of government authority on the

stability and prosperity of Hong Kong, 58.6 per cent of the respondents also agreed that 'Hong Kong needs a strong government in order to maintain its political stability' (29.3 per cent thought otherwise and 12.2 per cent had no definite answer). Among various socio-economic groups, the younger and the more educated were less likely to endorse the importance of political authority in the maintenance of political stability than others, while the older and the less educated were more likely to emphasize the role of political authority or to resort to non-committal replies. Besides, those who had confidence in Hong Kong's future, trusted the Hong Kong government and the Chinese government, and endorsed Hong Kong's existing political system were more inclined to emphasize the importance of government authority.

Generally speaking, those who preferred the Hong Kong government to be authoritarian rather than democratic were more likely to emphasize not only the importance of stability and prosperity, but also the significance of political authority in the maintenance of political stability in contrast to those who wanted a democratic government.

In the second place, the respondents' conception of democracy was rather peculiar. In Western democratic theory, the election of representatives is the *sine qua non* of a democratic government, but it does not seem to be important element to the respondents. When they were asked what a democratic government was, 44.2 per cent classified a government as democratic if it was willing to consult public opinion. The second largest proportion (19.7 per cent) regarded a government that could lead the people as democratic. Only 14.9 per cent considered democratic government as a government elected by the people. And 8.1 per cent even thought that a government which treated the people in a fatherly way was democratic. Apart from those who had no definite opinion on this matter (who were also more likely to be less educated and the older), no significant difference was found among various socio-economic groups with respect to conceptions of democracy. Given such conceptions of democracy, it is not surprising that the Hong Kong people's favourable attitude towards democracy is not translated into active support for the democratic activists.

Attitudes towards Elections and Political Parties

Elections fill an important role in the democratic credo. In Hong Kong, the direct election of political leaders is a new and controversial issue. Although 64.1 per cent of respondents claimed to trust Legislative Council members, only 48 per cent gave positive answers to the following question: 'Do you think that through the direct election of Legisla-

tive Council members, some more trustworthy political leaders can emerge?' Only 22.7 per cent thought otherwise. A substantial proportion of the respondents (29.3 per cent) had no definite answer and these were more likely to be the less educated and the older. There was no significant difference of opinion among various socio-economic groups on the direct election of Legislative Council members. However, those who claimed to have a bad impression of government critics and regarded a government which could lead the people as democratic were more likely to disagree that the direct election of Legislative Council members could result in the emergence of more trustworthy leaders. For example, 47.5 per cent of the respondents who considered democratic government as one which could lead the people, downgraded the positive function of direct election, while only 15.6 per cent of those who regarded democratic government as government elected by the people did so.

Political parties, though not an indispensable part of a political system, exist widely not only in democratic societies but also in many authoritarian polities. Parties function as one of the major institutional links between the public and the decision-makers. They serve to recruit political leaders, articulate and aggregate political demands, exert influence on government, and play an important role in political socialization and mobilization. However, since the appearance of political parties in China, the term 'political party' has become a horror to the ordinary Chinese. Even in Hong Kong, despite its high degree of modernization and westernization, the abhorrence of political parties seems to linger on. In this survey, only 25 per cent of respondents supported the formation of political parties in Hong Kong while 50.5 per cent opposed it. Nearly a quarter, 24.5 per cent of respondents gave no definite answer, which attests to the controversial nature of the matter. On the whole, the less educated, women, and the older were less likely than others to have definite opinions on this issue. For those who had definite opinions, different genders and age groups varied only slightly in their attitudes towards the formation of political parties. But those with a higher educational level were more inclined to support the formation of political parties than others. Moreover, respondents' attitudes towards the formation of political parties was not significantly related to their conception of the function of direct elections, the role of government authority in the maintenance of political stability, or their preference for democracy. However, respondents who reported an increase of political interest in the past three years were more likely to support the formation of political parties. As expected, those who

defined democratic government as elective government were also more inclined than others to support the formation of political parties.

Table 8.9. Attitudes towards the Formation of Political Parties (%)

	Disagreed	Agreed	Don't Know	(N)
Total	50.5	25.0	24.5	(396)
Selected conceptions of democratic government				
consultative government	57.1	24.0	18.9	(175)
government that can lead	57.7	24.4	17.9	(78)
elective government	39.0	44.1	16.9	(59)

Attitudes towards the Hong Kong Government

Evaluation of Government Performance

The satisfactory performance of the Hong Kong government has been considered as one of the major reasons for the people's widespread acceptance of the colonial regime. The present findings also indicate a favourable evaluation of the performance of the Hong Kong government. Although 46.5 per cent of respondents regarded the performance of the Hong Kong government as about average, a substantial proportion (42 per cent) rated its performance as good or very good. Only 6.6 per cent thought it was bad or very bad.

Table 8.10. Evaluation of Government Performance (%)

	Bad	Average	Good	Don't Know	(N)
Total	6.6	46.5	42.0	5.0	(396)
Age					
below 30	8.8	54.9	34.3	2.0	(102)
30 - 54	4.7	50.2	41.2	3.8	(211)
over 54	8.6	27.2	53.1	11.1	(81)
Educational level					
low	7.7	37.9	45.6	8.9	(169)
middle	4.3	51.9	41.6	2.2	(185)
high	10.3	59.0	28.2	2.6	(39)

Among various socio-economic groups, older people and the less educated were more likely to report a higher level of satisfaction with

government performance or gave no definite answer. The proportion of the younger and the more educated who rated the performance of the Hong Kong government as about average was greater than others.

By and large, the respondents' evaluation of government performance seems to depend primarily on their perception of social conditions rather than their own personal situation. Thus, while there were no major statistical correlations between their degree of satisfaction with government performance and their level of satisfaction with various personal life domains (e.g., educational attainment, current housing condition, state of health, etc.), the former was found to be closely related to their level of satisfaction with a variety of social situations. For example, the more they were satisfied with Hong Kong's economic situation, political situation, social situation, government performance in handling social problems, the present political system, and the fairness of the legal system, the more likely they were to be satisfied with the general performance of the Hong Kong government ($G = 0.39, 0.46, 0.54, 0.58, 0.52,$ and 0.50 respectively). Furthermore, those who had confidence in Hong Kong's future, trusted the Hong Kong government and the Chinese government, and expressed a strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong, were also more likely to appreciate the general performance of the Hong Kong government ($G = 0.51, 0.52, 0.41,$ and 0.31 respectively). It is noteworthy that despite the general perception of the erosion of government authority in recent years and its detrimental effects on Hong Kong's stability and prosperity, they were not closely related to the respondents' evaluation of government performance.

Attitudes towards the Erosion of Government Authority

Government authority is widely perceived as an important factor in the maintenance of political stability and effectiveness. However, in evaluating the changes of government authority in the past three years, a substantial proportion of respondents (54.3 per cent) did think that the authority of the Hong Kong government had been eroded, 28.3 per cent did not think so and 17.5 per cent gave no definite answer on this matter.

The older and the less educated were less likely to give definite answers. Hence, 30.9 per cent of those over 54 and 25.4 per cent of those with a low educational level said they did not know whether the authority of the Hong Kong government had been eroded or not, in contrast with 8.8 per cent of those below 30 and 11.6 per cent of those with middle educational level or above who gave the same answer. On

the other hand, different socio-economic groups who had definite answers on the extent of the erosion of government authority seemed to vary slightly in their evaluations. The respondents' perception of the extent of erosion of government authority was also not significantly correlated with their degree of emigration propensity, level of satisfaction with government performance, degree of acceptance of the existing political system, and their attitude towards government critics. However, those who expressed no confidence in Hong Kong's future, distrusted the Hong Kong government, the Chinese government and the British government were more likely to affirm the erosion of government authority in the past three years ($G = -0.54, -0.36, -0.42, \text{ and } -0.45$ respectively).

Table 8.11. Attitudes towards the Erosion of Government Authority (%)

	No	Yes	Don't Know	(N)
Erosion of government authority	28.3	54.3	17.5	(396)
Effect:				
Endanger Hong Kong	23.5	64.9	11.7	(396)
Reasons:*				
Eroded by the Chinese government	15.8	76.7	7.4	(215)
Eroded by democratic lobbyists	48.4	35.8	15.8	(215)
Remedy:*				
Take strong measure to re-establish authority	50.7	37.7	11.6	(215)

* refers only to those who perceived the erosion of government authority in the past 3 years.

In spite of the general preference for democratic over authoritarian government, the majority of respondents (64.9 per cent), regardless of their socio-economic background and attitudes towards the role of government authority, considered that the erosion of the authority of the Hong Kong government would endanger Hong Kong's prosperity and stability. Only 23.5 per cent did not think the erosion of government authority would generate such detrimental effects and 11.7 per cent had no definite answer. As expected, the older and the less educated were less likely to have definite opinions on this matter. However, respondents who were worried about the occurrence of political instability before 1997 and distrusted the Chinese government showed a greater tendency to affirm the detrimental effects of the erosion of

government authority on Hong Kong's prosperity and stability ($G = 0.50$ and -0.36 respectively).

In examining the respondents' perceptions of the reasons for the erosion of government authority, two possible causes, the Chinese government and democratic lobbyists, were raised. As indicated in Table 8.11, the Chinese government was regarded as the cause of the erosion of government authority by a majority (76.7 per cent) of respondents, compared with 35.8 per cent agreeing that the erosion had been caused by democratic lobbyists. Moreover, apart from the substantial proportion of respondents (48.4 per cent) who disagreed that the activities of democratic lobbyists had eroded the authority of the Hong Kong government, quite a number of respondents (15.8 per cent) still had no definite answer to the effect of the activities of democratic lobbyists, in contrast with 7.4 per cent saying that they did not know the effect of the activities of the Chinese government on the erosion of government authority.

Apart from those who did not think that government authority had been eroded, the older people were more likely to have no definite opinion on the effect of the activities of democratic lobbyists. Thus, 31.6 per cent of those over 54 years old replied that they did not know whether democratic lobbyists had eroded government authority or not, whereas only 11.1 per cent of those below 30 gave the same answer. Among those who held definite views on the reason of the erosion of government authority, various socio-economic groups seemed to have no significant differences of opinion on the extent of impact of the Chinese government and democratic lobbyists respectively on Hong Kong government's authority. Nevertheless, those who trusted the Chinese government showed a greater tendency to think the erosion of government authority had been made by democratic lobbyists than those who distrusted the Chinese government (65.2 per cent vs. 35.4 per cent). Besides, despite its relatively small proportion, respondents who did not think the erosion of government authority would endanger Hong Kong's prosperity and stability were also more likely to agree that the activities of democratic lobbyists had eroded the authority of the Hong Kong government than those who affirmed the detrimental effects (59 per cent vs. 37.3 per cent).

In spite of the general perception of the erosion of government authority in recent years and its detrimental effect on Hong Kong's prosperity and stability, half of the respondents who agreed with the incidence of erosion of government authority did not support the Hong Kong government's taking strong measures to re-establish authority, while 37.7 per cent thought otherwise and 11.7 per cent had no definite

answer. Certain groups of respondents who held definite opinions on this matter (those who were younger, with middle educational level, trusted the Hong Kong government to an average degree, did not think that the erosion of government authority would endanger Hong Kong's prosperity and stability, disagreed with the importance of political authority in the maintenance of Hong Kong's stability) were less likely than other groups to support the government's taking strong measures to re-establish authority.

Attitudes towards Government Critics

The increasingly close relationship between the government and the people and the introduction of political reforms are inevitably conducive to more public criticisms of government performance. Generally speaking, the government has been tolerant of its critics in recent years. Nevertheless, in view of the favourable evaluation of the performance of the government and the existing political system, and the general preoccupation with social stability, it is not at all surprising that a substantial proportion of respondents (35.1 per cent) (who were more likely to be female and less-educated) did not have a definite view of government critics. Moreover, the percentage of respondents who claimed to think badly of government critics was even lower than those who had a favourable impression (27.5 per cent vs. 37.4 per cent).

Table 8.12. Attitudes towards Government Critics (%)

	Bad	Good	Don't Know	(N)
Total	27.5	37.4	35.1	(396)
Sex				
male	31.7	39.6	28.7	(202)
female	23.2	35.1	41.8	(194)
Educational level				
low	26.6	29.6	43.8	(169)
middle	27.0	43.8	29.2	(185)
high	30.8	43.6	25.6	(39)
Sense of belonging				
low	20.0	43.3	36.7	(30)
middle	15.8	48.4	35.8	(95)
high	32.3	33.1	34.6	(266)

Comparatively speaking, respondents who declared a high sense of belonging to Hong Kong society were more likely to express a negative

opinion of government critics than others. Those who took a more democratic stance towards the political system were more favourably disposed towards government critics. Thus, 47.9 per cent of those who agreed that the direct election of Legislative Council members could result in the emergence of more trustworthy political leaders claimed to have a good impression of government critics, compared with 30 per cent of those who disagreed. Likewise, 50 per cent of those to whom democratic government was more important than stability and prosperity had a good impression of government critics, in contrast with 36.2 per cent of those who did not.

Conceptions of Government Functions

Until the nineteenth century, apart from the occasional and inevitable concerns with the economy and social life, the principal functions of most governments were the maintenance of internal order and international relations. However, by the turn of the century, involvement in economic and social development had gradually emerged as a fundamental function of government.

In Hong Kong, during the past few decades, the growing complexity and westernization of society and the demise of traditional social support networks had gradually undermined the traditional Chinese emphasis on self-help, and avoidance of government contact. Dependence on the government for the satisfaction of public and private needs has been fostered.

The growing dependence on government intervention is indicated not only in the public's accelerating demands for a variety of government services as entitlements, but also in the findings of previous studies on public perception of responsibilities and functions of the government (Lau and Kuan, 1988:80-93). The present findings also testify to the fast-adopted conception of an interventionist government. In the survey, a series of probing questions were asked of the respondents to examine their degree of support for the government taking a variety of policies or actions in the social and economic spheres. The results are presented in Table 8.13.

Findings in this survey indicate manifest support for government interventionism and government as the guardian of social and personal well-being. In spite of the well-known emphasis of Hong Kong Chinese on economic development, social well-being was found to be more valued by the respondents than economic growth. A majority of them (71.5 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that 'Hong

Table 8.13. Perceived Functions of Government (%)

Statements	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	Don't Know	(N)
Social sphere						
General principle: Provide more social services even at the expense of economic growth	0.0	19.7	67.7	3.8	8.8	(396)
Specific aspects:						
Set up a central provident fund run by the government	0.0	7.6	71.5	8.8	12.1	(396)
Impose heavier tax on the rich to reduce income inequality	0.3	15.9	57.8	16.9	9.1	(396)
Provide unemployment relief for the unemployed	0.5	18.2	64.6	9.6	7.1	(396)
Encourage and help workers to form labour unions	0.5	15.9	65.4	3.3	14.9	(396)
Economic sphere						
General principles:						
<i>Laissez-faire</i> policy	1.8	22.0	54.0	3.5	18.7	(396)
Privatization of public services	4.3	52.8	25.8	3.8	16.7	(396)
Specific aspects:						
Actively control business activities to prevent unscrupulous businessmen from cheating people	0.0	7.6	77.3	10.1	5.0	(396)
Set up long-term economic policy	0.0	3.3	80.1	5.8	10.9	(396)
Actively help the development of some industries and commercial undertakings	0.0	3.8	80.6	4.5	10.1	(396)
Protect H.K. industries from outside competition	0.5	13.9	70.7	4.8	10.1	(396)
Control the price of daily necessities	0.5	26.0	59.8	8.6	5.0	(396)
Prevent business corporations from monopolizing the market	0.5	20.5	60.9	6.1	12.1	(396)
Devise effective measures to control speculations by both citizens and business corporations	1.5	22.2	60.1	6.1	10.1	(396)
Set up a statutory minimum wage	0.8	33.3	54.3	3.3	8.4	(396)
Take back the responsibility of running public utilities	0.8	45.7	35.6	2.8	15.2	(396)

Kong government should provide more social services even at the expense of economic growth.' Also, 80.3 per cent of the respondents urged the government to set up a central provident fund, 74.2 per cent supported the provision of unemployment relief for the unemployed, and 74.7 per cent even supported the government's imposing heavier taxes on the rich to reduce income inequality. Though the participation of Hong Kong Chinese in labour unions is not common, a majority of the respondents (68.7 per cent) also supported government encouragement and help to workers to form labour unions.

The respondents' attitudes towards the age-old practice of government economic non-intervention were quite ambivalent. Although a plurality of respondents (57.5 per cent) still supported the government's *laissez-faire* policy, nearly one-fourth (23.8 per cent) rejected this policy and 18.7 per cent answered 'don't know' or gave no answer. While there was still general support for the principle of *laissez-faire*, inconsistent viewpoints were commonly found. Firstly, disapproval of the shift of responsibility from the government to private sectors was discernible, and 57.1 per cent disagreed with the policy of privatization of public services. There was even a number of respondents who supported the opposite shift of responsibility of running public utilities, such as electricity, gas, telephone and transportation, from the private sector back to the government. Moreover, the rest of the probing questions on specific government interference in a variety of economic affairs, especially its functions of maintaining law and order and in facilitating an infrastructure favourable to economic development, were strongly supported by the respondents. Nearly 90 per cent of the respondents supported the government's setting up a long-term economic policy, in assisting the development of some business undertakings, and in actively controlling business activities to prevent unscrupulous businessmen from cheating the customers. More than three-quarters (75.5 per cent) also supported government protection of Hong Kong industries from outside competition. Nevertheless, despite support for government interference in general economic affairs, a lingering support for the free capitalist economy was still discernible when government economic interventions came closer to the public's personal daily livelihood. For example, still nearly one-fourth of the respondents rejected government control of the price of daily necessities, business monopolies, and business speculation. Over one-third also disagreed with the idea of setting a statutory minimum wage.

On the whole, various socio-economic groups differed only slightly in their conceptions of government functions. However, the older people and the less educated were more likely to give non-committal

answers and to support the government control of the price of daily necessities and the provision of unemployment relief, while the younger and the more educated were more likely than others to oppose the government taking back the responsibility for running public utilities.

Our present findings demonstrate a general expectation of the government to play an active and interventionist role with regard to the functions selected in this analysis. Since the public's favourable attitude towards the colonial political system is largely based on the government's performance, the way in which the government (well-known for its adherence to *laissez-faire*) react to the public's demand for interventionism role will have serious political consequences in the transitional period. On the other hand, it is undeniable that the government's self-imposed limitation of functions accounts for the fact that Hong Kong Chinese have enjoyed a substantial degree of cultural, economic and social freedom in the past few decades. The recent upsurge of public request for government interventions in almost every area of life may eventually create a dilemma between government involvement in personal daily livelihood and the long-cherished value of individual freedom.³

Political Involvement

In modern societies, individual participation in political activities is generally regarded as a virtue in its own right. It has been perceived not only as a civic duty, but also as one of the best methods to ensure one's interests in society. Hong Kong people have nevertheless long been characterized as socio-politically alienated⁴, apathetic, and afflicted with a strong sense of political powerlessness. The following discussion primarily focuses on people's political attentiveness, political interest, sense of political efficacy and action propensity.

Political Attentiveness

Ostensibly the majority of citizens is comparatively politically inactive and lacking in interest. Nevertheless they are not totally uninterested in obtaining political information, particularly local political news. As shown in Table 8.14, excluding illiterate respondents, over half of the respondents (56.1 per cent) reported that they often or very often read local political news in newspapers, while 41 per cent said that they rarely read such information. However, the proportion of attentive respondents dropped drastically to 39.7 per cent and 27.6 per cent

respectively with regard to news relating to world politics and Chinese political matters. Respondents who habitually read local political news in newspapers were also more likely to read the political news of China and the world ($G = 0.71$ and 0.63 respectively).

Table 8.14. Frequencies of Reading Political News in Newspapers (%)

	Very Rare	Rare	Often	Very Often	Don't Know	(N)
HK's political news	14.8	26.2	44.7	11.4	2.9	(351)
World political news	22.2	35.3	33.1	6.6	2.9	(351)
China's political news	30.8	38.5	20.2	7.4	3.1	(351)

Since newspaper reading requires a higher level of cognitive skill and involvement, it is to be expected that respondents who read political news in newspapers were more likely to be male, better educated and white collar workers. Age was not a significant factor. However, those under 30 turned out to be the least attentive group with regard to China's political news. In addition, the proportion of respondents who frequently read world political news was greater among those who were planning to emigrate.

Political Interest

The lack of political interest among Hong Kong Chinese has been extensively documented. The approach of 1997 and a series of political reforms have nevertheless ignited a measure of political interest among the masses. Although 39.5 per cent of respondents declared that their interest in Hong Kong politics was about the same as compared with three years ago and 14.4 per cent had no definite answer, 37.9 per cent replied that their political interest had increased while only 8.2 per cent reported a decrease.

Various socio-economic groups differed slightly in change of political interest in the past three years. However, the less educated and the older people were less likely to give definite answers or to indicate an increase of political interest than others. For respondents with definite answers, those who did not accept the existing political system were more likely to report a change of political interest. Thus 46.4 per cent of those who considered the existing political system to be the best in the present situation reported no change of political interest, as compared with 28.6 per cent of those who did not agree. In addition,

respondents who were planning to emigrate were more likely to report an increase or decrease of political interest than those who were not.

Table 8.15. Change of Political Interest: RE 3 years ago (%)

	Decreased	Same	Increased	Don't Know	(N)
Total	8.2	39.5	37.9	14.4	(1662)
Sex					
male	9.5	40.8	38.2	11.6	(846)
female	7.0	38.1	37.6	17.3	(816)
Age					
below 30	8.3	37.0	47.9	6.8	(457)
30 - 54	9.0	40.1	38.8	12.1	(898)
over 54	5.9	41.4	20.7	31.9	(304)
Educational level					
low	6.4	41.5	27.6	24.5	(660)
middle	8.9	39.7	44.2	7.3	(822)
high	11.8	31.4	49.1	7.7	(169)

Sense of Political Efficacy and Action Propensity

The long established practice of secluded colonial governance, in conjunction with a lack of political interest among the masses, has inevitably nourished a pervasive sense of political powerlessness among Hong Kong people. In spite of increasing opportunities, channels and requests for the public to express their opinions on a variety of public issues in recent years, the people's feeling of political powerlessness not only persists but seems to become more severe when compared with previous survey findings on similar topics. In the present study, an overwhelming percentage of respondents (93.3 per cent) thought that they had no influence on government policy, while only 4.6 per cent considered that they had a little and 0.2 per cent that they had very much influence. It is noteworthy that a negligible 1.8 per cent of respondents gave non-committal replies ('don't know' or 'no answer') and this percentage was definitely the lowest one among the same categories of responses on other socio-political matters.

This growing sense of political inefficacy among the respondents, which might be partly accounted for by popular belief in the increasing involvement of the Chinese government in the governance of Hong Kong and the erosion of the authority of the Hong Kong government, inevitably impedes active political involvement. Voting turnouts, though not necessarily a valid indicator of political participation due to

variations in the substantive meanings of voting in different socio-political contexts, are nevertheless one of the most common standards in measuring conventional and institutionalized mass political participation. In Hong Kong, the overall voter turnout rates in District Board, Urban Council and Regional Council elections in recent years clearly indicate people's apathy with respect to political participation.

Nevertheless, the feeling of political inefficacy and apathy does not necessarily result in complete political passivity or surrendering the right to advocate personal or public interests whenever such interests are at stake. When respondents were asked the question: 'Suppose a bill is being considered by the government which you think is unjust or will have adverse effects on you. What would you be most likely to do?' only less than half of them (47.2 per cent) said they would do nothing at all (as against 93.3 per cent who felt they could not influence government decision making). Though such self-reported propensity for action could only be interpreted as an indication of a potential for action which might not necessarily be actualized, it nevertheless shows that a substantial proportion of respondents did express a relatively high propensity for action should the 'appropriate' stimulus appear. As indicated in Table 8.16, the less educated and the older people were more likely to do nothing than others.

Table 8.16. Propensity for Political Action (%)

	No	Yes	Don't Know	(N)
Total	47.2	45.1	7.6	(396)
Age				
below 30	45.1	50.0	4.9	(102)
30 - 54	44.5	48.8	6.6	(211)
over 54	56.8	29.6	13.6	(81)
Educational level				
low	53.8	33.7	12.4	(169)
middle	45.9	49.7	4.3	(185)
high	28.2	71.8	0.0	(39)

In attempting to protect their interests, 45.1 per cent of respondents said they would probably try to do something to influence the government. Their preferred influence tactics, which were similar to those found in the 1986 survey, were listed in Table 8.17. Despite the significant increase in and acceptance of group-based and unconventional influence tactics in the past few years, conventional forms of action were still being chosen by the majority of respondents as the most

probable actions they would take whenever there was a need to express oneself politically. Among these courses of action, institutional means, e.g. relaying one's opinion to the District Board or the relevant government department, were the most preferred methods. Probably due to their preoccupation with social stability, unconventional group-based political actions (from collection of signatures to political demonstration), whilst perceived as the more effective means, were selected by only 7.5 per cent of respondents as the most probable actions they would take. The proportion of respondents who thought they would join petitions even decreased from 11.3 per cent in 1986 to 4 per cent in this study. Furthermore, no significant statistical difference was found among various socio-economic groups in their preference for influence tactics.

Table 8.17. Selected Means to Influence Government Policies (%)

Do nothing	47.2
Contact District Board	10.9
Contact government department	8.3
Contact Omelco	2.0
Contact influential person	4.0
Contact mass media	3.0
Join petition	4.0
Join demonstration/protest	3.5
Action depends on situation	5.1
Others	4.3
Don't know/No answer	7.6
(N)	(396)

By and large, Hong Kong's particular political environment means that the expansion of higher education, the rise of the new middle class, and the spread of channels for political participation have surprisingly not increased the number of self-confident citizens who take the initiative in participating in politics. Living in uncertain times, many people are attentive to local political information, but active and systematic political involvement is still uncommon.

Political Trust

Political trust is a major aspect of political culture. Trust between government and citizens has a significant impact on political stability

and policy effectiveness. This section focuses on the people's trust in two types of political authority: the Hong Kong government and the political leaders. Moreover, in view of the growing importance of the role of the Chinese government in Hong Kong, the respondents' trust in the Chinese government is also examined.

Trust in Governments

The establishment of colonial rule in Hong Kong was originally based on military force. However, due to the satisfactory performance of the bureaucracy, the lack of viable political alternatives, and habituation, the colonial government has been able to maintain continuous and stable rule over Hong Kong for about one and a half centuries and has managed to secure a certain level of legitimacy among the Hong Kong people.

Table 8.18. Trust in Governments (%)

	HK Gov't	British Gov't	Chinese Gov't
Strongly distrust	0.9	4.2	6.7
Distrust	17.3	25.3	37.1
Average	27.5	26.9	23.3
Trust	45.1	29.0	19.6
Strongly trust	3.4	1.4	1.4
Don't know/No answer	5.7	13.2	11.9
(N)	(1662)	(1662)	(1662)

Table 8.18 shows the general acceptance of the Hong Kong government and the lack of trust in the Chinese government. Less than one-fifth (18.2 per cent) of respondents reported distrust or strong distrust in the Hong Kong government, 29.5 per cent in the British government, but up to 43.8 per cent in the Chinese government.

Various socio-economic groups differed in their level of trust in the Hong Kong government. Generally speaking, respondents who were older, less educated and lower in occupational status were more likely to report a higher level of trust in the Hong Kong government. Those who were younger, more educated, higher in occupational status and with more income showed a greater tendency to express an average and even low level of trust in it. Besides, the respondents' level of trust in the Hong Kong government was positively related to their degree of satisfaction with its performance, the level of their sense of belonging

to Hong Kong society and also their level of trust in the Chinese government ($G = 0.52, 0.39, \text{ and } 0.56$ respectively).

With respect to the differences of the level of trust in the Chinese government among various socio-economic groups, those who were older, less educated, lower in occupational status and with lesser income were also more likely to trust the Chinese government than others. In addition, the proportion of respondents who claimed a Chinese identity, emphasized the importance of political authority in the maintenance of Hong Kong's stability and prosperity, and were satisfied with the performance of the Hong Kong government were also more inclined to trust the Chinese government than those who held different views.

Table 8.19. Level of Trust in Governments (%)

	Low	Average	High	Don't Know	(N)
Hong Kong Government	18.2	27.5	48.5	5.7	(1662)
Age					
below 30	21.4	39.6	36.8	2.2	(457)
30 - 54	19.6	25.8	49.2	5.3	(898)
over 54	9.2	14.5	64.1	12.2	(304)
Educational level					
low	12.7	20.6	57.0	9.7	(660)
middle	20.9	29.9	45.6	3.4	(822)
high	26.6	43.2	28.4	1.8	(169)
Chinese Government	43.8	23.3	21.0	11.9	(1662)
Age					
below 30	59.3	21.9	11.2	7.7	(457)
30 - 54	43.1	25.7	20.7	10.5	(898)
over 54	22.7	18.8	36.5	22.0	(304)
Educational level					
low	33.6	20.6	28.0	17.7	(660)
middle	49.4	25.5	16.7	8.4	(822)
high	56.2	23.1	14.2	6.5	(169)

Trust in Political Leaders

Political leadership, as one of the most general forms of power, plays an important role in the functioning of any political system. The more economically developed a society, the greater the proportion of citizens

and their daily activities are directly influenced by the decisions and actions of political leaders.

However, despite the general recognition of the interrelationship between government activities and one's daily living, the increasing demand for government intervention in the socio-economic sphere, and the general confirmation of the positive contributions of political leaders and their activities (Lau and Kuan, 1988), the continued absence of trusted political leaders is a salient phenomenon in Hong Kong.

Similar to previous findings, the majority of our respondents reported having no particularly trusted 'national' leader (75.6 per cent) nor local leader (67.7 per cent) in mind. As expected, those who gave no definite answer were more likely to be female, older and less educated.

Table 8.20. Recognition of Trusted Political Leader (%)

	'National' Leader	Local Leader
Yes	13.2	10.6
No	75.6	67.7
Don't know/No answer	10.1	21.7
(N)	(1662)	(396)

The specific character of political leadership depends on the combination of three aspects: the personal characteristics of the leaders, the instruments they have at their disposal, and the situations they face. The prevailing absence of particularly trusted 'national' and local leaders in the mind of the Hong Kong Chinese can be regarded as a 'natural' outcome of the long established practice of the colonial political system. Firstly, the apersonal and relatively anonymous bureaucratic character of the political establishment have prevented the actual positional power-holders or decision-makers, e.g., government officials, from becoming identifiable political leaders. Though the common dichotomy of leadership, e.g., the 'real' leader and the 'office-holder' or 'manager', is found to be oversimplified, the 'real' or charismatic type of leader is nevertheless more eye-catching and can easily be developed as an identifiable political leader. Secondly, the closed and centralized character of the power structure, as evidenced by the lack of a meaningful electoral system and the occupation of nearly all formal political positions by government officials and their appointees has naturally obstructed the emergence of any popular 'national' or

local political leaders. Furthermore, the high level of political stability and rapid socio-economic development in the past few decades also render unnecessary the formation of an alternative indigenous political leadership as a challenge to or substitute for the colonial regime.

Nevertheless, the absence of trusted leaders as individuals in the public mind does not necessarily mean pervasive distrust of political institutions and political groups. It is perfectly possible for leadership to be impersonalized but still accepted by the people. It was to discover the extent of the acceptance that a list of organizations and groups with leadership roles was presented to the respondents and their trust in them examined. In terms of the formality of the leadership role and the amount of power actually exercised, these leadership groups can be roughly divided into three categories:

1. those who occupy formal political positions and possess a certain degree of political power, e.g., the Legislative Council, Legislative Council Members, and the New China News Agency;
2. those who may not occupy formal political positions but are considered to have influential power in political decisions, e.g., business leaders;
3. those who may not occupy formal political positions but are active participants in the political arena, e.g., pressure groups and democratic leaders.

The respondents' levels of trust in these leadership groups are presented in Table 8.21 in descending order.

Table 8.21. Level of Trust in Various Leadership Bodies (%)

	Trust	Distrust	Don't Know	(N)
Government official	66.2	16.7	17.2	(396)
LegCo elected member	64.1	10.1	25.7	(396)
Legislative Council	61.6	11.6	26.8	(396)
Scholar	61.1	10.1	28.8	(396)
District Board member	56.8	22.5	20.7	(396)
LegCo appointed member	52.5	19.5	28.0	(396)
Pressure group	40.7	24.3	35.1	(396)
Democratic leader	39.9	23.7	36.4	(396)
Business leader	35.7	29.1	35.3	(396)
New China News Agency	31.3	34.1	34.6	(396)

On the whole, a substantial proportion of respondents (from 17.2 per cent to 36.4 per cent) had no definite answer on the level of trust in these various types of leaders, particularly the newly emerged or non-institutionalized political actors (i.e., democratic leader, pressure group and the New China News Agency). And those who gave non-committal replies were more likely to be female, the less educated and older people.

The present data indicated that the greatest trust was in existing government bodies. Some 66.2, 64.1 and 61.6 per cent of respondents declared trust respectively in government officials, Legislative Council elected members and the Legislative Council, who/which actually occupy formal political positions and exercise the bulk of political power. This general acceptance of the existing power establishment is in fact in accordance with people's general satisfaction with the government's performance. District Board members and Legislative Council appointed members, though also trusted by the majority of respondents (56.8 per cent and 52.5 per cent respectively), were positioned at the lowest level of trust as compared with other government bodies. The reasons are probably due to the limited authority and duties granted to the former and the perceived 'yes-man' image of the latter.

To the majority of respondents, the first priority of an ideal political leader should be the pursuit of the interests of the Hong Kong people. Hence 67.4 per cent of respondents thought that the elected Legislative Council members from functional groups or electoral colleges should represent the interests of the Hong Kong people rather than their constituencies' interests, while only 19.2 per cent considered otherwise. Therefore, since business leaders are usually conceived of being in pursuit of self-interest and the New China News Agency as the representative of the interests of Mainland China, they were both ranked at the bottom with regard to trustworthiness. Moreover, the New China News Agency was the only leadership body listed in the survey that got a greater proportion of distrust (34.1 per cent) by the respondents than trust (31.3 per cent). The level of trust in New China News Agency was positively correlated with the respondents' level of trust in the Chinese government.

Scholars are a relatively different category among the leadership actors. Scholars, who used to enjoy high status in Chinese culture and who are the major object of government co-option, were found to be trusted by the majority of respondents (61.1 per cent) with only 10.1 per cent taking a different view. As there is an increasing number of scholars who are willing to participate in political activities, either

through the electoral process or by taking up advisory positions in the government, their role in the political system is noteworthy.

Pressure groups and democratic leaders, who tend to use unconventional and publicity-oriented tactics to pressure the government, have played an active role in the political arena in the past few years. They have been actively involved in the improvement of the well-being of the ordinary people and recently in the promotion of electoral democracy. However, a substantial proportion of the respondents still showed an ambivalent attitude towards these 'representative' and grass-roots leaders. Slightly over one-third of the respondents gave the non-committal answer of 'don't know' as they were unable to determine the trustworthiness of these leaders. Only approximately 40 per cent of the respondents (representing a degree of trust lower than that gained by those 'legitimate' political leadership agents) claimed to trust pressure groups and democratic leaders (nearly one-fourth took a different view). Moreover, similar to previous findings, the effectiveness of pressure groups in improving the living conditions of the common people was not yet positively acknowledged. Just over a quarter, 26 per cent, of the respondents rated their contributions as very little or little, only 17.5 per cent as large or very large. Some 43.2 per cent considered their performance in this respect as average, and 13.4 per cent replied 'don't know' or gave no answer. Nevertheless, respondents seemed to have a better impression of the pressure group leaders than the candidates for the District Board, Urban Council and Legislative Council elections. When they were asked to evaluate the foremost motives of pressure group leaders in criticizing and making suggestions on public policies, only 18.7 per cent interpreted their motives as 'self-interest' while 35.1 per cent as 'serving society' and 32.6 per cent as a mixture of both. (The distribution of responses to the motives of the electoral candidates were 20.5 per cent, 28 per cent, and 39.1 per cent respectively)

By and large, despite the absence of particularly trusted 'national' and local leaders, the level of trust bestowed by the respondents on different kinds of leadership groups not only reflects their general acceptance of the existing formal political power structure, but also their conventional and conservative orientation towards political leadership.

Notes

1. Throughout this chapter, a relationship is said to exist between two variables or phenomena when the Chi-square value is significant at 0.05 level unless specified otherwise.
2. See note 2 of the chapter on 'Attitudes towards social problems'.
3. 90.1 per cent of respondents rated freedom as an important or very important thing in one's life.
4. In the present survey, only 7.8 per cent of respondents replied that they had participated in activities organized by social organizations.

Reference

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9 Legal Attitudes

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THE legal system of Hong Kong has basically been implanted from that of England. The rule of law has been commonly accepted by the public and is conceived to be essential to the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong society. In the run up to 1997, the legal system of Hong Kong cannot but undergo some significant transformations. Though the Sino-British Joint Declaration stipulates the preservation of as much as possible of the present system, the government still has to codify the rules, promote bilingual legislation, localize the judiciary, internationalize the legal profession, and set up the final court of appeal in due course.

The extent to which the legal system and the rule of law can be maintained and can function effectively in this transitional period and after 1997 depends not only on the efforts of the Hong Kong and the Chinese governments, but also on the attitudes and reactions of the Hong Kong people to the existing and the new legal system. In view of this, the legal culture of Hong Kong people will be explored in this chapter in two major dimensions: (1) people's attitudes towards the legal system of Hong Kong, and (2) popular legal opinions in light of the influence of traditional Chinese legal thinking and modern legal conceptions. The perception of the applicability of Chinese law in Hong Kong will also be examined.

Legal Orientation

Legal orientation usually refers to the knowledge, evaluation and affection of the people regarding the legal system. The following section focuses primarily on the cognitive and evaluative aspects of the respondents' legal orientation.

Legal Efficacy

Despite the importance of measuring the cognitive dimensions of the legal culture of the ordinary people, it is, in practical terms, very difficult to test the respondents' actual legal knowledge effectively and

accurately. Therefore, the subjective sense of legal efficacy, which refers to the self-perceived ability to understand the legal system, was used in this survey to reflect one's knowledge of the legal system.

Table 9.1. Response to: 'The law and the courts are too complicated to understand' (%)

	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	Don't Know	(N)
Total	0.8	32.1	42.9	12.6	11.6	(396)
Age						
below 30	2.0	47.1	34.3	7.8	8.8	(102)
30 - 54	0.5	31.8	48.3	10.9	8.5	(211)
over 54	0.0	14.8	40.7	22.2	22.2	(81)
Educational level						
low	0.0	19.5	46.7	18.9	14.8	(169)
middle	0.5	38.4	43.2	8.5	9.2	(185)
high	5.1	56.4	23.1	5.1	10.3	(39)

Ordinary people are usually quite ignorant of the legal system. The ignorance of the Hong Kong Chinese is compounded by a language barrier. Though Chinese has been one of the two official languages in Hong Kong since 1974, it has not yet been developed as a language of the law. Thus, as expected, most of the respondents did find it difficult to understand the legal system. When they were asked the following question: 'Do you think the law and the courts are too complicated to understand?', 42.9 per cent agreed and 12.6 per cent strongly agreed with it. Only 32.9 per cent of respondents thought otherwise while 11.6 per cent had no definite answer.

Not surprisingly, this general feeling of legal inefficacy was significantly related to the age and educational level of the respondents. The older and the less educated not only were more likely to give non-committal replies, but, among those who gave definite answers, were also more inclined to express a stronger sense of legal inefficacy than the others ($G = 0.39$ and -0.46 respectively). In addition, respondents who showed a stronger sense of legal inefficacy tended to have a more conservative attitude towards political matters. For example, they were more disposed than other respondents to endorse the present political system, to emphasize the importance of government authority in the maintenance of political stability, and to define a government that could lead the people as democratic.¹

By and large, while legal efficacy may indicate the extent of psychological distance between the people and the legal system, the present findings clearly show that most of our respondents, particularly the older and the less educated, are cognitively alienated from the legal system.

Evaluations of Legal Justice

The people's judgment of legal justice not only constitutes a fundamental aspect of the evaluative dimension of legal culture, but also has a significant impact on the effective functioning of the legal system. In this survey, the sense of legal justice is examined in terms of the respondents' evaluations of the fairness of Hong Kong's legal system as a whole, the fairness of court proceedings, and the perception of the existence of unfair laws. The questions used to measure the above aspects of legal justice and the respective findings are presented in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2. Evaluations of Legal Justice (%)

	Legal System ^a	Trial ^b	Law (general) ^c	Law (specific) ^d
Fair	65.6	16.7	37.6	54.3
Unfair	15.0	76.3	35.1	19.2
Don't know	19.4	7.1	27.3	26.5
(N)	(1662)	(396)	(396)	(396)

The questions on the evaluation of the legal justice are:

- ^a 'In general, do you think the legal system in Hong Kong is fair?'
^b 'Some claim that, in court proceedings, the rich will fare better than the poor, while others think they are treated more or less equally. What do you think?'
^c 'Are there any laws in Hong Kong, which do not affect you, are unjust?'
^d 'Are there any laws in Hong Kong which affect you in an unjust way?'

The data clearly indicate an inconsistent evaluation of the fairness of the legal justice. On the whole, the legal system was regarded as 'fair' by the majority of respondents (65.6 per cent). Although a substantial proportion of respondents (19.4 per cent) (more likely to be female, older, less educated, and with lesser income) had no definite answer; only 15 per cent rated the legal system as 'unfair'. For those who held definite opinions on the fairness of the legal system, different gender and age groups seemed to vary slightly in their evaluations. However, those who were more educated and with higher income did show a

greater tendency to endorse the fairness of Hong Kong's legal system. For example, 91.3 per cent of those with a high educational level regarded the legal system as fair in general whereas 76 per cent of those with a low educational level held the same view.

Despite this general perception of fairness of the legal system, quite a number of negative views were found with respect to specific aspects of the system.

Firstly, just over three-quarters of the respondents (76.3 per cent), regardless of their socio-economic background, thought that court proceedings in Hong Kong were biased against the poor. Only 16.7 per cent considered that rich and poor were treated more or less equally in court trials while 7.1 per cent resorted to non-committal replies. Generally speaking, those who evaluated court trials as unfair were more inclined to admit a stronger sense of legal inefficacy ($G=0.31$), to regard the legal system as unfair ($G=0.61$), and to hold a skeptical attitude towards judges and the legal profession ($G=0.44$ for level of trust in lawyers, $G=0.57$ for level of trust in judges). Besides, they were also more likely to have less satisfaction with the present social situation and with overall government performance ($G=0.31$ and 0.34 respectively).

Secondly, diverse opinions were found with regard to perceptions of the existence of unfair laws. Some 35.1 per cent of respondents claimed that some of the laws in Hong Kong, though not affecting themselves, were unfair, while 37.6 per cent did not think so. As the legal system is usually only marginally related to the daily lives of ordinary people, it is quite natural for people's opinions on the legal system to be based on general impressions and hearsay evidence, or for people to have no firm opinion. Therefore, while nearly a quarter of respondents replied that they did not know whether there were any unfair laws in Hong Kong, only about half of those who claimed the existence of unfair laws (72 out of 139, i.e., 51.8 per cent) could answer when asked to specify an unfair law. In a similar vein, the proportion of respondents reporting the existence of unfair laws affecting themselves was significantly lower than those who claimed the existence of unfair laws that did not affect themselves (19.2 per cent vs. 35.1 per cent). Moreover, when they were asked to specify which law affecting themselves was unfair, only half (38 out of 76, i.e., 50 per cent) had definite answers.

On the whole, no significant difference was found among various socio-economic groups with regard to their attitudes towards the existence of unfair laws. However, those who reported unfair laws that concerned themselves were particularly more disposed to report the

existence of unfair laws that did not affect themselves ($G=0.84$). Besides, respondents who had a bad impression of the government and the legal system (e.g., those who distrusted the government, had a negative evaluation of overall government performance, condemned the legal system on the whole as unfair, regarded court trials as biased against the poor, and distrusted lawyers) were also more likely to report the existence of unfair laws than others. Those who reported unfair laws affecting themselves also showed a greater tendency to distrust judges than other respondents.

In view of the importance of the public image of legal justice to the effective functioning of the legal system, respondents were asked to substantiate their opinions on unfair laws. However, many 'unfair laws' cited by the respondents were not really legal matters *per se* (e.g., increase in prices for public services) or belonged to issues unrelated to particular legal rules (e.g., judicial mistakes and administrative justice). Notwithstanding these confusions, all instances reported by the respondents were included in the following examination of their substantive sense of injustice.

On the whole, there was a total of 116 examples of 'unfair laws' specified by the respondents (Table 9.3). They were broadly classified into three categories.

(1) Issues concerning public laws and public policies:

As law is a set of rules or general propositions made and applied by man to regulate human behaviour and the conduct of social, political, and economic activities in society, its content and development are thus closely related to the particular socio-economic context. In Hong Kong, during the past few decades, government involvement in social and economic affairs has drastically increased in response to the growing complexities of society and accelerating public demands on social and economic rights. The expanding government involvement in socio-economic activities consequently brings about a vast increase in public laws to authorize officials to implement public policies. Public laws, in principle, are enacted to protect and to improve public interests. However, it is not uncommon that public interests ensured by public laws may run counter to some individual interests and thus give rise to a certain degree of dissatisfaction on the part of the 'deprived' parties. In the present survey, the majority of cases reported by the respondents as 'unfair laws' were within the domain of public laws and public policies. As shown in Table 9.3, the majority of unfair public laws reported by the respondents were traffic regulations, such as the point system and traffic contravention penalty (18 cases). Other reported

'unfair laws' touched upon a variety of issues, such as government policies on public services (e.g., the old-age allowance and public housing policies): 9 cases; legal rules on hawkers: 8 cases; government policy on Vietnamese boat people: 7 cases; taxation (e.g., joint tax assessment of married couples): 6 cases; labour laws: 4 cases; legal rules on homosexual behaviour: 2 cases; the Public Order Ordinance; legal rules on cruelty to animals, etc..

Since it is hardly possible for public laws to cater for all affected individual interests, certain grievances towards particular public laws are expected and understandable.

(2) Issues concerning court sentencing:

There were 14 cases cited by the respondents who considered that the terms of punishment for convicted offenders were unfair. Among the elaborations given, only one considered the sentencing of convicted offenders as too harsh. The rest maintained that court sentencing was too lenient. Many of them even complained about the absence of the death penalty. Although retributive and harsh punishment is generally criticized by the 'enlightened public' as destructive and there is no conclusive evidence to support the deterrent value of harsh punishment and the death penalty, many of the respondents still supported the old punishment principle and even classified lenient court sentencing and the absence of capital punishment as unfair legal matters.

(3) Issues concerning the judicial process:

Though English common law proceeds on the basis of equality before the law, many reported 'unfair laws' were related to the perception of differential treatment of rich and poor by the legal system.

In the first place, this perceived inequality before the law was related to the perennial problem of legal justice. Legal rules are applied by law-enforcement officers to concrete situations where personal judgment and interpretations are indispensable. The exercise of discretion by law-enforcement officers is often found and perceived by the public to be biased against the poor, even though law-enforcement agencies are supposed to enforce the law in a uniform manner. In this survey, 12 reported 'unfair laws' involved this kind of injustice. Most of these complaints referred to police discretion in administering the loitering law and checking identity cards on the street.

In the second place, ten cases of reported unfair laws hinged on the weakness of the adversarial system in which there existed inequality in the legal resources and litigation capacities between rich and poor. In Hong Kong, the process of adjudication takes the form of an adver-

sarial proceeding which places partisan advocacy at the centre of the legal process. Litigants are presumed to have their own resources in preparing proofs and arguments to support their case. The weakness of the adversarial principle thus often lies in the unequal legal resources at the disposal of the rich and the poor. Though several legal aid services (e.g., the Legal Aid System provided by the government, the Duty Lawyer Scheme, the Free Legal Advice Scheme, and the 'Tel-Law' Scheme administered by the Law Society and the Bar Association) have been established to protect and to promote the legal rights and welfare of the ordinary people, the wealthy were nevertheless popularly regarded as commanding more legal resources placing them in a more favourable position in the legal process. As a result, they had a better chance of dodging the law or receiving more lenient treatment than the poor and ordinary people. The most cited example in this survey was the Carrigan case.

In addition to the inequality of legal resources and capacity between the rich and the poor, it is noteworthy that certain legal rules were perceived to be biased against the poor. For example, the most commonly reported unfair law was that regulating the hawkers. For these respondents, poor street hawkers who were liable to be arrested and punished so easily were unfairly treated by the law.

Apart from the inequality of rich and poor before the law, there were also 7 cases pointing to the problem of judicial mistakes, such as the conviction of innocent persons and the release of true criminals.

Generally, the present findings reveal an inconsistent perception of legal justice. Several specific aspects of the legal system were denounced as unfair, while the overall system itself was generally evaluated favourably. The inconsistency is rather remarkable, as most of the respondents believed that court proceedings was biased against the poor, about one third reported unfair laws that did not concern themselves, and nearly twenty per cent reported the existence of unfair laws affecting themselves.

How can this square with the fact that 65.6 per cent of the respondents regard the legal system as just? At this stage, we would like to posit that the sense of justice manifests itself in two related ways, specific and diffuse. There exists a threshold that governs the spillover of the cumulative effect of 'the specific' into 'the diffuse'. Furthermore, the diffuse sense of justice is nourished not only by specific experiences with the legal system but affected by other attitudes. In Hong Kong, the specific sense of injustice has not yet developed to the critical point where the overall legal system is challenged. On the other hand, there is as yet no better alternative available. Finally, the legal system may

have benefited from the people's general satisfaction with the social, economic, and political status quo, their appreciation of the overall government performance, and their relatively high level of trust in the Hong Kong government ($G = 0.34, 0.31, 0.25, 0.50,$ and 0.50 respectively).

Table 9.3. Incidence of 'Unfair Laws' Reported by the Respondents

	'Unfair Laws'	
	Not Affecting Themselves	Affecting Themselves
	f	f
Issues concerning public laws and public policies:		
Traffic	9	9
Public service policies	8	1
Hawkers	6	2
Vietnamese boat people	7	0
Taxation	1	5
Labour	1	3
Increase of price of public services	2	2
Educational policies	1	1
Homosexuality	2	0
Others	10	3
Issues concerning court sentencing:		
Sentences too lenient	10	3
Sentences too harsh	1	0
Issues concerning judicial process:		
Administrative justice	5	7
Unequal litigation capacity	9	1
Judicial mistakes	6	1
Total	78	38

Mixture of Traditional Chinese and Modern Legal Beliefs

A special blend of historical heritage, cultural interaction, miraculous socio-economic development in the past three decades, incessant inflows of immigrants from China, and colonial governance with a legal system completely different from that of traditional and Communist

China not only furnish a particular setting but also exert enormous influence on the development of the distinctive legal culture of the Hong Kong Chinese. A mixture of traditional Chinese and modern legal beliefs can also be perceived as a natural outcome in this fast-changing and unique Chinese society. The following section aims to explore the legal opinions of the Hong Kong Chinese in the light of the interactive impact of modernization and cultural tradition. With reference to traditional Chinese legal thinking, five sets of questions were used to examine the respondents' opinions on the following aspects of law: (1) level of trust in judges and the legal profession, (2) litigation propensity, (3) the importance of civil rights, (4) the principle of punishment, and (5) legal conformism.

Level of Trust in Judges and the Legal Profession

In traditional China, not only were the rules of law not institutionalized, but the judiciary was also an integral part of the administrative apparatus, whose functionaries were state employees, liable to dismissal and transferral, and loyal to the emperor. The local county magistrate usually combined the roles of the executive, the legislator and the judge, and was thus given nearly absolute authority in the interpretation and administration of laws. The arbitrariness of the practice of law inevitably gave rise to popular distrust of the judges and their deputies. The aphorism 'you don't enter the door of the officials when you are living, you don't go to hell after death' indeed vividly describes the traditional negative attitude towards the law and the judiciary.

The establishment of an independent judiciary and a specialized legal profession is a hallmark of modernity. In Hong Kong, the court system, conducted by judges and magistrates, and the legal profession, divided into barristers and solicitors, are both essential to the functioning of the legal system. Though judicial officers are public employees, the security of tenure of the judges of the District Court and those above has nevertheless safeguarded the independence of the judiciary from political and government interference. On the other hand, the legal profession and its rules of professional conduct and ethics are closely modelled on its English counterpart. Its independence from government control is also well established.

Though it seems unlikely for the ordinary people to have any but sporadic contact with judges and the legal profession, the majority of our respondents did have a favourable impression of judges and lawyers.

As indicated in Table 9.4, 66.7 per cent of respondents reported trust in Hong Kong judges and 63.4 per cent in lawyers. Only 14.1 per cent and 17.4 per cent said that they did not trust judges and lawyers respectively while 19.1 per cent had no definite answer.

Table 9.4. Trust in Hong Kong Judges and Lawyers (%)

	Judges	Lawyers
Strongly distrust	0.5	1.5
Distrust	13.6	15.9
Trust	65.2	63.1
Strongly trust	1.5	0.3
Don't know	19.1	19.1
(N)	(396)	(396)

There was no significant statistical difference among various socio-economic groups with respect to their level of trust in judges and lawyers. However, respondents' evaluations of the trustworthiness of judges and lawyers were closely correlated. The higher one's level of trust in judges, the greater the likelihood for one to trust lawyers ($G=0.94$). People's degree of trust in judges and lawyers was also related to their perception of legal justice, the fairness of court proceedings, and the existence of unfair laws. Those who thought of the legal system as just in general, that the rich and the poor received equal treatment in court, and those who disagreed that there were unfair laws in Hong Kong were more inclined to express a higher level of trust in both judges and lawyers. In addition, those who trusted judges and lawyers also tended to have a more favourable evaluation of the government and Hong Kong society. For example, they were more disposed to report trust in the government, to appreciate the overall government performance, and to be satisfied with the existing economic, social, and political conditions in Hong Kong.

It is noteworthy that those who had experience of using legal means to solve their disputes with other people showed a greater tendency to express distrust in lawyers than the others. For example, 35.1 per cent of those who had experience of legal action reported distrust in lawyers while only 19 per cent of those who had no former legal experience held the same view.

By and large, a favourable attitude towards judges and lawyers may not be a good indicator of the degree of legal modernity of the Hong Kong people because the evaluation of the judiciary and the legal

profession clearly depends on their performance as perceived by the public. However, the generally favourable reception of judges and lawyers as found in the survey do reflect the weakening of the traditional Chinese negative attitude towards the judiciary.

Litigation Propensity

In traditional China, the stress on social harmony, the Confucian de-emphasis on law, the preference of mediation to adjudication in settling disputes, the moral impropriety of law suits, and lack of confidence in the legal system had led the Chinese people to avoid litigation as far as possible. Law was usually perceived as a necessary evil which would only be called upon as a last resort.

Hong Kong's legal system is completely different from that of traditional and Communist China. The people are also more aware of their civil rights and the importance of law in society. Statistics of civil cases in Hong Kong courts in the past few decades (e.g., civil cases per 1,000 population have risen from 3.2 in 1961 to 5.7 in 1971 and 15 in 1981) reveal an increasing litigious tendency of Hong Kong people since the late 1970s.

In the present survey, only 10.1 per cent of respondents had actual experience of using legal means to settle disputes with other people. Yet, the majority of respondents perceived the effectiveness of legal action in conflict resolution. When they were asked the following question: 'Do you think that taking legal action is an effective way of solving your dispute with other people?', 66.9 per cent of respondents gave positive answers. Only 19.9 per cent were not positive and 13.1 per cent did not give definite replies.

As shown in Table 9.5, female, the less educated, and the older people were more likely than other respondents to give non-committal replies. Surprisingly, among respondents who gave definite answers, the proportion of the younger and the more educated who did not agree with the effectiveness of legal means in the settlement of personal disputes turned out to be higher than the others. Moreover, no significant statistical difference was found between respondents' attitudes towards the effectiveness of legal rule and their subjective sense of legal efficacy, their former experience in legal action, and their evaluation of the fairness of legal justice and court proceedings. However, those who reported the existence of unfair laws that did not affect themselves and those who distrusted the government and judges were less likely to consider law as an effective means of conflict resolution.

Table 9.5. Attitudes towards 'Law as efficient means of conflict resolution' (%)

	No	Yes	Don't Know	(N)
Total	19.9	66.9	13.1	(396)
Sex				
male	21.3	71.3	7.4	(202)
female	18.5	62.4	19.1	(194)
Age				
below 30	29.4	61.8	8.8	(102)
30 - 54	16.1	71.6	12.3	(211)
over 54	18.5	61.7	19.8	(81)
Educational level				
low	14.2	66.3	19.5	(169)
middle	21.6	69.2	9.2	(185)
high	35.9	59.0	5.1	(39)

The general approval of using law in the settlement of personal disputes reflects the influence of modernity and indicates another aspect of the modern legal attitude of the Hong Kong people.

Attitudes towards Citizens' Rights

Contrary to the modern and Western legal system, traditional Chinese culture and the legal system did not set great store by civil rights. Law was developed primarily as a coercive instrument of the ruler and was never conceived as a device to protect citizens' rights and private property. In modern societies, civil rights have been enshrined in bills of rights or other constitutional documents. Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, issued by the United Nations in 1948, the contents of rights have even expanded from traditional 'civil and political' rights to the new economic and social rights.

In view of the major emphasis of traditional Chinese legal culture on the protection of society from criminal acts and the primary concern of modern legal system with the protection of civil rights, people's attitudes towards a few aspects of traditional civil rights were selected as an indicator of the degree of modernity of the present legal culture.²

Three questions were used to gauge the extent to which Hong Kong people still placed emphasis on the traditional Chinese objective of law. Firstly, respondents were asked: 'In order to investigate crime, does the government have the right to examine our mail?' and were requested to choose between two dichotomous answers: (1) 'No, this will infringe upon the right of one person to communicate with another', and (2)

'Yes, this will help the police to identify and arrest the suspect.' Respondents' opinions on this issue were nearly equally divided. Whereas 48.5 per cent of respondents insisted on protecting citizens' rights to privacy in correspondence, 43.7 per cent chose to facilitate crime investigation at the expense of this aspect of civil rights. Some 7.8 per cent answered 'don't know' or gave no answer. Various socio-economic groups differed slightly in their attitude towards the personal right to privacy in correspondence.

Respondents were then asked to make their choice in another question: 'No legal system is faultless. Which of the following two mistakes do you think is more serious? (1) Convicting the innocent, (2) Letting the true criminal go free.'. Just under half, 49.2 per cent of respondents considered the first legal mistake was more serious while 11.3 per cent had no definite answer. However, for 39.4 per cent of respondents, letting the true criminal go free was a more serious mistake than the conviction of an innocent person. The elderly and the less educated were more likely to have no definite opinion on this matter. For example, 22.2 per cent of those over 54 years old and 17.8 per cent of those with a low educational level answered 'don't know' or gave no answer whereas only 5.9 per cent of those under 30 years old and none with a high educational level did so. For those who held definite opinions, no significant statistical difference was found among various age and educational groups. However, women were more likely than men to consider letting a true criminal free a more serious legal mistake than convicting an innocent person (50.3 per cent vs. 39.0 per cent).

Notwithstanding the above relatively modern legal attitudes, the respondents' answers as to the aim of the law clearly revealed the prevalence of the traditional collectivistic conception of the purpose of law. In this survey, only 8.6 per cent of respondents considered that the purpose of law was to protect the interests of the individual. Just under a third, 31.1 per cent, thought that its purpose should be the protection of group interest while 53.5 per cent considered the interests of individuals and groups equally important. No definite opinion or no answer was given by 6.8 per cent of respondents. For those who held definite opinions on this matter, the older and the less educated were more inclined to hold a collectivistic conception. For example, 53.5 per cent of those over 54 years old and 45.0 per cent of those with a low educational level thought that the aim of the law should be the protection of group interests while only 23.5 per cent of those under 30 years old and 25.6 per cent of those with a high educational level held the same view.

The above finding underlines a diverse and incoherent attitude towards the importance of citizens' rights. Modern legal conceptions seem to have taken roots amidst the tenacity of traditional Chinese legal thinkings.

Attitude towards the Principle of Punishment

Punishment of convicted offenders constitutes an important element in the legal system. The most common justifications of punishment are: retribution, social protection, deterrent, and rehabilitation. Comparatively speaking, in order to uphold authority and social order, punishment in traditional societies was characterized by harshness, punitiveness, and retributiveness. However, with the general recognition of the socio-environmental forces on individuals, rehabilitation has become a popular principle of punishment in modern societies. Because of the difficulties of evaluating its consequences, punishment is still a matter of considerable controversy. Nevertheless, those who emphasize the punitive and retributive aspect of the law and opt for harsh sentencing are generally regarded to have a lower degree of legal modernity.

In the present survey, respondents were asked to make a choice between these two fundamental punishment principles by answering the following question: 'There are two attitudes towards criminals. Which one you think is better? (1) Be lenient to them and use special educational programmes to rehabilitate them, (2) Be harsh to them and treat them with severe punishment.' A majority of respondents (62.6 per cent) regarded harsh punishment as a better measure towards criminals, whereas only 24.0 per cent believed in lenient and rehabilitative methods. Some 13.4 per cent of respondents answered 'don't know' or gave no answer. No significant statistical correlation was found among various socio-economic groups in regard to their attitudes towards the principle of punishment. And neither was it correlated to people's perceptions of the seriousness of crime and delinquency.

This general emphasis on the punitive aspect of law and the pessimistic attitude towards the effectiveness of the rehabilitative methods do reflect the lingering impact of traditional legal thinkings on this aspect of the legal system.

Legal Conformism

Obedience has long been accepted as a virtue and a duty in the Chinese culture. Since law-making power was vested in and exercised by the emperor, it was then a civil obligation to obey the law.

The present findings indicated that most of the respondents were law-abiding and did not express a high tendency to revolt against unfair law. As shown in Table 9.6, when asked 'Suppose we think a legal rule is wrong, then what should we do?' 27.8 per cent of respondents agreed that 'No matter what, we should obey it', and 25.5 per cent answered that 'We should pretend to obey it while breaking it in practice'. A mere 13.4 per cent said they would obey but would also try to change it. Two per cent gave other answers. Only 17.7 per cent refused to obey even if they might be punished with imprisonment and 13.7 per cent had no definite answer. No significant statistical variation was found among different gender and age groups. Nevertheless, the more educated did show a greater tendency than the others to try to change the law which they thought was wrong.

The respondents' attitude towards legal conformism was not statistically related to their sense of legal efficacy, their perception of legal justice, their evaluation of the fairness of court proceedings, their awareness of the existence of unfair laws, and their traditional legal thinking. Instead, it was found to be correlated with their level of satisfaction with the present social situation, political system, and their degree of trust in the government. Those who were satisfied with the present Hong Kong social situation, endorsed the existing political system, and trusted the government were more inclined to obey a legal rule even if the rule was thought to be wrong.

Table 9.6. Attitudes towards a Wrong Legal Rule (%)

	Obey	Pretend to Obey	Obey & Change	Disobey	Others	Don't Know	(N)
Total	27.8	25.5	13.4	17.7	2.0	13.7	(396)
Educational level							
low	30.8	23.7	6.5	21.9	1.8	15.4	(169)
middle	24.9	31.4	14.6	14.6	2.2	12.4	(185)
high	28.2	7.7	38.5	15.4	2.6	7.7	(39)

All in all, the above findings underline an incoherent pattern of popular legal beliefs. Influenced by the forces of modernization and habituated to the legal system modelled on that of England, the majority of respondents did display certain modern legal opinions. Most of them bestowed a relatively high level of trust in judges and lawyers and regarded law as an efficient means of settling personal

disputes. Approximately half of them recognized the importance of civil rights. However, the influence of traditional Chinese legal thinking was also discernible and manifested in the popular support for harsh and retributive punishment, the prevalence of the collectivistic conception of the purpose of law, and the reluctance to revolt against unfair laws. Generally speaking, the degree of modernity of the respondents' legal opinions was related to their age and educational level. The less educated and the older people tended to retain more traditional Chinese legal thinking while the younger and the more educated were more inclined to adopt a modern attitude towards law. The modernizing impact of education is thus obvious.

The Applicability of Chinese Law in Hong Kong

According to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the legal system of Hong Kong will be maintained and the Chinese laws, unless they are introduced through the Basic Law, will be excluded as laws applicable in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region after 1997. However, the possible application of Chinese law (other than the Basic Law) in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region still haunts many Hong Kong Chinese and therefore deserves study.

The majority of respondents were not only afraid of the degeneration of Hong Kong's legal system after 1997, but were also conscious of the differences between Chinese and Hong Kong law. More than half, 58.9 per cent of respondents did not think that the laws of China were becoming more applicable in the Hong Kong situation while only 14.1 per cent thought so. That a substantial proportion of respondents (27 per cent) replied 'don't know' or gave no answer could also be interpreted as another indicator of the sense of legal inefficacy of the respondents.

As shown in Table 9.7, the elderly and the less educated were particularly more likely to have no definite opinion on this matter. For those who gave definite answers, no significant variation was found among different gender and age groups in their attitudes towards the applicability of Chinese laws in Hong Kong. However, respondents with a lower educational level showed a greater tendency than the others to agree that the Chinese law was becoming more applicable in Hong Kong ($G = -0.36$). In addition, the lower the respondents' level of trust in the Chinese government, the more likely were they to recognize the inapplicability of Chinese laws in Hong Kong ($G = 0.61$).

Table 9.7. Attitudes towards 'Chinese laws are becoming more applicable in Hong Kong' (%)

	Disagreed	Agreed	Don't Know	(N)
Total	58.9	14.1	27.0	(396)
Age				
below 30	67.6	12.7	19.6	(102)
30 - 54	61.6	14.2	24.2	(211)
over 54	42.0	14.8	43.2	(81)
Educational level				
low	47.3	17.2	35.5	(169)
middle	64.9	13.0	22.2	(185)
high	76.9	7.7	15.4	(39)

Conclusion

The main thrust of our findings points to a generally favourable perception of the legal system in Hong Kong. There are definite weaknesses in specific areas as seen by the ordinary people. We have also observed that modernization has led the Hong Kong people to receive the common law legacy better but also to become more demanding of the system. The specific sense of injustice, coupled with a greater sense of efficacy, and the readiness of the people to challenge the law might lead to civic protests if the legal system did suffer from a decline in quality, especially in times of economic trouble.

Notes

1. Throughout this chapter, a relationship is said to exist between two variables or phenomena when the Chi-square value is significant at 0.05 level unless specified otherwise.
2. Since the concept and status of economic and social rights, or welfare rights, or rights to well-being are still controversial, they are excluded from the following analysis.

10 Summary

Satisfaction in Various Life Domains

- 1.1 The respondents of this 1988 survey consisted of 1,662 adults aged 18 or over living in Hong Kong. Their demographic features were broadly in line with those of the general population as found in the 1986 By-Census.
- 1.2 About half of the respondents said they had no worries in the six months before they were interviewed. For those who had worries, they were mainly troubled by problems related to their education, work, or family. Less than a quarter of them were inflicted with financial problems.
- 1.3 A pervasive sense of well-being was found among the respondents who were generally satisfied with most aspects of their life. Educational attainment was the only exceptional aspect with which massive dissatisfaction was expressed. Most of the respondents seemed to set the ideal target at the tertiary level for themselves and for their sons and daughters. Any attainment below that level was regarded by the majority as deficient and unsatisfactory. Such a thirst for educational qualifications deserves further investigation in order to specify the causes and to discover the behavioural consequences and implications for government policy.
- 1.4 Most of the respondents were satisfied with other aspects such as their work, family, status, health, housing, and the mass media. The level of satisfaction with the family was particularly high, reflecting the great importance still attached to this institution among the Hong Kong inhabitants. There was also a very high degree of satisfaction with local newspapers.
- 1.5 Different age groups showed significant variations in their satisfaction with most of the aspects covered. Subgroup differences were also found along the dimensions of education, occupation, income, and self-declared social stratum which were positively correlated with one another.
- 1.6 The respondents regarded good health, money, and freedom as three of the most important ingredients of a happy life. These were followed by a cluster of Confucian values such as peace of mind, filial piety and family harmony, indicating the amazing resilience of traditional Chinese values in Hong Kong.

- 1.7 The majority of the respondents felt that they had experienced an improvement in their livelihood in the three years before they were interviewed, and they anticipated that such improvement would continue in the next three years. They were most eager to seek improvements on their living environment, financial situation, family relations, and children's education, in that order. On the overall condition of Hong Kong, they were apparently quite satisfied with the economic situation, moderately contented with the social aspect, but clearly ambivalent towards the political scene.

Attitudes towards Social Problems

- 2.1 The perceived seriousness of social problems in descending order are: youth, environmental pollution, transport, public order, housing, old age, education, health services, social welfare, poverty, employment, and corruption.
- 2.2 The younger and the more educated respondents had a more critical attitudes towards the social conditions.
- 2.3 Respondents showed diverse opinions towards the government's performance in handling social problems and the perceived trend in public order.
- 2.4 A comparison with 1986 data indicated that (1) the problems of youth, public order and housing were still considered by a majority of respondents as serious social problems, (2) the percentage of respondents who classified environmental pollution and transport as serious social problems had increased significantly, and (3) the perceived seriousness of employment and poverty had decreased considerably.

Family and Social Life

- 3.1 The study confirms the nuclear family as the most prevalent family type in Hong Kong.
- 3.2 Although the nuclear family is very much an ongoing reality in Hong Kong, Chinese people still hold fast to some traditional family values. Under the label 'nuclear family' is hence a complex mix of values and norms, which do not entirely coincide with neat formulations about family change in the direction of the nuclear family. This then cautions against the extrapolation to the Hong

- Kong context of postulations derived from models of family change mainly based upon Western experiences.
- 3.3 Families are related to their immediate kin and other relatives through multilateral ties with assistance flowing in both directions. These mutual aid networks are further complemented by supportive ties afforded by friends and neighbours. The image of the family as an isolated structure is, in this perspective, largely unreal.
- 3.4 Division of labour within the family is still very much along traditional lines. It assumes the familiar asymmetrical pattern. Nuclear families are, however, more equalitarian than stem families.
- 3.5 In the survey respondents were asked to indicate their preferred, or 'ideal', arrangements of roles in the family. The ideal role pattern maintains the basic asymmetry in the allocation of tasks between the husband and wife, but somewhat reduces the latter's involvement. It emphasizes more the co-operative involvement of the couple as well as the collectivistic involvement of all members of the family in performing family duties. The discrepancies between the actual and the ideal pattern could become a potential source of family conflict.
- 3.6 From the respondents' answers to questions about how they related to family members and about how they rated different types of social relations, one gathers the general impression that families are generally satisfied with family relations. Hong Kong people seem also to find relations with spouses, parents and children relatively more satisfying than relations with friends and co-workers, and the latter more satisfying than relations with relatives and neighbours.
- 3.7 On the whole, Hong Kong people's attitudes towards sexual relationships are conservative. There is, however, some tendency to be pragmatic and to allow for flexibility as long as deviant acts do not depart too radically from institutionalized norms.
- 3.8 Hong Kong people's attitudes towards abortion can also be characterized as pragmatic though conservative.
- 3.9 The leisure activities of the respondents, those with manual occupations in particular, are mainly home-based. There is, however, an awareness of and a desire for a less domesticated pattern of leisure.
- 3.10 Most respondents are satisfied, however, with their present leisure arrangements. Younger respondents, more physically mobile perhaps, seem less ready to be reconciled with home-based leisure, hence less satisfied than older respondents.

- 3.11 The respondents associate most frequently with friends for leisure activities. Relatives and workmates, in descending order, are then the next frequent leisure associates. Neighbours are least frequently associated with for leisure. This general pattern of relating to leisure associates reflects, on one hand, the importance of the factor of choice in social life and, on the other hand, an instrumental attitude towards work.
- 3.12 Few respondents are members of voluntary associations and trade unions and few are interested in becoming ones. These responses reflect, it seems, the limited functional importance of these organizations and a basically instrumental attitude towards them.

Housing and Social Welfare

- 4.1 The survey indicated that there was a high desire for home ownership by the respondents, irrespective of whether they were living in public or private housing.
- 4.2 By and large, the respondents were satisfied with their living quarters, with those in private housing more satisfied than those in public housing.
- 4.3 Although satisfied to some extent with their living quarters, our respondents indicated that people in Hong Kong are living in a highly congested environment requiring a high level of personal tolerance.
- 4.4 In general, respondents were more satisfied with lighting, ventilation, and the direction of their living quarters. They were less satisfied with the noise level, size of the accommodation, and kitchen/toilet facilities.
- 4.5 Most respondents were dissatisfied with the maintenance and cleanliness of their buildings. These two issues were on top of their improvement list.
- 4.6 Respondents in general were satisfied with their district (community), with transportation and entertainment facilities being at the top of their satisfaction list. They were, however, least satisfied with noise pollution and population density.
- 4.7 A relatively high percentage of the respondents (62.7%) claimed that they would apply for social welfare services if they were in need. Educational background might not have a significant influence on the decision to apply for welfare.
- 4.8 People in Hong Kong were serious about their welfare system. While slightly more than half of the respondents (52.7%) thought

- that welfare should be aimed at the poor, (47.3%) thought that welfare should be a citizen's right.
- 4.9 While only 32.1 per cent of the respondents were satisfied with the current level of social welfare, more than half of them (67.3%) worried that the welfare system might not be sufficient to help needy families.
- 4.10 In general, there was no clear indication as to whether or the respondents would agree to foot the welfare bills through increased tax rates, although the tendency to reject increased taxation was slightly higher.
- 4.11 There was a clear tendency for the respondents to expect their employers to play a greater role in the provision of welfare.
- 4.12 In general, the respondents placed a relatively high level of trust in the work of social workers.

Mental Health

- 5.1 The present study is concerned with an assessment of the prevalence of mental health problems in Hong Kong.
- 5.2 Problems of mental health are not defined in terms of formal mental illnesses, but rather suggested by psychopathology which is indicated by emotional distress and psychological impairment. Criteria of mental ill-health in the present study are based on those of the screening instrument of David Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire (GHQ 20-item version). GHQ measures a number of dimensions of psychopathology: anxiety, inadequate coping, depression, insomnia and social dysfunctioning. It is well recognized that these dimensions give some indications of the nature of mental health problems.
- 5.3 In the present study, 26.3 per cent of the sample randomly representative of the population of Hong Kong scored above the recommended cut-off point (positive score in 4 items) of symptom severity and hence could be classified as the group with 'high risk' of psychological impairment.
- 5.4 By virtue of the principle of additivity in the scoring system of the GHQ, high scores correspond to a deteriorated state of mental health. By adjusting the cut-off point, the degree of severity of ill-health can be indicated. Hence, 13.5 per cent of the sample scoring 5-6 symptoms could be regarded as moderately ill while 7 per cent of the sample scoring 7 or more symptoms would be in a very poor state of mental health.

- 5.5 Mental health problems were found to be widely distributed throughout all age groups, thus dispelling the myth that elderly people are more susceptible to psychiatric illness.
- 5.6 The study also revealed that there was no sex difference in the likelihood of being at risk. This finding is contrary to the general expectation that women are more vulnerable to emotional disturbance and mental ill-health. It is suggested that an explanation of this finding is in the changing expectations of women's role in Hong Kong society. Women are no longer homebound, or tied to the routine of domestic chores, which used to be a major factor contributing to women's poor mental health. On the other hand, the obligation to live up to cultural expectations of success in a keenly competitive society like Hong Kong has exerted much mental pressure on men.
- 5.7 Other correlates of positive mental health were satisfaction with family life, satisfaction with work, the relationship with colleagues, and the promotion system. These findings fell within expectations. Satisfaction with housing was however not significantly related to one's state of mental health.
- 5.8 The study confirmed that a person's mental health is significantly correlated with having experienced worries in the previous 6 months. The study was conducted before the events of June in Peking, since when members of the Hong Kong community have explicitly expressed worries over the future of Hong Kong. This is likely to have some negative impact on their state of mental health. In view of the altered circumstances, an assessment of a prevalence of 26.3 per cent may be an underestimation of the magnitude of mental health problems in the community at the present.
- 5.9 As the study shows, society's attitude towards individuals with mental health problems is characterized by prejudice and mistrust. Concerted efforts by government and voluntary organizations, and inter-disciplinary professionals on the promotion of public education in areas of mental health are urgently required.

Religious and Supernaturalistic Beliefs

- 6.1 This chapter has revealed some features regarding religious and metaphysical beliefs in Hong Kong. The general profile is that over half of the Hong Kong people claim to have no religious

- belief, while another quarter or so believe in Chinese folk religions. About ten per cent would call themselves either Roman Catholics or Protestants. As a whole, Hong Kong people do not have a well-formed opinion on what the relationship between the government and religious institutions should be like. Few people are interested in knowing more about religion. Equally few people would describe themselves as very devout and committed to their religions. As such, Hong Kong can hardly be regarded as a religious and devout society.
- 6.2 Nonetheless we can still get a glimpse of what the religious people are like. In general, the female, the older, and the married are more religious than their counterparts. The Catholics and Protestants are better educated, and have a higher socio-economic status. By contrast, over half of the non-religious have an educational attainment at or below secondary level.
- 6.3 In terms of proportion, more Catholics and Protestants than others possess overseas residential rights. Among those who do not, more Catholics and Protestants than people of other religions have plans to emigrate.
- 6.4 Compared with others, Catholics and Protestants have more worries, many of which are concerned with problems at work or school. In terms of values, the Catholics consider good health, freedom, money, and love and marriage the most important to a good life. For the Protestants, the basic ingredients are good health, freedom, and peace of mind. The rest of the sample also view good health as the most important. However, money comes second on the list.
- 6.5 Almost half of Hong Kong people have not thought about the meaning of life. Frequencies are even lower among the satisfied and contented, the less educated, the older, and the less well-off. However, the Protestants are higher in their reported frequencies.
- 6.6 Believers of Chinese folk religion see little need for improvement in their own family life. Compared with other people, this group (and in some cases, Buddhists as well) tend to be most contented and satisfied with many aspects of Hong Kong society, to have the most favourable views about the British, Hong Kong, and Chinese government, and to have the least interest in political matters.
- 6.7 While institutionalized religion is not popular in Hong Kong, ancestral worship is fairly prevalent, especially among believers of Chinese folk religion and among the old. Worshippers are usually less educated, and from a lower socio-economic stratum.

- 6.8 On the whole people are quite positive towards geomancy, although the older ones and the less educated may not be extremely enthusiastic. Those who have favourable views about geomancy are of a higher socio-economic status. They place high value on peace of mind, love and marriage, and freedom. They also have more worries.
- 6.9 A naturalistic view of death is widely held, although some people still believe in retribution and the immortality of the soul. As expected, views about death are related to religious beliefs, age, gender, education, socio-economic status, and frequency of thinking about the meaning of life.
- 6.10 Although Hong Kong people are generally unreligious, they presume the existence of ghosts and spirits. At the very least, these beings are not seen as malicious. Further analyses showed that such beliefs are related to the person's gender, education, and age.
- 6.11 Most people attribute the worship of deities like Wong Tai Sin to the need for peace in body and mind. They consider the worship as something solemn, and would not agree that such behaviour is frivolous and motivated by the pursuit of fun.
- 6.12 On the whole, the notion of *yuan* is closely associated with belief in geomancy and a supernaturalistic (often Buddhist and Taoist) view of death. The average Hong Kong person does not reject this notion of *yuan* completely, although there are also reservations about it. Belief in determinism is stronger among believers of Chinese folk religion, Buddhists, the less educated, females, and those with a lower income. A general belief in *yuan* is more popular among the young than among the old.
- 6.13 Hong Kong is a pluralistic society where the East and West meet. Many people in this territory, though under unavoidable influences from religious and metaphysical teachings their fathers have passed onto them, have been exposed to some Judeo-Christian ideas. Adding further complexity to this hybrid is a fast-paced trend of secularization. The result is, we observe, a special breed of people who cannot or would not decide what religion they want to pursue, and what view of life they adhere. Instead, they come up with their own answer — an amalgamation of the apparently contradictory views about various aspects of life. This is the intriguing religious aspect of Hong Kong people.

Inequality, Stratification and Mobility

- 7.1 The majority of the respondents perceived the society as open, allowing competition. There are opportunities for self-advancement, and, in terms of subjective evaluation of status, there is a significant degree of inter-generational upward mobility. Among the 'requirements' for 'making good', education and hard work were emphasized; and the majority of the respondents wish society to be free, rather than equal, so that efforts and perseverance will eventually bear fruit.
- 7.2 Along with such optimism is a set of real and immanent objective inequalities, separating young and old, men and women, the non-manual 'service' class and the manual production class, and so on. It is perhaps these inequalities that explain the darker side of the optimism, viz. the belief that conflicts between the rich and the poor exist and are inevitable, and the sceptical, realistic view of the more immediate aspects of one's mobility prospects: work autonomy, job mobility and long-term career development. It is suggested that belief in room for social mobility and in the efficacy of personal efforts in upward mobility — and the optimism it generates — has to be seen alongside this more stoic view of the possibility of improving one's own lot.
- 7.3 As regards the future, most thought that their children will attain a better socio-economic status than they themselves both before and after 1997. With regard to this issue, the manual class was on the whole more optimistic than their non-manual counterpart. Most respondents, regardless of their self-assigned class membership, feared that in the event of an economic recession, the working class will be hardest hit, whereas 1997 will most affect capitalists. In either event, the respondents tended to see the middle class coming out relatively unscathed.

Political Attitudes

- 8.1 Notwithstanding their acceptance of the existing political system, respondents found the present political situation less satisfactory and more uncertain than the economic and social situation.
- 8.2 Respondents showed an inconsistent opinion towards Hong Kong's future. Despite their expressed confidence, most of the respondents anticipated various socio-economic deterioration after 1997 and reported a growing sense of political inefficacy.

- 8.3 The majority of respondents identified themselves as 'Hongkongese' instead of 'Chinese' and declared a strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong.
- 8.4 Most of the respondents showed no intention to emigrate before 1997. Those with the highest emigration propensity were more likely to be younger, more educated, with higher income and higher occupational status.
- 8.5 Despite the general acceptance of emigration, the political credibility of foreign passport holders was held in suspect.
- 8.6 Democracy was perceived as less important than social stability and prosperity. Most had no trusted political leader and did not support the formation of political parties.
- 8.7 Respondents generally trusted the Hong Kong government and evaluated Hong Kong government's performance favourably. They perceived a erosion of government authority in recent years and affirmed its detrimental effects on Hong Kong's prosperity and stability. They distrusted the Chinese government and regarded her as a major cause of the erosion of government authority.
- 8.8 Respondents reported manifest support for government interventions in a variety of socio-economic affairs.

Legal Attitudes

- 9.1 Most of the respondents found it difficult to understand the legal system. The feeling of legal inefficacy was significantly related to the age and educational level of the respondents.
- 9.2 There was an inconsistent evaluation of the fairness of the legal justice. While the legal system was regarded as fair in general, a number of negative views was found with respect to specific aspects of the system, e.g., court proceedings were perceived as biased against the poor and the existence of unfair laws was noted.
- 9.3 The findings revealed an incoherent pattern of popular legal beliefs. Modern legal conceptions seemed to have taken roots amidst the tenacity of traditional Chinese legal thinking.
- 9.4 Most of the respondents displayed certain modern legal opinions. For example, they bestowed a high level of trust in judges and lawyers, regarded law as an efficient means of settling personal disputes, and recognized the importance of civil rights.
- 9.5 The influence of traditional Chinese legal thinking was manifested in the popular support for harsh and retributive punishment, the

- prevalence of the collectivistic conception of the purpose of law, and the reluctance to revolt against unfair laws.
- 9.6 Respondents' degree of legal modernity was negatively related to their age and educational level.

Appendix: Technical Details of the Survey

S. M. Shen

Sample Design

The target population of the study is all adults aged 18 or over living in Hong Kong. The survey was designed to yield a representative sample of 1,600 interviews. According to the Hong Kong 1986 By-Census there are 3,884,000 such adults in Hong Kong with, of course, no listing available. Instead of a listing of adults living in Hong Kong, a more readily available listing is the frame of living quarters (LQF) kept by the Census and Statistics Department.

The LQF consists of two parts: (i) permanent living quarters in built-up areas and (ii) segments of temporary structures in non-built-up areas. Only records of the first part are available for our use.

For practical reasons, the sampling method involved a multi-stage design, with three different stages of selection.

Stage 1. Selection of addresses

With the help of the Census and Statistics Department a simple random sample of 3,488 residential addresses was selected from a sub-frame of the LQF. The sample included only permanent living quarters in built-up areas while partially residential and temporary structures were excluded.

After a small scale pilot study and careful consideration of the human resources as well as the time limitation, it was decided that a smaller number of addresses would serve the purpose. A systematic sample of 2,894 addresses was then selected from the original sample.

Stage 2. Selection of households

The selection was carried out by interviewers. Interviewers were required to call at each selected address and list all households using the same address. A household would then be selected according to a random selection table pre-attached to each address.

Stage 3. Selection of individuals

For each selected household the interviewer was required to list all those eligible for inclusion in the sample, that is, all persons currently

aged 18 or over and resident at the selected household. A respondent would then be selected according to a random selection grid (a Kish grid).

Survey Design

A large number of questions were prepared to be included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire became so lengthy that it could take two hours to complete an interview. As such time consuming interviews were not practicable we decided to divide the questionnaire into five parts. Part one included all the general questions, and was considered to be the core. The other four parts focused on four special topics, namely,

- A. family life, social network and social welfare,
- B. housing, leisure, work, medical and health,
- C. social stratification, social mobility and religion,
- D. political and legal aspects.

The survey then was designed to compose of four modules A, B, C, and D. The questionnaire for each module consisted of the core questions and questions of a special topic. Each selected individual would respond to one of the four questionnaires only.

Table 11.1 Sample Sizes (number of addresses) of the Four Modules

	Module				Total
	A	B	C	D	
Original sample size	724	724	723	723	2894
Invalid addresses*	49	53	58	70	230
Walled City [#]	4	4	3	4	15
Valid sample size	671	667	662	649	2649

* For Modules A and B invalid addresses include demolished, non-residential and vacant addresses. For Module C and D the category includes also unidentifiable addresses.

[#] Due to practical difficulties, households in the Walled City were not visited.

The 2,894 selected addresses were then divided into four sub-samples each being assigned to one of the four modules. The sub-samples were obtained by using systematic allocation so that each sub-sample by itself could be regarded as a simple random sample of smaller size. A detailed breakdown of the sample sizes are given in Table 11.1. Excluding the invalid addresses and a few addresses located

in the Walled City, the valid sample sizes varied from 649 to 671 giving a total of 2,649 valid addresses.

For the core which is common to all four questionnaires, therefore, a reasonable sample size of 2,649 was retained. At the same time all four questionnaires were kept at manageable lengths at the expense of having relatively small samples for the special topics.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork was administered by the three teams of researchers. The Department of Applied Social Studies of the Hong Kong Polytechnic was responsible for Modules A and B, the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong was responsible for Module C and the Centre for Hong Kong Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong was responsible for Module D.

Table 11.2. Response Rate

	Module				Total
	A	B	C	D	
Valid sample size	671 (100.0)	667 (100.0)	662 (100.0)	649 (100.0)	2649 (100.0)
Successful cases	429 (63.9)	429 (64.3)	408 (61.6)	396 (61.0)	1662 (62.7)
Unsuccessful cases	242 (36.1)	238 (35.7)	254 (38.4)	253 (39.0)	987 (37.3)
Non-contact*	128 (19.1)	118 (17.7)	94 (14.2)	99 (15.3)	539 (16.6)
Refusal	114 (17.0)	120 (18.0)	154 (23.3)	151 (23.3)	439 (20.3)
Other non-response [#]			6 (0.9)	3 (0.5)	9 (0.3)
Number of visits	1419	1322	1506	1326	5573

* After at least three visits at different times. Unidentifiable addresses are also included for Modules A and B.

[#] Other non-response includes those mentally ill and those with language difficulties.

Figures in parentheses are column percentages. Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Interviewing was carried out largely during the months of July, August and September 1988. The interviewers were mostly students from local tertiary educational institutes. A one-day briefing and training session was given in late June prior to the start of the fieldwork. Excluding the invalid addresses and those in the Walled City the response rate achieved, on the whole, was about 63%. This means that a total of 1,662 adults had been successfully interviewed. The detailed figures are given in Table 11.2. For the four Modules, the response rate varied between 61% and 64%, the number of successful cases varied between 396 and 429.

Sampling Errors

Estimation based on a sample which is only part of the population, are inevitably subject to sampling as well as non-sampling errors. As far as sampling errors are concerned, if the data were weighted according to the number of eligible adults residing in the corresponding selected address, the formula for calculating the sampling error of any percentage, p , is

$$\text{s.e.}(p) = \sqrt{p(100-p)/n}$$

where n is the number of respondents on which the percentage is based. With the sampling error obtained, confidence intervals can be easily calculated. A 95% confidence interval, for example, is

$$p \pm 1.96 \times \text{s.e.}(p)$$

Clearly, if the data are not weighted such formulae give only rough estimates. In this survey, the number of eligible adults were recorded only for those addresses with only one household. Fortunately, addresses with more than one household amount to only 1%.

Comparison of the Sample and Population Data

One way to assess how deviated a sample is from the population is to compare some general characteristics of the respondents with that of the population. Some major demographic characteristics in our sample are compared with that of the population as reported in the Hong Kong 1986 By-Census. There is a time-lag of two years in the comparisons.

For each of the characteristics considered below analysis of variance is also made to check whether there is significant difference between the four sub-samples. No significant difference has been found.

Table 11.3 shows the comparison of sex distribution of the samples with the adult population in Hong Kong as revealed by the 1986 By-Census. The sub-samples differ slightly from the population distribution, especially the sub-sample for Module C, however, the discrepancies are not significant. The combined sample proportions agree pretty well with the population ones.

Table 11.3. Comparison of Sex Distribution (%)

Sex	Module				Total	1986 By-Census Population
	A	B	C	D		
Male	51.7	52.0	48.8	51.0	50.9	51.0
Female	48.3	48.0	51.2	49.0	49.1	49.0
(N)	(429)	(429)	(408)	(396)	(1662)	

Table 11.4 compares the age distribution. It can be seen that the percentages of the age group 25-44 exceed that of the population while all other age groups have percentages smaller than that of the population. The lower percentages among the older age groups coincide with the general understanding that the younger people are generally better educated, can more easily accept the concept of sample surveys and are therefore more co-operative. The reason for the lower percentages in the youngest age group (age 18 to 24) is probably due to the fact that young people are more active and participate in more outside-home activities hence are more difficult to contact.

Table 11.4. Comparison of Age Distribution (%)

Age	Module				Total	1986 By-Census Population
	A	B	C	D		
18-24	15.6	10.5	17.0	12.9	13.9	19.3
25-44	55.4	57.1	53.5	54.3	55.0	44.9
45-64	19.6	22.9	20.8	23.8	21.8	25.3
65 and over	9.3	9.6	8.6	8.6	9.0	10.5
No answer	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.2	
(N)	(429)	(429)	(408)	(396)	(1662)	

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Table 11.5 compares the marital status. The figures are not directly comparable because the population percentages include all Hong Kong residents who are aged 15 and over. Table 11.5 shows that the percentages of married respondents exceed that of the population and percentages of all the other categories are lower than that of the population. The sample percentages for the 'never married' differ most significantly from the population. The majority of those never married are perhaps younger, again more active and hence more difficult to contact.

Table 11.5. Comparison of Marital Status (%)

Marital Status	Module				Total	1986 By-Census Population*
	A	B	C	D		
Never married	28.2	22.8	27.7	22.7	25.4	35.2
Married	67.4	72.7	66.2	71.7	69.5	57.1
Widowed/Deserted	3.5	4.0	4.4	4.0	4.0	6.6
Separated/Divorced	0.9	0.4	1.7	1.6	1.1	1.0
(N)	(429)	(429)	(408)	(396)	(1662)	

* All population aged 15 and over.

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Table 11.6. Comparison of Household Sizes (%)

Household Size	Module				Total	1986 By-Census Population
	A	B	C	D		
One	6.1	7.0	5.9	5.3	6.1	14.8
Two	12.1	10.5	9.3	12.1	11.0	16.3
Three	18.9	18.9	15.4	18.4	17.9	17.3
Four	25.2	21.4	26.7	26.0	24.8	20.6
Five	17.9	20.7	21.6	18.4	19.7	15.0
Six	11.7	12.1	11.5	11.9	11.8	8.6
Seven	4.9	6.3	5.4	4.5	5.3	4.1
Eight	2.3	1.4	2.5	1.8	2.0	1.8
Nine	0.5	0.5	1.2	0.5	0.7	0.8
Ten and over	0.5	1.1	0.4	1.1	0.8	0.7
(N)	(429)	(429)	(408)	(396)	(1662)	

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Table 11.6 compares the household size. It can be seen that small households of sizes one and two are under-represented. Small households are usually families without children and there is a bigger chance of finding no one at home, even on three visits. We should not read too much into the data of the extremely large households (size nine and over) because the absolute numbers for these categories (frequencies) are very small.

Table 11.7 compares the educational attainment. Again the population percentages include all Hong Kong residents aged 15 and over. The figures show that the population attaining 'lower secondary' or below is under-represented in the samples and those attaining higher are over-represented. This could be caused by two factors confounding each other. One is the possibility that more educated people tend to co-operate more. The other is the existing trend in Hong Kong that educational opportunities are being more and more adequately provided, hence the proportion of population attaining a higher educational level keeps on increasing. The discrepancies between the sample percentages and the population percentages are, however, slight.

Table 11.7. Comparison of Educational Attainment (%)

Educational Attainment	Module				Total	1986 By-Census Population*
	A	B	C	D		
No schooling/Kindergarten	12.4	13.8	13.5	11.9	12.9	14.1
Primary	24.7	24.5	27.7	30.8	26.8	29.2
Lower secondary	18.2	20.5	16.9	21.2	19.2	18.2
Upper secondary	26.5	26.8	26.5	21.0	25.2	24.7
Matriculation	5.6	5.6	4.2	4.5	5.0	6.6
Tertiary: Non-degree	5.8	2.3	4.2	3.3	3.9	2.9
Tertiary: Degree course	6.1	5.6	6.8	6.6	6.3	4.3
Others/No answer	0.7	0.9	0.2	0.8	0.7	
(N)	(429)	(429)	(408)	(396)	(1662)	

* All population aged 15 and over.

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Table 11.8 compares the industrial distribution of the working population. About 30% of the respondents are not economically active. They are housewives, students, retired people, etc. Another 0.5% of the respondents are unemployed. The sample percentages presented in Table 11.8 have excluded these respondents. The population percent-

ages again include those who are aged 15 and over. Table 11.8 shows that the 'manufacturing' and the 'wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels' industries have significantly smaller sample percentages than that in the population. The former could be due to the changing industrial pattern in Hong Kong that the manufacturing industry is getting less and less dominant. This trend has been emerging for more than ten years. The latter could have been caused by the irregular working hours required by the industry so that this part of the working population is more difficult to contact. The high sample percentages for the 'financing, insurance, real estate and business services' and 'services' industries are also partly due to the shift in employment, from the primary and secondary to the tertiary industries, in Hong Kong.

Table 11.8. Comparison of Industry (%)

Industry	Module				Total	1986 By-Census Population*
	A	B	C	D		
Agriculture and fishing, mining and quarrying	1.0	1.3	0.0	0.4	0.7	1.8
Manufacturing	30.4	29.2	35.7	29.2	31.4	36.5
Construction	9.0	7.2	9.0	9.4	8.6	6.2
Wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels	10.3	13.4	11.6	15.9	12.8	22.3
Transport, storage and communication	6.3	10.0	10.7	10.2	9.2	8.0
Financing, insurance, real estate and business services	15.0	12.7	9.7	11.6	12.2	6.4
Services	27.3	22.0	21.3	22.5	23.2	18.4
Others	0.3	3.4	1.4	1.1	1.4	0.4
No answer	0.3	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.1	
(N)	(300)	(291)	(291)	(277)	(1159)	

* All population aged 15 and over.

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Table 11.9 compares the occupation distribution of the working population. Again only respondents in the labour force are included. Major discrepancies appear in the categories 'professional, technical and related workers', 'administrative and managerial workers' and 'production workers, transport equipment operators and labourers'. The possible reasons are the change in the industrial composition and

the shift in employment as reflected by Table 11.8 and discussed in the above paragraph.

Table 11.9. Comparison of Occupation (%)

Occupation	Module				Total	1986 By-Census Population*
	A	B	C	D		
Professional, technical and related workers	19.7	18.9	21.6	8.0	17.2	8.3
Administrative and managerial workers	11.3	13.7	10.0	7.6	10.8	3.6
Clerical and related workers	17.3	9.3	12.3	15.9	13.8	14.6
Sales workers	8.7	10.0	6.2	9.7	8.6	11.7
Service workers	11.7	16.2	13.5	15.6	14.2	16.2
Agricultural workers and fishermen	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.9
Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers	30.0	29.5	35.8	41.5	34.1	43.3
Others	0.3	1.8	0.0	1.9	1.0	0.4
No answer	0.3	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.4	
(N)	(300)	(291)	(291)	(277)	(1159)	

* All population aged 15 and over.

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Concerning the income distribution, several influential factors need to be paid attention to. There is the factor of depreciation in the value of money, the factor of the changing occupational distribution caused by the changes in the industrial composition of the working population as well as the factor of the increasing trend of *real* income. These factors will alter the income distribution substantially in two years time. Moreover, there is a significant relationship between the level of income and age. Comparing the monthly income of workers from their main employment is therefore not very informative.

For completeness, however, we produce Table 11.10 on monthly income from main employment. In 1986, the median monthly earnings of workers was \$2,573. From our sample observations, the median earnings was found to be around \$4,500. Part of the difference between these medians can be explained by the inflation rate. The general level of consumer prices (Hang Seng Economic Monthly, February, 1989)

increased by 3.3% in 1986, 5.5% in 1987 and 7.6% in 1988. These figures give some indication on the possible changes in the income distribution. Other factors are discussed in the above. Readers interested in making comparisons should refer to Tables 11.4, 11.8 and 11.9.

Table 11.10. Comparison of Monthly Income from Main Employment (%)

Monthly Income	Module				1986 By-Census	
	A	B	C	D	Total	Population*
Under \$1,000	1.7	1.3	2.8	3.0	2.2	6.4
\$1,000 - \$1,999	3.7	5.2	5.2	7.2	5.2	21.8
\$2,000 - \$2,999	15.3	11.6	16.4	16.2	14.9	29.8
\$3,000 - \$3,999	19.7	19.6	19.2	21.0	19.8	18.4
\$4,000 - \$4,999	15.0	14.5	13.7	15.6	14.6	8.3
\$5,000 - \$5,999	9.3	8.5	7.2	12.3	9.3	4.6
\$6,000 - \$7,999	13.0	16.2	10.4	9.0	12.2	4.4
\$8,000 - \$9,999	6.0	5.2	7.2	5.4	6.0	2.1
\$10,000 and over	11.0	12.4	15.4	8.7	11.8	4.2
No answer	5.3	5.5	2.4	1.9	3.7	
(N)	(300)	(291)	(291)	(277)	(1159)	

* All population aged 15 and over.

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Table 11.11. Comparison of Monthly Household Income (%)

Monthly Household Income	Module				1986 By-Census	
	A	B	C	D	Total	Population
Under \$2,000	3.3	2.1	1.5	3.8	2.6	9.7
\$2,000 - \$3,999	6.5	6.1	6.1	7.8	6.6	25.4
\$4,000 - \$5,999	17.9	20.1	19.6	22.0	19.8	23.5
\$6,000 - \$7,999	16.1	19.3	18.2	13.9	16.9	14.4
\$8,000 - \$9,999	13.3	9.3	11.3	12.1	11.5	8.6
\$10,000 - \$11,999	8.2	9.1	9.1	11.1	9.3	5.5
\$12,000 - \$14,999	4.9	5.1	6.4	5.1	5.4	4.6
\$15,000 - \$19,999	5.4	4.4	7.6	4.5	5.5	3.7
\$20,000 and over	10.5	9.7	8.8	8.1	9.3	4.6
No answer	14.0	14.7	11.5	11.6	13.0	
(N)	(429)	(429)	(408)	(396)	(1662)	

Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Comparison of the household income distribution involves shortcomings similar to the above-mentioned ones. In addition we need to note that there is a direct relationship between the level of income and household size (Table 11.6). Again, Table 11.11 on monthly household income is presented for completeness only. In 1986, the median household income was \$5,160 and from our sample the median was around \$8,500. Interpretation of the discrepancies between the percentages revealed in the Table requires special care. Note also that about 13% of the respondents gave no answer to this item.