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The Impact of Social Work Professionalization on the
Development of Community Work in Hong Kong

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June 2001
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Abstract

The studies of the professions in the general “power approach” prevailing from the late 60s in the West have emphasized on the strategies employed and the power and privileges attained in the process of professional development, which was considered as a power struggle among occupations for the privilege market position in society. In Hong Kong, the mainstream discussions on the professionalization of social work still rests on the functionalist views, which have been challenged since the late 60s in the West for ignoring the power issues in the process an occupation striving for its professional achievement. This local study of the professional development in social work is, therefore, suggested to be better understood within the “power approach” and the concept of professional “project”. Yet, it must be recognized that this approach still falls short of recognizing the complexity of professionalism and the diversities and conflicts among practitioners within a “profession” while having significance on the explanation of certain power issues existed in the professional development.

This thesis argues that the local social work “profession” is not a unified entity as perceived in the “power approach”, working in a collective “project” for the professional privileges. Instead, there are splits among practitioners in different positions and service settings as these different practitioners espouse different or
conflicting ideas for the professional development. Some practitioners hold their belief that the professional mission of social work and community work is to alleviate inequality and strive for justice in society rather than achieve professional establishment, which is believed to be a way for professional privileges. The study tries to delineate how a concern group, the Joint Association Concerning the Professional Development of Social Work, originated from community work field, confronted the establishment of the Registration Board and the registration system. By going through these recent confrontations and the historical development of social work in relation to community work, it tries to reveal that the professional development is incompatible with the value orientation of community work or even social work as a whole. The professional ideals of the practitioners have been ignored and the benefits of the practitioners and even the clients have not been considered by the professional "elite" in the "project" of professionalization.

The 1990s is believed to be a decade in which social work as an occupation experienced its critical moment in professional achievement. At the same time, the field of social work was confronted by a series of controversial issues, the "Well-off Tenants", the "Roof-top Dwellers" and the suspension of the Tsuen Wan Ecumenical Social Service Center, happened in the area of community work. These issues had led to heated debates on whether community work should be concerned
about social reform and whether community workers should adopt “radical” practice in working with deprived groups against the Government. Much concern was about the “professional” role of social workers. These controversial issues are, therefore chosen as reference to reveal how community work has been marginalized and even gradually eliminated from the field of social work due to the conflicts between the “radical” practice and the demand of professional development. This elimination of community work is believed to result in depriving the service recipients, which are supposed to be benefited from the services.

The research was based on participant observation in most activities of the Group concerning the issue. Besides that, it was supported by more than forty in-depth interviews with key actors involved in the Concern Group and the dominant groups supporting the professional development, some service recipients of community work and some general social workers who did not register within the period of voluntary registration. With the supplement of hard evidences including newspaper cuttings and archives, official papers and documents, the problem was portrayed with reference to the history of social work professionalization and community work development.

Implications on local professional development of social work and theoretical application of professionalism were drawn from the study. It is hope that this
research report can achieve the purpose of arousing more concern and critical reflection on the orientation of professional development in relation to the clients’ benefit in the field of practice as well as academy.
Acknowledgements

The very first person I want to acknowledge is Dr. Shae Wan Chaw, my chief supervisor, whom I believe to be the only one I found to have both the interest in and relevant expertise knowledge for my research topic. His in-depth and comprehensive knowledge in sociological theories especially in professionalism supports me a lot. However, it is a shame that I have not paid enough effort on the work of theory construction. His openness has made much room for me to develop my own ideas and orientation for the whole project. I treasure to have been given the free hand and enjoyed so much within these two years’ study. The same also goes to Professor Henry Mok, my second supervisor.

Beside my supervisors, I have to give thanks to all those who contributed to the success of this research. Without their generous participation, the project probably could not completed so successfully. I am really grateful to all those who have kindly offered their time, information and help. First of all, I have to thank all the friends in the Concern Group, who worked cooperatively with me all through the period of struggling and provided me with all useful information. It is their companionship that made my trip in the academic research not as isolating as it was supposed to be. I am deeply moved by their trust and heartily sharing on their beliefs and visions in social work and their experience in the field. They did not even have a bit query on my role although they all knew that I worked with them in the process not only as a group member but also as a researcher for my own study or better say, in a sense, for my own benefit. Further, some of them were very helpful in referring some of the clients they had worked with as interviewees for
my other part of data collection.

Secondly, I want to thank all the respondents in the representative organizations. It was full of uncertainties and worry before the interviews started. I was afraid that members of these organizations might be reluctant or even refuse to be interviewed because I was a key member of the Concern Group and was present in almost all the actions taken by the Group confronting the compulsory registration system. This might result in blockage in data collection. Yet as it turned out, it was surprisingly smooth and easy. All respondents were very sincere and appeared to be very genuine and cooperative despite their long history, rich experience and high status in social work field. They are all very busy people but still found time to fit me into their tight schedules. Only two members of the HKCSS and one member of the HKSWGU refused to be interviewed, but this resulted in that some other more resourceful persons representing the organizations had been located for interview. I am grateful to all their bountiful information and publications; their open attitude and sincerity in all the interviews.

Thirdly, I am thankful to the individual social workers, some of which I have known for only a very short time. I am impressed by their willingness to accept the invitation for interview and share with me their experience in the field and their thoughts and beliefs towards social work. Finally, I am going to thank all those residents who had their precious experience in community work services. Their frankness in sharing even in the first time we met and their vigor in community work inspire me a lot. Their sharing would probably make this research more interesting and meaningful, as they are the clients social work serves and their
voices about the service as well as the profession, which are always the faintest, indeed have real importance to the field of practice. I owe them a huge debt and it is also my regret that they will not have a chance to read this research report as it is written in English and will only be put on the shelf in the University library.
CHAPTER ONE – Introduction

1. Introduction

As an occupation striving for professionalization, social work in Hong Kong has experienced marked changes in the years running up to the turn of the century. After almost ten years’ endeavor, it reached the first milestone of professional development, establishing a voluntary registration system for its practitioners in 1990. Seven years later, the Social Workers Registration Ordinance (SWRO) was passed by the Legislative Council (Legco) on the 6 June 1997, accompanied by the establishment of the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) not long after the celebration of the hand over of the sovereignty of Hong Kong.

For those who have endeavored in the process, the members of the representative organizations of social work field, these results are the natural stages of development of an occupation, as standing for the professional achievements. Whichever way one looks at it, the establishment of a human service profession seems to be both necessary and desirable to regulate the behavior of the practitioners and improve the service quality. However, for the countering voices, the SWRO and the SWRB represent a system controlled by a group of “elite” of the field to exert power over all the practitioners, a way to upgrade the occupation’s
social status and a means to achieve occupational control for the monopoly of practice.

All along these years, the road towards the legislation of social workers registration system has not been peaceful. Among the opponents, there is a prominent group called the Joint Association Concerning the Professional Development of Social Work (JACPDSW), which has been actively confronting the establishment of the SWRB since mid-1997. Many of the Group members refused to register until the last minute. In September 1998, one of them was dismissed from her work as a community worker for the reason that she refused to register (明報 15/9/98, 東方日報 15/9/98, 蘋果日報 15/9/98, 聯合報 16/9/98, SCMP 16-17/9/98). The last member in the Group to register took an action to shave his head in an open forum to show his reluctance and anger towards the compulsory registration (東方日報 27/9/98, 蘋果日報 27/9/98, 6/10/98). The main concerns and queries of the Group fall on various dimensions. First of all, they question whether social work is or should be a profession. Second, they are concerned about whether the professionalization of social work is violating its own mission – alleviating inequality and striving for justice in society. Third, they query on the existing mode of professionalization. They worry that the establishment of a unified compulsory social workers registration system is a step to exert occupational
control and exercise exclusion for the monopoly of practice.

It happens that most of the Group members are community workers or organizers who had participated in or witnessed the critical issues leading to the heated disputes on the nature of social work practice, happened in the field of community work in the 1990s. In these issues such as the “Well-off Tenants”\(^1\) in Public Housing in 1993 and the “Roof-top Dwellers”\(^2\) in 1994-96, there were debates on whether community work should be concerned about social reform and community workers should adopt “radical” practice in working with deprived groups against the Government. Much emphasis was placed on the “professional” role of social workers. After all, it came the service cutback on the Neighborhood Level Community Development Project (NLCDP) and the suspension of the Tsuen Wan Ecumenical Social Service Center (TWESSC), which had been well known of

\(^1\) In an action taken by public housing residents and social workers to demonstrate against the Housing Authority for the “Well-off Tenants” policy outside the Governor’s House, over 20 demonstrators including social workers were arrested.

\(^2\) The movement embraced two groups of dwellers taking actions against the demolition of their rooftop constructions by the Government on different spot of time in 1994-96. It started with the Tsuen Wan Rooftop Dwellers and ended with the Mong Kok Dwellers. The debatable issue happened when the Tsuen Wan Rooftop Dwellers brought stoves and food to highlight their homelessness, which finally led to the blockage of rush-hour traffic in Garden Road on the 14 December 1994, in the protest against the Government’s decision to demolish their homes. Twenty-two protesters, including ten social workers, were arrested by the police for blocking the traffic (信報 21/12/94). Later in Mong Kok, some university students and members of a social issue concern group, the “Video Power”, collaborated with the community workers of the Society for the Community Organization to work with the rooftop residents to fight for better resettlement. Again some residents and a worker were arrested by the police in an action trying to enter the Government office. After that, the SoCO terminated the service for the residents for the reason that the orientation of the volunteer supporters had violated social work “professional” practice and “stirred up” the “radical actions” of the residents beyond the control of the agency. The “Video Power” is an action group established in 1989. Its members have participated in numerous social actions and played the role of an ‘alternative reporter’ by making short and brief stories for grass-root organizations with their video cameras. Now they also produce longer stories about people’s life.
its “radical” practice in working with deprived groups for their welfare. The members of the Concern Group believe that community work is a kind of social work practice incompatible with the mainstream professional development. They worry that if this orientation of social work development is to be continued, community work practice will be further shrunken in the field of social work.

Following these concerns of the Group, the study tries to examine the recent hot issue of social work professional development with reference to those debatable issues happened in the field of community work in the 90s. The coming section will give a detail account of the objectives and the research questions of the project with a brief conclusion pinpointing the significance of the research. How the research was conducted and why it was conducted in this way with its theoretical framework will be introduced and discussed in Section III. After that, the researcher is going to share her reflections on the fieldwork experience including the difficulties and questions encountered in the process of doing the fieldwork in Section IV. Finally, there will come the introduction of the structure of the entire thesis in the last Section.

II. Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

The study attempts to look at the hot issue of professional development of
social work in Hong Kong through the lens of the prominent group in the antagonistic movement against the present trend of professionalization. It explores the impact of social work professionalization on the development of community work to address the issue of the registration system and the present mode of professionalization of social work would restrict the development of community work.

The impact or the restriction here implies changes in the practice nature, scope of service provision and change of value orientation in community work practice as many community workers believe that it is a kind of practice incompatible with the mainstream professional development. The study examines critically whether there have been changes and if so, how and in what way the changes have taken place in the historical context of professional development. Furthermore, the service recipients who have actually benefited from community work will probably be the first to be affected when those changes took place. So, how all these changes have affected the service recipients will also be examined.

When going further into the topic of professionalization, it is found that members of the Group do not totally dissent the concept of professional development but believe that there can be an alternative view of professional development that resonates with the rationales and values of community work. In
fact, in the Western world, there have long been disputes and changing orientations on the fundamental question in the dualism of social work – social change or individual change. In Hong Kong, however, practitioners seem to ignore or avoid touching on the issue. There have been very few attentions and discussions on the topic. Therefore, the final objective of the research is to portray what has been perceived to be the alternative professional development compatible with community work as considered to be the most beneficial for the service recipients.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, quite a number of questions will be addressed. The first set of questions rest on the concept of "profession". In search of the understanding of the professions in society, the study attempts to review different discussions and theories of professionalism generated in different epochs in recent history of the English speaking world. The second area to be aimed at is the realm of social work and community work. How have social work as well as community work been understood in society and perceived by their practitioners? What has been the relationship between social work and community work? What have been their fundamental rationales, values, beliefs and changing orientations? What happened to the field of practice when social work started striving for professionalization? Is community work a kind of practice compatible with social work professionalization? With reference to the experiences and
discussions in the area of social work in the Western world over the past hundred years, these questions will be examined carefully.

Finally, coming to the present case of Hong Kong social work development, local discussions and debates concerning the professional development, the role and orientation of social work as well as community work in society within this half century will be sought and presented. Relevant theories of professionalism will be borrowed as tools to understand and interpret the local situation. The above-mentioned questions, of course, will be explored in the Hong Kong context in comparison with the cases in the Western countries. Attentions will be drawn on the analysis of current issues in the present situation of the community work and the professional development of social work.

It is believed that this study goes beyond the local discussions or debates in the development of social work, as there has hardly been much attention concerning the issues of professional development of social work compared with the West. Nor has there been a systematic study on the history of professionalization. Only bits and pieces discussions and professional pronouncements can be found in some documents and publications within the field. These mainstream publications mainly include the series of Hong Kong Journal of Social Work (HKJSW) by the Hong Kong Social Workers Association (HKSWA) and 《社會與人》 by the Hong Kong
Council of Social Service (HKCSS). The others are some individual publications by groups of social workers or social work students. Moreover, the mainstream has been orientated towards the existing mode of professional development. Among all the documents searched, there is no documentation of any opposing ideas in all the official records. The SWRB, in response to the countering movement even stated that those opposing the registration system were just a minority who did not understand the system and those who refused to register had violated the Registration Ordinance (東方日報 1/4/98, 明報 2/5/98, 31/5/96, 19/8/98, 11/9/98).

So, in striving for a little space for the minority, the study intended to explore the whole issue through the eyes of this Group.

The HKCSS had just celebrated its 50 anniversary a few years ago and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) also held a banquet to celebrate its 40 anniversary in December 1998. In fact, over this half century, social work in Hong Kong has developed into a human service concerning the welfare of the entire public in every walk of life. At the same time, however, the field has long been falling short of an adequately critical view of statements made by the majority of general social workers. It is hope that the research report can achieve the purpose of arousing more concern and critical reflection on the orientation of professional development in relation to its clients’ benefit in the field of practice as well as
academy.

As the legal professional body has been established and the compulsory registration system has brought numerous debatable issues into the field, it is time to rethink for the orientation of its professional development. The implications on the local professional development of social work and theoretical application of professionalism drawn from the study may facilitate more discussions. Of course, all those issues will not be settled easily. Profound as well as continuous discussions are needed.

III. Research Method

The objective of the research is to explore the impact of social work professionalization on the development of community work to see how it affects its service recipients. It is a study of local contemporary phenomenon within real-life context of social work embedded in its historical development. This report of the study is first and foremost a record of empirical findings, thus, a considerable amount of excerpts from interviews and field notes are included in Chapters Four and Five, the chapters of data presentation and analysis. Although most of the informants and respondents do not mind having their identities exposed in the research report, in the view of protection for all, aliases are used instead of real
names to disguise all their identities.

In this local study, more emphasis is placed on the empirical observations for the reason that theoretical work is believed to be inextricably related to empirical work, which should be considered as the corpus for theoretical establishment. The more important reason is that this particular local professional development in social work has been experiencing its critical moment in these few years. The SWRB with the compulsory registration system was established just right after the hand over and at the same time encountered confrontation of the strongest opposition from a concern group within the field. This is believed to be a unique social and historical context with rich and profound theoretical implications worth exploring. Furthermore, the researcher has got a vantage position for doing the research as being one of the key members in the group JACPDSW concerning the issue of social work professionalization since mid 1997.

The research is based on participant observation in most activities taken by the Group concerning the professional development especially the establishment of the SWRB and the compulsory registration system. This is the key entrance to the exploration of professional development and the critical issues in the development of community work in recent years. Besides the reason that the researcher is one of the key members of the Group and concern about the issue, the Group is chosen to
be the entry point because the mainstream discussions has rested on the side with the dominant groups supporting the professional development. This minority group is believed to be in the powerless position and its voice tends not to be heard in the process.

According to Burawoy (1991), participant observation is one among a number of techniques of social research. The essence of this technique is the study of people in their daily life world. It not only enables the researcher to have close and direct observation of how people act, but also how they understand and experience those acts. Prus (1996) also advocated a kind of ethnography that requires the researcher to immerse himself/herself in the research process, respect the participants and their worlds and share their lived experience. He believes that this is a way to redirect social science to gain congruence between theory and method and actual human experience in the mist of criticism from the positivists.

In response to the criticism of being subjective and unscientific, Prus argues that notions of interpretive approach are the essential substances of a social science. If the social researcher does not attend to the interpretive, interactive processes by which human behavior is developed, he or she may be overlooking the fundamental social essences of human behavior. Thus, the positivist conception of social science should be queried of its scientific status claim because of this fundamental flaw.
Here Burawoy (1991) also holds the same view that the interaction of researcher and objects is the distinguishing feature of all social science, and there could be no social science without it. From this point of view, Burawoy (1998) continues to argue that both qualitative methods and quantitative methods fail to meet the positivist criterion of "objectivity", because of the inescapable "context effects" from the undeniable relationships between the subjects and the researcher, and the environmental influence to the subject from the social world. However, to the extent that qualitative methods can make all these effects more visible, it is to be preferred.

For the demand of both humanities and natural sciences, Burawoy (1991) suggests that "social science combines both understanding and explanation. Understanding is achieved by virtual or actual participation in social situations, through a real or constructed dialogue between participant and observer, or what we call the hermeneutic dimension of social science. Explanation, on the other hand, is the achievement of an observer or outsider and concerns the dialogue between theory and data, or what we call the scientific dimension." (p. 3)

Burawoy states that bringing ethnography to a paradigmatic position in social science does not mean to exclude other research methods or techniques. He just intends to show what is distinctive about the practice of all social sciences, which can only be emancipated through a kind of study with the researcher participating in
the life world of the subjects and having a real dialogue with them. In making
dialogue and context the basis of study, Burawoy further endeavors for a kind of
alternative for social science that he refers to as a “reflexive approach” emphasizing
methodological self-consciousness but without excluding certain research
techniques of positive methods. He places the extended case method, one of the
ethnographic methods, in a position to respond to the quest for generalizability.
Without ignoring the positive demand for generalizability, he admits that it is
impossible to replicate a case study because every situation in the study is a unique
ethnographic encounter.

Devoted to taking advantage of intervention, collecting multiple readings of a
single case into aggregation of social process, delineating the social forces beyond
the social processes, he locates “generalizability” in the reconstruction of existing
theories in the process of the research study. Burawoy believes that “theories do not
spring tabula rasa from the data but are carried forward through intellectual debate
and division. They then reenter the wider world of participants; there to be adopted,
refuted, and extended in intended and unintended ways, circulating back into
science. Science offers no final truth, no certainties, but exists in a state of continual
revision.” (1998 p. 16)

In response to all the above mentioned demands and suggestions, other
research techniques were included to supplement participant observations in this local study. Besides the views of the key actors involved in the Concern Group, the other side stories of various parties were also sought through a number of in-depth interviews. These parties included the members of the representative organizations supporting the professional development, some service recipients of various community work projects and some general social workers in different social work settings. All the interviews had been tape-recorded and transcribed into written records for analysis. In order to have a more balanced view, hard evidences including newspaper cuttings and archives, official papers and documents were reviewed for portraying the entire story with reference to the historical background.

The study has concentrated on searching for the beliefs and rationale of both sides, the dominant groups and the opponents, on the professional development related to community work and their different viewpoints for or against the present situation of professional development. The opinions of the general social workers towards the compulsory registration system, the outcome brought by the system related to the practitioners and clients, and the ongoing development of the registration system were carefully examined.

As participant observer, the researcher has been one of the key members of the group JACPDSW concerning the issue of professional development of social work
since mid 1997. Close observations were carried out within the period of data collection from mid 1997 to the end of 1999 in most activities taken by the Group concerning the establishment of the SWRB and the compulsory registration system. Huge amount of field notes and records in different forms has been taken through this participant observation. The activities include group meetings, actions or demonstrations against the compulsory registration system and the SWRB, seminars and open forums organized by the Concern Group or by SWRB as well as the representative organizations on the related issue. Sharing meetings with social workers, academics and social work students, and the other activities such as the Group members interviewed by mass media are also recorded.

Besides participant observation, a total of forty-four in-depth interviews among the four different parties of respondents were conducted within a period of four months. First of all, there were ten interviews from the key members of the Concern Group. They included front line social workers mainly in community service, university students (research students and social work students), a grassroots organizer (a public housing tenant), a welfare workers, the worker dismissed for refusing to register, and a social worker in SWD. Quite a number of them had been the staff of the suspended TWESSC. Many of them had participated in the issues of "Well-off Tenants" and "Rooftop Dwellers". Discussions have
focused on their perceptions on the following questions. What is the value and nature of community work? How do they perceive the present mode of professional development in the field of social work? How does it affect the development of community work practice? What is the relationship between the critical issues happened in community work field and social work professionalization? What are their perceived influences of the issues on the clients?\(^3\)

Second, the viewpoints of the SWRB members and core members of the organizations standing for the mainstream social work professionalization are important opposite side information to be gathered. A total of sixteen interviews were conducted with members of these dominant groups supporting the professional development, two appointed and three elected members from the SWRB, three from the HKSWA, two from the HKCSS and six from the HKSWGU. Since the chairperson and one of the associate chairpersons rejected the invitation, only two interviews from the HKCSS were achieved. On the other hand, as many of the elected members of the SWRB are the core members of the three representative organizations, who have endeavored for the professional development, those being interviewed as the SWRB members may also have other roles such as the core members of the HKSWA and the like. The same situation happened in the reverse

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\(^3\) The main theme of the interview questions in Chinese for the four groups of respondents is shown in Appendix III.
case as some being invited as members of the three organizations may also be the
Board members although all the interviewees were invited for only one specific role.
The interviews aimed to explore their perceived historical background of the
professional development; their belief and value on the development as well as on
social work itself; how they perceive the influence on community work and social
work as a whole; their perception on the critical issues in community work field and
the opponent movement towards the existing registration system; how the present
situation benefit the practitioners and the clients; their ideal orientation of
professionalization and their anticipation of the future development.

Third, eight general social workers who did not register within the period of
voluntary registration were visited for interview. They come from a variety of work
settings such as elderly, children and youth service, outreaching, youth
rehabilitation, youth integrated service, community work, home help service, school
social work and patient resource center. They have got working experience ranging
from six to fifteen years in more than one type of service settings. They are
commonly considered as the silent majority. Questions were posted on their
perception and attitude on the compulsory registration system; the significance of it
on the practitioners as well as clients; how they perceive the influence of
professional development on community work; their opinions on the critical issues
in community work field; and their belief and value orientation as social workers and for the professional development of social work.

Finally, in order to get some direct information on how the professional development of social work affect its clients, ten service recipients from different community projects were invited to share their experience with community service. Half of them had witnessed or participated in those controversial issues in community work field and were mainly service recipients of NLCDPs in public housing estates under redevelopment except one rooftop dweller who had worked with the workers of the TWESSC to fight against the demolition of his rooftop construction. The other five respondents were residents in different Temporary House Areas (THAs) when they encountered social workers of NLCDPs that served them. They were active members in residents’ groups but had no relationship with those controversial issues. The interviews were intended to examine how much they knew about the professional development in terms of the current establishment, their perception and experience with community work, and their relationship with the community workers. Questions like whether social work should work for professionalization, what kind of profession social work should be like, whether it would assure the quality of service for their benefit were also explored.

Choosing to do a research like this with the Concern Group as an entry point
for the study might also have to be confronted by the criticism that the sample was in no way representative. However, it is believed that there is no possibility of getting a real representative sample in qualitative research even though different groupings are to be included in the sampling. This kind of problems in relation to the generalizability in qualitative research has been tackled with the reference of the work of Prus (1996) and Burawoy (1991 & 1998). Despite the fact that a considerable amount of in-depth interviews with variety of respondents had been conducted, the result might still be considered as a little more than a glimpse of the issue. Yet, this is a glimpse worth taking as the mainstream discussions have rested on the side with the dominant groups supporting the professional development. Only recently has this Concern Group been prominently taking actions opposing the issue of the compulsory registration system, which has been considered as a critical issue for the professional development of social work.

I want to stress that although concentration has been paid on the members of the Group, there might be other community workers or even the general social workers in the field resonate with them concerning the issue of community work development and social work professionalization. Similarly, the voices of those supporting social work professionalization might echo among social workers. Although these two different parties reflected conflicts of interests and divergent
value perspectives, it was not necessary to view them as two extremes. They might be considered as ordinary people striving for achievement according to their own beliefs and values.

Regarding the theoretical concerns, the study attempts to integrate the empirical findings with the insights from some theories of the professions. Being one of the key members of the Group concerning the professional development of social work, I am especially aware of the "power" issues generated in the process of professionalization as informed by the theories of the "power approach". There will be little doubt that this awareness would direct the way I come to understand and analyze the material collected and processed in the research process.

From the theories of professionalism reviewed in Chapter II, certain undeniable elements are spotted out as important and useful targets for analysis. First, the actors (the agents) refer to the occupations striving for professionalization. Second, the strategies (the means) aim at the monopoly of abstract knowledge and skills. Third, the objective (the end) of the project is to achieve market closure for professional privilege. Finally, the external forces supporting the professions to gain the credential are from the state and the state related institutions. All these objects of study together, however, concern the areas in a relatively macro level. Thus, supplemented with the idea of the "actor-based framework" constructed by Burrage,
Jarausch and Siegrist (1990), a simpler framework is drawn out for the local case to narrow down the area of study, which will concentrate mainly on the level of the actors.

The analysis will focus first on the practicing professionals and then the clients group. It needs to be made clear that the first key actor, the practicing professionals in the process is not necessarily in a coherent or united body, as the general “power approach” perceives to be. As Freidson and Larson have pointed out, the practicing professionals in different positions inside the professional hierarchy maintain different level of professional power and thus have different interests and concerns. However, the shortcoming of their work is that it lacks attention on the difference, conflict and dynamics among the different sectors within a single profession. Further, they seem to have also ignored the complexity of professionalism. On addressing these two untended ideas, here in this study, three distinct groups of practitioners within the “profession” are identified for investigation. The first group comprises of mainly the front line community workers or organizers who actively taking action against the existing dominant wave of professionalization. The second group consists of the members from the representative organizations, who have been striving for the professional achievements all through these years. The third group represents those social
workers situated in the middle, apparently not striving for or opposing this wave of professional development. The interrelationships among these groups of actor and the client group, their values and beliefs in the process are to be explored carefully.

Concerning the state, as mentioned before, it will be treated as the external force affecting the professions in gaining the credential and status for professional privileges. When talking about the state, of course, the unique political situation due to the issue of 1997 hand over cannot be ignored. This would be dealt with as part of the external force. Thus, the role of the state within its unique political situation in the professionalization will only be examined as background resources for the “profession”.

The study tries to locate the position of Hong Kong social work in Larson's concept of professional “project”. It will focus on the strategic aspects concerning the power issues in relation to its ideological dimension and practice orientation, which is pointing to the relationship of community work development in its historical context. As the study aims at exploring the influence of social work professionalization on the development of community work, the boundary of study will be limited to the core issues happened in the professionalization process and in the field of community work in this recent decade. The aim of the study is to see whether similar phenomena exist as the Western countries have experienced of
community work development within the context of social work professionalization and see how it affects the service recipients.

Finally, I want to stress that I am not intended to ask whether there are "real" professions or not, and whether or not social work is a profession. Nor do I want to identify the "objective conditions" that would make social work into a profession in Hong Kong. Instead, I am asking what influences it would bring when social work is undergoing its professional "project" in this local context. Bypassing the other questions may bring obscurity to the question of whether social work in Hong Kong is "really" undergoing a professionalization process. Well, it may be so, but this problem must be left to the actors in the process. Let the actors give the answer through telling their stories. It is hope that a relatively autonomous approach based on empirical study can be achieved on this area of study in social work.

IV. Reflection on Fieldwork Experience

Participant observation as a methodology not only can be of great advantage, it can also bring disadvantages as well. It is totally dependent on the trust and goodwill of the informants and respondents on the two distinctive positions. It causes double effort and difficulties, as the two sides inevitably have conflicts of interests and very different value orientations.
In conducting the research, I was not immune to certain ethical and political dilemmas. First of all, the same as for most researchers, it was easy for me to become absorbed into the worlds of the respondents. After having an extended period of time as a member of the Concern Group, a fairly close working relationship with all the Group members have been established. Some of them were even my colleagues in the field of community work when I was a social worker a few years ago. These relationships might prove valuable for the research process, but they might also be a kind of constraint that I might not be always fully aware of. Even though I have my own point of view towards the issue, there would be no wonder that sometimes, I would identify with them and thus this would influence the information gathering. In response to this problem, I have kept on reminding myself through the instruction of some literatures. Besides this, I have the research project designed in searching for the other sides of the story through interviewing other groups of people, such as the members of the representative organizations, individual front line social workers and service recipients in community work. In order to have more balance, the research was also designed to be backed up by archives and all sorts of documents as well as records available.

Second, concerning the other side story, in some interviews with members of the representative organizations, there came the feeling of struggle inside of me. It
is about my position. Sometimes, when these respondents showed their sincerity and genuineness in sharing their points of view for the matter concerning professionalization and the issue of registration, I would be easily convinced by them. My own position and stand were challenged at the moment even it was confirmed inside of me right at the beginning. Yet, this was believed to be good for the study, as it was a way to keep me on being informed to evaluate on my own perception and viewpoint.

Third, when trying to use the fieldwork data, it was found to be so divergent that it is impossible to cover all the various standpoints in the analysis. There were conflicts of interests among the individuals and different groups of respondents. It was difficult to make selections but selections have to be made. It might seem problematic that I am a member of the Concern Group and thus inevitably privilege was given to the Concern Group’s story. However, it is considered to be worthwhile because I have my own belief and value orientation, which more or less resembles that of the Group. The more important point is that the Concern Group is believed to have the least power and the voice of such minority group is usually invisible. In fact, all along the history of social work development, the field has been overwhelmed by the dominant views for the professionalization.

So, finally at the end, I have to declare that the major motivation of doing this
research is to present the experiences of these community workers as well as grassroots organizers in this Concern Group and to do what I perceived to be justice to the issue. Of course it is hope that the research can allow all the informants’ and respondents’ voice to be heard even though they would be inevitably framed by my own preconceptions and beliefs.

V. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has started with a brief introduction of the entire research project. Before ending this brief introduction, it is perhaps pertinent to indicate what comes after it. Following the introduction chapter is a review of literatures. Two main areas of literatures of theory and study are presented as reference for the understanding and explanation of the problem being studied. The first area is on the theories of professionalization. It concentrates on various theories of the professions in recent decades. Their relative strengths and limitations, their usefulness for my purposes is discussed. The other main area rests on the literatures and research studies on the historical development of social work as well as community work in the Western countries in the past hundred years. Discussions on the perception for social work and community work in society, the relationship between them, their fundamental rationales, values, beliefs and changing orientations are explored. The
questions on professionalization of social work and its impact on the development of community work are emphasized. Regarding the terms of the profession, the problem of defining and handling the various definitions is also tackled.

Chapter Three is the historical background on the development of social work and community work in Hong Kong. In order to help readers to have more understanding on the background and the significance of the issue being studied, a comprehensive historical background is needed before the other chapters to come. On the basis of a very brief account of social work and community work development from its early history, this chapter tries to portray the socially constructed essence of social work and community work, and the relationship between them. The historical background of social work professionalization with the focus on the current issues and the development of community work with specific attention on the controversial issues happened in the 90s are the main theme of the chapter.

The chapters deserving the most attention and believed to be the most interesting ones are Chapter Four and Five, which represent the central parts of the study. These chapters are for the data presentation and analysis, for which the researcher had spent most of the time in fieldwork observation and data collection within the project. Chapter Four aims at exploring how the registration system of
the present mode of professionalization affects the prospect of community workers
by presenting the story of the Concern Group in their actions against the
professional establishment. The boundary of community work specified for this
study is identified for better understanding of the main theme. The Group acts as a
window for the exploration on the concern of how the existing registration system
has become a threat to community workers especially those clinging to the “radical”
practice.

Chapter Five focuses on various sides of the story to see whether it is
substantiated for the concern group JACPDSW to believe that the so-called radical
model of community work is to be eliminated from social work in the course of
professional development. Information from different parties such as members of
the representative organizations striving for professional development, the general
social workers from the silent majority and some service recipients of community
work will be drawn for the analysis. Discussion will be based on the reference of
the controversial issues in community work of the 90s, including the “Well-off
Tenants”, the “Rooftop Dwellers” and the suspension of the TWESSC. The role of
the Government will also be situated as reference in exploring her relationship with
social work professionalization and attitude towards community work development.

The ideas of “power approach” with the concept of “professional project” are
borrowed to examine this local professional development of social work in its historical context to see its impact on community work. How this affects its clients is the final concern of the study, which will be further discussed in the conclusion chapter.

Chapter six is considered to be the most important part of the thesis. It proceeds with further discussions and analysis based on the previous chapter's discussion and draws implications from the problem being studied with the reference to the theories reviewed in the earlier chapter. Finally, at the end of this last chapter comes the conclusion of the whole study with some implications for future research. It is hoped that this study can draw attention of the practitioners as well as the academics on this critical issue in the development social work.
CHAPTER TWO – Literature Review

I. Introduction

The concern towards the impact of social work professionalization on community work development in fact, relates to a broader ideological conception of the orientation of social work development. Thus, the study needs to be situated in two sets of theoretical references: one concerning the theories of professionalism, the other regarding the fundamental question of the dualism of social work value orientation – whether working for social change or individual change. Since both the ideas and ideals of Hong Kong’s social work profession stemmed from the West, both sets of theoretical references mainly come from sources of the English speaking world. There is therefore a need to review those professional ideas and ideals before we turn our attention to the local situation.

The following review is divided into four sections. Section II reviews the various theories of the professions in recent decades, their relative strengths and limitations, as well as their usefulness for my purposes. Section III spells out the problem of defining for the terms of profession, the way I handle the different definitions and my own way of perceiving the professions in society. Section IV concentrates on the discussions of professional development of social work in the
Western countries. Literatures and research studies concerning the historical development in the past century are going to be reviewed as well. It aims at exploring the perception for social work and community work in society, the relationship between social work and community work, their fundamental rationales, values, beliefs and changing orientations. The questions of what happened to the field of practice when social work started striving for professionalization and whether community work is a kind of practice compatible with social work professionalization will also be examined. These three sections will set the theoretical background for a preliminary discussion of the development of social work in Hong Kong. Section V will then encompass the summary and conclusion of this chapter.

II. Some Recent Trends and Developments in the Sociology of the Professions

According to Burrage (1990), the very early history of the professions in England started in the late seventeenth century, where a few elite occupations which thought themselves more learned, more honorable, more independent than the rest began to distinguish themselves as professions. Over succeeding generations, the English word ‘profession’ came to be used less as a synonym of occupation and instead
came to refer only to this sub-set of occupations. At the same time, it began to accumulate certain distinctive, evaluative connotations, referring to one or other of the ways in which this sub-set were thought to be, or claimed to be, distinctive. (p.151)

Before this, the word “profession” was used to denote general occupations through which people earned their living. Burrage notes that much later, the professions became the subject of academic investigation and the spirit, but not the exact form, of English professional association and self-regulation was spread to the United States.

The late 60s is considered to be the watershed for the development of professionalism in the West in the Twenty-century. The main stream of study on the professions before the 70s rested on the functionalist view emphasizing their functions for society at large (Brante 1990, Macdonald 1995). According to Johnson (1972), the functionalist view on professions is that they are a positive force in social development standing against the laissez-faire individualism and state collectivism as it involves the specialization of knowledge and skill which is then directed towards maintaining the social system. Professional organizations were regarded as preconditions for moral consensus in industrial societies. The break-up of the traditional moral order initiated by fragmenting division of labor
would be rectified only by the formation of moral communities based upon occupational membership. Thus professional institutions were thought to be important stabilizing factors in society and would help to maintain world order. Professions were, therefore well justified to be distinguished from other occupations with prestige and privilege. It seems that this functionalist view was developed in response to certain felt needs of society in that era.

As a result, the development was concentrated on quite a unilinear orientation based on the "traits model" which authors like Greenwood (1965) and Heraud (1970) had been keen on. Attempts have been made to the study of professional occupations in terms of specific characteristic, including the acquisition of a specific training institution and formal qualification based on esoteric knowledge, a code of ethics for service oriented practice, personnel registration, social status and recognition through a legislative body to regulate, monitor and develop the profession. However, Millerson (1964) and Beckman (1990) have observed that the sets of "traits" identified in all those studies were seldom shared by the different occupations entitled professions.

The functionalist views of the professions have been challenged since the late 60s and were even taken over in later years by the alternatives with a general label of "power approach". The main criticism towards the functionalist views is that
they did not acknowledge the issues of power in the process striving for professional status in society. Having reservation in the concept of the professions emphasizing the essentialistic dimension based on the "traits model", I would rather not pay too much attention on the functionalist views here but turn to the critical side of the discussions after the 60s. Numerous works have been done to unveil the power dimension related to the self-interest of the professions. Among those proponents of the "power approach", Freidson and Larson are two of the most prominent and influential writers. The following discussion will focus on these two authors' studies and writings.

Limiting her analysis to England and the United States, Larson (1977) laid her radical opposition to the conventional views as well as ways to study the professions. She suggested that the ideal-typical constructions do not tell what a profession is, but only what it pretends to be. In her analysis in a broad historical orientation, professionalization is a "collective mobility project" in which occupations seek to improve their economic position and prestige implying a form of social inequality in contemporary capitalist societies. Her approach concerned itself with the ways in which the possessors of specialist knowledge set about building up a monopoly of their knowledge and, on this basis, establish a monopoly of the services that can be exchanged for social and economic rewards. The notion
of the term “professional project” employed in her study, is that the professional
development of an occupation is a power struggle process among occupations in
society with reference to the concepts of class structure and system of stratification.
In short, for certain occupation to achieve the strategies in monopolizing the
relevant abstract knowledge and gaining privileged market position, rest on the
question of the favorable social economic development and the dominant ideology
at any given time.

Larson considered that the prescribed attributes of the professions are
gradually accumulated in the struggle or negotiation process and it is upon the
power of the state, which the professions depend for the right of professional
authority and privilege. Once they possess the power, however, they gain the right
to shape the criteria for their position through influencing the policy-making arenas.
In her paper in 1990, she has paid more attention to the construction and social
consequences of expert knowledge. She stressed that the production and
certification of knowledge is an essential activity in all “professional projects”, thus,
it is important to study the relations between knowledge and power and the negative
political consequences of knowledge that cannot be directly challenged.

Freidson has been preoccupied by the topic of professionalism since 1970. In
his book, Professional Powers, Freidson (1986) has generated a broad overview
with analytic description of the formal institutions of professionalism in the United States, emphasizing on the legal-political institutions that sustained the positions of the professions. His core argument is that knowledge is power. The word “knowledge” here connotes formal knowledge, which the professions acting as agents have successfully institutionalized and excluded ordinary people from attaining. Freidson has paid much attention to how occupations attain their “credentials” to achieve occupational “closure” and “autonomy” through the professionalization process of gaining access to the power structure of society. Occupational closure refers to excluding ordinary people without the prescribed quality from entering certain occupation and preventing competition among members within. By claiming to possess the formal expert knowledge, discretion in work or the so-called professional autonomy is attained. Of course, in Freidson’s interpretation, all these strategies are related to the issue of professional power, employed to protect their market position of gaining a living regardless of whether the professionals are self-employed or employed in organizations. His study found that the majority of the professionals are employed in organizations especially those providing services, be it public or private. He noted that the state, the training institutions, the judicial system and the organizations providing service inevitably have their specific positions in the process. Through exercising the professional
power in the arenas of the political economy, the professions attained their positions in making policy, setting standard of service, defining the needs of people and the like; all these are contributions in shaping people's lives in society. Thus, it is commented that professionalism is a new form of domination over people's lives. It is a pervasive social control masked behind benevolence, leaving people helpless and dependent on professionals for guidance in the conduct of even intimate lives in families.

Even though there have been quite a lot of writings on the ideas of professional decline described as deprofessionalization and proletarianization, Freidson has argued that there is no evidence of a sufficiently massive shift of the position and status of the professions. Nor is there any evidence of a loss of power in controlling formal knowledge. In addition, in his later publication, *Professionalism Reborn*, Freidson (1994) argued that the professions are taking a new hierarchical form, in which everyday practitioners become under the control of professional elite who continue to exercise authority that professions have had in the past.

In this later publication, he pointed out that the most serious deficiency in the field of sociology concerning the professions nowadays is the lack of clear theoretical roots. He emphasized on the necessity of a truly adequate theory of the
professions and has advanced his effort in theorizing for the professions based on the concept of occupational control of work. At the same time, he proclaimed his idea of professionalism in addressing the practical question “What are the alternatives to professionalism?” by arguing that professionalism is both necessary and desirable for a decent society. His conviction here is pointing at the need for a regeneration of a desirable “professional spirit” in organizing work in this post-modern era.

With this rough description of both Freidson and Larson’s ideas, it can easily be noted that both authors have some points in common on the significant elements of interpreting the development of the professions. Both of them not only stress on the necessity of the historical context for the study of the professions, but also the importance of expertise knowledge being monopolized in the process of professionalization for the purpose of achieving better market position for professional privilege. In having same concerns on professionalism in relation to bureaucracy, they point out that none of the professions should be considered as a real and unify community whose members share a relatively permanent affiliation, an identity, personal commitment and specific interests, etc. Everyday practitioners actually are ruled by their organizations’ professional elite. There are hierarchies among the professionals in the same organization. This would be a very important
hint for the micro level analysis within the development of a profession, even though both of their work has little to say about the individual practitioners or practitioners in different levels. Moreover, they share similar idea on the position of the state in defining the political and economic situation of the professionalization process while, on the other hand, being in need of the professions to support its legitimate ruling. Macdonald (1995) also claimed that no monopoly of the work market could be obtained and guaranteed in a modern society without the active cooperation of the state. This implies that inevitably the state is one of the important elements for analyzing the process of professionalization.

Macdonald (1995) is one of those recent authors who give an account on the sociology of the professions in a historical context with national comparison. Having inclination on Larson's professional project and Freidson's professional power, he also stresses on the important role of knowledge, the ideas of achieving market control and social mobility for professional privilege in professionalization. In reality, Macdonald is not the only one deeply influenced by Larson and Freidson.

Sharing the same methodological orientation with Larson as well as Freidson, Burrage and Torstendahl (1990) also suggested a historical perspective of the study of the profession and viewed the role of the professions as actors. In the same publication, they and their fellow company have contributed to the construction of a
historical and cross-cultural theory of the professions based on empirical evidence
and furthermore stressed the perspective of professional strategies. Professionalization is considered as a process and needs to be understood as part of
a larger range of social phenomena with reference to all the systems in context. The
“actor-based framework” constructed by Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist (1990) is
regarded as providing a satisfactory account of the professions through identifying
the actors involved in the establishment and transformation, or destruction of the
professions with the assessment of the various resources identified in the process.
The four actors identified in this framework are the professionals, the clients, the
state and the academics. The interactions and relationships among these key actors
engaged in the struggle of professionalization would be the center of exploration.

To make it simple, I would like to draw a conclusion of what I have made
sense of according to the works of these influential authors in these recent few
decades. It is believed that it would be more appropriate for the studies of the
professions to focus on the strategic aspects concerning the power issues and based
on the historical dimension of the process. The overall lesson drawn from the above
authors is that the so-called professionalization process is nothing other than a
“professional project” meaning that an occupation struggles among occupations in
society for a privileged position in the market by monopolizing the relevant abstract
knowledge.

In a framework of “power approach”, four basic elements were identified as important targets to be examined. First, the actors (the agents) refer to the occupations striving for professionalization. Second, the strategies (the means) aim at the monopolization of abstract knowledge and skills. Third, the objective (the end) of the project is to achieve market closure for professional privilege. Finally, the external forces supporting the professions to gain the credential are the state and the state related institutions. On the other hand, the “actor-based framework” suggested by Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist with a different focus, appears to further supplement the understanding of professionalization by limiting the boundary of study and identifying the actors, the resource situated with them and the interrelationships between them in the process. This framework seems to be useful in the description of particular cases, identifying the minimum requirements for analysis of the professions. However, both the general “power approach” and this “actor-based framework” have ignored certain aspects of professionalism and have failed to address to the individual actors, the practitioners in different positions, who participate in the professionalization process. The most prominent exception in this regard is perhaps Freidson who in his *Professionalism Reborn* has proclaimed the need for a regeneration of a desirable “professional spirit” in organizing work in
this post-modern era.

Although both Freidson and Larson have point out that none of the professions should be considered as a real and unify community and the various practitioners may have different commitment and specific interests, their work has little to do with the individual practitioners or practitioners in different sectors. As Shae (1999) has commented, one of the major problems of the "power approach" is that professionalism is considered to be all-negative, just as it was considered all positive in the functionalist view. This implies that the "power approach" fails to recognize the always ambiguous and at times even contradictory ideology of professionalism and ignores the fact that members of a profession can espouse different professional ideologies. He notes that internal splits along different lines are common features of most professions. Members of a profession in different positions or with different job types as well as in different organizational settings may espouse different versions or emphasis of their "professional ideal". Thus it may be more substantive and fruitful to address the multiple facets of professionalism and search for the professional ideals of the individual actors in various sectors in the "professional project" when having a study in this empirical level of the local case of social work. Now, it is time to focus on the meaning of profession and professionalism.
III. The Meaning of Professions and Professionalism

There is little doubt that the ordinary usage of the term 'profession' is often associated with doctors and lawyers. For a long time, it has been taken for granted that both these occupations are professions. However, it is believed that the meaning of the 'professions' is still in question. Even Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist (1990) consider it difficult to give clear definition for the professions. In their point of view, not only the meaning of the term have changed, but the occupations that might be described as professions also vary over time and space. In addition, members of professions have actively propagated their own definitions of what they are, what they are doing and what it is that entitles them to be called a profession. Thus, adopting such definitions may fall into the trap of supporting the professions in their propagation.

Selander (1990) also notes that the term 'profession' can be used in different ways in everyday language. Some occupations can maintain that they are professions because they have a practically oriented but unique knowledge, which is difficult to access by people outside. Others based their claim of professional titles on a complete mastery of academically oriented basic research. Yet others have claimed their professional status through controlling some of the mechanisms of power in society. With reference to various kinds of praxis and knowledge, focusing
on these distinct meanings of "profession", Selander maintains that today when
different occupational groups strive for their professionalization, it is difficult to
interpret what these efforts entail. Moreover, from his point of view, profession is a
historical phenomenon, which suggests that what have been seen as characteristic of
professions varies in times and spaces as what Torstendahl maintains, professions
have not always been what they are today.

Despite all these causes leading to the task of defining the "professions" as
tedious, many authors, including the above-mentioned, still consider it necessary to
have definitions. The first reason for the necessity is to distinguish the professions
from the non-professions. Secondly, the target object to be studied needs to be
identified and justified by certain criteria, which take place in the
professionalization process. Thirdly, definitions can be used as a means of
classifying professions and last, but not least, it can be used in analysis for
measuring historical change in the process of professionalization.

Presently I am not going to comment on the need to define the professions.
However, I do want to emphasize that I am going to stay away from the
conventional procedure of starting the discussion in a study. Not giving a clear
definition does not mean that I intend to side step the above mentioned problems. In
fact, giving definition for the profession is not really important for my study
because it is only a local empirical case study concerning the process of professional development of an occupation – social work, and is not a "high level" theoretical generalization or cross cultural comparative study. Since it is concerned more with analytic description, it is not necessary to have clear and definite criteria to recognize, differentiate or classify the professions. Even though social work has been considered as a semi-profession, the objective of the study is not to access whether it is a profession, a semi-profession, or a non-profession, but to examine the impact of its professionalization process on a certain kind of working approach – community work within the occupation.

It might be appropriate here to mention one of Blumer's more important contribution to sociology, namely his introduction of the term "sensitizing concepts". He argued sociology is different from other scientific disciplines in that most its core concepts are not "definitive concepts" but "sensitizing concepts", which would hardly have absolutely clear definition and criteria for measurement. These concepts can only serve as guidelines informing researchers about the target and orientation of the research. In the research process, researchers need to keep on reviewing the meaning of these concepts and reflecting on their relationship with the research targets. While Blumer's discussion is not without ambiguities and difficulties (佘 1996), the point should be well taken that when using sociological
concepts, from the very beginning, one should not consider them as final and definitive.

Although some occupations such as the doctors and lawyers have been generally called old professions or full-fledged professions, whether there is an ideal occupation, which can be entitled to be a profession is still an open question. For me, giving a definition implies that a preconception of the professions is assumed. In trying to define the professions, inevitably, identifying certain traits of the professions cannot be avoided. However, the so-called characteristics or nature of the professions being identified are only the end products of an occupation achieving its legitimate power and status in society. One may argue that the terms “legitimate power”, and “status” used here are certain “traits” being identified in the process of professionalization. Yes, that may be the case, but here the emphasis is placed on the process of professionalization, which is the main area of concern for this study. Here, I have to stress once more, the view of Johnson (1972) and Selander (1990) that the so-called profession is a historical phenomenon. That is to say, a process in which occupations strive for their professional status, rather than the characteristic of the professions, should be the center of study for the professions.

What Larson and Torstendahl pinpointed that doctors and lawyers have
dominated the discussion on the professions is quite true. Very often, social work, which is the target occupation being study in this project, has been categorized as a would-be profession or a semi-profession. Therefore, we have to turn to the field of social work itself to look at the discussions on the issue of its professional development.

IV. Professionalism and Professional Development of Social Work in the West

When talking about social work professionalization, of course, the first thing to touch on would be the essence of social work. There is hardly any agreement on it because it has been diverse and contentious when social work was initially developed into an organized service for the people in need. Furthermore, as Payne (1996) said, it is socially constructed and has been going through negotiation process in different historical and national situations, so it has varied in different times and countries. Concerning its development, the fundamental question in the dualism of social work value orientation – whether social work should aim more at social change in community work practice or aim more at individual change in clinical approach, has long been in polemic in the West. Countries like Britain and America have experienced the shifting in orientation of social work practice among the two distinctive approaches over the hundred years of development (Austin 1985,
Ehrenreich 1985, Epstein 1992, Haynes & Mickelson 1992, Popple 1992). What has been the relationship between the professional development of social work and the changes in its value orientation as well as practice approach? This part of literature review in the area of social work is going to deal with this question.

As early as the 70s, Richan and Mendelsohn (1973) have already uttered critical comments on the phenomenon in social work field in America. They stated that the more “professional” the field has become, the more social workers have disengaged themselves from the problems of poverty, discrimination, and urban decay, which they mainly worked for in the early years of social work existence. This is as true of social work as it is of the other specialized services offered in society since the longer the time spent in the training of a specialist, the higher the price of the service is. It follows that the higher the price, the further away it is from the poor.

They discovered in their studies that the distance between the givers and the receivers of service was increasing daily and it was particularly so when social work drove toward increasing specialization. In an example of a social work agency located in a sprawling suburb in Brooklyn, New York, which offers psychoanalytic services to a population reeling under the impact of crime, slums, rats, and despair, very few of the residents of this ghetto were “motivated” to seek the service.
Among them, only a small proportion actually received psychotherapeutic support from the social worker. It was commented that this agency and its services were as remote from their community as if they were located in the Himalayas!

According to their findings, unfortunately, this is not a rare occurrence in social work in America. This phenomenon existed as if the problem of poverty in society has been solved, thus social work could afford to provide service for the less needy and the less hungry – the group of middle class people – in a private practice form. Moreover, it is a fact that graduates of schools of social work would prefer to work in private agencies where therapeutic services are being offered to the middle class, rather than work with the poor in public agency. All these phenomena made the authors query that social workers have long since abandoned the arid ground of poverty for greener pastures of the middle class and social work has abandoned the area of community work for clinical practice. Or actually, social work has always been the flunky of the social welfare industry and a victim of its own obsession with professional prestige. They believe that all these have made social work become the unlived profession of the poor. Thus the poor have experienced growing reliance on direct political action to get what they needed. They see this crisis in social work requires a radical reordering of social work education as well as the concept of "professionalism" itself or perhaps even the creation of a new professionalism.
which suggests going back into the community.

Unfortunately, however, social work in America is far from learning the lesson. Two decades later, there seems to be little change and may actually be worse than it was before. Specht and Courtney (1994) unite in their criticism of the aforementioned problem in social work field. Again, as Richan and Mendelsohn did, they have studied the problem in a historical perspective. When Specht, one of the authors of the *Unfaithful Angels* (1994) first came to know social workers, it was appealing to him that they had a mission to help poor people, to improve community life, and to solve difficult social problems.

His collaborator, Courtney (a clinical psychologist) also found his clinical skills of minimal use in helping abused and neglected children in residential care and became increasingly aware of the wide range of social problems, which were not amenable to psychotherapeutic intervention. He came to believe that broader focus about family and children's services should be called for in social work. However, when he got more in-depth understanding of the current social work scene, he found that fewer and fewer social workers shared his vision. Specht and Courtney then came to raise the question whether social work has abandoned its mission to help the poor and oppressed and to build communality. They wanted to stir debate about social work's purpose in American life and to persuade people to
rethink its significant social mission.

The above authors did not show an explicit theoretical framework in discussing the problem of social work professionalization. Nor did they build their arguments on a notable theory of the professions, but rather they built their discussion on a historical perspective and framework. They dealt with the issue in the frankest way possible with their solid academic and practical experience, and gave a historical account with detailed and in-depth descriptions of the phenomena in the field in their years. Even though the authors had different areas of emphasis, incidentally, they had the same concern on the role of the state, the credential system with the training institutions, the welfare institutions and the culture aspect prevalent in the socialization of social workers in the process of professional development of social work. Moreover, they had similar inclinations on exploring the issue in relation to its original mission, the community oriented practice catering for the need of the poor and deprived in society. Even though it was in different times in history, they suggested the same resolution for the problem, a new professionalism that would lead social work back to the community.

In another research exploring the career development of a group of radical social work professionals over a period of two decades (70s to 80s) in America, Wagner (1990) examined whether professionalism and careerism had absorbed the
radicalism of these subjects through the “long march through institutions”. This is another study based on a historical perspective but with quite a different theoretical framework aiming at the area of ideology in relation to professional development. His subjects had entered the profession with a strong belief that social work values and ideals were very compatible with political radicalism, and even revolutionary zeal, since they placed the concerns of people above profits, and sought to empower the poor, the downtrodden, and the discriminated in order to fight for social change. He found that this was the reason why many activists in the 60s and 70s sought to carry on their ideals through working with people in this social service profession. However, the subjects experienced extreme marginality within the period. This sense of isolation pervades the interviews reported in the study. Once mass movements subsided, radical social workers felt stranded, thrown back on their own resources, compelled one-by-one to make individual decisions as how best to survive in a professional and political climate grown inhospitable to their values and aspirations.

Wagner discovered that the ideology of specialization, elitism, and “businesslike career structures” was part of social work professionalism and this ideology definitely served the “ruling class” of society. This was the seeming contradiction and struggles of radicals who entered the social work profession with
highly idealistic values. The findings showed that the career experiences of many
subjects had led to a diminished optimism about radical professionalism. A majority
of subjects felt considerable tension in social service positions and many suffered
"negative career events." The combination of problems at social service jobs and
the allure of other careers caused many subjects to either leave the social services or
interpret their work roles in a more critical way. Thus there was a noticeable decline
in "missionary zeal" over the years. Moreover, the "critics," who were more
divorced from social service professionalism, outnumbered those who felt social
work was very compatible with radicalism.

Finally, Wagner concluded that the pessimism of critics of professionalism
had powerful support since his study had moved beyond the individual careers of
radicals to evaluate the success of radical professionalism as a social movement.
Two decades of collective efforts to influence the social work field, its politics and
its practice had been studied and it was found to be far from successful. It was
proved that the viability of radical movements in the professions was clearly
bounded by the pull of careerism, upward mobility, and the norms of professional
conduct. The more militant prescriptions of radical activists, not only in social work,
but also in other established helping professions, were severely constrained by the
employment market and the pull of mainstream ideologies and institutions
dominating these professions.

Reeser and Epstein (1990), in their study in professionalization and activism in social work, while comparing the difference between the 60s and the 80s, also focused on the aspect of ideology of the time. They also point out that the ideology of professionalism is built on a set of social-psychological attitude, beliefs and values that are presumed to be indirectly associated with the process of professionalization and are directly associated with the aspiration to professional status. They explain it in the “Conservative Professional Community” model of social work, stating that professions constitute communities, which are organized around a set of attitudes, beliefs and values that are conservative in their consequences. They assume that social work constitutes a professional community organized around an elitist ideology of professionalism, which emphasizes political and effective neutrality, professional decorum, professional self-regulation and social distance from the poor.

In Britain, Wilding (1982) also studied on the issue in terms of the nature and extent of professional power in social welfare in a number of different areas. Through the analysis in the areas of policy making and administration, the definition of needs and problems, resource allocation, the power exercised over people, and the power professionals possess to control their area of work, Wilding
discovered numerous problems existing in the welfare service provision. One of the problems can be summarized as example as follows. Professional influence means that in many issues the decisions made are serving professional interests rather than the public interests. It leads to services being organized according to professional skills and ideas rather than to client needs. Certain elements and interests within the professions are able to dominate decision-making due to their greater prestige and status.

In order to support his arguments, Wilding cited evidence gathered by Sinfield concerning the Seebohm Report, which called for the reorganization of personal social services into social services departments. Sinfield had commented that the basis of social work pressure for such development had more to do with the work satisfaction and career structure of the professional social worker than it had to do with the client's own needs or rights. What Wilding concluded was that the report was conceived and written from the standpoint of aspirant professional social worker rather than from the viewpoint of actual or potential clients. Consequently, the interests of the public received less attention than professional needs. This is frequently the pattern of professional influence in policy making.

There have been lots of critiques against the professions. They have often been strongly criticized for making excessive claims about the contribution they can
make and have made to societal well being. They have not only been accused for
being guilty of failures of responsibility, but also trampling on people’s rights.
There are also the comments that their claim to political neutrality is a myth; the
service ideal has become tarnished; the professions disable as well as enable; too
often, they are accountable to no one. Wilding also tried to examine on all these
accusations, and there seemed to be plenty of evidence showing that social workers
have no way to escape from these accusations.

In Britain again, all the problems subjected to these criticisms seemed not to
be amendable and have lasted into the 90s. Social work is said to be in crisis and
much controversy in its practice and legitimate status has been generated. In a
recent work *What is Professional Social Work?*, Payne (1996) reflects on the
constructions of the nature of social work and questions whether or not social work
is a profession and whether the power of being a profession oppresses the clients it
is supposed to serve. He tries to tackle the difficult question of “what professional
social work is” through detailed examination of the methods, aims, values and
organization of social work as an activity and as a profession. Instead of the general
perception on the dual roles of social work, in accordance with the recent
development and situation in Britain, three perspectives are identified. They are
termed as the individualism-reformism, which focuses on welfare services to
individuals in society, the socialist-collectivist that seeks to empower the oppressed and disadvantaged people in society to gain control over their own lives, and the reflexive-therapeutic, which aims at promoting and facilitating people's own personal growth and self-realization.

He contends that all visions of social work contain these three elements in various combinations and in tension with each other. The most important point, however, is to correctly judge the influence of each of these visions in the creation of social work as a whole. Here Payne defines social work as an activity that human beings do and as a profession referring to a particular kind of occupational group. This is believed to be socially constructed and always ambiguous and changing. Thus, he suggests an all embracing attitude to search for its nature and how that is formed, by examining its discourse from the sources of direct accounts of social work as an activity based on his own experiences and indirect textual accounts on work practice and the profession. The textual accounts include textbooks for social work training, literatures and official documents.

In his analysis, he deliberately addresses the problem of professional power. According to the socially constructed nature of social work, power is always present with a professional social work position and can be very oppressive to the clients it serves. Here the professional power includes power from different sources such as
legal power, expertise knowledge, agency authority and the like. Within the professional relationship, the powers favoring the different perspectives can be of benefit or of disadvantage to the clients. Thus, in reacting to the oppressiveness of the professional power, he argues that if social work is to be a profession, it must incorporate all the three perspectives, which address to the personal, social and political objectives responding to the holistic needs of the people social work serves. Of course this implies the need for balance between the social objects of individualism, collectivism and personal growth, and the balance between social control, altruistic help and social development. However, he believes that there is still no definite answer as to whether social work is a profession.

Here, I have to say that even though I have reservation on the identification and interpretation of the three perspectives in his work, it is believed that his approach in tackling the question will bring insight to the understanding of social work as a profession. On the other hand, both he and Wilding (1982) have addressed themselves directly to the problem of “professional power”. Together with the above authors’ historical studies on the relationship between social work professionalization and its value as well as practice orientation, it is believed that there will be a concrete and comprehensive theoretical reference for this local case study. In addition, there are lots of articles from journals giving critical comments
on social work deserting its original mission and on the different aspects of power
issues in professionalization from different perspectives. They call for radical
reflections as well as changes in different realms of social work practice and suggest
social work new dimensions of professionalism (Martin 1981, Cullen 1983, Austin
Some other authors like Dressel, Waters & Sweat, Clayton and Chandler (1988) and
Dominelli (1996) have even paid attention to the issue of "deprofessionalization".
No matter whether they concern a reconstruction or a new creation of
professionalism, or deprofessionalization, it is believe that these references offer
reflective approach to the understanding of social work professionalization.

If all the relevant literatures were to be discussed here, there would be no way
to end this phase of the discussion. Therefore, a brief conclusion needs to be drawn
from these selected discussions. Among these literatures and studies related to
social work professionalization in the West, most are based on historical study. It
appears that the common perception of social work’s original mission is to work
with the poor and deprived for social justice and betterment. This is best manifested
in a term of practice called community work oriented approach. All through history,
however, it can be observed that social work has been striving for its
professionalization by aiming at a more clinical approach and a private practice
catering to the need of middle class people with the community work practice being marginalized in the field. Among the studies, different aspects of the power issue in professionalization have been the center of examination when relating to various power sources such as the state, the training institutions, the welfare institutions and the like. These ideas provide a clear reference for the understanding of the relationship between social work professionalization and the development in its practice orientation.

V. Summery and Conclusion

The key concern of the study rests on what social work professionalization would bring about on the development of community work. This is related to two sets of theoretical references originating from the English speaking world. Thus this chapter has first reviewed the theories of professions in the West, with specific attention placed on the recent trend of development. After tackling the meaning of profession, the professional development of social work in the Western countries was explored focusing on its relationship and influence on community work.

Prior to the 1970's, the functionalist views of the professions dominated the field of sociology, emphasizing the functions of the profession for society at large. The main stream of study was orientated by the "trait model". However, starting
from the late 60s, due to the reason that it ignored the problem issues of power in the process of professionalization, this dominant view of the functionalist has been challenged by the “power approach”. In the later years, the general labeled “power approach” took over the position of “trait model” in the sociology of the professions. Freidson and Larson are known as two of the most prominent and influential writers in these decades.

In the review focusing on their studies of the professions, supplemented with the works of Macdonald, Burrage and his collaborators, it is suggested that the so-called professionalization process would be better understood in the concept of professional “project” concerning the power struggle among occupations in society. The study of the professions needs to be based on the historical dimensions of the process and focus on the strategic aspects of monopolizing the esoteric knowledge for achieving a privileged market position in society. However, even with reference to the “actor-based framework”, this “power approach” still falls short of resolution to the issue of professionalism and fails to address itself to the individual actors, the practitioners in different positions within a profession, who play their parts in the professional “project”, and the internal splits within a particular profession. Thus, in the hope to achieve a substantive study of social work development at a micro level within the local context, it concentrates mainly on the actors. The ideas and ideals
of the social work profession held by the practitioners in different positions and how they make sense of the professional development are the target areas of study.

The meaning of the professions and professionalism, although it may be a minor issue here, was also tackled. It is difficult to give clear definition to the professions as the meaning and usage varies over time and space. Here, the decision is made not to define the professions for the reason that it is not necessary to give clear and definite criteria of measurement for this local case study of social work. The objective of the study is not to assess whether it is a profession or not, but to examine the influence the professionalization process brings to the field of practice. Moreover, as the term “sensitizing concepts” suggests, sociological concepts only serve as guidelines informing researchers about the orientation and target objects of study. They need to be reviewed continuously all through the process of study. On the other hand, whether there is an ideal occupation, which can be entitled a profession, is still an open question. Here, spelling out the perception towards the professions helps to make clear the orientation of the study, which focuses on the process an occupation strives to achieve its professional status, rather than the characteristic of the profession.

The other important part of this review concerns the professional development of social work in relation to its changing orientation in practice. Based on the
historical studies in the West, the relationship between the professional development of social work and the changes in its value orientation as well as practice approach, are examined. The fundamental question in the dualism of social work value orientation – whether it should aim more at social change in community work practice or individual change in clinical approach is explored.

The common perception of social work’s original mission is to work with the poor and deprived for social justice; this is best manifested in community work. However, it is observed that social work has been striving for its professionalization aiming at a more clinical approach and at a private practice catering for the need of middle class people while community work has been marginalized in the field of practice. Critical comments on social work deserting its original mission have been frequently expressed. Different aspects of power issues in professionalization displayed through a variety of perspectives were exposed. Radical reflections as well as changes in different realms of social work practice have been called for in response to the undesirable situation in the field of practice. There is even the suggestion of new dimensions of professionalism in social work. These studies have probably offered answers to the questions of what happens when social work strives for professionalization and whether community work is compatible with the professional development in the West. For the study of social work in the local
context, however, this chapter of review is aimed to offer a theoretical background for a preliminary understanding of its professional development. More emphasis will be placed on the empirical observation in search of the influences brought about when it is undergoing its professionalization process.
CHAPTER THREE – Historical Background

I. Introduction

The hand over of sovereignty in July 1997 not only marked a new era for Hong Kong citizens, but also presented social work with a new identity. The Social Workers Registration Ordinance (SWRO) passed by the Legislative Council on the 6 June 1997 has granted all together over eight thousand qualified social workers a new title, the “professional social worker”. In fact, more often than ever, the term “professional social worker” has been heard in relation to social or welfare issues through the mass media. Social work has finally achieved its professional status, or so it seems.

Perhaps, for the public, a local TV series of a social worker’s story called The Big Dipper【北斗星】in the 70s might have done a good job. The dramatized image of a caseworker in the series has gone deep into people’s heart that social worker has been recognized as the Big Dipper since then. In the 80s, the introduction of the electoral politics by the Government had been influential in bringing about another image. Quite a lot of social workers joined the elections and became electoral representatives and some candidates of the elections claimed to be social workers even though they were not really working in social work posts. In the early 90s,
social workers became regarded as infamous for being arrested alongside with public housing residents or roof top dwellers in “radical” demonstrations against the government departments. And now, more and more is being heard in the mass media urging people to seek help from professional social workers whenever they have problems. Every time when there is news about family tragedy, youth delinquency or student committing suicide and the like, there will come the voices of social workers explaining the causes and claiming the need for professional counseling or service.

Despite this plethora of images, what does social work really mean to those within the occupation? As Payne (1996) has noted, without exception, social work is a phenomenon socially constructed and thus it would never be static. Yes, over this half-century’s development, social work has changed continuously in response to changes in social, economic and political situations. This chapter looks at how it has been constructed all through these years and to see how community work has been developed and perceived inside of it. However, although the study needs to be based on the historical development of the “profession”, it is impossible to exhibit its entire history with details here. Instead, with a very brief sketch of social work and community work development from its early history in Section II, Section III will highlight the recent professional development apparently starting from the early
80s up to the present with focus on the current achievements. Section IV will focus on the development of community work with specific attention on the controversial issues happened in the 90s, and finally Section V will be the conclusion attempting to give a brief picture of what has been perceived about social work and community work within the professional development. As community work is the key area of study in this research project, this part of historical background might inevitably have more space on the development of community work and this can be viewed as one of the different dimensions of looking at or interpreting the history.

II. A Sketch of Social Work and Community Work History

For present purposes, it is perhaps adequate to begin the story of social work in Hong Kong with the post-war period. From the late 40s to the 50s, Hong Kong society suffered from the problems of widespread poverty, inadequate housing and numerous refugees coming from China. There were charities provided by religious groups and voluntary associations on the funding mainly from foreign countries or some local wealthy organizations with the initiative of helping the poor and the vulnerable (周 1984). The first course in social work education started at the University of Hong Kong in 1950 (Jones 1990). However, not until the late 50s was there a sense of institutional social work in the Government. It was the
establishment of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) in 1958 that marked the beginning of official development of social work in Hong Kong (Mok 1980). Yet, at that time, social welfare was still present as some kinds of charity, without a well-established system for service delivery and training for the workers. Even though the Government started to subvent some of the services in the voluntary organizations, social service provision still heavily relied on the voluntary organizations while service coordination relied on the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS), which was established in 1947.

The very early community work, which was conceived in quite a narrow sense, was initiated by the Social Welfare Office of the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs in 1949. The first Kai Fong Welfare Association, a local voluntary organization, came into being after the first community meeting was called in Shamshuipo in the same year. It aimed at facilitating people in the neighborhood to participate in local social affairs and self-help activities such as repairing bridges, mending roads, and promoting educational opportunities as well as providing free medical aid and emergency relief for the poor. This kind of neighborhood organizations spread rapidly with the support of the Government. The number of fully established Kai Fong Welfare Associations reached eighteen by 1952 and then approximately fifty in 1967. (Mok 1980)
The Government further recognized the importance of community work as a method of service delivery by establishing the first community center (CC) at Wong Tai Sin in 1960. The objective of community development service stated in the first White Paper on social welfare in 1965 was simply to encourage and assist individuals and groups to take an active interest in and work co-operatively for the welfare of their immediate community and ultimately of society as a whole. Community work might have also started in the voluntary social work agencies in the late 60s when the Community Development Committee consisting mostly of voluntary agency representatives and concerned individuals was established within the HKCSS in 1968. The work of the Committee was to introduce the concept of community development and promote community work in the voluntary agencies. (何 1972, Mok 1980)

In the period of the riots in 1966-1967, the Government experienced the first open support from local organizations and the Kai Fong Welfare Associations, which showed their stance to call for stable and peaceful life. The Government was aware of the need of communication with local people and making use of these organizations (張 1980). After the riots, the Government started to put forward her welfare redistribution policy. In the area of social work, she strengthened the training institution for the production of social workers. Resources were
appropriated for youth developmental service. More resources were allocated to help individuals and families cope with lives in the rapid changing society. Community building projects were set up in government as well as voluntary agencies to maintain social stability through improving the life condition of some minority groups or people living in transient areas. (Mok 1980, 周 1984)

Apart from these government funded projects, there were also non-subsidized community development programs organized in voluntary agencies at the grassroots level because the majority of grassroots people were trapped in problems of poverty and poor living condition such as wooden huts, squatters and temporary housing areas. However, the continuous lack of communication system between the Government and the local people had resulted in the growing threats of social unrest. Being facilitated by the social concern orientation of the churches and the Student Movement all over the world, community development and organizing tactics in social work grew rapidly and dominated the field of practice in the 70s. Some more voluntary organizations such as the Christian Industrial Committee (CIC), the Society for Community Organization (SoCO), and the Tsuen Wan Ecumenical Social Service Center (TWESSC), etc. with non-government funding and community work orientation came into being. Many issues oriented resident groups or pressure groups were organized to fight for the change of Government policy.
through “disruptive tactics”. The first related famous issue in the field of social work was believed to happen in 1972, the Issue of Yan Yi Tsuen (仁義村事件). But the most famous was the Issue of Boat Dwellers in 1979, which facilitated the establishment of Hong Kong Social Workers General Union (HKSWGU) in 1980. (馮 1990, 梁 1990)

On the other hand, the Government started to stipulate specific entrance requirements to different “levels” of social work posts. Since 1972, people who worked in the post of Assistant Social Work Officer (ASWO) or above should possess a qualified university degree of social work or equivalent (陳 1987). Almost at the same time, the second White Paper in 1973 expanded and elaborated more on the aims of community development although it was still conceived in quite a

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1 The Issue of Yan Yi Tsuen (仁義村事件) happened in September 1972. Over a hundred residents demonstrated outside the Urban Council in Central to ask for a just resettlement. All the demonstrators, including 112 residents, 13 students and a community worker, were arrested in the action. After the Issue, in December, the HKCSS held a seminar to discuss about the issue under the title of ‘The Community Worker -- Law and Order - From the Viewpoint of the Agency-Administrator’. In the seminar, the speaker, Rev. K. L. Stumpf who was the agency administrator of the Lutheran World Service, stressed that community workers should not provoke “radical action” but advise the residents to use tactics not against the law to solve their problem. Community workers should not be the revolutionist and power controller. He harshly commented on the use of “disruptive tactic” and discouraged social work agencies from supporting social actions.

2 The Issue of Boat Dwellers started in 1977. The boat dwellers in Yau Ma Tei Wind Shelter requested the Government to resettle them on land due to the extremely poor living condition in their boats in the wind shelter. A group of social workers, university students and individuals worked with them in the struggle. Being ignored by the Government for a long time, they decided to have petition...
narrow sense. The implementation was put forward through a network of Community and Youth Offices at the district level and community centers, estate welfare buildings and community halls at the neighborhood level. Community workers with social work training were posted for community organization and development through building up and working with local groups and organizations, training volunteers, gathering and sharing information with the local community and coordinating welfare services. They also encouraged citizens to participate in organized activities for community improvement. As a result, these community workers in the SWD had to perform different and often conflicting roles because while they were Government servants, they were also social workers who were expected to fight against social injustice stemmed from inadequate Government policies. (羅 1972, 何 1974, Mok 1980).

Although, as Mok had noted, compared with the Government servants, community workers in the voluntary agencies had enjoyed relatively greater degree of flexibility and freedom in employing strategies of community intervention, they were not all the way free of impediment. They had to struggle with harsh criticism on their intervention strategy in community issues within the field and suffer from lack of resource and support. When foreign funding was being reduced in the late

at the Governor's House in Jan 1979. However they were arrested on the coach on the way to the
70s, the voluntary agencies started to turn to the Government to ask for subvention.

In 1978, the Government tried to co-opt community organizing programs of the voluntary agencies through the subvention for Neighborhood Level Community Development Projects (NLCDPs)\(^3\) in selected deprived areas in order to make all those social conflicts or pressure groups under Government’s control. As Leung (梁 1990) had commented, the recognition of this kind of bottom-up community development or organizing tactics by the Government not only could make those actions under control, but also help consolidate the legitimacy of the Government. Wong (1993) also suggested that this was an indirect control mechanism of the colonial Government in preventing social grievances from worsening. Here, the Government’s political purpose in social control seems to be apparent. Supported by this Government orientation, the subvented NLCDP provided by voluntary agencies developed rapidly and became a dominant mode of service in community work since the early 80s and at the end of 80s, there were totally 49 NLCDP teams in

\(^3\) NLCDPs were developed to serve deprived and transient communities where the provision of welfare services and community facilities was inadequate or non-existent. Such communities were identified by the Committee on NLCDPs according to certain selection criteria. The communities included squatter areas, cottage areas, boat squatter areas, temporary housing areas, and Mark I&II public housing estates. NLCDPs serve the community building and the social services functions in these areas with population ranging from 3000 to 15000. The responsibility for NLCDPs was transferred from SWD to CNTA in 1985. In 1989, Mark III – VI public housing estates included in

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operation. (Report on NLCDPs 1984-1989)

At the same time, however, community work became more politically oriented due to the introduction of electoral politics through the establishment of the three-tier system of representation by the Government after the pronunciation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984. Many social workers, especially those working in community work, supported this electoral politics with real actions in the hope of influencing government policies on resource distribution. They not only encouraged and supported people to participate, but they themselves also entered this political system through joining the elections with the privilege of the wealth of networks and resources they gained as being social workers in the districts. The main stream concern then flowed to the role of social worker, especially community worker in the political situation. On the other hand, another group of “elite” in the field paid much effort to work on Social Welfare Personnel Registration (SWPR) for social work professionalization. At the same time, it could also be noticed that the other areas of social work had become more individual and family oriented as more Government resources were deployed into these services (1987).

In 1985, all of a sudden, the management responsibilities of all Government-operated CCs and NLCDPs were transferred from SWD to the City

the Housing Authority’s redevelopment program also became eligible for designation as NLCDP
and New Territories Administration (CNTA) and the community work units in the CCs were disbanded (Lee 1986, Report on NLCDPs 1984-1989). This was considered as a blow at community work in the field. It was believed that the Government wanted to kick out community work from social work while getting hold of it under CNTA. As Yeung (楊 1987) said, the Government did not consider social work as a profession with its unique definition of work that served people mainly in three working approaches: case, group and community work integrated together. It also implied that the Government would not continue to tolerate the “conflict approach” in community work under the Government’s subvention. (陳 1987)

Since the late 80s, the social work profession has been encountering waves of critical issues. In the presence of shortfall in all kinds of social service and manpower, there came the welfare cut back such as cutting the service of study room and library in children and youth center resulted from the evaluation in youth service. There was the emergence of the integrated service team and the failure in calling for a long-term youth policy. The promotion of community care concept was accompanied by the cut back of community development project.

In the mid 90s, the Government proposed a new mode of subvention system,
the “unit grant”, for the voluntary agencies in service provision, which implied a new relationship between the Government and the voluntary agencies instead of the old “partnership” (理 1996). This alarmed the field of practice and thus, the Government encountered great objection from the voluntary agencies. However, they were not united in the opposition due to their difference of interests. Therefore, the Government has got rooms to insist on enforcing the new subvention scheme after the experiential period. Now the Government has made one more step in putting forward the “added value” guide and quality assurance of service provision for the purpose of budget cut due to the difficult situation in economy. All these seemed to suggest that the Government had strong decision in restricting the development of social service, leaving only a safety net for those in desperate situations.

As it has been portrayed, within this half century, social work has developed from a sense of charity into a human service occupation. It has paid much effort to institutionalize its service provision and establish its professional image. It has also experienced enormous changes within the service provision system and struggles in the relationship with the Government. On the other hand, it can be seen that specific effort has been paid to work on social workers registration system for its professionalization by a group of “elite” since the early 80s. This was supposed or
taken for granted to be related to the issue of the hand over in 1997. But what actually have happened concerning this professional development in the field and what have resulted in the field of practice? It is time to turn to concentrate on the professional development of social work all along these years.

III. Professional Development of Social Work

The term “professional social work” appeared in the local social work community as early as the establishment of Hong Kong Social Workers Association (HKSWA) in 1947. This was the only association for social workers in that era. Its first aim stated in its Constitution is “To foster a high standard of professional social work in Hong Kong, by promoting the interchange between social workers of knowledge in social work by means of meetings, discussions and publications” (HKJSW 1: 2, 10). Although its conception of professional social work appears to be rudimentary when compared with present standards, this first volume of the Hong Kong Journal of Social Work (HKJSW) published in 1966 told that the Association was paying effort to define professional social work and build up a professional culture among the workers. With the very first draft of the Code of Ethics in the same year, the Association hoped to crystallize the role and status of professional social worker in Hong Kong (HKJSW 1: 4-7). The effort paid, however,
appeared not as influential as expected since beside the endeavor of this group of "elite", there seemed no other favorable factor supporting the professional development of social work.

Not until the year 1972 when the SWD enforced the policy that people who work in the post of ASWO or above should possess qualified university degree of social work, had the Government made a step to acknowledge the growing need of trained personnel for social service. It is perceived to be a step forward in professional development and a manifestation of social sanction for the profession (Mak 1990). (But it can be understood that it is only the recognition of the Government). In the later years, however, the Government had no well planing in manpower training for social work that led to the urgent need of employing non-trained degree holder to fill up the posts of ASWO in the 80s (Yeung 1987).

Started in the late 70s, a concern group was organized in the HKSWA to study the issues of social workers registration, licensure and credential of social work education. The trend of employing non-trained degree holder as social worker was considered by those "elite" practitioners to be a wave of "de-professionalization" in the field. The growing worry about the trend made them aware of the need to speed up professionalization as a countering force. As Mak (Mak 1990) noted, the situation could be considered as the disputes of professionalization versus
de-professionalization with the Government. First, the Government in leading positions employed non-trained graduates as social workers and placed Social Work Assistant (SWA) or Senior Social Work Assistant (SSWA) in the posts of ASWO due to the lack of manpower. Second, the SWD insisted that the two-year Diploma in social work is enough and appropriate for training a social worker working in certain levels that led to a later dispute within the field on whether social worker with Diploma training should be recognized as professional and included in the registration.

In the early 80s, the HKSWA initiated a proposal of setting up a registration system for social work personnel. However the Government paid no attention on it and did not recognized the need of having a registration system (栢 1990). The HKSWGU was not active at first, as it was an open organization for social workers including those non-trained welfare workers and community or labor organizers. That was why in later years of the consultation period, there came the disputes of whether the non-trained welfare workers should be included in the registration system. A few years later, in 1984, the 2 organizations came to an agreement with the HKCSS to form a “joint working group” on the SWPR.

More discussions on working for the professional development were facilitated in the field by the “joint working group”. Discussions on how to facilitate social
work to become a profession in different dimensions were published in the HKJSW. For some social workers, especially those who have been working in the field for a long time and have achieved a sense of belonging, it may be a common belief that it is good for social work to develop into a profession. This can be manifested in an article written by Mark Li who was the vice president of the HKSWGU in 1987. In his article, which was published in the newsletter of the Union in April 1987, he wrote that social work as an occupation was on its right track of development towards professionalization as other professions were. He claimed that it was a natural process for social work to demand a specific training and qualification, to establish a code of ethics for practice, to call for personnel registration, to gain social status and recognition and through legislation to become a profession. In the end, a legal body would be set up to regulate, control and develop the profession. A licensing system might even be set up to exclude those without an ascribed qualification in the practical field. There is the wish and inclination that professionalization will help ensure as well as improve the quality of social work service provision and thus the protection of the service recipients.

Towards the end of the consultation on the issue of SWPR in the late 80s, there was only little attention paid on examining whether social work should be developed into a profession and the problem issues sprang up in professionalization
referring to the “power” approach of the professions. These very few critical ideas could only be found in some minority publications, such as 《社研學報第二期》1988 and 《社會福利從業員註冊制度回顧集》1989 published by some groups of social workers and social work students.

In 1989, the “joint working group” produced its final proposal on the legislation of a registration system to the Government. It was considered to be in urgent need to have a legislated registration but the Government still had reservation on the proposal. Instead a voluntary registration system was set up in April 1990. For those striving for its success, this was considered to be the first milestone for social work professionalization. Legislation or licensure would be the ultimate aim. (Law 1989, 羅 1990)

In the 90s, with 1997 and the handover approaching, more effort had been paid to work for the legislation as the Basic Law says that the professional organizations set up before the handover will continue with their status through out the years after. That was why both Mark Li and Mr. Hui, the president of HKCSS, claimed that it was very important to have legislation for SWPR before 1997. The editor’s remark in 《社聯季刊 113》1990 clearly told that the ultimate purpose of social work professionalization is to ensure the occupation’s professional status and the autonomous development of the “profession” after the handover. Of course,
there was also the inclination for better quality control of practice in order to
safe-guard the service recipients. However, as Mak 麥董施 1990 noted, the
debate on whether social work was a profession was not a local issue in social work
field in the sense that there was no wide and deep enough discussion all through the
years. Not until the recent years, has the establishment of the compulsory
registration system in 1997 opened up to heated disputes and queries on the
orientation of professional development.

In 1996 the Government proposed a bill for legislation after Mr. Hui’s claim of
proposing a private bill in 1995. Eventually, not long afterwards and without much
consultation in the field as well as the public, the Bill was passed in 6 June 1997 and
a provisional registration board came into being. In January 1998, the SWRB was
formally set up with 8 out of the 15 board members as elected and the rest official
appointed. The chairperson of the Board happened to be the official representative
of SWD, the deputy director.

What is the attitude of those practitioners within the field? Up to 1995, only
about 1600 out of more than 6000 qualified social workers have been registered in
the voluntary registration system (星島日報 3/4/95). What did these figures tell?
What were these 1600 registered workers thinking about? Why was it that more
than 4000 silent majority did not join the registration before the compulsory system

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was established? Now the effort paid in professionalization has accomplished the legislated registration system and the establishment of a professional body, the SWRB. What do these mean to the field of practice?

In some open forums, some social workers had such expressions: “I don’t think I am really ‘professionalized’ after I have registered.” “I don’t know what made me more ‘professional’ by just paying $1000 for registration.” In other words, they were querying whether there would be any real difference in their work related to their clients after registered and why they should be entitled “professional social workers” just after registration.

The pursuance of full-scale registration of social workers was not as smooth as the negotiation in passing the Registration Bill in the Legislative Council. There were oppositions towards the registration system. Over a thousand refused to register even when the SWRB has been formally set up in January 1998 (蘋果日報 23/2/98). Numerous reasons were heard in different occasions including seminars and social workers’ protests. Some claimed that the registration fee was too high. Some queried about the closed system of the Registration Board including the membership and the unknown procedure as well as criteria in formulating the Disciplinary Board. Some questioned about the late coming and the legal applicability of the moralistic Code of Practice. Some argued for the effectiveness
of quality control over different kinds of social work services including the
government provision through a set of general and case work oriented Code. Some
worried that “radical action” in community work will be shrunken when social
workers have to abide by the Code of Practice and the Registration Bill.

Among the opponents, a group called the Joint Association Concerning the
Professional Development of Social Work (JACPDSW) with members mainly as
community workers or organizers in community work has been actively taking
actions to question about the establishment of the SWRB since mid 1997. Many of
the group members refused to register until the last minute. The Group is concerned
about whether social work is or should be a profession and whether the
professionalization of social work is violating its own mission and hinder
community work practice in alleviating inequality and fighting for social justice.
They also comment that the present mode of professionalization is a way to gain
professional status as well as privilege and the establishment of a unified
compulsory social workers registration system is a step to exert occupational
control and exercise exclusion for the monopoly of practice. They worry that the
final loser of the game would be the clients because they have never been involved
in the professionalization process and they would not have any say in the
professional service.
In response to these disputes, the SWRB had paid effort to tell the public that the establishment of social workers registration system was a milestone in social work professionalization, following the right track of social work development. The main purpose of setting up the system was to ensure quality control of social work service for better protection of clients. Those opposing the registration system were just a minority who did not understand the system. Those who refused to register had violated the Registration Ordinance (東方日報 1/4/98, 明報 2/5/98, 3 1/5/96, 19/8/98, 11/9/98). However, in the first closed meeting held by the SWRD in September 1998 to present its working progress to all registered social workers, there were only around 80 participants, including the board members and those registered social workers who have objection towards the system.

Since there were so many social workers who refused to register (including the Government servants), the SWD issued an instruction to the Non-government organizations (NGO) to have all social workers registered by warning to draw back subvention for the post occupied by non-registered social workers. The HKCSS also provided guideline for dismissing social workers refused to register. (HK Standard 27/3/98, 星島日報 10/8/98, 4/9/98, 新報 4/4/98, 12/9/98, 17/10/98, SCMP 17/9/98, HK Standard 10/8/98).

In mid September 1998, the first social worker was dismissed by an NGO in
reference to the instruction and guideline for the reason that she refused to register (聯合報 16/9/98, 明報 15/9/98, 東方日報 15/9/98, 蘋果日報 15/9/98, SCMP16-17/9/98). Later, at the end of September, the last government-employed social worker to register took an action to shave his head to show his reluctance and anger towards the compulsory registration (東方日報 27/9/98, 蘋果日報 27/9/98, 6/10/98). Both of them are also members of the concern group JACPDSW. The social worker being dismissed has taken action in judicial review querying the legitimacy of the compulsory registration system of the SWRO. According to the information released by the Registration Board in October, there were still around 20 qualified social workers not in the registration list (新報 17/10/98).

Following all the above mentioned unsettled issues, there came the news that 7 complained cases had been reported to the Registration Board, but all the 7 cases complaining about the mal-practice of social workers were rejected. The explanation was that all the cases were considered not related to ethical issue after the assessment of the Board. Whether the service recipient could be protected from social worker’s mal-practice through this kind of self-disciplinary system then became one of the concern areas of the group JACPDSW (明報 17/10/98, 蘋果日報 26/10/98, 新報 26/10/98, 9/11/98). On the other hand, in some forums on the Code of Practice, many social workers were showing their concern on how to
protect themselves from being complained and charged. The issue here has raised
the questions: What has the registration system brought about? Can service
recipients be protected under the system?

Inevitably, some social workers would believe that the establishment of a
registration system is simply a means to improve quality control over service
provision and thus the protection of clients, not necessarily related to the matter of
social work professionalization. However, it cannot be denied that it is considered
to be a step forward for the professional development concerning the hand over of
Hong Kong by those striving for its success.

In fact, lots of questions need to be raised within the process of
professionalization. First of all, what will the SWRBs and the compulsory
registration system bring to the field of practice, to the practitioner and the clients?
Secondly, what will happen to those non-registered social workers? Why would
these social workers, especially the two in the Concern Group, rather risk
themselves than join the registration torrent? What make the Concern Group as a
whole take an active role in the opposing movement against the professional
development of social work? How do they perceive the professional development in
social work and the opposition movement?

As a matter of fact, the concern group is mainly composed of community
workers or people related to some kinds of community work and some of them had even been involved in the controversial issues which led to enormous disputes within the field of practice in the 90s. Based on their experiences and observations, they have the belief that community work is a kind of practice incompatible with the mainstream professional development and the professionalization of social work would probably restrict community work practice in the field. Thus, it is important to have a look at the development of community work with specific attention on those controversial issues in the field in the 90s.

IV. Community Work

Community work is one of the working approaches of social work, having its own ideology and value assumption, perspective on problem and society, objective and dimension of work. In Mak's (麥海華 1990) interpretation, besides helping clients to cope with the demand of society, the basic working approaches of social work also includes facilitating changes in the environment to meet people's needs. To bring about social reform and facilitate social justice through organizing clients in actions is therefore an important tradition of social work. As Yip (葉 1995) has pointed out, community work as one of the working approaches of social work is related to issues of resource and power distribution. This concern on community
problems and social policy gives community work a political dimension apparently lacking in other social works. Community work aims at consciousness raising and improvement of life condition through the process of citizen participation and public education. It is based on an institutional oriented perspective believing that social problems stem from the inadequacy of the social system and policy in question. Thus, it is believed that community work is political in essence. This political sense has been changing all the time in its history and community workers are said to have different political role all through these years of development and in fact, there has been much concern about the proper role of community work in society since the late 60s.

In the late 60s and 70s, due to the closed political system, the public lacked communication with the Government in expressing their problem situations and needs. "Conflict approach" had been adopted as a dominant mode of community work practice to organize the deprived people to improve their life conditions. The prevailing "disruptive tactics" against the Government had led to the consequence that the participants in some demonstrations were charged by the police. Then there were debates on whether community workers as well as social work agencies should be concerned about social reform and whether they should advocate or participate in those "disruptive" practices. The most famous issue was the "Boat
Dwellers” in 1979. The protesters were arrested in an action and only the social workers and volunteer helpers were charged on court. This was a startling incident in the field of practice. There were the claims that community workers should be self-controlled and disciplined and should not incite people to use “disruptive tactics” against the law and the Government to solve their problems even if their motives were well justified. (馮 1990)

In the 80s, the field of practice became political in a different sense. Due to the introduction of electoral politics by the Government, many social workers joined the game and gained positions as electoral representatives in the hope of exerting influence on Government policy. The energy of community work seemed to have been directed towards the promotion of political participation through voting and supporting the preferred representatives. As a result, the main stream concern flowed to the role of social workers especially community workers who played a very active role in the political situation. Whether social workers should participate in the elections and whether grassroots organizing should be aimed at political participation became the focus of discussions. (麥海華 1990, 葉 1995)

When the 90s came, due to the limitation within the electoral politics, grassroots people were disappointed by the electoral representatives. This disappointment made them turn back to the “disruptive tactics” in community
actions. Once again, the “disruptive tactics” became commonly adopted by some community workers and grassroots people in their fight for welfare against the Government departments. The debates on new “social action” and the “disruptive tactics” became more prominent than ever in the field of social work, since participants in different actions (including social workers) were arrested in confrontations with the police. The issues of “Well-off Tenants” in Public Housing in 1993, and “Rooftop Dwellers” in 1994-96 opened up to heated disputes. There were many discussions and comments on the matters of “radical practice” and “civil disobedience”. The “professional” role of social workers was challenged. The questions on the conflict between advocacy for social justice through participation and upholding social order, the balance between consensus and conflict approaches on working with deprived groups in fighting for their welfare were being raised.

In the issue of Tsuen Wan Rooftop Dwellers, Some academics including Professor Chow Wing Sang of the University of Hong Kong disapproved the action of the social workers joining such “radical” demonstrations (信報 21/12/94). Choi Shing Kiu, the president of HKSWGU at that time claimed that the Union supported the rooftop residents but had reservations on the social workers’ way of support in the issue (SCMP 12/1/1995). The three representative organizations, HKCSS, HKSWGU and HKSWA established a “joint committee” to evaluate the issue and
the professional role of social workers in supporting demonstrators in social actions.

Later in the issue of Mong Kok Rooftop Dwellers, again the Government was going to demolish the rooftop constructions without "proper" compensation for the residents. In an action trying to enter the Government office, some residents and a community worker were arrested by the police. After that incident, the director of SoCO, Ho Hei Wah announced to the public that the agency decided to terminate the service for the residents. The reason was that the orientation of some volunteer supporters had violated social work "professional" practice and "stirred up" the "radical actions" of the residents beyond the control of the agency. The service for the residents was terminated when they were still asking the Government for better resettlement.

Along with these debatable issues in the field of community work, the Government policy was inserting new direction for its development. The White Paper Towards the 90s brought about the concept of "community care" as guideline for community work. This change in policy implied that community work needed to turn from organizing people to fight for betterment to a more welfare and service oriented approach (葉 1995). The Government intended to cut NLCDP service through the process of "natural dissolution" by stopping the re-provision of new service areas when the projects in transient areas were terminated. In recent years,
two pioneer projects in old urban areas had been terminated. On the other hand, in January 1997, the field was shocked by the suspension of the NGO, Tsuen Wan Ecumenical Social Service Center due to the conflict between the social workers and the agency board members. The agency was well known of its “radical practice” in working with deprived groups to fight for their welfare since the 70s. The role and attitude of the Government and the representative organizations in the field were influential on the issue.

As I have pointed out in Section III, throughout the 90s, the professional development of social work in terms of legalizing the personnel registration system was in its bloom. It is believed that all these incidents, the professional development, the Government’s service cutback, the disputes on “radical practice” and the suspension of TWESSC, did not come together by chance. Exploring the interrelationships among these incidents would be useful for the understanding of the community work development.

The development of community work is commonly considered in terms of service provision and the nature of practice. For service provision, the Government’s service cutback is definitely a force restricting its development. Why the Government took actions to restrict its development is not hard to understand and it will be touched on later although it is not the key concern of the study. For
the nature of practice, some practitioners believe that it is confronted by the professional development including the establishment of SWRB with the compulsory registration system within the field. How do these professional achievements exert their influence on its development? Changes are taking place in both terms of development. What is the relationship between the two? How do these changes affect the service recipients? All these questions will be examined carefully in the study.

V Conclusion

Social work in Hong Kong has developed for half a century with the first course of social work education in university started in 1950. Compared with over a century's history in the Western world, it is pretty young. Thus, from the beginning of the planned expansion of academic training in the 70s, its knowledge mainly came from the Western countries. All together, foreign practical models of social work and different theories from other disciplines like Psychology and Sociology came in touch with the local practitioners. Three different practice orientations with their own belief and ideology were commonly adopted. Firstly, for those who attributed social problems to individual and family's coping ability, social work means providing service and resource to help individual and family cope with the
changing environment. Secondly, for those who believe that social problems stem from the unequal distribution of resources and the inadequacy of social welfare, social work focuses on the work for a better welfare policy to ensure more even distribution of resources in the assumption that the Government is responsible and cooperative. Thirdly, for those who believed that social problems were caused by conflict of interests, power difference and inequality among different groups of people in society, social work refers to consciousness raising for the oppressed groups and mass participation to fight for the change of the system and Government policy.

More and more commonly in the local field of practice and training, social work is perceived as a helping profession. It is generally understood that the duty of social workers is to help people to help themselves in solving their problems. There is also the emphasis that social work is a profession in alleviating societal inequality through redistribution of resources and promoting social justice by resisting oppression in order to improve people’s welfare in society. These objectives are to be accomplished through casework, group work and community work approaches in different settings for different target groups of client. However, in these few decades’ development, social work, far from achieving the objectives through the integration of these working approaches, has long been criticized for its fragmented
service provision leaving numerous service gaps. NLCDP is said to be a kind of community work to fill those service gaps for the deprived groups and communities. However, there have been continuous disputes on the proper role of community work.

It is generally agreed that through organizing tactics and mass participation, the objective of community work is to empower people through consciousness raising activities, to alleviate societal inequality and promote social justice by resisting oppression in organized activities. However, there are often queries even in its own field: To what extent have these been put into real practice? Are these objectives compatible with the orientation of social work professionalization? On the other hand, there is often criticism on the role and practice approach of community work by the mainstream social workers.

In real practice, much effort has been paid for the professionalization of social work in recent two decades and a legal professional body with the legislated registration system has been achieved. The dominant views appear to rest on the functionalist views of the West before the 70s when the professions were considered as a natural product of the modernized society. Those who dominated the issue of social work professionalization tended to concentrate on how to facilitate social work to become a profession in reference to the “trait model”. The “power” issues
in professionalization raised or the strategic approach on understanding the professions developed in the West in these recent decades seem to be largely ignored in the case of Hong Kong. As Shae (1999) argued, the sociology of the profession is largely absent in Hong Kong.

Concerning the relationship between community work development and professionalization, although there are reasons to believe that conflict and tension do exist between the two, there has hardly been any discussion on it. Perhaps the only brief remark was uttered by Fung (馮 1990) that social work professionalization would gradually make community work go towards elitism and detach itself from its people. Community workers would hesitate although people needed to be organized and thus resulted in impeding the development of community organizing. He worried that the “disruptive tactics” in community work would be isolated and distorted, and finally lost support from the public. When referring to the literatures and studies in the Western countries, this very brief remark of Fung has been one of the key concerns in the area of social work professionalization.

For the role of the Government, it can be seen that her attitude towards social work professionalization as well as community work was changing all through the years. In fact, the relationship between social work and the Government is believed
to be always ambiguous. It can be seen that she needs social work as a profession being co-opted to act as a buffer between her and the people, or as a control agent with certain granted authority and autonomy. Yet, of course, she would not want social work to be out of her control especially in those working approach with "disruptive tactics". Adding to these is the problem of 1997, together with its associated political considerations. After the establishment of the professional body and the enforcement of the new subvention and service quality control system, it seems that the relationship between the Government and the social work profession has become more complicated. All these changes in the Government's attitude and her relationship with the profession are worth exploring as part of the historical context for the study.

Finally in conclusion, it should be emphasized that the purpose of this chapter is to set the scene for the following chapters exploring the impact of social work professionalization on the development of community work. As mentioned in previous chapters, the study aims to examine the problem through the lens of the concern group JACPDSW, which has been actively confronting the establishment of the social workers registration system in this recent critical period. The Group being chosen as the entry point of study can be considered as crucial for several reasons. First, the Concern Group is believed to be the most prominent one, if not the only
one, in opposing the professionalization of social work in recent history. Second, the Group mainly consists of community workers or organizers who had participated or witnessed those controversial issues in the field of community work in the 90s. This provides direct information sources and empirical ground for the research study. The last thing is that the researcher has the vantage position as being a member of the Concern Group right from the beginning. This is also the reason why the research has been designed to use participant observation as the key strategy of data collection.

The coming chapters are going to present the story of this Concern Group striving against the tide of professional development in these years. How they perceive the present trend and influence of professional development on community work and the relationship of the developments with the service recipients will be explored. The story is supplemented with the other sides' information through in-depth interviews with members of the representative associations, some service recipients in community work and some other front-line social workers.
CHAPTER FOUR – Community Workers & the Registration

I. Introduction

After going through the historical background on the development of social work and community work in Hong Kong with specific focus on the recent professional establishment and the controversial issues happened in community work field in the 90s, it is not difficult to get hold of a background picture for the story to be explored. It can be noticed that a concern group, the JACPDSW set up in mid 1997 and originated from the field of community work, has been actively taking actions confronting the recent established registration system. Most of the Group members believe that community work is incompatible with the existing mode of professional development. Among the Group members, there are two risking their career prospect with actions against the registration. One of them was a community worker and was finally dismissed for refusing to register. This chapter will aim at exploring how the registration system of the present mode of professionalization affects the prospect of community workers. The Group will act as a window through which the main concern is examined all through the chapter.

The story of the sacked community worker will start the following section and
the struggle of these two members will open up the discussion to follow. Why they bear the strong will against the registration and the belief that they uphold for social work as well as community work will be examined as a start for the understanding of the entire issue. As their story is believed to be part of the struggle against the system by the Concern Group, Section III will bring out the background concerning the Group as a whole. What they have done in response to the current achievement in professionalization is presented. What they perceive about the establishment of the SWRB and the compulsory registration system are explored in Section IV.

In order to capture the relationship between community work and the professional development for the chapter to come, it is important to have an understanding on why this Concern Group think that community workers would be excluded from social work under the registration system. Section V will trace what the Group believes to be the nature of community work, the beliefs and values they uphold for it and its difference from the concept of the mainstream community work practice. The boundary of community work specified for this study will also be identified within the discussion. Section VI will continue to look at why community workers are believed to be at risk under the system in the sense of the general understanding among ordinary practitioners. Finally, the conclusion section will draw a summary on the main theme of this chapter, why the existing
registration system has become a threat to community workers especially those clinging to the "radical" practice.

At the end, it needs to be noted that although most of the informants and respondents do not mind having their identities exposed in the research report, in the view of protection for all, the report will try to avoid naming the people involved. Aliases will be used wherever necessary instead of real names to disguise all their identities.

II. A Community Worker Sacked for Refusing to Register

"Prepared to sacrifice job for her principles"  Patsy Moy HKS 24/2/99

"Social worker to fight Dismissal"  Cynthia Wan SCMP 16/9/98

"Woman social worker dismissed for refusing to register, registration system violates justice"  香港 24/2/99

"Stubborn XXX the face of social worker rebelliousness"

Patsy Moy HKS 12/8/98

"Employee sacked after refusal to register wins right to challenge dismissal in court"  Angel Lau SCMP 1/5/99
“Social work not only makes people change themselves to enhance their livelihood, but also fosters changes in the whole society. I see the very basic rationales in social work are to foster justice and equality among people, pursue more harmony in the whole society through collective participation.” (Flora)

Following the above few pieces of headline picked out from the newspaper reports on Flora’s case is the belief she upholds and the testimony she gives for social work. Flora is the first, or may also be the last, social worker (more appropriate to say community worker) to be dismissed for refusing to register with the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB). She has strong will to uphold her beliefs and values in community work that she had rather risked her job as a community worker in a non-government organization (NGO). She will continue with the struggle despite the threat that she may never again work as a social worker in government funded service.

“To me, it’s a huge challenge because there’s much pressure. Yes, people support me and help me a lot, yet I myself have to bear all the pressure, from people around, about my future. But now it becomes clearer. It
doesn’t matter any more. It’s not a bad thing to leave the field as there’re too many constraints.” (Flora)

She believes that it was right to challenge the compulsory registration system, as it was set up without going through an open consultation in the social work field as well as the public. This is unfair and unacceptable in a democratic society. She also cannot agree with the idea that registration per se can make social workers more professional. If social work were to be professionalized through the registration system, it would violate the basic values of social work, to fight for justice and equality with the deprived and to help people help themselves. Further, it would only create more constraints on community workers being subject to the Code of Practice as the power to control the whole occupation rests only on a group of “professional elite” who are usually more conservative in orientation. On the other hand, she suggests that the registration system is actually redundant because most social workers in Hong Kong are qualified with completed practical and academic training.

Flora had worked as a community worker for two years before she was fired. She may be considered unrealistic and stubborn or even stupid. She was brought up in a grassroots family where her parents are illiterate and poor. She had experienced
the difficult life of grassroots people and thus she was determined from childhood to help the poor and deprived. So, when she became a social worker, she believed that it was her opportunity to protect the right of the deprived and enhance their livelihood.

Before she received academic training for social work, she had worked as a welfare worker with ex-mental patients in a halfway house for more than a year. The in-charge there was the only trained social worker and all the other staff were welfare workers. She experienced very good teamwork, but faced great limitations when working with her clients. It was the discrimination in society that put them in disadvantage positions or even hostile situations. A simple but unavoidable question from her clients often made her get stuck. "When I’m interviewed for a job, shall I tell them I’d had this illness?" She realized that no matter how much effort she paid to help them and how hard they tried themselves, there would not be real change to their situation if there were not any change in other systems in society accordingly. Later, when she got social work training, grounded by the experience earned in "community participation" projects organized as informal education by the lecturers, her view on the need of working for social change was more consolidated. This might be what she hoped to gain, (a way out of the limitations when working with the ex-mental patients), in social work training.
When she earned a Diploma in Social Work with Distinction from the City University of Hong Kong in 1996, she started to work as a community worker.

Flora is one of the key members of the concern group JACPDSW. Although she is the only one to be fired for not registering, she is definitely not the only one in the Group to risk career prospect for not compromising principles. Louis is another key member of the Group, who works as a senior social work assistant (SSWA) in a family unit of the Social Welfare Department (SWD). He started to work in the government service as a welfare worker in 1973 after he had finished secondary education. He was not considered as a social worker until 1979 when the Government put forward the Welfare Class Review in which Diploma in Social Work became the minimum requirement for social work posts. He was upgraded as a Social Work Assistant (SWA) with the title of “social worker”.

“At that time, after graduated from school, getting a job in government office was already very good. I only wanted to be a civil servant and I was not quite clear what social work was about. With the role of a civil servant, I didn’t think of doing something for social justice. But after being in the job for sometime, I’d got interest in it. Because when I had more direct contact with people, I saw many unjust cases, especially concerning the
policy problems or people’s need not reaching the policy level. The more I saw, the greater interest I got in the job. At the time of Welfare Class Review in 1979, I’d got real interest in social work, therefore was eager to join and continue with the work.” (Louis)

Louis is the chairperson of the Social Work Assistant Branch of the Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants’ Association (SWAB of HKCCSA). He has joined the union as the chairperson since 1991 with a year’s break in 1996. Although there were the threat that those who failed to comply with the Social Workers Registration Ordinance (SWRO) committed a criminal offence, he still organized his member, the civil servants in the Union to fight against the registration scheme. Being the last civil servant as social worker to register, Louis took an action to shave his head in an open forum to show his reluctance and anger towards the compulsory registration system. Even after registration, he has continued to take actions to challenge the SWRB as a way to put it under scrutiny.

Besides the effort paid to support Flora and Louis in their struggle and challenge against the SWRB and the registration system, the other members of the concern group JACPDSW have actively taken different actions and protests against the present mode of social work professionalization. They are mainly community
workers or grassroots organizers who had been involved in the controversial issues in the field of community work in the 90s. Although the group of “professional elite” has tried to convince the field with the good will on the establishment of SWRB and the registration system and to rule out the possibility of affecting the development of community work, it cannot be denied that this is the Group’s worry. And in fact, something has already happened to Flora who was a community worker before dismissal and who would consider herself definitely a different voice towards the registration. Instead of taking the development as an unavoidable trend in the field of social work and compromising with the registration system as the majority social workers have done, the Group has challenged it critically and actively taken actions against the tide.

III. The Background of the Concern Group

“First, community organizing work is highly professionally monopolized. Social service agencies and the voluntary organizations within them are usually conservative. Space for exploring and exercising grassroots organizing is further limited. Second, the Government wants to shoulder off her responsibility on social service and especially keeps on tightening
the subvention for community organizing work. Third, Council Politics are not working for the needs of grassroots people.” (The rationales commonly shared by members of the Concern Group)

A group of social workers and organizers gathered together for the first meeting in August 1997. These above were the rationales they shared for their action in forming the group. These above-mentioned expressions stood for what they have experienced and observed in the field of practice as well as the society at large. The aims and objectives of the Group were to work against the professionalization of community organizing; to foster self-motivated grassroots organizing; to encourage open attitude in evaluating organizing culture, approach, concept and social analysis. The Group hoped to form alliance with groups or individual organizers having the same interests to fight against the dominant culture of community organizing in the arena of social work and open up more rooms for new organizing tactic.

At the beginning, the Group met once every two to three weeks. It allowed much time to discuss on its orientation and focus of concern. Some members suggested the Group to act as a pressure group, an association or simply a concern group with more flexibility. Some suggested forming a union for community
organizer, an alternative union, in the light of protecting their right to work on grassroots organizing. Some preferred the Group to be more action oriented while the others clung to organizing or commenting current issues. Quite a number of them offered concrete suggestions for their focus of concern, which concentrated on the area of professional development and community organizing. Many of them happened to show the same interest on the issue of social workers registration. They also suggested that the concern towards this issue in relation to professional development should start from looking at the service recipients. Focus should be put on revealing the relationship between the "social work professional hegemony" and the service recipients or the public, how this "hegemony" would distort their "needs".

The SWRO was passed in June the same year, just two months before these people came together. This might also be one of the reasons bringing about the formation of the Group. As the enforcement of the SWRO was quite a hot issue in the field, the Group has started to pay attention on it from the beginning. In fact, some Group member has started to concern about the issue before the Group took its sharp. As one of them recalled from his memory:

"A few years ago, right before the 95 Legco election, one of the
candidates for the Social Welfare Constituency visited our agency to lobby us to register and vote for him. This led to our attention of the political interest involved in the social workers registration. But at that time, the registration system was on a voluntary basis. Some of us also began to put an eye on its development, as we were worried about our position as a community worker in some of the ‘radical actions’. When Hui Yin Fat proposed a Private Bill for legalizing the registration system in the Legco, we had taken actions to oppose it. But all of a sudden, the Government proposed a Public Bill and it was passed in such a rush that the public was in no time to react.”

According to the attendant lists of the first few meetings, the number of participants was around ten to twelve with a little bit variation of people in each meeting. Nearly half of them had been the staff of the Tsuen Wan Ecumenical Social Service Center (TWESSC), which was formally terminated in January 1997. After the termination, a few of them had resumed the status of university student and the others found jobs outside the field or in other service in the same field. Two of the other Group members were voluntary organizers who had once been the active members of two distinct residents groups, a public housing residents group
and a rooftop dwellers group, organized by the community workers of the TWESSC in the past years. Some of the others had also returned to the universities after a few years in the field of community work. The rest of the Group members, but very small proportion, were still community workers in the NGOs.

The social workers registration began to draw attention in the field of practice when the SWRO was to be implemented and all the non-registered social workers, at least half of the population of the practitioners, were reminded or forced to register within the deadline\(^1\) issued by the SWRB. Those group members who had the role of social workers also felt the pressure and more and more of the group’s attention was drawn onto the mandatory registration system. Gradually, the concern towards the issue became the focus of actions in the group. A questionnaire survey was done among social workers to seek their views and understanding on the registration system.

At the same time, in early 1998, the group discovered from the newspaper that there were also countering voices from social workers of the civil servants. They too have already concerned about the issue of social workers registration for sometime. They declared a clear stance against it in the position of the union, SWAB of HKCCSA and had already taken some actions such as refusing to pay the

\(^{1}\) A letter with Ref. No.: SWD 7/15/97 was issued by SWRB to all social workers with SWO and SWA grade. (Appendix IV)
registration fee, seeking legal advice for judicial review for the Ordinance and writing to the Civil Service Bureau to ask for exemption from registration (明報 27/3/98, HK Standard 27/3/98). Louis, the chairperson, acted as a voice of the Union on their view against the issue:

"We have opposed against the registration from the very beginning. We believe that social worker registration is wrong. We have already expressed our position to the Social Welfare Department. We always think that social work have not yet developed into a 'profession'. Is social work a profession? We still have no consensus in the field. Before a consensus is reached, some people come out to claim that it is a 'profession'. It's only an 'overnight profession', without going through deliberate discussions and reflection, not aiming at a desirable and ideal professional development, not for the purpose of protecting our clients, even more, without our or social workers' recognition. They only want it to become a 'profession' as the mainstream professions do. It's not a healthy phenomenon. After thorough discussion in our union, we make clear our standpoint that social worker registration shouldn't be compulsory."

(Louis)
It seems that Louis and his Union do not reject the concept of professional development in social work even though they hold strong opinions against registration. They see that there is no consensus in the field whether social work is a profession. They believe that it takes time to develop and needs deliberate discussions with reflection among practitioners to reach a consensus in the field for how a “profession” social work should be. Now the situation is not a desirable and ideal professional development, as it seems not for the purpose of protecting the clients and not being recognized by the general practitioners. As the representative of the Union, Louis joined the Group and work together for the issue. The Group did not have a formal title until forming alliance with the SWAB of HKCCSA in their struggle. The name JACPDSW was adopted for the commonly agreed orientation in concerning the professional development of social work and more concrete actions had taken place in challenging the SWRB and the registration system. In order to gather different viewpoints and seek for supports, open forums among social workers and social work students in different Universities were held to discuss on matters related to the registration system and the SWRB. Press conferences were held to express publicly their queries and stance against the system.

From the beginning, the Group had decided to be somewhere in between an
open and closed group. New members were invited to join the Group every now and then, including social workers, organizers and students in relation to the field, who might have the same interest and concern. The criteria of membership were simple. Any “self-defined” organizers who agreed with the Group’s aims and objectives and concerned about the livelihood of grassroots people were welcomed to join. All the way through, there had been new members coming in and old members leaving. Some members chose to take part only in actions and protests while some had committed themselves to all meetings and actions. It was quite clear that the Group had developed into an action group focusing on the professional development of social work through concerning the registration system. It was not a union for community organizer working for the member’s rights. Some members who wished the Group to transform itself into a union had left but still the “spirit of TWESSC” continued. The Group had no extra energy and resources to be concerned about other issues outside the field of social work as it had concentrated much of their attention on actions concerning Flora and Louis’s struggle against the registration.

Among the name list of over forty members in these years, there were around ten core members who had stronger commitment in concerning the issue of social work professionalization. All of them had been included in the in-depth interviews
of my study. Of course, Flora and Louis constituted a very important part of them.

In addition, the observation coming from the close working relationship with them also helped me to capture what they perceive about the present situation of the professional development of social work in relation to community work. In terms of the establishment of the SWRB and the social workers registration system, their perception on the issue will be the focus in the coming section.

IV. The Social Workers Registration and the Registration Board

The stories of Flora and Louis have opened up the position and concern of the group JACP'SW that brings along the main theme of discussions in this chapter. In fact, their stories with the whole group’s struggle have kept on drawing the attentions from social work field and the public at large in these few years. For the general public, it may be considered ridiculous when a social worker choose to give up her job instead of being a registered social worker. There may be very few people who understand why Flora would choose to lose her job for refusing to register or why Louis would rather risk his career prospect than compromise with the registration. Why the Group is so keen on the struggle against this professional development is also believed to be beyond the understanding of ordinary people. How about their own field of social work? Do social workers really understand
what the group thinks about the SWRB and the registration system? This question will be dealt with in the next chapter. Maybe in the area of community work, people would have more understanding on their thoughts and beliefs as well as their actions.

In the eyes of Flora, the mandatory social workers registration system is a means to control social workers, especially those who work with community organizing. It is a system to exert exclusion for the field of practice, the exclusion of countering voices and alternative or creative practices in community service. In reference to herself, she has this remark:

"Social work is said to stress on openness, encourage participation. In fact, it's not true. I myself am being oppressed!... I think the more professionalized, the higher status gained, the worse situation it would be. Because it has resulted in that some people came out with certain principle as the highest creed, the one who contravened it would lose everything. This so-called principle is actually something that restricts social workers from having new breakthrough." (Flora)

What she said is pointing at the fate of community workers. Once the system
was implemented, all registered social workers have to be subject to the Code of Practice, which has been criticized as more like a set of missionary statements with moral obligations than practical guidelines. As these moral obligations leave much room for interpretations, she believes that those who sit in the SWRB and possess the power to exercise them will have the absolute power to control all the social workers and their practice. She is afraid that community workers will be at high risk of violating the Code of Practice due to the “radical” nature of their practice. Most members in the Concern Group seem to share her point of view to some extent.

“I think no one will object, neither do I, to have a mechanism to oversee the practitioners of an occupation. To control the standard of, say a plumber or an electrician, through licensure is basically nothing wrong. But we have to look at what the existing registration system is all about. In my knowledge, this mechanism serves a group of people who notably have a comparatively unified concept of social work than the others in the field. They get the power to formulate regulations and the code of conduct, to make practitioners to abide by them.... In other words, those who are in or near the center of authority set up rules and regulations for all the
practitioners, to judge whether they have violate these rules and regulations and then punish those who violate them. This is the problem.”

(Tony)

“Why within the system, there’s not the participation of the direct service recipients and their families or relatives. The most important thing that we want to oversee the plumber and electrician through licensure is for the benefit of the clients or customers. But in social work, it’s those who within the occupation oversee themselves. That’s the problem.” (Tony)

“Further professionalization will become a process of exclusion, which further constricts and redefines who can be included. Substantially, this has to be achieved through the system of registration. The process of exclusion is to kick out some people…. You could freely claim to be a social worker ten years ago, but now the term “social work” includes registration or certain ideology, which excludes some people. When the concept of the whole profession is realized, now, it clearly refers to the about eight thousand registered social workers. In fact, this is a recently formed concept. In this process of development, some people are being
excluded from the profession. The development has been the same in foreign countries. Community workers were excluded from social work.”

(Larry)

Larry sees the registration as one of the stages of professional development. In this, what he calls loosely observation, the registration is a substantial mechanism to achieve exclusion. The preliminary stage of professionalization, which was comparatively loose, included or tolerated those non-trained with trained social workers in the field. Gradually it has developed into this registration stage, which only includes trained but all social workers in different fields. Further professionalization will mean a process aiming at a unified and standardized practice excluding community workers. Larry seems to see that the professional development in Hong Kong to certain extent is following those in the West shown by some studies that I have cited in Chapter Two (Reeser and Epstein 1990, Wagner 1990, Specht and Courtney 1994). More discussions will be seen in Chapter Five.

From these above viewpoints, it is apparent that the Group does not agree that the registration system is simply a mechanism to oversee practitioners to safeguard service quality for the benefit of clients. They even believe that it will not work since no service recipients are included in this so-called watchdog system. They
agree that the quality of social work practices should be assured but not through such a system that only allow internal censorship. This point will be further discussed in the other chapter.

Furthermore, the Group perceives the SWRB as a group of people craving for power to get hold of all practitioners in the field. The social workers registration system is a means of control, a threat or even a mechanism of exclusion set against the community workers. But why do they think that community workers would be excluded from social work? What makes community work different from other kind of social work and what makes them think that community work is so different? Is it that only this community work oriented group is especially aware of the threat? What makes them different from other social workers? When they talk about community work, what actually are they talking about? What are the beliefs and values they uphold for community work? All these questions are related to what the Group believes to be the nature of community work, which some people would like to term as the essence or the value and belief. Following the nature of community work, discussions on the above questions will come and continue to the other chapters.
V. **What is Community Work?**

"As a social worker, one should know CD² is to do organizing, only organizing. I'm not saying in the sense of social movement, yet if you assume yourself to be a social worker, you should know that it is to do organizing. Let other people give other service. CD is specialized for organizing." (Larry)

“For NLCDP, it's a way of survival. Because of the need for survival, for the report of service statistic, they have to provide some services. Basically, no need to give service.” (Larry)

Having worked as a community worker in the TWESSC for eight years until its suspension, Larry has generated the idea that community work or community development should aim at organizing, not service provision. Even if there is the need of service provision in the community, it should be provided through grassroots organizing. In his words, “grassroots organizing offers service too, but the different is that it’s offered by residents in organized groups, social workers

² CD is a popular usage referring to community development, which is commonly accepted as community work in social work field. In the whole thesis, community work and community
themselves are not the center." The TWESSC had been an agency known for its community work orientation since its establishment by church groups with foreign funding in 1973. It kept on with its work of organizing resident groups and deprived people to foster grassroots development and enhance people's livelihood in communities even after it had obtained government subvention for some of their projects. In the late 80s, after graduated from social work training in the university, Larry started to work for grassroots organizing in a non-subvented project of the agency. Without the limitations from government subvention like those in the NLCDPs, he was free to do according to his vision, what he believed and valued.

"...such as social change, raising people's quality, establishing grassroots democracy. They come from these years' work. I didn't know that at the beginning. It's good to start with non-subvented project. Basically, there wouldn't be so many boundaries.... Develop people in different aspects. In social work's terms, they're social justice, people's quality and democratic quality. They're the basic values and concepts of CD. It's from nurture, the heritage of the TWESSC because there's much space.... My understanding of people's development is for democratic life, which is

development is used inter-changeably.
learnt and actualized through the organizing process in community.”

(Larry)

Later, in the same agency, Larry had the chance to work in different subvented NLCDPs for public housing residents in redeveloping estates. Yet, he did not forsake his strong orientation in residents organizing for service provision, which was adopted by many social workers in NLCDPs. He believed that “the practice mode commonly adopted by NLCDPs should not be the only one as what those community workers perceived, NLCDPs in themselves have too many resources and many connections with the Government, therefore too many boundaries.”

In all those years, Larry worked closely with resident groups, sometimes in joint communities’ platform to fight for policy change, especially in the area of housing policies. He had tried hard with his colleagues to break through limitations and boundaries in the general situation of community work. Through attempts on new tactics in organizing and actions to fight for policy change, they worked to achieve changes in what he terms people’s quality like the ability in expression and problem analysis, cooperation with people, mutual respect in democratic process.

In the prominent issues of the “Well-off Tenants” of public housing and the “Rooftop Dwellers”, he and his colleagues had participated in the whole process.
He was also one of those being arrested in a protest. He probably had his own interpretation and expectation on the issues. The significance of these issues, including the suspension of the TWESSC, concerning the main theme of the study will be discussed as reference in the other chapters. As these issues aroused heated disputes, he and his colleagues initiated discussions on the concept of "new social action" in the field of practice. Regarding the actions that drew the attention of the public, Piven and Cloward's (1979) term, "disruptive tactics", was referred to in these discussions. These controversial issues made them the focus of attention in relation to the "radical" actions in the community work field in the 90s.

"In 92/93, I haven't yet got social work training but already believed that there are some deprived people in society, who can never succeed in expressing their need or achieve what they want through every possible means, the so-called legal, normal or rational channels. I can accept that they express their needs and requests through some so-called illegal tactics." (Tony)

Tony has worked as a welfare worker in rehabilitation service for 9 years. He is not only a member of the concern group, but also the chairperson of the Hong
Kong Welfare Workers' Association and an active member of a political group concerning the democratic development of Hong Kong. He prefers to work in social service because he has such belief:

"Many of the individual sufferings aren't solely resulted from individual problems. But it's the structural problems in society that lead to some people being incapable of helping themselves and in fact they need help from others. Social work is a kind of activity that insists on social conscience. When a society would provide social service to help those who aren't capable of self-help, that means the people in this society still have conscience and this is still a society that values people." (Tony)

Tony explained for what he chooses to do, as a welfare worker in rehabilitation service. "But I can still offer them some help. My work is to help directly some people who are in need of help but the structural problems that make these people suffer won't change. I know that. But at least what I do can help them directly. Of course, the fact is that the society continues to reproduce some people who are in need of help." He believes that social work needs to work on two levels. One is to offer help to those who are in need. The other is to deal with the basic
issues that give rise to those misfortunes, try to change the social reality in order to minimize people in sufferings.

When Tony talked about the relationship between community work and social work, he shared his impression gained when he had fieldwork practice in an NLCDP as he attained Diploma in social work not long ago. “Community work in itself is a working approach in social work. Because it suggests working for change at the societal level, compared with casework approach or other rehabilitation service aiming at individual change, community work is the most effective working approach to deal with the societal deficiency and achieve a more desirable society.” However, the experience gained in his fieldwork practice told him that community work as generally practiced is quite “de-politicized” in his term.

It can be seen that community work or community development has been considered as a service and sometimes as a working approach in social work. In fact, whether it should be considered as a service or working approach has long been a debate in the field. However, it needs to be mentioned that community work here is not referring to the services NLCDPs offer, filling the service gap for transient areas as commonly accepted in social work field, but referring to community or grassroots organizing for community participation and social change. What Nathan expresses, as he believes for community work may act as the
conclusion and response to the question at the very beginning of this section.

"the basic value is to put people’s development at the core and to actualize through community participation, not to aim at strategy all the time like those councilors who like to single out themselves for credit.” (Nathan)

This respondent said that he himself

“cling[s] to accept or even recognize the progressive force with something new and more confrontation in social actions happened in this recent decade.... Organizing is organizing. I won’t accept the old concept of leadership training. We talk about the concept of organizer. Everyone can be an organizer or be organized in any action. We believe in people, believe in actions. The old concept indeed can’t help the residents practically develop their action network. Organizers are to achieve fighting for their rights and benefits in their action network.... We believe in people’s power and have a bit ‘rebellious spirit’ against those vested interest parties such as the mass media, the Government or the establishments including the councilors who have betrayed us, or even all
the rules.” (Nathan)

Nathan was Larry’s colleague in the TWESSC and had worked as a social worker in community work for 8 years. After the termination of the agency, he and a group of friends as well as colleagues together set up an organization to continue with grassroots organizing and he acted as a no-pay organizer there for nearly a year. He has continued to be a voluntary organizer and got a full time job in other service setting since then. In the early 90s, he had joined the struggles in housing issue in his spare time. Before entering the TWESSC for a non-subvented grassroots organizing project, he had the experience of community work in a community center (CC) for block development as well as old urban area redevelopment and an NLCDP for public housing estate redevelopment. But actually what made him have the vision in community participation was his practical experience in student union in University. He himself as what he described has been going through development in the process of community participation.

The experience in various areas of community work as well as community participation has not only made Nathan capture a clearer picture about the situation of community work in these years, but also made him adhere to what he calls the “progressive force” for social change. This “progressive force” is based on the
belief that people’s development is the core of community work and the
development is to be achieved in community participation through the process of
organizing. In the process, all the actors are the subjects, who in themselves can be
the organizers and be organized. This is in contrast with the “leadership” in the “old
concept” of community work and community worker is not the expert or center for
leadership training anymore. All participants have their right to make decisions in
the on going process of their actions fighting for their rights and well being. Due to
this highly changeable nature of the struggling process in the real context, the
actions can easily result in some unexpected outcomes such as workers and
residents together as participants being arrested. The tactics used in the process
cling to those being labeled as “disruptive” with a stronger sense of rebellion
against the establishments with vested interest and even the rules that make people
suffer. One might say that this kind of “disruptive tactics” against the rules is a form
of “civil disobedience”.

Besides the basic belief on people’s development being the core in community
work, the ideology, concept and actual practice in organizing, the strategy and tactic
in actions are very different from the “old models” of community work generally
adopted in social work field. In fact, this specific definition or boundary for
community work is exactly what I wanted to single out in this study. When Wong
(1993) defined what he terms “activist social workers”, four strategies for social change adopted by social workers were identified, namely, institutionalized consensus, non-institutionalized consensus, institutionalized conflict and non-institutionalized conflict. He suggests that “social workers who use both conflict and non-institutionalized strategies can be classified as activist social workers.” In other words, they are “social workers who support and organize client groups in the attempt to influence the process and outcome of the distribution of social resources, status and power through contest or disruptive tactics such as holding petitions and protesting at the authorities concerned.”(p.6) Although this may not be the same as what Nathan tells, it may offer a reference to differentiate the so-called new model of community work from the old ones as the non-institutionalized conflict strategy from the others.

Straightly speaking, this so-called new model of practice in Hong Kong is not really new, as it is something very similar to what Alinsky (1969, 1971) had practically preached in American society from the 40s to 70s. The concept of the “free-society organizer”, an organizer in a free society working for a free society, with his work in organizing the poor to fight for their rights was so wide-spread that it has been internationally recognized. His ideology and concepts as well as practice model of mass organization for power were known after his name and even in Hong
Kong, anyone who have touched on community work in social work education would have known him with his work and thoughts.

In fact in Hong Kong, the so-called new model as well as the situation in the 90s is actually nothing new, but just represents the second wave in the history of community work. The controversial issues ranging from the “Yan Yi Tsuen” to the “Boat Dwellers” in the 70s had also rocked the field and brought along critical comments (馮 1990). As what Nathan perceives, in the late 80s, community work was in its desperate situation resulted from the limitations of the so-called old practice model, the government’s intention of service cutback and the downfall of grassroots organizations resulted from being absorbed by district councilors. This situation had made some of the community workers press for new alternative in practice. Starting from the early 90s, this kind of what Larry calls “new social actions” had been adopted by some community workers, mainly those in the TWESSC, in grassroots organizing to fight for policy change. Indeed, these have called on many attentions and discussions in the field as well as the public. But why do they think that they, as community workers, are the targets to be eliminated in the field of practice under the social workers registration system?
VI. "Radical" Community Workers under the Registration System

In a staff training seminar helped by the CD division of an NGO for all its community workers in December 1998, quite a lot of the workers raised their worry about the risk of violating the Code of Practice when they are working with their clients in demonstrations. The seminar was titled as "The Social Work Profession and Social Workers Registration". Representatives of the SWRB, the JACPDSW and the HKSWGU were invited to discuss on whether social work professionalization is necessary; the good and bad of social workers registration system and the impact of the system on community workers. Flora was also invited to share on why she insisted not to register.

The discussion emphasized the restrictions of the SWRO and the social work professional Code of Practice on community workers from looking at the Public Order Ordinance. In practice, community workers very often work with their clients fighting for their rights and welfare in social actions such as demonstrations and protests. They are probably at high risk of being charged when they are having actions in the sense of "civil disobedience". Once they are convicted for criminal offense under these ordinances, they may be disqualified for social workers registration as clearly stated in the SWRO (1997).3

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3 The SWRO (1997) No 28 III 17 (4a) writes: the Board – (a) may refuse to register a person as a registered social worker who has been convicted in Hong Kong or elsewhere of any offence which –
It was observed that the front line workers were more worried about the threats while the staff in supervisor’s grade or above were a bit indifferent on the issue. This NGO was established for community works in the 60s and had its leading position in social action facilitated by social workers in those years (馮 1990). Now it has also got its leading position but to exchange its NLCDPs for other more long-term services when NLCDPs started to experience their constriction.

In another open seminar organized by the HKSWA on the topic: “Morass in Practice – Reflection on the Social Work Principle of Confidentiality”4, there were over two hundred social worker participants. It is obvious that many social workers are concerned about the Code of Practice. In the whole seminar, the speakers, including a lawyer and a SWRB member managed to tell the audience how to avoid being charged according to the Code and emphasized that it was not easy for social workers to be charged of violating it. However it was observed that many of the participants were not really concerned about that, but rather about how to protect their client in practice. Some shared about their disappointment about the talk and some expressed their grievance towards the establishment of the Ordinance and the Code. They queried about their necessity and applicability and believed that the

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(i) may bring the profession of social worker into disrepute; and (ii) is punishable with imprisonment (and whether or not the person was sentenced to imprisonment).
Ordinance and the Code would only restrict workers in their practice.

These are not single incidences. In a staff meeting of another NGO, members of the SWRB, the JACPDSW and SWAB of HKCCSA as well as Flora were invited to share on the topic of "The good and bad of Social Workers Registration". The staff had common concerns on the compulsory registration and matters in the disciplinary system of the SWRB. In another NGO staff seminar on the same issue, the staff's greatest query was the exclusive definition of social work in the registration, which might exclude some services that indeed are part of social work such as community work, counseling, etc (黃 1998). However, in a seminar helped by the SWRB on the interpretation of the Code of Practice for social work teachers and fieldwork instructors in the universities, much concern was paid on how to avoid being charged or complained according to the Code. The questions on the disciplinary committee and disciplinary procedure were also raised but were put aside.

The social work professional Code of Practice under the SWRO actually came from the Code of Ethics for social workers of the Social Welfare Personnel Registration Council, the ancestor of the SWRB. It has just been titled as the Code

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4 See Appendix V for some information about the seminar.
5 An agency wise publication was prepared for the issue before the staff meeting. 香港中華基督教青年會(1998) 【社工註冊利與弊】專題專輯 號外 第 18 期 4 月內部刊物
6 See Appendix VI, Hong Kong Social Welfare Personnel Registration Council: Code of Ethics for Social Workers in Hong Kong.
of Practice\textsuperscript{7} in March 1998 for it was strongly criticized as being no more than missionary statements and moral standards. It has long been challenged as being too vague to act as a practice guide with legal efficacy to monitor all the practitioners in different work types. The closed system of disciplinary issues in the Board and the political interests involved in the registration system have also been queried (梁/陳 1998). The Board was urged to have it consulted in social work community. Although a series of consultation meetings were held from May to July 98, in the close meeting for all registered social workers in September 98, there were similar queries raised among the about 80 participants. They finally found out that under the registration system, they have no right to ask the Board for accountability while it has the absolute authority over them all.

Here it seems that many social workers even those in different service settings believe that the Ordinance and the Code of Practice will cause more constraints in their practice instead of protecting their clients. There seems to be no doubt that community workers, according to the nature and mission of their work, would specially have the risk of violating them when fighting for their clients’ welfare. That is why those being regarded as “radical” community workers would be much more “dangerous” as there have already been some case examples in the issues of

\textsuperscript{7} See Appendix VII, Social Workers Registration Board: Interim Code of Practice for Registered Social Workers (DRAFT)
the "Well-off Tenants" and the "Rooftop Dwellers".

However, this research is not aiming at the study of the professional Code of Practice and the SWRO or the impact of them on community workers in which Mok (莫 1999) has already had quite an in-depth discussion. Moreover, the social workers registration is not the whole picture of social work professionalization. As what the group members of the JACPDSW have said, concerning the development of the SWRB and challenging the registration system as well as the Code of Practice is only a strategic consideration for fighting against the present mode of professional development in social work. As what Larry suggests, the whole social work profession is a historical product and its professional development is definitely a struggling process. For this study, the main concern is the same. The illustration of the problem in the Ordinance and the Code is to bring out the focus on the present mode of professional development of social work in Chapter Five.

VII. Conclusion

The headlines of newspaper quoted at the beginning of this chapter have brought out the story of a vigorous community worker who has preferred her principle to "professional" status. In fact, these headlines also tell that the struggle of Flora and the group as a whole has drawn the attention of the public. As a human
or welfare service concerning almost every walk of life in society, the professional development of social work should deserve attention. Whether the majority of practitioner is paying attention or not, is a matter to be further explored in the following chapter. Yet, at least there is a group of people acting in a counter "movement" against the wave of the present development through challenging the social workers registration. Powerless as they are, they nevertheless demonstrated their strong will against the dominant force and system in these few years' struggle.

When going through how they perceive the establishment of the SWRB as well as the registration and what they believe and value for the nature of community work, it is not surprising to see that they would persistently or stubbornly work through these years' struggle. Some of them, like Flora who has burnt her boats behind her, have even chosen not to work in government funded services.

Starting from their point of view, it is not difficult to find the shadow of the "power approach" and even Larson's (1977) "professional project" in their analysis and understanding of the professional development of social work. But of course, there is something totally different from the "power approach". They still believe in a "proper" process of professionalization and have their own ideals and expectations in social work development. Detail analysis will be coming in Chapter
Five. When looking at the responses of participants in different seminars concerning the registration, there seems to be a common worry that the registration system will foster constraints especially on community work. There seems also to be the reason for the group to believe that the "progressive force" or the so-called radical community workers would be excluded from the system.

As Mok (莫 1999) observed, many practitioners believe that once the registration is established, community workers would be the first to be affected. However he believes that the Registration, the Code of Practice and even the professionalization are all embracing, aiming at all practitioners in different work types, not just targeting at community worker. Have the Board and those who have join the effort considered the feelings and situation facing the practitioners? How do they perceive and respond to their common worry and the specific reaction of the Concern Group?

Moreover, according to Mok's interpretation, parts of the professional Code of Practice not only favor social action by affirming its value, but also affirm it as one major part of social work. But why do many practitioners still have such worry? Besides the vagueness and contradictions found within the Code (莫 1999), it is believed that there are discontents and mistrust towards the Board as well as those who strive for the professional development. The lack of "true" communication and
consultation, the closed system of the Board and their orientation in the professional development may be part of the reasons. What has happened regarding the controversial issues about social actions happened in the field in the 90s also have significant contribution to the matter. All these are going to be considered carefully in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FIVE – Community Work & the Professional Development

I. Introduction

In Chapter Four, we see that the members of the JACPDSW have strong belief that they as community organizers standing for the “progressive force” are the targets to be excluded in the registration and thus in the field of practice. This implies that in their eyes the “progressive force” or the so-called radical model of community work is to be eliminated from social work in the course of professional development. This Chapter will examine this point of view very carefully. How do they have such perception and whether this argument is substantiated is the focus of discussion.

The controversial issues in community work of the 90s, including the “Well-off Tenants”, the “Rooftop Dwellers” and the suspension of the TWESSC, will act as reference for examining the situation. How all these happenings affect the fate of community work will be discussed. The role of the Government will be examined as reference in another dimension. Her relationship with social work professionalization and attitude towards community work development will be considered. Analysis is based on the ideas of a “power approach” and the concept
of "professional project" when examining this professional development of social work in Hong Kong in its historical context. Attention will be focused on the differences and conflicts among various sectors within the "profession" and the different facets of "professional ideal" held among them. These areas of concern are believed to be largely ignored by the general "power approach".

Viewpoints from various parties are solicited to assist the analysis. Besides the viewpoints of the major actors of the story, the Group members, the ideas of numerous members from the representative organizations in the field are also sought. These organizations, which are conceived to stand for the group striving for professional development, include the HKSWRB, the HKSWA, the HKCSS and the HKSWGU. How do they perceive the achievements they have endeavored? What do they expect both from the development and for the development in future? What are their understandings and responses towards the "countering movement"? Their attitudes towards the "radical" community work are also examined.

The responses of social workers in various settings are then revealed. Are they really the "silent majority" as perceived? What do they think about the professional development of social work? How do they respond to what has been happening in the field? Finally, the impressions from service recipients in different community work projects are visited. As they are the first being directly affected in whatever
development achieved in social work and very often they have no say in all the
changes within the service they receive, here they are especially invited to show
their understanding and feeling towards the issue. At the end, it is hope that the
fusing of all these ideas and viewpoints of different parties will generate a clear
picture of what I have made sense of the present situation of community work in
the local social work "professional project".

II. **The Social Work "Professional Project"**

The term "professional project" employed in Larson's (1977) theory of
professionalism refers to the process in which certain occupations seek to improve
their economic position and prestige in capitalist societies. By achieving the
strategies in monopolizing related specialist knowledge, the professions strive to
attain the monopoly of services that can be exchanged for social and economic
rewards. In other words, the "professional project" is the power struggle of a
profession to gain privileged market position in a specific social economic situation.
In the process, usually the state plays a significant role. Here in the study, the
concept of "professional project" is borrowed in the exploration of social work
development in its local context to see in what nature its exclusiveness has existed
and how it has worked through these years. Specific attention will be put on the
exclusive nature in relation to community work in the "project" in this empirical study.

As it has been stated in previous chapters, Larson's "professional project" or even the general "power approach" has failed to address the differences, conflicts and dynamics between different sectors within a single profession. Nor do they recognize the complexity in the ideology of professionalism. Yet, here in this local context, internal splits seem to exist within the social work "profession". Practitioners in different positions or different job types appear to have different emphasis of their "professional ideal". Even within the same position or same sector, a mixture of ideologies for the "profession" may exist. Therefore, when looking at this local professional development, the ideological conception on the orientation among practitioners needs to be revealed before we can proceed.

In this study, it is found that the sense of "profession" within practitioners is quite mixed. Very often, my respondents in interviews (except those members of the Concern Group) showed their concerns on ensuring better service quality for the benefit of clients. At the same time, however, they were extremely concerned about not only their social status and title, but also who had the right to practice and claim the title. However, it is apparent that these ideas come from distinctive conceptions such as the specific division of labor and the specific societal establishment.
Unfortunately, it is observed that this mixing of the distinctive, if not contradicting ideas very often make discussions difficult to proceed. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish them and be clear in mind what is considered as desirable and what is not in the professional development. For members of the Concern Group, they do not totally object to the concept of “professionalization”, but the exclusive professional ideology and the registration system maintaining the professional privileges achieved in the process.

In one of their group meetings, members shared their standpoints for working against the existing registration system. ‘We do not totally oppose professionalization, but against the fact that the profession tries to seize economic and political advantages through the professionalization process. We maintain that the position gained in Functional Constituency is immoral. Social work should encourage clients to help themselves. But Social Welfare Constituency is the manifestation of professional authority that is contradictory with what social work is supposed to uphold.’

Obviously, they pointed out a very important fact that being members of the social work profession, all practitioners do gain political advantages in the Functional Constituency election\(^1\). Thus, it needs to be clarified at this stage that the

\(^1\) The 1995 Legco election had marked the salient achievement of the social work “profession”. It was the first time for all registered individual practitioners to vote for their representative of the
following discussion will focus on the specific societal establishment, which iselieved to be a means to ensure the privileges of the “profession”, be it economic
or political. Matters concerning better service quality or specific division of labor
will be considered later.

Members of the Group seem to sweepingly believe that the existing
registration system is the totem of an exclusive ideology in the professional
establishment, which aims at professional privileges. The following quotations
from various members of the JACPDSW demonstrated their “anti-hegemonic”
stance:

“The premise of professional development must be the profession’s own
benefit. The developments in other countries have been the same. There
must be greater power inequality. It’s hard to change.... almost an
inevitable trend from every point of view, culture, norms, structure,
system, no check and balance. It’s an ideology implying many biases in
development, not only for doing something better. Yes, apparently, it is but
in fact it’s very complicated. On top of doing better, it also has to be very

Social Welfare Constituency in Legco after the active endeavor of the “profession”. The elected
representative that year, who have been pressing hard for the professional development towards
legalizing the registration system in these decades has also become a member in the SWRB. Before,
it was the social welfare agencies as representatives instead of individual practitioners to vote for the
place of the Social Welfare Constituency.
manipulative and monopolistic."

"I'm pessimistic towards professionalization. It's not simply saying a group of people attaining specific skills and a regulatory system to oversee them. In reality, professionalization is always a political process. Every occupation has its specialist knowledge, but very often in the political process, this specialist knowledge would be confined in the hands of certain people who make use of it to exalt their status and earn more money…. Whether the presence of the SWRB and the registration system would block the pluralistic development in the field and exclude different ideologies and innovative working approaches is something that worries me. Now I see this registration system is not under public scrutiny."

What worries the Concern Group seems to be very much in line with something being noted in the "power approach" of professionalism. They seem to strongly believe that the current mode of professional development is inevitably exclusive, implying a greater power degree of inequality in society. Furthermore, the most important point in their concern is the strengthening of control over practitioners and the standardization of practice for ensuring a notable professional image. This
implies that the "profession" in itself is not a united entity as considered in the "power approach". There are apparent internal splits within the "profession", and conflicts of interests concerning the development among different groups do exist that may result in the minorities within the "profession" being eliminated in the professional "project". Basically, this is one of the areas that the "power approach" fails to touch on as mentioned earlier but this is believed to be a very important point needed to be addressed in the process in this study.

For the Concern Group, this strengthening of control and standardization of practice may probably result in the gradual elimination of pluralistic orientations of practice, especially the innovative working approaches or the so-called disruptive practice in community work, which they perceive as the "progressive force" in the field. Yet how was such perception generated and are the arguments of the Group substantiated? Let us move onto the next section to focus on those controversial issues in community work field to see whether community work in this sense is compatible with social work professionalization.

III. The "Progressive Force" in the Controversial Issues

As roughly portrayed in previous Chapters, there have been what I would like to term as "field quake" in the area of community work in the last decade.
Numerous incidents took place in various aspects resulting in tremendous changes in the field. First, due to the threat of service cut in NLCDP and the downfall of community organizing, there came again the rise of "disruptive" tactics with "radical" actions in the social issues of "Well-off Tenants" and "Rooftop Dwellers" starting from the early 90s. These brought about heated disputes on the professional role of social workers and community work. The field was then rocked by the suspension of the TWESSC in 97. Following is the service cut back of NLCDP. For the Concern Group, these happenings are believed to best illustrate the rise and fall of the "progressive force" in community work. What makes them have this belief and how do different parties make sense of the situation in relation to the professional development? Let us go a little bit deeper inside the story.

In 1993, the field of social work was struck by the "radical action\(^2\)" of the issue of "Well-off Tenants", which resulted in over 20 demonstrators including social workers being arrested. Since the issue of the "Boat Dwellers" in 1979, it was believed to be the first alarm to the field in the 90s. There were critical comments within the field on the proper role of social workers. In the issue of

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\(^2\) According to some members of the Concern Group, before the issue of "Well-off Tenants", almost all community workers, when working with their clients to fight against the housing policies, usually followed a very structured model in protests or demonstrations. The so-called radical action, which suggests more contingencies and less structure in actions, was first initiated in the issue of "Well-off Tenants". In this model, community workers are no longer the center to control the process. Instead, participants become organizers and contingency actions will take place according to situational collective decisions made in the process. Thus, there will be more likely to have unexpected outcomes in protests and demonstrations.
"Roof-top Dwellers" in 1994-1996, there were hot debates on the "radical actions" both in the field and the public at large (新報 26/12/94, 聯合報 25/4/95). In addition, the three representative organizations established a "joint committee" to evaluate the appropriateness of intervention and the professional role of social workers in the incident of "Tsuen Wan Rooftop Dwellers". It was the first time in the field to have this kind of evaluation mechanism and a report was issued in 1996 (伍 1996). Later in the incident of "Mong Kok Rooftop Dwellers", the SoCO terminated its service for the residents for the reason that the orientation of the volunteer supporters had violated social work "professional" practice and "stirred up" the "radical actions" of the residents beyond the control of the agency (聯合報 25/4/95, 明報 2/5/95).

In all these issues, the staff members of the TWESSC were involved and were believed to be the main actors being confronted. They were considered as a small

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3 For a long time, rooftop constructions have catered the housing need of grassroots people. In 1993, the rooftop constructions on two blocks of building in Tsuen Wan were chosen to be first demolished in the clearance actions of rooftop constructions by the Government. Since those rooftop dwellers were not entitled for any compensation in the clearance, they rushed to various government departments to negotiate and to seek help from councilors for over a year, but were rejected for the reason that their rooftop constructions were illegal in the first place. However, all the rooftop constructions have been allowed for sale with taxation. At the end, they came across the social workers of the TWESSC, who agreed to offer them help to fight for a proper resettlement. Press conferences and protests were held, but still could not draw the attention of the public, thus finally came the demonstration in the Garden Road.

4 The clearance of Mong Kok rooftop constructions followed that of Tsuen Wan. The staff of the SoCO helped to organize the dwellers to negotiate for proper resettlement. Some participants in the Tsuen Wan incident including social workers and residents offered them support. A group of university students and a social issue concern group joined to support the residents in struggle. At the end, the residents clung to the suggestions of the volunteer supporters and struggled in a more "radical" way in their actions. Again, a worker and some residents were arrested in protest when they were trying to enter the government office.
group of “radical” social workers in the field, who clung to provoke participants and incite “disruptive” tactics in social actions, which violate professional practice. It was suggested that their “irrational” practice had brought about “poor reputation” for social work and thus needed to be controlled (聯合報 25/4/95). Due to the pressure coming up from the field, the board members of the TWESSC issued practice guidelines\(^5\) of social action for the staff, which led to conflicts between the two parties. Six staff members were dismissed and then protests and demonstrations by all the staff followed. Not long afterwards, in 1997, the conflicts resulted in the suspension of the agency, which was believed to have brought the confrontation to the highest tide and at the same time seemed to put a full stop to all the disputes on “radical” social actions. (《解散之後》1998)

After all the disputes, a conclusion was drawn that one of the reasons facilitating the establishment of the mandatory social workers registration was believed to be the urge in the field to control social actions carried out by social workers and to differentiate the mainstream social work practice with the “radical” (聯合報 25/4/95). In other words, the “radical” issues in these years had played their parts to speed up the establishment of the Registration Board, which in

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\(^5\) The guidelines were set to regulate the staff in joining or pursuing social actions. It was perceived as a move to issue tight control on staff in social actions and it was considered to be unacceptable for it had violated staff’s privacy and freedom of participation. As the very first point in the guideline states, when the staff members participate in community work especially social actions other than their job duties in their spare time, they have to inform and be approved by the agency head.
return, brought an end to the “radical” practice. According to Mok’s (1999) analysis, the existence of the professional Code of Practice has put a full stop to the “new social action” in social work practice. His analysis can be said to be in line with the ideas of most members in the Concern Group, but they believe that the full stop to the “progressive force” in community work has come much earlier. As one of the Group members noted, “it’s apparent that the suspension of the TWESSC represented the end of the “radical” practice. In fact, after its termination, at least two third of the joint platforms of policies concern were dysfunction and I can’t see any more “that kind” of social action exist in the field.”

Is community work compatible with social work professionalization? The answer is definitely not for many members of the Concern Group.

“It’s in great confrontation with community work since community work values equal and democratic participation and works for empowerment. In fact, it’s conflicting also with social work but not so overtly.”

Of course, they are talking about the “progressive force” which clings to the left wing, as they believe that there are different schools in community work,
varying from the right to the left. For those clinging to the right, "community work is only part of the whole social work service, part of the social work profession, yet not a bit ‘radical’.”

Another Group member took his observation in his fieldwork placement concerning the public housing issue for example. “The provision of public housing by the government is definitely telling that there’s deficiency in the free market of housing. But when working on the housing problems, workers never look at the problem in that way. Because once the question is escalated to that level, it becomes a political issue regarding the redistribution of power in society.” He believes that many community workers have intended to “de-politicize” social problems in his term, in order to gain survival in the position of a profession.

“Only the stream with the idea of the left wing will challenge the society. Now the professional development will clear out this stream of the left, the most ‘radical’ part. The majority in the middle and those clinging to the right will merge into the profession. This process of professional development is obviously a kind of ‘exclusion’.”
When referring to those controversial issues, some of them believe that those critical comments on the issues were "... definitely related to the professional development. The disputes at that time were that those actions weren't professional. Whether they [those practitioners] were really not professional needs to be discussed, but at least they're categorized as not professional."

"Their [the mainstream's] ideas were very simple. Basically, they [the mainstream] reject 'radical'. Technically, their interpretations were on the skill of how to differentiate workers and residents' participation. They always said under that context, you're not professional. Yet the process was a political elimination, not an academic or rational discussion."

"more on technical matters, of course, they wouldn't say you shouldn't work on 'radical actions', but charged you for manipulating the residents. It's a taboo in the field.... Yet they're worried that your 'radical actions' would affect the prospect of community work, the image of social workers. These were their main concerns. They're worried that this kind of social workers being different from them, if recognized as social workers would affect their image. It's apparent a screening process, but they argued that"
you're not professional, yet in a way defining and constraining what is a profession.”

However, they believe that the control mechanisms are not the result of the registration system, but has existed if only covertly in the field for a long time in the course of its development.

“Before formulating the registration system, they’re using many operating mechanisms to do that, such as the ‘joint committee’ formed by the three representative organizations to evaluate the issue of ‘Rooftop Dwellers’ in Tsuen Wan. There’s no such thing before, but it could function as this mechanism. Why they didn’t evaluate the issue of the SoCO terminating the service for ‘Rooftop Dwellers’ in Mong Kok. At that time, there’s no mandatory registration system, no agreement, no one could comment on an agency and finally, it turned out that they had no way to comment on our agency, yet they still did it.”

They believe that the mechanism has functioned to an extent that led to the suspension of the TWESSC as the mainstream wanted to get rid of this kind of
agency from the field of practice. All those confrontations and comments or even rejection were believed to have brought about the conflicts within the agency itself, between the board and the staff, for the board also considered those “radical” practice not professional social work and issued the practice guidelines of social action for the staff. They believed that those board members had fully internalized the professional development to an extent that they denied it as a social work agency with those “radical” practices. Thus, it led to the decision to terminate the agency when the conflicts came to a situation that the staff seemed to them as out of control.

The suspension of the TWESSC was in fact a crash to the field and probably brought an end to those “radical actions”, but it might mean different things to different parties. As one member recalled from his memory, an active member of the HKSWA, who has pressed hard for the professional development and has become one of the SWRB members, said that the field would calm down after the suspension of the agency. This appeared to imply that some striving for the professional development would rather have it terminated. However, there would still be some in the field who treasured this agency as it stood for the “radical practice” for the deprived people. That was why in the process, some worked very hard to mediate in the hope of rescuing it.
Although some would probably feel sorry for its termination, a Group member, who was one of those being dismissed at the beginning, has different viewpoint and seems to resemble that of Flora being rejected by the field. He accepts the termination because he thinks that “the ‘spirit’ is very important. If the TWESSC existed without the ‘spirit’ and continued to offer NLCDP service as other agencies do, it didn’t really exist. It’s not what I expected to do when I first joined it.” The staff felt sorry and sad for the termination of course but they would not tolerate it to continue without the “progressive spirit” due to the constraints set by the practice guidelines for social action.

Obviously, the Group believes that it is the ideology of the “progressive force” in community work that challenges professional development. That is why they see that in the “professional project”, the ultimate target to be eliminated is not really the service in NLCDP, but the “progressive” ideology in community work. In fact, they believe that community work as well as the service in NLCDP can be very professional, therefore not all community workers will be excluded. Many have fallen into the “right track” by merging into the profession as long as they are working within the norms. So what they are talking about is not the service cutback of NLCDP, but the evaluation aiming at those controversial issues and the constraints added by setting up practice guidelines for community work practice.
All these are believed to have brought about gradual changes to the field and finally
the "death of community work" or the "death of the progressive force". Therefore,
when being asked about the relationship between the controversial issues and the
professional development, some were very certain about the relationship and gave
similar responses especially those who had participated in the issues. Their
certainties were in the sense that all the critical comments on the issues within
social work field were related to the professional development.

According to the observation and information on the side of the Concern
Group, it seems that the "professional project" existing in these years has one of its
aims at building up and "purifying" the professional image as well as identity. This
has been achieved by first issuing critical comments on the "radical" practice in all
the debates and disputes concerning those controversial issues and then forming
evaluation mechanism and practice guidelines for social actions. Apparently, the
"progressive" ideology as well as "radical" practices with "disruptive" tactics in
community work had been swept out of the field in the "project".

As the participants or witnesses in the controversial issues, and on the other
hand, as working companions in the Concern Group, it is not surprising that they
have similar idea towards the professional development in relation to the "radical"
practice. Yet how about the other side of the story? What were the opinions of those
striving for the professional development? It seems that there are variations among different groups and individuals.

IV. The other side of the story

"Finally there came the death of the TWESSC, and thereupon the death of CD."

One of the Board members, who has participated in the work of professional development as a member of the HKSWGU for ten years, noted this viewpoint on the situation of community work. Some other respondents also shared his point of view, especially the members of the Union. Having worked in the area of community work before, he sees that there are various types of community work and NLCDP is one subvented community work service, which has its build-in conflict with the Government. He considers it very simple. "Because she is angry with this rebellious group of social workers who strive for democracy, so funding for the service is cut." He believes that "if they accept funding from the Government, they have to accept being regulated. However, the build-in conflict is that they are not contented with the game to act as her apparatus, so the service
cutback is inevitable.”

When talking about the attitude of people towards community work within the field, he acknowledged that “they [the mainstream] were skeptical towards CD workers. Before its death, it was ambivalent. Some wanted to have dialogues, especially when the crisis of the TWESSC broke out, to support them [those CD workers] hoping that CD could continue to survive. Hope to have dialogues and suggest them a change of strategies, but they [those CD workers] were not contented with the change as it's a matter of principle.” This Board member believes that for the sake of keeping community work, they had to compromise and not to be too “radical” because it is subvented by the Government, they had to be more strategic and skillful. “The premise is the same, for organizing the grassroots people to fight for their rights and social justice.”

Some interviewees have similar attitude as the about mentioned. Yet there are other opinions from members of the SWRB, which consists of two different groups, eight out of the fifteen are elected and the rest appointed. The appointed members are mainly SWD officers including the deputy director of SWD as the chairperson of the Board and individuals from social work academy or from other professions. The elected members are usually those who have endeavored for the professional development as well as the establishment of the registration system. Historically, it
was the representative organizations, the HKSWA, the HKCSS and the HKSWGU, that initiated the work on the professional development. Therefore these Board members are also mainly the core members of the representative organizations. On the other hand, some being invited as members of the three organizations may also be the Board members although all the interviewees were invited for only one specific role.

Regarding community work with those controversial issues, generally, members of the HKSWGU, although not all, seem to hold a more sympathetic position. Yet, this is not surprising because most of them have worked or touched on community work. Moreover, the establishment of the Union was mainly due to the issue of the “Boat Dwellers” in 1979, which alarmed the community workers at that time that they got no protection from being charged while working with their clients in social actions fighting for their welfare. However, although they have more understanding and sentiments towards community work, some of them appeared to be comparatively indifferent and thought that community workers in this generation need to compromise for survival. Some even believed that “they’re too ‘radical’”. Moreover, there was also the voice querying that “they acted according to their own wish, not their clients” and “whether those actions were appropriate and whether they had violated professional practice”.
After all, the six Union core members being interviewed have the most variation of opinions concerning the influence of professional development on community work. They range from the belief to have influence on the "death" of it to the belief that professional development has nothing to do with community work but the Government has the absolute power over its life and death.

Generally speaking, it appears that members in other organizations including the Registration Board are more in the position of the query whether those "radical" practice in community work were appropriate and whether they have violated professional practice. This is also not surprising because the core members of the HKSWA are mainly agency heads and individuals from the academy while those of the HKCSS are working for the interests of social service agencies. Thus according to their positions, they may have specific consideration on the matters of survival and reputation of social work as a profession. Not to mention the appointed members of the SWRB, who may probably be more critical. One of the appointed members, a SWD official, uttered this comment.

"They didn’t help the clients to cope with their problems but put things into their months to fight for something, and therefore used some very radical approach to do something but was actually not a proper way of
doing things. Social workers shouldn’t be like that.... They claimed they’re social workers, but lied on the road and blocked the traffic! I think people will be confused with what social worker is.”

Yet in these interviews, one thing needs to be noted. Some of the elected members of the Board have emphasized that they understood the worries of those community workers concerning the constraints of the Code of Practice on community work and claimed to have suggested not to have something too straightly written regarding social actions in the Code. On the other hand, some respondents noted that the mission of social work for justice and equality has, in fact, been written in the Code, therefore social actions fighting for the welfare of deprived people is supported and “radical” action may be accepted. Respondents generally see that the system does not necessarily object to “radical” social actions. “We have books and training on radical social work.” They consider it good to have the professional body to evaluate and discuss on social action case by case if there are complaints. “Whether they will be affirmed or judged to be violating professional practice are believed to be very situational. At least, there will be accumulation of experience after evaluation, much better than before when there was no direct discussion on the issues.”
According to the common belief of those who have endeavored in the
professional development, the work was started with the urge for a movement of
"self-consolidation" (自強運動) in the occupation in the 80s. The urge for the
movement came from various causes. First, the Joint Declaration brought about the
question of professional status and accreditation after the hand over of the
sovereignty. Second, there was a wide spread of social work posts being occupied
by non-trained degree holders. Moreover, some candidates in elections claimed to
be social workers while they were not really working in social work posts. They
believed that there was the need for social work to be professionalized because
social work as an occupation, in fact, has got social sanction and respect after these
few decades’ development. It needed to have a clear definition and image of social
workers for the public and differentiate social workers from those who were not to
prevent the use of the title from being abused. On the other hand, they believed that
social work should be more professionalized in its knowledge, skill and practice for
better status as well as benefit of the clients. However, a Board member stated that
in reality, “social work development in these few decades in Hong Kong cannot be
considered as professionalization but institutionalization.” Another respondent also
noted that “this professionalization means to have professional training, but doesn’t
mean to have well-performing practitioners, only for the standardization of
practice.” These points of view were at the same time shared by some other respondents.

Concerning the mandatory registration system, there are also distinctive ideas. Some suggested that it is a necessary outcome of professional development. For the benefit of clients, registration acts as a “self-disciplinary” system to resolve the problems of dependence and abuse arisen because of the enlarged knowledge distance between professionals and clients in professionalization. Some believe that “maybe the registration is a chance to tell the public that this is a profession. We work in social work after professional training. We are responsible professionals in delivering services. We have our Code of Ethic and professional mission… It’s good if we gain more recognition. Registration is a way to recognize the status of this profession and its contribution towards society.” Some of them, however, believe that this system may not necessarily facilitate social workers to gain higher status like those of the doctors and lawyers. Their argument is that it is different from other professions that private practice in social work will not be the mainstream in the foreseeable future.

One of the Board members said, “Basically, social work provides service for the people in need in society with public money. Professionalization does not necessary mean monopolizing the skill. The registration system only monopolizes
the title.” He took the counseling offered by missionaries, pastors or friends for example. Those counseling services are not under the control of the Ordinance, therefore, there will not be a monopoly of service. He believes that “now the whole registration system is just something affirming the professional development. The goals are to advance the quality of practitioners and oversee their behaviors for the benefit of clients. Therefore it needs to define the practitioners, or else the system won’t work.” At the same time, he considered the accreditation authority of the Board very important which needed to be noted. “The Board has the absolute authority to decide who is qualified to register and what kind of training can be accredited for the registration.” However, in his observation, within the confrontation concerning the professional establishment, there seems no attention paid on this absolute authority, which he sees as very influential for the development in the long run.

Regarding the attitude towards this system, there is something that deserves attention. Besides the general supportive attitude, again members of the HKSWGU got the most variations and extremes. There are members who believe that it is time to have this system to better control the field of practice after almost two decades’ endeavor. Some appeared to be indifferent because they do not really care about whether social work is a profession or whether they are entitled as professionals as
long as the establishment does not affect their position of practice. Some are ambivalent because on the one hand, they are worried about the power issues in professionalization, but on the other hand, they believe it is good to improve service standard and quality. The other extreme is the voice against the system. There is the member who suggested that “the system is not achieved by the effort of the whole occupation, but only from top down, not from bottom up. The majority does not support this development. The resulting problem is that no one will like to join the Board, no one will discuss the matters of professional development with them, no one will have interest to play this game and then they will monopolize the whole system.” After all, due to the historical background of its position, the Union still clings to support the system with only a comparatively critical stand that there are problems within the system that need to be discussed and kept on improving.

According to the information of the Board members, the fact is that under the Ordinance, the Board has no authority to oversee the agencies on social service provision and work on advancing the professional standard of practitioners. Some interviewees acknowledge that the registration is only a system to set guidelines on the behaviors of practitioners and to carry out procedures to assess and discipline those being complained of mal-practice in order to foster self-discipline among practitioners. It is not a system that can make practitioners more professional and
thus cannot stand for the professional development of the occupation, as the
authority granted by the Government through the Ordinance is too limited. Some
suggest that the professional development on advancing standard of practice may
have to rely on other organizations such as the HKSWA and the like.

Towards the countering voices with all the queries on the accountability of the
Board, the exclusiveness of the registration system and the threats of practice
guidelines on community work, some respondents did acknowledge that “their
queries represent the continuous concerns in all these years”. They did not
circumvent the problem of exclusiveness but noted that it has already existed when
trained workers were preferred for social work service. Moreover, some
respondents agree that the worry on excluding community work may be
substantiated and the Board may have the chance of being over authoritative if it
goes on the wrong way. However, despite the possibility for all these foreseeable
problems, they still suggest that the existing trend of professional development is
inevitable in this modernized era as they see no way to go back from the
development of labor division and thus professional expertise in occupations.

“...In fact, we have no choice. The only way is to establish more watchdog
systems and complaint channels and to be overseen by people outside the
profession."

In response to all the queries, some suggested that the best resolution is to have more mechanisms to oversee the Board and the profession from within and outside to ensure that the Board as well as the profession will not develop in a way excluding pluralistic diversities and without accountability. Some said that they welcome those alternatives or countering voices to join the system to work with them or to keep on giving suggestions within the profession or even oversee their work outside the profession. They agreed that “public education has to be facilitated to raise clients’ awareness of their right to oversee the profession for better social work services”.

However, there were also response from the other extreme. Some were totally annoyed by those queries and confrontations. They believe that it is good and natural for the occupation to become more professional and offer better services due to the demand of the changing society.

“I just can’t understand why they object against having a professional status.”

From this remark of an appointed Board member, it is not hard to tell that the
professional status and the authority to control over all the practitioners has been taken for granted by some Board members. That is why some of them even regarded any opposing idea as a mere reflection of their reluctance to be overseen by registration. Some Board members even believed that some social work clients would easily be manipulated by social workers and were not able to complain about their mal-practices. For example, one Board members told me that:

"There are certain social work clients who are not able to assess and complain about the quality of service they receive. Thus, a system is needed to make the whole social work occupation have the ability to self-discipline in order to safeguard those clients."

However, there are questions on whether the system will function as they expect. Is it applicable for a set of general practice standard Code aiming at different level and different type of services? Will this be too vague to be used as a practice guideline and evaluation? In fact, there is the comment that it is difficult to put the Code into enforcement because of the humanistic nature of social work practice itself, which is extremely situational.
“at least, there is one more system to oversee the practitioners and the services. Why not?”

“Are there any other better alternative to oversee the practitioners?”

“not a perfect system but better than no system.”

These are some responses for the above questions. However, besides all the queries from outside, some Board members as well as members of the representative organizations do agree that there will be the risk of professional self-protection within the profession. It depends on who the Board members are and what the orientation of the Board is as the Codes of Practice is largely subject to the interpretation of the Board members and disciplinary committee and the Board has power over all its registered members but no accountability. On the other hand, there is already a case that a social worker was convicted with criminal offence, but the Board has no way to exert the disciplinary procedure on this worker because the agency did not cooperate with the Board. The worker was transferred to a non-subvented post and withdrew from the registration to avoid the disciplinary procedure. Whether the case deserves disciplinary actions is still in question. These
seem, however, to suggest that on the one hand, there is the risk that practitioners may encounter superfluous control subject to the Board’s interpretation on the Code, on the other hand, the system is in fact not effective enough to exercise its disciplinary authority to safeguard service recipients. Is it substantiated that the “counter movement” is just from a group, who lacks understanding on the establishment as judged by some Board members?

After all, most of them who strive for the professional achievement seem to have thought of the problem issues generated in other professional establishments, such as the monopolization of services, exclusion of practitioners, power difference between practitioners and clients, etc. Yet, many of them cling to believe that social work is different from the high status professions and they seem to be willing to strike a balance in order to avoid those problems and safeguard the service quality as well as clients’ benefit. Moreover, they believe that professional establishment has to follow the pace of development in society. They see that social work in Hong Kong in this era cannot violate the democratic demand in society, thus they cannot reject the urge for public education for client’s benefit. Generally, they believe that at the moment, the professional body is still very young, therefore the public has to wait and see.

Yes, the public has to wait and see, and thus, it seems not appropriate to jump
to a conclusion here, but a few lines may probably be drawn up from the mixing ideas. According to the information from interviews with members of the representative organizations, it can be seen that there are variations of ideas towards the matters being explored. However, it is still not hard to see that first of all, as a whole, the professional development of social work has been considered as an inevitable trend. Some respondents has in fact taken for granted that social work deserves a professional status and it is time to have a mandatory system to clearly define its image and practitioners in order to better oversee the practitioners with their practice.

Second, towards the confrontation from the opponents, some respondents are simply annoyed by their actions confronting the establishment. They seem not understand why they object to social work’s professional achievement and why there is someone who would rather lose her job than has a professional status. On the other hand, however, there are some respondents with more open attitudes. They seem to be aware of the problems existed in the structure of the Board and the registration system as being queried and appear to welcome comments and discussions. Third, respondents have various attitudes towards the “radical” practice in the controversial issues. Some from the Union show more understanding on the stance of those social workers in the issues, but the other extreme utters harsh
comments on those social workers with the "radical" practice. They even query that those social workers had worked according to their own will, but not their clients' and thus had violated professional practice.

Finally, concerning the fate of community work, it is apparent that respondents who address to the "death" of it mainly refer to the service cut of NLCDP. They commonly attribute the cause of its death to the intention of the Government and claim that for strategic consideration on its survival, workers should have compromised and not to be too "radical". On the other hand, they reject the idea that professional development and the registration system would hinder social actions or "radical" practice. However, as some respondents address, according to the structure of the Board and the system, there will be the risk or possibility of over authoritative and exclusive orientation depending on who are in the Board. Is it really that simple as some suggested, it is only the Government's determination to end up community work due to its rebellious nature? Maybe it is time to look at the role of the Government and the relationship between her and community work as well as the professional development.

V. The Government

There was the respondents' idea in last section that the Government has the
absolute power over the life and death of community work, or better say NLCDP.

As a core member of the Union suggested, "it was the Government who has firm
decision to terminate NLCDP services. She has the intention before 1997 due to
those ‘radical actions’ with the controversial issues starting in early 90s.” In his
observation, the Government has well planning to substitute NLCDP with INP, the
Integrated Neighborhood Project, which is only a three years’ tentative project for
service in old urban area.

Another appointed Board member from social work academy also has similar
observation. “The image of social workers in these years has been very negative in
Government officials. They are afraid of social workers because of the deep
impressions that they’re not reasonable, often confrontative to the Government. I
don’t know whether this image is good or bad, how it is affecting the other service
or the whole social work development, but it’s a matter of fact that the Government
wants to cut CD programs.”

The Government’s will to end up NLCDP is uncontested. There are often
queries from community work clients, either implicitly or explicitly, as some of my
respondents did.

“I had asked them who paid them to help us. When we knew that they get
their salary from the Government, at first, we did query why the Government gave them money to help us fight against her and some of us didn’t believe that they would truly help us. But after working with them for some time in meetings and actions, we found they did help us in their best.” (An ex-THA resident)

The Group has well apprehended the situation.

“Don’t you think it’s strange for the Government to offer some agencies subventions to do something against her or organize people to challenge her? Of course, I believe that it’s the strategic consideration of the Government to have a group of controllable workers to organize those who are believed to be very discontented with the Government. It’s easy to control. Of course the Government would allow this happen with certain presupposed limitation or boundary that shouldn’t be overstepped.”

However, as mentioned before, the Group does not focus on NLCDP, but the suspension of the TWESSC with the “progressive force” although as commonly
perceived, especially in the eye of the Government, the TWESSC was one of the agencies providing NLCDP service.

"It's the marginality of the agency that made its termination inevitable.... It had brought along a lot of controversial incidents like the 'Well-off Tenants' and its alternative ideology, which were not acceptable to the Government. Moreover, it had developed into a situation that many of the so-called fellow social work agencies also felt it intolerable. So its termination could have been foreseen as it can be noticed that the Government had clear intention not to develop NLCDP. Of course, she won't put a brake on all the services immediately, but is going to get rid of the existing community work through different strategies like changing subvention mode."

In the Group's perception, the Government is only playing her own part in the "death" of community work, but the "profession" itself has also its contribution. It sees that the representative organizations have worked cooperatively with the Government to get rid of those "progressive force" in community work. Is there any apparent evidence for this argument?
First, in the case of TWESSC’s suspension, although the conflicts between the board members and the staff appeared to be not resolvable, the agency needed not terminate if the representative organizations and the Government had paid their effort to resolve the crisis for the benefit of the clients. When the crisis broke out, various groups of people came out to offer help in mediating and negotiating for the continuation of the agency. A group of university lecturers paid much effort to mediate within the conflicts. Some people with reputation grouped together to offer help in taking over the position of the agency board when the six member churches of the board decided to abandon the agency. Service users from different units of the agency even took actions to protest against its suspension. They suggested a restructure of the agency board and negotiated with the SWD, related departments and organizations to urge them to help the restructure in order to sustain the services for their benefit. However, the representative organizations seemed to be indifferent and the Government paid no attention to all the suggestions from different groups and the requests from the clients. The worst of it was that the SWD promised to support in paying the compensation for the staff when the agency terminated. (《解散之後》1998)

It was the first time in Hong Kong social work history to have an agency terminated, but it was not the only case that the church group supporting the service
agency had to retreat and wanted to abandon the services. In another example, with the support of SWD and the coordination of the HKCSS, all the services provided by the agency were taken over and continued to be carried out by another agency with the same staff without any break of services. It was believed that the clients’ interest had been best protected as disturbance to the services and all the clients in the process of hand-over had been minimized (張 1999). Obviously, terminating the agency is neither the only way, nor the best way to tackle the issue of the TWESSC. Both the SWD and HKCSS seemed to have shown their preference.

Concerning the service cutback of NLDMP, of course, the Government has firm decision despite the positive report of the service review on the effectiveness of NLDMP done in 1989 (Report on NLDMPs). The report showed two important points concluded from the opinion survey conducted by an independent consultant on the residents in service areas. First, it said that ‘NLDMPs did act as a cushion to guard against the problems of the communities served through alerting the Government on the pressing problems and matching resources to cater for the needs of the community’ (p.17). Second, the report suggested that the overall NLDMP teams were very effective in achieving their service objectives due to the flexible approach in service delivery to residents of various age groups. This is probably the reason why when the Government’s intention to cut the service was exposed, many
service recipients came out to protest against it. This had not happened before even in the struggle against the cut in youth service, which however could be considered a successful battle that the Government had made a step backward. Thus, it was apparent that the service cut of NLCDP would not be so smooth if the representative organizations or the agencies themselves did not compromise. In fact besides the transformation of NLCDP into INP, some agencies has started to exchange it for other service such as service for the elderly.

Yes, there are continuous suggestions in the field that community work should not be confined as a service or NLCDP, but should be conceived as an approach to be applied in various setting to make advocacy for the disadvantages possible in all kinds of service. Some respondents from the representative organizations also hold this belief, but in fact in the same party, there are respondents suggesting that community work will finish although there are still the INP with a totally new definition of community service.

Finally, towards the establishment of the registration system or the professional development, the attitude of the Government had been far from supportive in the past few decades until mid 90s. Those who have endeavor for the achievement probably well understand the situation. "The Government didn’t support social work to have registration system or professionalization because she
has to release certain power. Now the power to define who can be qualified as social worker has been released to the profession."

When the unification with Mainland China was approaching, they pressed even harder for the deadline of 1997. According to the respondents, they had paid much effort in preparing to propose a private Bill for legalizing the social workers registration in 1995. "As the Government estimated that the Bill would probably be passed in the Legco, she announced to propose a public Bill for the registration in order to get hold of the position." The public Bill was then passed in June 1997, right before the unification. The political consideration in establishing a professional body before the hand over was crystal-clear. As some of the respondents acknowledged, the definition of social work, the training and the system in Mainland are highly different from those of Hong Kong and it will be a threat to the field if those in Mainland come to work as social workers. Therefore, they considered there was the urgent need to establish the professional body. If so, among those whose support the registration system in the field, how many do think that social work is a profession? How many do want to assure the quality standard of social work? Or they just have the same consideration as the above mentioned. However, this political consideration is not the concern of this study and in fact, one of the key concerns is situated in another issue with a different political sense.
The establishment has brought about the elimination of the countering voice from the field of practice by excluding those who refuse to register from the post of social work such as the case of Flora. There was the argument that it was only an individual case and it was a matter of law because the worker who refused to register had violated the law abiding by the Ordinance. However, it cannot be denied that the system is a kind of strengthened control exerted on the practitioners in the professionalization as they all have no choice besides joining the registration. When looking at the combination of the Board, the relationship between the profession and the Government can be clearly seen. Almost half of the Board members are appointed by the Government with the deputy director of SWD as the Chairperson. This probably gives an impression that the profession must have worked hand in hand with the Government, if it is not totally controlled by her. That is probably why the Concern Group believes that the profession itself has played its part in the elimination of community work in the process.

Coming back to Larson’s “professional project”, professionalization is a way to protect the status and privileges of an occupation. Once an occupation achieves its professional status, it gains power and authority to control resources and privileges. As in the viewpoint of the Concern Group, under the circumstance that the Government keeps on cutting social services, the social work occupation has to
claim its professional status for power to assert its right to resources and privileges.

In order to keep up with the professional status, those who violate the commonly accepted professional image have to be excluded. As community work aims more at dealing with structural problems, it is common for community workers to challenge the systems and policies for equality and justice. This will probably result in that the Government wants to get rid of it. As under the aforementioned relationship with the Government, the profession would also need to do so.

Yet, some respondents of the other side declared that the existence of the Board and the system is not for the confrontation with community work but for overseeing all types of service and in fact the effort paid for professionalization has started as early as the beginning of the 80s. Some members in the Concern Group do agree with this idea, but the situation is that community work has gone through all those incidents and community workers have experience the most pressures in the professional development.

Finally, some group members attribute the situations to community work’s potential of “anti-profession” as it very often consciously or unconsciously touches on marginal areas. “The death of it may not be directly related to the professional development of social work because the Government definitely has her critical role on whether it can survive or not, but it happened that it was unfortunate to crash
onto the coming wave of professionalization in the 90s."

At this stage, it can be seen that the relationship between the Government and the profession is not really that clear, if not too complicated. At one time, it seems that the profession wants to stay away from her control, so it strives for its professionalization. At another time, it seems that it works cooperatively with the Government to get rid of community work, be it intended or unconsciously. Again another time, it seems that they are two in one as the combination in the Registration Board. Or may be the profession is totally under her control like the situation in the implementation of new subvention and management model that it has almost no say in all the changes and resource redeployment. As the role of the Government is not the core concern of the problem, the analysis will not go any further as long as it is already quite clear that both the profession and the Government have their contribution to the fate of community work as mentioned before in this section.

VI. The Silent Majority

In the last Section, a new idea coming from members of the Concern Group regarding the situation of community work in the “professional project” was introduced. It is community work’s potential of “anti-profession” that places it in
the marginal position in the social work "profession". I am not going to discuss on this idea here, but this point of view has implied another question, which is relevant to the specific point of discussion in this Section. Is it true that only community workers are aware of the problems of professional development and come out to fight against it?

In my observation, parties concerning the professional development of social work are situated in two extremes. On the one hand, there is a group of "professional elite" striving for the institutional establishment. On the other hand, there is a group of "opponents" actively taking actions against the current achievement as well as the dominant professional ideology while the majority of social workers seem to be indifferent and silent in the process. This observation has also been identified by many of the respondents of the representative organizations. Is it true that the silent majority do not care about the development of social work?

Some members of the Concern Group have a different perception. "It seems not fair to say that, apparently, it is so, but in fact, it is not that true." Why is it that mainly workers in community service are alert of it and come out to fight against it?

"Because they have the concept and idea that make them more sensitive to these problems brought about in professional development and the most important thing is that they're more familiar with and more likely to use social actions and
organizing skills and tactics.”

Chu (朱 1990) raised the question to what extent social work practitioners accept the registration system. He was referring to the voluntary registration system started in 1990. It was a good indicator showing whether social workers really support the system or whether they believed that the system was good to the field of practice as well as the clients. All through the years with voluntary registration system, generally, only over a thousand out of the more than six thousands practitioners had registered. (As the non-trained welfare workers were included in this voluntary system, the actual population of practitioners should be much more than that.) Even in its record high prepared for the election of the Functional Constituency of Legco in 1995, there were only over three thousand registered social workers, less than half of the population of the whole community. Why so many social workers did not register in the voluntary system?

Eight social workers in various social work settings, who did not register in the voluntary system, were invited to share their points of view. They have got working experience ranging from six to fifteen years in more than one type of service settings. These various work settings include elderly service, children and youth service, outreaching, youth rehabilitation, youth integrated service, community work, home help service, school social work and patient resource center.
The years of working and service experiences of these respondents will be listed out following their first quotation or whichever considered to be necessary. It happens to find that most of them see that the registration had nothing to do with them in response to the question of why they did not register in the voluntary system.

"I can't see any impact on social workers. At that time, there're very few discussions on whether registration was important. Very few people were concerned about it. And there seemed nothing professional to back up the registration, such as professional conference and examination like those of the accountant or lawyer." (7 years, elderly, children and youth service, youth integrated service)

"I don't know why I have to register. What for? I can't see any good thing. After registered doesn't mean I can have a job. Nor does it mean I'm very professional or I'll be observant to the Code of Ethic." (8 years, elderly service and youth rehabilitation)

"It's none of my business. Just some people wanted to have the status, but
it meant nothing to me on practice skills or other benefit. I don’t identify
with professional registration because social work in Hong Kong hasn’t
reached the standard of the professions.” (12 years, youth service and
community work)

“What’s the difference between a social worker and a registered social
worker? It’s a job for me. That’s all. Registered social worker means
nothing to me. Registration is only for social status, but I don’t think
social work is a profession and I’m not doing something professional.
Why should I register? If the relationships between social workers and
clients need to be equal as claimed, why do you emphasize that you’re
professional?” (8 years, youth service and home help)

Obviously, they did not register in the voluntary system not because they did not
know about it or did not care about social work. Most of them intended not to
register for one reason or another. Some considered that it was only an in-group
game as there lacked thorough and wide discussions. Some objected to it, as they
thought that it was only a game seeking professional status but nothing else in
advancing practice standard. They seemed to have something to expect in the
professional development. In fact, most of them consider that social work is not or has not developed into a profession.

"I think social work is not a complete profession. Sometimes, it's piteous if we ourselves don't recognize it as a profession. I can't say it's not a profession because it needs certain knowledge and skills." (8 years, youth service and community work)

"It's said to be a semi-profession. I believe so. It's not yet developed into a profession. Sometimes, what we do is quite common sense. Without training, you may still know how to do it. With training, it's just done more systematically. On the other hand, it's not influential enough because it's not irreplaceable and long lasting. Long lasting in the sense that the existence of social workers can solve social problems and help improve the stability of society. However, we can't see this." (6 years, children and youth service, school social work)

Basically, the voluntary registration system cannot be considered as a success, as more than half of the practitioners did not join the registration.
However, the mandatory registration system was still achieved in 1997. According to the latest record of the SWRB in February 2000, almost nine thousand social workers have registered. Of course all of the respondents here are included in the record.

"It’s totally a compromise."

“I can’t help, there’s no choice and no alternative. The problem is that they forced people to register when the system was not well understood. We weren’t well informed of the function and they didn’t ask for workers’ opinions. What’s registration for? If I was forced to register, it’s probably a control. Control people in the choice of occupation. In the past, I could be a social worker because I had the certificate, the ability or the education.”

“I register because of the job. I think a professional body is supposed to have expectations on its members, such as further training and continuous assessment on their practice performance for continuous registration, better accountability to the public. However, I can’t see any difference
except for the term ‘registered’ was add to the name card.”

There seems to be a lot of grievance concerning the compulsory registration system especially when the issue came to a situation that a worker who refused to register was dismissed in 1998.

“It’s too firm to have those unregistered dismissed. It shouldn’t happen in a democratic society. This will only make people query and reject the system. It’s not going to consolidate all social workers but differentiate. It won’t do any good in this unrest situation. Now people who register aren’t for the profession, but for the pay…. I went to registered just before the deadline. I don’t support the registration but I have no choice. It’s a fact that I can’t do anything if I leave the field. I don’t want them to control the whole game.”

“But now the way it goes makes some people very disaffected because people are forced to register. I still have the knowledge and skills. Even though I don’t register, I’m still a qualified social worker!”
"I'll ask who set up this professional body. Now, social workers including myself are made into professional social workers. They wanted to be professionalized, a system was then set up. I'm not voluntary, but only a product. What means by profession? I don't know the function. The problem is that I was forced to accept. If I don't want to join, I'll lose my job. That's why I said I was made into a so-called professional social worker."

After all, there is one who has clear stand in supporting the system and professional development although she also did not register in the voluntary system and she has the following point of view.

"They weren't doing something widely and therefore not many people know what they're doing. I support it because there's the need to oversee social workers and ensure quality service. If the system is effective and healthily developed, I think it can achieve those objectives. But now I don't know its orientation because I can't see what it's doing besides the limited information sent to members." (15 years, youth rehabilitation and elderly)
She does have expectations towards the existing establishment on the consolidation of the occupation. She even give concrete suggestions on what the Board can do in the meantime to build up a trustful relationship with the general practitioners.

"I don’t expect much. First, they should make the Board known to all social workers. Maybe organize some discussion platforms for social workers, concerning service development, relationship with the Government. At this critical moment of the new subvention and quality management model, why didn’t the Board say anything or make public its standpoint. They should fight for something regarding these significant issues. The Board will probably be recognized if they achieve something for the field. Moreover, they can gather a group of workers together through working on these issues."

It can be seen that practitioners do have expectations towards professional development. That is why they have questions on the existing establishment. In fact, most of the interviewees have reservation on the compulsory registration system although they have all registered. First, there lack widespread and thorough discussions among practitioners regarding the orientation of professional
development. They object to the system that practitioners are forced to register or else they will lose the job. Second, they expect that work should be concentrated on programs to help practitioners improve their service-related knowledge and skills in order to advance practice standard. They think that the Board seems to be not working on what they expect for professional development. Third, they do not see that the Board has done something to arouse clients’ attention on the establishment. They all do agree that clients’ benefit should be secured and thus service quality needs to be safeguarded, but they query whether these can be achieved in this way through a system as such.

“I agree there’s the need to oversee the services. Yet, they can oversee the practitioners and improve service quality without professional status. ‘I don’t see the difference. I don’t see our clients will be benefited from this professionalization.’” (7 years, children and youth service, patient resource center)

“I believe that professionalization may bring them privileges and social status. I don’t think it’s for the clients’ benefit. They can work for the clients’ benefit without registration. Why they’re so high sounding! It
must be for their own benefit."

"At the moment, not any influence on clients can be seen. I think social work should be overseen by the public. But how and what to oversee should be discussed."

"I would ask to what extent the Board has worked on overseeing the practitioners. I can’t see anything done on the service quality or on the workers’ in these two years. If social workers see nothing, how can our clients see it? They don’t even know about the establishment of the Board. How can they know they’re being protected? Maybe it’s still young!"

Generally speaking, they think that there should be more discussions in the field before the establishment as many of them expect that social work is an occupation with a strong sense of democracy, thus it should be more open and allow discussions, diversities, or even contradicting ideas. Moreover, some of them also are worried that the establishment will bring “more constraints and thus block out diversity in development. When something being standardized or professionalized, clients may not be benefited because social work emphasizes individuality."
Of course, the viewpoints and attitudes of these eight respondents cannot act as a generalized picture. It cannot be ignored that there are some practitioners who just consider social work as a job to earn a living and care nothing about its professional development as suggested by the respondents. Yet, from two different surveys conducted in early 1998 and 1999, something more can be drawn from the general practitioners about their attitudes and responses towards the exiting registration system.

The first questionnaire survey was conducted by the JACPDSW and aimed to see the practitioners’ attitudes and understanding towards the system. When the survey was carried out, the Board had not yet issued a deadline for registration. Among the 252 respondents who returned the questionnaire, 27% had not yet registered with 6% determined not to do so. For those who had registered, only 28% believe that social work is a profession and 14% believe that it will safeguard practitioners and clients while the other 24% had registered because they were requested by their agencies and another 23% were in fact object to the registration. On the other hand, the majority of respondents showed that they got little knowledge about the Board and the registration system. (梁/陳 1999)

The second questionnaire survey was carried out by the JACPDSW and the SWAB of HKCCSA when the dismissed unregistered social worker was having
judicial review. It aimed to see whether the general social workers would continue to register if the judicial review succeeded in asking the court to withdraw the compulsory registration system. There were 288 returned questionnaires and the outcome showed that most respondents did not support the existing registration system and were not satisfied with the performance of the Board. Less than 30% would continue to register while nearly 60% would refuse to register if the Court rule against the compulsory registration. The reasons to against the registration were that they considered that the system could not help social workers advance their practice standard and the Board was not open and accountable. Quite a lot of respondents wrote that they registered just for securing their job, but they were still dissatisfied with the Board’s performance. Some even believed that the system could not effectively oversee practitioners and improve service standard, but would only facilitate service monopoly and thus violate social work mission. (《社工註冊？特刊》1999)

There seem to be reasons to believe that there is considerable amount of practitioners who object to the existing mode of professional development and have similar ideas as those of the community workers. It can be said that there are practitioners even in the silent majority, who are thoughtfully against the system but in a passive way due to the limitations in reality. Moreover, there were in fact,
another group of people including practitioner and individuals from academy, uttering criticism publicly against the Board and the Code of Practice (梁及其他 1998)⁶. Therefore, it appears that only community workers take open actions just because they are used to the organizing tactics with social actions, which are more commonly adopted for problem solving by collective effort in community work.

VII. The Service Recipients

Referring to the interviews of the general social workers, all the respondents resonate with each other in the point that clients should be safeguarded from mal-practice, but they see that the Board has done nothing to directly inform the clients their right to complain. They also query whether the system can achieve ensuring service quality and securing clients’ benefit as claimed. According to some social workers’ views, the right to oversee the quality of service should be left for the clients themselves as they are the ones who best know their needs and they probably have their ability to judge.

“They come with their purpose and expectation. When they find that they have similar idea on some problems concerning our work, they will try to

⁶ See Appendix VIII 梁玉麒等七人（1998）對《註冊社會工作者（臨時）工作守則》意見書
voice out and ask why. Take selling tickets for example, our staff kept it
done only in the morning session for their own convenience. But it's not
convenient for our members, so they kept on urging us to change until it's
achieved.” (15 years, youth rehabilitation and elderly)

“Or now in boys’ home. They have to encounter many adults, over twenty
teachers in school and over ten staff in hostel. They’re able to tell whether
you can help them, care for them and love them. Not because you’ve
registered or you’re the staff that they’ll think you’re the same and
standardized. They feel with their experience. They’re indeed professional
clients. Some of them are orphans, brought up by social workers from
hostel to hostel. They know clearly what behavior brings punishment and
what deserves reward!” (8 years, elderly service and youth rehabilitation)

These are the perceptions of different workers towards the clients they work
for. They seem to believe that the clients social work serve have their own ability
and experienced wisdom to judge whether a worker really wants to help and treats
them well. They do not care about whether a worker is a professional or university
graduate. In fact, all the respondents in last section see nothing different for the
clients after the establishment of the registration system and they believe that most clients even do not know about it. Yet, all these ideas are from the viewpoints of social workers.

In order to get some direct information on how the professional development of social work affect its clients, ten service recipients from different community projects were invited to share their experience with community service. Half of them had witnessed or participated in those controversial issues in community work field and were mainly service recipients of NLCDPs in public housing estates under redevelopment except one rooftop dweller who had worked with the workers of the TWESSC to fight against the demolition of his rooftop construction. The other five respondents were residents in different Temporary House Areas (THAs) when they encountered social workers of NLCDPs that served them. They were active members in residents' groups but had no relationship with those controversial issues. Some more of their individual background information will be noted wherever considered to be necessary at the end of the quotations from them.

The interviews were intended to examine how much they knew about the professional development in terms of the current establishment and their perception on community work. Although all of them were active members in residents' groups concerning mainly the housing policies and issues within their communities,
there is apparent difference between the two groups of residents in their personal
development regarding community participation. In the sharing on their history of
community participation, it is found that the majority of them knew nothing about
social workers before their first encounter with them. Only very few had little
knowledge of what social workers were.

When they got to know that the social workers working with them in their
communities got their pay from the Government, they felt strange and some even
had reservation towards them at first. As they kept on working with those workers
in issues concerning their right and benefits, they got more understanding on them
and trustful relationship were built. On the other hand, some became clear that in
fact, they have helped to bring out problems in the early stage through organizing
and thus prevent social unrest caused by accumulated unsolved problems. Most of
them believe that they could well differentiate these community workers from other
social workers and could tell who really wanted to help and who did not.

"The responsible workers are very good and help many people heartily,
but there're some irresponsible, who only like to talk and do nothing. I
had seen one who organized the residents to do something to serve his
own purpose. However, those who worked with their best usually
wouldn't stay long.” (Ex-THA resident, first met social workers in 1993)

“I met social workers in squatter area and THA only, compared with those in elderly center and shelter workshop, etc. they are so different. Of course, the Government has intention to transfer those troublemakers in NLCDP to other service like elderly, deviant youth, etc.” (Met social worker when living in squatter area in the 80s, chairperson of a Mutual Aid Committee in public housing estate now)

“Not all are the same, some social workers in other agencies weren't as good as those I worked with. They're very lazy. Those in our THA worked very hard to help us fight for our right. They worked overtime very often but some in other THA wouldn't. We sometimes had meetings in another THA, they wanted us to finish meetings on time…. After I moved here, I found that social workers here were very passive and lazy. They wouldn't pay us home visit…. I was once rejected by a school social worker when I sought help for my son.” (Ex-THA resident, moved to public housing for 3 years)
"Since 1994, I have kept contact with social workers. I feel that there’re two kind of social workers. Some follows only agency policy and regulations, works according to their pay. The others are more than that. They help you whole heartily as friends.” (Ex-rooftop dweller, encountered social workers in 1994)

Now all the respondents are no longer under the service of community projects because those who lived in THAs have been resettled in public housing estates and those who lived in estates under redevelopment have moved to new blocks. Those who got the service from the TWESSC lost the service when it terminated in early 1997. After these years’ participation in community issues, all of them have experienced great changes within themselves.

"Before 1992, I was totally a housewife without any concern on policies or welfare. When reading newspaper, I didn’t read the news but only fictions... I’ve got great changes in my life after knowing social workers. Besides fulfilling my duty as a housewife, I put the work in community participation first. The habit in reading newspaper has changed. I read the news concerning policies instead of fictions. I feel that I have changed a
lot, more talkative, presentable and outgoing, not so self-centered and
more thoughtful and open, very often participate in volunteer work.”
(Ex-redeveloping estate resident, MAC member now)

“Before I met these social workers, I only did the housework and took
care of my son everyday. I didn’t even read the news. Now I’m concerned
about social issues and like to discuss with social workers or my husband
about them such as the recent issue of the ‘right of abode’.”

“Before, I just lived my own life, didn’t care for other people. After I met
the social workers, I got to understand we’re all lower class people and
should help and care for each other. I learnt how to fight for our right. We
didn’t know that before because no one told us about that. Now I’ll tell
those who don’t know.” (Ex-redeveloping estate resident, participated in
District Board election last year)

“Because I found that there’s the need for more people to come out to
fight against injustice in society, so I join to help as volunteer... Until now,
I still continue because I want more people to know that it’s our right to
voice out the problems.”

These are some of the reasons for the respondents to have strong sentiment towards the community service they got before. They all suggested that there should be service in all public housing even in new estates. That is why when the news of service cutback on NLCDP was announced, most of them had joined the actions protesting against the Government’s decision. As they said, there were over a thousand service recipients and workers joining some of the protests. In the case of the TWESSC’s suspension, the five respondents in connection with those controversial issues had worked actively in the rescue action for the agency. Moreover, all the five have continued to participate actively in self-motivated residents groups or social issues concern groups after the service cut off. One even joined the District Board election last year. However, there is something worth noting. The other five respondents of ex-THA residents have apparent differences in their development in community participation after the termination of service from community projects. Among the five, only one continues to participate in residents’ group.

Concerning those “radical actions’ in the controversial issues, they also have different attitudes from the five who had connection with them. Three out of the
five prefer not to be too “radical”. Only the other two suggested that the Government officials as well as the police should also be responsible for those actions.

“It’s situational. Of course, it’s the best to have both sides sit down together and talk. However, very often, the officials refuse to answer or reject your request. You have to escalate actions. People shouldn’t just blame on the demonstrators.” (Ex-THA resident, met social worker in 1990)

For the participants of the issues, they do know that it is difficult for the public to accept that because all the difficulties and hardships they had experienced in their struggles usually were not known to the public. Yet, they still believe that they had done nothing wrong and there was the need to have these actions because their experience told them that when their problems get known to the public, there will be the chance to get change.

“The problem was that we weren’t aware of the tricks of the police. I insisted to the end and was arrested even though I’m not a well off tenant
myself because I thought that this policy of ‘well off tenants’ was unjust and should be changed. If we left, they would think there’s nothing wrong with the policy and we were the troublemakers. On the other hand, we’re fighting for our right and just wanted them to change the policy, we had done nothing wrong.” (Ex-redeveloping estate resident, first met social workers in 1992)

“If we didn’t take that action, the whole society actually wouldn’t know about the existing problem of the rooftop constructions. It’s the issue in Garden Road, that made the Government pay attention to it because the public debates went from harsh comments to sympathy. Before that action, we had sought help from the Councilors and related Government departments, but the results were the same, demolition without compensation. Actually the Government has been wrong on allowing its sale with taxation if it’s illegal. Finally, all of us were compensated with settlement in public housing.”

After working with the workers all through these issues especially, the suspension of the TWESSC, all of them in fact can tell the changing situation of
community work they have experienced. They well understand the Government’s
determination to cut the community projects because they consider that there is no
reason for her to continue paying those social workers to work against her. Yet,
some of them note that the Government is wrong as these workers can help to solve
social problems through organizing work before the problems reach the irresolvable
situations resulting in social unrest. On the other hand, they do know that not many
social workers would work as those of the TWESSC did. Many of them would be
more control in actions against the Government. Some believe that those workers
may have to abide by regulations of their agencies or the Government.

“Were they too ‘radical’ or the others not doing enough? I don’t know if
it’s because the other agencies have regulations that control them not to do
so. I see three different parties of social workers, one from the TWESSC,
one party is mild, and the others are conservative and don’t agree with the
two parties, but of course especially can’t accept those from the
TWESSC.... I see that after the termination of the TWESSC, many of the
joint platforms of policy concern have suspended. I feel that social
workers have retreated from concerning the policies. They seem to have
changed their orientation. I don’t know whether it’s the Government who
controls them not to do so."

In the experience with community work, the respondents have pointed out that not all social workers provide the same service and have the same attitude. It seems that they can well capture what is good for them and what service they really need. Although, the two groups have apparent differences in their development in community participation after the termination of service from community projects, they all treasure very much the community services they got in the past.

Regarding the establishment of the registration system, only some of them have got a little bit information while some others know nothing about it. Most of them pay no attention on it except one, the ex-rooftop dweller, who is now a member of the JACPDSW.

"Some people think it's better to have control than not. I can understand.

Sometimes, I do believe that. But the main point is the thing behind. I see the problem behind is the privilege such as the Functional Constituency, the in-group election!"

They are not really concerned about it because they consider it has nothing to
do with them but is something concerning social workers. Many of them consider it
good for social workers to have professional status and social respect. "Social
workers should have specific status in society because they help people solve many
problems." However, they seem to know nothing about the claimed objective on
ensuring clients' benefit. Only a few respondents have criticism on it.

"We'll assess whether they're right. We have our own knowledge and are
able to do so. If they're wrong, we won't follow them in their actions."

"I think it's only lip service. How to safeguard service recipients? Stop
them from doing something 'radical', such as protest against the
Government? I think these should not be regulated by some written rules.
Neither social workers nor we are little children. They know what they
should do. We know what we can accept. All are situational. For example,
if we all think we should have overnight protest outside the Government
office, does the regulation clearly state whether they should go with us?"

"We had worked with them for a long time and we met very often, so we
could differentiate whether they're good or bad.... I don't agree that it can
protect us. Registration can’t guarantee that they’re good.”

Overall speaking, those who have criticism on the system seem very much in line with the social workers that they are able tell who is really good to them and what actions they can accept in the work to fight for their right. They object to the point that the registration can guarantee that social workers will deliver good services. Some even feel that the system may add pressure on social workers and restrict them from the work against the unjust policies. However, there are some very optimistic. They believe that even social workers’ status is upgraded, it will not result in their abuse in power and clients’ benefit being overridden.

“If social workers do something wrong, people will criticize them. You see, the Government has authority, but people still voice out when she’s wrong. People also come out to comment on the problems of doctors and hospitals. We can see all these in newspapers. Don’t worry about that. The higher status they have, the more criticism they have to face.... Because they come from people, they have to go into the people and rely on people’s support. I don’t know where they get their pays but their work has to be orientated towards people’s need like that of the Government.
The public will comment on them and make them improve. Even the
Government has to be overseen by the public. Don't think that all of us
know nothing."

This very optimistic idea not only shows that the clients social work serves
have their ability to oversee the service, but also tell a very important message. The
public is the most powerful "watchdog" on the whole "profession". However, so far,
the Board seems not doing much publicly as they claims to alert the clients of their
right to demand quality service and to complain social workers of their mal-practice.
Nor has it facilitated the field to offer public education for clients' awareness. As
the Concern Group keeps on criticizing, they have not seen from the very beginning
those who strive for professional development have any public work on educating
the clients. Social service clients are mainly deprived and under educated people. If
only having the Ordinance and the Code of Practice gazetted and paying for a few
pieces of notice on newspapers are conceived as public education, then the news on
the confrontation of the Concern Group with the Board might have drawn more
public attention and given a hand in the education of the clients. Moreover, some
members have commented on the rigid and bureaucratic procedure of reporting
complaints. If the Board truly wants to get rid of mal-practices in the field and
encourage clients to exert their right to complaint, they should by all means make
the complaint procedure easy and reachable for the most deprived and under
educated.

VIII. Conclusion

In this Chapter, we have concentrated on the situation of community work in
these years’ professional development. More precisely, we have revealed the matter
of survival for the “progressive force” under the influence of the “professional
project”. When concluding the ideas of the Concern group, in these years, it can be
observed that the eliminating “project” has existed in various dimensions. First,
there were harsh comments on those “disruptive” or “radical” practice. Second,
evaluation mechanism was set up to evaluate community work intervention and
roles of workers. Third, constrains were put forwards by introducing practice
guidelines for social action. Fourth, the suspension of the infamous “radical” social
work agency brought about direct clash on the “progressive force”. Fifth, there
came service cut back on NLCDP, which further direct community workers into the
more controllable field of practice. Finally, the establishment of the mandatory
registration system may further constrain community work practice by the
Professional Code of Practice.
Although, most of the respondents of the representative organizations have rejected the idea that the professional development has contributed to the elimination of community work and the professional establishment will hinder community work development, there seem to be evidences that the elimination in the “professional project” has been existing. They seem to be not aware of the “exclusion project” in the professional development. May be in their position, at least some of them if not all, believe that professional development of social work is an irreversible trend and the professional establishment helps advancing practice standard, service quality and thus benefits the clients. At the same time, they seem to also believe that community work aiming at services for the poor and disadvantages is part of social work that worth keeping. That is why they claim that community workers have to compromise for its survival.

Yet, some practitioners basically believe that community work or even social work itself is incompatible with this mode of professionalization, as it is different from other occupations that it is concerned about people’s well being and social justice. If its practitioners do uphold its value and mission for people’s empowerment, equal participation and democratic society, it would probably work for the de-professionalization of the occupation itself. In reality, however, that is not the case. In its course of development, the main stream has become very
professional in a sense that "certain professional elite" in the occupation has pressed for its status and privileges through monopolizing the service in the registration system like what the other professions have done. Their urge may be unconscious, if not intended.

Even community work has become professionalized. Besides the "progressive force", the target of study in this research, community work in fact has been part of the social work profession as what is happening in NLCDP. Although its practitioners may touch on the matter of power or the Government, it does not have any sense of "anti-profession", as the main stream practitioners believe that what they offer is the best practice, which is not replaceable. In a press conference of the actions fighting against the service cutback of NLCDP, one of the arguments for the need of NLCDPs is that they provide professional service that is irreplaceable by those provided by other volunteers or community groups.

Yet, its ultimate goal is believed to be that the clients it serves can finally stand on their own feet and solve their problem themselves. This implies that community worker's role should not be as irreplaceable as it is claimed in professional social work. That is to say the clients whom community work serves will not rely on the workers for the long run. They will be empowered to a situation that they can get hold of their own life themselves and may even become organizers.
or leaders in groups to be concerned on social issues related to their livelihood.

That may be why there is in fact a "progressive force" in the field of community work that has initiated the "anti-profession movement". It is the nature and belief of community work that bring about this "progressive force". More optimistically, the social work value and mission has its influence implicitly on the professional development in the social work community although the majority seems to have merged with the mainstream.

As part of the concern of the "professional elite", what attributes social workers should process and what quality of service social workers should provide are the basic questions of social work as a human service occupation and the expectation of the public towards this occupation. These are not necessarily related to the quest for professionalization or registration.

"Social work needs reflections in process. Social workers need to be open minded. Theories can not be straightly applied to real situation. Things are all the way changing in understanding, interpretation and need to be viewed critically. Relationship between social workers and clients needs to be more equal due to the need of accountability, thus social workers should not be placed in the expertise position." (麥萍施 1990)
She agrees to have moral standard as guideline for the field of practice and suggests the whole social work community to follow as an ideal to improve the quality of service. However, she objects to have the moral standard as criterion to evaluate social workers' practice attitude, value and working approach. The reason is that it would be too complicated. The question is who set up and approve the set of moral standard, under what process and what circumstance to approve. She worries that if the moral standard as guideline was used as regulation, the social work profession would be straightly controlled and then become social control professional organization. Those who refuse to register will be labeled or excluded from the profession. Now her worry seems to have come true. She also worries that under such professional control situation, the ideal of ensuring professional service standard will be in vain. She suggests the occupation should have open and positive attitude to ensure quality service through self-discipline and to evaluate the professional standard through many discussions within the field.

Coming back to the “professional project” of Larson, what it implies is also the sense of “collective” effort. However, it can be seen that in the social work community, this “collective” effort for professionalization is not that strong and complete, if not tenuous. Different parties have so different or even contradictory
attitudes and ideologies that made them in contest about the development.

For the Concern Group, what quality of the profession do they wish for the development in social work? The potential of “anti-profession” may be the answer. Some of them believe that the professional sense of social work should be situated in its “de-professional” essence that enables it to have an all-embracing nature. It is believed that social work is such a unique profession that should be against its professionalization, the existing mode of professional development.

For the general social workers, many of them seem to believe that it is not a profession, or not a complete profession, but a well-paid job. They have seemingly got no concern over the whole development, passively rejecting what the dominant group working for. Yet, in reality, for the “professional elite”, there are the political economic interests in controlling as well as bargaining for resources, especially due to the matter of the hand over in 1997. Some consider the development of social work not professionalization, but only institutionalization. Some believe that social work is a profession and hope it can be more professional in the sense of more expertise and specialized for the benefit of clients as they see that social work practice now is still very layman, not accurate and effective enough. However, there are the queries that they have not been concentrating their effort in the appropriate way because the effort paid for professionalization seems not directly aiming at
tackling the existing problems in the field of practice for the improvement of service quality. Furthermore, the establishment seems not aiming at how to protect the clients such as paying effort in public education for the clients especially the most disadvantage and under educated groups about their right to demand quality service and complain for mal-practice.

After all, it seems that social work cannot exempt from the mainstream professional development as some members of the Concern Group suggest that social work in itself has the self-constructed image of the sense of “salvation”, which is being strengthened in the process. It is hard to change unless it breakthroughs the conventional conception towards social worker, the idea of “worker centered”. A well-marked instance for this argument is that it is the social workers that define all their service recipients. However, up to the present, social workers still do not want to admit this, but claim in a positivist way that there are social problems out there that need social work as a tool to handle or better say intervene. This concept may come from the way of self-identification and the so-called professionalization may have existed in this way.

There are concrete evidences on the problems in the professional development of social work and community work in the Western countries. With the present situation in Hong Kong’s development, there seem to be reasons to support the
Concern Group’s point of view that the specific or “radical” community work and its practitioners have been excluded from the social work “profession” in its “project”. They believe that it is the matter of ideology. The problem of the registration on community workers is that gradually, only the social action organized by the conformed registered social workers will be recognized.

Further, social work in these few decades’ development has been very divided and fragmented. More important is that it seems to help individualize social problems and its causes. However, the fact is that most social problems are originated from the deficiencies of the structure and systems in society. Thus, it will not be effective in resolving social problems if social work only works for individual changes without the concern for structural problems as well. There is the worry that the existing mode of professional development may probably further enlarge the gap. As some of the respondents believe that many social workers only consider social work as a job and in fact these practitioners may be more conservative than ordinary people, the pursue for “radical” change in the field as well as the society may not be an easy task. Therefore, there is the need to ask the fundamental question concerning the dualism of social work orientation – working for social change or individuals’.

Regarding the role of the Government, her complicated relationship with the
profession and her powerful influence on the survival of community work are
touched upon in this chapter. Yet, the study is not going to confirm whether the
profession has colluded or collaborated with the government as long as it is clear
that she is the funder of the major social work agencies and their services.

One of the key concerns in the study is how the impact of professional
development on community work affects its service recipients. From the stories of
the service recipients being interviewed, It is apparent that the community services
they encountered played a significant role in their development in community
participation. According to their feedback on the need of community projects and
their actions to fight against the service cutback of NLCDP, it is believed that the
impact on them cannot be ignored when community work is continued to be
restricted in this current professional development. However, the fact is that not
only the clients of community service are affected if the orientation of social work
development is restricted to mainly for individual change! This concern on the
impacts will be tackled in the final chapter.
CHAPTER SIX – Conclusion: Do Clients Benefit from this Professional Development?

I. Introduction

How the professional development of social work affects its clients is the final question I want to ask. The study has been aiming at this concern from the very beginning. By exploring the impact of social work professionalization on the development of community work in the last decade, it tries to reveal the influence brought about in the process on the clients in the area of community service. The exploration started with the heated debates on the professional establishment in 1997, as it is considered to be a critical moment in social work history in Hong Kong. Also, it is the first time to have a group of opponents actively taking actions to challenge the professional establishment publicly. This group of opponents, known as the JACPDSW, consists of mainly community workers or grassroots organizers and many of them were participants or witnesses in the controversial issues happened in the field of community work in the 90s. Since these controversial issues are believed to be influential to the development of community work in relation to the professionalization of social work, the study has tried to link up the recent empirical findings with these issues as background history. This
attempt to follow the debates and confrontations in the story of the Concern Group with reference to those issues also originated from the belief that professionalization as in Larson's term, "professional project", is in fact a historical development.

In order to have a more comprehensive picture of the entire story, various other sources of information including those from the members of the representative organizations, the general social workers and the service recipients in community work were visited through in-depth interviews. Of course, all these stories drawn from my observation and the accounts of my respondents are presented through my own interpretation. For a more balanced view, information from hard evidences such as newspaper cuttings, archives, official documents and agencies' publications are also included in the analysis.

In this final chapter, I want to go back to my theoretical references in concluding what the empirical findings presented in previous chapters have revealed about the impact of professional development on community work in relation to the influences on its service recipients. As I have suggested in Chapter One and Two, the professional development of social work in Hong Kong is better understood in terms of a "power approach" and the concept of "professional project". Yet, these theoretical conceptions are not free from shortcomings. As suggested by Shae (1999), they have ignored the complexity of professionalism and
the diversity among different sectors within a "profession". These two areas of concern are exactly the main theme of this study, in which the key arguments of the thesis rest. Further, the analysis cannot go without the exploration of the nature of social work itself and its dualistic practice orientation.

The coming section will go through the central arguments of the study and how the study arrives at the arguments through the discussions concentrating on all the changes within community work that affect its clients all through these years in the wave of professional development. Section III will focus on the problem in a broader sense, on the nature of social work. The fundamental question of the dualism of social work, working for social or individual change will be tackled with reference to the current discussions in the West. Following these will be some implications suggested for community work in Section IV. Finally, the last section of this chapter will give a brief conclusion and an account on the limitation of this research and the implications for future research to end up the report.

II. Professionalism, social work and Community Work

"Ever since the pronunciation of the Joint Declaration in 1984 countless professional associations have sought to secure and if possible, extend
their present roles and privileges after the hand over in July 1997. The introduction of a representative political system along the lines of ‘selective’ functional constituencies has injected a further dose of catalysis to the politicization of the professions.” (Shae 1999)

As Shae’s observation quoted above indicated, social work is probably one of those “professions” having taken actions in response to the demand of the unique political situation of the hand over. The “joint working group” formed by members of the three representative organizations started working on social workers registration in 1984. The voluntary Social Welfare Personnel Registration System established in 1990 had been in support of the struggle and success in redefining the electorate of the Social Welfare Constituency, from social welfare agency to registered social welfare personnel, in 1995. Despite the changing attitude of the Government on the issue, the Social Workers Registration Ordinance passed by Legco in June 1997 was just in time to set up the mandatory registration system before the unification. In fact, a number of the respondents from the representative organizations especially those active participants from the beginning did acknowledge the need for the professional establishment because of this concern. There were also publications by the representative organizations addressing this
point in support of their work. (李 1987, 許 1988, 社聯季刊 113 期 1990)

Moreover, when the Party of Democratic Alliance with some other allied parties in the Legco in 1997 revised the Election Ordinance to redefine the electorate of the Social Welfare Constituency, the representative organizations and social service agencies were triggered to oppose the revision in strong actions. It was because the electorate being redefined was enlarged to include community organizations other than those social service agencies and the non-registered practitioners in the organizations. It was not hard to see the political interests targeted by these Parties in the revision and it might be a way to help winning more seats in the Functional Constituencies. (東方日報 7/10/97, 蘋果日報 12/10/97)

Nevertheless, it is apparent that the political interests and privileges involved in the professional development of social work in terms of the establishment cannot be denied. With the explanation of the "power approach", this local development of social work in these few decades can be said to have undergone a power struggle process in society as in the term of Larson's "professional project". In seeking to improve its professional status and privileges and further secure these after the hand over, the occupation has striven to achieve the monopoly of the services for economic and political privileges. Apart from whether it can achieve a sustainable professional status and privileges in the long run, this "professional project" has in
fact, attained a legitimate professional role or title and the power to define its practitioners through legalizing the registration system. In the political arena, a place in the Functional Constituencies has been confirmed for all its electorates as registered social workers in the Social Welfare Constituency.

However, these “power approach” and “professional project” cannot help to explain the entire issue as they consider professionalism a unified conception with its all-negative ideology in seeking for professional privileges and fail to recognize its complexity, which is ambiguous or even contradictory. In this local “project”, it is found that even among those working actively for the professional establishment, there are different emphases of the professional ideologies. Furthermore, an individual can also hold different or conflicting ideas for the professional development such as on the one hand, the concern on ensuring better service quality for the benefit of clients and on the other hand, the concern about the achievement for the professional status and privileges. Some in fact, believe that the development can help achieve the expertise practice with specific knowledge acquired, which enables the “profession” to deliver quality service to its clients and thus, deserve professional status. Yet, some see that the development can only be said to stand for the institutionalization of social work or the standardization of practice, practitioners and service provision. Apart from the existence of mixing ideologies
within the mainstream, there are opposing ideas held by practitioners confronting the mainstream. They believe that the professional development has generated a system of closure that strengthens the control of work and thus in a way excludes alternative practices and the so-called unqualified practitioners.

In fact, prior to the legalization of the registration system, within this power struggle "project", exclusion and control over the occupation as well as the practitioners are said to have been at work. This is the target concern of the research study, which suggests that in the "professional project" of social work, community work, or more accurately the "progressive force" in community work, has been excluded. This idea was demonstrated in the exploration of the development of community work in this recent decade with reference to the controversial issues that happened in its own field. The study shows that the exclusion has been achieved through various strategies. First, critical comments querying the professional roles were uttered on the "radical" practices of those actions in the "Well-off Tenants" and "Rooftop Dwellers". Second, evaluation mechanism was set up to evaluate community work intervention and roles of workers. Third, practice guidelines concerning social actions were issued in social work agencies to regulate or control practitioners in community work against "radical" practice. Fourth, the suspension of the TWESSC, an agency standing for "radical" practice from the 70s was
facilitated in the support of the Government. Finally, service cutback in NLCDP has been compromised with the Government for the exchange of other services including INP, another form of community work.

This "project of exclusion" exposes the existence of the phenomena that are generally ignored in the studies of the professions and also in support of what Shae (1999) suggests, internal spits along different lines are common features of most professions. The study shows, although the existence of the "progressive force" in community work was not aiming to confront the professional development, it has been seen as an obstacle to the development and thus has been eliminated in the "project". The community work related Concern Group's countering actions on the professional establishment, in fact, have demonstrated the concrete internal splits within the "profession", and they indeed believe that community work has got the potential of being an "anti-profession". Moreover, there is a seemingly silent majority of practitioners in the middle. Their inner attitudes and response towards the present mode of professional development or the causes of their silence is not the main theme of this study and thus has not been thoroughly explored, but a rough impression can still be drawn from the interviews and observations. Quite a considerable amount of the practitioners shown by the majority of the respondents do not support this professional development and it can be said that they are
passively against it.

In Macdonald’s interpretation, “The professional project is intended to secure for its members’ economic and social advantage, thus achieving upward social mobility” (1995 p.63). The study obviously not only tells that the actors in the “profession” are far from united for the “professional project”, but the expectations and interests of the majority of practitioners are also not secured as well. In real situation of this local “project”, certain interests of the practitioners or even those of the clients have been compromised if not sacrificed. The study shows that there are grievances and discontents among the general social workers towards the professional establishment. They are dissatisfied with the performance of the SWRB because their expectation towards the professional development such as more professional backup in advancing their practice standard has not been acknowledged. As concurred with Shac’s (《社工註冊？特刊》1999) observation, the professional establishment does not bring social workers benefit, but strengthened control, which refers to the control of practitioners by the registration system, or more precisely by the group of “professional elite” in the Board, which may also be interpreted as the Government. (The Government seems to have hijacked the Board as we can see from the combination of the Board and the limited function on professional advancement defined by the Ordinance.) He suggests that
the registration system and the existing mode of professional development has split up the social work occupation as those in power in the field have more power and autonomy, but the majority of practitioners will be subject to greater control and constraints. This point of view is also in line with a point from Freidson (1994) that the professions are taking a new hierarchical form, in which everyday practitioners become under the control of a professional elite.

As a matter of fact, the recent trend of professional development has concentrated on the establishment of the SWRB, the mandatory registration system and the Professional Code of Practice. It seems to be far from the claimed content of work on assuring quality service and securing clients’ benefit. According to the Registration Board, basically, the present registration system is only responsible for complaints on individual social workers’ alleged mal-practice. Whether it is effective in handling complaints and mal-practice in practice, however, is still in question. It is not authorized to oversee social service agencies or judge on policy issues and more, it is not even authorized to offer practitioners professional backup in advancing their practice knowledge and skill. On the other hand, besides the mal-practice of individual practitioners, majority of the problems resulting in clients not getting the best or appropriate service probably originates from the deficiencies of agency administration, SWD bureaucracy or welfare policy. Although, this
situation and argument is commonly understood in the field and agreed by the respondents, there is still the excuse that the system cannot be expected to do too much. It is obvious that the existing system is too limited in fulfilling its claimed objective of ensuring quality standard of practice for the benefit of clients and may even help to shift the attention and attribution of the problem of the entire occupation to the problem of individual practitioners.

Besides this lack of effectiveness of the registration system in protecting the clients from mal-practice and advancing the quality standard of practice for the benefit of clients, there are further problems brought about in the "professional project", that deprive the clients that community work or social work serves. It is the "death" of community work, which may refer to the restriction on "radical" practice in fighting for the right and welfare of the disadvantages, the constraint on community work development or the service cutback of NLCDP.

From the findings drawn on the accounts offered by the group of service recipients, it is obvious that community work as a service to the grassroots people and disadvantages does have significant influence on their personal development. In sharing their story with community work, they all expressed that they have experienced marked increase in the awareness of their civil right, social justice and equality, the initiative of social concern and community participation, and the
ability of social analysis and problem solving through collective actions. Moreover, they have strong articulation on the need of community work for the grassroots and disadvantages. Besides telling the researcher that there should be community service in all public housing even in new estates, most of them had in fact, joined the actions protesting against the Government's decision to cut NLCDP. From the fact that over a thousand service recipients and workers joined some of the protests, (this was quite rare in Hong Kong social work history), the strong sentiment of the service recipients towards community service was apparent and the significance of community work on them cannot be denied.

Recently, I have a chance to chat with a friend who was once a community worker but is now a newspaper reporter. His job in the past has made him mind about things happening in the field of social work, especially about issues concerning social actions. He got such an impression that it has been silent in the field these few years, especially after the suspension of the TWESSC. What he meant "silent in the field" was that there has not been any great issue concerning social action. Since he is a reporter, it is not surprising that he has the interest to search for and work on this kind of news. Yet, what he pointed out does imply something, which has been mentioned by many of my respondents in various parties. Community work may have gone into history.
If people in Hong Kong were living in stability and prosperity as they wished, the specific role of community work should have finished. If it had well performed its role and finally, achieved its ultimate goal in empowering the disadvantages to get hold of their lives and attain a more equal and justice society, it would have accomplished its specific duty. The fact, however, is that the economic oriented and technocratic led development in society has not narrowed down the gap between the rich and the poor. More and more conflicts of interest have been generated, such as those between the developers and residents in urban redevelopment, those between the employers and employees, and those between the people and the Government. The Government and her officials seem to have become increasingly irresponsible and incapable of fulfilling their roles and duties. Under these circumstance, community work as the service to the poor and disadvantages, definitely still has a role to play.

I am certainly not in a position to judge, but I do believe that social work as well as community work in Hong Kong has gone through a series of changes in the direction of further professionalization and institutionalization. In this process, professional authority and privileges have been attained, but only for those controlling the “profession” while the benefits of the majority of practitioners and even the clients have been sacrificed. As it can be seen in the area of community
work, the so-called radical approach and practitioners have been excluded from
social work and community work practice has been shrunken with practitioners
being directed into the mainstream "professional" practice. This will probably
deprive the clients from the alternative practices that will cater their needs in their
specific situations for societal changes. In a press conference of the actions fighting
against the service cut of NLCDP, the HKSWGU claimed that NLCDP could not be
cut because the professional work in those projects was irreplaceable even by the
work of councilors, community groups and volunteers. The orientation towards
professional development of some practitioners is clear, but is it the appropriate
direction community work should go? Should it work for the survival of its own or
the genuine need of society? What should be its role and relationship with the entire
social work occupation?

III. Dualism of Social Work

In response to the mainstream professional development of social work, there
are numerous studies and literatures in the West, as cited in Chapter Two, showing
that social work had forsaken its original mission in working for the poor and
deprived when going through its professionalization. (Richan and Mendelsohn 1973,
These studies showed that different aspects of the power issue in professional development did arise and social work had become an "unloved profession" (Richan and Mendelsohn 1973). The more specialized social work was, and the more expertise its practitioners were, the more it was orientated toward clinical and individualistic practice catering for the need of middle class people leaving community work in structural approach for the poor and disadvantages being marginalized.

Although, comparatively, the history of social work in Hong Kong is very young and its professional body has just been established in these recent years, this empirical study of its professional development still shows that it cannot exempt from the problems as those happened in the West. The fate of community work has been the same as that of the Western countries, being squeezed out of the mainstream of social work service in the process of professional development. A conclusion can even be drawn from this local study that community work is incompatible with the existing mode of professional development. Further, as a matter of fact, social work itself is also incompatible with this professional development.

Wilding (1982) discovered in his study that professional influence meant that in many issues the decisions made were serving professional interests rather than
the public interests. It led to services being organized according to professional skill and ideas rather than to clients' needs, and thus the development had more to do with the work satisfaction and career structure of the professional social workers than it had to do with the clients' own needs or rights. In Hong Kong, practitioners seldom touch on this question. Maybe it is too sensitive to be discussed. Yet, social work in Hong Kong at least is still a relatively well paid job accompanied by the chance of "upward mobility" with social respect and in fact it has sustained or even secured a large crew of so-called professionals to some extent with middle class wages. However, there is a question that needs to be asked. What does social work really serve, the poor and disadvantages or the Government establishment and the "profession" itself? This question seems to have occupied some space among a minority of practitioners. At least, the study shows that some practitioners have reflected on this primitive and stinging question. When looking at the privileges of having one more vote as a profession in the Functional Constituency in Legco election, social work is in fact, one of the professions that have gained political advantages over its clients.

Coming to this stage, there is probably the need to address the very basic or primitive issue. What is social work? Or in other words, what role should social work perform and how and on what bases should it perform its role? These are the
questions in continuous debates especially in the Western world. There has been ceaseless criticism of social work as a control agent that serves capitalism and government rather than the poor and disadvantages. Yet, there is still a strong belief that social work is or should be an agent of change that brings “anti-oppressive practice” for people in need, based on social justice and equality for the well-being of the whole society (Payne 1997).

According to Payne, of course, also the common belief of practitioners, social work seeks change at two different levels – the personal level and the societal level – as a concern for enabling, enhancing or correcting behavior as well as environment. At the personal level, also considered as individualistic approach, change is sought in behavior, relationships and networks of individuals so that they can better accommodate the environment for happy and successful lives. On the other hand, for radical approach at societal level, whether it is policy, system or institution, change is desired in order to create better environment for those social work serves.

In Payne’s ideal concept, one key objective of social work is to work for changes that lead to the removal of social disadvantages or even advantages. Therefore, no matter which level is concerned, without the participation and cooperation of clients, desirable changes cannot be achieved. That is why the
fundamental ethic of social work is that its clients should be involved in the
decision making about what should be contained in the social work process. More
ideally, they should be involved in the discourse about what social work should be
about. It is how the term “empowerment” makes sense in the social work process.
Dominelli (1993, 1998) also has similar ideas on the “anti-oppressive” practice with
its value commitment to the realization of social justice as an emancipatory
approach to social work through the implementation of progressive practice. Adams
(1998) even suggests that real achievement of “quality social work” necessitates an
authentic process of empowering service users, their carers and practitioners.

It is apparent that the current discussions in the West have already gone beyond
the question on the dualism of social work. That is to say, whether social work
should aim more at social change in community work practice or aim more at
individual change in clinical approach is no longer the center of concern. Instead, a
holistic practice regardless of clients’ social status, the “anti-oppressive” practice
emphasizing on empowerment in clients’ participation has become a wave of new
practice paradigm countering the traditional concept of social work with the
dualism of its practice orientation and role of practitioners. Based on the
fundamental concern of social work in social justice and equality for the well being
of individuals, groups and communities, this “anti-oppressive” practice stresses on
progressive approach that seeks changes in both individual level and societal level.

In Dominelli’s (1993) sense, it is a practice of structuring relationships between individuals in order to empower clients by reducing the negative effects of hierarchy in their immediate interaction and the work they do together. For the professionals’ engagement, Dominelli points out that this “anti-oppressive” practice requires “a redefinition of professionalism, with expertise being rooted in more power-sharing egalitarian directions and making explicit the value system to which the professional subscribes” (1998, p.8). In other words, this practice challenges traditional views of professionalism in which a neutral expert is required to exercise power over the “client”.

The mainstream of professional development in Hong Kong, however, is found to be far from this ideal paradigm of social work. The recent establishment of the profession, as being challenged, will only continue to consolidate the ascribed power relations, hierarchy and status quo within the field of practice, within worker-client relationships and within the social relations in society at large. Further, there seems to be no evidence that the Board has paid effort on public work in advancing social work practice for the empowerment of clients or more ideally for the empowerment of practitioners.

In conclusion, I have to say, yes, in the situation of Hong Kong, many people
may believe that professionalization is an inevitable trend of development in social work or even in all kinds of occupation in this modern era. Yet, the study suggests that the present trend of professional development in social work is neither the only way nor an appropriate way for the real concern of quality service for clients' benefit. It is not a process with the participation of general social work clients and practitioners, but only the professional “elite”. The worst is that as a matter of fact, the value and mission of community work, or more accurately, social work as a whole is incompatible with the existing orientation of professionalization. This has led to the elimination of the comparatively more “radical” working approach in community work and furthermore the service cut of NLCDP in this process of professional development, which probably results in depriving all those clients who are supposed to be benefited from the services.

IV. Implications for Community Work

As a matter of fact, some respondents including the Group members see that community work has come to its “evening” before the establishment of the registration system. Yes, this has been said since the end of 80s and now a decade has gone. Yet, in my observation, this may be just a stage of development. When examining its development from the 70s, it can be seen that community work has
experienced its ups and downs all through these decades. The “radical” practices being critically commented started in early 70s. Due to the increasing subvention on community work project by the Government, the expansion of community work was in its bloom in the early 80s. Following the introduction of the electoral politic, community organizing was said to be absorbed into the work of elected councilors and was therefore believed to be experiencing its low tide. Being confronted by the lack of priority area for service absorption and the Government’s pending cutback of the service, community work was said to have come to its evening in the late 80s. Starting from the early 90s, “radical” actions came alive and brought along heated disputes on the role of social worker in “radical” practice and on the role of community work in social work and in society at large. After all, there came the service cutback of NLCDP through the way of natural dissolution of the existing projects. The suspension of the TWESSC brought an end to the “radical” practice in community work. Finally the introduction of the INP, a three-year tentative project of a so-called new mode of community work is believed to bring the Government subvented NLCDP into history.

As a stage of development, community work in the Western countries has more or less experienced similar situations but in a longer history and finally was squeezed out of the mainstream of social work service. Of course, it got to find
another way out. If the existence of the issues of the 70s was due to the constrains at the time before and those of the 90s due to the constrains in the end of 80s, probably another high tide of community work is coming in the future, but may be not under the Government subvention.

Of course, there are various reasons for the impediments on the development of community work. First, the attitude of the Government is very conservative. Second, there is the general “de-politicized” philosophy or quality in social workers as well as social work agencies. Third, the lack of awareness on “civil right” is prevalent among the public, especially those being oppressed. This is believed to partly come from the quality of Chinese and partly from the legacy of the colonial government. Fourth, unlike the Western countries, in Hong Kong, it lacks funding available for community work other than the Government resource.

Yes, people usually prefer negotiation to activism as Beder (1992) also suggested, but she still see nothing wrong with being confrontational and believes that it is often the best way to proceed. Therefore, although the situation as such in Hong Kong may easily bring pessimistic thoughts, there are still reasons to see the chance for “radical” actions in community work. As we can see, increasing economic difficulties bring along more oppression and inequalities, larger gap between the rich and the poor. More and more conflicts of interest have been
generated as mentioned in Section II. Insecurity grows among grassroots people may result in more and more people being aware of the need to stand together for their right to participate in policy making. As the need for organizing is more and more apparent, organizers will search for other funding to support organizing work. Being excluded in social work, as Flora said, is not a bad thing. She can work outside the system with other funding. Although they will probably keep on being confronted by the lack of resource, their work will not be constricted by the Government. There are in fact numerous examples of successful development of community work outside the official structure. One of them worth citing as reference for Hong Kong is the “community management” in many small community organizations in Australia, which is considered as an alternative form of human service management achieving community development aims of participation and empowerment (Roberts and Pietsch 1996).

For the development of social work as a whole, although it is not the key concern in this study, there is something generated in the process of the study worth noting. Beside community work, social work in fact, is also in a state of flux in recent years. Its development is confronted in various aspects. There are the new subvention model and managerial mode imposed by the Government, new relationship with the Government, increasing demand for quality service assurance
and service restructure and integration, Government’s budget cut for welfare service
leading to the pay cut of social workers. All these issues have come together at once
almost make the whole social work field get stuck. It seems that the field is facing a
tremendous crisis that it has never had. It is really rare to have over two thousands
social workers and service recipients to come out and protest as in the recent action
against the service budget cut underneath the new subvention mode.

Yes, it is a huge crisis, but it may also mean a good chance to get change. As
some respondents of the representative organizations said, social workers had
experienced a long period of secure and stable circumstance in the field that make
them insulated from reflection and change. Moreover, generally speaking,
community workers are comparatively more ready for change and more ready to
reflect on and challenge the establishment because they are often in a state of crisis
in the sense of service cutback. So it is believed that the field has got a very good
opportunity now to gather collective effort for change and improvement. At the
same time, due to the service cutback in these years, social workers may probably
have been aware that there will not be a way out for social work development if
they continue to rely only on the Government for funding.
V. Conclusion and Implications for Future Research

The studies of the professions in the general “power approach” prevailing from the late 60s in the West have considered the professional development of an occupation as a power struggle among occupations to achieve privileged market position in society. Emphases have been paid on the exploration of the strategies employed and the power and privileges attained in the process. Yet, the mainstream discussions concerning the local professional development of social work within these few decades has largely ignored the perspective of the “power approach”. They still rest on the functionalist views with emphasis on the “traits model”, which has been challenged since the late 60s for the problem of ignoring the power issues in the process occupations striving for professional achievement. In this local study of social work professionalization, therefore, the ideas of the “power approach” and the concept of “professional project” are employed to analyze its impact on community work development. However, this approach falls short of recognizing the various facets of the “professional ideals” and ignores the differences, conflicts and dynamics among different sectors within a single profession while having its significance on the explanation of certain power issues existed in the professional development. The thesis argues that this local social work “profession” does not exist in a unified entity as perceived in the “power approach”, working in a
collective "project" for the professional privileges. Instead, there are splits among practitioners in different positions and service settings as these different practitioners espouse different or conflicting ideas for professional development.

By starting the study on revealing the heated disputes on the recent professional establishment and going through the historical development of social work in relation to community work, it can be concluded that the present trend of professional development is incompatible with the value orientation of community work or even social work itself. In this "professional project", the professional ideals of certain practitioners have been ignored and the benefits of the practitioners and even the clients have been sacrificed by the dominant professional "elite".

When exploring the controversial issues in the field of community work in the 90s as reference with supplement on the understanding of the Government's role, it can be seen that in the process of professionalization, community work has been marginalized and even gradually eliminated from the field of social work. This results in depriving its service recipients, which are supposed to be benefited from the services.

Coming to the end of this report, it is time to give a brief account on the limitations of the project and some implications that I have sorted for future research. For the specific concern on the development of community work in a
research as such, the study inevitably has to narrow down its focus to a comparatively micro level of analysis aiming at the actors of the “profession” with more emphasis on the area of community work. This may result in failing to address the problem in a more comprehensive picture in the whole occupation and ignore the problems and influences encountered by other social work settings in the process of development.

As suggested by a respondent in the interview, in these few decades, social work development in Hong Kong has gone through a process of institutionalization rather than professionalization. He sees that this institutionalization has made social work gradually develop into a standardized service provision institution significant to people in need in society. However, at the same time, he criticized that social work has become fragmented with the orientation in fulfilling the expansion of social service agencies rather than the real need of the clients. Therefore, it would also be significant to study its professional development in the sense of institutionalization. As this research boundary needs to be limited and narrowed down on the area of community work, there is no way for the study to touch on this area of discussion. This is also my regret and I truly believe that this area of study can be more beneficial to the field of practice as well as its clients once genuine discussions are facilitated.
On a comparatively macro level, besides the clients, the state and the profession itself, training institution as Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist (1990) suggest, is also one of the actors contributing to the “professional project”. This training institution and the aspect of knowledge concerning the credential system of the “profession” are also believed to be significant for the exclusion of practitioners and the monopolization of practice although they have not been touched on in this study. In another dimension, this training institution is in fact, one of the influential systems contributing to the construction of the “professional identities”, which seem to vary among different practitioners as the study shows. How the variations come into being in the training process and how this training institution works with the culture of the occupation and social work organization in the influence of the “professional identities” are also believed to be worth exploring.

Moreover, the entire social work “profession” is encountering the coming wave of the quality assurance and managerialism based on the concept of cost effectiveness and the new subvention mode as well as the contracting-out of social work service aiming at welfare cut by the Government. The “profession” at this moment has to face a new system of service accountability and a new relationship with the funder, the Government. How it reacts to the situation is believed to be influential to its future development and probably is the central concern and
discussion within the “profession”. This is also believed to be a critical issue in a
critical moment deserves attention for research study.

Finally, I like to acknowledge that the very first urge for doing this research
stemmed from the intention to facilitate more discussions within the field of social
work on its professional development in relation to community work. It is hoped
that the study will bring some sparks to the silent, passive and fragmented field of
practice and the most important thing is the reflection on how to facilitate social
work development to maximize clients’ participation in different dimensions for
their best interests.
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新：邁向廿一世紀的社區發展工作」》香港：香港社會服務聯會社區發展部

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剪報

HK Standard 27/3/98 Subsidy cut threat over social workers
HK Standard 10/8/98 by Sanna So HKCSS hit for tough guidelines — 100 still unregistered
HK Standard 12/8/98 by Patsy Moy, Social workers shy of new register
HK Standard 12/8/98 by Patsy Moy, Stubborn Winnie the face of social worker rebelliousness.
HK Standard 24/2/99 by Patsy Moy, Prepared to sacrifice job for her principle
HK Standard 24/2/99 Unregistered staff urged to obey controversial law
HK Standard 24/2/99 by Lily Dizon and Patsy Moy, Social worker in court challenge
HK Standard 3/3/99 by Patsy Moy, Social workers rally against registration
HK Standard 13/2/2000 by Patsy Moy, Social worker at risk of arrest in law snub
HK Standard 1/5/99 by Lydia Ho, Requirement on social workers ‘hits Basic Law’
SCMP12/1/95
SCMP16/9/98 by Cynthia Wan, Social worker to fight dismissal
SCMP17/9/98 by Cynthia Wan, Staff have more time to register
SCMP15/9/99 by Angel Lau, Social work rules ‘break Basic Law’

信報 21/12/94 周永新，抗爭請願不能自無法紀。
星島日報 3/4/95 強制社工註冊草案月內完成。
星島日報 31/5/95 行局同意強迫社工註冊 未受專業訓練者被摒棄

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## Appendix I

### Table of some related Critical Issues in chronological order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Date</th>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Issue of the Yan-Yi Tsuen (仁義村事件)</td>
<td>Com. Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Provision of Government subvention NLCDP service started</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Issue of the “Boat Dwellers”</td>
<td>Com. Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>“Joint working group” on Social Welfare Personnel Registration set up by the 3 representative organizations</td>
<td>Profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Establishment of Voluntary Registration System</td>
<td>Profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Issue of the “Well-off Tenants”</td>
<td>Com. Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-96</td>
<td>1. Issue of the “Rooftop Dwellers”</td>
<td>Com. Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Joint committee established by HKCSS, HKSWGU and HKSWA for the evaluation of com. work intervention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Society for the Community Organization terminated the service for the Mong Kok rooftop dwellers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Mr. Hui proposed a private bill for Social Workers Registration.</td>
<td>Profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>The Government proposed a public bill for Social Workers Registration.</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1997</td>
<td>Suspension of Tsuen Wan Ecumenical Social Service Center</td>
<td>Com. Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 June 1997</td>
<td>1. Social Workers Registration Ordinance passed in Legislative Council</td>
<td>Profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Provisional Social Workers Registration Board set up by the Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Compulsory Registration System started</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 1997</td>
<td>JACPDSW started to concern about the establishment of SWRB.</td>
<td>Com. Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1998</td>
<td>Establishment of Social Workers Registration Board</td>
<td>Profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 1998</td>
<td>The Government terminated 2 pioneer community work projects in old urban area.</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Sept 1998</td>
<td>A social worker was dismissed by an NGO for the reason that she refused to register.</td>
<td>Com.Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviation and Terms

ASWO – Assistant Social Work Officer.
CC – Community Center
Disciplinary Board – composed of 55 members including ASWO grade and SWA grade social workers and non social workers appointed by SWRB for the investigation and judgement of complained cases.
HKCSS – Hong Kong Council of Social Service, an NGO representative, established in 1947 for the coordination of social service provision by most of the NGO all over Hong Kong social service.
HKSWA – Hong Kong Social Workers’ Association established in 1947.
HKSWGU – Hong Kong Social Workers’ General Union, established right after the issue of the “Boat Dwellers” in order to work for the protection of social service workers.
JACPDSW – A concern group called Joint Association Concerning the Professional Development of Social Work formed in mid 1997.
Legco – Legislative Council
NGO – Non-Government Organizations / agencies, as a partner of the SWD in providing all subvented social services other than the government provision.
NLCDP – Neighborhood Level Community Development Project, a kind of community service subvented by the Government starting from 1978 for the purpose of filling service gap in some deprived or transient areas.
SoCO – Society for the Community Organization, an NGO came into being in the 70s under foreign funding, and well known for its “radical practice” in working with minority groups to fight for their welfare.
SSWA – Senior Social Work Assistant
SWA – Social Work Assistant
SWAB of HKCCSA – Social Work Assistant Branch of the Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants’ Association
Appendix II

SWD – Social Welfare Department of the Government, in charge of social service provision in Hong Kong.


SWRB – Social Workers Registration Board established in Jan 1998.

SWRO – Social Worker Registration Ordinance passed in the Legislative Council on the 6 June 1997.

THA – Temporary Housing Area

TWESSC – Tsuen Wan Ecumenical Social Service Center, also an NGO founded by church groups with foreign funding in 1973 and aimed at organizing grassroots people.
Appendix III

不同訪問對象組別的訪問重點

第一組  關注社工專業發展聯席成員
（一）你心目中的社區工作的本質及其價值是甚麼？
（二）你對現時社會工作專業發展的模式有何看法？
（三）你認爲現時社會專業發展對社區工作的發展會帶來甚麼影響？
（四）你認爲九十年代社區工作行內發生具爭議性的事件如「富戶」、「天台屋」、「合一解散」等事件與社會工作專業化的關係是怎樣的？
（五）你認爲這些爭議性事件及社會工作專業化對社會服務受眾會帶來甚麼影響？
（六）你參與組織的目的及期望是怎樣的？

第二組  社工界代表組織：註冊局、社聯、社總及社協的成員
（一）你所知道的整個社工界（專業化）發展的背景歷史是怎樣的？
（二）對於社工這行業及其發展，你的信念及價值取向是怎樣的？
（三）你認為現時的社工專業发展方向對社區工作及對社會工作本身有何影響？
（四）你對過去社區工作行內所發生具爭議性的事件及現時反對強迫註冊制度的鼓勵運動有甚麼看法？
（五）你認為現時的註冊制度及專業發展方向怎樣影響社工及其服務受眾？
（六）你對專業發展的理想取向及所預期的未來發展是怎樣的？

第三組  在自願註冊年代沒有註冊的不同服務類別社工
（一）你對現時註冊制度的看法是怎樣的？
（二）你認為這註冊制度對社工及服務受眾的意義是甚麼？
（三）你對以往的自願註冊制度及現時強制性註冊制度的態度是怎樣的？
（四）你認為社工專業發展對社區工作會帶來甚麼影響？
（五）你對過去社區工作行內所發生具爭議性的事件如「富戶」、「天台屋」、「合一解散」等事件的看法是怎樣的？
（六）你做社工的信念與價值取向是怎樣的？
（七）你對社工專業發展的信念與價值取向又是怎樣的？
（八）你對現時社工界的發展方向有何看法？

第四組  那些具爭議性事件的參與者／服務受眾及其他的社區工作服務受眾
（一）你過去所接觸的社區服務是怎樣的？
（二）在你的理解中，你與那些社區工作者的關係是怎樣的？
（三）你對過去社區工作行內所發生具爭議性的事件如「富戶」、「天台屋」、「合一解散」等事件的看法是怎樣的？
（四）你是否知道你所參與的這些事件帶來了甚麼影響？
（五）你覺得社會工作應否搞專業化？
（六）你覺得社會工作應該是怎樣的一個行業或專業？
（七）你對現時的社工註冊制度知道有幾多？
（八）你覺得現時這註冊制度能否保障社工的服務質素以致保障你的利益？
（九）你認為這註冊制度是否社工專業發展的一個適當方式？原因？

備註：
除以上列出的訪問重點外，每位被訪者均會被提問其個人資料如姓名、工作經驗、
與訪問題目相關的角色身份和經驗並是否願意被公開其身份在這研究報告中。
社會工作者註冊局
香港灣仔皇后大道東一九七三至二二一號
明德大廈九二八室
電話 Tel. No. : 2892 5614 2892 5620 2892 5269

標號 Ref. No. : SWD 7/15/97

請注意
已接獲註冊批准信的社工須立刻用入數紙
繳交註冊費，否則不能夠在即將舉行的註
c冊局成員選舉中投票。

社會工作者註冊條例（第 505 章）

根據《社會工作者註冊條例》（以下簡稱《條例》）於一九九七年六月六日生效。《
社會工作者註冊條例》及《社會工作者註冊局》亦於同日開始運作，並於一九九
七年七月十八日發信邀請所有受條例影響的同工申請註冊成為註冊社會工作者。

截至一九九七年十一月十日，已提交註冊申請的人數約為 4 370 名；其中約有
3 640 宗申請是於一九九七年九月三十日或以前提交，這 3 600 多名申請人於完成所有
註冊手續後，將有資格於十二月舉行的註冊局成員選舉中參選及/或投票選出 8 名註冊
社會工作者成為註冊局成員。註冊局的成員共有 15 名：8 名註冊社會工作者成員由選
舉產生；6 名成員為行政長官委任，以及 1 名成員為社會福利署署長。

衛生福利局局長第一次於意報刊登公告說明任何註冊社會工作者已妥為選出
成為註冊局成員的日期訂為「有關日期」。而「有關日期」將於註冊局選舉後，即一九
九八年一月中訂出。

根據《條例》第 34(1) 條的規定，由有關日期起，任何不是名列註冊紀錄冊的
人無權使用以下名銜：
(a) “註冊社會工作者”或“registered social worker”的稱謂；
(b) “R.S.W.” 的英文縮寫；或
(c) “社會工作”或“social work”或“社會工作者”或“社工”或“social
worker”的稱謂。

不論是否連同任何其他稱謂或任何英文縮寫使用或以其他方式使用，以描述其專業為社
會工作專業或描述其社會工作專業資格，否則便會觸犯《條例》的規定，如被定罪最高
可被罰款 50 000 元。

如你仍未提交註冊申請，請盡速填妥申請表格並連同有關文件，於一九九七
年九月十五日或以前，郵寄或遞交註冊局。如你的申請在十二月十五日以後遞交註
冊局，你的註冊申請手續不一定能夠在「有關日期」前完成。另外如你於「有關日期」
或於「有關日期」前仍未向註冊局申請註冊，註冊局將會根據《條例》所賦予的權力考慮你採取行動。

如對本函內容或註冊申請手續有任何疑問，歡迎致電與本人（電話： 2892
5269）或高倩芬女士（電話： 2892 5620）聯絡。

社會工作者註冊局註冊主任李秀煥
一九九七年十一月二十七日
香港社會工作人員協會
福利事件關注委員會 舉辦

「實踐中的困局 — 社工保密原則的反思」研討會

目的：
1. 探討在刑事罪案中，社工角色與公民責任的衝突；
2. 了解社工工作守則如何保障工作員及服務對象應有的權益；
3. 從具體案例中，探索社工如何面對及處理工作守則與公民責任的矛盾。

日期：1998年12月19日（星期六）
時間：上午十時至中午十二時
地點：香港灣仔洛克道3號香港小童群益會總部大廈禮堂

程序：

10:00 - 10:10 簡介

10:10 - 10:30 公民責任凌駕社工工作守則 — 好市民還是好社工？
林子健律師（柯氏陳律師事務所合夥人）

10:30 - 10:50 面對刑事罪行時工作守則的地位 —
保障社工、服務對象還是大眾市民？
羅志光議員（香港大學社會工作及社會行政系副教授）

10:50 - 11:10 實戰中的反思 — 社工工作守則與公民責任的矛盾
陳紹勤先生（循道衛理楊震社會服務處部門主任）

11:10 - 12:00 公開討論
香港社會工作人員協會
福利事件關注委員會 舉辦

「實踐中的困局 — 社工保密原則的反思」研討會

在實際的過程中，社工與服務對象的關係是重要的— 環，若服務對象向社工透露他曾觸及刑事罪行，又或在探案中，是否是堅守社工保密原則？若警方向法庭申請搜查令，要求社工單位提供服務對象有關資料，社工又應如何對待？社工工作守則又有何法律地位，保障社工、服務對象以及案主利害呢？法律對案主的要求，以及社工工作守則對社工的要求是否出現矛盾？當中是否有灰色地帶需要進一步探討及尋求解決方法呢？

目的：
1. 探討社工在刑事案中，社工角色與公民責任的衝突
2. 了解社工工作守則如何保障社工及服務對象應有的權益
3. 從具體案例中，探索社工如何面對及處理工作守則與公民責任的矛盾

形式：講座、案例分享及公開討論

講者：
林子錦律師（伍氏陳律師事務所合夥人）
公民責任凌駕社工工作守則 — 好市民還是好社工？

羅致光議員（香港大學社會工作及社會行政系副教授）
面對刑事罪行時工作守則的地位 — 保障社工、服務對象還是大眾利害？

陳錦勤先生（循道衛理楊其樂社會服務處部門主任）
實踐中的反思 — 社工工作守則與公民責任的矛盾

活動編號：CW1981219S
日期：1998年12月19日（星期六）
時間：上午十時至中午十二時
地點：香港灣仔老撾道3號香港小童群益會總部位大廈607A室
人數：70人（先到先得，本會只通知不成功之申請者）
對象：社工及社會工作系學生
言語：廣東話
費用：全免
截止報名：1998年12月10日（星期四）
報名辦法：填寫報名表（Course Enrolment Form）傳真回2528 0068 或 寄回香港灣仔軒尼詩道15號領事
公署社會服務大廈703室（信封上請註明活動編號）
查詢：報名手續 — 柳小姐 2528 1802，研討會內容 — 陳錦勤 9472 3252

Course Enrolment Form

For office use only  Participant no.

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For student only: Name of School: Program (e.g. FT-DSW): Year: | For HK Social Workers Assn. Member Only: Membership no. & HKID: }
Appendix VI
Elaborated Version of the Code of Ethics for Social Workers in Hong Kong

Hong Kong Social Welfare Personnel Registration Council
Code of Ethics for Social Workers in Hong Kong

Preamble

This document serves as a guide to the everyday conduct of the members of the Hong Kong Social Welfare Personnel Registration Council and as a basis for adjudication when the conduct of the social welfare personnel is alleged to deviate from the standards expressed or implied in this document. It represents standards of ethical behaviour for members in professional relationships with clients, with colleagues, with agency, with profession, and with society as a whole. It is applied to the extent that individual conduct is associated with an individual’s status as a social worker.

Members of the Council are required to cooperate in the implementation of this code and abide by any disciplinary rulings based on it. Members also take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct the unethical conduct of colleagues. Members should also be ready to defend and assist colleagues unjustly charged with unethical conduct. Supervisors should take adequate measure to ensure welfare workers under supervision to learn and abide by the Code of Ethics.

Basic Values and Beliefs

1) The social worker respects the unique value and dignity of every human being irrespective of one’s origin, ethnicity, sex, age, beliefs, mental and physical abilities, social and economic status or contribution to society.

2) The social worker believes that individuals have the potential to develop and accepts a responsibility to encourage and facilitate the self-realization of individuals with due regard to the interest of others.

3) The social worker accepts a responsibility to advance the cause of human rights and social justice.

4) The social worker believes that each society, regardless of its form, should function to provide maximum benefits to its members.

5) The social worker accepts a responsibility to devote professional knowledge and skills to the betterment of individuals and society, with the aim to empower people to act on their own behalf as far as possible.

Principles of Practice

Related to Personal Conduct

1) The social worker should strive for the enhancement of human well-being and the relief or prevention of hardship and suffering.

Elaborated Version

a. The social worker has the responsibility to set work goal or job priorities to assist individuals, groups, communities and societies in their development and in their resolution of personal-societal conflicts and related consequences. The aim of such resolution is to empower people to act on their own behalf.

b. The social worker should act to prevent practices that are inhumane or discriminatory against any person or group of persons and that will deny any person or group of persons the right to access to services.
2) The social worker should maintain honesty, integrity and responsibility in professional practice.

*Elaborated Version*

a. The social worker should inform concerned parties all the necessary details of the situation without withholding, falsifying important information or selectively presenting information so as to purposefully deceive or mislead the parties concerned to make uninformed decisions.

b. In case of conflict of interest or conflict of roles, the social worker should withdraw from the professional situation or remove the source of conflict before continuing his/her involvement in the professional engagement.

c. In case of differences of opinions within the professional context, the social worker should contain any debate within the facts and views around the issue, without using personal attack.

d. A social work professional should maintain appropriate personal integrity within reasonable limits. For example, refraining from using office facilities for personal affairs during office hours except when necessary.

e. A social worker should not intentionally confuse others his/her personal statements and actions as representing an agency or organisation. (Please refer to Item 3 of Related to Agency)

3) The social worker should strive to be proficient in professional practice and to act in accordance with professional integrity.

*Elaborated Version*

a. A social worker should not undertake or continue the provision of any service if he/she deems him/herself is unable or is not competent enough to carry out the job expeditiously. (Please refer to Item 1.b. of Related to Clients)

b. It is the professional integrity of a social worker in not misrepresenting his/her professional status, qualification and competence. (Please refer to Item 3 of Related to Profession)

**Related to Clients**

1) The social worker has a primary responsibility to the clients.

*Elaborated Version*

a. The social worker should serve clients with devotion, commitment, determination, and the best use of professional skill and competence.

i. A social worker should put the interests of the client over the interest of the agency and the profession.

ii. A social worker should not place his/her own personal interest before the welfare of his/her clients.

b. The social worker should provide services to their clients within their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, or appropriate professional experience.

i. A social worker should not use the clients in experimenting new techniques and methods without full confidence and without prior careful preparation. If the worker wished to do so, he/she should duly inform the clients and obtain consent from the clients, and due consultation with knowledgeable resource persons.

ii. A social worker should make appropriate referral if client's problem is out of the scope of worker's knowledge or agency's resource.
Appendix VI
Elaborated Version of the
Code of Ethics for Social Workers in Hong Kong

iii. A social worker should refrain from undertaking professional activities with clients when the social worker knows that his/her personal problems and value conflicts are likely to lead to inadequate service or harm to the clients.

c. The social worker should avoid relationships and/or commitments that may conflict with the interests of clients. For example, a social worker should not take up public office in the same district he/she is working.

d. The social worker should not change post, job, or terminate service suddenly without proper arrangement in the preparation of the clients and hand-over of the work to another colleague, except under unusual circumstances, giving careful consideration to all factors in the situation and taking care to minimize possible adverse effects.

e. The social worker should make every effort to foster maximum self-determination and autonomy on the part of clients, and in cases of small children or people with mental deficiency, a social worker should as far as appropriate respect their right and acknowledge their ability in making choices related to their own welfare.

f. The social worker should try his/her very best to protect the civil or legal rights of clients.

g. The social worker should protect clients who might inflict serious danger or harm to his/her own life.

2) The social worker acknowledges a responsibility to inform the clients of their rights and help them to obtain appropriate services. Clients should also be informed of, as far as possible, obligations and possible consequences associated with services provided to them.

*Elaborated Version*

a. The social worker should apprise clients of their risks, rights, opportunities, and obligations associated with the social service delivered to them at the initial stage as far as possible and in a language and manner which are appropriate to clients' background and ability.

i. A social worker should not knowingly withhold information or give false information so that the client is deprived of his/her fair share of benefits which s/he is entitled to or making a major decision without being aware of the full picture of the situation.

b. The social worker should duly inform clients his/her name, position, roles, and professional training.

c. The social worker should inform clients the channels for them to make complaints against any mal-practice of worker. For example, a social worker should never deter a client from lodging a complaint with the agency or other authorities against him/her.

3) The social worker should inform clients fully, as far as possible, about the limits of confidentiality in a given situation, the purpose for which information is obtained, and how it may be used. In publication of case material, the social worker should make the necessary and responsible efforts to remove all identification information and to seek consent, as far as possible, from the client and the employing agency.

*Elaborated Version*

a. Social Workers' Right of Access to Information

A social worker employed in a particular social welfare agency is an agent of the agency to provide services to clients. Unless the social worker is assigned to handle a particular case or to assist (including supervising) other colleagues to handle that particular case, the social worker has no right of access to that case file.

b. Sharing of Information Among Fellow-professionals within the Same Agency

Sharing of information with other colleagues should be purposeful, such as in order to obtain advice from colleagues about other case. Gossiping about clients with colleagues is unethical and violates
the principle of confidentiality. However, ventilation is different from gossip as ventilation is positive in the sense of seeking emotional support. In case conferences within agency, information shared should be purposeful and relevant for professional exchange.

c. Sharing of Information with Other Non-professional in the Same Agency

When it is necessary for other non-professional (e.g. typist) to have access to such confidential information, the social worker should take all reasonable steps to inform them about the need of confidentiality of the information they may consequentialy acquire. Individual social worker should be more alert to remind co-operating colleagues against the possibility of releasing confidential information.

d. Professional Exchange with Other Colleagues in the Social Work field (in Occasions where no Printed Material is provided or no Press is Present)

All identifiable information of a client (e.g. name, address, name of school or work place etc.) should not be provided in any form of communication except for transferring cases or case referrals.

e. Exchange with People outside the Agency in Printed Form or with the Presence of Press

Informed consent has to be obtained from the clients or their guardians and the employing agency. The social worker should make reasonable efforts to remove any relevant information contained in the case material that may reveal the identity of the client to someone who is casually related to the client, e.g. neighbours, workmates, school teachers, etc. If personal information of a client should be disclosed in form of written material, the worker should obtain the client’s consent and assess whether the client might have the ability to estimate the consequences of making such a decision.

Social worker can have a right to disclose details of social work cases in newspaper column if it is for professional purposes.

f. Limits of Confidentiality

In circumstances where there is sufficient evidence to raise serious concern about the safety or interest of clients or of others who may be affected by the client’s behavior, the social worker should take such steps as are judged necessary to inform appropriate third parties even without the prior consent of the clients. Whether the social worker should alert the client about breaking the limits of confidentiality depends on the judgment of any reasonable person that the serious concern under consideration may exacerbate or transform into something even worse.

The limits of confidentiality should be extended so far as not contravening the principles of Privacy Ordinance and Human Rights Bill. For example, if a social work student wished to defer his/her study due to family problem, there was no necessity to disclose details of the student’s problem to make a professional judgment for deferment.

g. Obtaining Information from the Client’s Acquaintance

Seeking information from other people who know the client may reveal that the client is currently receiving service from the social worker. When such possibility is obvious, the social worker should obtain the informed consent of the client before making such contacts. If a person became a client of a worker, the worker should obtain a prior consent from the person if the worker wished to know any information about the person. However, if the person was not a client of the worker, causal conversation about that person with another should not involve seeking the person’s consent. A worker should be aware of the necessity to have client information shared among colleagues without seeking client’s consent under some exceptional situations, e.g. special school setting, hospital setting.
h. Client’s Access to Information

The clients or their legal guardians have full right to know what kinds of information are being stored in their own case files, to access the information that is provided by the clients themselves or consequential to the information provided by the clients, e.g. opinions of the social worker, diagnosis, treatment plan, etc. Information obtained from other sources or their consequentialis should also be accessible to the client and consent of the client has to be sought before the relevant contacts are made (ref. the point on “obtaining information from the client’s acquaintance”), except when the client has given such right prior to the social workers’ action to obtain such information. The clients’ or their legal guardians’ access to such information may only be limited by similar concerns discussed with respect to the “limits of confidentiality”.

4) Social worker should not abuse the worker-client relationship in the pursuance of personal interests.

**Elaborated Version**

a. The social worker should terminate service to clients, and professional relationships with them, when such service and relationships are no longer required or no longer serve the client’s needs or interest. That is, a social worker should not prolong the helping process in order to satisfy the interests of the worker and those of other parties.

b. The social worker should not exploit professional relationship for personal and monetary gain.

c. The social worker should not use the helping relationship to pursue political interest.

i. A social worker should not influence clients to vote for him/herself or for a particular candidate/political party for his/her own political interest.

ii. A social worker should not use his/her relationship with the clients in enlisting their help as volunteers in political election campaigns for him/herself or for his/her own political affiliation/part.

d. The social worker should consider to withdraw from the situation to protect client’s benefit and to arrange alternative service if there is conflict of interest when the worker involves in the case.

i. A social worker should transfer the client to another worker when he/she finds there are signs of counter-transference.

ii. A social worker should avoid to provide service to clients who are with prior personal relationship.

5) The social worker should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities with clients.

**Elaborated Version**

a. Social workers should not involve in any sexual activities with clients even though clients agreed to do so.

b. Dating clients could not be classified as sexual activities, but it would have abused, Item 4 of the [Related to Clients], the worker-client relationship in the pursuance of personal interest.

6) If and when fee for service is required, the social worker should ensure that the fee is fair, reasonable and commensurate with the client’s ability to pay.

**Elaborated Version**

a. The “fairness principle refers to clear fee charging rules and procedure instead of basing on idiosyncratic considerations such as a worth-while case or the client being an acquaintance of the social worker’s good friend, etc.
b. The "Reasonable" principle refers to the rationales basing on which fee charging rules and procedure are designed. The rationales may refer to the fees charged by similar organizations, related professions, or comparable costs. Whether a particular fee level is reasonable or not is not only based on the actual amount of money charged but on the rationales behind.

c. "Commensurability" to the client's ability to pay refers to the relative magnitude of fees charge and disposable income of the clients. It would be difficult to spell out the maximum or minimum ratio. However, the hourly rate or its equivalent should by no way exceed the daily wages of the client or that of the client's main financial provider (e.g. parent or spouse). When alternative service is not available, the client should not be refused services because of their inability to pay.

Related to Colleagues

1) The social worker should pay due respect to the differences of opinion and practice of colleagues, other professionals and volunteers. Any criticism should be expressed and conflicts resolved through appropriate channels in a responsible manner.

Elaborated Version

a. Social worker should seek to have a clear understanding of the expertise and orientation in collaborating with colleagues, other professionals and volunteers.

b. Social worker should respect the philosophy, objectives and obligations of agencies to which colleagues, other professionals and volunteers are associated with.

c. In case of differences in opinions with colleagues, other professionals and volunteers, social worker should share his/her views openly with the individual, organisation(s) concerned, and other relevant parties.

d. No personal attack should be made against colleagues, other professionals, and volunteers. Criticism should be based on actual event and action.

2) The social worker should co-operate as far as possible with colleagues to promote professional interest and concerns and to enhance service effectiveness.

Elaborated Version

a. Social worker should be readily share knowledge, skills, and experience with colleagues with the objective of enhancing professional interests, concerns, and service effectiveness.

3) The social worker should bring any violation of the Code of Ethics to the attention of appropriate bodies and should be ready to defend colleagues against unjust accusations.

Elaborated Version

a. Social worker should not knowingly withhold information concerning malpractice by colleagues when called upon to give information in any inquiry on malpractice. Social worker should report facts as far as known and should not let personal feelings or interest interfere with the testimony.

4) The social worker should not solicit the clients of colleagues.

Elaborated Version

a. Social worker should not assume professional responsibility for clients of a colleague within the same agency without through the proper channel of work assignment, or should not assume professional responsibility for clients of another agency or a colleague without via proper transferral procedures from that agency or colleague.

b. In case of a client of another agency or a colleague of the same agency seeking the service of a social worker, the latter should communicate with the serving worker of the client to clarify respective responsibility and scope of service.
c. Social worker, if not involved in serving a client or being asked for a second opinion, should not deliberately get information about the client's background and service rendered.

d. Social worker should not discuss the performance of and service rendered by a colleague with the client(s) of that colleague.

5) For joint practice, confidential communication shared by co-workers should not be conveyed to clients without explicit permission from the authors of such communications.

Related to Agency
1) The social worker should be responsible to the employing agency for the efficient and effective performance of professional duties.

Elaborated Version
a. The social worker should, based on needs assessment, formulate and document appropriate intervention plan with the client, and the plan not only guides the service operations but also serves as a basis for evaluating the goal attainment.

b. The social worker should evaluate one's work and duties within fixed intervals.

c. The social worker should provide and keep accurate and updated records and reports of service activities and progress of the client, which could be in written or other forms such as video-tapes or computer discs, as required by the employing agency.

d. The social worker should consult supervisor not only in case of doubt, but also keep the supervisor informed of the progress of one's work.

e. The supervisor of the social worker should assume the professional responsibility to review, monitor, and assist the social worker in providing quality service.

f. The social worker should seek professional consultation whenever necessary.

2) The social worker should act constructively and responsibly to influence policies, procedures, and practice of the employing agency in order to obtain the best possible standards of service.

Elaborated Version
a. The social worker should be familiar with the aims and objectives, policies, procedures, guidelines and memoranda issued by the employing agency.

b. The social worker should give constructive comments, feedback and suggestions to the employing agency for upholding social work values and clients rights.

c. The social worker should alert employing agencies of any possible violation of the professional code of practice and related legislation.

d. Where policies, procedures, or practice of the employing agency contravene professional standards, the social worker should endeavour to effect change through appropriate channels in a responsible manner.

3) The social worker should make clear in any public statements or in undertaking public activities whether one is acting in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organization.

Elaborated Version
a. In expressing personal views or undertaking action in personal capacity, the social worker should not use the official letter pad with agency chop, or agency logo in the communication.
4) The social worker should not use institutional affiliation to recruit clients for private practice without the consent of the institution.

Related to Profession
1) The social worker should uphold the values and ethics, and advance the knowledge of the profession.

Elaborated Version
a. Social worker should consciously and critically examine the value base and ethical standard of his/her practice to see that they are consistent with that of the profession. In such examination, the social worker should identify and overcome any personal or organisational barriers and seek ways and means to the realisation of social work values and ethics.

b. Social worker should contribute to the generation of knowledge from his/her practice experience through professional exchanges and contributions.

2) The social worker has the responsibility to protect the dignity of the profession against unjustified criticism. The social worker should be responsible to and constructive in criticism of the profession.

Elaborated Version
a. Social worker should refrain from making malicious and ungrounded comments that degrade the profession. They should be prepared to give a clear account of their professional practice including intent, action, and consequence.

b. In making and responding to criticism of the profession, points must be made unambiguously. Arguments should be rigorous, well grounded with evidence and analysis, with intention and suggestions for improvement.

3) The social worker should make no misrepresentation as to professional qualifications, nature of service, method of service or results to be achieved.

Elaborated Version
a. The social worker should give accurate information on his/her own professional qualifications which pertain to those conferred by academic institutions and professional bodies. He/she should readily provide documentary evidence if required.

b. Social worker should refrain from giving any information or comments on his/her own competence and results which have not been accredited or certified by recognised institutions, or properly researched.

c. Social worker should explain clearly and accurately the nature of service and method of service provided.

4) The social worker should accept responsibility for updating his/her professional skills and knowledge.

Elaborated Version
a. The social worker should actively participate in various forms of in-service training and staff development program.

b. The social worker should seek opportunities to enhance his/her professional knowledge and competence through self-study, or structured studies which may lead to the award of professional qualifications.

c. The social worker should take opportunities to contribute their knowledge and skills learnt for the benefits of his/her clients, colleagues and agencies.
5) The social worker should take responsibility to help those who are entering the profession to develop their values, ethics, skills and knowledge."

6) The social worker should assist the profession in making appropriate services available to the general public.

**Elaborated Version**

a. The social worker should take initiative to disseminate information of available services to general public and make suggestions to agencies to overcome geographical, disability and literacy barriers in the dissemination of such information.

b. The social worker should identify changing unmet needs and to develop services to meet them accordingly.

**Related to Society**

1) The social worker has the obligation to bring to the attention of policy makers and the general public the activities of governments, societies or agencies which create, contribute or militate against the relief of hardship and suffering.

**Elaborated Version**

a. The primary task of social worker is to be responsible to clients and uphold the value of social work profession. Therefore, he/she should concern about matters militate against the relief of hardship and suffering, including things such as complicated procedures, delay in work and allocation of resources.

b. Social worker has the obligation to arouse public concern on unfair and unjust social policies and procedures.

c. Actions which can arouse public concern can be many. They include reflecting facts to the organisations and units concerned, issuing feature articles or press releases to the media, organising promotional activities such as signature campaign, petition as well as releasing research data and findings.

2) The social worker should advocate changes in policies and legislation to improve social conditions, to promote social justice and general welfare of the society. One should also contribute to the implementation of policies for human welfare and should not allow one's knowledge, skills or experience to be used to further unjust policies and inhuman practices.

**Elaborated Version**

a. Social worker should participate in the course of formulating and amending policies of the Government and organisations, expressing their views as well as sharing his/her personal and work experience and expertise.

b. As far as time and work arrangement allow, social worker should proactively consider to join committees, executive committees and working groups of the Government and non-governmental organisations when being invited.

c. Social worker should make use of every appropriate channel to protest against unfair and inhuman policies.

2) The social worker should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination and should strive for a more equitable distribution of resources and to ensure that all persons have access to the necessary resources and services.

**Elaborated Version**

a. Social worker should review from time to time his/her personal and agency value as well as the strategies and procedures of existing social services so as to ensure the deprivation of opportunities for those in need is minimised.
b. Social worker should consider, from the perspectives of the needy and the service recipients, how to enhance and improve service provision, allocation of resources and the method of releasing concerned information.

4) The social worker should act to expand choice and create equal opportunity for all, with due regard to the interest of others, especially the disadvantaged.

Elaborated Version
a. Social worker should take appropriate actions to strive for the amendment or abolition of unjust laws and practices which lead to the suppression or exploitation of vulnerable groups as well as to advocate improvement of policies and services concerned.

b. When designing service modes and delivering services, social worker should advocate for the protection and equal opportunities for vulnerable groups and try to facilitate them to have equal access to these information as far as possible.

c. In the course of striving for public interest, social worker should adopt non-violent, peaceful and rational approaches and actions, respecting the basic human rights of the others.

d. In the course of striving for public interest, social worker should consider the interests of different groups. Should there be contradictions, he she should explain clearly the rationales behind the decisions and suggestions made.

5) The social worker should promote conditions that encourage respect for the diversity of cultures in the society.

Elaborated Version
a. Social worker should take an active role in understanding the cultures and characteristics of different groups in community, and to cater for their needs during service delivery.

b. Social worker should provide opportunities, as far as possible, for people of different cultural backgrounds to integrate, interact and communicate.

6) The social worker should encourage informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions.

Elaborated Version
a. In service delivery, social worker should as far as possible help the public to understand their rights and obligations in society, to exert their rights and express their needs and views through organisations and through participation.

b. Social worker should as far as possible provide information to the public to help them to have fair understanding on existing social policies and systems, to enhance improvement on social policies and to express their views through organisations concerned.
DRAFT

Social Workers Registration Board
Interim Code of Practice for Registered Social Workers

Preamble

This document serves as a guide to the everyday conduct of a Registered Social Worker and as a basis for adjudication when the conduct of a social worker is alleged to deviate from the standards expressed or implied in this document. It represents standards of ethical behaviour for a social worker in professional relationships with clients, with colleagues, with agency, with profession, and with society as a whole. It is applied to the extent that individual conduct is associated with an individual’s status as a social worker.

Social workers are required to cooperate in the implementation of this code and abide by any disciplinary rulings based on it. Social workers should also take adequate measures to discourage, prevent, expose, and correct the unethical conduct of colleagues. Social workers should also be ready to defend and assist colleagues unjustly charged with unethical conduct. Social workers should take appropriate and adequate measures to ensure all staff under their supervision and personnel assisting them (including volunteers) to understand and abide by the Code of Practice.

Basic Values and Beliefs

1) The social worker respects the unique value and dignity of every human being irrespective of one’s origin, ethnicity, sex, age, beliefs, mental and physical abilities, social and economic status or contribution to society.

2) The social worker believes that individuals have the potential to develop and accepts a responsibility to encourage and facilitate the self-realization of individuals with due regard to the interest of others.

3) The social worker accepts a responsibility to safeguard the cause of human rights and advance social justice.

4) The social worker believes that each society, regardless of its form, should function to provide maximum benefits to its members.

5) The social worker accepts a responsibility to devote professional knowledge and skills to the betterment of individuals and society, with the aim to empower people to act on their own behalf as far as possible.

6) The social worker recognizes the central importance of human relationships and seeks to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the well being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations and communities.

7) The social worker’s primary goal is to help people in need and to strive to address social problems.
Principles of Practice

Related to Personal Conduct
1) The social worker should strive for the enhancement of human well-being and the relief or prevention of hardship and suffering.

2) The social worker should maintain honesty, integrity and responsibility in professional practice.

3) The social worker should strive to be proficient in professional practice and to act in accordance with professional integrity.

Related to Clients
1) The social worker has a primary responsibility to the clients.

2) The social worker acknowledges a responsibility to inform the clients of their rights and help them to obtain appropriate services. Clients should also be informed of, as far as possible, obligations and possible consequences associated with services provided to them.

3) The social worker should inform clients fully, as far as possible, about the limits of confidentiality in a given situation, the purpose for which information is obtained, and how it may be used. In publication of case material, the social worker should make the necessary and responsible efforts to remove all identification information and to seek consent, as far as possible, from the client and the employing agency.

4) The social worker should not abuse the worker-client relationship in the pursuance of personal interests.

5) The social worker should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities with clients.

6) If and when fee for service is required, the social worker should ensure that the fee is fair, and reasonable, and the clients would not be denied services they need due to financial constraints.

Related to Colleagues
1) The social worker should pay due respect to the differences of opinion and practice of other social workers, other professionals and volunteers. Any criticism should be expressed and conflicts resolved through appropriate channels in a responsible manner.

2) The social worker should co-operate as far as possible with other social workers to promote professional interest and concerns and to enhance service effectiveness.
3) The social worker should bring any violation of the Code of Practice to the attention of appropriate bodies and should be ready to defend other social workers against unjust accusations.

4) The social worker should not solicit the clients of other social workers.

5) For joint practice, confidential communication shared by social workers should not be conveyed to clients without explicit permission from the authors of such communications.

Related to Agency
1) The social worker should be responsible to the employing agency for the efficient and effective performance of professional duties.

2) The social worker should act constructively and responsibly to influence policies, procedures, and practice of the employing agency in order to obtain the best possible standards of service.

3) The social worker should make clear in any public statements or in undertaking public activities whether one is acting in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organization.

4) The social worker should not use institutional affiliation to recruit clients for private practice without the consent of the institution.

Related to Profession
1) The social worker should uphold the values and ethics, and advance the knowledge of the profession.

2) The social worker has the responsibility to protect the dignity of the profession against unjustified criticism. In criticizing the profession, the social worker should do so in a responsible and constructive manner.

3) The social worker should make no misrepresentation as to professional qualifications, nature of service, method of service or results to be achieved.

4) The social worker should accept responsibility for updating his/her professional skills and knowledge.

5) The social worker should take responsibility to help those who are entering the profession to develop their values, ethics, skills and knowledge.

6) The social worker should assist the social work profession in making appropriate services available to the general public.
Related to Society

1) The social worker has the obligation to bring to the attention of policy makers and the general public the activities of governments, societies or agencies which create, contribute or militate against the relief of hardship and suffering.

2) The social worker should advocate changes in policies and legislation to improve social conditions, to promote social justice and general welfare of the society. One should also contribute to the implementation of policies for human welfare and should not allow one's knowledge, skills or experience to be used to further unjust policies and inhuman practices.

3) The social worker should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination and should strive for a more reasonable distribution of resources and to ensure that all persons have equal opportunity to access to the necessary resources and services.

4) The social worker should act to expand choice and create equal opportunity for all, with due regard to the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged.

5) The social worker should promote conditions that encourage respect for the diversity of cultures in the society.

6) The social worker should encourage informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions.

(Remarks: Chinese version prevails English version if there is any discrepancy)

31 March 1998
初稿

社會工作者註冊局

註冊社會工作者(臨時)工作守則

前言

這份文件是註冊社會工作者(以下簡稱社工)日常操守的指引，當社工被指控其操守違反本文件內申明或隱含的守則標準時，本局將以此守則及有關指引作為裁決之依據。這份文件列明社工與服務對象、同工、機構、專業及社會建立專業關係時的道德行為標準。其適用範圍包括社工以社工身份所從事的一切有關活動。

社工有責任遵守這些守則，並遵循依據這些守則而作出之任何紀律判決。社工應該採取有效的措施或行動去抑制、預防、揭露及糾正同工有違反守則之行為。社工亦應盡力維護及協助不公正地指控有違守則的同工。社工應採取適當及足夠的措施去確保其管轄的及協助其工作的所有工作人員(包括義工)了解和遵守這些工作守則。

基本價值觀及信念

(1) 社工尊重每一個個人的獨特價值和尊嚴，並不因任何人的出身、種族、性別、年齡、信仰、智力、體力、社會及經濟地位，或對社會的貢獻不同而有所分別。

(2) 社工相信每一個人都有發展的潛質，並肩負鼓勵及協助個人在個人及他人利益的情況下作自我實踐的責任。

(3) 社工肩負維護人權及促進社會公義的責任。

(4) 社工相信任何形式的社會都應為其成員提供最大的福祉。

(5) 社工應運用本身的專業知識和技能去推動個人和社會的進步，務求令每一個人都能按照自己的意願而行事。

(6) 社工重視人與人之間關係的重要性，並盡力加強人與人之間的溝通，務求促進、維持及提高個人、家庭、社區及機構之間的和諧。

(7) 社工的首要任務為協助有需要的人仕及致力解決社會問題。
工作守則

有權個人業守

(1) 社工應力求提升人的福祉，幫助社會大眾預防及脫離困境與痛苦。

(2) 社工應以誠實、正直及盡責的態度從事其專業工作。

(3) 社工應力求維持高專業水平及本著剛正不阿的專業精神提供服務。

有關服務對象

(1) 服務對象是社工首要的負責對象。

(2) 社工有責任讓服務對象了解自己的權利及協助他們獲得最適切的服務，且盡量使服務對象明白接受服務可能帶來的承擔與後果。

(3) 社工應盡可能幫助服務對象清楚瞭解保密原則在某些情況下的限制，獲取其資料的目的和用途，在刊載個案資料時，必須以可靠的方法刪除一切有關服務對象身份的資料，並須事先盡可能取得服務對象及其僱用機構的同意。

(4) 社工不得濫用與服務對象的關係，蓄以獲取個人的利益。

(5) 在任何情況下，社工都不得與服務對象發生性行為。

(6) 如需要收取服務費用，社工應確保收費公平而合理，其服務對象不會因經濟能力而接受不到其所需要服務。

有關同事

(1) 社工應尊重其他社工、其他專業人士及義務工作者的不同意見及工作方法，任何批評及衝突都應以負責任的態度透過適當的渠道表達和解決。

(2) 社工應盡量與其他社工合力提高社工專業的權益和服務成效。

(3) 社工應向有關當局報告任何違反專業工作守則的行徑，並在接受社工受到不公平指稱時給予協助。
(4) 社工不應索取其他社工之服務對象。

(5) 社工在互相合作之間所得的保密資料，在未獲得另一個社工明確同意下，不
可向服務對象透露有關的保密資料。

有關機構

(1) 社工應為其僱用機構提供具效率及具效能的專業服務。

(2) 社工應就其僱用機構的政策、程序及工作方式作出建設性及負責任的行動，
要求及機構達到最佳的服務水準。

(3) 社工應在發表任何公開言論或進行公開活動時，應表明自己是以個人身分抑
或代表團體或機構發言。

(4) 社工不應在未經機構同意下，利用機構與外界的聯繫，為個人的私人業務招
攬服務對象。

有關專業

(1) 社工應持守專業的價值觀與操守，和提升專業知識。

(2) 社工有責任維護專業尊嚴，糾正不公平的批評，對其專業提出評論時應持著
建設性和負責任的態度。

(3) 社工不可就其專業資格、服務性質、服務方法及預計可達的成果提供不真
實的資料。

(4) 社工應肩負不斷增進本身的專業技能和知識的責任。

(5) 社工應協助新加入社會工作專業的同工建立價值觀和操守，並發展他們的技
能與知識，這是大家應盡的責任。

(6) 社工應協助社會工作專業為市民大眾提供適當的服務。
有利社會

(1) 當政府、社區或機構推行或延續任何不利解決困擾及痛苦的活動，社工有責任喚起決策者及公眾人士對這些活動的關注。

(2) 社工應倡導政策及法律之修訂以改善相關之社會情況，促進社會之共善，更應致力推動社會福利政策之實施，但不可運用個人的知識、技能或經驗助長不公平的政策及不人道的活動。

(3) 社工應致力防止及消除歧視，令資源分配更為合理，並確保所有人仕有平等的機會獲取所需的資源和服務。

(4) 在尊重他人權利的原則下，社工應盡量為大眾，特別是弱勢社群提供更多的選擇和創造更平等的機會。

(5) 社工應推動大眾尊重社會的不同文化。

(6) 社工應鼓勵社會大眾在知情的情況下參與創作和改善社會政策和制度。

一九九八年三月三十一日
對《註冊社會工作者（臨時）工作守則》意見書

前言

（一）《註冊社會工作者（臨時）工作守則》（以下簡稱《守則》）發表至今，社會界內的討論仍未見熱烈。然而，《守則》對日後社會工作專業的發展影響甚大，是故我們擬定此意見書向貴局反映。

（二）這份《守則》在正式通過之後將會是註冊社會工作者“日常操守的指引”，當社工被指控其操守違反本文件內明示或隱含的專業標準時，本局將以此守則及其有關指引作裁決的依據。（第17頁，行1-3）換言之，它的地位不單是一個道德指引，而是一份具有法律規條性質的文件。以條文具體地規範社工的外顯行為，要求這些行為合乎條文文字清楚列明的特徵。假若日後有社工在實務中發現有關指引不符合現時社工的角色，便可根據《守則》向註冊局投訴有關社工，註冊局的仲裁，和當事人的抗辯。無論在紀律聆訊中或是因不服裁斷而上訴到法院，都要以《守則》為基礎。然而，若果這是《守則》之目標的話，它的內容和行文卻是與一份法律規條性質文件不相符合的。

法律規條與道德指引不可混為一談

（三）法律規條與道德指引屬於截然不同的範疇。前者只是提出一些“可欲”的行為標準，指出一些理想和最高的行為典範，例如：香港政府不斷鼓勵市民要做好公民，但所謂“良好公民”是一個“高”標準。當社會上多數人的行爲未能達致如此理想的境界，但也不足以構成人犯的法庭。相反，在香港的法治傳統中，法律規條所要界定的，是一般有理性的人應具有能力去達成的標準。因此，法律規條的條文需要細緻、準確和詳細。

概念含糊不清，用字模棱兩可

（四）可憐的是，《守則》雖然是期望具備法律規條的目標和效果，但它所使用的概念卻常是含糊不清，表達用字竟是模棱兩可。例如：“前言”部分列明，當一名社工違反了這份《守則》所“明示或隱含的專業標準時”（頁1，行2），這名社工便會有被指控的可能。然而，所謂“隱含”的標準究竟何所指？是否包括任何可以從現有條文引申或推演的行為？若果是，则有關範圍便廣於寬鬆，在實務上也難以找到具公信力或說服力的仲裁者。

（五）這種概念不清的例子在《守則》中經常出現。在“基本價值觀及信念”部分的第（7）條說：“社工的首要任務是協助有需要的人士及致力解決社會問題。”（頁1，
行21）那麼，當一名社工拒絕施捨鈔票乞丐時，他是否已經違反了這項規條？他／她是
否必須要為眾多無依靠者布施或向政府請命呢？

（六）又例如：在“前言”部分指出，（守則）的“適用範圍包括社工以社工身份所從
事的一切有關活動”。（頁1，行4）但是，在什麼情況下，一名社工有什麼具體行爲（如
口頭宣稱或用文字宣示），才算以構成“以社工身份”進行活動？而“一切有關活動”
則是模範兩可的用詞，其指涉範圍可以隨著仲裁者的主觀決定而擴大或縮小。

（七）此外，在“基本價值觀及信念”部分的第（1）條（頁1，行10－12），其中
“出身”和“體質”兩詞定義不清，令人無所適從；讀者根本無法理解條文的意義，仲裁
者也難以界定或執行條文所引導的法律責任。

“泛法律化”問題不容小覷

（八）而“有關個人操守”部份，要求社工“幫助社會大衆預防及脫離困境與痛苦”
（頁2，行3）這些都是價值取向的語句，卻用來作爲具體的“合法行爲”的標準，這
種道德與法律相互混淆的情況，在民主社會裡實屬罕見。

（九）在道德層次上，我們固然可以對社工提出各種期望和要求，以作爲每位社工努力
不懈的目標。然而，這些道德期望卻絕不可以簡單地轉變為法律規條，並以此為依據
有否違反專業操守的依據，因爲，若如是，則凡沒有達成這些原本是道德期望的社工，
都可以被追究職或疏忽的罪名，如此重要的法律責任問題，在這份（守則）的起草過程
中竟被忽略。

（十）舉例而言，“有關服務對象”部分列明“社工應確保收費公平而合理，其服務對
象不會因經濟能力而接受不到其所需的服务。”（頁2，行12－13）但是，在實際上這
是機構的行政事項而非社工的職責，社工對收費多少常常是無從置喙的，在道德
上我們固然可以有此期望，但在法律上，註冊局否有機會因公眾人士訴訟，而指控有
關人士違反了專業操守呢？

（十一）在“前言”部分，將道德期望“泛法律化”的特點尤其明顯，並言明此（守則）
乃“列明社工與服務對象，同工、機構，專業及社會建立專業關係時的道德行爲標
準”。（頁1，行4），“社工應採取適當及足夠的措施去確保受其管轄的及協助
其工作的所有工作人員（包括義工）了解和遵守這些工作守則。”（頁1，行7－8）
在這個要求之下，試問，一間青年中心有百多名以上的義工，社工可以如何“確保”義
工遵守本不屬於他們範圍之內的守則？一旦其中有違反者，有關社工，中心主任，其上
司以至機構主管，是否要全部違反了專業操守，並應受到懲處？
(十二) 類似用語不當、誇大不實的例子在通篇《守則》中比比皆是，我們因此有必要指出，它現時在遣詞用字和概念釐定兩方面的標準，都還未具備十分可以具有法律規條性質地位的文件。若草草通過，只會引起更大爭議，日後也無法從有效和合理地執行。

製定《守則》不宜草率

(十三) 事實上，我們覺得《守則》所反映的問題不單是應如何遣詞用字，而是在現階段，香港的社工界是否適合自己的專業工作和社會工作發展 Votes。根據《守則》，對此，我們應為不適當。理由如下：

1. 社會工作是以價值取向為主導的社會活動，因此，一個理想的專業守則應能於
   成熟和廣泛的社會工作的價值取向之上。唯其如此，才可以充分發揮民主精神，讓不
   同觀點得以互相交鋒和補益，求同存異，在業內獲得最大程度的共識。否則，《守則
   易於成為只是一群人的共識，甚而變為排除異己的工具。

   可是，香港社工界對社工價值及專業守則的討論尚未成熟，有關文章或研究，非
   常不足，討論氛圍至今為止仍不著要。既缺乏了具有深度和廣度的討論，任何強行匆
   匆通過的《守則》難以得到多數社工的認同，更容易流為長官意志的產物，一旦執行，
   使人動輒得咎，結果只會阻礙或窒息了社工界自由討論社工價值的氛圍。

   例如，《守則》定明“社工肩負維護人權及促進社會公義的責任”(頁 15)，但是，“社
   會公義”(英文本為 Social Justice)的定義衆說紛紜，從自卑主義到員邊學派均有不同的解說，在現實上香港不同背景的人士對此都是理解各異，在容
   許思想自由、百家爭鳴的現代社會裡，社工在此點上並不需要，也不能夠夠衆多不同的
   價值觀定奪，有關專業團體更不可逆其道而行，硬要一錘定音。

2. 環顧英美等國社工界的討論，大多認為普有社會工作價值的內涵與時代發展
   等，當此社會發展急遽的時刻，實需要來更多的討論和實踐，以進一步發展社工價
   值的內涵。因此，作爲道德指引的專業守則，在現階段而言，其大方向應該是言無
   無言，少規限而多空間，以包容更多不同的思想潮流和意見，豐富社工價值的多樣性
   和現實性，使到社會工作不會同步自封，作夢自圓，因此，一份專業守則若然是貝有
   極大約束力的話（違反者可被將停止執業），在現時的大氛圍裡是不合時宜的。

   近期不少社會工作學者指出，各地社工需要把來時的社會工作價值觀重新認識及
   調整，使之符合本土的國情和文化。可是，現時這份《守則》基本上以美國社工人員
   協會（NASW）的專業守則為藍本，背後有其預設的價值觀和理念，不僅適合香港特有
   的文化背景，卻亦決定以此守則作爲日後香港社工發展的標準，會否同調了社會工作
   需要持續發展和本土化的大趨勢？
製定《守則》兼聽則明

（十四）我們並非苛於法律程序的急切，也深深關心註冊局在推動社工專業化的努力之可貴。可是，基於上述各種原因，我們有如下建議：

1. 到目前為止註冊局舉辦的論壇，由於時間不足而牽涉範圍複雜廣泛，實未能收到集思廣益的效果。因此，註冊局應與其他機構合作，全力推動有關社工價值及專業守則的討論，使業內人士能有更多資訊而更好意見。

2. 日後在社工價值討論有相當基礎之後，才開始討論社工專業守則應如何設定，應包括何種範疇和細節的標準。

3. 《守則》本身是綱領性的文件，用字較為濃縮，為窮準確地傳達概念，應考慮在正文之外附加評論及補充部分，使到意義更為清晰。

4. 這份守則對本職既然如此重要，當局應就如何設立更具機關廣泛諮詢同工的意見，尤其是當前實際的前線同工。之後，應定期作出諮詢及必要的修改，有關資料也應該適當發表，以豐富整個社工界對有關問題的認識。

（十五）最後，我們重申：目前的《守則》還未可以作爲一份具有法律規範性質的文件。若強行通過，日後只會為社工界帶來更多的問題。然而，若是基於法律程序的原故，我們認可通過的《守則》，應秉持著宣讀不宜的原則，只包括最基本的、必不可少的行為標準。更重要的，是要增加社工界討論的機會和時間，使到這份守則更能符合大多數社工的期望和意見。

一群關注（註冊社會工作者（臨時）工作守則）的社工

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一九九八年五月