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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

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WORKING–CLASS HOUSEWIVES IN HONG KONG

by

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ABSTRACT

This report explores the cognitive, motivational, and social factors related to working-class women's involvement in community activities. Ninety-two housewives from Shatin, Tsuen Wan, Tsing Yi and Tuen Mun participated in the study, of which 68 were leaders or members of the local Yin Ngai Societies. Comparisons between leaders, members and non-members showed that women's community involvement was closely associated with their family and interpersonal orientation. Although the leaders initially became involved on the basis of social affiliation, they subsequently derived their satisfaction from the personal growth they experienced. Active participation in community activities was dependent on the availability of help from the family and the development of life management skills.

INTRODUCTION

Housewives constitute half of the adult women population in Hong Kong. Only about 50% of married women are engaged in full-time paid employment. However, little attention has been paid to the roles of housewives as members of the community, other than their roles as mothers. Few studies have been conducted on women in Hong Kong although there has been some recent interest in the needs and adjustment of working women. It has been implicitly assumed that entry into the labour force is women's only inroad to social participation. However, women's careers take many forms other than the traditional full-time gainful employment. Some women, particularly those who decide to raise a family before or instead of making a commitment to employment, may spend segments of their work lives as volunteers in non-profit organizations. For them, the content of the volunteer work itself is experienced as a viable work activity and their volunteer work serves as an integral part of their work cycle (Jenner, 1981). For working-class women as a specific group, participation in community activities as volunteers often provides a channel to connect them with the social mainstream. By way of this social integration, working-class women are able to change their traditional position of social marginality and virtual obscurity (Dabrowski, 1984).

Previous studies on women's social participation via volunteer work have focussed primarily on objective factors that facilitate or inhibit a woman's participation. Schram & Dunsing (1981) found that a married woman's level of education and her husband's negative attitude towards wives working outside the home were the two deciding factors on whether

a woman participated in volunteer work or not. Furthermore, they observed that among other variables, a woman's age, education and marital satisfaction were determinants of the extent of the woman's involvement in volunteer work. In a review study by Dabrowski (1984) of the social integration of working-class women, it was suggested that labour force participation potentially broadens community ties. The woman's work experience might reduce the barriers she experiences to voluntary group participation in the traditionally non-associational working-class community.

In a study of the different functions volunteer work had in women's work lives, Jenner (1981) found that housewives who saw homemaking as a role but not a career treated their volunteer work as a primary career. They strongly identified with the purpose of the organization and the satisfaction they sought was self-actualizing in nature. They were also most likely to enjoy a leadership position in the organization. On the other hand, housewives who viewed homemaking as their main work tended to be involved in volunteer work out of a sense of social responsibility. They were less available to the organization and derived most of their satisfaction from the affiliative aspects of the volunteering experience.

In the Chinese culture, it has been recognized that there are many psychological and social barriers restricting women's social participation Among them are low self-confidence, lack of support from within and outside the family and lack of opportunities. As working-class housewives are most likely to suffer from these handicaps, their non-

involvement is therefore most striking and pervasive. In a recent survey of nearly 1000 Hong Kong women by a local women's organization (Association for the Advancement of Feminism, 1985), it was observed that women's overall social and civic participation was limited by their low education, economically dependent status, family role as wife and mother of young children, and the strong sense of importance ascribed to the family. Factors facilitating women's participation included higher education, employment status, a strong sense of political consciousness and high esteem for women's role status. Overall, the results reflected a generally low level of participation by women except in a few local community organizations such as the Mutual Aid Committees. Despite their low social economic status, their childcare responsibilities and their strong family orientation, a few women were very active and involved in these local community organizations.

The Yin Ngai Societies (賢毅社) in the present study represent one type of such community organizations. They were established through the initiation and assistance of the Department of District Administration to promote the development and social participation of working-class women. Originally, the societies were started within the new town public housing estates. The movement has since moved into urban and private housing premises. Most of the members are housewives. Since their inauguration in 1981, the number of Yin Ngai Societies has grown to 30. A few of these societies have emerged as active community groups. The activities and attitudes of some of the leaders have also shown remarkable changes since the organizations first began. So far,

there has been no systematic study of these groups of individuals to assess their needs and satisfaction in community participation.

The present study focussed on small groups of housewives who have participated in the Yin Ngai Societies. Their self-concept, psychological needs, life satisfaction, social support and other background characteristics were related to the range and nature of their community participation. By comparing the women leaders to ordinary members, we hoped to identify the leadership skills and personal variables which characterized the leaders. For comparison, a group of non-participating housewives matched in background with the group of Yin Ngai members was also included.

Since our objective was to explore the variables which discriminated among the three groups of women instead of testing hypotheses, a small sample of the target groups was studied using a battery of psychological measures. The rich amount of data from this intensive study has provided us with more detailed information on the needs and satisfaction faced by working-class women in community participation. The outcome of this study may suggest important considerations in encouraging working-class housewives to participate in community affairs and in developing leadership skills among these women.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 92 women living in three districts in the New Territories, namely, Tsuen Wan/Tsing Yi, Shatin and Tuen Mun. The Yin Ngai Societies were first set up in these three districts. The housing estates in these three districts were built at different times, and therefore consist of households at different stages of the family life cycle. For example, the majority of the families in Tuen Mun new town are relatively young in comparison to those in the more established estates in Tsuen Wan.

Among the subjects studied, there was a slightly higher proportion of women from the Tsuen Wan/Tsing Yi districts (42.4%), since the original Yin Ngai Society there has been split into two societies following a recent district reorganization. The remaining subjects came from Shatin (31.5%) and Tuen Mun (26.1%).

The subjects were categorized into leaders, members and non-members in relation to their past or current association with the Yin Ngai Societies. Among the 92 subjects, there were 42 leaders, including those who had served or were currently serving as officers of the society. There were 27 Yin Ngai members at large. The remaining 24 subjects in the sample were non-members living in the same housing estates as the above two groups. The leaders were identified through the assistance of the Government's City and New Territories Administration which advises the Yin Ngai Societies. The members and non-members were recruited by the chairwomen of the Societies.

Instruments

Data were gathered by use of a self-administered questionnaire made up of four parts. Part I included items on background information, community involvement and activity pattern.

Part II was a Value Survey (Rokeach, 1973) measuring subjects' personal preference for 36 values. These 36 values were presented as two separate lists. Eighteen values formed the terminal value list which included items such as inner harmony, freedom, happiness, salvation, social recognition, an exciting life, etc. The instrumental value list included items such as logical, courageous, clean, broad-minded, forgiving, self-controlled, loving etc. The gummed-label technique of Form D was adopted and subjects rank ordered the 18 values in each list from 1 to 18 according to the degree of importance each of these values had for them.

Part III examined the subjects' social support network and their life satisfaction. Availability, area and helpfulness of support from confidante, husband, parents and close friend were measured. In addition, a 5-point Likert scale was used to assess subjects' degree of satisfaction derived from various life areas.

Part IV was the Role Construct Repertory (REP) test (Kelly, 1955) which measures subjects' self-concept and their perception of significant role figures. Subjects were first asked to identify persons fitting the 18 provided role figures such as father, mother, boss, teacher, the most successful person, the most pitiful person, mother-in-law, close friend etc. Twenty-one different triads (groups of three

role figures) were then presented to subjects one at a time. They then were asked to come up with a quality or a description which two members of the triad shared and which at the same time differentiated them from the third member. After the subjects had recorded this construct, they were asked to write down the opposite of the construct. Thereafter, they would go back to the rest of the 15 elements or role figures not included in that triad to indicate whether the construct was also descriptive of each of these elements.

Due to the time consuming nature of the REP Test, the entire questionnaire took an average of two and a half hours to complete. For a small proportion of subjects who could not finish the four parts of the questionnaire in one sitting, and also for those who required individual assistance in doing the REP Test, Part IV was completed separately and in some cases through individualized administration by an interviewer.

RESULTS

Demographic Background

The majority of the subjects were born in Hong Kong (65.2%), whereas the others had been in Hong Kong for over 10 years. Over half of these women had only primary education (56.6%), 25% of them had junior secondary school education, 17.4% finished secondary school, and only one had post-secondary education.

The mean age of the subjects was 36.3. The number of children they had ranged from none to seven, with the mean at 2.8. The average age of the children was 11. Most of the children were still residing in the same household. In addition, a small number of the subjects were living with their parents (7.7%) or their parents-in-law (14.2%).

Over half (57.5%) of the women in the study were gainfully employed, mostly on a part-time basis (22.8%) or on a temporary basis (21.7%). Only 13% were working full-time. The majority of the working women (90%) were unskilled or semi-skilled workers engaged in manufacturing (66%) or service (28%) industries. Even for those who were not presently employed, the majority had worked previously for an average of 7.4 years.

Except for one man who was retired and another who was temporarily unemployed, all of the husbands were employed in a range of occupations, including manufacturing (28.6%), services (22.6%), transportation (21.4%), retailing (13.1%), and construction (10.7%). Their job levels were generally low, with 45.1% being workers, 22% supervisors, and 17.1% clerks/technicians. Only one of the husbands was a professional, three

were managers, six were proprietors, and another three were self-employed. The average family income was between $4,000 and $5,999 per month.

Community Involvements

Yin Ngai Society. Sixty-eight of the subjects in this study were involved with the Yin Ngai Society for an average of 2.8 years, with 41 taking up positions in the executive committees or other subcommittees. Fifteen of them were presently or had previously been chairwomen or vice-chairwomen. Most of these leaders felt satisfied (47.6%) or very satisfied (31%) with their committee work. The reasons for their satisfaction were mainly related to personal gratification (81.3%) or social relationships (18.8%). Only two leaders expressed slight dissatisfaction with their committee work and another seven had no opinion.

Most of the Yin Ngai members learned about the Society through their own friends (83.8%). A smaller number, all leaders, were invited by officials of their local District Offices (13.2%). Only a few members got to know about the Society through posters and newsletters of the Society. The programmes attended by most members were recreational activities (72.9%), interest classes (62.9%), lectures (55.7%), and to a lesser extent, social services (48.6%) and field trips (45.7%). The majority of the members felt satisfied (52.9%) or very satisfied (30%) with the programmes they attended. The main reasons were the opportunity to make friends (68.9%), personal growth (47.5%), and the development of new skills (21.3%). When asked to state the areas of disappointment, if

any, with the Society, only about half of the members responded, with the major sources of disappointment related to the way activities were organized (47.2%) and finance (14.3%).

Other Types of Community Involvements. Only 20 subjects were presently engaged and 18 were previously engaged in other community organizations other than the Yin Ngai Society. Most of these subjects belonged to the leader group. The most common involvement were with mutual aid societies, social groups and religious organizations.

Time Allocation. On the average, the subjects spent about five evenings each week at home, with about 12% staying home for only one or two evenings. All of the latter were leaders or active members of the Yin Ngai Society. However, in terms of time spent on different activities, the amount of time spent on community work was generally low, with an average of four hours per week, as opposed to 32.7 on housework, 26.4 on childcare, 17 on watching television, 8.8 on personal leisure activities, and 7.6 on family leisure activities.

Social Support

The support received by the subjects was assessed in terms of both practical help and psychological sharing. In the interviews, the women were asked about their relationships with their husbands, their parents, and their close friends, as well as the availability of any confidante. With regard to their community involvement, inquiries were also made into the husbands' attitudes and the availability of household assistance.

Overall Support. The support from significant others included the quality of the relationship, the feeling of being understood, the amount and helpfulness of communication, the willingness to disclose happiness and unhappiness, the extent of care and attention received, the extent of sharing of one's joy, praise received for achievements, and encouragement received for failures. The overall support from three significant others (husband, parents, and friend) generated three separate factors, with different loadings on items for each.

For the husband and the parents factors, care and attention was the dominant constituent of overall support. Husband's support was also loaded on the quality of relationship, communication and understanding. For parents, other important components of support were sharing of joy and communication. However, the disclosure of unhappiness played a much smaller part in the relationship with parents. On the other hand, the dominant constituents of overall support from friends were disclosure of happiness and disclosure of unhappiness. The omega reliability coefficients for the factors of overall support from husband, parents and friend were 0.92, 0.91 and 0.79 respectively.

Most of the subjects maintained a good relationship with their husbands, parents and friends, and generally felt understood by them. They tended to discuss matters related to childrearing, their own personality and family affairs with their husbands, friends and, to a lesser extent, their parents. There was a tendency to relay happy rather than unhappy experiences to the significant others. The support these women received was mostly positive.

Availability of Confidante. This area of social support was measured by a separate section of the questionnaire, comprising six aspects related to the person whom the subject could confide in: contact (with a loading of 0.81), inclination to approach for problems (0.80), frequency of being approached (0.67), accessibility (0.59), ease of interaction (0.65), and significance of the confidante (0.61).

About 50% of the subjects cited their friend/neighbour as their confidante, as opposed to 20% who cited their husband, 9.4% their sibling, 7.1% their former schoolmate, 9.4% other relative, and only 2.4% their parent. The amount of contact with, the accessibiltiy to, and the sharing with the confidante were all favourable.

Husband's Attitude Towards Community Involvement. Over half of the subjects' husbands (53.8%) were indifferent to their community involvement. About one-third approved (28.2%) or encouraged (5.1%) their social participation. However, 10.3% of the subjects felt that their husbands were dissatisfied with their involvement and 2.6% actually opposed it. This variable is moderately correlated with the amount and the helpfulness of communication with husband (r = 0.37 and 0.43 respectively), and husband's understanding of wife (r = 0.28).

Practical Assistance. The subjects generally finished their housework first before they left the house to join in a community activity. Only the minority of the husbands helped with childcare (33.8%), grocery shopping (23.8%), and other household chores (17.5%). Older children played an important role in helping out, especially with household chores (22.5%), grocery shopping (13.1%), and to a lesser extent,

childcare (9.1%). Few of the parents, parents-in-law, or neighbours came to the subjects' assistance. The likelihood of being helped is positively correlated with the average age of children (r = 0.28). Those women who would discuss their community activities with their husband, parents and/or friend were more likely to receive assistance with childcare (r = 0.34, 0.35 and 0.32 respectively).

Life Satisfaction

A scale of life satisfaction was constructed using the simple average of scores on nine items depicting different aspects of the subject's life along a five-point scale. Higher scores indicated greater dissatisfaction. Factor analysis showed that a one-factor solution could account for 90.1% of the total variance. Loadings on all items were positive and the omega reliability coefficient was .80.

The overall level of life satisfaction among the subjects was positive. The areas of life where less satisfaction was expressed were related to health, living conditions and finance. Otherwise, the subjects were satisfied or very satisfied with their family life, their role in the family, their relationship with their friends, their social life, their neighbours and their lifestyle.

Values

The ranks assigned to each of the Rokeach terminal values and instrumental values were converted into rank scores with a score of 18 for the highest rank (most important) and a score of 1 for the lowest

rank (least important). The mean scores on each value for the entire group of subjects were used to compute the group rankings.

Among the terminal values, Family Security ranked the highest, followed by Freedom, A World At Peace, and Inner Harmony. The least important terminal values were An Exciting Life, Salvation, Social Recognition, and Pleasure. Compared with the ranks obtained by women in Rokeach's national NORC sample tested in 1968 (Rokeach, 1973, Appendix B), the patterns of values for both HK and American groups of women were very similar. The only exceptions were Salvation which was ranked fourth, and Inner Harmony which was considered much less important by the American women.

The most important instrumental values to the subjects were Ambitious, Helpful, Honest and Capable. The least important values were Imaginative, Obedient, Logical and Courageous. The pattern of rankings corresponded with that of Rokeach's sample which ranked Helpful, Forgiving, Responsible and Ambitious the highest and Imaginative, Logical, Intellectual and Obedient were the lowest.

To reduce the 36 value items, a principal component factor analysis was run. Based on the results of the scree test, three factors were extracted, accounting for 26.2% of the total variance. Factor I loaded positively on the instrumental values of Cheerful and Clean, and the terminal values of Pleasure and Happiness, and negatively on the values of Wisdom and Intellectual. This factor may be labelled Gratification vs. Competence. The second factor, Affiliation, loaded positively on Honest, Helpful, Loving and Polite, and negatively on An Exciting Life,

Capable and Broadminded. The third factor, Self vs. Societal
Orientation, loaded positively on Self-respect, Self-controlled and
Friendship, and negatively on Beauty and Peace.

Although only a small proportion of the total variance is explained
by the three factors, the reduction in data is needed in the further
analyses in which the groups of subjects are compared and the level of
community participation is predicted. One should note, however, that
even though Rokeach (1973) attempted a similar approach to factor
analyze his original data, the ranking procedure used in the measurement
would create artificial negative correlations among the items. In this
analysis, only 19 of the 36 values were used to construct the factors. A
large proportion of the variance was left unexplained.

Personal Constructs

a) Content analysis

The content of the personal constructs elicited from the respon-
dents were analyzed by means of 12 construct content categories. Six of
them were based on the personality dimensions suggested by Hogan (1983)
namely, intellectence, adjustment, surgency, likeability, sociability
and conformity. Three role-related categories were added: family role,
work role and societal role. The last three were informational
categories. They included statements of relationship, physical characte-
ristics and factual categories. The score for each of the personality
and role-related construct content categories was coded either as +1 or
-1 to reflect the direction of the category while the entries for the

informational categories were all coded as +1 as there was no direction
involved.

The following examples present some of the constructs included
under the positive and negative poles of each of the construct content
categories:

Positive intellectence:	clever, leadership, analytical, persuasive, successful, knowledgeable
Negative intellectence:	lack of determination, superstitious, closed to novel experiences
Positive adjustment:	optimistic, adaptive, independent
Negative adjustment:	uncontrolled, anxious, dejected, feeble-minded
Positive surgency:	status-seeking, enthusiastic, greedy, ambitious, dominating
Negative surgency:	child-like, lazy, sluggish
Positive likeabililty:	friendly, honest, tolerant, trustful, helpful
Negative likeability:	solemn, likes to curse, selfish, stingy
Positive sociability:	talkative, hospitable, active, expressive
Negative sociability:	introverted, small social circle, solitary, uncooperative
Positive conformity:	planful, principle keeping, tendentious
Negative conformity:	wasteful, fickle, scattered, extravagant
Positive family role:	cares about family, amiable parents, values family security, respected in the family
Negative family role:	valuing career over family, self-centered in the family
Positive work role:	satisfied with work, placing importance on one's performance at work
Negative work role:	unhappy at work, irresponsible at work

Positive societal role: sense of social responsibility, devoted to social welfare, active social participation

Negative societal role: not concerned about social events, lacks civic awareness

Relation statement: kinship, married to each other

Physical characteristics: fat, tall, wears glasses

Factual: likes to drink beer, likes to gamble, does not like cold weather, likes watching TV, etc.

Since the number of constructs elicited in each grid could vary from 1 to 21 (there being 21 sets of triads employed to elicit constructs from each respondent), each of the 12 construct content categories could therefore have a score ranging from 0 to the maximum of 21 (with the latter obtained if all of the 21 constructs of a grid fell on the positive pole of a category). In reality, the score for each of these content construct categories represents the saliency of that particular construct content category in relations to the 18 specified role figures (elements) in the grid.

From the total sample, only 82 grids were obtained since ten of the subjects failed to complete them. The mean number of constructs produced by the subjects was 17.07. Among the 13 construct content categories irrespective of the direction of scoring, likeability was used most frequently by the respondents ($\overline{X}=5.45$), followed by surgency ($\overline{X}=2.90$) and sociability ($\overline{X}=2.30$). The two construct content categories used least were physical characteristics ($\overline{X}=0.02$) and work role ($\overline{X}=0.01$).

In regard to self-concept constructs (i.e. constructs used to

describe oneself) sociability ($\overline{X}=0.378$) was the construct most often mentioned by the subjects, followed by adjustment ($\overline{X}=0.357$) and likeability ($\overline{X}=0.322$). In constrast, physical characteristics and factual information ($\overline{X}=0.002$) were the two least used categories.

b) Structural analysis

(i) Cognitive complexity

A principal component analysis was performed on the 378 responses on each grid (i.e. responses derived from the 21 sets of triads and 18 elements provided to respondents for eliciting their constructs) so as to maximally explain the variance of the constructs. A value expressing the proportion of variance explained by each principal component for the total constructs included could be derived. Here, each construct was treated as one variable before categorization. When individual grid data were analyzed, the value of the proportion of the variance explained by the first principal component could be treated as a cognitive complexity index for the subject since the first principal component accounts for the largest proportion of the variance and it could thus reflect the construct structure of the subject. When principal component analysis was used on group data where subjects were aggregated as leaders, ordinary members and non-members, the constructs would also be aggregated in the form of nine directionally categorized constructs. Accordingly, the proportion of variance explained by the components could be referred to as the cognitive complexity of the group.

(ii) Self-other distance

The distance measure between self and the other 17 elements provided in the grid formed the self-other distance index. The maximum likelihood factor analysis showed that the first factor of self-other distance accounted for 58.9% of the variance. Also, the factor loadings on the first factor were positive, ranging from 0.707 between self and the pitied person to 0.240 between self and close friend. The omega reliability coefficient was 0.817 with the 17 element items.

For the total sample, subjects perceived themselves being farthest apart from the feared person ($\bar{X}$=1.36), boss ($\bar{X}$=1.35) and mother-in-law ($\bar{X}$=1.35), and closest to close friend ($\bar{X}$=1.06), sister ($\bar{X}$=1.19) and happy person ($\bar{X}$=1.19). The husband, on the other hand, was not perceived to be among the closest to the subjects ($\bar{X}$=1.26).

(iii) Inter-element distance

The mean inter-element distance measured the mean distance between all elements based on averaging the distance between the 154 possible pairs of elements over all the constructs provided by the subject. The measure indicated the subject's tendency to either exaggerate or minimize distance between elements. The distance variable was calculated as the Euclidean distance divided by the square root of the number of constructs used for each pair of elements.

With all the subjects, the mean inter-element distance was 1.22 where 2 was the maximum distance possible. Among all the pairs of elements, the pairs being perceived by the subjects as being most

alike were: pitied person and feared person ($\bar{X}$=0.957), rejecting person and pitied person ($\bar{X}$=0.854) and rejecting person and feared person ($\bar{X}$=0.807). At the other end, the most dissimilar pairs were: mother-in-law and successful person ($\bar{X}$=1.371), friend and rejecting person ($\bar{X}$=1.363) and mother and husband ($\bar{X}$=1.352).

FURTHER ANALYSES

In the further analyses, the three groups of women leaders, members and non-members were compared in terms of their background variables, social support, life satisfaction, values and personal constructs. Three methods of analyses were used: ANOVA, multiple regression and discriminant analysis. In addition, multiple regression was used to predict the variables of community involvement and life satisfaction.

In order to reduce the number of individual items in these further analyses, factors were extracted from the background information, social support measures, Rokeach values and personal constructs. Other aggregate variables included overall life satisfaction, eight of the major personal construct content categories used in self-descriptions on the REP Grid, the distance between self and others shown on the REP Grid, and the total number of constructs elicited on the Grid.

Four factors were extracted from the demographic and lifestyle variables accounting for 45.1% of the variance. Factor I loaded on the subject's number of children, their average age, living with children and the subject's own age. This factor is labelled Family Life Cycle. The second factor, Housework Beneficiary, loaded positively on having help with grocery shopping, having help with other household chores, subject living with own parents and with other relatives, her own educational level, and negatively on time spent on child care. Factor III loaded positively on residency in Tuen Mun and getting help on child care, but negatively on residency in Tsuen Wan/Tsing Yi and living with

husband's parents. For convenience, this factor is labelled Residency. The last factor, Entertainment, loaded on having more daughters, time spent on watching television, time spent on family recreational activities, and negatively on work employment and residency in Shatin.

The social support factors included Overall Support from Husband, Overall Support from Parents, Overall Support from Friends and Availability of Confidantes. The Rokeach values factors were Gratification vs. Competence, Affiliation, and Self vs. Societal Orientation. Three principal component factors were extracted from the personal constructs. These factors have been discussed in the earlier sections. The variance explained by each of the factors was used as a variable in the further analyses.

Group Comparisons

The three groups of women--Yin Ngai leaders, Yin Ngai members and non-members--were compared. In terms of background variables, there was no difference in housing type, district of residency, marital status, employment, past working experience, husband's employment, family income and past social involvement among the three groups of subjects. They differed in the highest level of education achieved. More of the non-members (33.3%) and the leaders (19.5%) graduated from secondary school as opposed to only 3.1% of the ordinary members.

Analysis of Variance. On each of the 25 aggregate variables, ANOVA was run to test the difference among the three groups of subjects. Fifteen variables were significantly different at the 0.05 level.

Non-members differed from both leaders and ordinary members on the

availability of confidantes, with a standardized score of 0.544 as opposed to 0.483 and 0.485 for the latter two groups respectively. It seems that more of the non-members felt that they had people whom they could confide in.

The other 14 differences relate to personal constructs from the REP Grid. The leaders produced the largest number of constructs (18.7), followed by the ordinary members (16.0) and non-members (15.0). The variance explained by the third principal component was lower for the leaders although the variances explained by the first and second factors did not show any significant differences. Among the construct categories used to describe oneself, sociability constructs were mentioned more frequently by the leaders with a standardized score of .60, as opposed to .29 for the ordinary members and .04 for the non-members.

In terms of the perceived distance between the subject and her husband, the leaders perceived a greater distance ($\overline{X}=1.28$) than the members ($\overline{X}=1.25$) and the non-members ($\overline{X}=1.23$).

Regarding the use of constructs to describe elements other than oneself, the three groups differed on five variables:

1. Leaders were more likely to describe their fathers with positive surgency constructs ($\overline{X}=0.05$) while members and non-members with negative surgency constructs (-0.45, -0.16).

2. Mother-in-law was more often perceived as likeable by members (0.13) but in unlikeable terms by leaders (-0.08) and non-members (-0.40).

3. Leaders tended to view their boss with adjustment constructs more often than did members (0.07) and non-members (0.10).

4. Non-members and leaders described the most successful person more often with positive sociability constructs (0.33, 0.13) whereas members described this figure with negative sociability constructs (-0.36).

5. The happy person was more often perceived by leaders in positive family role constructs (0.13) but was seen as uninvolved in family role by members (-0.29) and non-members alike (-0.32).

There were also significant group differences in the perceived distance between elements. Non-members saw their father and mother-in-law as more alike ($\overline{X} = 1.11$) than did leaders (1.27) and members (1.31). At the same time, non-members also perceived more similarity between rejecting and feared persons (0.69) than did leaders (0.98) and members (0.88). The same pattern was observed in the subjects' perception of rejecting person and someone whom they wanted to know more, with a standardized score of 0.70 for non-members and 1.18 and 1.00 for leaders and members. On the other hand, leaders saw brother and close relative as more alike (1.12) than did members and non-members (1.30, 1.30). Leaders also tended to describe close friend and happy person in more similar terms (1.05) than did the other two groups (1.26, 1.30). Finally, boss and happy person were seen as more similar by members (1.11) than by leaders (1.31) and non-members (1.37).

Regression Analysis. In the original stepwise regression analysis, 114 individual variables were used. The results were found to be unstable and interpretation of individual variables was difficult. The regression analysis was revised using only the aggregate and factor variables. Due to missing data on some of the items, the number of subjects available

for this analysis was reduced to 50, including 27 leaders, 12 ordinary members and 11 non-members. Dummy variables were used as the dependent variables in the prediction of status as leaders, members and non-members.

In the prediction of leader status, only two variables were found to be significant: variance explained by the third principal component derived from the REP Grid (Beta = 0.538, $p < 0.001$) and Housework Beneficiary derived from the background information (Beta = 0.345, $p = 0.006$). With these two variables alone, the R^2 was 34.18%, significant at 0.001 level. The significance of Housework Beneficiary suggests that when women are helped with their housework, they have greater freedom to become actively involved in community activities.

In the prediction of ordinary member status, two variables were obtained from the regression analysis at the 0.05 significance level: variance explained by the third principal component (Beta = -0.481, $p < 0.001$) and the Residency factor derived from the background information (Beta = 0.361, $p = 0.006$). If the variable of Husband's Overall Support was included (Beta = 0.636, $p = 0.073$), the model was able to explain 34.1% of the total variance. The relationship between the third principal component and ordinary member status ran in the opposite direction from that for leader status, suggesting that the constructs used by the former group might be cognitively less complex. Although the variable of Husband's Overall Support was not significant in the prediction of leader status, the direction of its relationship was also opposite to that with ordinary member status. It seems that overall support from husbands was more important for the women when participating in the Yin Ngai Society

whereas it may have a more negative relationship with becoming a leader. The prediction of membership by the Residency factor (living in the Tuen Mun district, receiving help in childcare, but not living with parents-in-law or in Tsuen Wan/Tsing Yi) also confirmed that support from the nuclear unit might facilitate community participation.

No significant variable was found to predict non-member status. It seems that this group of subjects was more diverse in their characteristics.

Discriminant Analysis. To gain convergent validity, a stepwise discriminant analysis was run to discriminate the three groups of women with a candidate pool of 26 aggregate or factor variables. The results suggested the inclusion of three discriminants: variance explained by the third principal component ($p < 0.0001$), Housework Beneficiary ($p = 0.032$) and the Residency factor ($p = 0.077$). The first two variables have been included in the regression model to explain leader status while the last variable was found to explain ordinary member status in the regression analysis.

Discriminant analyses were also performed to separate the three groups of women on different sets of variables. No significant discriminant was found for the three value variables, the four support variables, the life satisfaction variable or the four background variables. However, the 13 REP Grid variables reached significance at the 0.065 level with correct prediction of 67.07%. The leader group, different from the other two groups, was characterized by a larger number of constructs elicited and a greater use of the construct categories of sociability, likeability and work role to describe themselves.

Prediction of Self-other Distance

Two regressors significant at 0.1 level were included in the regression model to explain 16.8% of the variance in self-other distance. Residency was the dominant regressor (Beta = 0.335, p = 0.015) followed by the Life Satisfaction factor (Beta = 0.236, p = 0.083). Women living in Tuen Mun perceived a greater psychological distance between themselves and others. The psychological distance might have reflected their geographical isolation from relatives and their inability to find a support group in the new town, thereby resorting more to self-reliance. Women who experienced a higher level of satisfaction in life seemed also to be the group who saw themselves as more psychologically independent and therefore did not identify themselves with the role figures.

Community Involvement

Involvement in community activities was measured in terms of time spent per week. This variable was correlated positively with leader status (r = 0.43), less with member status (r = 0.28) and negatively with non-member status (r = -0.28). Active women tended to conceptualize themselves as closer to the successful person and the happy person on the REP Grid, with the correlations between community involvement and the distances between self and these two elements to be -0.29 and -0.28 respectively.

In the regression analysis, only the REP Grid construct category of conformity was included in the prediction model (Beta = 0.279, p = 0.05). Active women tended to use more conformity constructs to describe

themselves. They perceived themselves as being well organized in their work and life. Another variable, the Family Life Cycle factor (although not significant enough to be included in the model) showed a negative Beta weight of -0.21 (p = 0.135), suggesting that women who were older or had more responsibilities at home were less likely to become involved in the community. The results suggest that with better planning and organization, and with help in the familial responsibilities, women would be able to participate more in community activities.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction was best predicted by four variables in the regression model although only two were significant at the 0.05 level. Husband's Overall Support was the dominant regressor (Beta = 0.473, p < 0.001), followed by the REP Grid content category of intellectence (Beta = 0.275, p = 0.023). The other two variables were Housework Beneficiary and Self-other Distance in the REP Grid. These four variables combined to explain 40.69% of the variance in life satisfaction.

The results suggest that marital support was the most important correlate of life satisfaction, while support from parents and friends played a much more minor role. Women who described themselves in terms of more rational and intellectual constructs were also more satisfied with their lives. Their community participation, however, did not increase life satisfaction nor did it bring about additional life stresses either.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study has attempted to explore the cognitive, motivational and social factors behind working-class women's involvement in community activities. Whether they were leaders, members or non-members of the Yin Ngai Societies, the subjects in general, were similar in many respects.

For most of the subjects, the family and interpersonal relationships were their central concerns. These concerns might have been reflected in their values and in the constructs they used to perceive themselves and others. In terms of the Rokeach values, Family Security was ranked highest among the terminal values, whereas Ambitious and Helpful were ranked highest among the Instrumental values. On the REP Grid, the construct categories of sociability and likeability were used most often to describe oneself as well as other people.

The subjects were generally satisfied with different aspects of their lives. They found the overall support from their husbands, parents and friends to be positive. The support came more in the form of communicating happy experiences whereas actual assistance was much less.

The husbands were generally indifferent towards the subjects' social participation. They did not offer much direct assistance either. The subjects perceived their husbands to be less similar to themselves than their close friends and sisters.

Active participation in community activities such as becoming a leader in the Yin Ngai Societies seems to be less related to values than to the amount of help the subjects received from their families. Since

husbands did not provide much help in childcare and other household chores, assistance from parents and parents-in-law was important in freeing the leaders to engage in community activities. The leaders themselves were also more capable of structuring their time and planning for their work. These life management skills should be emphasized in the development of women's social participation.

Although the Yin Ngai leaders indicated that the satisfaction they gained from their involvement with the Societies was due to the opportunity for personal growth, it would seem that they initially became involved mostly on the basis of social affiliation. Social involvement was perceived in conjunction with success and happiness. However, the active women were more likely to associate success with sociability and happiness with family orientation. The family remained as a focal concern for women who ventured into the community. The importance placed on the family unit suggests that in order to promote women's social participation, the support of the family needs to be solicited. This emphasis was also stressed in the development of the Yin Ngai Societies. In promoting the Societies, the early leaders tried to reassure potential members that they were not "feminists" who tried to surpass men, but that their community involvement would complement or even benefit their family roles.

Despite the affiliative orientation among the Yin Ngai leaders and members, social support did not seem to be a major goal or consequence of their participation in the association's activities. Contrary to our initial expectation, non-members fared better than leaders and members

in terms of the availability of social support and confidantes. This
availability may also explain why the non-members have not ventured
outside their families. However, the non-members were more diverse in
background and no significant predictor could be identified for this group.

Contemporary women's movements have encouraged women to become
more aware of themselves and of their roles in the community. There may
be different strategies to promote social participation among women.
The family and interpersonal orientation in working-class women's
involvement in community activities found in the present study suggests
that in the promotion of women's social participation, the individualistic
and confrontational approach found in some women's movements in the West
may not be readily applicable to Chinese women at the grassroots level.
Instead, alternative and complementary roles for women at home and in
the community, and the increased availability of home assistance should
be facilitated as a direction for women's development in Hong Kong.

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勞工階層之家庭主婦參與社區事務之心理及社會特徵

（ 中文摘要 ）　　　　張妙清
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　著
　　　　　　　　　　　　袁家慧

　　此報告探討基層婦女參與社區活動的認知、動機、及社會因素。參加這項研究的婦女共92名家庭主婦，她們分別住在沙田、荃灣、青衣、及屯門，而其中68名乃該區賢毅社的領袖或會員。領袖、會員與非會員之間的比較顯示，婦女參加社區活動與她們的家庭及人際取向有密切關係。雖然婦女領袖初時多數因為羣聚的動機而開始參與活動，但隨後，她們透過參與體驗到個人的成長，因而感到滿意。婦女積極參與社區活動很視乎家庭能否提供協助及個人是否掌握生活管理能力。