

2014

# A concept mapping study on social inclusion in Hong Kong

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This document is the authors' final version of the published article.

Link to published article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11205-013-0498-1>

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## Citation

Chan, Kara, Sherrill Evans, Yu-Leung Ng, Marcus Yu-Ling Chiu, and Peter J. Huxley. "A concept mapping study on social inclusion in Hong Kong." *Social Indicators Research* 119.1 (2014): 121-137.

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## A CONCEPT MAPPING STUDY ON SOCIAL INCLUSION IN HONG KONG

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Revised manuscript published in *Social Indicators Research*

Vol 119 No. 1, 121-137

Acknowledgement: This project was funded by Economic & Social Research Council  
(Grant reference: ES/K005227/1)

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## **A CONCEPT MAPPING STUDY ON SOCIAL INCLUSION IN HONG KONG**

### **Abstract**

A focus group study involving concept mapping was conducted in September 2012 to investigate how the concept of social inclusion was understood by Hong Kong residents. It was a replication of an earlier UK study. Seven groups involving 61 participants (38 females; 23 males) were interviewed, including non-professional workers at a Non-government Organisation service, senior centre users, a mixed group of community residents, people with severe mental illness, professional social service providers, communication studies students, and social work students. Data analysis using Nvivo 10 and systematic thematic analysis identified six major themes including: (1) material resources and wealth, (2) work, (3) social (dis)harmony and diversity, (4) discrimination, (5) communication, and (6) participation in activities. An overall final model of Social Inclusion for Hong Kong based on concept maps for all seven groups is presented. The results will inform the conceptualisation and development of a Chinese-language measure of social inclusion (SCOPE-C) based on translation and cultural adaption of the Social and Community Opportunities Profile (SCOPE) developed in UK.

Keywords: social inclusion; social harmony; concept mapping; inclusive practices; qualitative methods

## **A CONCEPT MAPPING STUDY ON SOCIAL INCLUSION IN HONG KONG.**

### **Background**

The concepts of social exclusion / inclusion emerged in the 1970s and 1980s from Europe, where social exclusion figured prominently in policy discourse, developing on from the concept of poverty. Social inclusion was popularised in 1997 by the UK Labour Government of the day, which established a coordinating policy body called the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU 1998). In recent years social inclusion has gained considerable currency internationally: being a focus of social policy in diverse countries such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Macedonia and Nepal. The concept relates to all societal groups including children, ethnic minorities and migrants, older people, people with mental health problems or physical disability, and unemployed people. It also encompasses diverse societal systems such as public health, social care, education and criminal justice.

Social inclusion has also been ‘the guiding spirit’ or a stated objective of Hong Kong Government policies, including: White Papers on Social Welfare (Hong Kong Government 1973, 1975, 1991) and Rehabilitation (Hong Kong Government 1977, 1995); subsequent strategy documents on education, employment, and other supports or services for people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, new arrivals from the Mainland China and the underprivileged (Hong Kong Government 2012); and most recently policy addresses on housing, the caring society, education, sports development and the constitution, which value diversity, promote opportunities for population sub-groups and as such aim to foster social integration (Hong Kong Government 2013). A range of policy initiatives to support vulnerable groups through education, employment and other schemes have also developed

(Hong Kong Government 2012). Social Harmony has been an important goal of the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Hong Kong since its reintegration with China in 1997 (Tung 1997) and a campaign for Social Quality and Social Harmony has garnered support (Tung 2000). More recently, in 2012-2013, a public awareness campaign aimed at promoting mutual respect was launched by the government's Committee on Promotion of Civic Education (established in 2003 to promote civic and national education among its people). Three public service advertisements (entitled 'mutual respect', 'voices' and 'views') were broadcast online and on free-to-air television (Information Services Department 2013a). The campaign advocates appreciating different values and embracing different voices. A Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) was established in 2002 to support collaborative projects that promote community participation and social inclusion. As a result, an array of new services have developed including those for people with mental health problems, which aim "to help them stay in the community where they are familiar and develop their potential to the full" (Social Welfare Department 2012, p. 43).

Nevertheless, none of these policy initiatives or service developments have been evaluated properly, so their impact is unknown. Data suggest that viewings of the recent public awareness campaign on 'YouTube' are low in number - fewer than 1000 views as of May 2013 (Information Services Department 2013b).

Inadequate evaluation of social policy based interventions is not uncommon, and not unique to Hong Kong. Through its Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST), UNESCO has recently highlighted concerns about the evaluation of social inclusion policies and initiatives, and the interest in and importance of assessing inclusion robustly, over time. A recently convened meeting aimed at strengthening policy evaluations on social inclusion

through measurement and research / policy linkage, noted the complexity of measuring the concept due to its diverse, multi-dimensional definitions and operationalisation (UNESCO 2013).

### Definition of Social Inclusion

There is no consensus definition of social exclusion or social inclusion, nor is there agreement as to whether one is the inverse of the other. Two broad schools of thought emerge from reviews of the literature: the first might be called a rights-based approach, in which social exclusion reflects the deprivation of rights as a member or a citizen of a particular group, community, society, or country; the second considers social inclusion in terms of opportunities to participate in key functions or activities of society (Huxley et al. 2006). The rights-based approach is strongly associated with the international literature on social inclusion (for example, Rodgers, Gore and Figueiredo 1995), while the participation model develops the traditional concerns of social science and social policy particularly, in measuring poverty and multiple deprivation (Townsend 1979; Gordon et al. 2000).

Despite these divergent theoretical approaches, there is considerable overlap in the definitions of inclusion that have emerged more recently (Burchardt, Le Grand and Piachaud 2002a; 2002b). Social inclusion is widely agreed to be:

- relative to a given society (place and time);
- multi-dimensional (whether in terms of rights or key activities);
- dynamic (because inclusion is a process rather than a state); and
- multi-layered (in that its causes operate at individual, familial, communal, societal and even global levels).

Four aspects of social exclusion have been identified (Burchadt et al. 2002a; 2002b): consumption - where individuals lack the capacity to purchase goods and services; production - where individuals are unable to find employment; involvement - in local and national politics and organizations; and finally - social interaction and family support.

This relative homogeneity tends to be reflected in policy. For example, the European Commission (2004) adopts a hybrid definition, but emphasises the participatory model, referring to: ‘a process, which ensures those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life, and enjoy a standard of living and wellbeing that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision-making, which affects their lives and access to their fundamental human rights, as defined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union’ (European Commission 2004, p. 1).

UK policy also encapsulates both approaches viewing social inclusion broadly in terms of material and other opportunities for participation (Brennan et al. 1999), lack of participation, integration and power (Room 1997), and its manifestation at national and community level (Berman and Phillips 2000); inclusion in society is defined normatively as citizenship, having a job, home or financial security according to the norms of society, and being part of, and identifying with, a community (Social Exclusion Unit 1998).

Similarly, the Hong Kong Government adopts a mixed approach that recognises individuals’ rights in terms of “enhancing an inclusive society, so that all individuals can enjoy equality

and respect in different areas of life”, to be achieved through participation in education, training, employment and other means (Hong Kong Government 2012).

### Research Evidence

The emerging literature on social inclusion takes little heed of concerns articulated through UNESCO (2013) about current capacity to evaluate social inclusion policy and initiatives rigorously and appropriately. Recent studies, including surveys undertaken in Hong Kong (Cheung 2013) often seek to examine social inclusion or evaluate social inclusion policies without sufficient understanding of how the concept is understood, and which indicators tap into the construct. Few studies have focused on the conceptualisation of social inclusion at the individual rather than societal level, making the construct validity and face validity with those for whom a more inclusive society is sought, highly questionable. While measures such as the Social Inclusion Questionnaire User Experience (Mezey et al. 2012) have reported reasonable psychometric properties for some aspects of reliability and validity, as far as we are aware only the Social and Community Opportunities Profile (Huxley et al. 2012) involved mapping the concept of social inclusion as part of the instrument development and validation process.

This paper builds upon that work undertaken in the UK by two of the present authors, in which nine groups representative of the UK population participated in concept mapping exercises to provide a clearer understanding of how the term is perceived, which domains are relevant and, which indicators need to be included in measures of social inclusion (Huxley et al. 2006; Huxley et al. 2008). This paper reports the first phase of an ESRC funded replication study to develop a Chinese language measure of social inclusion (SCOPE-C) based on translation and cultural adaptation of the UK Social and Community Opportunities



Profile (SCOPE). Using the same methodology as the UK study, this paper explores the relevance of social inclusion in the Hong Kong culture, and examines how the concept is understood by Hong Kong residents.

### Aims and objectives

The main aim of this paper is to determine whether the SCOPE measure of social inclusion can be culturally adapted for application in the Hong Kong context.

The underlying objectives are to:

- describe how the concept of social inclusion is understood by Hong Kong residents
- determine whether the concept is relevant in Hong Kong society
- explore similarities and differences in understanding between Hong Kong and the UK
- identify common and divergent domains for the SCOPE-C measure.

The research team made no prior assumptions about how social inclusion is constructed among Hong Kong participants, but recognise that some commonality with the UK understanding is needed, for cultural comparisons using the SCOPE to be valid.

### **Method**

The concept mapping phase of this study will inform the content of a conceptual model of social inclusion for Hong Kong, and the cultural adaptation of the Social and Community Opportunities Profile (SCOPE-C) measure that we plan to develop.

## Concept Mapping

Concept maps are graphical tools for organizing and representing knowledge, which can be used for measurement development, as in this case with the creation of a social inclusion index (Trochim 1985; Trochim 1989a; 1989b; 1989c).

It involves six processes:

- Preparation - identifying and obtaining a sample, recruiting participants and determining a focus
- Generating statements
- Structuring statements
- Representation of statements
- Interpretation of maps
- Utilisation of the concept maps

A flow chart indicating the process of data collection and data analysis is shown in Figure 1.

The following sections describe the details.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

### *Participants*

Participants were recruited through a mental health association, an elderly centre, a rehabilitation services centre, and personal networks. Seven focus groups were conducted to represent a wide range of demographic characteristics. The composition of the focus groups is summarized in Table 1. The focus groups involved two groups of social service providers including clinical psychologists, social workers, and non-professional workers of

a mental health association, as well as a group of mental health service receivers. Two groups of students and a group of older people were included to cover the whole age range. A group of parents, adults, and community residents representing the general public was also involved. All participants (n=61) were of Chinese ethnic origin. Thirty-eight participants were female and 23 were male. Participants' age ranged from 19 to 92.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

### *Procedures*

Recruitment and other procedures mirrored those of the UK concept mapping study (Huxley et al. 2006). Ethical approval was granted by the University's Committee on the Use of Human and Animal Subjects in Teaching and Research. An informed consent statement was given to participants prior to the focus group interviews. Participants were told that their participation in this study was voluntary, that no identifier would be used and that they may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time during the interview without penalty and without any loss of benefits. The focus groups were conducted between September and November 2012, in Hong Kong. The interviews were conducted in Cantonese (a Chinese dialect used in Hong Kong) and moderated by one of the authors. Five focus groups were conducted at premises of the Non-Governmental Organisations and the remaining two at a university campus.

### *Generating statements*

All participants in each group were asked to write three ideas that they associated with the term "social inclusion", on the memo papers distributed. Members of the older persons' group were not required to communicate their ideas in written form and were offered help

to write their ideas down, by the research assistants. It was emphasised that there are no right or wrong answers. Participants were then asked to elaborate and discuss their ideas and encouraged to generate more ideas as the discussion moved on. When the procedure of elaborating the statements was complete (i.e. no more ideas were generated), participants were asked to post the memo papers on a whiteboard. Similar statements were placed together and different statements further apart. Participants were given an opportunity to redistribute the statements until agreement had been achieved. Finally, participants were required to label different groups of statements under themes and describe the relationships between the themes. The final version of the concept map was agreed by all participants in each group. The duration of the groups ranged from 51 to 82 minutes ( $M = 65.1$ ,  $SD = 12.5$ ).

#### Data analysis and model construction

A research assistant employed for the project transcribed and translated the interviews into English. The transcriptions were cross-checked independently by two of the authors for accuracy. The seven group transcripts were loaded into Nvivo10, and qualitative analysis programme which generates 'nodes' by grouping together similar statements and topics from transcripts. Nodes were created for each transcript sequentially, adding new nodes as they emerged. The nodes were then used to create a graphic 'model' for each of the seven groups. The seven models and the seven concept maps constructed by the mapping groups were examined thoroughly to identify consistent 'themes'. Throughout the process of theme identification, a comparison analysis method was used (Marshall and Rossman 1999).

Interview transcripts were compared and contrasted across the different maps and models systematically and consistently (Strauss 1987). Major themes were identified through repetition, and by making systematic comparisons across the units of data by searching for similarities and differences. The theme classifications were identified by one of the authors

and were agreed upon by another. Representative quotes are presented in the following section, which is sub-divided into the main themes

Following the creation of seven group models, an overall model was created based on the number of responses for all groups. The research team then discussed the content of the final model, and agreed upon the direction and extent of connection between all of the elements. This final model is also presented later.

As in the development of the original SCOPE, this model will inform the content of the SCOPE-C in terms of its core themes and item coverage, all to be agreed by the research team. Individual items (questions) will be selected from the Census and other Hong Kong surveys, or original SCOPE questions where these are readily understood.

## **Results**

Altogether 222 references to 18 nodes were identified and are summarised in Table 2. The nodes of ‘social (dis)harmony’ and ‘diversity’ were reported by all seven groups and were referenced 26 times. Four nodes including ‘material resources and wealth’ (37 references), ‘work’ (28 references), ‘communication’ (17 references), and ‘participation in activities’ (13 references) were reported by six out of the seven focus groups. Though reported by only four focus groups, the node ‘discrimination’ was mentioned 24 times, making it the fourth most frequently referenced node. Based on the procedure described above, six major themes were developed, each of which are elaborated upon and illustrated below.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

## Theme 1: Material Resources and Wealth

‘Material resources’ was the most commonly identified theme with references most often relating to the role played in society by wealth differentials. Another component was the ability to access these material and community resources, which are restricted to some groups in society, contributing to the exclusion of other social groups. Some people felt that the rich were in control of making the rules that maintained the wealth differential between themselves and the poor. This is illustrated by the following three representative quotes.

“(Interviewer: In what way do you mean ‘equality’?) In two ways, first, we get equal chance of sharing the society’s resources. It is about equal opportunity. Second, we can have opportunity to develop our potential. We have the right to choose... I think people sometimes do not live in harmony with one another. It is because of the uneven distribution of society’s wealth. Rich people are very rich and poor people are very poor. It explains why there is hatred toward the rich.”

(Group 1: Non-professional workers of a mental health association)

“I want to say something about “community resources”. The supporting resources of a community would affect the social inclusion. For example, there are insufficient facilities for people in a community to use together. Sometimes, people don’t even have the opportunity to encounter. So, how can we achieve inclusion?”

(Group 3: A group of parents, adults, and community residents)

“Everyone needs to use money. You need money to integrate into society. So money is very important. If you don’t have money, you can do nothing. If you have money, at least you can satisfy your daily needs. (Interviewer: What do you mean by “Money” and “Social inclusion”? How can you explain their relationship?) For example, living! You need to pay rent. If you can’t pay the rent, you can’t integrate into society.”

(Group 4: Mental health service users)

## Theme 2: Work

Work was the next most common theme, in part because it was seen as essential to access material resources, through financial means. Work was seen as a source of social participation and the development of personal friendships, both of which contribute to inclusion. On the other hand the workplace was sometimes seen as the location for discrimination against minority groups. Education was identified as a means to improve one's work status. The following quote illustrates the importance of work for social inclusion.

“I want to talk about resources for employers. If they have more resources, they can employ mental patients and people with physical disabilities. In this way, these people can integrate into society through work. These people have the ability to contribute to society. Without government support, most of the employers are reluctant to hire them. These people therefore do not have a chance to integrate into society.”

(Group 3: A group of parents, adults, and community residents)

The group of people with mental health problems expressed the view that maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationship in the work context is important. They perceived a lot of stress to fit-in with the highly competitive work environment in Hong Kong, as illustrated in the following two quotes:

“I think interpersonal relationship is important. It is because normal people misunderstand us. They discriminate against us. We hope other people can accept us. That's why interpersonal relationship is important. (Interviewer: What do you mean by misunderstanding?) They are afraid of us and think we are crazy. Social inclusion needs government's publicity. Not every mental patient has violent tendencies. They need to understand more about this illness.”

(Group 4: Mental health service users)

“If I want to integrate into society, I need to evaluate my competence, type of work that is suitable for me, my personality, and whether I can handle the job or not. If you are unable to handle the job, it is useless for you to force yourself. Try your best. The jobs in Hong Kong require you to accomplish in a quick and good manner, no matter which companies or which industries you work for.”

(Group 4: Mental health service users)

### Theme 3: Social (Dis)Harmony and Diversity

Social harmony and the acceptance of diversity can lead to a positive and ‘loving’ environment. Societal harmony was a positive social goal for many of the groups, but was more a focus for younger participants than the older age groups. Older people felt that respect was important to the achievement of societal harmony, typically expressed as:

“Social inclusion exists when people accept and care each other from the heart regardless of their social class, occupation, sex and race. They can participate in different activities together. I accept you not because of certain benefits or reputation. The two are different. One is apparent acceptance. The other one is acceptance without benefits. It is ‘accommodating’.”

(Group 5: Social service providers)

“Language diversity! Different countries have different languages. There are a lot of languages in the world. Due to globalization, a lot of languages disappear. Social inclusion includes many aspects, such as the existence of different languages, even though only very few people speak a particular language.”

(Group 1: Non-professional workers)

### Theme 4: Discrimination

Discrimination could be against individuals or more commonly against minority groups such as immigrant workers, or people with mental health problems (the latter was a feature of the community resident group). Many of the participants promoted the need for people to



avoid stereotypes and to accept the diverse nature of society. Several saddening cases involving discrimination of mentally ill workers were reported.

“For example, in the McDonald’s case I mentioned, a staff with intellectual disabilities was bullied by a customer. However, her colleagues didn’t help her. The colleagues discriminated against them... Of course, some employers do discriminate against them... Some colleagues make joke on them. (Interviewer: Why do they do that?) They think doing this kind of thing is funny because they can’t communicate with each other.”

(Group 3: A group of parents, adults, and community residents)

Communication students commented that social exclusion exists due to social problems such as discrimination, cultural conflict, and influx of immigrants from Mainland China.

“When I think of social inclusion, I think about underprivileged class and minorities. I notice about the problem of social inclusion when I heard news about their education and the difficulties experienced by Indonesian domestic helpers, and children with intellectual disabilities. I think of the issue of discrimination. In fact, people do not intend to discriminate against them. But people do not care about their interests. The government policies sometimes ignore the welfare of these people. They discriminate against these people unconsciously.”

(Group 6: Communication students)

Social work students thought that racial and cultural differences cause discrimination.

“Different races may be discriminated against by others such as black people. It is because they have different cultures. Apart from accepting them, it is important for us to accept their cultures.”

(Group 7: Social work students)

#### Theme 5: Communication

Communication was seen to be the main means to promoting inclusion and to opposing discrimination. To understand other people's point of view one should attempt to communicate with them, and allow their voices to be heard. The difficult issue of language and dialect differences is therefore a key component in the promotion of inclusion in a multi-dialect society. Here are the two representative quotes:

“I think communication is very important. I am now doing a part-time job and communication skill is very important. When I don't understand what the mainland Chinese or India and Pakistan people are thinking about, I would communicate with them. I would ask them ‘Why do you have such need?’ and ‘Why do you think in that way?’ Communication improves our relationship and enhances empathy.”

(Group 6: Communication students)

“Different social classes and people of different background should have equal rights and opportunities to participate. They need to accept this concept. I wrote “Equal opportunity/participation”. I focus on whether their voices are being listened and whether they have opportunities to express their opinions. After that, are their opinions respected and valued? Sometimes we can see that some social classes' voices are weak and their powers are low. Their voices cannot be heard. It seems that their opportunities to participate are low.”

(Group 5: Social service providers)

#### Theme 6: Participation in Activities

Participation in activities was felt to be a major factor in the ability to be included in society. It could improve health and well-being and lead to the development of interpersonal relationships, enhanced social networks and the accumulation of social capital. It also helped to counter discrimination and to improve communication. Here are two typical quotes.

“I think we should get involved in society. Social centre for the elderly is really good. Social centre for the elderly is an organization. There are a lot of social activities and

interest groups such as painting class. We can chat with friends in the interest groups. It is like a big family. Very happy! Sometimes I feel bored at home because my son and daughter have grown up. They have their own families.”

(Group 2: Senior residents)

“We need to take an active role for social inclusion. Some elderly and people with low self-esteem would stay at home and they don’t want to meet people. If you don’t go out to meet people, they can’t find you and interact with you. It is impossible for you to integrate into society. I think you need to take initiative to integrate into society. (Interviewer: Do you think which side should do more, the majority or minority?) I think both sides shall make an effort. I think someone who has the ability and who knows and understands own needs should take initiative such as attending an interest class.”

(Group 6: Communication students)

Figure 2 provides an example of an individual group model, in this case generated from the group of communication students. Within each model, the size of the circles corresponds to the number of responses within each theme / node.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

An overall model created on the basis of the node response numbers for all groups, is shown in Figure 3.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

Comparison of the overall model presented in Figure 3, with a similar model for the UK (Huxley et al 2006) enabled the research team to compare similarities and differences in the construction of social inclusion in the UK and Hong Kong, and to determine whether conceptual understanding was sufficiently similar to apply the SCOPE framework in the

Hong Kong context. The expectation is that a combined model will be produced (see subsequent paper on the comparison of HK and UK models).

The groups were also largely similar in that there was little mention of civil, civic, or human rights. Only the focus group of social services providers commented that the government policy should protect the rights as well as interest of different groups, and interest groups should work together to fight for their rights of participation.

Although our focus so far has been on the major similarities in groups' understanding of social inclusion, there are, however, some striking group differences in the terms used to describe social inclusion. For instance, only the older persons' group (all women) referred to 'health' as important to social inclusion, by which they meant access to health information and check-ups. The older persons' group, the social services professionals and the communication students were the only groups not to cite work as an important component of inclusion. The use of the term social harmony also differed between groups: the older persons' group did not use the term at all, while the non-professional helpers and the social work students both preferred the term 'cultural diversity'. Interestingly the group of people with mental health problems did refer to social harmony and not to diversity. Negative references to people with mental health problems were limited to groups involving older people and community residents.

## **Discussion**

Like all studies, ours is subject to some limitations. For example, the membership of concept mapping groups was not based on random selection, and so may be subject to self-selection bias. This process, however, did mirror that used in the UK study to provide consistency. Representativeness of opinion can only be judged by the extent to which views

conform to current knowledge and evidence from other sources. Some groups were gender imbalanced. Nevertheless, the range of groups was purposively selected to reflect diversity and, as will be seen below, group collective views reflect conventional thinking more often than not.

While there is potential for interpretation bias, we have countered this in several ways including having group members reach consensus on the map produced by their group, comparing analyses using a standard assessment package (Nvivo 10) and a recognised systematic thematic approach, having two researchers agree these findings, and finally having the entire research team agree the content and direction of relationships within the final model (to be tested in data at a later stage in the study). Therefore on balance we are fairly confident that the findings presented are reliable and representative of the wider community.

This discussion that follows examines the main themes identified by the analyses in the context of these study limitations and previous literature.

Material resources and wealth was the most strongly endorsed aspect of social inclusion. This reflects the feeling, observed in the literature (Yu 2007), that Hong Kong is a polarised society with considerable wealth inequality (Lee et al. 2007), and people's concern about wealth disparity and worries that the 'winner takes all'. This could be attributable to the frequent reporting of property hegemony in the news media, and the high visibility and glorification of wealth in everyday life. In this respect government policies can be seen to reinforce this feeling, on the one hand continuing to provide a booming market for financial and other sectors, and on the other adopting a residualisation approach to welfare (trying to

reduce and restrict the dependence on state benefits, and promote welfare to work style policies) (Yu 2007).

Partly as a consequence of this emphasis, work was the second most endorsed feature of social inclusion, bringing with it access to material resources. Work also promotes social inclusion through its social component, making participation in ‘out of work’ activities likely among work colleagues. The mental health group in particular, saw acceptance in a work environment as especially significant for their social inclusion. This is consistent with the identification by Ho and Chan (2012) of work as one of the main driving forces of social harmony in Hong Kong.

Social harmony and diversity emerged as a considerably important aspect of social inclusion. This can in part be attributed to Hong Kong government policy, which has emphasised the promotion of social harmony (Chau and Yu 2009; Cheung 2013; Ho and Chan 2012; Tsang 2010; Tung 1997, 2000; Wong and Shik 2011) and also social inclusion (Tsang 2010). In all three public services advertisements created by the government, mutual respect for diversity and maintaining social harmony were emphasised. In order to promote social inclusion and social harmony the government should, according to Ho and Chan (2012) “join hands with the people in order to spread the message of mutual respect, help and tolerance” (p. 58).

Harmony has been identified as the cardinal value of Chinese culture (Chen and Starosta 1997). Individual concepts of social harmony may differ, and before the data were collected we had no preconceived idea of its importance to Hong Kong Chinese people. As the quotes illustrated, in our study people often spoke of social harmony and the acceptance or

tolerance of diversity in the same sentence. Respect for others was another component of social harmony, as was the acceptance of linguistic diversity. The result was consistent with the notion that harmony in the Chinese context was relational and was able to tolerate differences (Wei and Li 2013).

Discrimination was frequently reported at schools, work places, and in the community. Linguistic diversity was an important feature of the theme of discrimination, mainly in terms of the different dialects used in Hong Kong. This also contributed to communication being another major theme. People felt that immigrant workers, people with mental health problems and people with learning disabilities were hard to communicate with. The result was consistent with Chen and Chung's (1994) argument that the goal of Chinese communication is to pursue a conflict-free social relationship. Better communication was seen as the way to improve social inclusion, although it was sometimes unclear exactly what form of improvement in communication was being proposed.

One way in which communication might be improved was through the final theme – participation in activities, mostly outside the home. This would bring people together over a shared enterprise, such as an art class, or a discussion group, or something very informal like meeting in a coffee-shop. Participants in the mapping groups put much emphasis on equal opportunity and equal access to resources. The result echoed the argument that participating in community activities is able to help the underprivileged members of the society to develop a collective identity and over time can lead to empowerment (IFAD 2001).

The use of terminology relating to ‘social harmony’ or ‘diversity’, whether cultural or linguistic, is interesting and may be an age related finding since the older persons’ group did not use the term social harmony. This group and the community residents group were the only ones to make negative references to people with mental health problems, which is a cause for some concern if people are growing older with these negative perceptions. This suggests that the government might need to invest more effort in promoting inclusion of people with mental health problems in the way they do for people with disabilities more generally.

Only one group mentioned the individual’s rights to access resources and facilities in society. This is very different from the right-based approach to social inclusion in western research literature, and to the hybrid definition of social inclusion adopted by policy makers internationally, including in Europe, the UK and Hong Kong (cited in the background section above). Data from the present study suggest that for the Chinese in Hong Kong, access to resources is more likely to be seen as a benefit for the under-privileged than a right for them.

Finally, the Chinese as a collective group put more emphasis on civic responsibility than civil rights. Defending a person’s right can involve confrontation. Personal confrontation is often considered threatening to a harmonious relationship and is to be used sparingly in Chinese societies (Chan and Ma 2002). This is one of several potential differences in the way the concept of social inclusion emerges in Western and Eastern societies.

While the concept of social inclusion is perceived a little differently in Hong Kong to the UK, in some important ways, there is enough shared understanding to suggest that a cultural



adaptation of the SCOPE is feasible and desirable. The concept is clearly relevant to the Hong Kong context as demonstrated by the country's policy focus and the way in which members of society were able to articulate what social inclusion means to them. The existence of policies and policy based initiatives targeting social inclusion requires that the concept can be measured for evaluation purposes. The fact that there are some differences in conceptual understanding suggest that a culturally sensitive measure is needed, but common understanding about the importance of work, material well-being, participation, access to resources etc suggest that the UK SCOPE can be applied appropriately as a core construct, to be supplemented by culture specific indicators (e.g. in Hong Kong a discrimination scale) as appropriate.

In the next paper we will report in more detail the similarities and differences in the measurement of social inclusion between the UK and Hong Kong, and will use integrated concept mapping data to develop a model of inclusion common to both countries.

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