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Perceptions of Social Justice Among the South Asian and Mainstream Chinese Youth from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the attitudes of young people from different cultural backgrounds in Hong Kong toward social justice, in particular those regarding gender, racial/ethnic equalities, and immigrant rights. Among the sample of 15,428 adolescents, aged 12 to 19, 7.1% were South Asians, 15.5% were immigrants from mainland China, 4.1% were cross-boundary students, 73% were Hong Kong mainstream Chinese, and 0.3% did not indicate. Their civic attitudes were assessed by the adapted International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) (2009) questionnaire instrument. Latent means analysis (LMA) was conducted and the findings concluded that, compared with Hong Kong mainstream students (HKMS), South Asian (SA) students reported a statistically significant lower score on gender equality and significantly higher score on racial/ethnic equality and immigrants' rights. In contrast, both Cross-Boundary students (CBS) and Chinese Immigrant students (CIS) rated significantly higher on items relating to racial/ethnic equality and immigrants' rights, as compared with their HKMS counterparts. Regression analyses were also utilized to investigate how demographic variables predicted the latent variables. Specifically, regression analyses of different student groups on social justice issues were discussed to compare how demographic variables contributed to the subjective perceptions of these rights and responsibilities. Policy implications were drawn with reference to the data and recommendations for improvement were discussed.

Introduction

Immigrants and/or students from immigrant families make up the fastest-growing student groups in many societies. They bring diverse cultures, values, languages, and expectations to their new schooling and communities that impact all facets of a society (Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 1997). Immigrants and racial minorities often find themselves in a socially disadvantaged situation and are liable to have frustrations with the host society and mediating social integration and harmony (Wortley & Owusu-Baupah, 2009). People who perceive the justice system as fair tend to be more legally compliant than those who do not. As young people are in the process of undergoing a critical transition toward adulthood, their views on social justice and equal rights link with their sentiments and the socioeconomic structure.

Young people's political attitudes, behaviors, and participation have become key social issues in Hong Kong (Zheng et al., 2014). For example, the student umbrella movement, also known as Occupy Central (October 2011–September 2012), supported by the Hong Kong Federation of Students sparked heated public debate with regard to young people's political behavior and aspirations (Or & Lau, 2014). Yuen

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(2014b) argues that young Hong Kong people clearly care about the fairness of their society and the legitimacy of its justice system. As the society becomes increasingly pluralistic and culturally diversified, the commitment of the civil service toward a fair and tolerant society has been questioned (Kennedy, 2014). However, this area is under-researched and this study is a timely response to address this social issue. It aims to measure and document the attitudes of immigrant and mainstream adolescents in Hong Kong toward social justice and measure how the results correlate with the demographic context.

In Hong Kong, there are four types of adolescents in terms of ethnic grouping: Hong Kong Mainstream Students (HKMS), South Asian Students (SAS), Chinese Immigrant Students (CIS), and Cross-Boundary Students (CBS) from Mainland China. HKMS refers to the Hong Kong-born mainstream Chinese students enrolling in mainstreaming secondary schools, while SAS are defined mainly due to their ethnicity and linguistic background, although many of them can hold conversations in the local dialect, Cantonese. According to the 2016 population census (Census & Statistics Department, 2016), ethnic minority students in Hong Kong under the age of 15 originate mainly from Pakistan, India, and Nepal. The Education Bureau categorizes them as a single group under the umbrella term of Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS). However, given that some are second- and/or third-generation immigrants and are competent with spoken Cantonese, they are regarded as South Asians (Erni & Leung, 2014; Law & Lee, 2006; O'Connor, 2011; Yuen & Lee, 2013). The SAS are clustered in the Western Kowloon and Western New Territories. The predominantly CIS are Han Chinese who are either recent arrivals or have been in Hong Kong for less than seven years, while CBS are either children of Hong Kong-mainland intercultural families or children born in Hong Kong from mainland parents. Most of the CBS's fathers are Hong Kong citizens and mothers are mainland-born Chinese citizens residing in the Chinese boundary towns next to Hong Kong (Yuen, 2012). The latter CBS group refers to those born in Hong Kong from a mainland home. These student groups have the right of abode in Hong Kong and are mainly from socially disadvantaged families except those CBS from mainland families. Hong Kong has both moral and civic obligations to provide an equitable environment conducive for them to excel and to contribute.

Social justice attitudes are centered on beliefs and judgments about an equal society: a state of affairs in which all groups can enjoy equal opportunities for participation and contribution (Grayman & Godfrey, 2013). Equality may be defined as all people being born with equal dignity and rights irrespective of their personal characteristics (Schulz, Ainley, & Fraillon, 2011). However, even in democratic societies, respect and tolerance for people from different religions, ethnic origin, color, gender, political opinion, and philosophical beliefs remain a challenge to the implementation of the ideal (Filmer & Scott, 2008; World Bank, 2005). These issues of social justice shape the worldview and, thus, the value orientation of the new generation. The International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) (Schulz, Ainley, & Fraillon, 2011) has inspired numerous other studies on citizenship and civic education in both the West and the East (Davies & Issitt, 2005; Dejaeghere & Tudball, 2007; Hahn, 2010; Nelson, Wade, & Ken, 2010). In the ICCS, social justice is assessed using three dimensions: gender equality, racial/ethnic equality, and immigrant rights.

Gender equality refers to legally treating men and women equally with regard to equal opportunities and the availability and usage of resources, as well as services within the family and society (WHO, 1998). Evidence shows that many societies fall short of this standard. For instance, in some societies, females are still underrepresented in schooling (Mahaffy & Ward, 2002; Trommsdorf & Iwawaki 1989) and many are oppressed by their society's unjust socioeconomic systems (Fan & Lui, 2003; Post, 2004). For example, SA adolescent females stand out among those who struggle with inferior social status for not having rights equal to their male counterparts both at home and in society (Shum, Gao, & Tsung, 2012; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000).

Attitudes toward racial/ethnic equality have been well-examined together with attitudes toward ethnic prejudice and immigrant discrimination (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Hello, Scheepers, Vermulst, & Gerris, 2004; Wagner, Christ, & Hetimeyer, 2010; Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008). Among other theories, the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the realistic group conflict theory (Campbell, 1965; Sherif, 1966) have been employed to understand ethnic prejudices and ethnic distances in North America and Europe (Allen & Nielsen, 2002; Berry, 1991; Billet & De Witte, 2008; Coenders, Lubbers, Scheepers, & Verkuyten, 2008; Davis & Smith, 1992; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Tam et al., 2008).

When immigrants are perceived as threats to the values, beliefs, and culture of mainstream society, defensive national reactions are aroused (Barber, Torney-Purta, & Fennelly, 2010; Joppke, 2005; Lewin-Epstein & Levanon, 2005). For example, Verkuyten (2009) employs the group identity lens and national identification to explain the in-group and out-group threats of ethnic immigrant youth and adults in Holland. In parallel, Mainland Chinese in Hong Kong are seen as threats to both the values and resources of mainstream society as there have been rising tensions over the availability of maternity beds, school placements, and cultural clashes that fueled heated policy discussions among lawmakers in recent years. As a result, in January 2013 the Hong Kong government launched the “zero quota” policy to deter mainland Chinese pregnant women from giving birth in Hong Kong. Moreover, Hong Kong people tend to see Pakistanis, Indians, Filipinos, and Nepalese as out-group members of their society (Hong Kong Unison, 2012). The number of immigrant groups has prompted several studies in Hong Kong to examine such topics as citizenship and social support (Law & Lee, 2006), immigrants’ poverty (Lee, Wong, & Law, 2007), immigrant students’ well-being (Yuen, 2015; Yuen & Lee, 2013; Yuen, Lee, & Leung, 2016), and immigrant students’ civic engagement (Yuen, 2013). However, the attitudes of adolescents toward immigrants’ rights have not been further studied to any serious degree, especially using a comparative approach.

Issues facing non-local students in Hong Kong

Promoting social justice is shaping society to be equitable, respectful, and equal for all its members. Compared with mainstream groups, there is evidence that CIS, SAS, and CBS face different types and degrees of exclusion (Yuen, 2014a). The CIS report to be the most unsatisfied with life (Yuen, 2013, 2015 2016; Yuen, Lee, & Leung, 2016), while CBS struggle with having neither a Hong Kong nor a Mainland Chinese identity (Yuen, 2012). More SA children, on the other hand, had been excluded from early childhood schooling than from any other group traditionally. Additionally, SA females experience greater restrictions in education than their male counterparts due to family religion and customs (Shum, Gao, & Tsung, 2012). The life experiences of these young people may have direct or indirect impacts on their understanding of social justice issues.

The present study sought to investigate adolescents’ perceptions of social justice across the student groups with a focus on their attitudes toward gender equality, racial/ethnic equality, and immigrant rights in Hong Kong. The adapted instrument was based on the ICCS student questionnaire (Schulz, Ainley, & Fraillon, 2011; Yuen, 2014b).

Research questions

The following analysis explores three research questions to address gaps in the literature: (a) What are the young people’s attitudes toward issues relating to gender equality, racial/ethnic equality, and immigrant rights? (b) In what ways do the attitudes of the three non-mainstream groups differ from mainstream students and from each other? (c) How are attitudes toward social justice in the various student groups influenced by demographic variables?

Methodology

The data were gathered using the modified English and Chinese versions of the ICCS student questionnaire. Both questionnaires were identical in content. To answer the three research questions, a stratified sampling method was utilized to target secondary schools, including those with a number of SAS, CIS, and CBS, and involved all students from secondary one to six (sixth to twelfth graders). Formal consent forms were distributed and then collected from the designated school personnel, parents, and students. In compliance with the university research ethics standard, all participants were informed of the purpose of the study and confidentiality was both practiced and assured.

Participants

Our sample comprised 15,428 students, aged 12–19, from 28 Hong Kong secondary schools with a valid response rate of 80%. A total of 14,992 indicated their ethnic backgrounds. The sample comprised 73.0% HKMS, 7.1% SA, 15.5% CIS, and 4.1% CBS, representing 23% of the total S.1–S.6 population in 2016/2017 in Hong Kong. Gender distribution among the three Chinese groups was more or less equal, whereas with the SA, there were more boys (58.1%) than girls (41.9%).

Descriptive statistics of adolescents' views on these issues

The questionnaire instrument employed a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Table 1 presents students' self-rated scores on the three factors. Items 3, 4, 6, and 7 of Factor 1 and item 6 of Factor 3 were reverse-coded when conducting the analysis and the missing values accounting for 5% of the sample.

On gender equality, as shown in Table 1, the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that men and women should be equal in terms of rights, opportunities, and wages (items 1, 2, and 5). However, there was less agreement on gender equality in the areas of political involvement (items 3 and 6), job opportunities when few jobs were available (item 4), and family roles (item 7). For racial/ethnic equality, over 76% of students agreed or strongly agreed that different ethnic minority groups should have equal

Table 1. The frequency of views of students on relevant issues.

Factors	Items	1	2	3	4
Gender equality	1. Men and women should have equal opportunities to take part in government.	5.2	7.4	49.5	37.8
	2. Men and women should have the same rights in every day.	5.1	8.1	48.2	38.6
	3. Women should stay out of politics. (Reversed)	42.2	30.7	21.0	6.1
	4. When there are not many jobs available, men should have more rights to a job than women. (Reversed)	33.6	33.3	25.6	7.4
	5. Men and women should get equal pay when they are doing the same job.	5.2	9.4	45.3	40.0
	6. Men are better qualified to be political leaders than women. (Reversed)	31.6	34.5	26.2	7.7
	7. Women's first priority should be raising children at home. (Reversed)	29.3	34.3	28.5	7.8
Racial/ethnic equality	1. All ethnic/racial groups should have an equal chance to get a good education in Hong Kong.	7.2	12.8	54.1	26.0
	2. All ethnic/racial groups should have an equal chance for good jobs in Hong Kong.	6.3	13.7	54.1	25.9
	3. Schools should teach students to respect members of all ethnic/racial groups.	5.5	9.5	54.3	30.7
	4. All members of all ethnic/racial groups should be encouraged to run in elections for a political office.	6.9	17.2	53.7	22.2
	5. All members of all ethnic/racial groups should have the same rights and responsibilities.	6.4	12.0	54.7	27.0
Immigrants' Rights	1. New immigrants should have the opportunities to continue speaking their own language.	7.4	16.5	59.0	17.2
	2. Children of new immigrants should have the same opportunities for education as other children in Hong Kong.	7.8	16.4	56.1	19.7
	3. New immigrants should have the opportunity to vote in elections in Hong Kong.	8.6	21.7	53.5	16.2
	4. New immigrants should have the opportunity to continue their own customs and lifestyle.	8.2	18.6	56.5	16.7
	5. New immigrants should have all the same rights as other Hong Kong people.	8.5	18.3	55.3	17.8
	6. When there are not many jobs available, immigration should be restricted. (Reversed)	9.7	22.9	47.9	19.4

rights and responsibilities in accessing education and employment. Similar responses were noted on attitudes to immigrant rights, except many believed that local people should have priority over immigrants in employment when opportunities were scarce.

Attitudes toward gender rights

Regarding adolescents' perceptions of gender equality (Table 1) both the factor loadings and *R* square were improved by deleting the negligible items 1, 2, and 5. An improved index of goodness of fit was yielded ($\chi^2(2) = 200.062$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.993, TFI = .978, SRMR = .014, RMSEA = .083) with Cronbach's alpha (.902).

Attitudes toward racial and ethnic rights

Table 1 shows that adolescents' beliefs in racial/ethnic equality reached a satisfactory index of goodness of fit, CFA ($\chi^2(5) = 646.764$, $p < .001$, CFI = .981, TFI = .962, SRMR = .020, RMSEA = .094). Although RMSEA indicated a moderate index, the Cronbach's alpha (.946) suggested a very good internal consistency.

Attitudes toward immigrants' rights

The CFA results of immigrant rights (Table 1) also produced good indices ($\chi^2(9) = 512.984$, $p < .001$, CFI = .983, TFI = .972, SRMR = .023, RMSEA = .062) and with good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha, .874). Due to the small factor loading of item 6, it was deleted, and a better CFA result was yielded ($\chi^2(5) = 271.109$, $p < .001$, CFI = .990, TFI = .981, SRMR = .016, RMSEA = .061) with Cronbach's alpha (.918).

Statistical analysis strategies

Latent Mean Analysis (LMA) was utilized to identify the mean structures and to compare the student groups by using Mplus (Byrne, 2012). Multiple regression was subsequently applied to determine the relationship between students' demographic variables and their attitudes toward gender, racial/ethnic, and immigrant rights across the groups. To avoid multicollinearity, the student group variable was excluded in subsequent regression analyses.

Results

Attitudes toward gender equality across student groups

The LMA was conducted to compare the SA, CBS, and CIS with the HKMS while all three latent factors were observed. According to Byrne (2012), the procedure for comparing the mean difference includes: (a) building baseline models for each group of interest; (b) building the configural model; (c) freely estimating factor loadings and intercepts; and (d) comparing the latent means. Table 2a presents the indices for goodness of fit and Table 2b presents the LMA means comparisons of all student groups. Good internal consistency was acquired (Table 2a) and suitable for the next stage of analysis.

Table 2b shows that, compared with HKMS, LMA results revealed that SA scored significantly lower ($-.502$, $p < .001$) in gender equality and significantly higher in racial/ethnic equality and immigrant rights (.221, $p < .001$; .435, $p < .001$), respectively. There was no significant gender equality difference between CBS and HKMS. However, CBS rated higher in racial/ethnic equality (.103, $p < .05$)

Table 2a. Indices of fitness of student groups on gender equality, racial/ethnic equality and immigrant rights.

	χ^2 value	DF	CFI	TFI	SRMR	RMSEA
SA VS HKMS (Ref)	2,718.397	170	0.969	0.967	0.032	0.052
CBS VS HKMS (Ref)	2,689.327	170	0.969	0.967	0.031	0.053
CIS VS HKMS (Ref)	3,031.775	170	0.966	0.964	0.033	0.052

Table 2b. Latent mean analysis of three student groups (HKMS as a reference group).

	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Z score	p value
SA				
Gender equality	-0.502	0.037	-13.575	***
Racial/ethnic equality	0.221	0.038	5.844	***
Immigrants' rights	0.435	0.043	10.057	***
CBS				
Gender equality	-0.040	0.049	-0.910	0.363
Racial/ethnic equality	0.103	0.045	2.300	*
Immigrants' rights	0.248	0.049	5.065	***
CIS				
Gender equality	-0.014	0.025	-0.581	0.561
Racial/ethnic equality	0.155	0.025	6.112	***
Immigrants' rights	0.417	0.030	14.105	***

* $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.001$.

and in immigrants' rights (.248, $p < .001$) than HKMS (Table 2b). Likewise, CIS rated higher in both racial/ethnic equality (.155, $p < .001$) and immigrant rights (.417, $p < .001$) than HKMS, except in gender equality.

Prediction of demographic variables for gender equality, racial/ethnic equality and immigrant rights

The regression analyses demonstrated that all demographic variables were significant in predicting gender equality, although the R square values were small (Table 3). Overall, gender, age, and speaking English were significant predictors for attitudes toward gender and racial/ethnic equality. Family income was only significant for gender equality while student group, parent education, and writing English and Chinese were significant for racial/ethnic equality. Moreover, gender has the most predicting power over other variables across the items in gender equality ($\beta = .295$, $p < .001$) and racial/ethnic equality ($\beta = .100$, $p < .001$); student group outscored the other variables across the items in immigrant rights ($\beta = .150$, $p < .001$).

Prediction of demographic variables for three factors across student groups

Overall, girls outscored boys in ratings of all three factors across all four student groups (Table 4). Age was the only predictor for gender equality ($\beta = .079$, $p < .001$) of HKMS and a predictor for racial/ethnic equality ($\beta = .077$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .084$, $p < .001$) of HKMS and CIS. Additionally, age was the only significant predictor for immigrant rights ($\beta = .117$, $p < .001$) of CIS. Senior HKMS and CIS had more favorable evaluations of racial/ethnic equality than their younger counterparts. Parental education was

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis of three latent variables on demographic variables (total sample).

Variables	Gender equality	Racial/ethnic equality	Immigrants' rights
Gender	0.295***	0.100***	0.034***
Age	0.058***	0.066***	0.040***
StuGp	-0.016	0.072***	0.150***
ParentEd	0.000	0.024*	0.024*
FamInc	0.036***	0.012	-0.026*
Speak_Chi	0.042***	-0.019	-0.026*
Speak_Eng	-0.032*	0.062***	0.037*
Write_Chi	0.005	0.063***	0.047***
Write_Eng	0.028	0.045**	0.061***
R-square	0.094	0.035	0.035

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.



Table 4. Multiple regression analysis of three latent variables on demographic variables (HKMS, SA, CBS, and CIS).

Variables	Gender equality			Racial/ethnic equality			Immigrants' rights			
	HKMS	SA	CBS	HKMS	SA	CBS	HKMS	SA	CBS	CIS
Gender	0.298***	0.215***	0.258***	0.311***	0.100***	0.139***	0.120***	0.003	0.075	0.110***
Age	0.079***	0.001	-0.081	0.044	0.077***	-0.007	0.084***	-0.014	0.102*	0.117***
ParentEd	0.006	0.130***	-0.091	0.031	0.016	0.036	0.055**	-0.057	0.074	0.030
FamInc	0.011	0.090*	0.069	0.038	0.020	-0.026	0.000	0.001	-0.024	0.010
Speak_Chi	0.019	0.018	0.026	0.064*	-0.003	-0.072	-0.010	-0.092	-0.056	0.012
Write_Eng	-0.004	-0.073	-0.063	-0.062	0.056**	0.013	0.014	0.112	0.038	0.018
Write_Chi	-0.002	-0.004	-0.095	-0.029	0.051***	0.152*	0.117***	0.056	0.075	0.099**
Write_Eng	0.008	-0.129*	0.015	-0.055	0.042*	-0.021	0.039	0.098	0.007	0.044
R-Square	0.095	0.083	0.086	0.109	0.032	0.043	0.045	0.045	0.029	0.045

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

only a significant predictor for gender equality of SA and racial/ethnic equality of CIS. Competence in writing Chinese was another significant predictor for HKMS and CIS in racial/ethnic equality ($\beta = .051, p < 0.001$; $\beta = .152, p < .05$) and Factor 3 ($\beta = .041, p < .01$; $\beta = .099, p < .01$). However, family income was a significant predictor of gender equality in the SA group only ($\beta = .090, p < .05$) and a negative predictor of HKMS for evaluating immigrant rights ($\beta = -.028, p < .05$). Interestingly, writing English was significant for SA ($\beta = -.129, p < .05$) supporting gender equality and for HKMS with regard to racial/ethnic equality ($\beta = .042, p < .05$) and immigrant rights ($\beta = .054, p < .01$). Speaking Chinese was a significant predictor of gender equality for CIS ($\beta = .064, p < .05$) and for immigrant rights among the SA group ($\beta = -.102, p < .05$). Speaking English was a significant racial/ethnic equality predictor for HKMS ($\beta = .056, p < .01$) and again among SA ($\beta = .157, p < .05$).

Discussion

The findings confirm previous research and reveal some unexpected results. For example, LMA affirms that girls generally were in stronger agreement than boys with items suggesting that women should receive equal opportunities in education, employment, and political participation irrespective of their cultural backgrounds (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010; Grayman & Godfrey, 2013; Lauglo, 2013; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). This commonly shared view among young female adolescents exposes a pressing need to equalize gender differences across multiple facets of daily lives in society. Female CIS showed significantly higher support for gender equality than other girls, while SA girls showed the lowest. Despite SA and Chinese cultures both having long histories of strong patriarchal traditions, their value systems are nonetheless different. The cultural differences may well be due to the strong impact of (a) patriarchal religious faith on SAS who are mostly affiliated with their family's Islamic or Hindu traditions (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000; Yuen, 2013; Yuen & Lee, 2013), and (b) the preservation of ethnic tradition and culture in which adolescent SA girls are more tied to their homes and where they are exposed to rigid gender-specific norms (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). This being said, it would appear that gender difference is affected by the Hong Kong education system and the assimilation of students into local liberal culture. Both CBS and CIS are nonreligious groups and seem to be receptive to liberal values.

One model cannot explain all social phenomena. The findings show a need to expand East-West dialogue and comparative studies on promoting social justice in general and in addressing diverse cultural and ethnic student groups in particular. This study reflects a development of equity entering into the general belief systems of adolescents that different genders should share equal civic and political rights and responsibilities (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). Evaluation of youth engagement in social and civic engagement must be context-specific (Bastedo, 2015; Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, & Agrusti, 2016). For example, regarding SAS, the findings reveal an emerging awareness in gender equity among the SA girls after being educated in Hong Kong. This is both a local issue and yet confirms international findings (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000) that the gender equity issue seems to be a shared social concern among immigrant SA girls across Western and Eastern societies. Although the long-standing male dominance among SA communities reinforces the superiority of males it appears to generate a greater desire on the part of SA girls to overcome their disadvantage when their situation allows an equal footing. With their increased education opportunities, this phenomenon will become more common and hence will be of interest to social science researchers on gender and cultural studies.

Parental education, family income, and writing English are all significant predictors of SAS with regard to upholding gender equality, suggesting that family SES and academic exposure play an important role in this context. Access to education is likely to be the cause for SA girls to question their unequal social status at home and in society. Family income is strongly correlated with parental education and value orientation. This suggests although the majority of SA families come from the low-income sector, nevertheless there are professionals sympathetic toward gender equality (Isaacs & Magnuson, 2011).

Competence in English language is negatively linked with SAS's perception of gender rights. One reason for this unexpected result is that such students are competent academically and socially, rewarded by the meritocratic system, and hence have more contentment with their status quo. Language acquisition does not necessarily lead to value acquisition. As elsewhere, SAS tend to focus more on the instrumental

value of English rather than on their acculturation (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). A comparative study between an HK sample and a Western sample can further enhance such public knowledge. Regarding racial/ethnic equality, several demographic factors—including gender, age, writing Chinese, and writing English—were significant for HKMS, whereas speaking Chinese and speaking English were significant for SAS. This confirms the relationship, already known, between language and ethnicity (Kim & Chao, 2009; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000) and the challenge of acquiring either Chinese or English language for different ethnic student groups.

Affirming equal rights among racial/ethnic groups has been acknowledged as one of the indicators of solidarity in a multicultural society (Turner, 2007). The findings show that CIS held the strongest convictions in defending racial/ethnic rights and immigrants' rights out of all the immigrant groups. Ethnic prejudice and immigrant discrimination promotes explicit in-group and out-group conflicts and distances (Campbell, 1965; Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008). In this case, it may be due to prevailing tensions between Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese groups giving rise to a shared identity threat and hence a stronger conviction to protect their civic rights (Yuen, 2013). This study is timely and highly relevant to the educators, advocates, and policymakers at a time when the conflicts between mainland Hong Kong people are being widely discussed. Although most of the findings are specific to the political and social contexts in Hong Kong, struggles for wider social recognition and greater civic rights in a foreign land are also issues for international societies, as mainland Chinese are a fast-growing student group on campuses around the world. This finding has implications for the internationalization of education and comparative studies in addressing the conflicts between domestic and international students with reference to the civic understanding of social justice (Grayman & Godfrey, 2013).

International literature shows that immigrants are often regarded as threats to the values, beliefs, and culture of mainstream society (Barber, Torney-Purta, & Fennelly, 2010). The significant group differences in the attitudes toward racial/ethnic rights across the student groups deserve further attention. For instance, SAS had the largest group mean difference while CBS and HKMS had the smallest. This large difference could be attributed to the racial differences and the ethnic diversity within the SAS category, due in part to their traditional patriarchal cultures remaining in place to the second or third generation (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). By contrast, the narrower gap between HKMS and CBS shows the latter having a better understanding and higher assimilation of HK mainstream culture compared with their CIS and SA peers (Yuen, 2010).

Educational attainments of migrant children are linked with their linguistic status. All Hong Kong students are considered to have the same mother tongue, Cantonese, as implied in the “mother-tongue teaching” policy (Loper, 2004). This policy is not sensitive to the case of non-Chinese Hong Kong students (Erni & Leung, 2014). Likewise, most CIS do not initially speak Cantonese, and consequently they can feel both alienated and vulnerable regarding their identity at school as neither a Hong Konger nor a Mainlander (Yuen, 2010). Internationally, this is a recognized phenomenon that deserves more deliberated research attention (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Both CIS and SAS face multiple challenges adjusting to life in Hong Kong because of numerous interrelated acculturation stressors, such as unfamiliarity with language, lack of information of the education system, less access to services, and an experience of discriminatory treatment from society (Erni & Leung, 2014; Hong Kong Unison, 2012). Consequently, both these groups express desires for their disadvantaged status to be rectified and to be treated as equals.

The same pattern was found in attitudes toward immigrant rights. Although the government has instigated measures to help enable access to Hong Kong schools Erni and Leung (2014) argue that many SAS may continue to experience hardships in the society. The Chinese language remains the largest barrier for full and functional social inclusion as this leads to underperformance in school and diminished interaction with mainstream students. A dearth of suitable teacher support also compounds the problem. SAS have complicated feelings about Hong Kong people, and more than a few students could recall unpleasant incidents. Many SA complain that it is hard for them to make friends with local people (Ku, Chan, & Sandhu, 2005). SA support for immigrant rights is reflected in their personal encounters in Hong Kong. Compared with HKMS, CIS also rated very highly in their attitudes toward immigrants' rights. They mainly come from lower socioeconomic circumstances (Yuen, 2016; Yuen, Lee, & Leung, 2016), and consequently tend to be more aware of their family's economic position than their Hong Kong

counterparts (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1995). Social capital plays a significant role in shaping the sense of well-being in CIS, and teenagers commonly seek to expand their social network from family to peers. However, due to their family status, CIS often find this difficult. Contextual data from previous studies support the notion that CIS have a strong desire to be accepted as in-group members of the society (Yuen, 2010), and their difficulties in this area explain why CIS strongly support equal opportunities for education, employment, and the political participation of racial/ethnic groups in Hong Kong. Public policies should give more deliberated attention to enable them to contribute to Hong Kong on equal terms. For CBS, their sense of alienation is by far the strongest, and consequently they rated lowest in their perception of immigrants' rights.

It is noteworthy that speaking Chinese was found to have a negative relationship with perceptions of racial/ethnic rights. This offers some contradiction to the findings that speaking Chinese is an important tool for SA to socialize in Hong Kong (Yuen, 2010). However, such might be explained by SA feelings about Hong Kong and Chinese people and the fact that due to religious and social reasons, most SA lead a rather isolated life within mainstream society (Ku, Chan, & Sandhu, 2005).

Family income, writing Chinese, and writing English had a significant impact on adolescent perceptions of immigrant rights within HKMS, whereas none of the demographic variables contributed to this perception in SA. This may be due to the fact that school factors, peer factors, and other family factors such as parental support and communication, are the significant variables accounting for this perception (Dennis, Phinney & Chunteco, 2005).

For CBS, gender was the only significant predictor of adolescent attitudes toward gender rights. This may be due to the fact that gender equality is still an issue in mainland China especially in the rural areas (Hannum, Kong, & Zhange, 2009; Yu & Sarri, 1997). In their perception of racial/ethnic rights, gender and writing Chinese were the significant predictors, as CBS have less proficiency in complex Chinese characters than local students in general. The same is also true with SA in relation to HKMS in terms of language and ethnicity (Kim & Chao, 2009; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). In each case, competency in writing Chinese complex characters would enhance communication with HKMS, improve socialization, and consequently lower the prevalence of discrimination. Regarding immigrants' rights, only age played a significant role within the CBS. This is explained by the obvious point that the longer CBS are educated in Hong Kong, the more they are assimilated.

For CIS, gender and speaking Chinese were both significant predictors for the perception of gender equality. With regard to racial/ethnic rights, parental education was the significant predictor. Unlike HKMS, female and older CIS adolescents tend to support immigrants' rights. As their stay in Hong Kong lengthens, so too does their desire to identify themselves with their local counterparts and enjoy the same rights (Yuen, 2010).

Conclusion

The results of this original study underline how young Hong Kong people may endorse a strong sense of social justice in realizing gender, racial/ethnic equity, and immigrant rights regardless of their origin of culture. It would seem vital that this aspect of today's youth is understood and appreciated throughout the world. There are nevertheless significant student group differences with regard to perceptions of the assessed social justice issues as accounted by age, gender, and language competence. Consequently, the findings of this study have several implications for the development of policy to better integrate ethnic minority students into the HKMS group.

Ethnic minority students' rights

The findings show that student group is an important predictor for attitudes toward racial/ethnic rights. There are noticeable differences between the perceptions of non-mainstream student groups regarding immigrant rights compared to the mainstream group. For example, CIS indicated the strongest conviction in supporting immigrant rights followed by their SA peers, more than CBS and HKMS. This finding corroborates with the in-group and out-group model of identification threat perceived by immigrant and

ethnic minorities (Verkuyten, 2009). Within the Hong Kong context, the recent student protest movement illustrates the strong desire of mainstream youth to have greater social and political participation. This is a response to their frustrations and perceptions of limited opportunities in society, an important indicator of their subjective evaluation of civic and political engagement in Hong Kong. The society is also experiencing a series of tensions in relation to lifestyle, resource allocation, and the sharing of public space between mainstream and mainland Chinese. Relations between the two groups are an important issue, and this calls for public attention to be given to CIS to reaffirm their entitlement to civic rights. Policymakers should develop appropriate support measures and policies to promote greater social solidarity and equality.

Develop chinese language programs

Cantonese and complex Chinese characters have a unique place in Hong Kong society, and language plays an important role in socialization (Heath, 2008; Yuen, 2010). Because language is the basis for communication among different student groups, speaking Cantonese and writing Chinese complex characters should both be made accessible to all student groups with functional, equitable pathways. Additional learning support and resource allocation are both important policy directions, especially for schools with a high percentage of ethnic minority and Chinese immigrant students.

To complement this cross-sectional study, qualitative research is needed to unfold and triangulate the quantitative data. Moreover, adolescent attitudes and perceptions of social justice are context and time-specific. Future research should aim to collect multiple sources at multiple points to track the development of these perceptions and better formulate a stable prediction across their full spectrum.

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