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Family Violence: Attitudes and Beliefs - A Cross-Cultural Comparison Among Hong Kong, Singapore and Australian Human Service Workers.

Gillian Potter

This collaborative research project is being undertaken with Dr Kurt Lushington, Professor Freda Briggs, Dr Greg Ireland and Ms Josie Luscri of the University of South Australia and Masters in counselling students at the University of Hong Kong.

This study explores the attitudes and beliefs about family violence held by persons working in human services (e.g. teachers, social workers, nurses, psychologists) in Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia.

The aims of this study are to explore the attitudes and beliefs about family violence held by those who work in human service professions with a view to identifying necessary support and professional programs for members of the communities and the workers.

Family violence is a costly problem both socially and economically. The social impact of family violence is unequivocal. It has a negative effect on psychological, family and community well being. It also has a direct economic cost to the community. Government bodies in Australia spend in excess of 226 million dollars each year directly dealing with incidence of family violence. A better understanding of the factors that contribute to family violence will result in social and economic benefit.

Governments in Hong Kong and Singapore have recently identified this as an area of need. While there are many parallels between the experiences of Hong Kong Singapore and Australia, it is well recognised that family violence occurs within a cultural context where certain behaviours are considered acceptable while others are considered unacceptable. To what extent the cultural norms on family violence in Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia converge, is not known. This knowledge is important because policy

makers in each country are increasingly looking outside of their own experience to better inform practice and this process is clearly informed by cultural norms. A useful starting point to begin a comparison between cultural norms on family violence is to examine the attitudes and beliefs held by those in the human service profession; there is a paucity of information about this. Moreover, cross-cultural comparisons of attitudes and beliefs are yet to be explored.

At the time of writing this article a questionnaire on attitudes and beliefs about family violence has been administered to human service workers in Australia and Singapore and will be administered in Hong Kong later this year. This questionnaire contains statements obtained previously from interviews with Australian professionals, perpetrators and victims of family violence. Participants are asked to rate how strongly they agree or disagree with the statements. To control for "faking good", participants are also asked to complete the Marlowe-Crown Social desirability scale which will be used to validate responses on the attitudes and beliefs questionnaire. Data obtained from this study will be used to establish the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, to establish normative values and enable comparisons between Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore human service workers.

Principle component analysis will be used to explore the underlying commonalities between items in the questionnaire. This will be performed separately for Parts A, B and C. Part A focuses on sexual abuse, Part B on emotional abuse and Part C on family violence. Initially, data from the three countries will be combined. This will enable the identification of the factor structure of the questionnaires and further refinement of construct validity. Factor scores will then be compared between Australian, Hong Kong and Singaporean groups. Principle component

analyses will also be performed **in** each of the target populations to explore whether there are any cultural differences in factor structure. Combined groups and individual groups factor **scores** for **Parts A, B,** and C will also be cross-correlated to explore the relationship between attitudes and beliefs toward spousal abuse with that toward child emotional **abuse** and similarly, and with **that** toward child **sexual abuse**.

As there has been no similar project carried out, the findings **will** interest human service providers, trainers and policy makers as they design and implement relevant services and support programs for community members and professionals. Findings **of** the research will be published so they can be used by **students** undertaking teacher education, special education, nursing, counselling and other relevant social science programs at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.