

CHAPTER 1: PERCEPTIONS AND SELF-PERCEPTIONS**OVERVIEW**

This chapter presents an overview of the research conducted into the perceptions of Hong Kong Chinese towards Hong Kong's ethnic minorities and the perceptions that ethnic minorities have of themselves. The research findings highlight the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in Hong Kong and the impact this has on the self-perceptions of ethnic minorities residing here. For example, second- or third-generation ethnic minorities who are still seen as “immigrants” by locals due to their skin colour experience difficulties in establishing Hong Kong identities and a sense of belonging despite their longstanding connection with and contribution to Hong Kong.¹ The outcomes suggest an urgent need for targeted policies to tackle misinformation, prejudice and a fundamental lack of understanding and awareness about Hong Kong's ethnic minorities in the short-term and implement measures to cultivate trust, understanding and mutual respect for ethnically diverse groups in the longer-term. There is also a need to research and understand the history of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong to generate discourse that is inclusive of ethnic minorities and properly documents the presence and contributions of ethnic minorities here.

A. PERCEPTIONS OF HONG KONG CHINESE TOWARDS ETHNIC MINORITIES***A1. Government Consultations***

In 1996-1997, the Home Affairs Bureau conducted the first public consultation aimed at understanding Hong Kong people's attitudes and perceptions towards ethnic minorities in Hong Kong (“1997 Public Attitudes Towards Ethnic Minorities Survey”).² Based on the outcomes of this survey, the Government concluded that racial discrimination was not a serious problem in Hong Kong and this provided the basis for the decision not to introduce legislation to combat racial discrimination at that time.³ A review of the public's responses to some of the questions in the survey, however, shows precisely why such legislation was needed. The public's responses showcased their discriminatory attitudes towards particular groups. The failure on the part of the Government to take note of the prejudice inherent in the public's responses highlights the deeply rooted nature of the problem of racial discrimination in Hong Kong. The Government's conclusion that the findings do not suggest that racial discrimination was a serious problem in Hong Kong despite the discriminatory nature of the public's responses foreshadows and in a way, underscores the reason why many ethnic minorities in Hong Kong do not appear to be faring well across various aspects of life.

The Home Affairs Bureau commissioned a second public survey in 2004, in which a total of 1,954 respondents were interviewed (“2004 Public Attitudes Towards Racial Discrimination Survey”).⁴

Table 1.1 Respondents' views on the unacceptability of racial discrimination in different situations

Field	Situation	% finding behaviour 'unacceptable'
Provision of goods and services	Refusal to provide goods or services to a customer because of their racial background	89.3%
Admission to School	Refusal to admit a student on the basis of his / her racial background	86.0%
Salary	Two employees with an identical job portfolio get different salaries on the basis of their different racial backgrounds.	80.1%
Employment	Refusal to employ a person on the basis of their racial background	78.8%
	An advertisement for recruitment indicates that only persons of a certain race are eligible for the job.	71.4%
Membership in Clubs	Refusal to admit a person as a member on the basis of their racial background.	76.2%
Rental of Property	Refusal to let a vacant flat to a person on the basis of their racial background.	70.5%
	Refusal to sublet a room to a person on the basis of their racial background.	60.5%

Source: Home Affairs Bureau, (2004), "Survey on Public Attitudes towards Racial Discrimination".

A relatively high percentage of respondents (ranging between 60-90%) rated it as "unacceptable" to discriminate against a person based on his/ her racial background in specific situations (from the provision of goods and services to the letting of accommodation, see Table 1.1 above), Slightly less than half of them (47.5%) perceived that there was a problem of racial discrimination in Hong Kong. Nearly 60% of the respondents supported the introduction of legislation to prohibit racial discrimination and 80.2% were of the view that the Government "should take measures to promote racial harmony and educate the public about racial equality," whilst 64.7% believed that "a race discrimination law would not have a negative impact on the Hong Kong economy."

On attitudes towards having friends, colleagues or superiors of different racial backgrounds, there were very high acceptance levels ranging from 85.4% to 93.7%. However, compared to acceptance levels towards Caucasians and East Asians, acceptance levels for South Asians were lowest across all three categories. The lowest acceptance levels were for the category of the acceptability of having South Asians as friends, which 85.4% of the respondents considered acceptable compared to 92.7% and 91.6%.for Caucasians and East Asians respectively. Indeed, given that racial prejudice is invidious and can have a detrimental

impact on the targeted groups, the percentage of unacceptability of racial discrimination in the categories outlined ought to be significantly higher. That the acceptability of such discrimination in the context of employment, membership of clubs and rental of property is considerably high (almost 40% for rental of property) betrays the accuracy of the relatively low percentage of those who considered Hong Kong has a racial discrimination problem.

Also in 2004, the Government conducted a public consultation on the need for legislation against racial discrimination (“2004 Racial Discrimination Legislation Public Consultation”).⁵ The consultation exercise was criticized by a local NGO, Hong Kong Unison, for its failure to take into account ethnic minorities’ views on the issue, particularly in relation to the difficulties they faced and the issue of perceived discrimination.⁶ For instance, the consultation paper was not translated into languages of the major ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong, and there was little initiative taken to make ethnic minorities aware of the consultation process. Given the centrality of the views of this key stakeholder group, this was perceived to be a glaring omission.⁷

This led some universities and NGOs to conduct their own surveys to better understand the general acceptance of ethnic minorities among Hong Kong people. The findings of these surveys are described below.

A2. Public Attitude and Perception Towards Ethnic Minorities (2004)

In 2004, Lingnan University conducted a telephone survey on *Public Attitude and Perception Towards Ethnic Minorities* (the “2004 Public Perception Survey”).⁸

Table 1.2 Background of Participants Sample in the 2004 Public Perception Survey

Participants’ characteristics	% of Respondents
Male	50.4%
Female	49.6%
Aged 30-54	53.3 %
Completed Higher Secondary to Post-Secondary Education	46%
Students, Housewives, Unemployed, Retired	45.5
Worked in Non-professional occupations: Clerks, Service Workers, Shop Salesmen, Other Elementary work	~33%
Did not earn any monthly salary or earned Less than HK\$3000	43.3%
Earned between HK\$10,000 and HK\$29,999	33%

Source: Chan, Cheung Ming, Alfred and Wong, Hon Yui, Eric, “Survey on public attitude and perception towards ethnic minorities 2004” (2005).

A total of 512 respondents chosen randomly from 917 households participated, with an even balance between male and female participants and just over half of them (53.5%) were in the age bracket of 30-54. About half (46%) of the respondents had completed higher secondary

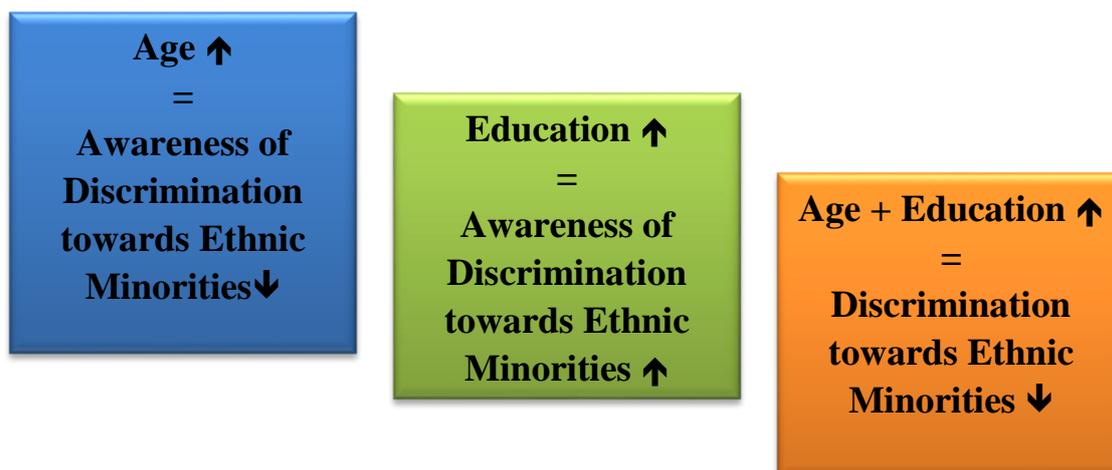
to post-secondary education whilst 45.5% comprised of students, housewives, the unemployed and retired. About a third of the respondents worked in non-professional occupations, such as clerks, service workers, shop sales workers and other elementary occupations.

Table 1.3 Key Findings of the 2004 Public Perception Survey

Statement	% agreed
Racial discrimination is a serious problem in Hong Kong	22.5%
Hong Kong people have serious racial discrimination towards ethnic minorities	~40%
Hong Kong people have a negative perception towards ethnic minorities	58.4%
Unwilling to let their children study in schools with ethnic minority children ⁹	27.6%
There was no need to legislate to combat race discrimination in Hong Kong	50%

Source: Chan, Cheung Ming, Alfred and Wong, Hon Yui, Eric, "Survey on public attitude and perception towards ethnic minorities 2004" (2005).

Just over a fifth (22.5%) of the respondents agreed that racial discrimination was a serious problem in Hong Kong¹⁰ whilst 58.4% of the respondents agreed that Hong Kong people had a negative perception towards ethnic minorities. Almost 30% indicated an unwillingness to let their children study in schools with ethnic minority children.¹¹ Contrary to the views of businesses and NGOs in Hong Kong at this time, which observed that Hong Kong was in need of an anti-racism law given the largely discriminatory attitudes prevalent in the community and the negative impact of the lack of such legislation,¹² half of the respondents disagreed on the need to legislate to combat race discrimination.

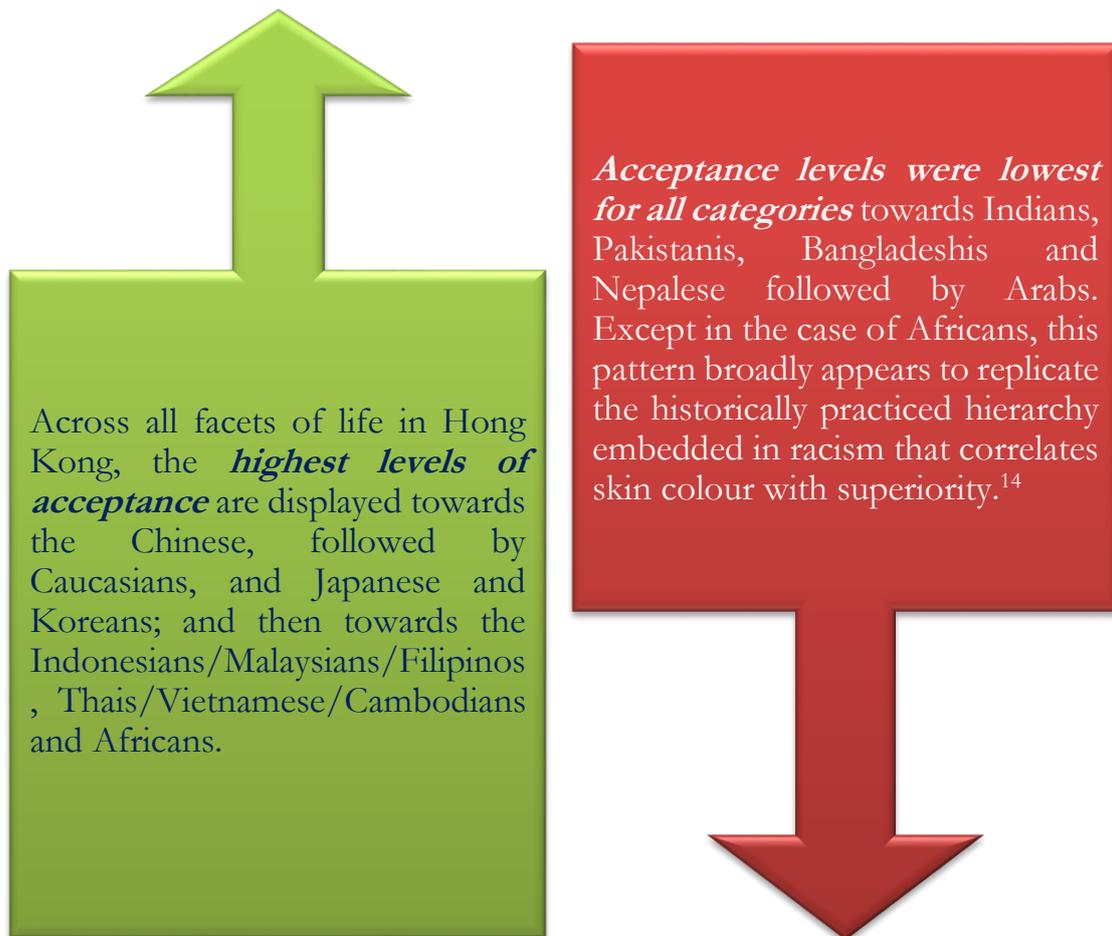


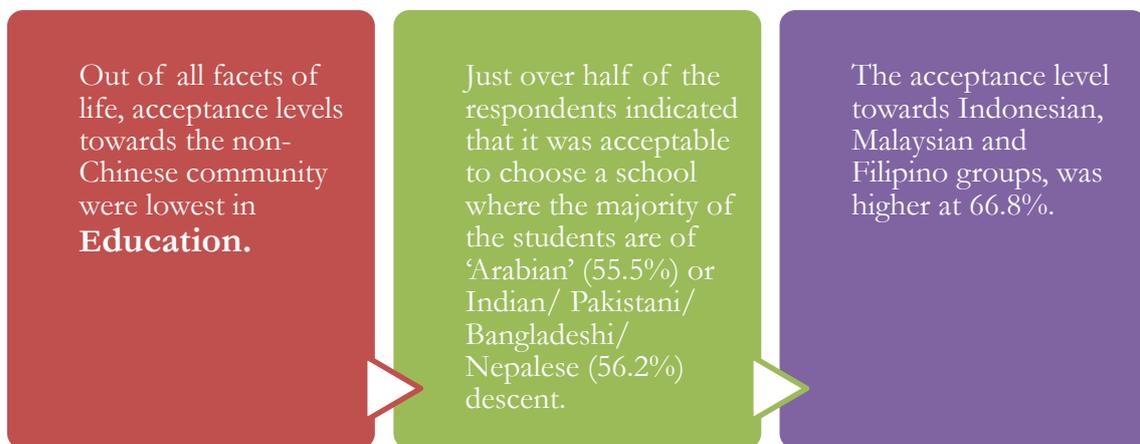
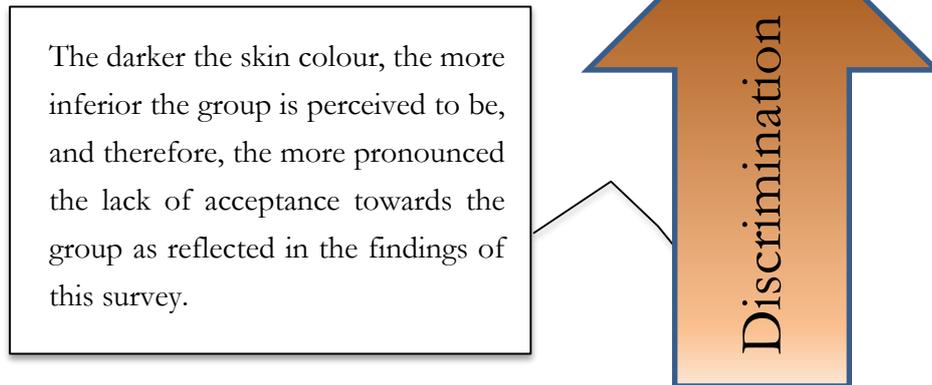
The survey also revealed interesting and important correlations between the background characteristics of the respondents and their attitudes. For example, the older the respondents were, the less aware they were of the problem of serious racial discrimination in Hong Kong towards ethnic minorities. On the other hand, they were more likely to have positive perceptions towards ethnic minorities. Likewise, whilst those who were better educated held

positive perceptions of ethnic minorities, they were also the group that was more aware of the negative attitudes and prevalence of racial discrimination towards them in Hong Kong. These provide excellent pointers as to where to target efforts to raise awareness about ethnic minorities and equality and non-discrimination.

A3. Racial Acceptance Report (2008)

In 2008, the Census and Statistics Department conducted a survey on Racial Acceptance (the “2008 Racial Acceptance Survey”), which compared the racial acceptance of respondents towards different ethnic groups.¹³ Around 10,000 households were surveyed from a scientifically selected sample, and in each household, a person aged 15 or above was randomly selected and asked about their views on racial acceptance towards different ethnic groups. As over 95% of the respondents were Chinese, this report analysed the degree of acceptance of ethnic Chinese towards other ethnic groups across different facets in life including, the provision of services, education, the workplace, living arrangements, family and social interaction. A summary of results is provided below in Table 1.4. Overall, this survey found that there is a significant difference in acceptance levels towards different ethnic groups.





Within the category of “other ethnic groups”, the group “Indonesian/ Malaysian/ Filipino”, ranking just behind “Japanese/ Korean”, generally received the highest levels of acceptance, followed by “Thai/ Vietnamese/ Cambodian” and “African.”¹⁵ “Pakistani/ Bangladeshi/ Nepalese and Arabian” generally received the lowest levels of acceptance across all categories of questions.

Although this survey is uniquely representative in that it is one of the largest scale studies conducted on acceptance on grounds of ethnicity, the unfortunate groupings of different ethnic groups, some of whom are perceived quite differently among themselves (for example, North Indians and Bangladeshis), make the findings insufficiently discrete as to the groups which are the targets of the lowest levels of acceptance within this artificially constructed grouping.

Also regretful, is the use of the term 'Arabian' which should be 'Arab' and, in any event, is not an ethnic group, as Arabs can comprise Caucasians, Africans and those of Middle-Eastern descent. It is primarily used as a descriptor of a culture or language.

The use of these terms and the groupings reflects a lack of appreciation of the insufficient differences between ethnic groups and even individuals belonging to the same ethnic group who come from different parts of one country.

Table 1.4 Racial Acceptance of Hong Kong ethnic Chinese towards different ethnic groups

Category (note 1)	Provision of Services	School	Workplace			
Statement: It is acceptable to...	provide service for customers of the following ethnic groups (%)	choose a prestigious school where the majority of students belong to the following ethnic groups	work with members of the following ethnic groups as colleagues	work under a superior of the following ethnic groups	offer a job to a candidate of the following ethnic groups	pay an employee of the following ethnic groups with lower salary
Chinese	99.3	99.1	99.5	99.1	98.9	94.1
Caucasian	96.6	87.9	95.9	95.1	93.1	90.4
Japanese/Korea	95.0	81.1	93.3	91.8	89.9	88.7
Indonesian/ Malaysian/Filipino	91.7	66.8	89.6	86.6	85.2	85.9
Thai/Vietnamese/ Cambodian	90.6	62.8	87.8	84.8	83.0	86.0
African	88	58	85.9	82.7	79.2	86.1
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladeshi/ Nepalese	85.7	56.2	83.7	80.5	77.6	85.6
Arabian	85.5	55.5	82.7	80.1	76.3	86.0

Table 1.4 Racial Acceptance of Hong Kong ethnic Chinese towards different ethnic groups (ctd.)

Category (Note 1)	Living Arrangements		Family		Social Interaction
Statement: It is acceptable to...	lease premises to a tenant of the following ethnic groups	have neighbours of the following ethnic groups living next door	have neighbours of the following ethnic groups living next door with whom they could communicate verbally ¹⁶	have family members of the following ethnic groups	invite friends of the following ethnic groups to a party
Chinese	98.1	99.3	99.2	98.8	99.2
Caucasian	88.7	95.7	93.6	85.2	93.7
Japanese/Korea	85.8	94.2	90.6	82.1	92.0
Indonesian/ Malaysian/Filipino	74.9	88.8	87.0	69.3	88.4
Thai/Vietnamese/ Cambodian	72.4	87.8	85.4	66.9	87.6
African	66.5	84.4	80.9	57.4	84.9
Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladeshi/ Nepalese	63.0	81.5	79.8	56.6	83.2
Arabian	63.6	81.6	79.0	56.2	82.7

Source: CSD Thematic Household Survey Report No. 39 – “Racial Acceptance”, June 2009

Note (1): The categories in this column group the levels of acceptance pertaining to the different areas of life in Hong Kong.

Note (2) Other ethnic groups include Indonesian/ Malaysian/ Filipino/ Thai/ Vietnamese/ Cambodian; African; Indian/ Pakistani/ Bangladeshi/ Nepalese and Arabian.

A4. Racial Encounters and Discrimination Experiences of South Asians (2012)

In a study conducted by the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission in partnership with Policy 21 (a University of Hong Kong subsidised Research Services Centre) into the areas of life that formed the basis of the 2008 Racial Acceptance Survey, 19 focus groups comprising 107 Chinese and South Asian stakeholders were organized. The findings present, among other matters, the perception of Hong Kong Chinese towards ethnic minorities in a number of different contexts and detail the extent of and forms of discrimination experienced by South Asians.¹⁷

Around a quarter of the participant sample comprised of South Asians. The rest of the sample comprised Hong Kong ethnic Chinese, who were members of the public or NGO staff. The sample for the focus group, aside from ensuring a wide cross-section across four categories (homemakers, retirees, employees and students), was not scientifically determined and it is unclear from the report how the sample was recruited.

The participants were chosen from various age-sex groups, levels of educational attainment and different economic activity status. For both the Hong Kong Chinese and the ethnic minority individual, the stakeholder groups that participated in the study are presented in *Table 1.5*.

Table 1.5: Stakeholder participants in focus groups in the 2012 Study on Racial Encounters and Discrimination Experienced by South Asians.

Stakeholders	Number of focus groups conducted	Number of Participants
NGOs	5	14
Members of the public (Chinese)*:	9	66
Members of the public, (South Asians)**:	5	27
Total	19	107

*Source: This table reproduces the data presented in the 2012 Study on Racial Encounters and Discrimination Experienced by South Asians.*¹⁸

*Includes home-makers, retirees, employed and students

** Includes home-makers, retirees, employed and students

The discussion in the focus groups centered on employment, education, social interaction, and the provision of goods, services and facilities.

Within each category, the views of South Asians regarding any perceived discrimination and the difficulties they encountered, as well as the opinions of Hong Kong Chinese towards South Asians, were presented. NGO representatives shared their experiences and observations in related contexts to supplement the discussion.

This section presents an overview of the findings pertaining to the perceptions of Hong Kong Chinese towards South Asians while Section B below presents the findings from the focus groups with the South Asians.

The responses of the Hong Kong Chinese respondents:

In Employment

- they do not have any negative impressions of South Asians. They do not think that South Asians are less hardworking or responsible compared to the Chinese. The participants did not report any negative experience of working with South Asians. They reported that they got along well and met socially with ethnic minorities outside of work. The participants stated that they were aware of the different eating habits of their South Asian colleagues (for example, many of them would bring lunch from home) and they would respect their needs for eating separately.

In Education

- the Chinese respondents said that they would mingle or work together with South Asian students if the school provided such an opportunity and in fact, mothers of young students reported that their children did mix and play with South Asian students.

In Social Interaction

- Chinese and South Asians interacted at “*a level of maintaining appropriate demeanour*”; but there was still a differential attitude towards South Asian ethnic minorities, especially among the younger generation of Chinese people. For instance, while Chinese parents indicated that they would accept South Asian in-laws, Chinese youngsters showed less enthusiasm about marrying or entering into relationships with South Asians. Also, they were hesitant about establishing deeper personal relationships with South Asians as opposed to Caucasians.
- Chinese participants reported that they had the perception that South Asians “*would like to keep to themselves, seldom venturing outside their own group.*” Some thought that South Asian women avoided making eye contact with them and therefore, formed the impression that South Asians secluded themselves “*as a result of an inferior feeling.*”

In terms of Differences in Cultures

- Chinese participants admitted that they knew little about South Asian cultures. For instance, they knew a few things about South Asian foods; however, festivities and customs were entirely foreign to them.¹⁸

On the provision of goods, services and facilities

- Chinese participants stated that they did not feel that South Asians were treated differently because of their race and ethnicity

On Other behaviour

- some noted that Chinese people would sometimes cover their noses when they were near South Asians or even avoid sitting next to them on public transportation. They claimed that this was not driven by discrimination but was rather a general reaction to unpleasant smells, regardless of a person’s race and ethnicity. They also thought that South Asians generally had larger physiques, which led to their preference of not sitting next to them.¹⁹

Chinese Participants

reported that they had the perception that South Asians “*would like to keep to themselves, seldom venturing outside their own group.*”

Some thought that South Asian women avoided making eye contact with them and therefore, formed the impression that South Asians secluded themselves “*as a result of an inferior feeling.*”²⁰

One participant

said he had no reservations hiring South Asians in the future and pointed out that working attitude is not something that could be generalised on the basis of a person's race: “*there were lazy and irresponsible South Asian workers just as they were languid and unreliable Chinese*”²¹

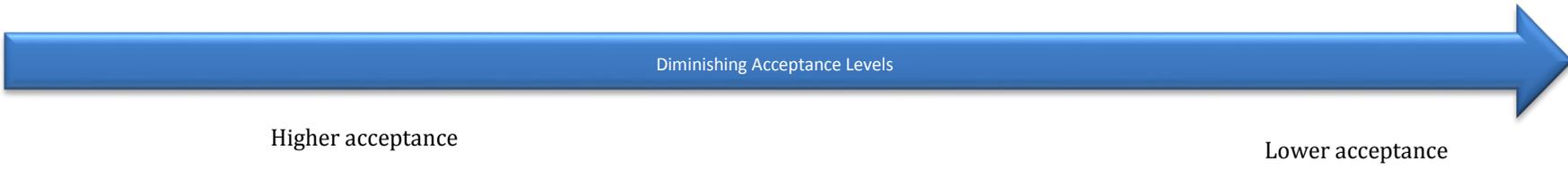
A5. Racial Acceptance Survey Report (2012)

In 2012, a local NGO, Hong Kong Unison, produced a statistical report entitled *Racial Acceptance Survey Report* based on approximately 1,800 surveys, over half of which comprised responses of police recruits from the Hong Kong Police College (2012 Racial Acceptance Survey Report).²³ The rest came from secondary school and university students as well as teachers from secondary schools that enrolled ethnic minorities. The respondents were chosen based on Hong Kong Unison’s contact with ethnic minorities or those working with ethnic minorities in the course of their work duties or studies (for student respondents). For the purposes of this survey, “Chinese” respondents are defined as “ethnic Chinese Hong Kong residents.”

Respondents were asked to rate their acceptance levels for the following statements via a written questionnaire. The survey findings are presented in *Table 1.6* below.

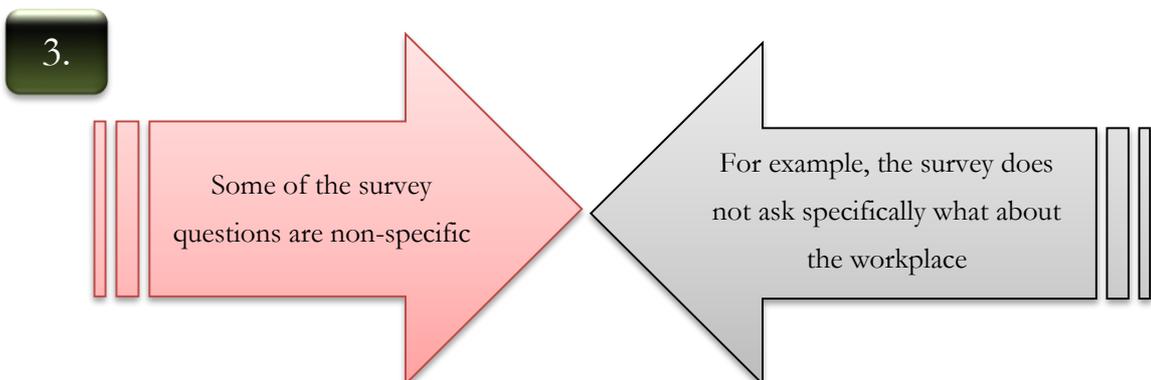
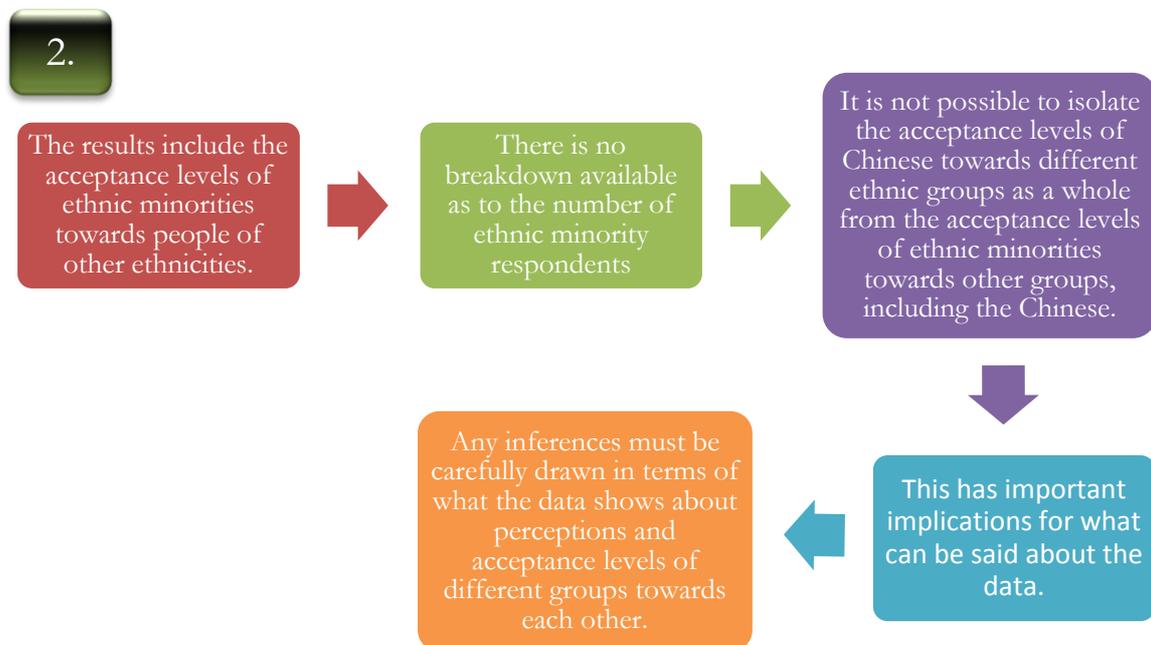
Education:
“I accept studying with _____ in the same school.”
“I accept studying with _____ in the same classroom.”
“I accept having my children study with _____ in the same school.”
“I accept having my children study with _____ in the same classroom.”
Neighbourhood
“I accept living with _____ in the same neighbourhood”
“I accept living with _____ on the same floor”
“I accept sitting next to _____ on public transportation.”
Personal Life:
“I accept being friends with _____”
“I accept having my family members marry _____”
“I accept marrying _____”
“I accept having my children be friend with _____”
“I accept having my children marry _____”
Workplace:
“I accept being colleagues with _____”

Table 1.6 Degree of acceptance of Hong Kong ethnic Chinese towards different ethnicities.

Degree of Acceptance towards ethnic group in the following areas of life	Japanese %	American %	Chinese %	European %	Filipino %	Indian %	Nepalese %	African %	Pakistani %
Relationships	85.7	86.0	85.0	83.0	60.6	61.0	59.2	60.0	59.1
Neighbour-hood	92.6	89.3	85.4	86.1	67.2	65.0	64.4	63.4	62.6
Workplace	91.2	89.4	88.7	85.9	71.8	70.7	70.0	69.8	69.3
Education	90.0	89.9	87.4	86.6	70.2	69.9	69.4	68.7	68.5
									
The acceptance brackets across all areas of life	Top Tier: American and Japanese		Second Tier: Chinese and European		Third tier: Indian and Filipino		Fourth tier: Nepalese and African		Last tier: Pakistani

Source: Hong Kong Unison's 2012 Racial Acceptance Survey Report. Further analysis on acceptance levels and race was performed by the author and the editorial contributor to this report.²⁴

However, the findings of the survey need to be treated with caution due to limitations in the study's methodology. These include:



KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2012 RACIAL ACCEPTANCE SURVEY REPORT

- There is greater acceptance for some races over others and the pattern of preference is very clear. See Table 1.6 above
- The results of the survey confirm that consistently, across all questions, South Asians are viewed less favourably when compared to East Asians and Caucasians, with Caucasians receiving the highest levels of acceptance.
- In particular, there appears to be a clear gap in acceptance levels between the second tier and the third, fourth and fifth tiers as a group as described in Table 3.
- Pakistanis are the least accepted group across all areas of life. Interestingly, acceptance towards ethnic Chinese did not score the highest. This is inconsistent with the other surveys presented in this Chapter.
- Levels of acceptance in terms of areas of life, in descending order, are in the workplace, neighbourhood, education and lastly, relationships.

Limitations of the Study:

- Some of the ways in which the statements are worded in a manner that may have impacted the results. This means that the data may in some instances, be unreliable to prove a specific relationship between ethnic groups. For example, the statements in the category of personal life ask about acceptability levels towards members of various ethnic groups as friends or appropriate for marriage with oneself, family member and children. The responses may indicate that whilst it may be agreeable to be friends with persons of a particular ethnicity, it was not acceptable to marry out of their ethnic group regardless of which specific ethnic group was asked about and regardless of whether the statement concerned one's own relationships or those of members of their family.
- The data must therefore be analyzed carefully and with reference to the context within which the questions were raised, i.e. decisions having implications for personal life, social life, employment, and educational facilities in Hong Kong and in tandem with considerations about the level of 'involvement' implied by the question in that particular area of life. The answers appear to vary depending on the specific relationship or interaction asked about in any given context, i.e. being friends with or marriage to a person of a different ethnic background.

It is also worth comparing the findings of the 2012 Racial Acceptance Survey Report with the 2008 Racial Acceptance Survey.

Differences in Findings

- First, compared to the 2008 Racial Acceptance Report, this set of surveys found that acceptance levels towards ethnic minority groups were much lower. This is possibly explained by the specific questions listed in each category of the survey, which were designed to solicit different thresholds of acceptability on a range of topics within a single area of life, which might have impacted the results. For example, a person who may find it acceptable to be friends with a person of a

particular ethnic background may not necessarily find it acceptable to marry a person of that ethnicity. Yet, for the purposes of the survey, both these questions fell into the same category of “personal life.”

- Second, the way in which the question was phrased also clearly impacted the responses. For example, in the 2008 Racial Acceptance Report, respondents were asked to rate the acceptability of sending their children to prestigious schools attended by ethnic minority children belonging to different ethnicities. In the 2012 Racial Acceptance Survey Report, however, respondents were asked to rate the acceptability of sending their children to schools where the *majority* of children attending were ethnic minorities of a particular background. The finding that Pakistanis are the least accepted group across all areas of life is inconsistent with the findings of the 2008 Racial Acceptance Survey, which suggested that Arabs were the least accepted group, and in which Pakistanis also scored poorly.
- Given the fact that Pakistanis tend to be Muslim, and that there is a general perception that Arabs are Muslim, the results of the 2008 Racial Acceptance Survey and the 2012 Racial Acceptance Survey Report read together may suggest a bias towards those of Muslim background in the Hong Kong community.
- These findings indicate the importance of maintaining disaggregated records and drawing distinctions in studies between different ethnic groups, including between those of South Asian backgrounds. This is because the findings of the 2012 Racial Acceptance Survey Report highlight differences in perceptions and treatment of Indians, Bangladeshis, Nepalese and Pakistanis. Grouping ethnicities together randomly or by ‘region’ loses the possibility of identifying nuances underlying their differing circumstances.

Similarities in Findings

- One finding that appeared consistent with that of the 2008 Racial Acceptance Report was that in both surveys, the lowest level of acceptance was found in matters relating to the personal life of the respondents, as compared to decisions involving the public or less personal domain. Thus, when asked about the respondents’ attitudes on the acceptability of being friends with ethnic minorities (either themselves, their family or the acceptability of their children being friends with them) and acceptance towards marrying ethnic minorities (either for themselves, their family members or children), less than half of them rated it acceptable where the ethnic minorities concerned were South Asian. On the other hand, acceptance levels towards other ethnic groups (such as European, American, Japanese and Chinese) in the same spheres were much higher.²⁵

- Also, there was a higher level of acceptance in matters concerning the social life of the respondents' children, as compared to their own social life. For instance, when asked whether they would accept their children studying in the same school and same classroom with ethnic minorities, be friends with, and even marry ethnic minorities, about 60% of the respondents gave a positive response. Yet again, there was a large discrepancy when comparing acceptance levels for South Asians in general to the levels of acceptance displayed towards other ethnic groups, such as European, American, Japanese and Chinese.

B. SELF-PERCEPTIONS AND REFLECTIONS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

The findings from the focus groups held with ethnic minorities as part of the 2012 Study on Racial Encounters and Discrimination Experienced by South Asians show that:

• **On provision of goods, services and facilities**, difficulties are encountered most seriously in the context of opening bank accounts, renting residential premises and accessing public hospitals (because of the lack of translated materials and translation services). For restaurants and shops, South Asian participants reported that they had not been denied access *per se*, but some felt that they were treated differently compared to other [Chinese] customers.

• **On social interaction**, some long-term South Asians residents of Hong Kong reported that outright discrimination such as verbal abuse and derogative gestures had decreased.²⁶ However, the lack of public education on social inclusion means that there is still a lack of mutual understanding between local Chinese and ethnic minority groups. This is particularly apparent in the degree of understanding and mutual respect in the context of cultural or religious practices and their impact on the value systems and the work and social ethics of the South Asian community.

• One limitation of the 2012 Study on Racial Encounters and Discrimination Experienced by South Asians is that it **did not ask how the Chinese majority were perceived by the ethnic minority respondents**. This perception is of course important for informing the development of an integration policy which fully addresses the concerns and needs of all parties involved. This is done to some extent in some of the surveys carried out in the education sector, where students were asked to describe their perceptions of Hong Kong ethnic Chinese. These surveys are discussed in Chapter 3 of this Report on The Education of Ethnic Minorities.

In the report entitled, “*A Research Report on the Education of South Asian Ethnic Minority Groups in Hong Kong*,”²⁷ several observations were made about self-perceptions of ethnic minority students.

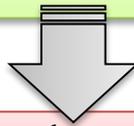
Identity

Ethnic minority students have a strong sense of ethnic pride with 90% indicating that they are proud of their ethnic origin. One of them explained that he was proud of the fact that people of his ethnic origin tend to stick together and help each other out in difficult times.²⁸ Another expressed that since his ethnic origin is part of his identity, it is of utmost importance to him regardless of the number of years he spends in Hong Kong.

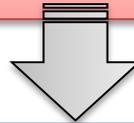
On identity, 63% of the students identified themselves by both their ethnic origin and as a Hong Kong person. Around 30% would identify themselves only by their ethnic origin; whereas 7.5% would identify themselves only as a Hong Kong person.²⁹ This speaks to the highly hybridised sense of identity among ethnic minority students in Hong Kong and the importance of harnessing and cultivating that hybridity to help facilitate a strong sense of belonging and affiliation with the Hong Kong identity in addition to their own ethnic identity.

Ability:

72% of the students disagreed that they were not as smart as Hong Kong students.³⁰



80% of ethnic minorities think they have special qualities or abilities that local Chinese students did not have; for example, their competence in the English language.



Some also stated that they were less shy than their Chinese counterparts and cited this as an advantage.³¹

Social Interaction:

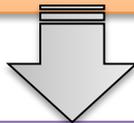
- Levels of Difficulty experienced in making friends with Hong Kong Chinese as reported by ethnic minority students:
- Grouped together, that suggests that 83% of the respondents found making friends with Chinese people a challenge.
- When asked about perceived reasons contributing to the difficulty of making Hong Kong Chinese friends (where participants were allowed to select more than 1 reason)³²:

• Level of Difficulty	• Percentage
• A bit difficult	• 50%
• Difficult	• 21%
• Very Difficult	• 12%
• Total	• 83%

Reasons contributing to difficulty	Percentage
Not knowing the Chinese language	70%
Unfriendliness of Hong Kong Chinese	37%
Cultural and religious differences	27%
Their ethnic origin	20%

Equality and Discrimination:

Ethnic minority students felt that Hong Kong people did not treat them equally. 73.5% of the students disagreed with the statement that Hong Kong people treat people of different races/ nationalities equally.³³



Over 60% of the respondents reported that they experienced discrimination.³⁴ This stands in stark contrast to the perceptions of Hong Kong people, amongst whom, only a small proportion believed racial discrimination to be a problem in Hong Kong.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

Racial prejudice in Hong Kong is pervasive as is clear from the many examples and prejudices revealed through the surveys carried out in recent years. However, there is a correlation between both age and education to awareness of racial discrimination, allowing us to better target groups that are less aware of the phenomenon, for suitable interventions to eliminate these prejudicial attitudes.

In overall terms, the highest levels of acceptance are displayed towards the Chinese and White ethnic groups, with the lowest levels being exhibited towards Indians, Pakistanis, and Nepalese. A lack of awareness was also exhibited during the surveys conducted towards definitions of ethnicity. Nonetheless, when asked, Hong Kong Chinese respondents claimed that they had no negative impressions of South Asians and stated that they would interact through work or school with South Asians where given the opportunity. In fact, they generally responded that they did not feel that South Asians were treated differently because of race or ethnicity.

It takes generations to change behaviour. Therefore, it is expected that equal opportunities legislation would take time to have a noticeable impact on attitudes social attitudes. First, behaviour is changed as a result of legislation. Change in attitudes follows. The golden rule is that it takes 3 - 4 generations for such a change to become embedded in the community as the norm.

Acceptance levels appear not to follow notions of fairness. Acceptance levels seem to be lower for areas of life which are closer to the heart and this results in distancing of ethnic minorities in spheres considered personal as compared to their acceptability in areas such as work or the neighbourhood.

The results of the 2012 Study on Racial Encounters and Discrimination Experienced by South Asians indicate that, contrary to conventional wisdom and Generation Y research, which suggest that acceptance of multiculturalism increases over generations, the perception of parents is that ethnic Chinese youngsters appear to be less tolerant of marriage to South Asians than their parents. This observation, however, must be qualified by the fact that it was made by parents based on their observations of their own children.

Ethnic minorities, however, felt that they encountered serious difficulties in access to public services, such as banking, healthcare and restaurants, and reported that although outright discrimination against them had ceased, there is still a lack of mutual understanding between them and Hong Kong Chinese groups.

In the 2012 Study on Racial Encounters and Discrimination Experienced by South Asians, ethnic Chinese participants in the focus group indicated that they observed fellow Chinese avoiding South Asians on public transport, citing unpleasant smells. However, participants claimed that this was not driven by discrimination but was rather a general reaction to unpleasant smell, regardless of a person's race and ethnicity. They also thought that South Asians generally had larger physiques, which led to their preference of not sitting next to them.³⁵ This represents a distancing exercise in an attempt to justify (discriminatory) behaviour on the basis of a legitimate or logical ground as opposed to race or ethnicity, which is now widely perceived as politically incorrect and

potentially irrational given the immutability of race. Whether these are mere perceptions or are objectively justifiable views begs the question. Since such opinion is the basis of a certain distancing behaviour that is commonly occurring, it suggests that the perception may be the result of unfamiliarity.

Racism is embedded as part and parcel of a racial hierarchy that is very much prevalent today even in Hong Kong. A racial hierarchy is predicated on the stratification of racial groups into a hierarchy on the basis that some races are superior than others. The findings from these studies are revealing and signal the need for much work to be done to break free of the racial hierarchy and its entrenchment of the superiority of some over the rest based on colour. Positive associations and interactions are the key to make the unfamiliar more familiar and to dispelling myths, mysteries and a lack of understanding and respect.

That language is overwhelmingly cited as the primary perceived reason for the difficulties encountered in developing such friends speaks volumes about the significance of enhancing access to quality education in the Chinese language. Moreover, the perception of nearly 40% that Hong Kong Chinese are unfriendly towards them reflects the need for enhancing opportunities for intercultural exchange through better policies and facilities.

A crucial component of the construction of race in any society is the self-perception of ethnic minorities, i.e. their sense of self, how they see themselves and what has also been termed as their 'self-concept'.³⁶ Ethnic minority students have a strong sense of ethnic pride with 90% indicating that they are proud of their ethnic origin. However, 63% identified as both an Ethnic Minority and Hong Kong person, suggesting a hybridised sense of identity. 83% of them, however, found making friends with Chinese people a challenge.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. There is an urgent need for targeted policies to tackle misinformation, prejudice and a fundamental lack of understanding and awareness about Hong Kong’s ethnic minorities in the short and longer-term.
2. There is an urgent need to implement measures to cultivate trust, understanding and mutual respect for ethnically diverse groups in the longer-term.
3. There is a need to research and understand the history of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong to generate discourse that is inclusive of ethnic minorities and properly documents the presence and contributions of ethnic minorities here. There is a need to consult with Hong Kong’s ethnic minorities to understand how they wish to be referred to and understood in terms of aspects of their identity. The label ‘ethnic minorities’ needs to be replaced with a better alternative which includes dimensions of both, a Hong Kong identity as well as the ethnic identity the person chooses to identify with.
4. There is a need to target Hong Kong Chinese who have not attended higher secondary or post-secondary education to raise awareness about ethnic minorities, and their rights to equality and non-discrimination.
5. Whilst the research drawn on in this chapter highlights various aspects of Hong Kong’s racism in practice and charts the development of an ethnic consciousness among Hong Kong’s ethnic minority population, the studies also reveal the numerous research gaps and signal the need for the use of much improved research tools. Perhaps due to the fact that assessing discrimination is a matter of perception, which is a subjective element, it is difficult to test empirically without carefully designed and structured survey tools.

¹ Raquel Carvalho, ‘IN PICTURES: Underprivileged children in Hong Kong revisited one decade later’ *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong, 18 July 2015) <<http://www.scmp.com/treasures>> accessed 1 August 2015.

² Home Affairs Bureau, *Consultative document on equal opportunities: A study of discrimination on the ground of race compendium of submissions* (Hong Kong Government Printing office 1997). It is entirely another matter that the purpose of the survey, which was to discern whether racial discrimination was a serious problem in Hong Kong, was itself problematic as an approach to addressing prejudice and inequality in society.

³ Alfred Chan and Eric Wong, ‘Survey on public attitude and perceptions towards ethnic minorities’ (*Gerontology Commons*, May 2005) <

<http://commons.ln.edu.hk/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=apiasmp> > accessed 17 September 2015.

⁴ Ethnic Minorities Forum, ‘Survey on Public Attitudes towards Racial Discrimination’ (*Home Affairs Department*, 17 May 2005) <https://www.google.com.hk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CBwQFjAAahUKEwjG8oXK1_3HAhWFKKYKHYAHByw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.had.gov.hk%2Fru%2Fenglish%2Faboutus%2FEthnicforum%2FEthnicforum20050517paper2.doc&usg=AFQjCNHLe5qqdjgJxGsrbdUGPvmOr5upxg&sig2=6cE1HM0zHMKxpsi6zWleRQ> accessed 15 September 2015.

⁵ Home Affairs Bureau, ‘Legislation Against Racial Discrimination – a Consultation Paper’ (*Government Information Centre*, September 2004) <<http://www.info.gov.hk/archive/consult/2005/lard-e.pdf>> accessed 15 September 2015.

⁶ Unison Hong Kong, ‘Unison’s position on the Government’s consultation document on legislation against racial discrimination’, LC Paper No. CB(2)736/04-05(01)’ (*Unison Hong Kong*, 26 January 2005) <<http://www.unison.org.hk/DocumentDownload/R01-Position%20papers/2004/ha1211cb2-763-1e.pdf>> accessed 15 September 2015, §5.2-5.3.

⁷ For further discussion of the consultation process and the passage of the Race Discrimination Ordinance, see the Chapter on The Rights of Ethnic Minorities Under the Law: Equality and Non-Discrimination of this Report.

⁸ Chan and Wong (n 3).

⁹ The responses to this statement need to be treated with caution as it is unclear whether respondents were under the impression that they were being asked about their willingness to send their children to schools which have predominantly ethnic minority children (formerly known as ‘designated schools’) or whether they took the statement as referring to the presence of any ethnic minority children in the school they send their children to.

¹⁰ See Chan and Wong (n3), p. 10.

¹¹ *ibid.*, §3.1.

¹² See Chapter on The Rights of Ethnic Minorities Under the Law: Equality and Non-Discrimination of this Report.

¹³ Census and Statistics Department, ‘Thematic Household Survey Report – Report No. 39 – Racial Acceptance’ (*Census and Statistics Department*, 9 June 2009) <http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/fd.jsp?file=B11302392009XXXXB0100.pdf&product_id=B1130201&lang=1> accessed 15 September 2015.

¹⁴ This is true across all groups except for Africans.

¹⁵ The finding that Africans fare better in terms of racial acceptance compared with lighter skinned ethnic groups such as Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis is at odds with the hierarchy of preferential treatment meted out on the basis of skin colour, which has been commonly experienced in Hong Kong by Africans.

¹⁶ The lower percentages seem to suggest that whilst they may consider it acceptable to have these groups as neighbours, they consider it less acceptable that they might have to communicate with them. It is important to treat this data with caution as it may be unreliable or at best, unclear as to what the percentage drop represents.

¹⁷ Centre for Civil Society and Governance at the University of Hong Kong, ‘Study on Racial Encounter and Discrimination Experienced by South Asians’ (*Equal Opportunities Commission*, 2012) <http://www.eoc.org.hk/EOC/Upload/UserFiles/File/ResearchReport/201203/Race_eFull%20Report.pdf> accessed 17 September 2015.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, §3.44 and §3.53.

¹⁹ *ibid*, §3.33

²⁰ *ibid*, §3.32

²¹ *ibid* (n16), 13-14.

²² *ibid* (n16), 9.

²³ Unison Hong Kong, 'Racial Acceptance Survey Report' (*Unison Hong Kong*, March 2012) <<http://www.unison.org.hk/DocumentDownload/Researches/R201203%20Racial%20Acceptance%20Survey%20Report.pdf?subject=Enquiry%20for%20Research%20hard%20copy>> accessed 17 September 2015.

²⁴ This table and the analysis in this section benefited from the contributions of the Reviewing Editor of this Report, Ms. Shalini Mahtani, who offered insights into the structured nature of the discrimination, which was seemingly replicating a hierarchy of colour, impacting levels of acceptance towards minorities of a particular colour.

²⁵ *ibid* (n16), 9.

²⁶ Centre for Civil Society and Governance at the University of Hong Kong (n 16).

²⁷ Kerry Kennedy, JoAnna Phillion and Ming Tak Hue, 'Educational Provision for Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong: Meeting the Challenges of the Proposed Racial Discrimination Bill' (*The Hong Kong Institute of Education*, 17 September 2015) <http://www.ied.edu.hk/diversityproject/Outputs%20and%20downloads/Doc/First%20Interim%20Report_final.pdf> accessed 31 January 2015.

²⁸ Hok Bun Chan, Chan Kam-wah and Karamjit Sandhu, *A research report on the education of South Asian ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong* (Centre for Social Policy Studies at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Unison Hong Kong 2005) 52.

²⁹ *ibid* 55.

³⁰ *ibid* 51.

³¹ *ibid* 52.

³² *ibid* 54.

³³ *ibid* 53.

³⁴ *ibid* 55.

³⁵ *ibid* (n16), §3.32.

³⁶ Puja Kapai, 'The Doctrine of Substantive Equality and the Democratisation of Diversity, Moving Multiculturalism Forward' in Michael Kearney (ed), *From Conflict to Recognition: Moving Culturalism Forward (At the Interface/Probing the Boundaries)* (Rodopi 2011).