"Tolerated One Way but Not the Other": Levels and Determinants of Social and Political Tolerance in Hong Kong

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Abstract Tolerance constitutes one of the core elements of a democratic political culture and an indicator of social cohesion. While the concepts of social tolerance and political tolerance have each generated a substantial body of literature, few studies have examined the two forms of tolerance simultaneously. Empirically, this study examines Hong Kong people's social and political tolerance toward five minority or non-conformist groups. Analysis of survey data shows that degree of tolerance varies substantially across target groups. More important, the group that is the most tolerated socially is not necessarily the most tolerated politically. Many people are found to be holding the attitudes of "quiet co-existence" or "respectful distance" toward specific minority or non-conformist groups. This article also examines the demographic and attitudinal predictors of tolerance. It finds that tolerance is stronger among the youngest cohort and weaker among new immigrants. Tolerance is also significantly related to social trust and post-materialist orientation, yet not to a sense of relative deprivation.

Keywords Social tolerance · Political tolerance · Generational differences · Post-materialism · Hong Kong

1 Introduction

Modern societies are typically heterogeneous. People have different cultural backgrounds, adopt different lifestyles, and espouse different religious, moral, and/or political beliefs. Disagreement on many matters is inevitable. Yet it would be difficult to build trust, minimize conflicts, and handle disputes if citizens are unwilling to accept differences and recognize the rights of disliked others. Hence tolerance is a core psychological under-pinning of democracy (Sullivan and Transue 1999). The Organization for Economic

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Cooperation and Development treats tolerance as a "social cohesion indicator" (OECD 2011). Indeed, empirical research has suggested that tolerance can contribute to social stability and harmony (e.g., Almond and Verba 1989; Ho and Chan 2009).

This study examines the level and determinants of social and political tolerance in Hong Kong. It asks: To what extent a range of minority or non-conformist groups are socially and politically tolerated? What is the relationship between social and political tolerance? Is the group that is the most tolerated socially also the most tolerated politically? What are the demographic and attitudinal predictors of social and political tolerance?

By tackling these questions, this article should contribute to the empirical literature on tolerance by generating new findings about the relationship between tolerance and other attitudinal variables in a context where tolerance has received little systematic examination. More important, few studies have examined social and political tolerance simultaneously. To the author's knowledge, no study has paid attention to the possibility that a group largely tolerated socially may not be tolerated politically (and vice versa). This study shows how considering social and political tolerance together can generate additional insights into people's attitudes toward minority or non-conformist groups.

The next section further discusses the conceptualization, measurement, and predictors of social and political tolerance. Specific research questions are set up in the process. The research questions are then tackled by analyzing survey data.

2 Literature Review and Research Questions

2.1 Tolerance: Conceptualization and Measurement

As Walzer (1997) pointed out, tolerance may refer to several states of mind. At the minimum, tolerance can refer to a resigned acceptance of or a passive indifference toward cultural and political differences. It can also refer to the recognition that other people have rights even if they exercise those rights in unattractive ways. At the other end, tolerance may refer to a willingness to learn from others or even an enthusiastic endorsement of differences. Similarly, Persell et al. (2001, p. 208) defined complete tolerance as "full recognition and acceptance of the identity and uniqueness of differences that are seen as not reducible to invisibility by their bearers," whereas a less demanding form of tolerance "would include the willingness to grant equal legal and political rights to someone seen as different."

Empirical research on tolerance typically adopts the less demanding definition. Nevertheless, the presence of a tolerant citizenry cannot be taken for granted. Scholars generally agreed that intolerance is people's "natural response" when facing differences (Marcus et al. 1995). In contrast, the ideas behind the value of tolerance "are complex, rooted in traditions of human history and political theory which are themselves difficult to grasp" (Sniderman 1975, p. 181). Tolerance, therefore, needs to be learned.

While social scientists generally agree upon the above conceptualization of tolerance, there have been more debates about measurement. One particularly important issue is whether "content-control" is necessary. Sullivan et al. (1979) first articulated the importance of "content-control" by arguing that it makes sense to talk about tolerance only when people dislike a group. If people do not find a group objectionable, the question of tolerance does not arise. Based on this premise, they proposed a content-controlled measurement of tolerance. The method requires researchers to first ask the respondents the group they dislike the most before asking whether they would be willing to extend rights to

the group. The method thus ensures the functional equivalence of the social groups the respondents have in mind when answering the tolerance questions.

Sullivan et al.'s (1979) method was adopted in much later research (e.g., Sullivan et al. 1981, 1985; Peffley and Rohrschneider 2003). But many other studies continued to adopt the more conventional method in which the researchers examine people's attitudes toward several minority or non-conformist groups that are generally disliked in a society (e.g., Cigler and Joslyn 2002; Gibson 1992). We can dub the latter the pre-selected groups approach and Sullivan et al.'s (1979) the self-selected group approach.

Several reasons explain the persistence of the pre-selected groups approach in measuring tolerance. First, the self-selected group method leads people to focus on extremist groups (Gibson 1992; Petersen et al. 2010). It thus tends to underestimate levels of tolerance. It also blurs the normative implications of the empirical findings because "intolerance" toward extremist groups, such as terrorists or racists, is not necessarily unjustifiable. How to handle extremist groups often brings about conflicts between tolerance and other important democratic values (Peffley et al. 2001; Ramirez and Verkuyten 2011). Banning racist speech, for instance, may not be normatively undesirable because it can be justified by the importance of maintaining racial equality (Harell 2010).

Second, the pre-selected groups approach may not be as problematic as Sullivan et al. (1979) contended. As long as multiple controversial groups of different types are included in a survey, the survey should be able to provide "everyone an opportunity to express his or her intolerance" (Gibson 1992, p. 574). That is, if a survey has already included many of the most controversial groups in a society, people are unlikely to find all the groups in the survey unobjectionable while having other strongly disliked groups in mind (Mondak and Sanders 2003). Third, the pre-selected groups method is simply necessary if researchers are interested in not only the abstract concept of tolerance but also people's attitudes toward the specific groups under examination.

This study adopted the pre-selected groups approach. The survey tapped into respondents' attitude toward people of other ethnicities, recovered mental patients, homosexuals, sex workers, and political radicals. These groups are arguably some of the most likely targets of intolerance in Hong Kong (e.g., Chiu and Chan 2007; Ku and Chan 2006, 2011; Lee and Chan 2012; Wong et al. 2011). Yet none of them is extremist or constitutes a severe threat to others' safety. The first research question is:

Q1: What are people's levels of social and political tolerance toward ethnic minorities, recovered mental patients, homosexuals, sex workers, and political radicals?

2.2 Social Versus Political Tolerance

Empirical research often examines either social or political tolerance, two overlapping but distinctive notions. Social tolerance is concerned with people's willingness to accept disliked others into their everyday life. Studies may ask if people would mind to be neighbors of members of a disliked group or to have members of a non-conformist group brought home for dinner (e.g., Golebiowska 2009; Hadler 2012; Persell et al. 2001). Political tolerance is concerned with people's willingness to extend citizen rights and liberties to members of disliked groups. Studies typically asked respondents if they believe members of the disliked group should be allowed to speak publicly, hold public rallies, teach at public school, and so on (e.g., Cigler and Joslyn 2002; Gibson 2008; Gibson and Bingham 1982; Peffley et al. 2001; Weber 2003).

This study is interested in how social and political tolerance may combine with each other to form more nuanced attitudes that people may hold toward other groups. Despite the probable tendency for levels of social and political tolerance to be correlated at the individual level, it remains possible for a person to accept a group into his/her social life without being willing to extend citizen rights to the group. It is also possible for people to be willing to recognize the rights of a group without being willing to interact with the group.

These are not only logical possibilities; they are substantively meaningful types of attitudes. When people accept a group into their social life and yet refuse to grant the group full citizen rights, the attitude can be described as "quiet co-existence." That is, people are willing to live with the group as long as the latter "keep quiet" and refrain from striving for their interests publicly. This attitude may be found when the fact of co-living between a dominant social group and a subordinated group is already established, and yet the dominant group is unwilling to acknowledge deep-rooted inequalities between the two groups. In this situation, members of the dominant group would not find peaceful co-living a big problem, but they may be unwilling to grant the subordinated group their fair share of rights.

Among the five groups examined, Hong Kong people are particularly likely to exhibit the attitude of quiet co-existence toward ethnic minorities. Being an international city, an ex-British colony, and a major employer of foreign domestic helpers, ethnic minorities have long been part of the society. Yet researchers have noted that ethnic minorities are often "invisible" to the local Chinese (Ku and Chan 2006). If ethnic minorities were ever accepted into the society, the acceptance was seemingly premised on their "low profile" in the public arena.

Opposite to quiet co-existence, when people are willing to grant citizen rights to a group and yet unwilling to interact with them in everyday life, their attitude can be described as "respectful distance." The attitude of respectful distance is similar to the not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) syndrome. The NIMBY attitude arises when people recognize the necessity or justifiability of certain things and yet find them uncomfortable to live with. By the same token, when a person exhibits the attitude of respectful distance toward a group, s/he is basically recognizing that members of the group are their fellow citizens who should enjoy the same rights and liberties, and yet s/he remains unwilling to interact with members of the group, out of fear, disgust, or other negative feelings.

Among the groups studied in this article, Hong Kong people are particularly likely to hold the attitude of respectful distance toward recovered mental patients. Recovered mental patients are after all just unfortunate people who were mentally ill, and there is no reason to deny them citizen rights. But widespread misunderstandings and stereotypes about mental patients (Chiu and Chan 2007) may lead people to become reluctant to interact with recovered mental patients in their everyday life.

The above considerations point to the possible complexities in people's attitudes toward minority or non-conformist groups. Studies have rarely interrogated into the possible combinations of social and political tolerance. The following research question should allow this study to contribute to the extant literature by getting into the nuances in people's attitudes toward others:

Q2: What is the relationship between social and political tolerance at the individual level? At the aggregate level, are groups most tolerated socially also most tolerated politically, and vice versa?

2.3 Predictors of Social and Political Tolerance

Cote and Erickson (2009) summarized the huge literature on the factors contributing to social and political tolerance into four major "hypotheses." First, the learning hypothesis emphasizes the above-mentioned point that tolerance needs to be learned. Hence education and cognitive sophistication lead to tolerance (e.g., Gibson 1992; Bobo and Lacari 1989), whereas dogmatism and stubbornness are associated with lower levels of tolerance (Hinckley 2010; Sotelo 2000). Besides, people can learn about the need to compromise and cooperate with disagreeing others through civic and political participation (Weber 2003) or simply by living through the "rough and tumble" of democratic life (Peffley and Rohrschneider 2003).

Second, the competition hypothesis posits intolerance as a result of the perceptions that one's interests are adversely affected by minority or non-conformist groups. Tolerance, therefore, can be predicted by perceived threats from the groups (e.g., Wang and Chang 2006; Wike and Grim 2010; van der Noll et al. 2010) and perceived personal and national economic conditions—which influence people's sense of security (Persell et al. 2001; Hadler 2012). The effects of news exposure on tolerance (Ramirez and Verkuyten 2011; Tsang 2013) can also be explained by how the news portrayed certain social groups as threats. On the flip side, social trust is positively related to tolerance (Sullivan and Transue 1999).

Third, the contact hypothesis posits that people would become more tolerant toward minority or non-conformist groups when they come into more frequent contact with the groups. This is because contact can breed familiarity and trust. Hence the composition of a person's social network can affect tolerance (Cigler and Joslyn 2002; Harell 2010; Robinson 2010). Finally, the influence hypothesis posits that interactions with tolerant (or intolerant) people can breed tolerance (or intolerance). Hence participation in civic associations that promote liberal attitudes and attract open-minded people as members could breed tolerance, whereas participation in associations that promote dogmatism could breed intolerance (Cote and Erickson 2009; Iglic 2010).

In addition, one may add a fifth approach by seeing tolerance as a manifestation of a broader value orientation. Specifically, several recent studies have demonstrated that people with stronger post-materialistic orientation are more tolerant (Davis 2000; Hadler 2012). By definition, being post-materialistic means that one would prioritize non-materialistic goals, such as self-expression and social justice, over the concerns of physical security and survival (Inglehart 1977, 1990). Post-materialists are more supportive toward the values of liberty and less likely to be concerned with "threats." Hence they should be more socially and politically tolerant.

This study does not contain the full range of variables examined in the literature. But it will test the applicability of some of the above arguments to the Hong Kong case by examining education, social trust, the sense of relative deprivation (based on perceived economic conditions), and post-materialism as predictors of tolerance. Following the literature, four hypotheses are posed:

H1 Education positively relates to social and political tolerance.

H2 Social trust positively relates to social and political tolerance.

H3 A sense of relative deprivation negatively relates to social and political tolerance.

H4 Post-material orientation positively relates to social and political tolerance.

Lastly, this study is also concerned with how age and migrant status affect social and political tolerance. There have been debates in recent years in Hong Kong about how different generations of citizens differ in their value orientations. Some commentators argued that young people growing up in the prosperity of the 1980s and 1990s have a stronger sense of formative security and are therefore more post-materialistic (cf. Lee and Tang 2012; Ma 2011; Wong and Wan 2009). If this is true, then the youngest cohort, with their stronger emphasis on the values of self-expression, may also exhibit higher levels of social and political tolerance.

The concern with migrant status, meanwhile, follows from the debate on the "core values" of Hong Kong. In the early 2000s, a group of professionals and academics have articulated an influential argument stating that Hong Kong has been developed over the years into a society where the liberal notions of freedom, democracy, professionalism, and equality have constituted its "core values" (Ma et al. 2010, pp. 6–7). The empirical validity of this argument has yet to be systematically verified. But if the core value argument is correct, newcomers from the more authoritarian mainland China may lag behind the locally born citizens in their acquisition of liberal values, including the value of tolerance.[1]

Based on such background considerations, the last two hypotheses are:

H5   The youngest age cohort exhibits higher levels of social and political tolerance than the older cohorts.

H6   New immigrants exhibit lower levels of social and political tolerance.

For simplicity, *H1* to *H6* assume the factors to have similar impact on social and political tolerance. The empirical analysis below, of course, would illustrate if this is indeed the case.

3 Method and Data

3.1 Sampling and Sample Characteristics

The survey analyzed below was conducted by the Center for Communication Research at the Chinese University of Hong Kong between May 30 and June 13, 2012. The target population was Chinese speaking Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above. Sampling began by compiling all telephone numbers from recent residential directories. The last two digits of each number were replaced by the full set of 100 double-digit figures from 00 to 99 to include non-listed numbers. This produced a huge data base from which numbers were randomly drawn by computers. A total of 806 interviews were completed. The response rate is 58.0 % following American Association of Public Opinion Research formula 6.

The sample has 57.3 % females, 19.2 % aged between 18 and 29 and 25.7 % aged between 30 and 39, 33.3 % had monthly family income of $19,999 or below and 33.0 % had monthly family income of $40,000 or above, and 27.2 % had university education. The sample is comparable to the population in gender and age. People with high levels of

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[1] Mainland China has historically constituted the most important source of migrants to the city. According to government census data in 2011, put aside the locally born citizens, 2.27 million Hong Kong residents were born in mainland China, Taiwan or Macau, whereas only 0.55 million Hong Kong residents were born in other places. In the present study, the proportion of migrants from China should be even larger given the survey interviewed only Chinese speaking city residents.

education and income were oversampled, however. The data were therefore weighted by education.[2]

3.2 Operationalization

3.2.1 Social and Political Tolerance

The survey measured social tolerance by asking respondents whether they would mind having people of other ethnicities, recovered mental patients, homosexuals, sex workers, and political radicals as neighbors. The answering categories included "not at all," "a little bit," and "would mind." For political tolerance, the respondents were asked whether they would feel objectionable when the five groups "strive for their rights or profess their ways of life publicly." The answering categories included "not at all," "a little bit," "somewhat," and "strongly." Strictly speaking, only "not at all" constitutes the "tolerant" answer. The other categories capture different degrees of intolerance. Descriptive statistics of the items are discussed in the analysis sections.

3.2.2 Social Trust

Following the World Values Survey, three questions measured social trust by asking the respondents to choose between competing statements: (1) "the majority of people can be trusted" vs. "one has to be careful when interacting with others"; (2) "most people would take advantage of others when there is the chance" vs. "most people would try to be fair"; and (3) "most people are willing to help others" vs. "most people are concerned about their self-interests only." A respondent scored 1 point on a question if s/he chose the "trusting" answer. Hence the index ranges from 0 to 3 ($M = 1.15$, $SD = 0.91$, $\alpha = 0.41$).

3.2.3 Post-Materialism

Five questions measured levels of post-materialism. Each question asked the respondents to choose the most and the second most important goals among four choices. For example, one question asked respondents to choose among "fighting inflation," "maintaining social order," "protecting free speech," or "letting people to have more say in policy-making." Two of the goals are materialistic (the first two in this case), and the other two are post-materialistic. A respondent scored 1 point whenever s/he selected a post-materialistic goal. Therefore, a respondent could score 2 points on one question and 10 points from the five questions ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.95$, $\alpha = 0.53$).[3] Details about all five items used are available upon request.

3.2.4 Relative Deprivation

Social movement scholars often argue that what drives people to protest is not a straightforward sense of deprivation, but a sense of oneself being deprived relative to some

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[2] Lack of information prevented weighting by both education and income. Yet weighting by education should also partly correct the sample bias in income.

[3] The α values for social trust and post-materialism are lower than the usual threshold of acceptability. But the indices are still adopted given the conceptual content of the items and for the sake of analytical parsimony. Low reliability may imply relatively large random errors, but it should not generate systematically biased findings.

reference points (Buechler 2011; Staggenborg 2011). Similarly, intolerance may be a result of people being pessimistic about themselves *in comparison* to others. Relative deprivation was derived from four three-point scaled items. The first three questions asked the respondents whether "in the next five years": (1) the problem of income gap in Hong Kong will improve, remain the same, or get worse (2) the social system in Hong Kong will become fairer, remain the same, or become even more unfair, and (3) opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong will increase, remain the same, or decrease. The fourth question asked: "In the next five years, will your family's condition become better, remain the same, or get worse?" The index of relative deprivation was created by subtracting the average of the first three questions from the answer to the fourth question. The higher the value, the stronger the sense of relative deprivation ($M = -0.37$, $SD = 0.73$).

4 Analysis and Findings

4.1 Levels of Social and Political Tolerance

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive findings that answer Q1. Degree of social tolerance varies substantially across target groups. Nearly 80 % of people accepted ethnic minorities as neighbors, and more than half (57.9 %) would not mind having homosexuals as neighbors. But only 28.4 and 26.1 % indicated that they did not mind having recovered mental patients and sex workers, respectively, as neighbors. The latter figures probably illustrate people's perceptions of the problems of having the two types of people as neighbors. For example, occasional news stories about violence committed by mental patients might lead to negative stereotypes. Meanwhile, the home of many individual sex workers in Hong Kong is also their workplace. Therefore, people may see having sex workers as neighbors as bringing about various inconveniences or even safety concerns.

Slightly more than one-third of the respondents (36.7 %) would not mind having political radicals as neighbors. On the whole, not many Hong Kong citizens exhibited

Table 1 Social and political tolerance toward five minority or non-conformist groups

	Ethnic minorities (%)	R. mental patients (%)	Homosexuals (%)	Sex workers (%)	Political radicals (%)
Mind being a neighbor?					
Not at all	78.7	28.4	57.9	26.1	36.7
A little bit	15.5	42.7	18.1	27.4	26.0
Mind	5.2	28.1	23.3	46.4	36.3
No answer	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.2	1.0
Feel objectionable when group strives for rights?					
Not at all	53.4	77.6	63.2	53.4	39.9
A little bit	32.1	15.4	19.5	24.9	31.2
Somewhat	4.1	1.7	5.8	7.8	12.5
Very	4.5	1.5	9.5	9.8	11.0
No answer	5.8	3.8	2.0	4.0	5.4

Percentages in a column may not add up to 100.0 % due to rounding. N = 806

complete social tolerance toward all five groups. In fact, if the five items are considered together, 93.9 % of the respondents would mind neighboring members of at least one group.

For political tolerance, Table 1 shows that more than half of the respondents would not feel objectionable when four of the five groups strive for their rights or profess their ways of life publicly. Yet only about 40 % would not find the public actions of political radicals objectionable. The finding can be understood in relation to the development of protest politics in Hong Kong. On the one hand, the society has witnessed an increase in social mobilization in the past decade. But on the other hand, there is an emphasis in public discourse on the orderliness of protests (Ku 2007). Accompanying the emphasis on order is the stigmatization of specific groups and tactics as "radical" (Lee and Chan 2012). In any case, similar to social tolerance, not many Hong Kong citizens exhibited complete political tolerance toward all five groups: only 18.8 % did not find the public actions of any of the five groups objectionable.

4.2 The Relationship Between Social and Political Tolerance

Q2 asks about the relationship between political and social tolerance at the individual level, and whether, in aggregates, the group that is most tolerated socially is also most tolerated politically. At the individual level, social and political tolerance toward a group are indeed positively correlated. But interestingly, the strength of the correlation varies. At one end, social and political tolerance toward homosexuals are quite strongly correlated at $r = .47$ ($p < .001$). At the other end, social and political tolerance toward ethnic minorities are only correlated at $r = .16$ ($p < .001$). The corresponding correlation coefficients for mental patients, sex workers, and political radicals are .23, .47 and .39 respectively.

These findings regarding individual level correlations suggest that the two types of tolerance do not always go together. It also suggests that, at the aggregate level, a group that is tolerated socially may not be tolerated to the same extent politically. In fact, Table 1 has already illustrated the phenomenon. Although only 28.4 % of the respondents would not mind having recovered mental patients as neighbors, more than three-fourths found recovered mental patients striving for their rights unobjectionable. In contrast, although nearly 80 % would not mind having ethnic minorities as neighbors, only slightly more than half found ethnic minorities striving for their rights unobjectionable.

Table 2 illustrates the combinations of social and political tolerance more clearly. The figures were produced by first dichotomizing the items in Table 1. "Not at all" was the "tolerant" answer, while the other answers were grouped as "intolerant." Cross-tabulating the dichotomized social and political tolerance items would generate four types of attitudes. Full acceptance refers to the case when a person accepts a group as neighbors and does not object to the group striving for their rights publicly. Complete non-acceptance refers to the opposite case. Quiet co-existence involves a person accepting a group as neighbors but objecting to the group striving for their rights publicly, whereas respectful distance involves a person rejecting a group as neighbors and accepting the group striving for their rights publicly.

A few findings are worth highlighting. First, while 45.0 % of the respondents exhibited full acceptance toward ethnic minorities, about one-third exhibited the attitude of quiet co-existence. That is, as discussed earlier, a substantial proportion of Hong Kong people indeed would not object to the presence of ethnic minorities in their social life, but they would not approve the ethnic minorities publicly striving for their rights. Second, also in line with earlier discussions, a substantial proportion of people hold the attitude of

Table 2 Combined attitude toward five minority or non-conformist groups

	Ethnic minorities (%)	R. mental patients (%)	Homo-sexuals (%)	Sex workers (%)	Political radicals (%)
Complete non-acceptance	12.9	19.1	25.5	41.1	44.7
Quiet co-existence	33.7	3.2	11.3	5.5	15.3
Respectful distance	8.4	52.5	16.6	32.8	18.6
Full acceptance	45.0	25.2	46.6	20.5	21.4

respectful distance toward recovered mental patients. Table 2 further shows that a high proportion of people hold the same attitude toward sex workers.

Third, homosexuals constitute the group that registers the highest proportion of "full acceptance" (46.6 %). But there are also 25.5 % who exhibited complete non-acceptance toward homosexuals. The latter percentage is higher than the corresponding percentage for ethnic minorities and recovered mental patients. Put differently, Hong Kong citizens' attitudes toward homosexuals seem to be most polarized—only 27.9 % belonged to one of the two "middle categories"—i.e., quiet co-existence and respectful distance. This polarization is a result of the relatively high individual-level correlation between political and social tolerance toward homosexuals—as a person who is socially tolerant (or intolerant) toward homosexuals is also very likely to be political tolerant (or intolerant) toward the group, fewer people would fall into the middle categories.

4.3 Predictors of Social and Political Tolerance

We can now examine the predictors of social and political tolerance. It should be noted that, despite variations in overall levels of tolerance toward the different groups, levels of social tolerance toward the five groups do correlate positively (Pearson r ranges from .16 to .33, Cronbach's $\alpha = .61$), and so do the five items of political tolerance (Pearson r ranges from .19 to .51, Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$). Indices of social and political tolerance were therefore produced to simplify the analysis.

There are two approaches to create the indices though. First, one may take the average of the five items about social tolerance as an index (and do the same for political tolerance). Second, one may take the most *intolerant* answer that a person gave to the five social tolerance items as his/her score on the index. Comparatively, the most intolerant answer approach could better guarantee that the score does refer to intolerance in the strict conceptual sense (Mondak and Sanders 2003). It is because when a person gives a "tolerant" answer on an item toward a certain group, the person may not really be "tolerant" in the strict sense—the person may not dislike the group in the first place. Yet the most intolerant answer approach would undermine the variance of the index, and it could not take into account the possibility of intolerance toward multiple groups.

Table 3 shows the relationship between five demographics and the indices created by the two approaches. Women were significantly less politically tolerant than men. Consistent with the literature, more educated people and people with higher levels of income exhibited higher levels of tolerance. Relevant to *H5*, the youngest age cohort (18–29 years old) exhibited substantially higher levels of tolerance. Notably, the relationships between age and tolerance are not linear. The differences among the three older cohorts are minor. The youngest cohort stands out as particularly tolerant.

Migrant status also matters, though the differences reside only between the locally born and those who came to the city within 15 years prior to the survey. The "new arrivals" exhibited higher levels of social and political intolerance. The findings are consistent with *H6*.

Table 3 shows that the indices created by the two approaches give rise to substantively the same results. The remaining analysis thus uses only the averaging index. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to more formally test the hypotheses. Independent variables include the demographics, postmaterialism, relative deprivation, and social trust.

As Table 4 shows, support for *H5* and *H6* remain intact. The 18–29 age cohort exhibited significantly higher levels of social and political tolerance when compared to the 30–44 group (the reference category). The oldest cohort is also significantly less politically tolerant when compared to the 30–44 group. Besides, the new arrivals exhibited lower levels of social and political tolerance when compared to the locally born.

In addition, supporting *H2* and *H4*, both post-materialism and social trust significantly positively relate to social and political tolerance. Nevertheless, there is no support for *H1*

Table 3 Degree of tolerance by demographics: analysis of differences among group means

	Social tolerance		Political intolerance	
	Average	Most intolerant answer	Average	Most intolerant answer
Gender				
Men	2.19	1.42	3.46_a	2.34_a
Women	2.17	1.34	3.32_a	2.52_a
Age				
18–29	2.44_{abc}	1.61_{abc}	3.64_{ab}	3.04_{ab}
30–44	2.13_a	1.29_a	3.36_a	2.50_a
45–59	2.16_b	1.36_b	3.40_b	2.56_b
60 or above	2.07_c	1.28_c	3.17_{ab}	2.27_b
Education				
Junior high<	2.12_a	1.34	3.25_{ab}	2.36_{ab}
Senior high school	2.19	1.38	3.44_a	2.62_a
College or above	2.25_a	1.40	3.50_b	2.78_b
Income				
L (HK$19,999<)	2.10_{ab}	1.30	3.27_a	2.34_{ab}
M (HK$39,999<)	2.21_a	1.41	3.39	2.68_a
H (>HK$40,000)	2.25_b	1.43	3.50_a	2.70_b
Immigrant status[a]				
Locally born	2.22_a	1.40	3.45_a	2.71_{ab}
Early migrants	2.11	1.34	3.26	2.27_a
Long-time migrants	2.14	1.32	3.34	2.39
New arrivals	2.10_a	1.31	3.20_a	2.26_b

Entries are mean scores on the respective index

[a] Early migrants: lived in Hong Kong for more than 30 years; Long-time migrants: lived in Hong Kong for between 16 and 30 years; New arrivals: moved to Hong Kong within the past 15 years. Between-groups differences were examined with independent-samples *t* test or one-way ANOVA with bonferroni tests. Pairs of mean scores sharing the same subscript differ from each other at $p < .05$

Table 4 OLS regression analysis on social and political tolerance

	Social tolerance	Political tolerance
Sex (F = 1)	.01	−.10**
Age		
18–29	.18***	.11**
45–59	−.01	.02
60 or above	−.03	−.14***
Education		
Junior high<	.02	−.06
College	−.04	−.04
Income		
Low	−.02	.02
High	.05	.06
Migrants		
Early migrants	−.02	−.04
Long time migrants	−.02	−.03
New arrivals	−.09*	−.10**
Beliefs and perceptions		
Post-materialism	.17***	.11**
Social trust	.09**	.09**
Relative deprivation	−.04	−.02
Adjusted R^2	0.094	0.106

Entries are standardized regression coefficients. Missing values were replaced by means. N = 806. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

and *H3*. Education does not affect tolerance when other variables are controlled. Relative deprivation also has no relationship with social and political tolerance.

To further explore the data, the sample was split according to gender, and the same regression analysis (with gender removed) was conducted again for men and women separately. The findings regarding the predictors of social and political tolerance remain largely the same. There are a few cases in which a predictor became statistically insignificant after the split sample procedure. For instance, social trust significantly predicts social tolerance only among women ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .01$) but not among men ($\beta = -.04$, $p > .40$). However, the two unstandardized regression coefficients for social trust in the two subsamples do not differ from each other significantly. Therefore, we cannot say that social trust has a stronger impact on social tolerance among women than among men. Overall speaking, the predictors of social and political tolerance shown in Table 4 are applicable to the population at large, instead of applicable to only people of a specific gender.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis shows that contemporary Hong Kong citizens arguably have rather low levels of social and political tolerance. Only about 7 % of them would not mind having any of the five groups in the survey as neighbors, and only about 19 % would not feel objectionable toward any of the five groups striving for their rights or professing their ways of life publicly. Certainly, it is difficult to state how large such percentages should be before we would consider a citizenry as generally tolerant. Direct international comparison is also

difficult because no other studies have asked exactly the same questions about the same set of groups. The World Values Survey, for instance, also examined social tolerance by asking respondents to pick from a list of groups anyone they would mind having as neighbors. However, the list does not contain sex workers and recovered mental patients, the two groups that are shown to be least socially tolerated by the present study.

The judgment that Hong Kong citizens exhibited rather low levels of tolerance is based on interpretation of the present findings in relation to the characteristics of the groups included in the survey. The five groups, as noted in the conceptual section, do not include any groups that carry severe threats to people or extremist groups that seriously violate basic democratic norms. But the percentages of people exhibiting complete social or political tolerance toward all five groups are still indisputably small.

The finding of low levels of tolerance in the city is not entirely new. Ku and Chan (2006, 2011) have written about the racism and racial discrimination the South Asian ethnic minorities in Hong Kong had to face. Wong (1999) showed that, in a 1995 survey, more than 80 % of people found homosexuality "unacceptable." He stated that "on tolerating, respecting differences, Hong Kong people do very badly" (p. 110). Different from these earlier studies, this article examines social and political tolerance toward multiple groups. It provides more systematic evidence regarding the less than satisfactory levels of tolerance in the city.

Fully explaining Hong Kong citizens' low levels of tolerance is beyond the scope of this article. However, one issue tied to the findings in this study is worth pointing out, *i.e.*, the lack of impact of education on tolerance. Although the bivariate analysis shows that better educated people exhibited higher levels of tolerance, the impact of education disappeared in the multivariate analysis. While one should not over-interpret a null finding, there are indeed reasons why the impact of education would be weak. Local scholars have long criticized civic education in the city for its overwhelming focus on general moral and behavioral norms and its failure to promote an all-rounded conception of social and political citizenship (Tse 2006). The educational system has arguably failed to serve as the platform through which young people can learn about the value of tolerance.

When learning of tolerance is concerned, one can also note that Hong Kong is yet to develop into a full democracy. The extant literature has shown that people living in consolidated democracies tend to exhibit higher levels of tolerance (Peffley and Rohrschneider 2003). The stagnation of the democratization process in the city, therefore, can be considered as another obstacle for the development of social and political tolerance.

Two qualifications about the conclusion of low levels of tolerance in Hong Kong are needed. First, while the finding may put into question the idea that various liberal and democratic norms have constituted the "core values" in the city, the analysis shows that the locally born citizens exhibited higher levels of social and political tolerance than recent migrants from mainland China. Tolerance is a matter of degree. If locally born people are not as tolerant as one might desire, they could still be relatively more liberal-oriented than their newly arriving compatriots from the mainland.

Second, the analysis finds that the youngest generation is substantially more tolerant than the older cohorts. The impact of age is not linear. Citizens born during and after the 1980s stood out as particularly tolerant. The findings are consistent with recent research results about the peculiarly high levels of post-materialistic orientations among also the youngest cohort in Hong Kong (Lee and Tang 2012). The findings can be considered as good news, as generational replacement may be bringing about a more tolerant citizenry in the future.

This study also examines the linkages between tolerance and a number of social and cultural beliefs. The demonstrated relationship between social trust and tolerance replicates a well-established finding. The lack of relationship between tolerance and relative deprivation is possibly due to the fact that the five minority or non-conformist groups included in the survey are not the kind of groups that would pose an economic threat to the dominant group in the society. More interestingly, this study shows a positive relationship between tolerance and post-materialism. This study thus adds new evidence to both the literature on tolerance and that on post-materialism. Certainly, this article does not provide a comprehensive modeling of the development of tolerance. Future research can extend the analysis to incorporate other important factors.

More important, this study shows how social and political tolerance and intolerance may combine to generate more specific attitudes toward different groups. The analysis shows that, between full acceptance and complete non-acceptance, there are the possibilities of quiet co-existence and respectful distance. People may accept minority or non-conformist groups into their social life without being willing to grant the full set of citizen rights and liberties to those groups, or they may be willing to grant the full set of citizen rights and liberties to some groups without being willing to accept them into their social life. The notions of respectful distance and quiet co-existence should be concepts applicable to studies in other societal contexts. They are not only logical possibilities. As the present study shows, it is possible that substantial proportions of people in a society indeed fall into one of these two categories when certain groups are concerned. In Hong Kong, people are particularly likely to hold the attitude of respectful distance toward recovered mental patients and sex workers, whereas a substantial proportion of people prefer quiet co-existence with ethnic minorities.

These findings imply that conclusions about people's attitudes toward specific minority groups may be misleading if we focus only on social or political tolerance. In the Hong Kong case, if we focus only on social tolerance as measured by the "mind being a neighbor" items, we would have concluded that ethnic minorities are widely accepted as part of the society. However, this conclusion could be misleading, as ethnic minorities are only "accepted" as part of the society in a specific way. While most Hong Kong people do not mind having ethnic minorities as their neighbors, they also seem to be unwilling to acknowledge the presence of racial inequality and discrimination in the society and recognize the rights and interests of the ethnic minorities. A recent controversy that highlights this mixed attitude toward minorities is the debate surrounding foreign domestic helpers' right of abode. The controversy centers on whether foreign domestic helpers can become permanent residents after working in the city for seven years. The local public largely rejected the foreign domestic helpers' claim to right of abode. The controversy shows that, while the domestic helpers are part of the everyday life of many middle class families, the general public can easily see the domestic helpers as a threat when they start fighting for their rights.

Similarly, if we focus only on political tolerance, we would have concluded that Hong Kong people are willing to recognize the rights of recovered mental patients. While this conclusion would not be totally wrong, it would have missed the point that recovered mental patients would still find it difficult to re-enter the society because of people's reluctance to fully welcome them into the community.

More generally speaking, the findings of this study point to the conceptual differences between social and political tolerance. Handling differences in lifestyles and habits in one's everyday environment can be rather different from handling conflicts in the public arena. As Walzer (1997) pointed out, the concept of tolerance encompasses a range of

attitudes. What this study shows is that the different attitudes pertinent to tolerance do not always go together. Without overcomplicating the empirical analysis, it may be advisable to examine tolerance as a two-dimensional construct encompassing whether people accept others into their everyday social environment and whether people are willing to extend citizen rights and liberties to others. Considering the possible mixes of social and political tolerance can provide us with additional insights into how people see minority and non-conformist groups. It can also help us pinpoint more accurately the problems of exclusion suffered by the minority and non-conformist groups and therefore design better social remedies and/or policy responses.

This article utilizes a cross-sectional survey. It does not address the issue of changing levels of social and political tolerance toward groups over time. Notably, in many countries around the world, tolerance toward different groups may have increased over time, but the speed of increasing tolerance may vary across groups. While this study provides a baseline against which future studies in Hong Kong can be compared, longitudinal analyses can help track the changing levels of tolerance Hong Kong people exhibit toward the groups concerned. Moreover, this study points to the additional possibility that increasing levels of social tolerance toward a group may not always be matched by increasing levels of political tolerance toward the same group, and vice versa. Simultaneously tracking of changing levels of both social and political tolerance would therefore be crucial to understanding the changing attitudes a society can be holding toward various minority and non-conformist groups.

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