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The impact of changing value systems on social inclusion: an Asia-Pacific perspective

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Introduction

Social exclusion involves restrictions on social contact and social relations (Littlewood and Herkommer, 1999). For many older people, this may mean fewer opportunities to interact with relatives, friends or neighbours. Like social ostracism, it can leave the individual in a state of entrapment, isolated from society's general activities (Lee, 2001) and with ongoing reminders 'of their own failures ... and with inescapable proof of their inability to alter the unwanted circumstances of their lives' (Pearlin et al, 1981, p 340).

There has been growing interest worldwide, and especially in the Asia-Pacific and its Chinese societies, in changes in inter-family and intergenerational relations and how these may impact on older persons' inclusion or exclusion. This issue has taken on increasing importance in many Asia-Pacific countries, where demographic change and rapid socio-economic development are believed to be associated with a generalised decline in close family relationships, and especially the reciprocal family responsibilities known as filial piety. Therefore, when considering possible marginalisation of older people in Asian societies, especially Chinese societies, there is a need to take account of at least two major issues: demographic change; and value systems, social norms and traditions within filial piety.

Many countries in the Asia-Pacific have seen considerable increases in the numbers and proportions of older people, with concomitant changes in family structures (Phillips et al, 2010). Two domains of social exclusion on which these combined influences are likely to impact are exclusion from material resources, including employment (often causing poverty in later life), and social isolation through exclusion from family relations (often stemming from changes in filial piety). We concentrate here on the second of these domains.

Demographic trends: potential impacts on family relations and older people

The Asia-Pacific is now leading many global demographic trends such as demographic ageing, smaller families and the feminisation of ageing. Asia has more than 60% of the world's total population and also well over half of its population aged 65 and over. While some Asian countries are still relatively young, China already has more people aged 65 years or above than in the countries of the European Union combined (over 100 million versus some 80 million). Another major Asian country, India, is not far behind (at around 60 million) (Population Reference Bureau, 2009).

There are, nevertheless, considerable variations in demographic ageing across specific countries in Asia and the Asia-Pacific sub-region (Phillips et al, 2010; Phillips, 2011). Increased life expectancy and low fertility are well established (Kinsella and He, 2009). Some of the region's countries, especially Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Singapore, have considerable percentages of older persons and are among the oldest countries in the world. However, the region is by no means uniform demographically. Expected life at birth (ELB) in the Asia-Pacific ranges from 61 years in Cambodia and even lower in Myanmar and Timor-Leste, to as high as 83 years in Japan and Hong Kong. The 65+ cohorts similarly range from 3% in Cambodia to 23% in Japan. A crucial demographic feature for health and well-being, and very likely for social inclusion, is the significant growth of the 'oldest old' cohorts (aged 85+), who may risk increasing social isolation if certain of the social trends discussed later continue. We will argue that the rapid pace of demographic ageing in most parts of the region, over just a few decades, and equally rapid and encompassing socio-economic changes, have given little opportunity for family relations to adjust and older people to remain as well integrated as in the past.

An underlying demographic trend strongly influencing demographic ageing in the region is falling fertility rates. It is likely that this demographic feature will become the major factor in the region affecting the potential for social inclusion or exclusion of older people. While its effects have often been overlooked, it is emerging as a policy issue in much of the region (McDonald, 2007; Chen, 2009; Phillips et al, 2010). Traditionally, almost all Asian societies have relied heavily on family care to provide for their older members, with living arrangements often being in extended families and institutional or formal care being an anathema (Phillips, 1992, 2000). Today, smaller, more widely scattered families mean that the potential for extended family living is much reduced. Moreover, many Asia-Pacific families are separated by regional or international migration; younger members living locally are likely to be working full time outside the home.

Socio-economic impacts of demographic change

These demographic changes are impacting socially and economically, often in rather unexpected ways. A major issue has been the changes in long-term family and community relations caused by smaller families, fewer relatives and greater longevity. In particular, the numbers of potential family carers are inevitably becoming fewer and many children do not wish to look after their older parents. In cultures where daughters and daughters-in-law have often been assumed to become the carers, many women may well prefer to pursue their own careers outside the home or within a nuclear rather than an extended family. This may be the start of exclusion for some older members from the social relations associated with the immediate family circle.

Demographic changes also mean that many countries have to recognise the financial impacts of living longer and of retirement. In Korea, for example, some 30,000 people aged 65 and over have had to explore opportunities for remaining in the labour force as only 28% of the working population is covered by the government pension system (Global Action on Aging, 2009). The Korean government, like some others, has established 'silver job fairs' to find jobs for people aged 60 and older and has offered subsidies to private companies that hire older people. However, there are still insufficient openings for older job-seekers. At the same time, competition for employment from younger and middle-aged workers has stimulated negative sentiments towards the older population, even branding them 'job-takers' who should be obliged to retire. Alternatively, emerging labour shortages have sometimes enhanced the image and value of older workers, encouraging places such as Singapore to highlight the need for retraining and flexible employment policies to retain older workers. The picture, therefore, differs by both time and place.

A further effect of demographic change has been a shift in attitudes regarding the social relations of longer-lived older family members. For example, remarriage of older people was once effectively taboo, especially for older women who generally live longer than men. Today, attitudes may be changing. In China, older people may avoid formal remarriage, although they value having someone to look after them or be available for companionship (Global Action on Aging, 2009). Instead of registering as a legally married couple, some choose to live together, an unthinkable situation a decade or so ago. What, however, are the attitudes of conservative societies and family members towards the remarriage or cohabitation of older people? Remarriage may effectively remain taboo, or frowned upon, in many Asia-Pacific countries, but evidence is unclear. A study comparing filial attitudes in Taiwan and in Baoding, Hebei, China, in the mid-1990s, for example, found strong disapproval of remarriage even after an older woman had been widowed for some time in Taiwan. By contrast, over 90% of older respondents in Baoding felt that it was acceptable for women to remarry under such circumstances (Whyte, 2004). This shows clear regional contrasts

even within ethnically similar societies and suggests greater conservatism in the Taiwanese respondents than in modern China.

In the face of shrinking family resources, greater numbers of older adults may need support over longer periods of time. There has been a spectacular epidemiological transition in almost all countries of the Asia-Pacific, and especially in East Asia (including Singapore), marked by the emerging prominence of chronic and degenerative diseases related to population ageing and lifestyle changes (Phillips, 2000, 2011; OECD, 2010; Phillips et al, 2010). Heart disease, cancers and stroke now make up the vast majority of mortality in older age groups, accounting also for a substantial proportion of morbidity. The growing incidence and prevalence of dementias is also likely to become a serious challenge in a number of societies in the region (Access Economics, 2006, 2009). Assuming responsibility for care may well no longer be possible for many families and older adults, with some forms of mental and physical health problems, such as advanced dementias, almost inevitably requiring institutional care.

The combination of demographic and epidemiological changes effectively means that health and social care policies will increasingly have to focus on the older cohorts while at the same time attempting to care for other age groups with finite resources and diminishing family capacity to help. This is a major social challenge and there is speculation that resources will be spread so thinly that there will be intergenerational conflicts or competition between demographic and social groups. Questions are raised concerning whether younger generations will agree to redirect public expenditure from mother-child health and education towards long-term care, social and welfare services for the older cohorts. To date, this issue has largely been hidden because of the extensive reliance on intra-family care. Today, challenges are emerging for social service care because of the changes in family structure and potential loss of family caring capacity. Among these major emerging challenges are long-term care and end-of-life care (Chan, 2011a).

Cultural values and changes: filial piety and ancestral duties

In recent years, there has been considerable academic and policy-related interest in the region in the topic of family capacity to care. Much of the discussion has focused on the question of whether family relations and filial piety are changing and having adverse consequences for older people's well-being and care (Chow, 2001, 2006). In most of the Asia-Pacific, the impact of modernisation, sometimes held to be associated with 'Westernisation', on cultural and social values and practices has indeed been considerable. There have been changes in family functions, evidenced by departures from traditional practices, and caring attitudes (Hugman, 2000; Kim and Lee, 2003; Lee, 2004; Ong et al, 2009; Zheng and George, 2010). Research and anecdotal evidence also point to qualitative changes in roles and relationships within the remaining multigenerational households. Such changes have potentially adverse implications for older people's experience of physical and emotional security and well-being (Ingersoll-Dayton

and Saengtienchai, 1999; Silverstein et al, 2002) and, hence, may affect their social inclusion. One crucial cultural practice that has attracted, and will continue to attract, considerable regional and international interest is filial piety.

Filial piety is represented in a Chinese character comprising an upper character for 'old' and lower one for 'son', which may convey many messages, including support by young of old, or even burden of old on young (Ikels, 2004). The concept is generally agreed to have originated from the teachings of Confucius (551–479 BC) and has been influencing interpersonal relations in China and East Asia for more than 2,500 years. According to Confucian teaching, filial piety covered mutual obligations between the emperor and his subjects, between the father and sons, between husband and wife, and among members within the same sibling generation. It lies at the root of most moral and social values in East-Asian countries such as China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. In China, for example, it was held that obedience (or even subservience) to respected old people should arise from love for the parents (Lin, 1992); it should be much more than merely providing food and basic necessities (Chow, 2001). Indeed, filial piety operates at a number of levels: in the provision of fundamentals for parents' physical needs and comfort; in paying attention to, and obeying, parents' wishes; and, in behaving so as to make parents happy, bringing them honour and respect in the community (Chow, 2001).

Until recently, filial piety certainly exercised considerable influence over practical relations and care between parents and children and relationships among people (Tsai, 1999). It continues to exert considerable emotional influence, even if its practical expressions have become muted in recent years. Traditionally, filial practice encompassed a holistic form of care with clear implications for the overall quality of older people's lives. There are eight qualities for traditional Chinese people to complete throughout their lives, of which filial piety comes first and foremost. The importance of paying filial duties to parents (and older members) is explained as all physical bodily aspects of one's being were created by one's parents. Parents tend to their children's well-being, especially that of sons, until they can look after themselves. The reciprocal respect and the homage to parents of filial piety are to return to them this gracious deed, both during life and afterwards.

Filial piety: changes, challenges and social consequences

Today, the modernisation of filial piety in Asia-Pacific countries appears to have eroded its influence and even changed its practices to allow, for example, the substitution of cash and paid services by others for personal care by the family (Ng et al, 2002; Cheng and Chan, 2006). Indeed, it has increasingly been felt that the traditional aspects of care and veneration are less well-taught and less understood in most modern Chinese societies (Ikels, 2004). In more Westernised Hong Kong, Chow (2001) and Ng et al (2002) found that filial piety is being reinterpreted in a modern way, in which parents' wishes would not necessarily be paramount or automatically obeyed, and assistance could take as much a financial as a personal

form. The People's Republic of China (PRC) under Mao Zedong previously actively attempted to undermine the solidarity of the family in favour of the role of the state. Today, given its large older population and pressing need for social and economic support, the PRC is actively trying to reinstate and redevelop the concept of obligation to provide family care.

In Korea, it was officially felt for some time that provision of care for older people outside the family would undermine family solidarity and filial traditions (Choi, 2000; Chow, 2006). However, given the country's rapid demographic ageing and fertility decline, attitudes have changed and 'the centrality of informal family support networks in providing care is increasingly absent from the scene' (Hwang, 2009, p 85). Pressure for more formal social provision has led to an expanded role of the state into personal and long-term care. In this shift, there is potential for providing some care for people in need, but also to further isolate older people from their intimate family and filial networks.

In Hong Kong, parts of China, Taiwan and elsewhere, changes have stemmed from the combined forces of modernisation, housing pressures and general social trends towards nuclear families. In Hong Kong, special circumstances have made this even more evident. Hong Kong experienced rapid population growth and an influx of migrants in the 1950s and early 1960s, and has small housing sizes due to high costs. More recently, it has witnessed family fragmentation resulting from migration and emigration for economic and other reasons. It is increasingly common for older persons to be living by themselves. Recent Hong Kong data suggest that some 12% of Hong Kong's older population live alone (Census and Statistics Department, 2008). This trend is also evident in Singapore and other similar modernising societies (Reisman, 2009).

A major social development and consequence of the demographic changes noted earlier is that, in most of the region, multigenerational families have been becoming a rarity rather than the norm over recent decades. This is especially evident in the urban areas such as Hong Kong and Singapore, and in many other cities throughout the region, including Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul and Taipei. In Korea, the proportion of older people living alone or with their spouse has increased substantially from under 20% in 1981 to 62% in 2007 (Choi, 2009). Specific local factors have exacerbated this trend.

In China, the growth of economic zones and cities along the eastern seaboard since 1980 has caused considerable social imbalance resulting from labour migration. Millions of young workers have flocked to the main eastern cities and economic zones such as Shenzhen and Zhuhai, leaving relatives and older parents behind, mainly in rural areas. On a smaller geographical scale, housing developments in Hong Kong since 1980 have meant that a considerable proportion of the population moved to new town areas, sometimes placing younger members at a distance from their other relatives. When the moves have involved older people themselves, they have sometimes separated individuals from their established networks of social support, leading to necessity for considerable psychosocial adjustment in old age (Phillips et al, 2005, 2009). As a result, here and elsewhere,

some older persons have had to look for new sources of social support, sometimes from the formal sector, which are more readily available or accessible. This might have the twin effects of better including older people in social networks outside the family, while simultaneously reducing the importance of the immediate family. It also effectively alters the relationship between older persons and support providers from an obligatory one based on traditional values to one based on the exchange of favours (eg between friends and neighbours) or purchased or 'rights-based' care from formal and official welfare services.

Tensions arising?

Some believe that the Asia-Pacific is at a turning point, at which traditional values that have maintained social harmony for centuries are now under serious erosion. Nevertheless, there is evidence that some younger adults continue to hold strong filial beliefs. By contrast, many older people seem to have lower filial expectations of the younger generations than they do for themselves. For example, a representative survey in Taiwan in 1995 showed that, while 66% of those aged 31–35 years felt obliged to live with their aged parent, only 57% of those aged 66–70 years actually expected their children to live with them (Hsu et al, 2001). Indeed, it seems likely that adult children often feel uncomfortable and unhappy when their home circumstances and working patterns mean they cannot provide the care they would like for parents. This emotional conflict may well affect the relationships between sons and daughters-in-law, as much of the caring burden still falls on women (especially a daughter-in-law).

Despite emotional pressure and even desire, fewer young Chinese people in particular now appear to be fulfilling formal filial obligations (Yan et al, 2002). Increasingly, the younger generations have had different life experiences from their parents, including greater education, working away, travelling, living in nuclear family structures, experiencing formalised caring facilities and exposure to information technology; so many believe that to have older parents living with them full time is neither practical nor possible. This may be contrary to the traditional filial expectations of both generations. But it may also suit some parties. The desire for family care is more or less universal, as even in Western countries, many older people hope that they will be cared for and accompanied by their children when they need help (Chappell and Kusch, 2007). However, the family is often no longer in a position to provide adequate care.

By emphasising the rights and equality of all parties, the theme of intergenerational well-being and even a form of potential inclusion through compromise is arguably being achieved. In some places, this is being fostered voluntarily. In others, notably Singapore and China, there are laws in place that require children to maintain and look after their adult children. However, younger adults of today may consider their own well-being as just as important as that of their parents, a notion arising from modern notions of equality and individual rights. Many consider themselves as family members with the obligation to take

care of their own children in a nuclear family but not necessarily all other family members – a perspective consistent with views of the concept of family unity found in some studies on filial piety (Kao and Travis, 2005). Younger adults may feel that while older parents' interests are a binding duty, their own (fewer) young children and they themselves warrant greater focus. Some academic research and much popular and media coverage attributes the increased focus on the nuclear family to the fact that many Asian countries are becoming more 'Westernised'. Individualistic values, allegedly more characteristic of the West, may indeed be growing today in Asian cities. This, of course, does not mean that the younger generations are 'unfilial' in the traditional sense of self-sacrifice for parents, but perhaps, as discussed later, they have a new perception of the value and practice of filial piety. A balance between different parties' interests has increasingly become a desired policy goal, suggesting all generations' views of practising filial piety is more flexible than in the past (Traphagan, 2006). In effect, the cultural climate is in a state of flux and will continue to change to suit changing times.

Family carers and non-family carers

The differences between receiving care provided by the family (especially by adult children) and that from other sources, especially formal and paid sources outside the home, have come to be an important contemporary concern in many countries in the region. Employment of outside sources of help may lead to a type of reconciliation between fulfilling familial obligations and pleasing the younger nuclear family. In many countries of Asia, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, the employment of foreign domestic helpers as non-family live-in carers for older, particularly frail, people, has become common among middle-class and even less well-off families. Today in Taiwan, it is increasingly common for older people to live in long-term care settings or to be cared for by hired helpers (Li and Yin, 2005). Generally, such helpers come from poorer countries of the region, previously mainly from the Philippines, but increasingly from Indonesia and Sri Lanka. While the level of care and attention provided by such helpers is often high, and can be round-the-clock, there is the potential for yet further linguistic and cultural isolation and a type of displacement from the family and especially from the expectation of personalised family care. In 2009, Hong Kong tabled plans to allow the employment of domestic helpers from mainland China who would have more cultural and linguistic ease with some older people. This opens up interesting possibilities for further isolation and/or inclusion in that the helper can interact with the older person, and will have at least some shared cultural values. However, for some families, the costs are high and the fact that they need to employ a helper could also foster a sentiment in the minds of some older people that they are a burden on their children.

Researchers have further attributed changing trends in individuals' perceptions of filial piety to the current social and economic environments. In the past, cultural belief systems were expected to be followed strictly and rigorously. In the minds

of some baby-boomers, a new 'middle-way' of thinking seems to be developing, in which responsibilities for the care of older relatives can be shared out to solve care-taking. However, many still wish to adhere to some elements of five prior normative beliefs (Ikels, 2004). First, the ways of practising filial obligations must comply with the general expectations or acceptance of the population ('I think that the way in which I will treat my parents is the way that people generally expect'); so public approval or even sanctions are relevant. Second, care must be based on intention to reciprocate for parents' past care and the raising of their children, requiring a response in kind when the parents are old. Third, care can be a way of expressing gratitude and affection, and a way to protect parents from harm. However, it increasingly appears that people do not find it necessary to define precise behaviours in this regard as long as the parents feel the appreciation. Furthermore, it is believed that a diversity of methods can be used to display filial piety, such as meeting parents' physical, emotional and spiritual needs, and protecting them from worries, loneliness or troubles. Fourth, filial piety should apply when neither parents nor children have to make unilateral sacrifices and when both parties' well-being and happiness are taken into consideration. It may, for example, be felt that by not living together, unnecessary conflicts will be avoided and relationships preserved. Finally, there may be an economic link between providing care and inheritances.

Changing traditional forms of care for parents and social isolation: an East-Asian perspective

The reduction in family size in most countries of East Asia has been seen as an indicator of successful population policies, but, more recently, as a cause of considerable social concern. A particular threat to intergenerational cohesion identified in China over the last two decades, is the growth of the so-called '4-2-1 family structure' (four grandparents, two parents, one child). This was an almost inevitable consequence of the rigorous implementation of the one-child policy in the 1970s and the slightly more relaxed policy since the 1980s. As a result, the government of the PRC, like many others in East Asia, has begun to anticipate the very real likelihood of an inverse population pyramid, with considerably more people in the older than younger cohorts (Chen, 2009). The practical outcome of this, in conjunction with increased employment opportunities for younger men and women, is that the tradition of multiple caregivers being available in each generation has been rather abruptly disrupted; tens of millions of retirees will have only one adult child to rely on. Consequently, these adult children's situations have rendered them highly conflicted about prospective parent care. Further, they have realised that, when the time comes, they will have little latitude in terms of employment flexibility and being able to provide all aspects of care to their parents.

Indeed, so serious is the potential ageing (as well as lack of labour) in large cities in China that the relaxation to a de facto two-child policy in cities such

as Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou was effected in mid-2009, especially for 'double-single' couples, parents who are both singletons and products themselves of the one-child policy (Becker, 2010; Li, 2010). Whatever positive view may be put on the 30-year population policy, some senior Chinese officials now hold it responsible for what is regarded as a serious problem: rapid population ageing. The pressure is therefore growing for relaxation of the one-child policy even beyond the major cities.

Consequences for older people of the population policy are varied but include less family contact and potential isolation from kin. Like many other countries, China is experiencing unprecedented growth in the private aged-care industry, a de facto recognition that family care is insufficient. Previously, socialist welfare policies were undermined by welfare reforms of the mid-1990s, and a socialistic entrepreneurship has seized the chance to provide older people with private residential care services (Gu et al, 2007; Zhan et al, 2006; Cheng et al, 2008). This has come at a time when some Chinese citizens' affluence and prosperity are similar to those in other major cities in the industrialised world. Now, in China's urban areas, many adult children who are unavailable to provide adequate care, but who have disposable income, have the option of placing older parents in residential homes. The numbers of such care homes has grown rapidly since the mid-1990s.

Rapidly changing socio-economic conditions in China, as in many other parts of East Asia, have also provided a new context for how some older people feel about these changing care practices. Zhan et al (2008) note that older parents have made compromises, such as accepting placement into for-profit residential care homes, to maintain harmony with their child(ren). Rather than feeling abandoned or shamed if they move into residential care, many felt the move denoted privilege and were proud their families could afford the care. Ironically, for some at least, this ability to pay for care appears to have become a symbol of wealth in socialist-capitalist China. Many believe that they will receive good-quality medical and social care as well as enriched social environments with people of similar ages. While in the residential care units, they reported positively about their children's continued emotional support and care involvement. They may have appeared to be experiencing a form of isolation, but, at this later stage of life, filial obligations were no longer solely about children's direct physical care. Research among different age groups in Hong Kong has found that, among many older people, placement in an old-age home was not seen as an indication of unfilial behaviour. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, older respondents were more likely than younger ones to view old-age homes positively, although potential problems of adjustment to such homes should not be minimised (Tang et al, 2009).

These findings provide an interesting new perspective on filial piety. Zhan et al's (2008) China research supports suggestions from studies elsewhere in the region, such as the Hong Kong study, that if adult children are not available to provide adequately personal physical care, filial obligations could still be fulfilled by placement in a good care facility. This may be especially so in China when it signals wealth to neighbours, friends or relatives. These findings from China suggest

that adult children also contribute to the reinterpretation of filial obligations. Rather than feeling guilty or ashamed about placing parents in institutions, adult children openly discussed their decisions and expressed satisfaction with resulting arrangements. To the older parents, as long as their children's emotional and financial commitment remained strong, the sense of abandonment or shame associated with the assumed potential stigma of living in a care home dissipated and was even superseded by pride. However, one implication of this trend is that the ability to pay is likely to enlarge the growing gap between rich and poor older Chinese people in their capability and decisions about care options (Zhan et al, 2006). Nevertheless, some research suggests that managing stigma can be an issue in placing parents in institutional care (Zhan et al, 2011). There is potential for an increase in feelings of social exclusion among some people, who might feel shame if they are placed in inferior homes or if they are not visited and supported by their child(ren). However, there is no evidence to date of income-based differences in family exclusion.

For practical reasons, it seems that many older people in China are feeling the need to reinterpret and forge a more liveable version of filial piety (Lee, 2001; Zhan et al, 2008) and this almost certainly also applies elsewhere in the region. This trend supports Gore's (1992) earlier suggestion of the interactive and compromising role that older people and their adult children should adopt in seeking a new solution for long-term care. Supportive families may sometimes provide older people with a chance to reciprocate by taking part in family roles, with contributions such as caring for, bringing up or educating grandchildren or undertaking household chores, potentially helping to maintain the integration of older people into family life. Perhaps paying for residential care is a modern-day extension and should not automatically be construed as a form of exclusion of older members from the family. Based on the findings of empirical survey research, Chow (2001, p 135) suggests: 'Looking at the present-day behaviour of Hong Kong people, Confucius would certainly denounce it as improper.... However, he would accept that, since circumstances have changed, putting parents' wishes above one's own may no longer be possible'.

One particular issue of potentially great importance arising from, and also causing, social isolation is the abuse of older people. This is starting to be acknowledged and is emerging as a policy and family matter in this region. In the West, there has been much discussion of this phenomenon, which can take many forms ranging from overt violence to more subtle psychological and economic neglect. It is now becoming a concern in many countries of the Asia-Pacific. Research-based evidence is as yet relatively slim, although case studies are emerging in places such as Singapore (Chan, 2011b). Elder abuse has been a hidden but probably fairly widespread phenomenon in most of the Asia-Pacific. Socio-political changes mean that more open discussion is now becoming acceptable and is appearing in Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and elsewhere. Officially reported cases are relatively rare in places such as Hong Kong and Singapore even with their well-established social welfare organisations (Teo et al, 2006; Chan, 2011b). But

real figures are almost certainly much higher than those reported. Several places in the region, including Singapore and China, have formal legislation requiring support of older relatives or parents (eg Singapore's Maintenance of Parents Act with its tribunals for settling stipends since 1994/95). In China, the reciprocal responsibility for care and assistance is actually stated in the 1982 Constitution. Japan's Elder Abuse Prevention and Caregiver Support Law, which came into effect in 2006, makes reporting of abuse mandatory if the life or health of an abused or neglected older person appears to be in danger (Tsuno and Homma, 2009). These provide evidence of the growing concern about, and at least some policy attempts being formulated towards, disrespect and abuse of older people in the region.

Resilience and the older consumer: evidence of social inclusion?

We can conclude on a potentially more positive note for the more developed parts of the Asia-Pacific region. To date, older persons have generally been viewed as less powerful, almost as supplicants, in society and in many families. However, evidence is emerging that this may be an erroneous stereotype, at least for some older groups. Greater numbers of older people are both resilient and have economic power, in increasingly consumer-oriented societies, where the economic value of the 'silver market' is growing. The general status and inclusion of older persons may be enhanced if they are viewed as consumers; an area where many have to date been marginalised. The silver market is usually interpreted as services (especially health, welfare, pensions and foods) provided for older persons. However, the silver market is also being interpreted in the Asia-Pacific, as it is in the West, as one in which older people are seen as a growing cohort of consumers in their own right, with economic requirements and purchasing power (Furlong, 2007; Ong and Phillips, 2007).

Older consumers will demand, and often be able to pay for, suitable homes, transport, consumer goods, financial services and leisure activities. Many will be able to afford them and be in a position to influence future consumer goods provision and marketing. This is becoming recognised in the region and, indeed, there is a silver market organisation looking at business-consumer connections regionally in the Asia-Pacific (Silvergroup, 2011).

Nevertheless, many older people, especially in the currently old cohorts, do not have financial resources or savings, and poverty represents a powerful aspect of social exclusion. However, in the future, it is likely that more older persons will become the 'canny consumers' found in one Malaysian study (Ong and Phillips, 2007). Increasingly, older adults are empowered and able to express their demands, requirements and consumer complaints (Ong et al, 2009). Producers of goods and services, marketers, public policymakers, and the families of older people will do well to recognise this growing area of inclusion of older persons in the economy. It seems certain that ever-more independently oriented older people

will still want filial contact with their children and other family members, so the continuing evolution of filial piety will be an increasingly important research and policy interest.

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