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Abstract:

The UK Chinese community has long been perceived to have a high degree of solidarity and self-sufficiency. On the other hand, it is argued that the sense of community and mutual help among Chinese people has been weakened by their competitive approach to business. Based on findings from ESRC-funded national study of the UK Chinese people's help-seeking behaviour, this study found that Chinese people, both where their population is dispersed and where it is concentrated, actively formed organisations to meet their social and cultural needs. However, Chinese organisations were weakened by inadequate resources and the diverse needs of different Chinese groups. Thus, the UK Chinese people were neither self-sufficient nor isolated from each other. The experiences of Chinese organisations further show that in spite of government expectations of community organisations, state input has been mainly in terms of regulations and control. Without financial support, UK Chinese organisations will slip from being weak organisations into 'silent' ones.

Key words: weak organisations, culturally oriented services, diversity, organisational capacity.

‘Beyond Silent Organisations’ – A Reflection of the UK Chinese People and their Community Organisations

Introduction:

There are two contrasting views on the nature of the UK Chinese community. The first view, on the one hand, perceives Chinese people as a silent and self-sufficient community, which, as stated in a Home Affairs Committee report, prefers ‘self-reliance and mutual aid within the family and community’ (Runnymede Trust, 1986: 6). As a Home Office minister pointed out: ‘There is a great desire among the Chinese to sort out their problems for themselves and not ask others for help’ (National Children Centre, 1982: 3). As a result, Chinese people have always been perceived by statutory bodies as having sufficient resources to meet their needs. For example, a Chinese organisation experienced difficulties in obtaining support from a local authority because the ‘official council statistics at the time showed no record of any enquiries made by Chinese people and the official conclusion was that they had no problems’ (Chinese Community Centre, 1995: 5). The second view, on the other hand, perceives UK Chinese people’s caring practices as operating mainly at family

level, while mutual help at the community level is minimal. According to Chau and Yu (2001: 114-115), 'Few Chinese deal with their problems on a community basis or actively promote their interests as a community. Most of their concern is limited to their family and little attention is paid beyond this boundary'. They further argued that the 'Chinese cohesion is much weaker than is commonly assumed' due to their potential business conflicts (*ibid*:115). Consequently:

Many Chinese in Britain to a certain extent experience 'double social exclusion': they are not fully integrated into the social mainstream and (for financial reasons) maintain a distance from each other. They have a foot in both camps but lack the full support of either. (Chau and Yu, 2001:120)

It should be stressed that the image of UK Chinese people and their community directly shapes the provision of public services for them. According to a Chinese community leader, public authorities and the public continue to operate on the perception that:

The Chinese are hard working, self-reliant and keep themselves to themselves. They do not like to mix with other communities and have a very tight extended

family support network to look after them. (Lam, 2002)

The community leader further claimed that Chinese people suffered disadvantages due to public officials' limited knowledge of the Chinese community (*ibid.*). In fact, the Minister of State for Home Affairs expressed a similar view more than two decades ago when he said that the UK Chinese people were 'the least well-known and understood' (National Children's Centre, 1982: 2). Because of this poor understanding, the needs of UK Chinese people have often been 'ignored or misconstrued, resulting in gaps in services or inappropriate services that often adds insult to hardship' (Lam, 2002). Furthermore, the Chinese in Britain Forum (1999) noted that 'British people do not understand the UK Chinese people. Based on their own perception, they have wrongly assumed Chinese community is self-sufficient without using public services'. Thus, it is essential to investigate the caring capacity of the UK Chinese community so that its needs can be accurately assessed and culturally appropriate services provided. It is in this regard that it is important to evaluate the welfare functions of UK Chinese community organisations from the perspective of them being service providers to UK Chinese people. Based on data from a postal survey with 316 respondents (PS) and semi-structured interviews with 100 respondents (SSI), this paper examines the nature and extent of the welfare functions of Chinese community

organisations from the perspective of the Chinese recipients.

Chinese People in the UK

It is important to give an account of the development of the UK Chinese community before our exploration of its present nature. Official figures in 2001 showed that there were 247,403 Chinese people in the UK (National Statistics, 2001). The first group of Chinese settlers in the UK was seamen, who were recruited to support the maritime trade in Asia in the 1850s. They were a transient population found mainly in the ports of London and Liverpool. The number of Chinese people, however, did not increase rapidly; there were only 1,934 in 1931. It was not until after the Second World War that more Chinese people from Hong Kong's rural areas came to Britain. According to Parker (1999), three key factors contributed to the migration of Hong Kong farmers into the UK after the war. Firstly, Hong Kong farmers in the New Territories found it difficult to earn a living as a result of the arrival of a large number of refugees from mainland China. Secondly, rice prices dropped due to more importation from Thailand. Thirdly, the development of 'a taste for new cuisines' after the Second World War provided a business and job opportunity for Hong Kong people to run Chinese restaurants and take-aways abroad. Against this background, Hong Kong people

became the largest Chinese group in Britain. Among the 156,938 Chinese people in 1991, 34% came from Hong Kong, 13% came from Singapore and Malaysia, and 28% were born in the UK (Cheng, 1996).

The key feature of the settlement of UK Chinese people is that they were concentrated in big cities such as London, Manchester, and Liverpool and were scattered or dispersed in smaller towns and large villages (see National Statistics, 2001). This pattern is due, partially, to the survival strategy of the Chinese catering industry. Chinese people move into small towns and large villages in order to avoid or reduce competition. As Parker (1999: 305) put it, ‘the dispersal of the Chinese population in Britain reflects the need for each business to have a wide catchment area and to move away from competitors’ (see also Watson, 1975 and Shang, 1984). In the big cities, UK Chinese people tend to concentrate more in the inner city areas, particularly in areas that have become internationally labelled “Chinatowns”.

The UK Chinese community has become even more diverse in recent years as a result of more Chinese people being born in the UK, the increasing number of Chinese students from mainland China and the arrival of middle class Hong Kong people in significant numbers. Figures from the Labour Force Survey show that the proportion

of UK born Chinese aged 19-59 increased from 8.9% to 17.3% between 1995 and 2002 (Lindley *et al*, 2004). Before Hong Kong's political turnover in 1997, 50,000 families were granted British citizenship. In 1990, *The Economist* predicted that new immigrants from Hong Kong 'are more likely to become accountants than chefs in a local take-away', which means 'a profound break with the traditional Chinese immigration of the past' (1990:1). Added to this, it has been estimated that Chinese students would increase from 32,000 in 2002-03 to 49,100 in 2010 (Nania and Green, 2004). These developments help explain why there was a 57% increase in the Chinese population in Britain between 1991 and 2001. In short, diversity and dramatic growth are two significant features of the UK Chinese community.

Methodology

This paper is based on findings from ESRC-funded research into the help seeking behaviour of UK Chinese people (Chan *et al*, 2004). One of the objectives of the study was to explore the relationship between Chinese people and their community organisations.

In terms of research, the UK Chinese are believed to be a 'hard-to-reach' minority

group due to their geographical distribution and communication (language) problems.

Previous studies reveal that a major difficulty in researching the UK Chinese people is the lack of 'existing and easily accessible sampling frames' (see Prior *et al*, 1997: 77; see also Boxter, 1988; Pang, 1993; Parker, 1995). Besides national surveys that provide a general picture, local studies have used different methods in the attempt to acquire in-depth information about UK Chinese groups. Many studies have used members of Chinese organisations as samples. One of the consequences of this is the exclusion of many Chinese people who never attend Chinese community organisations. Others have acquired their samples from UK Chinese people who use particular services such as GPs or housing facilities, schools or Chinese Christian churches (see for example, Law, 2004; Furnham and Lee, 1993; Raschka *et al*, 2002)

The main limitation of these studies is that the samples were small and not representative of all UK Chinese groups. Hong Kong Chinese, being the largest Chinese group and the ones most likely to own Chinese restaurants and takeaways and attend Chinese organisations or use public facilities, are more likely to be targeted by local researchers because of their 'visibility' whilst the other Chinese groups are often ignored or visibly under-represented.

In contrast, this study attempted to reach all UK Chinese groups. In addition, the

study used both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to obtain more robust data for analysis. Two random samples of UK Chinese people were drawn from Chinese surnames listed in the BT (British Telephone) Telephone Directory (BTDD), which included customers of both BT and other telephone operators. One sample was drawn for the postal survey (PS) and the other for the semi-structured interviews (SSI)

To begin with, a stratified random sampling method was used to produce a sampling frame for the postal survey (PS). The sample was selected in such a way as to take full advantage of the geographical distribution of UK Chinese people. Using available census data, areas were chosen with high (over 5,000), medium (2,000 - 5,000), and low (under 2,000) concentrations of Chinese people in the UK. Consequently, 25 areas were selected for the survey: five in areas with 'high' concentrations of Chinese people, five in areas of 'medium' concentration and 15 in areas of 'low' (dispersed) concentration (see Chan *et al*, 2004 for details). Traditional Chinese instead of simple Chinese was used in the postal questionnaires. This is because respondents in a pre-test did not encounter any difficulties in understanding traditional Chinese even though some of them were used to reading in simple Chinese. A total of 2,500 questionnaires were sent to the 25 areas. After deducting some invalid addresses such as incorrect addresses, wrong names, and respondents having moved houses, there

was a total of 2,162 valid addresses. 316 questionnaires were returned, giving a success rate of 14.6% (Chan *et al*, 2004). Low response rates in public surveys can be due to several factors. Ours can be partly explained by cultural and political reasons. It is not unusual for Chinese people to be reluctant to give personal information and be suspicious of the purpose of external surveys. This was confirmed during the SSI when interviewers reported that some respondents, especially those from mainland China, were quite suspicious of the purpose of the study. Having been living in a relatively authoritarian state with little protection of individual rights, some respondents' suspicious attitudes toward the survey are reasonable. In a postal survey, this suspicion can only result in non-completion of questionnaires. In addition, low completion rate could be due, as in most surveys, to illiteracy or low level of education. Studies have shown that uneducated Chinese parents depend on their children to handle external communications (see Parker, 1995). As research questionnaires might not be seen as important as household bills and legal correspondence, these parents are less likely to ask their children for help in completing them. This explanation is supported by the fact that a high percentage of the respondents in the PS had higher educational qualifications (58% educated to colleague certificate/diploma or above) than the national average (35.6% received higher education or above) (National Statistics, 2006). The fact that respondents in

postal surveys are more likely to be educated, knowledgeable and interested in the issues than non-respondents is a common 'hazard' in public surveys.

For the semi-structured interviews (SSI), four areas were used: two in areas of 'high' concentration or clustering of Chinese people (London and Manchester) and two in areas of low concentration or dispersal (Cardiff and Lincoln). According to National Statistics (2003) 35.3% of UK Chinese people lived in London and 5.2% in Manchester. In contrast, 0.8% lived in Cardiff and 0.1% in Lincolnshire. In order to counter language problems and to cater for the diverse nature of UK Chinese people, interviewers recruited for this study could speak Cantonese, Mandarin and English. A total of 100 respondents were interviewed.

The study relied on the BTDD because it provided a useful source of access to large numbers of Chinese people in different parts of the UK. However, the researchers were aware of the limitations of this method. Chinese people without Chinese names (for example Chinese women who are married to non-Chinese people) and Chinese people who are ex-directory or use only mobile phones, were naturally excluded from the study.

By comparison with national figures, respondents of this study have several features:

(1) Concerning marital status, respondents in the PS and SSIs were similar to that of the Labour Force Survey. Most of them (60% in PS and 66% in SSIs) were 'married' and there were low rates of co-habitation (7% in PS and 6% in SSIs), separation or divorce (7% in PS and 6% in SSIs). Data from the Labour Force Survey show that 60% of Chinese women in the UK were 'married', 7% 'co-habiting', and 3.5% 'divorced or separated' (Lindley *et al.*, 2004).

(2) As for education, over four in ten respondents (46% in PS and 42% in SSIs) were educated to a bachelor degree or above; and only two out of ten received education 'below the primary school' (18% in PS and 20% in SSIs). The national statistics reveal that 31% of UK Chinese people had 'degree or equivalent' whilst 20% had 'no qualifications' at all (National Statistics, 2006).

(3) In terms of gender, about six out of ten respondents aged over 18 were male (62% in PS and 59% in SSIs). Data from the 2001 census shows that 49% of Chinese people age over 16 were male and 51% female (National Statistics, 2001). Thus, the two samples of this study included disproportionately more male respondents.

(4) Regarding age structure, one in ten respondents of the two samples (10% in PS and 11% in SSIs) were over the age of 65 years, while the proportion of this group in 2001 census was 6.3% (National Statistics, 2001).

The above comparisons reveal that while respondents of the two samples share some similarities with that of the national surveys, this study had disproportionately more respondents who were male and who possessed better education qualifications. Therefore, these differences should be born in mind by applying the findings of this study to the UK Chinese people. Nevertheless, the overall sample of 416 respondents (both PS and SSI), from regions in which Chinese people are concentrated to varying degrees, could provide some meaningful analysis on the needs of Chinese people and their relationship with their community organisations.

Findings and Discussions

The Role of Chinese Community Organisations

The role and functions of Chinese organisations seem to have been underplayed in the

discussion of UK Chinese people and their communities. In traditional Chinese communities, voluntary community-based organisations played a vital role in providing various social services. In addition they serve as a political link between the communities and the government. In Hong Kong, for example, traditional Chinese organisations played an important political role before the Second World War (Chan, 1996). At the time of this study, around 140 Chinese community organisations were established in London, 18 in Manchester, four in Cardiff and two in Lincolnshire. Data from our PS and SSI show that UK Chinese community organisations provided a variety of services and support for local Chinese residents (see the following table).

Types of services for which Chinese Organisations were used by respondents in the postal survey

Type of service	Respondent	%
Leisure and social activities	22	28
Religious activities	22	28
Chinese class	19	25
Welfare advocacy	16	20
English class	16	20
Health education	13	17
Interest class	8	10
Computer class	8	10
Support group	7	9

N = 80

Culturally Oriented Services - The main culturally oriented service common to UK

Chinese organisations is the provision of Chinese education. Data from the PS show that more than one in four of the respondents who consulted Chinese organisations said that they used them mainly for Chinese language classes (Table 1 above). To the respondents, learning Cantonese or Mandarin was more than just the knowledge but an opportunity to cultivate a sense of Chineseness to the younger generation. Chinese people, especially those who live outside their countries of origin, are concerned about their children not forgetting their origins and ancestral culture (see Shang, 1984). A mother in Lincoln said that Chinese schools are essential in order to 'let our next generation understand about 30% to 40% of the Chinese culture. I don't expect them to know it all, but they should know some'. The transmission of Chinese culture is listed as one of the objectives of the Lincoln Chinese Association and also in the mission statement of the Wai Yin Chinese Women Society in Manchester (WYCWS, 2004a). This common expectation of cultural transmission, especially the view that the teaching of Chinese is important to the younger generation, encourages Chinese people to work together even though they might be business rivals.

Social Identity - Chinese organisations are simply meeting points for local Chinese residents, where they gather for social, cultural and other (traditional) recreational events. A respondent in Manchester described Chinese associations as 'a major social

arena'. According to another respondent from the SSI:

Basically, we have a place for Chinese people to come together so that we know each other more. After a whole week's work, it is no good for only sleeping at home. The organisation provides us with an opportunity to know more what other people are doing. We learn something in the process of talking to each other.

In this regard, Chinese organisations provide a secure and familiar environment for the promotion of a sense of identity as well as an opportunity to socialise with other Chinese local residents, old and young. As a respondent pointed out, 'It keeps you close to your origin so that you don't forget your roots'

Social Integration - Respondents also mentioned the role played by Chinese organisations in helping new Chinese immigrants and students to settle in the UK and tackle difficulties in a new environment. A respondent in Cardiff detailed the support that he received from a Chinese community organisation leader:

The first time I came to the UK, I approached the Chairman of the Chinese

Students and Scholars Association (CSSA). He helped me to get accommodation. Then, I returned to China for a while. At my second visit, I went to the Chinese Embassy and got the telephone number of the Chairman of the CSSA in Liverpool. I phoned the Chairman, seeking his assistance with accommodation. He arranged a temporary place for me for one week before I got a permanent one. The Chairman of the CSSA in here (Cardiff) also asked other people to help me with accommodation.

Access to Public Services - UK Chinese organisations acted as mediators between Chinese people and providers of social and health services. It has been widely reported that inadequate knowledge of the English language is a major problem for UK Chinese people. It is a factor that mostly explains their low take up rate of public services and social exclusion (see The Runnymede Trust, 1986; Au & P'ng, 1997; Prior *et al*, 1997; Eaton, 1999). Respondents referred to valuable support given to them by staff and leaders of their local Chinese organisations as either translators or mediators at meetings with social and health service providers such as GPs. According to a respondent:

[Chinese organizations are] important to me. Sometimes, I don't understand the

contents of government's letters. Workers from Chinese organizations would help me, explaining to me the time of payments, finding out my previous records, and talking to relevant departments on my behalf.

Help rendered also included contacting the police on behalf of Chinese victims of crime and accompanying them to police stations as interpreters. As one respondent simply puts it 'Chinese organisations are very good. They will quickly solve my problems. They will immediately help me to call the police'.

Analysis of the data shows that those who were most likely to require the services of Chinese organisations for this type of support were low income (Chi-square = 6.498, d.f. = 2, $p < 0.01$); had a low level of education (Chi-square = 14.413, d.f. = 2, $p < 0.01$); and could not speak fluent English (Chi-square = 20.509, d.f. = 1, $p < 0.01$). In this regard, Chinese organisations play a useful role in helping the most disadvantaged members of the Chinese community to meet their welfare needs.

Empowerment - In addition to helping with access to welfare services, Chinese organisations also play an important role in helping residents to acquire skills and training that would empower and enable them to participate more fully in society. The

provision of English classes is a common programme offered by Chinese organisations (see the above table). Chinese community centres are also known to be venues for a wide range of training courses such as classes on how to run small business, and 'outreach sessions for all statutory agencies' (The Chinese in Britain Forum, 1997). From Shang (1984) it is clear that Chinese community organisations have offered, since the 1980s, advice on housing, immigration law, welfare entitlements and taxation to their members. Furthermore, in Manchester, the Kwan Wai (Mental Health) Project, launched by WYCWS, provides personal support and advice to Chinese clients with emotional (or mental health) problems. The Lincoln Chinese Association also reported having organised in the past, public health and education talks to local Chinese residents.

Over the years, Chinese organisations have grown to be multi-service organisations, in response to the increasing needs of UK Chinese families. The London Chinese Community Network (2005) reported that 89 projects were being run by 20 respondent organisations at an average of 4.5 projects each. At a glance, UK Chinese organisations appear to be committed institutions. Their role in helping disadvantaged UK Chinese people to access welfare services and achieve social integration should be acknowledged. The above evidence suggests that the UK Chinese community is far

from individual and family-oriented, but will work together to meet social and cultural needs. However, with only 25% of respondents in the PS using the services of Chinese organisations, their impact might be mainly limited to certain Chinese groups and existing services might not be able to attract some Chinese users. The financial and organisational constraints on the development of Chinese organisations as well as the differences among Chinese groups will be further examined in the following sections.

Challenges and Constraints

However, our respondents revealed that the diversity of Chinese groups and the inadequacy of resources had severely weakened the solidarity of the Chinese community as well as constrained the work of Chinese organisations.

Diversity

As illustrated above, the UK Chinese people are not a homogeneous group. They are peoples with diverse origins and cultural backgrounds (see Shang, 1984; Blackwell,

1997; Chan & Chan, 1997). Since the first batch of Chinese immigrants to settle in the UK came from Hong Kong, the earliest (and now the largest number of) UK Chinese organisations were established by Hong Kong people who use Cantonese in social activities and traditional Chinese (used in Hong Kong and Taiwan) as the medium of instruction in their schools.

The earliest Chinese community organisations were formed around surnames, lineage, district and occupation (Chan, 1996). Surname groups such as 'Cheung' and 'Pang' formed clansmen associations. Individuals with the same surname could join these organisations (Watson, 1975). These early Chinese organisations, to certain extent, performed similar functions as the current ones. For example, the Hui Tong Kung Sheung Association, established in 1907, helped Chinese seamen to negotiate better working conditions and made funeral arrangements for members (Shang, 1984). In Liverpool, the Sze Yap Association promoted mutual help among workers from the Sze Yap district. Furthermore, the Cheungs' Clansmen Charity Association (Europe) ran mother-tongue classes, in addition to getting their members together annually for a banquet during the mid-autumn festival. However, the working pattern of Chinese people was a barrier to the development of the earlier community organisations. As Watson (1975: 124) reported, restaurant workers were 'preoccupied with the everyday

difficulties of their jobs and are too busy working to devote much time or energy to community activities’

The challenges to Chinese organisation started when new Chinese immigrants began to arrive from mainland China. Between 2000 and 2004, 9,785 mainland Chinese people were granted permanent residency in the UK compared to 3,125 Chinese people from Hong Kong (Home Office, 2005). The use of Cantonese in the existing Chinese organisations was seen as problematic by Chinese people from mainland China who speak Mandarin and write simple Chinese. Mainland Chinese respondents in the SSIs said that they encountered difficulties in participating in what they saw as Cantonese organisations. A respondent from Cardiff explained:

‘People from the Cardiff Chinese Christian Church asked me to join their activities several times. Because they are Hong Kong people, we found it difficult to talk with them’.

Another respondent in the same city was disappointed that Cantonese was the only medium of instruction at the local Chinese school:

Unfortunately, Chinese people here are mainly from Guangdong and Hong Kong.

It is difficult for me to understand them. People from Cardiff Chinese Christian Church are mainly Hong Kong people. The church has set up a Chinese school where Cantonese is taught. Our children don't go there because they can't understand.

In addition to language, there are also educational and occupational differences between mainland Chinese people and their Hong Kong counterparts. Hong Kong Chinese people are mainly in the catering industry, while mainland Chinese people worked mostly in public services or are university students. As mentioned earlier, UK Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong have predominantly rural origins. In contrast, those from Singapore and Malaysia tended to be 'better qualified and possess a higher standard of English' (Park, 1999: 305). Many of them were in the legal, accountancy and medical professions (Shang, 1984). As a respondent from Mainland China simply put it, 'Hong Kong people run take-aways and restaurants. We are studying here. It is difficult to communicate, [because there is] a social gap'.

In 1988, in response to the increasing number of Chinese scholars and students from mainland China, the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) was formed.

This broke the monopoly or dominance of the Cantonese speaking organisations. The CSSA was partly financed by the Chinese Embassy in London; its objectives are to 'organize, sponsor, and support various social activities among Chinese students and scholars in the UK' (CSSA, 2005). Now the CSSA has over 70 subsidiary associations with 100,000 registered members throughout the UK (CSSA, 2005). Mainland Chinese people now perceive the CSSA as their own (personal) community organisation. Initially, the organisation provided services to Mainland Chinese students, but, in recent years, it has started to provide services much as Mandarin classes to Chinese children in the community. According to one respondent:

The CSSA is very useful, especially to mainland Chinese students. If you contact the CSSA, many of your problems can be solved, especially problems which are related to daily life. The CSSA is reliable; it will not cheat you.

Furthermore, the British-born Chinese people also see themselves as a distinct group. Although they have not established community organisation, they have websites and other forums for sharing 'ideas and thoughts' (The British Born Chinese Organisation, 2005).

In a nutshell, there has been, in recent years, an increase in the development of Chinese organisations in the UK based on 'country of origin', Mandarin and Cantonese organisations being the most prominent. Sadly, there is very little communication between the two groups and this has substantially weakened the solidarity of the UK Chinese community as a whole.

However, in contrast, the WYCWS is an organisation primarily set up to promote the interest of all Chinese women in the UK, especially those who have suffered domestic violence (WYCWS, 2004b). Now, it is 'the heart of the Chinese community in Manchester', providing a wide range of employment, education and community services for different age groups and for both men and women, irrespective of country of origin (WYCWS, 2004c). Similar Chinese organisations were also established in Sheffield and Doncaster. The rise of Chinese women's organisations can also be interpreted in terms of the inadequacy of the male dominated Chinese organisations and the failure of statutory agencies to meet the welfare needs of UK Chinese women, for example, in relation to domestic violence.

Thus, whilst there has been a radical departure from organisations based on surnames,

trade and district, there is still a strong tendency for many of the organisations to pursue the interests of the particular Chinese sub-group that forms the core of their members. Thus, it would be inaccurate to say that UK Chinese people do not pursue common interests.

Lack of Resources

Lack of resources is a major challenge that affects the performance of Chinese organisations not only in terms of the provision of services but also in terms of the quality of the service and the ability to offer more services to meet the emerging needs of residents. This was found to be particularly the case with organisations in the areas with low concentrations of Chinese people (see also Manchester Oriental Organisations Alliance *et al*, 2004: 52). For example, many respondents in Lincoln and Cardiff saw their local Chinese organisations merely as social clubs. This was because most of the activities that they were able to provide were social and recreational. The organisations in these two cities could not run a number of services because of lack of staff. For example, they were unable to provide counselling and legal services to users even though there was an expressed demand for such services by residents. In addition, the Lincoln Chinese Association could not offer some of its

language classes, including English classes, to residents due to lack of funding. In fact, the Lincoln Chinese community organisation did not have a permanent office base. According to a respondent in that city ‘without a permanent office, even though a person has problems, he does not know where he can seek help’. Furthermore, data from the SSIs in these two cities showed that local Chinese parents acted as teachers in the Chinese schools because of lack of staff. For example, in Cardiff local Chinese families took turns to provide Mandarin lessons in the Chinese schools on a voluntary self-help basis.

The Chinese organisations in the small cities were, indeed, run primarily as self-help groups. In order to meet their needs, both leaders and service users had to actively participate in service provision. Thus, the quality of the services and the ability to provide new ones were limited in these areas. It was apparent that it was the lack of resources, not lack of organisations that differentiates the areas of high ‘concentrations’ from those of ‘dispersal’. With more resources, the Chinese organisations in the big cities like London were able to provide a much wider variety of services to meet the needs of the local residents, old and young.

The critical issue is inadequate resources has resulted in many UK Chinese

organisations not being able to provide services that address some of the urgent concerns of UK Chinese people. Data from our PS shows that 20% of respondents experienced 'relationship problems with spouse or partner', 18% encountered 'racial discrimination', 15% faced 'problems with parenting', and 12% suffered 'racial harassment or attacks'. An earlier national study on ethnic minorities has reported that Chinese people were more likely to be subjected to racial harassments and attacks than other groups (Virdee, 1997). According to a Chinese welfare rights organization Min Quan (2002: 15), 'racial violence and harassment are everyday experience of the Chinese community in the UK'. Parker (1999:307) added that unfortunately, owners of Chinese takeaways in particular 'have grown accustomed to the police arriving late when such incidents [racial harassment] occur'. A respondent from Lincoln complained of unfair treatment by the police:

Sometimes, some people caused troubles at my restaurant. I called the police.

But some policemen were prejudice. Instead, they said we attacked the trouble-makers first. I have no confidence in seeking help from the government.

However, only limited work has been done to address the problems of racism, racist attacks and harassment experienced by UK Chinese people as well as the family

problems that they face, especially in the rural areas and small towns. Language barriers and lack of understanding of Chinese culture have made public service provisions to UK Chinese people a difficult issue. Law (2004: 7) pointed out in relation to Chinese people in Leeds that ‘there is an urgent need to transform casework concerns into a collective agenda for action in order to improve the lives of Chinese families’. Chinese organizations have, historically, provided an alternative support network outside the family. Unfortunately the resource issue makes it impossible for their impact to be felt.

Chinese Organisations and COMPACT

Despite playing a crucial role in tackling the social exclusion of Chinese people, Chinese community organisations receive little support under the current New Labour’s approach to community building. Recent years have seen a growing interest in the role of minority ethnic-led voluntary and community organisations (see McLeod *et al*, 2001). The recommendations of the Macpherson Report (1999) which placed the issue of racial discrimination on the political agenda and the increased lobbying by minority ethnic umbrella groups, have led to the recognition of the voluntary and community sector in the development of social policy (McLeod *et al*,

2001). The New Labour Government also recognises the value of the voluntary sector in contributing to welfare and encouraging social obligations. As the Active Community Unit (2001a: 2) put it, the voluntary sector achieves equality and diversity by enabling individuals to ‘contribute to public life and the development of active communities’ through voluntarism. In particular, the Unit stressed that a ‘successful BME [Black and minority ethnic] voluntary and community sector is an important partner in helping Government makes its commitment to race equality a reality’ (Active Community Unit, 2001b: 6).

However, the contribution of the government to the advancements of the voluntary sector had been mainly in terms of regulation and control rather than concrete support. For example, a *Code of Good Practice* for BME voluntary and community sector was published in 2001 for addressing ‘the exclusion’ experienced by the sector (Active Community Unit, 2001b: 3). Key areas of ‘good practice’ include:

1. *Clear and effective employment policies, management arrangements and procedures*
2. *Effective and proportionate systems for the management, control, accountability, propriety and audit of finances*

3. *Systems for monitoring and evaluating activities against agreed objectives*
4. *Systems of quality assurance and accountability to service users*
5. *Make use of appropriate training opportunities, particularly support and training for trustees and senior staff*

(Active Community Unit, 2001b: 6; 2001c: 5)

More importantly, voluntary organisations have to subject themselves to ‘the tests of best value: challenge, compare, consult and compete’ in the new regime (National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2001: vii).

Unfortunately, many Chinese community organisations lack resources as well as the formal organisational and management structure to meet the funding requirements of statutory bodies, nor can they compete for grants with well-established mainstream organisations. Concerning organisational management, only one-fifth of the Chinese organisations in a study had policies on paternity leave, diversity, disability and fundraising (London Chinese Community Network *et al*, 2002). As for the frequency of management committee meetings, seven out of the 25 respondent organisations met ‘quarterly or less often’. Regarding team/staff meeting, three met when needed and two did not have any meetings at all. In terms of human resources, many Chinese

organisations are actually managed by part-time staff or even volunteers. Chinese schools in Lincoln and Cardiff, for example, were run by hourly paid teachers. The Lincoln Chinese Association was managed by local residents based on mutual help. Even Chinese organisations in big cities only have a small number of paid staff. The above study found that a third of Chinese organisations in London had less than two full-time staff. Also, a third of respondent organisations found it 'difficult/very difficult' in preparing grant applications. One respondent detailed the barriers:

Applying for grant is not simple; you have to fill a lot of information. After successfully getting some grants, you have to attend many meetings and submit a lot of reports. This takes much time. All of us are volunteers, these requirements are too harsh to us (*ibid.* 33).

The difficulties faced by Chinese organisations were related to their short history, their dependency on part-time staff and volunteers as well as their financial constraints.

In addition, where grants were obtained, they were usually short-term and subject to unexpected cuts. For instance, one respondent of the study was disappointed with a

local council suddenly cutting four-fifths of financial assistance for his organisation (*ibid.*). The financial crisis of London Chinese organisations was further illustrated by another study, which included:

- (1) government's aid to mother tongue education dried up;
- (2) some councils ceased support for luncheon services mainly for elderly users;
- (3) 'core services' such as welfare rights advice in some community centres reduced to two days a week or even less.

As researchers of the study concluded, 'without sufficient resources, service provision may wither away, and quality of service will suffer' (London Chinese Community Network, 2005: 18).

Similar problems were also identified by other researchers. According to McLeod *et al.*, black and minority ethnic community organisations have:

Neither the historical and organisational links of white-led voluntary organisations, nor the organisational structure or experience to negotiate their way successfully through the new contract regime. There is some evidence that

smaller, less formalised organisations are often unable to meet ‘contract culture’ criteria. (McLeod *et al*, 2001: 5)

Most ethnic minority organisations are small organisations, which lacked ‘the technical expertise to establish credibility and compete for resources’ (Gutch *et al*, 1990: 8).

Fundamentally, mainstream funders have provided neither resources nor support for minority ethnic groups to build their organisational capacity. According to Craig *et al* (2002), the black and minority ethnic voluntary sector is overstretched and under-resourced, and that significant additional resources are needed to build both its infrastructure and capacity to respond to local issues and act strategically when necessary. Moreover, another study further illustrated that small voluntary organisations, particularly black and minority ethnic groups, find it difficult to access funding, particularly core funding, and that the pursuit of grants takes up a disproportionate amount of their time (Chouhan and Lousane, 2004). According to the research, this problem was exacerbated by a lack of awareness of challenges facing the sector, particularly with regard to organisational capacity. Therefore, the authors argue that the role that black voluntary and community sector plays in capacity

building, civic engagement and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups is not recognised by many funders, who focus primarily on service delivery.

Without doubt, capacity building leads to empowerment or confidence to access public services and help integrate an organisation fully into society (Charity Commission, 2004). However, basic support is essential to help ‘small and weak’ Chinese organisations to improve their organisational management and strengthen their capacities. As for the case of Chinese community, the government, however, stopped financial support for the London Chinese Community Network this year (2006), the only organisation which provided training and networking services for Chinese organisations. The constraints of Chinese organisations to comply with COMPACT together with little support received for building their capacities have meant that they are unable to compete with well-established organisations for resources, thereby further excluding themselves from statutory support.

Conclusion

The above evidence suggests that the UK Chinese people’s concerns are beyond the

family circle but also at community level. UK Chinese community organisations are service providers and essentially cultural organisations, providing social, cultural and educational services for Chinese people. Their role as mediators between the needy and public services helps tackle the social exclusion of the most deprived Chinese groups. However, lack of resources, especially finance, has meant that many Chinese organisations could mainly provide leisure and social activities with limited capacities in addressing racism, family problems and the psychological health of Chinese people. In short, UK Chinese organisations are relatively weak rather than silent organisations.

The experiences of Chinese organisations further reveal that current government policies on community organisations have focused on regulation and control, neglecting the importance of concrete support for and long-term investment in the small and weak minority ethnic organisations. As Chouhan and Lusane (2004) pointed out, funders should have 'Long-term strategies and vision for the development of the Black voluntary and community sector'. It is only through additional financial support from statutory bodies that small ethnic minority organisations, such as Chinese organisations discussed in the paper, will be able to improve their organisational structure and strengthen their welfare functions. Otherwise, Chinese organisations

might eventually turn from being what they are at present ‘weak’ organisations into ‘silent’ ones. The result is simply the further exclusion and misunderstanding of the UK Chinese people.

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