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**A STUDY OF THE MECHANISM OF SOCIAL
CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT:
THE CASE OF SHAM SHUI PO CHILD-FRIENDLY
NETWORK**

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M.Phil

**THE HONG KONG
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The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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A Study of the Mechanism of

Social Capital Development:

The Case of Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Network

CHAN, Wing-ki

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Philosophy**

February 2009

Certificate of Originality

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Abstract

Abstract of thesis entitled

**“A Study of the Mechanism of Social Capital Development:
The Case of Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Network”**

submitted by **CHAN, Wing-ki**

for the degree of Master of Philosophy
at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
in Feb 2009.

This study is to investigate the development of social capital among participants of the project “Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Network” (SSPCFN). The project SSPCFN was a three-year project which aimed at promoting social capital formation among low income families in Sham Shui Po. A total of twenty-six participants of the SSPCFN project and two representatives from the business corporate partner of the project were invited to join the in-depth interviews to explore whether and how different forms and dimensions of social capital were generated in the project. In order to give a detailed analysis of the factors in social work intervention that are conducive to the generation of social capital, the social workers, supervisor and director of the organization of the project were also interviewed.

This study shows that the content of the programmes, the qualities and competences of social workers as well as the organizational support all contribute to the outcome of the project. Both the family-focused and community-focused programmes of the project encouraged social capital formation. The effectiveness of the programmes indicated the importance of the social workers in the project. To what extent social workers recognized the value of social capital concepts and are committed to community work, their knowledge and skills to carry out the programmes brought influence to the promotion of social capital formation among project participants. The study also reveals that the support provided by the organization helped create an environment conducive to a better development of the project. This study contributes to the understanding of the mechanism of social capital development for low-income families. A social capital intervention model is proposed, which acts as a reference for local social work practitioners.

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List of Abbreviations

CIIF – Community Investment and Inclusion Fund

CSSA – Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

SSPCFN – Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Community Network

BGCA – Boys' and Girls' Club Association of Hong Kong

Chapter One – Introduction

This study explores the mechanism of social capital intervention in social work practice. A project which aimed at promoting the development of social capital among the low income families was selected as the field of this study. The development of social capital and its impact among the participants of this project was examined. The process and the mechanism for the formation of social capital among the participants were studied. The factors which affected the development of social capital in the project have also been traced.

In this chapter, I will first give an overview of the situation of poverty worldwide, in Hong Kong and in a particular district of Hong Kong, Sham Shui Po. Secondly, I will discuss the consequences of long-term poverty on families and children. I will then move on to discuss the relationship between poverty and social capital. Based on the issues stated above and my personal experience in social work, I will justify why a study on understanding the development of social capital as social work intervention to tackle poverty is worthwhile and explain the objectives and framework of the study. Lastly an outline of the organization of the thesis is introduced.

Poverty and Social Capital

The Situation of Poverty Worldwide, in Hong Kong and in Sham Shui Po

In the Global Economic Prospects 2007, the World Bank (2007) provides us with updated figures of the situation of poverty all over the world. It is found that there are 2.7 millions people in developing countries living on less than US \$2 per day and among them, 1.1 million live on less than US \$1 per day in 2003. It is also found that there are over 50 % of people who come from low and middle income countries are living on US \$2 or less per day in 2003. The Global Economic Prospects 2007 also states that, although the strong economic performance of some developing countries such as China could reduce the number of poor people in the coming ten years, the progress is highly uneven across and within countries. Even in China, there are many poor people concentrated in remote and hard-to-reach locations and their situation of poverty could not be easily improved. Thus, in order to reduce poverty all over the world, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund approved a plan drafted by the Group of Eight (industrialized nations) to cancel an estimated debt amounts to US \$40 billions carried by 18 poor countries (Hong Kong

Standard, 27 September 2005).

The past few years have brought a hard time for Hong Kong people due to the economic downturn since 1998 and the SARS outbreak in 2003. Although the overall situation has been improved since mid-2000's, there are still many difficult problems needed to be addressed if we are looking for better development in the future. One of these problems is poverty.

There are 295,802 cases or 523,020 recipients receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) as at 30th of November, 2006, which approximates to 8% of the Hong Kong population (Social Welfare Department, 2006).

According to Human Development Report 2005 of the United Nations Development Programme (United Nations, 2005), the Gini Coefficient of Hong Kong is 0.525, which is higher than most of the developed countries. In addition, the lowest income group (the 1st decile group) shared only 1.4% of total monthly household income of Hong Kong whereas the highest income group shared 35.2% in 1981. In 2001, the discrepancy between the two figures (which were 0.9% and 41.2% respectively) enlarged (Hong Kong Council of Social Services, 2006). This means that the gap between the rich-poor gap is widening in Hong

Kong. In 2005, there were 1.22 millions people living in poverty in Hong Kong, which indicates that around 17.7% population of the households were earning a monthly income below or equal to half of the monthly median household income (Hong Kong Council of Social Services, 2006). Besides, the unemployment rate stood at 4.4% in October/December quarter in 2006 and the underemployment rate 2.4%. There are still 157,100 people unemployed and 89,800 peoples underemployed (Census and Statistic Department, 2006). Undoubtedly, these data provide us with an idea of the magnitude of the problem of poverty in Hong Kong.

The problem of poverty of Sham Shui Po (SSP) is among the most severe in Hong Kong. First, Sham Shui Po (SSP) constituted around 9% of the total CSSA caseloads in Hong Kong (Commission on Poverty, 2005). Moreover, about 11,200 children and youth were living in CSSA households, which amounts to 20% children and youth population in SSP. Finally, the monthly median household income in SSP was \$11,700, which was about 25% lower than the territory's average of \$15,500, and it was the lowest among all the districts in Hong Kong in 2004 (Commission on Poverty, 2005).

The consequences of long-term poverty for community, families and children

After presenting the situations of poverty in the world, in Hong Kong and in Sham Shui Po, it is the time for us to ask “why we need to tackle the problem of poverty?” In this part, I will discuss the consequences of long-term poverty for community, families and children.

First, long-term poverty could be a heavy burden to the community. Take Hong Kong as an example, in 2004, 72% or HK \$23.3 billion of the total expenditure of Social Welfare Department, was spent on financial assistance payments, which amounted to 15% of the total government expenditure (Social Welfare Department, 2006). However, the huge amount spent, rather than solves the problem, may create further social divide among different classes of people as many of them do not agree that the government should use so much resource to help the poor. Therefore we need to find a way to address the issue of poverty instead of simply giving financial assistance which could actually create further problems without solving the original one. If left unresolved, poverty would threaten social harmony, a social goal proclaimed by the SAR government.

Moreover, there are also consequences of poverty on families and children.

Since poverty could be transmitted through generation, the development of the children will be affected by poverty. According to Seccombe (2000), “children reared in poverty have poorer physical and mental health, do worse in school, experience more punitive discipline styles and abuse, live in poorer neighborhoods, and are more likely to engage in deviant or delinquent acts”. Seccombe (2000) further points out those children who come from poor families are more likely to be poor or use welfare themselves. Although there are not many studies on the poor children and families in Hong Kong, a South Asian welfare programme worker who was a respondent of my work on a research project (which will be described in the following sections) points out that most of the South Asian children who come from CSSA families are not willing to study and work when comparing with the children come from the working families. Finally, the community will be bound to suffer in the future if its next generations have not grown well due to poverty.

Social capital as pain reliever for people

With the situations of poverty worldwide and in Hong Kong, as well as the consequences of poverty in mind, how could we improve this situation? The building up of social capital among other methods may be one way to relieve

people's suffering from poverty.

Social capital is resource which exists in human relationship. Social capital has different dimensions, such as norms of reciprocity trust and social networks.

Through connecting with different people, different forms of social capital such as bonding, bridging and linking social capital could be generated. Social capital benefits to people's well-being. From my work experience in a number of social work research projects, I found that many South Asians women and young people find jobs through their social networks. One example is that a South Asian woman who participated in a women social group was looking for a part-time job. She could easily get one through other woman members in the group as they knew some shop-owners who wanted to hire part-time worker. Although social capital could not be used to improve human capital such as education level, however, it could enlarge the social networks of a person and provide more opportunities to search for a job.

The above example suggests that social capital could be a way to help the poor without spending extra cost which may lead to further prejudice. The establishment of the Community and Investment Inclusion Fund (CIIF) by the

HKSAR government in 2002 also indicated that social capital may be useful for tackling the harmful effects of social and economic deprivation. Up to the end of 2008, CIIF has all together funded 189 projects that aim at building up social capital in different districts in Hong Kong. The main targets of these 189 projects were low-income families and their children, youth at-risk, women, retired people, elderly, homeless people, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities. Many of them were living in socially and economically disadvantaged circumstances. According to the 2005 Best Practice Award Report of The Hong Kong Council of Social Services, 638 job opportunities have been successfully created by the CIIF project “The ‘Healthy-Mother-To-be’ – A Women and Community Network Project” for the participants within two years of operation. This is strong evidence suggesting that social capital can act as a way out to tackle the effects of poverty.

Reasons and Background of the Study

According to the World Bank, “Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is

fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom” (World Bank, 2009). While considering this ‘definition’ and the consequences of poverty as discussed in the last section, and imagine becoming one of them, how can we remain complacent and not do anything to address “poverty”?

I started my social work training since 1999. My belief in humanism and utopianism supports me to be a social worker. I believe that every person has his/her value and his/her dignity should be upheld. Also, I believe there should be equality and social justice in society such that every person’s life could be better. Based on my belief in humanism and utopianism and my understanding of the consequences of poverty on children’s welfare as mentioned above, I cannot endure to see so many people, especially children, suffering from poverty in the future. I think we have to find some ways to reduce poverty for the betterment of children and the society as a whole.

I have been a registered social worker since 2001 and have gained some experiences in working with elderly people after I graduated from the Diploma in Social Work course. In 2002, I returned to university to study for the

Bachelor of Arts in Social Work and finished my degree study in 2004. I started to learn some basic knowledge of social capital since 2003 as I have been helping in some research projects in this area. That is the time when I recognized that social capital could be an important element in the development of community.

After my graduation, I took up a full-time job as a research assistant and was involved mainly in two research projects namely “A Participatory Study on the Effectiveness of Social Capital Building in Hong Kong” and “A study to document the process and mechanism of social capital development and to measure the impact of social capital on the lives of project participants who belong to the socially and economically disadvantaged groups”, which was part of an evaluative study of the Outcomes and Impact of The Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF). The former project looked into the change in the level of generalized trust (a major indicator of social capital) of students from two local secondary schools after joining different types of group programmes held by the school social workers. The latter attempted to understand the processes and mechanisms for developing social capital adopted by the operators of ten CIIF funded projects. Also, the latter one attempted to

study the impact of social capital on the overall well-being and quality of life of project participants.

The experiences in doing these two projects not only have enhanced my research skills and basic knowledge in social capital concepts but also enabled me to develop insights for further study. First of all, I observed that young unemployed people mostly came from low-income families and often did not have a plan for their future. One of the main reasons for this situation was that their families did not have enough resources to support their goals. The resources here do not only refer to financial means, but also the knowledge, skills and social networks that are facilitative to their growth and development.

In order to prevent these youth-at-risk from inheriting the disadvantaged social and economic position, there were around ten CIIF projects that aimed at building up the social capital among youth. It was expected that the development of social capital can provide them with more opportunities to participate in society and to obtain resources to improve their situation. Apart from this remedial intervention, as a social worker, I think it is more important to prevent children of low-income families to ever fall into these risks. But, how could we prevent these risks from happening? Shall we build up social

capital among people low-income families and their children at an early stage?

To what extent could social capital help children from low-income families to improve their situation? These questions provide me with the motivation to initiate a study of social capital development among people of low income families.

Among the CIIF projects, the “Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Community Network” (SSPCFN) which started in June 2005 was operated by the Boys’ and Girls Clubs Association of Hong Kong (BGCA) and the Department of Applied Social Sciences (APSS) of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. This project provided a good opportunity for my present study since the project targeted at the low-income families in Sham Shui Po. Moreover, as APSS is a joint operator of this project, access to the project and project participants would not be a problem. All of these constituted the background of the present study.

Research Objectives and Framework

There are three objectives in this study. Firstly, this study aims at presenting the development of social capital and its impact among the participants of a project named “Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Community Network” (SSPCFN) which

aimed at promoting social capital formation among low income families. Secondly, this study would like to analyze the process and the mechanism, specifically those adopted by the project of SSPCFN, through which social capital is built among low income families and their children. Thirdly, this study aims to reveal the factors which affect the development of social capital among project participants. How the performance of social workers and organization support affect the formation of social capital among project participants are examined.

In this study, the Long Interview Method (McCracken, 1988) was adopted to guide the research process. In order to study the development of social capital among the project participants, two rounds of in-depth interviews were carried out. A total of twenty-six participants who joined the project of SSPCFN in the first and the second year were interviewed. In order to understand the process and the mechanism the project adopted, the programme content of the project was analyzed. In addition, the two social workers who carried out the project, the supervisor, the director of the organization who initiated the project as well as two representatives of the business corporate partner of the project were also interviewed. The information I got from the interviews was useful to

understand how social workers and the support from the organization contributed to the outcome of the project – the development of social capital among project participants.

Organization of the Thesis

This chapter (Chapter 1) provides an overview of this study. In chapter 2, I review the literature related to the concepts of social capital. The definitions, history, dimensions, forms as well as the impacts of social capital are presented. The sources of social capital and the important role of associational involvement in social capital formation are also included. The practice gap with regard to the knowledge and skills for social capital intervention is identified through reviewing the intervention models of social work practice. The literature review, thus, provides with me the foundation to further study. In chapter 3, the methodology of this study is presented. The details of the research process as well as how I can ensure the trustworthiness of this research are included. In chapter 4, I examine the development of social capital among the project participants. The narratives of interviewees are included to reveal their social capital formation. In chapter 5, I introduce the design of the project

and the content of the programmes. The analysis about the programme content may let us know whether they are effective in generating social capital or in what context the participants can develop their social capital. In chapter 6, I argue that social workers play an important role in carrying out a project that promotes the formation of social capital. Social workers' belief and understanding about the concepts of social capital and their skills in social capital intervention would contribute to the outcome of the project. In chapter 7, I analyze the support and resources that the organization provided for the project and how these inputs contributed to the whole development of the project. In chapter 8, the conclusion of this study is presented. An initial model of social capital intervention is proposed.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Introduction

Social capital is one of the popular concepts discussed in social sciences literature in the past decades. To present the concept of social capital and the relevant studies clearly, there are four parts in this chapter. In the first part, I will review the history, definition, dimensions, forms, impacts as well as the dark sides of social capital. Through this review, we could have more understanding on the concept and the nature of social capital.

To build up social capital, the source of social capital, thus, should be the most important question we have to ask. Coming into the second part of this chapter, the sources of social capital will be introduced. It is found that social capital could be generated from three levels, which include micro-, meso- and macro levels. In each level of sources, various aspects would affect social capital formation. The influences of these aspects would also be discussed.

From the review of the sources of social capital, it is found that participation in

voluntary associations is one of the important sources of social capital. However, many researchers provide us with counter view. They argue that social capital could not be generated simply by their involvement in voluntary associations. The controversy over the role of associational participation, therefore, would be introduced in the third part of this chapter.

Lastly, the role of social workers in facilitating the formation of social capital will be discussed. It is recognized that social workers may play an important role in encouraging social capital formation in voluntary associations. However, there is limited academic research related to this aspect. To bridge this gap, intervention models in social work practice were reviewed. Knowledge and skills which social workers could be applied during social capital intervention would also be explored in the forth part of this chapter.

History and the Definition of Social Capital Theory

The term “social capital” first appeared in the article written by L.H. Hanifan in 1916. Hanifan (1916, as cited in Hanifan, 1920) defines social capital as

“In the use of the phrase “social capital” no reference is made here to the usual acceptation of the term “capital”, except in a figurative sense. We do not refer to real estate or to personal property or to cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of a people; namely, good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit...[I]n community building, as in business organization, there must be an accumulation of capital before constructive work can be done...The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself...if he comes into contact with his neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient for the substantial improvement of life in the whole community.” (1920:78-79)

The definition from Hanifan above introduces the concept of social capital.

Similar to other tangible capital, social capital could be seen as a kind of “capital” which help satisfying needs of individuals as well as bringing benefits to the whole community. Individuals could accumulate their social capital by

connecting with family, friends and neighbors. Hanifan described the features, sources and value of social capital 90 years ago. However, his discussion on social capital did not draw much academic attention until 60 years later, the concept of social capital was popularized by other scholars including Bourdieu(1986), Coleman(1990), Putnam (1993a, b) and Lin (2001).

Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as *“the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital”*(p. 248-249). Bourdieu (1986) further defines social capital as a composition of social obligations that could be converted into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility under some conditions.

Coleman (1990) states that, instead of a single entity, social capital is a variety of different entities. It is composed of some aspects of social structure. Certain actions of individuals who are within the structure could be facilitated by it. Social capital exists in the relations between people and among people. Putnam

(1993a) defines social capital as networks, norms, and trust, which are characteristics of social organization that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Lin (2001) also explains social capital that it is an “*investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace*”.

Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1990, 1988) define social capital by the way it functions and where it exists. Putnam (1993b) provides with us a more concrete picture of social capital by identifying the form of social capital such as networks, norms and trust. Lin (2001) highlights the value of social capital as well.

The above definitions are derived from sociological approach, economic approach or political sciences. Social capital does not have single definition (Cote & Healy, 2001). The purpose of this dissertation is not to examine the differences of definitions of social capital among different schools. Instead, social capital could be defined broadly by putting all these definitions together: social capital is a kind of resources which exists in or could be generated within human relationships. Similar to other types of capital, it could bring benefits to individuals and society.

Forms of Social Capital

Social capital has different forms, including bonding, bridging and linking (Putnam, 2000; Gittel and Vidal, 1998; Woolcock, 2001). The distinction between bonding and bridging social capital has drawn many scholars' attentions. Bonding social capital, according to Putnam (as cited in T. Schuller, S Baron and J Field, 2000), refers to the links between like-minded people, or the reinforcement of homogeneity. People who already know each others join together (Gittel and Vidal, 1998), and provide social and psychological supports within the same group (Putnam, 2000) indicate that bonding social capital is formed.

Bonding social capital helps to build strong ties among people within the same group but it also discourages relationship building among people who are out of group (T. Schuller, S Baron and J Field, 2000). Instead, bridging social capital fosters social inclusion (Putnam, 2000). Bridging social capital refers to the linkage among people who come from heterogeneous groups. These linkages provide people with opportunities to gain external resources from different groups. (Putnam, 2000; Gittel and Vidal, 1998).

Linking social capital is the third form of social capital. The concept of linking social capital is mainly developed by Woolcock, Szreter and others, to describe the linkage between networks of individuals' and communities' with those with very unequal power and resources (Halpern, 2005). Linking social capital is seen as the special form of bridging social capital or the vertical dimension of social capital which shows more concern on power. People or groups who have linking social capital can leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions or those who have power (Woolcock, 2001) to those who are lacking resources or power in the community.

Dimensions of Social Capital

The discussion on the definition of social capital and the distinctions among different forms of social capital also reveal that social capital has different elements or dimensions. At least three dimensions of social capital has been distinguished namely social network of person, norms, and civic engagement (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990, 1988; Putnam, 1993b), which will be explained in the following sections.

Social networks

Bonding social capital exists in dense networks while bridging social capital exists in more diverse networks (Putnam, 2000; Halpern, 2005). People or groups who connect to those in power and are able to remobilize the resources from those who in power could show that linking social capital is existed (Woolcock, 2001). It is apparent that the main difference between bonding, bridging and linking social capital are the types and volume of social networks people possessed. The amount of social capital that people possessed is indicated by the size of network of connections a person can mobilize effectively and the volume of capital possessed by each of his or her network (Bourdieu, 1986).

Coleman (1988) describes the relationship between social networks and social capital more precisely by using examples of parent-parent relations. Parents of children in the same school would share their experiences and come up some consensus in raising their children, which may provide quantity of social capital for parents (Coleman, 1988). The establishment of social networks indicates that the patterns of communication and cooperation are built up, which reduce transaction costs of cooperation and facilitate collective actions (Uphoff, 1999).

Norms

Besides social network, norm is also an important dimension of social capital (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995; Halpern, 2005). Powerful form of social capital can be constituted by effective norms (Coleman, 1990). Some norms have “behaviour component” which provide the rules on how to act and some norms refer to our feelings to the community and the group which are more affective in nature (Halpern, 2005). Norms facilitate certain positive action, for instance, people give up their self-interest and act in the interests of the collectivity. Norms also constrain some negative action such as the criminal activities (Coleman, 1990). Reciprocity and trust are two kinds of norms which are always discussed in the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993b).

Norms of reciprocity

Norms of reciprocity refers to the mutual expectation that a benefit person gives now should be repaid in the future (Putnam, 1993a). If person A does something and believes person B will reciprocate later, an expectation in person A and an obligation on person B will be established. Person A, therefore, possesses the credit slip from person B and would be looking forward to person

B's return (Coleman, 1990). The credit slips we accumulate could be seen as social capital we hold in human relationships, which facilitate our reciprocal behaviours in the future. Norms of reciprocity can be 'specific', that is "*I'll do this for you if you do that for me*" (Putnam, 2000, p.20). Sometimes, norms of reciprocity can also be 'generalized': the giver still pay without expecting the receiver to return as the giver believes that someone else will help him or her as return if he or she needs help (Putnam, 2000). Norms of reciprocity could be enhanced in both bonding and bridging relations (Putnam, 2000). The former helps consolidating specific reciprocity while the frequent interactions among a diverse set of people facilitate the establishment of generalized reciprocity and broader identities (Putnam, 2000).

Norms of trust

Norm of trust is another dimension of social capital (Coleman, 1990; Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000). Trusting others means accepting others into our "moral community" (Uslaner, 2002). Trust is based on the belief of the existence of common underlying values (Uslaner, 2002). Trust can be distinguished into two types, namely particular trust and generalized trust (Uslaner, 2002), in which the former refers to thick trust and the latter refers to

thin trust (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2002). The trust to people who similar to us or people we know is particularized trust, while the trust to people we may not know is regarded as generalized trust (Uslaner, 2002). The distinction between particularized trust and generalized trust coincides with the difference between bonding and bridging social capital (Uslaner, 2002). Particularized trusters rely on people within their social circles, in other words, their families, friends, or people they know. Particularized trusters have to ensure whether those outsiders would share their own values. In contrast, generalized trusters believe that most people they meet or people who are different from them could share their values (Uslaner, 2002). Therefore, trust facilitates the interaction among people, regardless who are inside or outside the social circle, which is beneficial to the society. People tend to have more contribution to charity, have higher attendance in politics and community organizations, and are more willing to serve juries, do blood donation more frequently, follow tax obligations and show many other forms of civic virtue if they trust other (Putnam, 2000).

Civic engagement

Civic engagement is another dimension of social capital which has frequently

discussed by Putnam (1993a, 1993b, 1995, 2000, 2001). Civic engagement refers to people's connections with the lives of their communities, not merely with politics (Putnam, 1995). People's political participation and civic participation show the trends in civic engagement and social capital (Putnam, 2000). Discussing politics with neighbours, joining election campaign and signing petitions are some avenues that people can show their concerns to the political issues of their communities (Putnam, 2000). Citizen's civic participations, such as their participation and involvement in associations also are some areas to show peoples' civic engagement as well as their connections with their communities (Putnam, 2000; Coulthard, Walker and Morgan, 2002, as cited in Halpern, 2005).

Linkage between Forms and Dimensions of Social Capital

In summary, social capital can be examined from its forms and dimensions. The examination of social capital tell us which forms of social capital are located in which types of relationships, for instance, bonding social capital exists in homogeneous groups while bridging social capital can be found in heterogeneous groups. The discussion on dimensions of social capital tells us

more about the nature of social capital in various forms of relationship, such as bonding social capital is characterized with specific reciprocity and particularized trust, which is often established within relatively close networks. On the other hand, bridging social capital in diverse networks is always associated with generalized reciprocity and generalized trust. People who are civically engaged and have more connections with formal institutions may have greater potential and ability to leverage the resources or information from the community and linking social capital could be developed.

Impacts of Social Capital

Social capital, like other forms of capital, provides impacts on well-beings (Cote & Healy, 2001; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2002; Halpern, 2005). Better health, improvement on child welfare as well as benefits to job search are some advantages that social capital offer (Cote & Healy, 2001; Putnam, 2002; Halpern, 2005).

Impacts of Social Capital on Health

Social capital brings positive impacts on individual's health (Cote & Healy,

2001; Halpern, 2005). Sociologist Durkheim points out that the rate of suicide and the extent which individuals integrated into society are correlated. Rates of suicide increase during the periods of rapid social change, which social connectedness are weakened (Cote & Healy, 2001). The studies on social isolation suggest that ill-health and age-adjusted mortality at a later date is associated with social isolation (Halpern, 2005). It is also shown that positive personal relationships have health-protecting power (Halpern, 2005). For those who had warm and close relationship with their parents, a little under half of them suffered from serious diseases in their midlife, but for those who had strained and cold relationships, all of them suffered from serious diseases in their midlife (Russek and Schwartz, 1997, as cited in Halpern, 2005). Similar result is also obtained in a study on cardiovascular diseases, in which for those who had intimate social ties, they were more likely to survive the years after the heart attack than those who were social isolated (Ruberman et al., 1984; Orth-Gomer and Johnson, 1987; Berkman et al.,1992; Case et al., 1992; as cited in Halpern, 2005). People who have supportive networks are less likely to suffer from depression (Halpern, 2005), and psychic and physical stress could be reduced as social networks always provide individuals with tangible assistance and care (Putnam, 2000). The association between supportive

networks and mental health is confirmed (Cote & Healy, 2001; Putnam, 2002).

The necessity for human happiness is the good relationships with family members, friends or romantic partner rather than money or fame (Putnam, 2002). The above discussions show that social capital, especially its emphasis on promoting the building up of social networks, brings advantages to individuals' physical and mental health.

Impacts of Social Capital on Economics

Social capital affects economic performance among individuals, firms, neighbourhoods and nations (Cote & Healy, 2001; Halpern, 2005; Putnam, 2000). At the individual level, it is suggested that social ties determine whether people can get the jobs, bonus, promotions or other employment benefits (Putnam, 2000). This is because people can get advice, job leads, strategic information and letters of recommendation from their social networks. By comparing families with close friends, casual acquaintances can be the more important assets for job searching (Granovetter, 1973, as cited in Putnam, 2000). Especially for those distant acquaintances, they always come from diverse networks and therefore provide people with more unexpected opportunities.

Social ties also benefit ethnic enclaves as well as unemployed people (Putnam, 2000). Employers in most ethnic immigrant communities often rely on their employees to recruit and train new workers. Immigrant networks would also provide financing to entrepreneurs (Putnam, 2000). Surveys of unemployed people reveal that people would look for leads on job openings from their personal networks (Putnam, 2000). These studies conclude that social capital, in terms of social networks, brings economic advantages to individuals.

Impacts of Social Capital on Education and Children's Welfare

Improvement in educational performance and children's welfare are benefits of social capital. Social capital within the family is one of the key factors for a child's intellectual development (Coleman, 1988). It is found that relationship between parents and children, which is a kind of family social capital, is associated moderately to strongly with adolescents' educational attainments in Australia and in Hong Kong (Majoribanks, 1991; Majoribanks and Kwok, 1998, as cited in Halpern, 2005). Quality child-parent contacts as well as attentiveness of parents predict the educational attainment of the young persons (Halpern, 2005). The degree of emotional closeness between parents and their adolescents acts as a conduit of social capital in that close ties facilitate the

aspiration of parents which could cultivate adolescents' human capital (Crosnoe, 2004). The interactions with attentive adults enhance the development of emotional and social control among the children as well as encourage them to become attentive and effective self-learners (Halpern, 2005).

Apart from educational performance, it is suggested that some kinds of family and school social capital help to reduce the behavioral problems of children. Parents get to know children's friends and where they go, church attendance of children, and attending the school where teachers concern students more are some examples that may reduce children's behavioral problems (Parcel and Dufur, 2001).

The studies of child abuse also highlight the importance of social capital on children's welfare (Cote & Healy, 2001). Child abuse seems to have a higher tendency among neighbourhoods that suffered from a lack of social capital or with lower cohesion (Korbin and Coulton, 1997; as cited in Cote & Healy, 2001). The greater child abuse risks exacerbate the relationships among neighbourhoods, in which residents were more unwilling to ask for help from others, exchange child-care with neighbours or let the children play with others

(Garbarino and Sherman, 1980, as cited in Cote & Healy, 2001). The study on the residential mobility and the social capital of families concludes that when comparing families that always move with families that do not move, the former may be less successful at social ties development than the latter (McLanahan, 2003). Both situations mentioned above may prevent children from building a supportive or trustful relationship with others, and thus, the resources they can be received from their neighbourhoods are very limited.

Other benefits of social capital

Besides, social control is one of the functions of social capital (Portes, 1998). Tolerance for gender, racial equality and civil liberties are strongly correlated with the development of social capital. Crime rate and the phenomenon of tax evasion are negatively predicted by social capital (Putnam, 2002).

Social Capital and Low Income Family and Children

From the above, we can see that social capital is beneficial to the health, economy, education as well as children welfare of the society. It is shown that social capital is especially important to families with low financial and educational resources to get out from the poor trap (Runyan et al., 1998).

Since those low-income families could gain opportunity for job search by enhancing their social capital, the problem of poverty among them may be mediated. If low-income families can have more mutual helps from different networks, even though they are facing financial difficulties or employment problems, they can find someone to share and support, their stress could be reduced. Some of their problems can also be solved by using the resources of social networks. Their overall happiness and life satisfaction may also be enhanced. Children in these low income families, thus, can grow up in a better environment and have more resources or opportunities for their development.

Dark Side of Social Capital

Social capital theorists recognize the value of social capital (Coleman, 1990; Cote & Healy, 2001), conversely, its dark side has also been discussed by many authors (Field, 2003; Leonard, 2004; DeFilippis, 2001).

To some, social capital may create social exclusion and inequality in the society. Bonding social capital will only benefit those in the same group but exclude those outside the group. Such “benefits” may lead to loss in others and as a result, social inequality may be further promoted (Leonard, 2004; Field,

2003; DeFilippis, 2001). For example, powerful groups can use their social capital to limit or undermine resources of those who do not have the power (Field, 2003). In addition, individual's self-interest, can determine whether others can enter the groups or not. People only allow those who give advantages to them to enter the group (Wenneras and Wolds, 1997, as cited in Field, 2003) and exclude those who cannot (Leonard, 2004).

Moreover, social capital can be used improperly or even illegally. Social capital can be exploited for perverse benefits. Organized crime is the most frequently quoted example. According to Field (2003), the networks among gangs help the gang members committing crime more easily. Furthermore, social norms may produce negative impacts on the society and many political problems may also be caused by the exploitation of social capital. Political corruption is one of the most serious problems in governance. The ready-made insider networks between political parties and the business companies facilitate the corrupt exchange behavior (Warren, 2001; Field, 2003). The fairness in business operations may be affected by this kind of exploitation.

The above arguments summarize the risk of social capital that may bring to the society. The discussion can act as a reference to alert us to pay attention to the

negative effects of social capital and find ways to prevent them from emerging during the process of social capital formation.

Local Attention to the Concept of Social Capital

Although the concept of social capital has been developed in America and European countries for nearly thirty years (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993a, 2000), the term “social capital” has not appeared in Hong Kong until the last decade. However, when we review the community development practice in Hong Kong, it is not difficult for us to find that “social capital development” has already existed in some settings or intervention models for a relatively “long period”. For example, self-help groups as well as intervention models used in new arrivals services were already an attempt to facilitate social capital development among their participants.

According to Kurtz (1997, as cited in Kwok, Chan & Chan, 2002), “self-help group is a supportive, educational, usually change-oriented mutual-aid group that addresses a single life problem or condition shared by all members” (p.10).

Self-help groups may bring about personal changes or societal changes. Instead of being managed by professionals, self-groups emphasize on the participation of the groups' members (Kurtz, 1997, as cited in Kwok, Chan & Chan, 2002). Self-help groups are always formed by a group of people who have similar and specific concerns. Members in self-help groups provide mutual support to each other. Besides exchanging their own resources, self-help groups may also aim at advocating policy reform and voicing out their needs and demands. In Hong Kong, self-help groups for vulnerable populations have been developed rapidly in 1980's (Mok, 2004) and have served various populations, for instance, the mental ill and their families, battered women, persons with disabilities and their care givers, single parents, and senior citizens. Social capital indeed could be developed within these self-helps groups. These homogenous groups provide mutual-help and form supporting networks on their own. It seems that bonding social capital could be developed among members in the same homogenous group. Furthermore, especially for those self-help groups for patients or disabilities, it is not difficult to see collaborations between self-help groups and professionals. Support or assistance are always provided by medical social workers or other medical professionals, patients are referred to the self-help groups for pre-operational support and sharing by doctors. Peer counseling and

modeling will be given to the new comers by senior members (patients with prior experiences) in the self-help groups. Public health education programmes were also carried out by self-help groups and health professionals (Mok, 2004; Wong & Chan, 1994). The partnership between patients and professionals indicates that bridging social capital is developed among members of self-help groups, as they are linked up with people from different backgrounds and those resources from the “outsiders” could be shared.

Besides self-help groups, indeed, new arrivals services always emphasize on social adaption and community integration. Programmes and supporting groups which link up the new arrivals with local residents are often launched (Christian Action, 2010; Hong Kong New Immigrant Service Association, 2010). Through participating in these programmes and groups, new arrivals not only build up networks with other new arrivals but also interact with local residents. Local residents share their resources with the new arrivals and thus new arrivals can learn more about Hong Kong and gain more opportunities for employment. Bridging social capital is believed to develop between these two groups of people.

In summary, the former community practice such as self-help groups and intervention programmes for new arrivals could be seen as some platforms to promote social capital formation, even though the term “social capital” has not been a commonly used term in the discussion of such services. Indeed, the setting up of the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF) could be seen as the milestone to promote social capital development in Hong Kong.

In the 2001 Policy Address, the previous Chief Executive announced the establishment of the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF). Local NGOs and community organizations are invited to apply for it which totaled up to three hundred million and was intended to promote the development of mutual concerns among people, to facilitate participation in the community and to foster the cross-sectoral collaboration. Until the end of 2008, a total of one hundred and eighty million have been used to support around one hundred and ninety projects. Among these projects that have been launched, many attempted to develop social capital with different target groups such as children, youth, women, workers, families, elderly, homeless people, racial minority, and many other community members.

In 2004, when fifty-six CIIF projects have been launched, CIIF considered it as a prime time to build up indigenous literature on social capital and to evaluate the outcome and impact of CIIF funded projects. The CIIF committee invited seven research teams from five local universities to form consortium. The research teams carried out a fifteen-month research investigation into the development of social capital in the fifty-six CIIF projects and the impact on individuals, groups and community of Hong Kong. These efforts have enriched the discussion of the theory and practice of social capital in Hong Kong. These studies were to explore the development of social capital among project participants and to understand the impact of the projects on the participants. The study identified the characteristics of social capital in Hong Kong and recognized the value of social capital development in improving the lives of the participants. However, these studies have also revealed that bridging social capital was under-developed in some projects and there may be a long way to go when it comes to linking social capital. The value of social capital in improving people's quality of life is illustrated from the above review of local studies. It is also found that the previous CIIF projects may not have significant result in generating bridging and linking social capital. Further studies should be conducted to help build up advanced knowledge and skills on the topic of

social capital in the local context.

Source of Social Capital

The above discussion indicates that social capital is important to human well-being. If we would like to promote the development of social capital, how shall we start? Where does social capital originate? The sources of social capital can be distinguished into three levels, namely, micro, meso and macro level (Halpern, 2005), which will be discussed in the following section.

Source of social capital at individual level

Family

Norms and social ties are created in families (Halpern, 2005; Stolle, 2003).

Family is the primary context for children to learn to trust others, build up their value and interact with others.

Young children always feel secure with their primary caregivers. This strong bonding could act as secure emotional base which facilitates children to safely explore the outside world. The trusting relationships in family would have

positive domino effects which would spread out into the wider circle in human relationships (Bowlby, 1988, as cited in Halpern, 2005). Social capital within family, including social network, individual psychological resources, and characteristics such as feelings of security, the ability to trust and the social skills to build relationships, affect the growth of a child both directly and indirectly (Halpern, 2005). Social capital theorists, on the other hand, also indicate that the first building block in the generation of social capital for the larger society is family (Coleman, 1988; Halpern, 2005).

In addition, modeling and socialization within a family also facilitate the development of social capital among children (Halpern, 2005). Children who come from families that often do volunteering, are regularly involved in community and interacts with others freely and respectfully, tend to be participate in community more actively and be more sociable (Halpern, 2005).

Research also indicates that the extent to which parents told their children to be careful with stranger predicts the development of generalized trust strongly (Stolle, 2003). In addition, parents' education on how to judge others and with whom to cooperate, and the first-hand experiences of cooperation or defection gained by children, determine the adult outlook on the world of children (Stolle,

2003). All these studies showed the importance of family in forming social capital.

Social class, education and employment

Besides family, social class, education and employment are the other sources of social capital (Halpern, 2005). Middle class people always generate more social capital than people who come from a lower class as they are more likely to be involved in larger and more diverse social networks and have higher level of social trust (Goldthorpe, Llewellyn and Payne, 1987, as cited in Halpern, 2005).

For people who possess higher qualification in education, they tend to be engaged more in the wider society around them and show more trust in their fellow citizens (Halpern, 2005). Moreover, employment also acts as a source of social capital. Employees often possess more social networks and the resources within the networks than those who are unemployed (Halpern, 2005).

The discussion in this part highlights that family, social class, education and employment are sources of social capital at the micro-level. Among different sources, it is obvious that some of them, especially for social class and educational background, cannot be changed or enhanced easily by outside efforts. Therefore, can we still facilitate social capital development among

people, especially for those who are deprived and without a relatively high education profile?

In fact, Coleman (1994, as cited in Field, 2003) has already reinforced our confidence that social capital could be generated among the poor. In Coleman's studies, social capital is not merely the asset of the privileged groups. The poor and minorities could also benefit from social capital. Hence, the most important thing we should do is to explore the ways to help the poor generate and use their social capital well for improving their quality of life. Family, the primary source of social capital, should act as our entry point.

Source of social capital at macro level

Besides those sources at individual levels, social capital can also be generated at the macro-level, including history and culture, state and government, and economic and gender inequality.

History and culture

In his comparative study of northern and southern regions of Italy, Putnam identified the difference in the level of social capital among northern and

southern regions in Italy through exploring their cultural differences with historical events happened in thousands of years (Putnam, 1993a, as cited in Halpern, 2005). It is found the vibrant civic life had been developed much earlier in the northern region and therefore they always have the most effective and trusted government. In contrast, the culture of distrust in the southern areas had been rooted in a history of invasion and oppression, as a result, the effectiveness of governments in southern regions was relatively low and remained highly constrained by the light of relatively low level of public trust of citizen (Putnam, 1993a, as cited in Halpern, 2005).

Besides historical factor, culture can also be the source of social capital and can be transmitted over several generations (Halpern, 2005). Minneapolis and St Paul's, the areas of the highest level social capital in the USA on most measures, is populated by high-trust Scandinavians. It was reported that, after several generations, the residents of Minnesota and the Scandinavian nations remained connected and trusting. The finding highlights the importance of culture in social capital development. We tend to be trusting and cooperative if at least a reasonable proportion of people around us also behave like that. But in populations where the vast majority is untrustworthy, co-operative strategies

will be maladaptive and will disappear gradually (Rossteutscher, 2002; Axelrod, 1984; Good, 1988 as cited in Halpern, 2005).

State and government

Apart from history and culture, it is also suggested that the state or government can play an important role in facilitating generation of social capital in society (Tarrow, 1996; Levi, 1996 as cited in Stolle, 2003). Actions taken by a government, for instance, providing information and monitoring legislation, enforcing rights and rules that sanction lawbreakers, protecting minorities and supporting the integration and participation of citizens (Levi, 1998, 85, as cited in Stolle, 2003), can facilitate the development of trustworthiness and thus the formation of social capital. Hence, the quality of the state is another source for social capital development.

Economic and gender inequality

Income and gender equality also affect social capital formation among citizens (Halpern, 2005; Stolle, 2003). A close negative correlation has been found between economic inequality and social capital across nations (Knack and Keefer, 1997, as cited in Halpern, 2005), across regions within a state (Putnam,

1993a; Kawachi et al., 1997, as cited in Halpern, 2005), and at the village level in developing nations (La Ferrara, 2002, as cited in Halpern, 2005). This is because income and gender inequality increase social distance between individuals and reduce the likelihood of shared interests, social associations, norms or mutual respect. Moreover, the ability of a community to develop shared social vision or build commitment to public goods or a welfare state would be reduced (Halpern, 2005). It was also found that in Scandinavian countries with low levels of income and gender inequality, their trust levels are relatively higher than those of France and the United States (Stolle, 2003). The result highlights the importance of income and gender equality in social capital development, by which citizens might make a leap of faith and give a trust credit to people more easily if they see their fellow citizens are equal and are “one of their own” (Stolle, 2003). When citizens feel public policies are fair and just and believe that others in this city also have the same feeling, their political and institutional trust would be increased (Stolle, 2003).

The review of literature about the sources of social capital at the macro level above indicates the important role of government and the influences of policies.

Although this study does not focus much on the macro- or policy level, the

above discussion reminds us that if we try to help people build up their social capital, we might need to consider the political and economic situation they are in. We should pay attention to both positive and negative impacts of the political and economic situations.

Source of social capital at meso-level

Associational involvement

As a social worker, we always work with communities. Through our work with communities, individual needs can be fulfilled and the society can be benefited as a whole. Hence, besides concerning the micro- and macro- level of sources of social capital, we should better examine the source of social capital at community or meso-level.

Associational involvement is seen as the major source of social capital at meso-level. However, some scholars argue that this argument seems to be too general and they try to prove that participation in voluntary association may not have any impact on social capital development. All these discussions will be elucidated in the following section. There are three parts in this section. I will first review literature that highlights the significant role of associational

involvement in social capital formation. In the second part of this section, studies that argue against the importance of associational participation will be presented. The implications for this controversy will be indicated in the last part.

The discussion about the role of associational life appeared in academic field over hundred and fifty years ago in America (Halpern, 2005). The importance of associations was first suggested by Alexis de Tocqueville. As noted by De Tocqueville ([1840], 1969), intellectual and moral associations could act as the foundation stone of vibrant American democracy. He points out that association has the ability to unite people's different minds and direct them to achieve their indicated goal. Association encourages people's collaboration and collective action. People do not only benefit by increasing collaboration but also by reducing the effects of individualism. People learn civic virtues of trust, moderation, compromise, reciprocity as well as the skills of democratic discussion and organization in the context of association (Newton, 1997). Due to these socialization effects, social capital can be generated through associational participation (Stolle, 2003).

In the past few decades, the roles of association in social capital formation were frequently discussed in social capital literature. To facilitate the development of social capital, Coleman (1988) identifies that two types of structure, closure of social networks and social organizations are needed. Voluntary organizations, as an example of social organizations, do not only serve for their own purpose, but also aid their members to fulfill their other needs. Members' social capital resources can be generated and well-used inside the voluntary organizations. Voluntary organizations can produce public goods, for instance, the Parent-Teacher Associations in schools do not only serve their own members but also other students and parents. Social capital within voluntary organizations can improve people's quality of life and increase the effectiveness of employment referral services (Coleman, 1988).

In fact, the controversy of the role of associational participation in the social capital formation is started by Putnam. Putnam (1993a) highlights that voluntary cooperation is the easier channel for the people inherit a substantial stock of social capital, in the forms of norms or reciprocity and networks of civic engagement. Civil associations bring both internal and external effects on the effectiveness and stability of democratic government (Putnam, 1993a).

Internally, habits of cooperation, solidarity and public-spiritedness of members are developed in associations. Participants' cooperation skills and sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavors can be built up.

Externally, dense network of secondary associations acts as a bridge for members and political systems. The articulation and aggregation of interests and values can be encouraged and both social collaboration and democratic governance can be facilitated. As a result, democracy becomes more responsive and effective (Putnam, 1993a, cited in Wollebæk and Selle, 2003a, 2003b).

In his study of Italy, Putnam (1993a) states that society, no matter modern or traditional, authoritarian or democratic, feudal or capitalistic, is characterized by both formal and informal networks of interpersonal communication and exchange. He distinguishes networks into two categories, namely vertical and horizontal. The former always link unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence. The latter always bring together agents of equivalent status and power. Almost all networks in the real context are mixture of the horizontal and the vertical.

According to Putnam (1993; as cited in Boix & Posner, 1996), the ability to generate norms of reciprocity, social trust or a shared sense of responsibility for collective endeavour would be limited by vertical relationships. This is because the interactions within vertical associations are characterized by dependence. In contrast to vertical associations, dense but segregated horizontal networks sustain cooperation within each group (Putnam, 1993a; as cited in Boix & Posner, 1996). Examples of networks of civic engagement, such as neighborhood associations, choral societies, cooperatives, sports clubs as well as mass-based parties, are also examples of horizontal interactions. Putnam suggests, since networks of civic engagement can nourish wider cooperation by cutting across social cleavage, it is an important components of social capital. As horizontal interactions can help to solve dilemmas of collective actions among participants, to overcome self-defeating opportunism and to collaborate for mutual benefit, therefore, the more horizontally structured organizations in the community, the institutional success as well as the formation of social capital in the society can be predicted (Boix and Posner, 1996; Putnam, 1993a). Putnam (2000) further indicates that the actual involvement of people in community activities cannot be reflected by the number of membership people are possessed. Hence, level of engagement of people should also be considered if

we want to know the effects of associational participation on social capital formation.

Besides Putnam, there are also many studies focus on the effect of voluntary associations. Almond and Verba (1963, as cited in Stolle, 2003) notice that people who participate in associations are “*more political active, more informed about politics, more sanguine about their ability to affect political life and more supportive of democratic norms*” (p.24). Some studies also show that the number and type of associations to which people belong, the extent of their activity within organization are correlated with political activity and involvement (Rogers, Bulten and Barb, 1975; as cited in Stolle, 2003). Later, Verba and his colleagues (1995) state that self-respect, group identity and public skills can be learnt from joining voluntary associations. Additionally, Brehm and Rahn (1997, as cited in Claibourn and Martin, 2000) find that people who trust others have the tendency to join groups and for those who have more group memberships are more inclined to trust others. Their study shows that there is connection between interpersonal trust and group memberships at the individual level.

In summary, Putnam and other scholars make much effort to show the

connection between participation in voluntary association and the existence of social capital, especially, in the form of generalized trust and civic engagement. However, many scholars also try to criticize their assertion (Claibourn & Martin, 2000; De Ulzurrun, 2002; Stolle, 2001). It is suggested that the above studies do not have strong empirical evidence and fail to identify the causal relationship between associational participation and social capital formation. Their critiques will be discussed in the following part.

*Controversy about the role of associational involvement on
social capital formation*

Many scholars have suggested that there are few problems from the school which supports the role of associational participation in social capital formation. First of all, those studies fail to fully explain the causal relationship between joining associations and the increase of social capital among members (Claibourn and Martin, 2000). There is no strong evidence that support the conclusion that association produce trust and reciprocity (Claibourn and Martin, 2000; De Ulzurrun, 2002). It still remained unclear through what mechanism voluntary associations help generate more trust and cooperation among their members (Stolle, 2001; De Ulzurrun, 2002). Moreover, there is no empirical

justification to support the assumption that all types of associations could have similar effects in generating social capital (De Ulzurrun, 2002). Lastly, the effect of group membership on trust development is still remained unclear, especially when other sources, such as family or personal experiences as well as the impact of national institution are considered together (Stolle, 2001). With these queries in mind, these scholars brought in a new set of perspectives with a view to address their concerns and to re-appraise the role of associational participation in social capital development.

Group interaction and socialization effects

It is claimed that sustained interactions within associations enable participants to build up trustful relationship with fellow members and as a result, the trust they formed is generalized toward society as a whole (Stolle, 2000 as cited in Hooghe, 2003). However, this argument is being criticized. Hooghe (2003) agrees that group interaction in association can have socialization effects as people will be influenced by the value of other members, value congruence can be achieved within associations. Nevertheless, there isn't any strong evidence to show that this socialization process may automatically result in generating more social norms or trust formation. The interaction just enforces existing

value but does not introduce qualitative new values for group members (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955, 96 as cited in Hooghe, 2003). Moreover, the conversion of particularized trust into generalized trust may not be facilitated by group interaction easily (Hooghe, 2003). The role of associational participation in generating social capital, thus, is being criticized since causal relationship could not be drawn from these studies.

However, arguments regarding socialization effects on group interaction seem to be problematic as those academics did not explain how the socialization process occurred and whether there were any confounding factors influencing the outcome of the socialization process. Instead of being automatically socialized, it is also possible that some kinds of norms could be reinforced by group facilitators. It is therefore, the socialization effects that may lead to different outcomes. Social capital formation could also be one of them.

Self-selection Theory

Using the self-selection theory, Stolle questioned the logic connecting social capital, in term of trust, and associational involvement (Stolle, 1998; Stolle and Hooghe, 2004; Claibourn and Martin, 2000). Studies regarding association

memberships always find that associational members are more educated, have higher incomes, are more politically engaged and are more trusting than those who are non-members (Stolle, 1998).

Stolle criticizes these results by asking whether association members learn to be more trusting within the associations or because they are already more trusting before joining the associations. Stolle compared the development of trust of association members from different types of association, for instance, church choirs and bowling leagues, in Germany, Sweden and the United States and found that members of church choirs are more trusting when compare with those of bowling leagues in general. The differences might be attributed to the original level of trust of people and show that there is high probability of self-selection effects (Stolle, 2001), i.e. members, who are more trusting are more likely to enter an association. People who are higher on trust are more likely to join certain types of associations that are directed toward a common purpose, such as church choirs or parent groups, and tend to enter more diverse groups. In contrast, people who have low level of trust tend to join groups with less diversity, for instance, bowling leagues (Stolle, 2001). It seems that the tendency to participate in voluntary associations is determined by people's

self-selection and their original level of social capital, therefore, the argument that people joining groups with more diversity can result in higher level of trust is no longer convincing.

Critique on socialization effects and Self-selection Theory

The above discussions regarding socialization effects of group interaction as well as the theory of self-selection suggest that associational involvement may not be associated with the formation of social capital, especially generalized trust. However, some empirical studies highlight the important role of associational involvement in social capital formation. For instance, Larance and Porter (2004) find that trust and social network is built up within group of female survivors of domestic violence. Their study is a counter example to self-selection theory and socialization effect, as it describes particularly that personal trust can be transformed into social trust through people's regular participation in group.

Larance and Porter (2004) argue that female survivors of domestic violence first build up trust with group facilitators who provide information and help. These women then observe the relationship between facilitators and other group members. Some of women want to interact with others and feel uncertain about

how to do so in the group. Facilitator validates the feelings and worries of women and encourages them to interact with other women in the group. As women trust the facilitator, they try to interact with others. Through exchanges in the group, for instance, problem solving, sharing pictures of children, bringing food to enjoy together as well as passing tissues to support tearful members, women's personal trust on facilitator gradually transforms into social trust on other group members.

Larance and Porter's study provides us with few implications. First of all, their study shows that social capital can be developed through participation in voluntary association. Moreover, face to face interactions act as a base for the transformation of personalized trust into social or more generalized trust. Furthermore, people's background and their original level of social capital (trust) may not determine these women's further development of social capital. As women who have been victimized by domestic violence are often lacks of social capital. However, Larance and Porter's study shows that trust and networks, indicators of social capital, could be created after participated in group activities.

These results show that the theory of self-selection seems problematic and

reconfirm that social capital can be generated through associational involvement. Meanwhile, it appears that there are some other factors which may affect the efficiency of social capital formation by associational involvement, for instance, the level of engagement and the roles of facilitators.

Different aspects in associational participation

Among the literature concerning the role of associational involvement, many of them try to examine the different aspects of participation, including both the qualitative and quantitative dimensions. We also need to identify which dimensions that aid or hinder social capital formation if we want to encourage people's associational participations.

Types of membership, level of participation and format of interaction

Types of membership, level of participation as well as format of interaction are some areas which always attract academic attention in discussion about associational participation. Membership could be simply categorized into three categories, namely volunteer, active and passive membership (Maloney & Rossteutscher, 2007). Different types of membership may indicate members' level of participation or their contribution to the association. For instance,

volunteers may be involved in voluntary work in the association or in the community frequently; active members may participate actively in various types of activities whereas passive members may have relatively low level of social engagement.

Stolle (1998) has looked into the effect of members' engagement in associations on the formation of social capital. It was found that members who were actively involved in and were responsible to take up some tasks in associations were those with higher level of participation. They tended to have more generalized trust (Stolle, 1998).

In contrast to Stolle's study, Wollebæk and Selle (2003a) argued that active participants of associations did not show significant contributions in creating more social capital than passive participants. As Wollebæk and Selle (2003b) mentioned, most voluntary associations are full of passive members who may also share the norms and values of the association. However, the nationwide study of Wollebæk and Selle does not offer any explanation on why passive members who uphold the norms and values of the association do not participate actively. Moreover, the study cannot indicate the differences of social capital

between active and passive membership in a unique organizational setting.

Apart from types of membership and level of participation, format of interaction should also be considered in social capital formation within associations. Face to face interactions in voluntary associations provide a channel for members to exchange their resources, which is important to social capital formation (Putnam, 1993a, 1995, 2000). Members who engage in more activities, take up more tasks in associations or have to cooperate with other members may have more opportunities to interact with different people, especially when these activities provide opportunity for “face-to face” interaction. For passive members, they do not have such a platform to get to know each other, how can they exchange their resources or share their social capital? The above studies cannot provide with us any suggestion. Nonetheless, the above discussion reminds us that people’s level of participation and the format of interaction they engage in groups are important to social capital formation. We should further examine them and see how these factors affect the development of social capital.

Time spent, the length of membership and past experiences

Besides level of engagement, the time spent on associational activities and the length of membership are found to be associated with people's social capital formation. Stolle's (2001) study compares generalized trust in three different countries, namely Germany, Sweden and USA. People who spend more time in voluntary associations tend to show more trust of other fellow-members, however, the result does not highlight that those people have more generalized trust, civic engagement and activities outside the groups. Longer periods of involvement or longer membership are not associated with trust creation (Stolle, 2001). In addition, it is found that different countries show different results, the "rule" that the more associations people join, the more generalized trust could be generated shows in USA (Putnam, 2000) cannot be found in Europe. It seems that, for Stolle, time spent in associational activities and the length of membership cannot bring positive effects on people's social capital formation. However, people who recently join; are actively involved and take an important role in organizing activities in an association, show a well development of social capital. Obviously, time spent in association and duration of membership are two "quantitative" aspects that may affect social capital formation. However, we cannot capture the full picture of participation if we merely

consider these two “quantitative” aspects. The quality of participation, such as the role people takes up in association, as discussed above, should be considered together in order to understand which kind of participations can facilitate social capital formation.

Besides time spent on associational activities and the length of membership, past experiences in association is also considered as another factor which affect social capital formation. Group participations could be encouraged by people’s positive experiences, and vice versa (Claibourn and Martin, 2000). People may withdraw from groups and do not want to interact with others again due to their previous bad experiences within the group. The negative effects from previous experience may prevent people from developing social capital. Therefore, we should make our great effort to avoid bringing any negative impacts to members.

Types, purposes and content of associations

Membership in different types of groups is considered as a factor that may affect social capital formation. Stolle (2001) finds that, compared with other groups such as bowling or sports groups, those people who join church choirs are shown to be more trusting. The result indicates that development of

generalized trust could be different among different type of groups.

Purpose of association is another “qualitative” factor that may affect the formation of social capital within association (Boix and Posner, 1996). It is recognized that not all associations promote democratic goals nor are organized in an egalitarian fashion (Boix and Posner, 1996). Instead of social capital formation, intolerance and inequality may be fostered in some associations, for instance, the Ku Klux Klan (Boix and Posner, 1996). Their purpose was to restore White supremacy and preached racism, anti-Catholicism, anti-Communism, nativism, and anti-Semitism. Members often adopted violent methods, such as using ceremonial cross burning to intimidate victims and demonstrate its power (Wikipedia, 2009). These associations would negatively affect the ability of members of the larger community to trust one another and cooperate for common ends. In contrast, active participation in a Sinn Fein chapter or a pro-choice abortion group may promote lots of social capital among fellow group members (Boix and Posner, 1996). That social capital may greatly facilitate the cooperation necessary for group members to organize rallies, coordinate fund-raising efforts and conduct other collective tasks. Hence, the purposes of associations affect the development of social capital of

members.

Similar to Stolle's study, Ting and Sze (2006) also studied the change in the level of generalized trust (a major indicator of social capital) of students from two local secondary schools after joining groups with different content held by the school social workers. One of them was a leadership training group and the other was a community service group. It was found that the group members had positive development on both particularized trust and generalized trust, which are key elements of social capital. However, for the leadership training group, as students had the chance to organize activities with people who are mentally handicapped for a year, they could build up mutual relationship with people of different backgrounds. Students of this group tended to show higher level of confidence and readiness to contact with people whom they were not familiar with and/or coming from different background. The results also suggested that generalized trust was gradually formed among students in leadership training group. However, for the community services group, which merely facilitated students' participation in various community services and did not provide a session to help student to consolidate what they learnt and how they saw their relationships with people in the community, their generalized trust were

relatively low when compared with that of students in the leadership training group. This example shows that the content of group programme can affect the secondary students' social capital formation.

Facilitators in associations

Facilitators in associations carry out an important role to promote social capital development of members. As mentioned by Larance and Porter (2004), trust formation starts from the relationship of facilitator and group members. Through the facilitator's encouragement, group members feel safe to express themselves during the group activities and are willing to connect with other group members. Lastly, their personal trust could be transformed into generalized trust. It seems that facilitator does play a key role in fostering social capital creation or transformation, as they could ensure the supportive atmosphere in the group, which is essential for members' relationship building.

Ting and Sze (2006) also indicate that the crucial success factor for social capital formation is whether the social workers could transform their role from group leader to mediator. In the group where the social worker encouraged the students to develop the group on their own and to cooperate with different

people; and taking a less dominating role, the development of social capital (in terms of trust) was relatively significant.

Furthermore, the CIIF consortium (2006) indicates that the successful factor for the development of social capital is social workers' understanding on the concept of social capital. For instance, for those social workers who better understood the importance of bridging social capital were willing to take more efforts in helping project participants to connect with people of different sectors.

Strategies used in association

Strategies for building up social capital used in associations should also be considered. It is found that role transformation, community engagement, mentorship and partnership are some of the strategies that were used in association were contributive to the formation of social capital in associations (CIIF consortium, 2006).

Ting (2006) evaluated eleven projects which aimed at promoting social capital development in Hong Kong. In particular, this study intended to document the process and mechanism whereby social capital is developed and to find out the impact of social capital on the participants' lives. Results of her study indicate

that group work is the main strategies that social worker use to develop social capital. It is also revealed that the social workers' competence correlates with the outcome of projects in social capital formation. For instance, if social workers were good at working with group and networking, project participants could often build up supportive networks for themselves. In other words, participants' bonding social capital was better formed. However, if social workers were not competent in linking up the groups with other sectors in the community, project participants would not be able to build up connection with people coming from different background. In other words, bridging and linking social capital were not well developed very in some projects. The findings of this study indicate the need to further explore the relationship between social workers' professional knowledge and skills and social capital formation.

The Knowledge and Skills for Social Capital Intervention

Last section identifies that associational participation is the important source of social capital formation. Social workers always encourage people to actively participate in voluntary associations. Nevertheless, how social workers can transform this encouragement to facilitate social capital formation among our

services users? What purpose and types of association are good for social capital formation? Also, what kind of role that facilitators should take and what kind of strategies the facilitators should use to encourage the development of social capital? All of these are important questions but very seldom discussed in literature of social capital. Though Ting's (2006) CIIF study focuses on the process and mechanism, the short duration of her study makes it difficult to document in full details the process and mechanism of social capital formation that took place in those projects. Hence, the above discussion with regard to Ting's study only provides a rough sketch on the model of social capital development, which lacks full details for further application and replication.

As mentioned by Ting (2006), group work method is the main strategy often used in the projects. If so, it is expected that social workers' could carry out those CIIF projects effectively. This is because "working with group" is one of the important practice competences that social workers should develop. However, it is found that social workers encountered many difficulties when carried out those projects aimed at promoting social capital formation. It probes us to wonder whether there are any differences for social workers to conduct a group in conventional practice setting and a group for building up social capital building. If there are differences, then how could the social workers prepare

themselves if they need to achieve project aims of building up social capital? Moreover, it is also important to learn why some social workers find it difficult to achieve the projects aims of building bridging and linking social capital while others do not? What kind of support the agency should provide for the social workers who carry out this kind of project? The previous studies done locally and overseas seldom discussed these concrete and practical issues. Since nearly two hundreds community projects have been initiated to promote social capital formation in Hong Kong (CIIF, 2009) and most of them are carried out by social workers, hence, the study of how social work practice can contribute to the development of social capital should be at the top of agenda.

The Importance of Longitudinal Study

It is apparent that the above mentioned local studies were mainly evaluative research studies that were carried out within relative short period of time. Especially for those studying CIIF projects in Hong Kong, the researchers evaluated the effectiveness of the projects from the point of view of an outsider and accomplished the whole research within a fifteen- month timeframe. The researcher then elucidated what they found and provided suggestions in their

final reports. For instance, the researchers could not find strong evidence of linking social capital in many projects (Ng, S.H., Leung, K.K., Chan, W.T. & Chan, Raymond, 2006; Mok, B.H., Ngai, Steven & Cheung, Jacky, 2006). Hence, it is important for us to undertake a longitudinal study in which we could study one project in-depth for an extended period, so that the whole process for social capital formation can be documented. We could also capture intervention skills in social work practice which are effective for social capital formation among low income families.

In summary, literature that has implication for intervention and is useful for social work practitioner is still lacking. As the study of social capital in general, and practice intervention in particular, is still in the initial stage in Hong Kong, hence, it is worthwhile for us to initiate a study which aims to provide social workers more ideas on how to build up social capital in the local context. We may build up a model of social capital development that would provide practice guide for social workers. We could also re-visit our practice repertoires to find the most relevant practice model and modify or expand it to provide practice framework for social capital intervention.

The Relevance of Mutual-aid Group Practice and Community

Intervention Model to Social Capital Intervention

As have been noted earlier, I have been involved in studying the CIIF projects. Many social workers of the CIIF projects expressed that “building social capital is not a new thing for us; we have always been doing it” and “it is more difficult for them to facilitate the formation of bridging social capital than the formation of bonding social capital”. Their expressions remind me that it maybe helpful to review the training of social worker and to see if any social work practice models are supporting social workers’ practice in the development of social capital. As the study of social capital development should include all three forms of social capital, thus it would be of much practice value if we could identify or develop a practice model that could help bridge this practice gap.

Social workers mentioned that facilitating the formation of social capital was not a ‘new’ task in their practice and they were more familiar with fostering the building up of bonding social capital. It maybe the case that for local social workers, they have been trained and became efficient when used certain kind of

group work models. To build up bonding social capital among members of a group, social workers often need to have the skills that work with people of similar backgrounds. Social workers also have to encourage trust building among group members and facilitate the supporting behaviour within the group. It may be helpful to examine the mutual-aid group model. This is because the aim for building up a mutual-aid group is to facilitate the mutual help among people in a homogenous group. Trust, norms and reciprocal behaviours are also encouraged within the group. The nature of mutual-aid groups seems to be similar to a group which aims at generating bonding social capital. Hence, it maybe helpful to examine the mutual-aid group model if there is any hint for us to develop a practice model for social capital intervention.

Besides generating bonding social capital, social capital intervention model also have to include the skills and knowledge for social workers to facilitate the formation of bridging and linking social capital. To help generate bridging social capital and linking social capital among people, it is necessary for social workers to facilitate the connections between different parties in the community. Hence, the review of community intervention model may provide hints for us to see whether there are any skills that we have been learnt are conducive to the

building of bridging and linking social capital.

The philosophy and the process of mutual-aid group practice

Schwartz suggests that a “symbiotic” relationship exists between individuals and their society, in which individual depends the other for his/her own life and grow; and all individuals would reach out to the other with all of their possible strength (Schwartz,1971; as cited in Gitterman, 1986, p.30). However, Schwartz indicates that this reciprocal relationship may become tenuous, diffuse and obscure in the complex society. To re-establish this reciprocal relationship, Schwartz suggests that social work practitioners perform important function by acting as mediators. The formed and natural group could be seen as the primary medium for individual or social exchanged (Gitterman, 1986). Therefore group work may be one of the means to encourage the reciprocal relationships among individuals.

Group work in social work practice has been developed for several decades. Social work group is defined as “*enterprise in mutual aid*” (Schwartz, 1977; as cited in Gitterman & Shulman, 2005, p.21), in which individuals who are in need of each others in different extent come together to form an alliance to

work on certain common problems. The group is a helping system in which the members need each other as well as the worker (Schwartz, 1977; as cited in Gitterman & Shulman, 2005). Then, how can social workers perform their function in this helping system?

Shulman (1986) further brings the concept of Schwartz into social work practice. He develops the mutual-aid processes which guides social worker to build-up mutual-aid group to encourage the reciprocal relationship. There are nine processes for building up mutual-aid groups. First of all, “sharing data” is a process which provides the platform for the group members to share their information. Secondly, the “dialectic process”, through discussing and sharing ideas, group members are encouraged to learn new things. During the third process, the group members could enter “taboo areas” and have the chance to share something they will not talk about normally. Very often, it provides a chance for the members to express their feelings. Coming into the forth process, the members could develop the “all-in-the-same-boat” feelings in which members feel that they are not lonely and there are some people living with them in the similar situation. This acts as a base for the fifth process, in which group members could provide “mutual support” to each other. Coming into the

sixth process, the group has already been developed and step into the “mutual demand” process. It is the time for the group members to try to take some actions for fulfilling each others’ needs. Group members may face difficulties and learn together during the process. In the seventh process, the “individual problem solving”, members could transform the experiences they gain in the group into their individual skills to help them solve problem. During the eighth process, the “rehearsal”, group members have the chance to practice their skills and equip knowledge continually through their participation in group. Lastly, the group members will enter the stage for advocacy, named “strength in numbers”. They could well-use their group power to take some social actions to fight for their rights or improve their living situations. (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005; Steinberg, 2004)

From these discussions, we can see that mutual aid could be either a cause or an effect. When mutual aid acts as a cause, it is the reason why we use group work as medium of help and guidelines for us to intervene into people’s life. Mutual aid is also the result of our interventions: we are helping people to help others (Steinberg, 2004). As a trained social worker, the mutual-aid concept has already been firmly grasped and become an integral part of our daily practice.

The above paragraphs are just a review that reminds us what we have learnt. Having illustrated the dynamics of mutual-aid, it is now timely to discuss the relationship between mutual-aid group practice and social capital intervention.

Mutual-aid Group and Social Capital Intervention

When we examine the concepts of mutual-aid and social capital in-depth, it is not difficult for us to identify the common elements.

First of all, social relation is the key component of both concepts of mutual-aid and social capital. As a kind of voluntary associations, the mutual-aid group provides a context for people of similar backgrounds to connect. Before entering the group, the group members may not have any social support network. After joining the group, they could get to know other group members. Their networks could then be expanded. As the literature review highlighted above, social capital exists in the social relations (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993a) and connections between homogeneous groups is a kind of bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000). This kind of social relations act as a platform for exchange of resources as well as emotional support to take place within the group. For instance, participants in a mutual-aid group for new

arrivals could exchange the information and could share their feelings or adjustment problems regarding living in Hong Kong.

Moreover, trust and norms of reciprocity could also be developed and strengthened through mutual aid group. The mutual aid concept assumes that people uphold the norms of reciprocity. Hence, they can get help from others and can reciprocate through their participations in the mutual-aid group. They promote the norms that the participants should “take” and “give”. For instance, someone help you this time and you should help others the next time. The mutual-aid group also promotes trust among members in the same groups. With trust, the members could share their feelings and seek help in the group confidently. Indeed, the norms of reciprocity and trust are key dimensions of social capital. Norms of reciprocity and trust play an important role in facilitating people’s connection as well as the building up of bonding social capital. Having the foundation of trust and norms of reciprocity, the relationships between people could be maintained. People are more likely to share their resources with others as well as contribute to the society.

Thirdly, the empowerment element in social capital concept is also found in the

mutual-aid groups. Social capital concept does not focus on people's weakness. Instead, it is people's strengths and abilities that are the being attended to. Moreover, it is this kind of strengths and abilities that could be well-used and contribute to the community they are in. The mutual-aid concept also shares this philosophy and believes that the members in mutual-aid group could use their own strengths and abilities to help themselves.

The above discussion points out the similarities between the concepts of mutual-aid groups and the role of associational participation in the social capital formation. It seems that running mutual-aid group could help people generate their social capital. However, the purpose of mutual aid group is to gather people who are having homogeneous background. Indeed, the close relationship among homogeneous group members is a kind of bonding social capital, rather than bridging and linking social capital (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001). Mere bonding social capital can have negative effects on the group members. This claim is made in the discussion of the dark side of social capital which highlights that social exclusion may appear if we only emphasize on the building up of bonding social capital. In this case, group members may exclude those people who do not share their similar background. Moreover, the

group members in the mutual-aid group may be less likely to connect with other people outside the group as norms of trust and reciprocity generated in the group could not be extended to others outside the group. In addition, there might be a risk that group members in the mutual-aid group could not help each other due to their limited resources since members are coming from similar background.

If this is the case, how could social workers tackle this situation? As mutual-aid group model have been well-developed in the social work literature and could provide clear guidelines for us to follow. Can we apply or modify the mutual-aid group model to help people not just building up bonding social capital but also bridging and linking social capital? What kind of programmes we should plan and implement in order to facilitate group members to connect people outside their groups?

As mentioned before, the role of facilitators is the main concern for social capital development in association. Therefore, what kind of roles should social worker adopt if the groups not only for mutual-aid but also for social capital formation? Maybe the most preferred scenario is to provide practice framework

for the development of different forms of social capital in social work intervention.

From Community Intervention Models to Social Capital Intervention in Social Work Practice

In the last section, it is mentioned that some guidelines of mutual-aid group model may be useful to facilitate the development of bonding social capital.

However, to generate bridging social capital or linking social capital, networks building among different systems are necessary. Therefore, how social workers facilitate networks building or help the participants to reach out to different resources in the community should also be another important question to ask.

The review of relevant community intervention approaches to see whether there is any implication for social workers to carry out project of social capital development, thus, would be the top of agenda.

Community intervention models

In social work practice, there are different community practice models. Rothman (1979) introduces three models of community intervention, namely

locality development, social planning and social action. Rothman (1996) argues that intervention approaches always overlap and mix with others in real practice. A phasing relationship also exists in different intervention models. A project may start by using one model, but later, practitioners may need to apply another model. According to Rothman (1979), the model of locality development emphasizes on community change through the participation of people from broad spectrum in the community. The purpose of this model is to facilitate cooperative problem-solving on a self-help basis building community capacity.

In the model of Locality Development, people are seen as active participants that interact with each other and social worker practitioners. Through joining the groups in the community, participants can learn and grow. Participants would find out their needs, determine desired goals and finally carry out appropriate conjoint action to solve their “problems” (Rothman, 1976). To achieve the objectives in locality development, the role of social workers should be “enabler”. Practitioners should facilitate the problem solving process in the groups, such as encourage participants to express their feelings and their needs, emphasizing common objectives, facilitating organization and

nourishing good interpersonal relations (Rothman, 1976).

Apart from Rothman, Weil and Gamble (1995) review that there are eight models of community practice for social worker. They are neighborhood and community organizing; organizing functional communities; community social and economic development; social planning; programme development and community liaison; political and social action; coalitions; and social movements. These eight models have different desired outcome, systems targeted for change, primary constituency, scope of concern and primary social work roles.

Among eight models of community practice reviewed by Weil and Gamble (1995), the focus of the Neighborhood and Community Organizing model is on working with geographic neighborhoods and communities. Its purposes are to develop capacity of members, to facilitate the accomplishment of tasks with regarding to improving social and economic conditions in the community and to alter the direction of regional planning and external development. To achieve the purposes of neighborhood and community organizing, social workers should carry out different roles which include organizer, educator and teacher,

coach, and facilitator. In order to establish the organization with the participants and prepare them to be the staff of the organization, social workers always need to work with participants; assistance and skills trainings should be provided during the process. When participants begin to act as the leader of the organization, social workers become advisors, working with the chairperson and committee members of the organization to prepare meetings, set goals, find resources, make strategies plan and carry out the action, and evaluate the process. The social workers often involve in leadership training instead of taking up the role of the leaders in this kind of intervention.

The models suggested by Weil and Gamble (1995) and Rothman (1979) seem to share some common grounds. These models encourage the development of participants and emphasize on the involvement of the participants that they should play an important role in the problem solving process. The review of these two models may provide us with insights on how to work on the social capital development project in the community.

Community intervention models and social capital intervention

To generate bridging and linking social capital, the most important task is to

connect people of different groups. The formation of bridging and linking social capital required the existence of generalized reciprocity and generalized trust. People of different parties are willing to share their resources and to work for the common interests, such as leveraging resources, ideas and information.

Indeed, community practice shares common elements with social capital formation. Community practice also focuses on working with different people in the community, such as community leaders, elected officials, professionals or different functional groups (Weil & Gamble, 1995). The objectives of the community intervention are to develop organizing skills and abilities of individuals and to connect people from different groups together to work for common interests. It seems that community practice is on similar ground with the formation of bridging and linking social capital.

Therefore, community intervention models can act as references for us to build up intervention model for social capital formation. For instance, in Weil and Gamble's neighborhood and community organizing model, it is clearly indicated that social workers should take up roles of organizer, educator and teacher, coach, and facilitator during the intervention (Weil & Gamble, 1995).

Moreover, social workers should not be the dominator once the participants become the leader and committee members of the organization. According to Rothman's locality development model (1976), social workers also need to provide training for the members of the organization as well as nourish good interpersonal relationships among the groups. In order to accomplish the tasks within the organization, social workers also have to locate resources together with members of the organization, cooperation with different parties would also necessary. These skills seem to be relevant to social workers who carry out social capital intervention, especially when they are encouraging the formation of bridging and linking social capital.

Nevertheless, the discussions in this section only provide a general picture with regard to the roles and the tasks that social workers should take and do during the community intervention. How to facilitate the relationship building among different groups of participants? How to encourage different parties to contribute their resources on the organization? When will be the right time for the social workers to become less dominant in the organization? How to prepare the leaders of the participants to pick up the tasks in the organizations? How to facilitate the leaders to connect with different parties on their own?

These questions cannot be answered by examining the above community intervention models. Hence, it is better for us to build up a practice model for social capital intervention.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the basic concepts of social capital which include the history, definition, dimension and forms of social capital have been reviewed in the first part. The review provides us with framework to examine the development of social capital. For instance, the appearance of reciprocal behavior and particular trust within homogenous network indicate the development of bonding social capital. Generalized trust and reciprocal behaviors appeared in different heterogeneous networks show the development of bridging social capital. People's connection with their society could be studied through exploring their civic engagement.

Moreover, the impacts of social capital have been discussed in the second part of this chapter. Social capital benefits to human well-being, especially in the aspects of health, economic, education and children welfare. For those people

who have more interactions with others and are less isolated, are less likely to suffer from depression or other diseases. People's social networks can provide information and more unexpected opportunities on job searching. Family social capital benefits to education and children welfare. The discussion about the impacts of social capital ensures the worth to develop social capital.

In the third part of this chapter, the sources of social capital have been reviewed. Social capital could be generated at micro-level, family acts as the primary source of social capital. Social class, education and employment may bring different influences on the formation of social capital. At macro-level, it is worthy to note that history, culture, social structures and hierarchy of the state may negatively affect the formation of social capital. For instance, rigid, strong hierarchical or patriarchal social structures always are associated with low trust cities. It is also found that for the state with low levels of income and gender inequality, people in the countries always showed higher level of trust. It is necessary to notice the influence of economic and gender inequality made on the formation of social capital.

Apart from micro- and macro-level of sources, meso-level of source of social

capital which always refers to associational involvement was discussed in the third part of this chapter. It is recognized that associational involvement plays an important role in generating social capital. Nevertheless, the review of the critique on the function of associational involvement by self-selection theory as well as the different aspects of associational participation reminds us that, we should not only notice the quantity but also the quality of associational participation. In addition, facilitators in association may affect the social capital formation very much. Therefore, as social workers in groups, the role we take and the strategies we used should always be the top agenda in studies about the formation of social capital.

In the final section of this chapter, the uncharted ground for further study is indicated. It is important for us to explore the knowledge and skills of social capital intervention for further application and replication in social work practice through longitudinal study. From the review of mutual-aid group intervention and community intervention models in social work practice, we get to know that social workers are familiar in facilitating the development of bonding social capital, while the practical skills for social workers in helping group members to develop their bridging and linking social capital are limited.

To overcome this weakness, the modification of practice models as well as the creation of social capital intervention model is needed.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

Introduction

Literature on social capital has been reviewed in last chapter and the uncharted ground for further studies has been identified. In this chapter, the research objectives, background and the methodologies of this study will be elucidated.

Research Objectives

From the above discussion, we can see a big gap in the social work theory and practice of social capital intervention in Hong Kong. As such, three objectives have been proposed to bridge this gap in the current study. Firstly, the development of the development of social capital and its impact among the participants of “Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Community Network” would be studied. Secondly, the process and the mechanism, specifically those adopted by the project “Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Community Network”, through which social capital is built among low income families and their children would be explored. Lastly, those factors which affect the development of social

capital in the project of “Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Community Network” would also be analyzed in this study.

An Overview of “Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Community Network”

(SSPCFN)

In 2006, there were 116 CIIF projects. “Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Community Network” has been chosen as the site of the current study as it was the only project working with low-income families and their children in Sham Shui Po. This project was organized by a non-governmental welfare organization, namely the Boys’ and Girls’ Club Association of Hong Kong (BGCA) and the Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The three-year project started in June 2005 and completed in September 2008.

The project SSPCFN aimed to enhance the well-being of Sham Shui Po community through building up a sustainable community network and facilitating the development of bonding and bridging social capital among low income families and children. The project aims could be achieved via two

channels, namely the family-focused programmes and the community-focused programmes.

Through organizing the family-focused programmes, support was provided for children of low income families and their development was encouraged via equipping their parents with necessary parenting knowledge and skills. A team of volunteers who mainly came from low income families has been set up as an important asset to support the development of a child-friendly community. The family-focused programmes facilitated the formation of bonding social capital through linking up low income families who have access to different social resources together. Social cohesion then was enriched since understanding and mutual help were promoted.

The community-focused programme acted as a platform for the development of bridging social capital and linking social capital. Different parties in the communities were invited to form mutual support networks, namely the “child-friendly networks”, in which members of the networks both gave and took, and all engaged in the building of a better community for children to grow up. Lastly, the norms of mutual help, trust and reciprocity were cultivated

and social participation was promoted not only among the participants but also the general public in the community.

The SSPCFN project served thirty low income families every year. The training programmes provided for those families who joined the project during the first year (the first year families) was repeatedly used again with the families who enter the project in the second year (the second year families) and the third year (the third year families). For those first year families, they developed a self-help group and continuously participated in the project to promote child-friendly programmes and to serve other families that have similar needs in the community.

Research Methodology: Qualitative versus Quantitative

In order to bridge the gaps discussed above, this study employed a qualitative mode of inquiry. Creswell (1998) states that there are some important reasons for using qualitative inquiry. First of all, if the nature of the research questions are “how” and “what” instead of “why” or “comparison”, qualitative inquiry may be a better way to answer the questions. Second, qualitative inquiry is also

suitable if the study is “exploratory” in nature. Third, we could study individuals in their natural setting by using qualitative inquiry. Lastly, the role of researcher is an “active learner” rather than an “expert” in qualitative study; the former tells the story of the participants instead of the latter who makes judgment on individuals.

In this study, I aimed at studying “what” kind of social capital could be generated among project participants and “how” it is related to the project implementation. I would also study the processes and mechanisms for the formation of social capital and “how” the content of project, social workers’ intervention and organizational support could contribute to the development of social capital. These questions bring along here the need to explore more deeply, especially for the social work practice in the local context. Moreover, the purpose of this study is to understand the views and the lives of low-income families and social workers which all come from a natural setting rather than an experimental one. Lastly, this study would like to tell the mechanism for building up social capital rather than stand at a distance to make any judgment on the participants I studied. Based on these considerations, I would adopt a qualitative mode of inquiry to carry out the study.

The Long Interview Method

There are many qualitative research methods and among them, the Long Interview Method is adopted for this study as it is suitable for studies which have descriptive and analytic purposes (McCracken, 1988). I would like to examine the development of social capital and describe the mechanism of how social capital is formulated through social work intervention. All these data would be quite descriptive and analytic. Hence, the long interview method is suitable in this case. Moreover, as a novice researcher, the Long Interview Method has relatively clear and detailed procedures for me to follow. In the following, I would present the details of the four-step method of inquiry of the Long Interview Method, and would elaborate how I carried out the research activities by following these “steps” in this study.

The Four-Step Method of Inquiry

Long Interview Method is highly recommended by McCracken (1988). Long Interview Method consists of several structured steps, which could help me to construct the open-ended interview guide, to carry out the interviews, and finally to process and analyze the data. There are four steps in the research

process including “review of analytic categories”, “review of cultural categories”, “discovery of cultural categories” and “discovery of analytical categories”. (McCracken, 1988)

Step One: Reviewing Analytic Categories

The first step is literature review which includes the review of analytic categories and interview design. A good literature review is essential as it helps researcher to have a better understanding about the problem he/she is studying at.

It also helps the design of the interview questionnaires. McCracken (1988) recognizes that there is a problem of preconception in qualitative research if the researcher enters the field with plenty of theory. In order to this, McCracken (1988) suggests that investigator should have critical undertaking in conducting literature review. By examining the literature and particularly on how the assumptions are generated in these papers, the researcher gets to know what he/she has to ask for or listen to, and therefore a list of topics for interviews could be prepared.

In my study, I intended to examine the development of social capital among participants. The first literature review on social capital provided me with

direction that I should consider participants' development on different dimensions and forms of social capital. Besides, I also intended to study the process and the mechanism of social capital development. I then ventured into another literature review which focuses on the sources of social capital. The impression I got from the discussion on associational involvement, one of the sources of social capital, was that the purposes of the associations as well as facilitators in groups would influence the generation of social capital. Thus, I became aware that many factors would bring influence on the development of social capital. Finally, I have analyzed how the contents of programmes and social work intervention affected the development of project. These are just some illustration on how 'Reviewing of Analytic Categories' could have implications for the direction of the present study.

Step Two: Reviewing Cultural Categories

The second step of the Long Interview Method states is to review cultural categories. In this step, the researcher starts to use the self as a tool for inquiry. According to McCracken, it is important for the researcher to recognize the relationship between his/her personal experiences and the topic under study. The associations, incidents and assumptions in the mind of the researcher

should be examined in this stage. This helps us to identify cultural categories and relationships that haven't been discussed in the previous literature. This could also provide us with the chance to establish "critical distance" that we should be aware of, because our familiarization may block our understanding on the topic under study.

I grew up in a low-income family. My family situation has improved gradually once my parents have joined a religious organization. After their participation in the organization, my parent's social networks have been expanded. Within their religious networks, extra resources were shared. Through the building up of social capital, I gained more learning and job opportunities. Eventually the quality of life of my family has been improved. These personal experiences affected my understanding on the impact of social capital among low income families. I recognized the virtues of social capital. I also had the impression that social capital could be generated in voluntary associations through members' active participation. My experiences and perception encouraged me to notice the development of social capital and its impacts and aroused my interest to study the mechanism of how social capital is formulated. .

I was trained to be social worker for several years. Instead of being frontline social worker, my working experiences were mainly on research projects about social capital. The experiences I gained from my previous jobs provide me with opportunities to grasp the knowledge regarding the concepts of social capital. I also had the experiences to study other CIIF projects. As I did not have much frontline experiences nor carried out social capital intervention on my own, I should pay extra attention that there may be a gap for the theory to transform into real practice model. In addition, I should be aware of the differences that appeared among different projects and it is therefore not suitable to compare the performance of the project with others. These reflections, or 'Review of Cultural Categories as suggested by McCracken are important for researcher to carry out qualitative study.

Step Three: Discovery of Cultural Categories

Step three is a process of discovering cultural categories including questionnaire construction and the implementation of interviews. McCracken (1988) gives a detailed description on the practical skills, including the development of interview guide, method of sampling and the actual interviewing process.

Interview Guide

Before entering the phase of interview, questionnaires or interview guides should be constructed carefully. To understand the background and details of the respondents, a series of bio-graphical questions have to be asked. This is the easiest step and I always started my interview by asking them to talk about their personal history. Long Interview method also reminds us to let our respondents tell their own stories with their own words and therefore the investigator should maintain a “low” and unobtrusive profile. It is therefore suggested that questions with general and nondirective phrase, which named as “grand-tour” questions, should be used to encourage respondents to express their views without over specifying the substance or the perspective of the interview. Hence, to remain unobtrusive, I have asked questions like “What is your feeling about this?”, “How’s your living when you first come to Hong Kong?” and “How would you see your change after joining the project?” These are some examples of “grand-tour” questions to facilitate the respondents to describe their experiences in the project.

There are several kinds of respondents in this study, which included participants, social workers, organization supervisor, organization director and

representatives from business corporate partner. Most of them could respond to those “grand-tour” questions. In order to expand respondents’ utterance, I also applied the techniques of using “floating prompts”. I simply repeated some key terms that the respondents expressed, they would further elaborate which helps me to understand what they meant.

There were many categories we needed to explore from the literature review, for instance, different aspects of social capital development, and knowledge and skills for social workers to carry out the project. Sometimes, it was quite difficult for the respondents to express all of them spontaneously. When I faced this situation, “planned prompts” were used. “Planned prompts” helped to facilitate the respondents to talk about something which “do not come readily to mind or speech”. For instance, parent participants seldom mentioned their expectations on returns from people who received their help. Planned prompts, such as “Do you think that those you have helped would help you back if you are in need?” and “why do they have different attitudes between ‘return to others’ and ‘being returned’?” were planned prompts that were necessary to let participants consider these issues. Through these planned prompts, participants described “sense of ability”, “norms to return to others” and “expectations of being

returned” much more clearly. In addition, a series of “cultural category” questions were also asked since this study also aimed at understanding how social workers and agency supervisors perceived their roles during different stage of the project. For example, social workers’ relationships with participants as well as the skills and strategy they have used. All these categories were important to formulate the social capital intervention model. The discussion here showed the necessity of combining different kinds of prompts when constructing the interview guides.

Sampling

Besides the construction of interview guides, McCracken (1988) also discussed the selection of respondents. There is a big difference between quantitative and qualitative research in this aspect; the former concerns its generalizability whereas and the latter focuses on the access to cultural categories and assumptions. Unlike quantitative studies that follow the paradigm of positivism, qualitative research does not concern about large sample size to represent the larger world. “Less is more” is the principle of qualitative research. Instead of working with a huge number of people superficially, qualitative researchers believe that it is much better if they could work longer and provide greater care

for a fewer number of people. McCracken (1988) also highlighted that eight respondents is the perfect number for many research projects.

Due to the availability of resources, the time frame as well as the drop out rate during the research process, a limited number of participants were selected and invited to participate in this study. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the background of the participants, their level of involvement in the project as well as the year the participants joined the project were the selection criteria in sampling. To understand the impacts on social capital development that the project brought to the participants, participants with different backgrounds were all included; participants' family and marital status, sources of income as well as the length of stay in Hong Kong were all considered. For instance, local born Hong Kong people, new arrivals to Hong Kong, single parents, low income families as well as CSSA recipients were all invited to join this study. In addition, as suggested from the existing literature, participants' level of involvement may also affect their social capital development. Thus, active participants who attended the parents group or became volunteer frequently, and passive participants who did not always participate in the project were also invited. One of the objective of the current study is to

examine the process of how social capital would be generated in the SSPCFN project and the relationship between the content of programme intervention and social capital development. Therefore, how long the participants have stayed in the project is also an important factor. Participants who joined in the first and second year were also invited to join this study respectively.

In order to give a more comprehensive picture for a better understanding on the project and to identify any changes in the participants, two rounds of interviews were carried out. The first round of interview was carried out between the end of the first year of the project and the start of the second year of the project. A total of twenty-two participants were invited to join the first round interview. The second round of interview was carried out between the end of the second year and the start of the third year of the project, in which a total of sixteen participants were interviewed. Eleven of the interviewees in the second round interview had also been interviewed in the first round, while five of them were new comers to the project.

Apart from the participants, two social workers, the organization supervisor and the organization director were the key persons of this project also participated in

this study. Two rounds of interview were carried out with the social workers so that they could reflect and describe their intervention strategies during different stages of the project.

Furthermore, to examine the cooperation and the development of bridging social capital, two representatives from the business partner of this project were also interviewed. The detailed background of all the respondents in this study is shown in Appendix 1.

Apart from the participants, two social workers, organization supervisor and organization director were the key persons of this project and thus were also participants of this study. Two rounds of interview were carried out among social workers so that they could reflect and describe their intervention strategies during different stages of developmental of the project.

Furthermore, to examine the cooperation and the development of bridging social capital, two representatives from the business partner of this project were also interviewed. The detailed background of all the respondents in this study is shown in Appendix 1.

Interview Process

Interviews started right after the identification of research participants. Long Interview Method reminds us to reduce respondents' anxiety level during the interview. According to McCracken (1988), during the interview process, the interviewer should "identify key terms, minimize respondent distortion, choose the most promising avenues of inquiry, and listen for material that is indexed by respondent testimony but not made explicit in it" (McCracken, 1988, p.41). The time-frame should be set and respondents are able to "tell their story in their own terms" (McCracken, 1988, p.41). During my interview journey with different kinds of respondents, I had always reminded myself to follow these guidelines.

Apart from the techniques above, McCracken (1988) also mentions that the investigators should pay attention to their relationships with the respondents. It is undoubtedly that how respondent perceive the investigator would affect their participation in the interview. To McCracken, it is necessary for the investigator to hold the balance between formality and informality. The role of scientist could be shown by investigators' formal appearance whereas the distance between investigator and respondents could be shortened by the informality. Good

balance between formality and informality could ensure that the investigator-respondents relationship is equal. The balanced relationship thus facilitate the respondents disclose themselves easily.

As there were different kinds of respondents in the current study, I applied different 'strategies' during the interviews. One example was to wear casual to reduce imbalance effects when interviewed with the participants of the project. The imbalance effect arose from the differences of backgrounds, as most participants got to know that I was a social worker who came from the university and would therefore build up an 'academic' image. Besides wearing casual t-shirt and jeans, I sometimes disclosed my family background that I grew up from a low income family. This gave them perceptions that I could have better understandings on their situations and would as well as encouraging them to tell their own stories. Another kind of respondents in my study was the staff from business sector. Rather than dressing casuals, my dress code was formal to cast the image as a 'researcher' and being more 'professional'. I also emphasized that how I processed the data I gathered from them, so that they had the confidence that I would handle their data appropriately and would not publish without their consent. The formality I upheld thus facilitated the participation of staff from

business corporate partner.

Step Four: Discovery of Analytic Categories

Preparation: Data Transcription

All interviews I carried out in this study were recorded by a MP3 player to prepare for the next step - data analysis. Verbatim transcripts of the interviews have been created and both hard copy and machine-readable file were produced. I always finished this process before entering another round of interviews. I also used the transcripts to prepare for “planned prompts” and referred to respondents’ background information if needed during the second round of interviews. Since all interviews were carried out in Cantonese and were transcribed in Chinese first, I needed to translate the materials presented in this report into English and care was taken so that the translation will not alter the original meanings.

According to McCracken (1988), the last step of discovering the analytic categories in Long Interview Method should be started after the above tasks were completed. This is a data analysis process which made up of the following five stages.

Stage 1: Identification of Utterance and Making Observation

In stage one, each utterance should be treated in its own terms and its relationship to other aspects of the text should be ignored. This process generates observations. For instance, one participant expressed that “*It is very difficult for me to repay others. I don’t know everything.*” When I took a look on this expression, I got to know that it was difficult for the participant to carry out ‘repay’ behaviour. To study the development of cognitive social capital, it was necessary for us to explore the norms which governed the reciprocal behaviours. Hence, I noticed that this utterance may be important. As mentioned by McCracken (1988), the self of investigator could be seen as an instrument. At this stage, I played the role of archaeologists who identified whether the utterances are important or not while did not pay much attention on how to gather up those important utterances. I had to examine the utterances carefully and generate the ‘intuition’. Sometimes, it was also necessary for me to refer to the literature and cultural review, so as to enhance the sensitivity for exploring the meanings of the interview data.

Stage 2: Expansion of Observations

The second stage of step four is named as ‘expansion of observations’. As

McCracken (1988) noted, each observation created in stage one should be continually developed in this stage. The observation beyond its original form should be extended until its implications and possibilities are generated. By following the guides of Long Interview method, I first re-examined the observation itself, then went back to the transcripts and finally went back to previous literature and cultural reviews to search for more evidences to support my analysis. By using the above methods, I read the transcript repeatedly and noticed that the “sense of incompetence” may affect participants’ reciprocal behaviour. In this stage, I also reminded myself to take an in-depth look on all relations among observations. Those with identity, similarity, oppositions and contradiction as well were explored.

Stage 3: Comparison of Observations

According to McCracken (1988), all the expanded observations are gathered together for comparison in the third stage of analysis. The similarities and contradictions among the expanded observations would then be identified. The interconnection between these observations should be highlighted, and therefore patterns, themes and constraints became much clearer. During this stage, the data of interview was well-organized and its properties emerged. Following the

above example I used to illustrate what I have done in stage 1, I reviewed the whole transcript of that participant and found that she did not have much experience in helping others and did not take up any tasks during the volunteer services in the project. It seemed that the participant was full of the ‘sense of incompetence’. Indeed, the participant showed her willingness to help and repay others if ‘she has the chance’. It seemed that the ‘sense of incompetence’ limits ‘the chances’ the participant gets to actualize her wish. I then came up with a preliminary idea that the ‘sense of competence’ and ‘actualization of reciprocal behaviour’ are related. I applied the skill of “comparison of observations” to generate many preliminary ideas from all the interview transcripts. Finally I entered the stage four with all of these potential themes in my hand.

Stage 4: Theme Development

During the fourth stage of analysis, as mentioned by McCracken, it is the time to make the judgment. It is necessary for the investigator to identify the interrelationships among all the themes. Hierarchy and contradictions of these themes should be examined carefully in this stage. I discarded those themes which were not useful to make a clear and consistent presentation. By using the

same example above, I proposed that the ‘sense of competence’ was the important theme when studied ‘reciprocal behaviour’. I then went through all themes I generated during the previous stage to examine whether there were any interconnections. After passing through this stage, I had a much clearer picture on how the themes are related and I tried to organize them hierarchically.

Stage 5: Comparison of Different Interview Themes

The fifth stage is the process for the comparisons of different interview themes and the make up of thesis (McCracken, 1988). In this stage, instead of considering particular lives, the general properties and behaviors of the respondents under study should be presented. The implications for the social science field which come from this study should be elucidated. The conclusion of this study is therefore created.

To go through this stage, I reviewed all the themes from each interview and examined whether any conclusions could be generated. I found that ‘participation in activities’ is also related to the ‘sense of competence’ and ‘reciprocal behaviour’. Hence, I tried to make the conclusion that the norms of

reciprocity could be enhanced and practiced much easier after participating in the programmes of the project. I also observed that the relationship was not only appeared in one case but were also relevant to other participants as well. This showed that it is a general theme I could reach.

Trustworthiness of the Research

The Long Interview Method, the methodology that I applied in this study has been discussed in the above section. In this section, the trustworthiness of the research will be discussed.

When I was studying qualitative research methodologies in class, I noticed that Lincoln and Guba, who promoted the naturalist inquiry, introduced systematic and detailed framework/guidelines to establish the trustworthiness of qualitative research. I carried out qualitative research that studied the subjective experiences of project participants and the process of social capital development in a certain context. Therefore, the framework of Lincoln and Guba was suitable and useful for the assessing the vigor of my research. The following sections present and discuss the trustworthiness of my research as

guided by the framework suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Four criteria including credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability are suggested to replace the four criteria come from positivism/post positivism paradigm, namely “internal validity”, “external validity”, “reliability” as well as “objectivity” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Credibility

The first important criterion is credibility, which emphasizes the ‘true value’ of reality demonstrated by the researcher. As the reality is multiply constructed, hence, the researcher should represent those multiple constructions adequately.

This can be done by the following two ways. One way is to apply appropriate method that increases the probability of getting credible findings. Another way is to show that the findings have been approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied.

Several techniques to enhance the credibility are suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. I had applied these

techniques in conducting my study.

Prolong Engagement

Prolong engagement highlights the importance of the investment of sufficient time to learn the “culture” and to build trust with the participants. In these two years, I visited the centre nearly every week. I attended the gatherings of parents group. Participants became familiar with me through these persistent contacts and observations. They then were willing to share their daily lives with me and invited me to give opinions during their meetings. My continuous appearance in their groups gatherings seemed to be normalized. I did not attend the activities during my study leave, when I appeared again; parents would ask me where I went during that period. This example showed that participants have already treated me as one of the members in their group. My prolong engagement thus facilitated the building up of trust among participants and turned me into a native of the project.

Persistent Observation

Prolong engagement ensures the investigator becoming native and knowing the scope of study. Accompany with prolong engagement, persistent observation

should also be carried out to enhance the depth of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The identification of the characteristics and elements which are relevant to the issues being studied is the objective of persistent observation. In these two years, every time I sat in the activity room, I observed the development of project participants and the relationship built up between them. At the very beginning, most parents did not know each other. They only expressed themselves when encouraged by the social workers. I noticed that parents started to communicate with each other through the accomplishment of small tasks and their participation in the parents group. Initially, they always shared with others the general matters related to their children. Their sharing became more in-depth gradually. They were willing to talk about their marital relationships and relationships with other family members. My continuous observations let me know deeply the dynamics of participants in the project and their changes. Apart from the contacts with project participants, I attended nearly all the meetings of project steering committee, which allowed me to observe the development of project and to record the strategies the social workers applied to develop social capital. I interviewed most of the participants in my study twice. This persistent observation provided me chances to understand better both the changes of project participants and the development of the entire project.

Triangulation

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation is another skill which helps to ensure the credibility of the findings and interpretations. The term 'triangulation' comes from the metaphor of 'radio triangulation', which measures the point of origin by setting up directional antennas from two ends. There are four modes of triangulation which include the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories (Denzin, 1978, as cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

As mentioned above, I also applied multiple sources to understand the phenomena I studied, which was one of the techniques of triangulation. For example, I interviewed parents, children and social workers in order to explore the development of social capital on low income families. Through their different perspectives, the picture of social capital development among low income families became clearly revealed. The source from other channels provided me with different information, such as the parental newspaper. I got to know that the parents felt nervous before the interview by reading their 'internal newspaper'. By the end of the project, participants faced the media with greater confidence and learnt how to protect their own rights in front of the mass media,

which reflected the participants developed after joining the project. Moreover, I used different methods to collect data. Apart from conducting interviews with parents, I joined the activities of parents group every week to conduct participant observation. I then referred to the documents and records of this project to ensure not missing anything which may affect the development of the project. Since this study was not a team-based study, it is quite difficult for me to apply the method of 'multiple investigators'. My supervisor performed as my teammate to solve this problem. Our open and in-depth discussions on the progress of the study and the data I collected helped maintain the credibility of the research.

Peer De-briefing

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), peer de-briefing is one of the methods to enhance credibility. Peer de-briefing is the process in which the investigator is being exposed in front of a peer group. The group would therefore help exploring the aspects of inquiry which may be implicated in the mind of the investigator.

A group of de-briefers including my classmates, friends as well as my supervisor was formed to help examine my preconception and biases. Since my study concerned about the process of social capital development as well as the

intervention skills of social workers, a group of de-briefers as well as my supervisor who had frontline working experiences helped me pick up some of the useful aspects in social work practice. I also discussed those matters related to research and methodologies with my classmates and friends who were also social sciences research students. The discussion provided me with many inspirations which definitely help increase the credibility of my research project.

Member checking

Member checking is one of the most crucial techniques to safeguard the credibility. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the interpretation and conclusion of data should be tested by the group of stakeholders who have participated in the present study. The credibility of the research can be safeguarded if and only if the respondents agreed that the reconstruction could reveal their real lives.

In the present study, some of the members of the stake holding group, which included social workers, supervisor of the organization, and the participants of the project, were invited to carry out the member checking. This means that they had to access my intentionality; correct errors deviated from the facts, as well as

pointed out wrong interpretation of data.

The member checking was carried out in both phases of data collection and the accomplishment of the thesis. Through participant observations, I have generated some ideas that participants have developed, their supporting networks were formed and started to function. To examine whether my observation is correct or not, I checked with the participants during the interviews. The parents often described how their supporting networks functioned with greater details. During the interview, I also repeated some of the wordings the respondents used so that they could elaborate more and we could work out the right interpretation together.

Apart from the member checking during the interview, I carried out the member checking after I had generated some themes from data analysis. I invited those members involved to comment on the relevance of the themes and theses. I thought the above actions of member checking help ensure the credibility of my research as I received the agreements from the respondents groups.

Referential Adequacy

The concept of referential adequacy is seen as the last method for the qualitative researchers to maintain the credibility of their research. As mentioned by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the concept is proposed by Eisner. To Eisner (1975), it is important for the investigator to establish “the adequacy of critiques written for evaluation purposes”. The life of respondents could be captured by using videotape recordings and cinematography. These recorded materials provide benchmark to test data analyze and interpretation for adequacy later.

Although I did not make any videotape recordings and cinematography in this study, all respondents accepted the arrangements of having the interviews being audio-recorded. Some of them asked me whether the small machine (MP3) could record so many interviews and showed their interests to keep records for their interviews. I prepared some CDs and returned the hard copies of the transcripts to the respondents. The problem of obtrusiveness of the recording process was therefore greatly reduced.

The audio recordings and the transcripts I kept could be seen as the ‘raw’ data in the present study. The concept of ‘referential adequacy’ reminded me to always

return back to the raw materials for evaluation of the data analysis and interpretation. This could eventually improve the credibility of the current research.

Transferability

The second criterion I considered was the transferability of the research. Traditional researcher concerned on the generalization of research results very much and the high internal validity would ensure the transferability. However, to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the transferability is not only concerning about the achievement of internal validity of the research, but also about the empirical matter that depends on the degree of similarities between the sending and receiving context. Thus, transferability could not be ensured from the researcher who only has the understanding on the sending context. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest investigators to show a thick description on the studied context. This would therefore provide sufficient information for others to make the judgment of similarities which increase the transferability of the research.

In my own research study, I explored the process of how social capital developed among participants of the project SSPCFN. To provide 'thick

description', I described the programmes, participants' various development among different stages of participation and within certain context in detail. The transferability of the strategies that were useful to generate social capital depended so much on whether the descriptions I provided for the reader is thick or not. I therefore tried my best to present all information regarding to the intervention strategies, its outcome, its limitations as well as other factors which may bring effects on those strategies. The reader would have more information to modify these strategies when they need to apply them into different practice contexts.

Dependability

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted, the third criteria the investigator should pay attention to is the dependability of the research. Dependability could be seen as the substitute of reliability. Under the paradigm of positivism, reliability can be confirmed by replication. The reliability of the research can be established when similar findings are generated by two or more repetitions of similar inquiry process. However, the naturalists and qualitative researchers do not subscribe to this view. They do not believe the existence of reality as single, tangible and unchanging. Moreover, it is impossible to repeat the inquiry

process within the context which is full of changes. It is therefore, instead of taking account of reliability, dependability of the research should be considered.

Guba (1981) demonstrates several methods which may help enhancing the dependability of the research. Among these methods, 'inquiry audit' was applicable to the present study.

Guba (1981) highlights that the inquiry audit is based on the fiscal audit metaphorically. It is necessary to have an 'auditor' to examine the whole process of inquiry and to ensure the data collection and analysis process is authentic. Hence, my supervisor acted as 'auditor' to check whether my research is carried out in an ethnical and professional way, and ensured those data I collected were authentic. All these can be facilitated by letting my supervisor fully-informed about my research progress. I also made great effort to increase the 'accountability' of the research and let my work become 'visible'. I presented my progress during the agency meetings regularly. The members of steering committee acknowledged that my research was carried out in an appropriate way. The dependability of this research was enhanced through the above procedures.

Confirmability

The fourth criteria that the naturalist suggests is confirmability. Confirmability can be seen as the substitute of 'objectivity'. Objectivity can be tested and exists when inquiry is value-free. Conventionally, according to Scriven (1971, as cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985), it is necessary that the study upholds 'objectivity' quantitatively, and that a number of individual experiences is objective whereas only a single case is subjective. However, to Scriven, objectivity also has its qualitative sense. Instead of focusing on the 'objectivity' of the investigators themselves, the 'objectivity' of the data collected should be ensured. The naturalist prefers the qualitative means of 'objectivity' and hence they promote the confirmability to replace 'objectivity' when examining the trustworthiness of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlight that the dependability concerns the authenticity of the research process whereas the confirmability concerns the authenticity of research products, which include the data, findings, interpretations and recommendations. Halpern (1983, as cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985) suggests that the confirmability can be enhanced through the 'audit trail'. The investigator should keep the records of the inquiries suitably and systematically. There are six audit trail categories

suggested by Halpern. They are raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information. Besides audit trail, Halpern also has some discussions on the 'audit process'. Firstly, the auditor should examine whether the findings are grounded in the data, it is necessary for them to trace back via the audit trail. Secondly, the auditor is responsible to study whether the inferences are logical or not and to examine the quality of interpretation. The auditor also needs to assess the degree and incidence of inquirer bias, considers preponderance of inquirer terminology, overimposition of a priori theoretical concepts as well as presence or absence of introspections. The auditor also examines whether the investigators have made efforts to ensure the confirmability of their own research.

To facilitate the progress of the audit process and to help the auditor or outsider reviewing the research smoothly, the investigators should take the responsibilities to keep records of the data and the process of data collection and data analysis. As different researchers have different practices, the full set of categories provided by Halpern (1983) may not be used in the same research. For me, I kept a full set of raw data such as the audio records of the interviews,

transcripts, field notes, all the documents which came from the agency regarding to the project, condensed notes of literature and cultural reviews and theoretical notes. A set of data reconstruction and synthesis products were kept. It consists of themes and relationships I found, and the interpretations and conclusions I made during the process of data analysis. Furthermore, I also kept the notes regarding to the methodology and trustworthiness of my study, and the reflections during the discussions with my peer de-briefer as well as my supervisors. All these records I kept would not only enhance the confirmability of my research studies. Indeed, as a social worker and the inquirer of the project, how I treated the data I collected represented my respect to the field and to the respondents of my research study.

In short, I discussed four criteria which suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) from naturalistic inquiry to examine the trustworthiness of my research. From the above discussion, I got to know that I have the responsibility to take those procedures and prepare all the documents to ensure the trustworthiness. I hope the efforts I made could let the auditor and all the readers as well with confidence to recognize the contribution of this research.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the four steps method inquiry of Long Interview Method which promoted by McCracken (1983) was presented. I tried to follow the four steps: “review of analytic categories”, “review of cultural categories”, “discovery of cultural categories” and “discovery of analytical categories” to conduct my research. I also discussed how I could ensure the trustworthiness of my research by using the four criteria including credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability which were suggested by the naturalist Lincoln and Guba (1985).

As a new born qualitative researcher, this is the first time I studied the methodology and practice. Fortunately, the Long Interview Method and the discussions on the establishment of trustworthiness from the naturalistic inquiry provided me with clear guidelines to ‘follow’. I did not have enough experiences, therefore I learnt a lot from the process. I acknowledged that I should have many improvements. Thus, I hope the effort I made during the process could let all the reader recognize the value of this research project. I hope the ideas I generated from this study will stimulate other researchers or

social work practitioners feeling that this research is worthwhile and the ideas I generated would stimulate their further studies and practices.

Chapter Four – The Development of Social Capital

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the methodology and the introduction of SSPCFN were discussed. In this chapter, the findings of this study: the development of social capital of the project participants will be presented.

In this chapter, we are going to discuss the development of social capital of participants through examining three forms of social capital. The development of bonding social capital of project participants would be analyzed in the first part. The change of social networks before and after the participation of the participants would be analyzed. The application of their norms of reciprocity and particular trust would be other indicators to show whether the bonding social capital was formed.

In the second part of this chapter, the development of bridging social capital of project participants would be discussed. In order to achieve this objective, participants' norms of generalized reciprocity, generalized trust as well as civic

engagement would be explored. Participants' connections with different parties in their community, such as small business, schools as well as small-medium enterprise would be described. All these discussions may help us to understand more about the formation of bridging social capital.

The development of the third form of social capital of project participants, linking social capital, would be discussed in the last part of this chapter. All these discussions provide a comprehensive picture of social capital development among the participants in this project.

Bonding Social Capital

Bonding social capital refers to the linkage of members within the homogenous group. A detailed analysis of the relations, trusting, reciprocal and co-operative behaviour among participants, which are different dimensions of social capital, will be presented in the following to help understanding the development of bonding social capital.

Social capital, as mentioned by Coleman (1988), is a resource which exists in

human relationships. Generally speaking, people who have wider networks can accumulate and use more social capital. Hence, the changes in the pattern, quantity and quality of social network of participants, would tell us the development of social capital of participants after participated in the SSPCFN project.

Social networks before the participation

Relationships with nuclear and extended families

In this project, all participants came from low-income families and most were new arrivals from the Mainland. They faced various problems during the initial stage of living in Hong Kong. Participants' social networks and their experiences of seeking help during the early period of staying in Hong Kong were examined, the following responses were found.

“My husband seldom stays at home.”(P25)

“I did not make any contact with my husband's relatives, my mother and relatives of my extended family. I did not know any social workers at that time, and I felt very sad if there were conflicts (with

my husband). I didn't know how to handle.” (P08)

“During the early period you lived in Hong Kong, who will you ask for if you need help?”

“I asked my father's sister.” (P01)

“It is better now, as her daddy can help take care of my daughter.”(P18)

As shown above, most participants were merely relied on themselves or their relatives when they needed help during the initial stage of settling down in Hong Kong. Some participants even had bad relationships with their relatives. The average level of primary social network was low which implied limited supports and resources were available for these new Mainland migrant participants.

Relationships with friends and neighbours

Then if they encountered problems that cannot be solved by their own capabilities, did they seek help from the “wider” circles?

“I did not have any friends when I arrived in Hong Kong.”(P20)

“All my friends were busy. The friends from my hometown needed to work and she lived very far away. I was anxious(徬徨) at that time. It was quite difficult to find someone to ask for help.” (P18)

“How could we have friends? Friends ‘got away’ from you. They always called me and asked me to go out with them. I was very busy and did not have any spare time to go out with them. I had consistently rejected all their invitations. My friends really hoped that I could join them, however, where could I go? I could not leave my children alone and went out without considering my family. I only had three hours to do household works before I picked up my children from school. I also needed to guide them to do homework and study.” (P02)

It was apparent that limited support or help from friends/neighbours was available to the participants. Although participants had connections with previous friends and workmates, it was hard to maintain these relationships

because of the following two reasons. First, most participants held heavy responsibilities in the family, especially in taking care of younger children, and therefore had very little available time to meet up with friends. Second, as taking the roles as housewives, mobility of participants was greatly restricted. Most participants found a great difficulty travelling to visit friends, leading to gradually alienated relations.

Indeed, the needs of participants were always related to their children, for instance, to find school or a temporary caregiver. The children playground and the common area outside of the schools are the most convenient places for participants to form new relationships with others and to obtain different information.

“How did you know this centre? Did your friend introduce to you?”

“Yes, a friend told me that.”

“When did you know her? Did you know her after you come to Hong Kong?”

“Yes.”

“Then how do you know this friend?”

“I got to know her from the school of my daughter, the kindergarten previously.” (P01)

“After bringing my daughter to school, I always met with other parents in the same school. Then I went to playground, did some exercise and had a chat with those parents. My son had not born at that time. I also went shopping with them.” (P13)

Other parents in the schools which the participants' children attended to played an important role in the supporting networks of participants before they joined the project. These parents often provided community information and resources during the participants' initial period of living in Hong Kong. Indeed, many participants revealed that they got to know the centre through their friends and other school parents.

“Yes. She (friend) asked me to come together once and we filled in the forms. I didn't know why we came together. Then social worker asked me whether I joined or not, or had interest in it or not. Then I finally joined.” (P11)

“You mentioned that you know this centre from social workers in other centre. How did you recognize that social worker?”

“The social worker was introduced by a parent in the school that my children attended to.”(P15)

Apart from getting information from school parents, a few participants received help from their neighbours:

“My child was sick and needed to see doctor, but we did not have money. The old woman who lived next to us sometimes lent us money.” (P15)

“...sometimes the owner of my house brought me to some places where I didn't know...” (P12)

Although, some participants could establish good relationship with their neighbours, it is important to note that the above cases could not be generalized to the majority, as most of the participants did not receive any support or help from their neighbours. The kinds of help the neighbours provided were very

limited. Most participants' social support networks among neighbours seemed to be weak or uncommon before joining the project.

Relationships with formal institutions

By reviewing the demographic background of the participants, it was found that almost half of them received Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and nearly all were new arrivals. This common background provided participants opportunities to have contacts with various formal institutions, such as Social Welfare Department, Department of Health, Housing Authority, Immigration Department and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These institutions provide public services to the participants. For instance, participants applied for public housing and CSSA through Housing Authority and Social Welfare Department respectively.

“We were holding the One-way Permits¹ at that time. The Immigration Department had our information. They said they could help new arrivals. They ask whether we adapted to new environment or not and whether we knew any services for new

¹ According to the Basic Law, Mainland China residents who want to settle in Hong Kong must apply for One-way Permits. The process and issue of One-way Permits are administered by Mainland Authorities (HKSAR, 2009).

arrivals and our children. We are not well-educated and are not good in English. They told us that there was a project which was appropriate for us.” (P17)

“I asked for social workers’ help to apply for public housing and to find the school for my daughter.” (P12)

“My husband wanted to use the kitchen knife to hit me. We went to the police station and looked for reconciliation. I started to join this centre after getting divorced.”(P14)

“I always met social worker of family services. I asked her to sign me a letter to prove that I was receiving the CSSA, then I did not need to pay for the medical services. ...” (P22_2)

It was clear that participants had connection with some formal institutions. However, the kinds of help participants received were either a one-time service such as police services or information seeking, or short-term services which were provided for new arrivals. Although some were receiving CSSA, the

services they received from these institutions were only related to financial arrangement.

It is also worth noting that most participants did not know the existence of project SSPCFN or even NGOs until social workers promoted social services at their children's schools.

"Did you know this centre after social workers promoted the project at school?"

"Yes."

"Did you hear the name of this centre before?"

"No, until I followed others to attend the promotion session of this project at school."

"Did you know this kind of centre when you arrived in Hong Kong?"

"No, I did not know. I seldom went outside." (P26)

Even though there were many NGOs providing social services, participants did not receive much information until social workers made contact with them. It seems that participants' connection with these organizations was quite weak. If

social workers did not promote their services, participants, especially for those who were not within the net of CSSA, might not be able to take initiative to seek help. Their connection with formal institutions was relatively weak. These systems might not function as supporting networks for most participants before they participated in the project.

In short, the findings above showed that participants mainly relied on support or help from family members before joining the project. Some built good relationships with neighbours and parents of school that their children attended to; however, the kinds of help provided were relatively limited. In addition, participants did not receive much help from the formal and professional organizations of the wider community. Based on this self-report information, social support networks among participants were relatively weak before they joined the project.

Networks building among participants after the participation

To study the development of social capital among participants, one direction was to examine their changes in social networks after the participation. The followings are some descriptions regarding the changes.

“Did you get to know more parents after joining the parents group?”

“Yes, I got to know many. I just knew only one from my home town during the early stage I lived in Hong Kong. I didn’t know others. I walked along the street and say hello to others, we became familiar...I got to know more people in parents group...”(P17_2)

“I feel very happy that I knew many people. Sometimes, I would chat with them and we would help each other.” (P23)

“When I felt sad I would share with those people I trusted. I would listen to them too. I got to know more people.”

“Did you have any chance to get to know more people previously?”

“No.” (P25)

Obviously, participants got to know more people and became more familiar with other participants after joining SSPCFN for a while. They then started to

connect with others who came from a wider social circle. Social networks of participants have thus been extended. Meanwhile, the quality of networks was also improved.

“...I would ask another parent to pick up my children from school”

“Did you trust her?”

“Yes. We joined this project together. She was also the parent in the school which my children attended to and we lived in the same building. We would provide mutual support. Sometimes I asked for her help and sometimes she asked me.” (P13)

“I shared with other parents when I was angry and in a bad mood. My emotions could be expressed naturally.” (P14)

“Some parents called me and told me that there were some free activities and asked me whether I would participate or not....They have my phone number and would let me know if there was something good for me.”

“Did you know these parents from this centre?”

“Yes. P23 called me and asked whether the restaurants I worked

for offered any job vacancies. I told her ‘yes’ and asked her to apply...” (P21_2)

The above expressions revealed the existence of mutual help among the new network. Participants within the network provided a variety of support, for instance, emotional support, tangible support, information regarding job seeking or other benefits in the community. The format of interaction was not only limited to face-to-face but also by phone. The contacts with others became more frequently and closer among participants. The formation of this new network among the participants and the interaction within indicated that bonding social capital is formed.

Norms of reciprocity

From the above, we note that mutual help among the participants is existed, which improve the quality of network. Why did participants help each other? What governed the exchange behaviour of participants? The examination of norms of reciprocity of participants provides us with the reference. Norms of reciprocity govern people’s behaviour in a continuing relationship of exchange. People are willing to contribute their resources to others and have the

expectations that the recipients will return something to them in future. In this study, in order to explore the norms of reciprocity that the participants upheld, feelings about being helped, views on repaying others after being helped, willingness to offer help and expectations on the reciprocation of help from others were studied.

Feelings about being helped and views on repaying others after being helped

Help is a frequent behaviour appeared in parents' relationship of exchange. Sometimes, they needed others' helping hands to take care of their children temporarily. They expressed their feelings after being helped as following:

“I felt that there were many good people. People who had kind heart joined this project.” (P02)

“It was very touching!” (P14)

When asked about their belief about repaying others after being helped, they said:

“I am sure that I will repay others if I get the chance.” (P14)

“I was indebted to all the people who gave me their helping hands. I would try helping them if I have the chance.” (P02)

“If I have the ability, I will help others.” (P07)

“In my faith, people should help each other. When the incident was happened, it was hard for me to manage it on my own if the centre did not help me. Similarly, if other people are in need, I feel happy if I can help.” (P08)

From the above, we find these parents believed that they should help others in return for being helped and thought that it is a part of human relationship. They empathized with people in need. The feelings of “being in the same boat” facilitated their reciprocal behaviours. Together with the empathy, the positive experiences and the feelings that being helped acted as a base for them to repay others. The feeling of “indebtedness” (唔好意思) indicate that they felt they owed people who had helped them. This feeling also encouraged their repaying

behaviours.

However, when asked where the belief comes from or the reasons they uphold, they could not give clear explanations. The following expressions give support to this claim:

“It is an instinct. I don’t know. It should be.” (P10)

“I do not think about the reason to repay others, but just do it directly...I want to let others know that people could gain a lot of benefits no matter the help is a great deal or not. This belief would affect people’s interpersonal relationship, for instance, interpersonal relationships with neighbours will become better” (P03)

The phrases they used such as “instinct” and “do it directly” impressed us that the norm of reciprocity is rooted in their mind. P03’s elaboration also highlighted that the return by the recipients let the givers understand their importance as well as encouraging better interpersonal relationships. The return may also enhance the norm of reciprocity of the giver continuously.

Participants' strong belief in the norm of reciprocity was not only shown by their attitudes toward repaying others after being helped, but also their success in actualizing their intentions. They provided the examples that they repaid others:

“I helped her to take care of her children when she was busy.” (P09)

“I cooked congee or made soup, and shared with her.” (P15)

Willingness to offer help and expectations on the reciprocation of help from others

As mentioned above, participants were willing to help others in the project. They provided a variety of help to others, such as tangible and emotion support. Participants also acted as information providers which helped other participants getting employed as well as getting more community resources.

Most of the participants tended to help others. However, they did not uphold similar views on the reciprocation of help from others. When asked about whether they had the thoughts that “people they helped will return something to

them in the future”, some of them expressed that they did not have this consideration before helping others:

“I did not think about this. I just feel happy if I can help people.”

(P01)

When asked about the reasons that they did not have such consideration, P03 explained that:

“This is because we only contributed a little, a very little. Hence, I did not intend to ask for any return.” (P03)

Their responses impressed me that they did not consider whether they would be repaid before going to help others. An explanation of not having this consideration was that the participants thought their contributions were small. When asking whether they had the confidence that the people they helped would reciprocate in the future or somebody would help them if they need, their expectations are shown below:

“Yes, she would help me. I needed to take care of my little daughter.

She told me not to go to supermarket. She helped me to buy the stuff.”(P26)

“We need help and think that it is important to us, but it may be a simple matter for those who help someone to take care of the kids.”

(P03)

“Yes. This is because we would help each others. They would be busy and I would be busy too. We should not only receive people’s help but do not offer help. I think if I help them, they will help me in return.” (P14)

The above expectations coincide with Coleman’s theory about norms of reciprocity. Participants uphold some credit slips after offering help to others, which could be called in by the participants if they were in need. Together with the obligations that they should repay, the reciprocal relationships with others among some participants were well-developed.

However, some participants limited their expectations on those who were familiar with them and those who had the abilities. Their willingness to seek help was a factor which affected their development in norms of reciprocity. The following expressions support this claim:

“I think half of them will repay. It is easily for someone to ask my help. It is difficult for me to ask for help. I would try my best to handle it on my own. I would not ask for help if it is not really urgent.” (P06)

“I would see whether the people are able to help me. If we have good relationship, I think they are willing to help me. It depends on the people I asked.” (P13)

“It sounds good when someone could provide the method for us. However, it may not be possible for us to ask for financial support from others. Every family has its own difficulties. We cannot blame them for not helping us.” (P08)

In fact, ability was the main concern of the participants when they thought about helping others or getting help from others. The followings are the dialogues regarding the issue of ability:

“It is very difficult for me to repay others. I know nothing. I cannot hold the cup if only using one hand. So, do I have the ability?”

“Do you want to repay others if you have the chance?”

“Yes, I want. But I could not.” (P12)

From this study, we find that participants had high tendency in helping others and repaying people who helped them. However, we cannot confirm when the norm of the reciprocity was established, that is whether before or after their participation in the project. The effect of the project regarding the norm of reciprocity is thus inconclusive. During the second year of the project, a few new participants were interviewed in the beginning and they showed a strong tendency to help and repay others:

“This is because people have helped us. We must do something to return to others. We do what we can do.” (P17)

“My friend got to know we were in financial difficulties and she gave us five hundred dollars. I gave two hundred dollars to her mother-in-law during the next Lunar New Year. I needed to save money and spent less after doing this.” (P19)

It is clear that participants upheld norms of reciprocity at the very beginning of their participation in the project. This strong belief continuously appeared after one year. It is indicated that the norms of reciprocity could be practiced with a wider group of recipients and could be seen in a various forms. The following expressions tell us the differences after they joined the programme:

“Social worker asked me to make contact with other parents. I felt nervous as I haven’t tried before. Social worker encouraged me so that I had the courage to learn and I am brave enough to contact with other parents now. If social worker did not ask me, I would never do it.” (P19_2)

“Were you the member of Story-telling Mother? Did you tell story in the kindergarten?”

“Yes, I did. I felt very nervous during the first time. I was afraid that I could not tell the story very well. I was very happy after getting children’s positive response.” (P25)

Preparing snacks for children, teaching children how to play toys in the centre, visiting elderly home and distributing presents to people who were in need and guiding the youth in community walk were other examples of volunteer services that parents had involved during the project. After having these experiences, participants felt that they had more confidence to help others and their capabilities had been enhanced. The gradually increased sense of capability along with strong belief in reciprocal relationships with others, acts as a good base for participants to further develop and use their norm of reciprocity, which is a form of social capital.

Particularized Trust

According to Putnam (1993a), norm of trust is one of the key dimensions in social capital concept. There are two kinds of trust, namely “particularized trust” and “generalized trust”. To Herreros (2004), particularized trust is the trust in known people whereas generalized trust is the trust in unknown people.

To understand more about trust formulation among participants, their particularized trust among familiars, participants as well as social workers will be explored in the following part. Their generalized trust among people in Hong Kong as well as institutional trust on Hong Kong government will also be presented when discussing their development of bridging social capital in later parts.

Trust on participants

The interviews with participants gave greater details on their trust among other participants after one year programme intervention. They thought that the participants who joined the project were more trustful. The following expressions support this argument:

“I will have more trust in them (other participants).” (P02)

“Do you think that people who joined this project are more trustful than those who did not join?”

“Yes, I agree.” (P03)

Participants further explained the reasons they had this feeling. The condition for their trustworthiness was the familiarity with others. The below expressions are some examples:

“When compare with people who are outside, we are more familiar with participants in this project.” (P13)

“If we do not meet, it is difficult for us to think of “trust”. We could trust each other when we had chance to communicate. P18_2 and I are partners. I trust her as we always meet and chat with each other. For other participants in general, I only said ‘Hello’ to them and discussed something unimportant. I did not know them very well.” (P23)

“I have more trust in her. This is because we always get along with others. For other parents, we made jokes but were not able to build up in-depth relationship.” (P06)

The above expressions emphasize that familiarity is the base for trust formation.

According to participants, familiarity could only be created through face to face interaction. During the project activities, participants joined together and had more chances to get to know each other. Interactions helped to facilitate the participants knowing more about others. Hence, in order to help participants to generate particularized trust, barely increase the number of contacts is not enough. How participants interact and whether the interaction could encourage familiarity should also be our concern. Besides the familiarity, participants highlighted that the nature of relationship is another key factor for building up particular trust with other participants. The following expressions provide the hints:

“We did not involve in any financial transaction. They only helped me to take care of my children.” (P14)

“We did not have any relationships of interest (利益關係). We felt free to express ourselves in the group. We should trust each other. We only talk about our children and they would not cheat us out of our fortune.” (P16)

It seems that relationship of interests (利益關係) and matters involving financial transaction were the barrier for participants to build up particularized trust. This is understandable if we refer to the background of participants. All of them came from low-income families. They always thought that the only thing they could be cheated was money. Some participants also had previous experiences of being tricked out of their money. These experiences also affected the development on generalized trust which will be discussed in the later part of this section.

Another foundation for participants to build up their particularized trust was their similarity. They had similar background and their difficulties were often similar, which allowed them to understand situations of other participants more.

The following dialogue supports this:

“I trust them more.”

“*Why?*”

“This is because we are similar, either low-income or receiving CSSA.”

“*Do you think your backgrounds are similar?*”

“Yes, we have similar backgrounds.” (P09)

This feeling of being understood provided them with confidence to trust this group of participants. The impression of P15 enlightened this point of view:

“I don’t know whether it is related. I could not express myself clearly. Some people did not talk to me.” (P15)

Obviously, communication and understanding are two important elements during the process of particularized trust formation.

To summarize, it is found that particularized trust can be formed among some of the participants, especially for those who had more contacts and were familiar with others. The relationships among these participants were more in-depth. They believed that those relationships with any financial entanglement may affect the trust formation among them. Similar background let them have a better understanding on each other.

However, it is also important to note that particularized trust could not be developed among some participants. It seems that communications should be

encouraged and platform for forming relationships should be provided, in order to help those participants to generate particularized trust.

Trust on social workers

Besides trust building among other participants, participants also built trustful relationship with the project social workers.

“Do you think that people in this project are more trustful than those who outside?”

“Social workers are more trustful.” (P01)

“I trust social workers of this project more. They offered sincere help for us.” (P14)

The above data reveal that participants trusted social workers of the project. As mentioned in chapter two, their trust on social workers may provide them with a sense of security and they may start building trust with other participants more easily. However, this kind of particular trust should be noticed by social workers. This is because their dependence on social workers may also have the

risk that prevents them from building closer relationships with other participants. Thus, the facilitator role in helping participants to build up particularized trust could not be ignored and this issue will further be discussed in chapter 6.

Formation of Bonding Social Capital and Its Limitations

Bonding social capital acts as a kind of sociological superglue, which is good for particularized reciprocity enhancement and solidarity mobilization (Putnam, 2000, bowling alone). In the previous sections, we found that the norms of reciprocity were well-developed among participants. They also showed high tendency and potential to extend their norms of reciprocity to the members of SSPCFN. Moreover, most participants were able to establish trustful relationships with other participants. Their social support networks were also formed and well-functioned. All these results support this initial conclusion that bonding social capital had been built among most participants.

However, bonding social capital was not well-developed among a few participants:

“Have you asked some parents to help you?”

“I haven’t. If I can handle by myself, I don’t want to make trouble on others. I don’t want to owe any people.” (P21_2)

“I would say hello to them (participants) if we meet on the street, but I seldom make contact with them.” (P22_2)

“We could have a conversation in the group. However, we would leave after finishing the meeting. Our relationship may not be very intimate. We may not know each other very well. Our relationship seems to be superficial. If we have close relationship and make contact with others more frequently, we could become good friends.”(P10)

During the interviews, both P21_2 and P22_2 expressed that they got to know more parents through joining parents group. However, the expressions above indicated that they were not willing to ask for help from the new established networks. Their bonding social capital was only weakly formed.

Moreover, P10 also presented the difficulties to build up closer relationships with others. From the interview of P06 and P10, it is found that they formed a deep and lasting friendship and provided mutual support for their own for a few years before they joined the project. This close relationship may act as stumbling block for them to build up wider networks with others, just like what P10 said. The bonding social capital or “strong tie” between P06 and P10 may exclude themselves from other networks.

The cases we discussed highlight the differences of the development of bonding social capital among project participants. It is important for us to further explore the reasons for the differences. The difference in the level of involvement among participants and the design of the programme content may be some possible explanations to this. All these will be discussed in the later chapter.

In summary, it is found that social network has been formed among participants and mutual help was not difficult to find within this homogenous network. Participants were willing to help each other and some of them believed that they would be repaid if needed. Norms of reciprocity of participants facilitated

their reciprocal behaviours. It is also found that particularized trust have been formed among participants. Similar background and familiarity were the bases to form particularized trust. The development of different dimensions of social capital indicates that bonding social capital had been generated among participants.

Bridging Social Capital

Bonding social capital, as mentioned by many authors, is the relationships among the group of people who have similar background. This resemble to the feature of the participants of this project, as almost all were new arrivals and came from low-income families. Although their bonding social capital was formulated and well-used, the range of resources accessible was narrow and thus the kinds of mutual help available were limited and may be insufficient to fulfill their needs. Hence, it is important to help developing bridging social capital among them. Bridging social capital, according to Putnam (2000, bowling alone), is the connection between people who are from diverse social divisions. It is better for people to link up with external assets and information. Bridging social capital can be understood as a “sociological WD-40” which helps people

generating broader identities and reciprocity.

To study the formation of bridging social capital, the development of norms of reciprocity and trust among participants should be studied but in different level of that of bonding social capital. Were norms of reciprocity of participants extended to wider circles? Were their reciprocal behaviours only appeared within the same network? To what extent the norms of reciprocity are applied would be explored. For trust formation, did participants only trust people they know or their trust could be generalized to people who came from wider circle or even strangers? The development of generalized trust as well as their trust on government will be discussed.

Besides, the formation of bridging social capital depends mainly on the linkage among people in the heterogeneous groups and their resources. Therefore, participants' connection with their outside community, including small shops and schools would be explored. Moreover, there was a chance letting participants and their children to interact with business partner of the project. Participants' connection with business partner of the project was different from that with small business shops and schools. This is because the relationship

formed was out of the geographical boundary. The detailed would be discussed in the following parts.

Norms of Reciprocity

In previous section, it is found that participants were willing to help other participants. Their norms of reciprocity could be practiced within the network of participants. Indeed, participants did not only help some particular person or people they knew. Participants were also willing to help strangers. The expression of P14 enlightened us:

“I don’t know why I am so kindhearted. Even though someone who do not help me, I will offer my help if I have the ability. For example, I saw an elder woman who was holding many waste papers. She could not hold all waste paper. I suggested her to use the trolley next time. I gave her a helping hand. I carried some papers for her and could mitigate her burden. If I have the ability, I must offer my help. If I have money, I will contribute money to people who are in need.” (P14)

The expression also identifies the kinds of help that participants offered were not limited to manual work. They were willing to give financial contribution to help others if they were capable. For instance, they would donate money during flag days. Their willingness to help others was much higher than expected, as most of them were new arrivals and facing financial difficulties.

Generalized Trust

As mentioned in chapter two, trust can be distinguished into two kinds, namely particularized trust and generalized trust. The former refers to the trust to known people and was discussed in the previous section. Generalized trust describes the trust to people we may not know, and is an indicator to understand the development of bridging social capital. This is because if participants extend their trust to a wider circle of people, their readiness to reach out to get the resources from outside and their willingness to share their resources to more people would also be increased.

As most participants came from mainland China, their impressions on Hong Kong people may reflect their level of generalized trust. Some participants highlighted that they were not sure whether they could trust Hong Kong people

in general.

“I don’t know whether they could be trusted or not.” (P26)

“Half of the Hong Kong people could be trusted...” (P02)

“People in the centre could be trusted whereas outside people could not be trusted.” (P12)

It seems that some of them did not trust Hong Kong people. There are two reasons that may explain this situation. First of all, the negative experiences they had enhanced the above feelings:

“I had strong feeling that I was being cheated when I worked over there.” (P02)

“I do not trust in Hong Kong people. I had the experiences of being cheated by a private tutor. I really thought that he had our information. This is because he knew the name of my elder daughter, where she studied and names of her classmates. Then I thought it

was no doubt and I let him come in. He asked me about some personal information and to give him a photo of mine. Then he requested for six hundred dollars. At that moment I really felt that I was cheated. He eventually got twenty-five dollars from me before left.” (P15)

P15’s story was not a unique case. Given the low-educational and new arrivals background, most participants were the target of swindler. P23 and other parents also shared similar experiences. Some participants did not place their trust on Hong Kong people or strangers in general because of the experiences of being cheated. Hence, they needed to guard the strangers, especially when money was involved.

“I would guard against strangers if they mentioned about the money. If they cheat on someone, it should be related to money. I have watched television. I would guard against the ‘pray group²’. We should not be so greedy.” (P14)

² Pray Group or Spiritual Blessing is common trick in Hong Kong. The culprit advises the victim that she has an evil spirit (bad luck) at her home. The culprit tells the victims that someone can help to expel the evil spirit if he or she provide them with some valuables money for a ritual to drive away the evil spirit. (The Hong Kong Police, 2009)

“I do not believe them. I do not trust those outside people.” (P05)

“We should have the awareness on strangers(防人之心).”(P06)

Another reason which may affect their trust building on people in general is their feeling of other people’s perception on them.

“Some people do not believe us...They do not understand the situation of our family and our quality of life. They do not know how we use our money. We said we do not have enough money for daily living, nobody trusts us.” (P19_2)

“I felt that they looked down on people who came from Mainland China. Members of my husband’s family also had this point of view.” (P05)

“I don’t think that other people would trust me. They always consider the social class I belong to.” (P16)

The above expressions indicated that the basis for people to build trust is mutual understanding. If the situations of new arrivals or low income families were not being accepted or understood, it is quite hard for them to build up trust with people in general.

From the above discussion, it is concluded that the generalized trust was not well-developed among participants after the project intervention. Nevertheless, positive experiences that participants had after interacting with Hong Kong people may help improve their impression of Hong Kong people. This acts as foundation for participants to build generalized trust on people in general in future.

“Hong Kong people are honest and nice.” (P13)

“Some of them are caring and they are willing to help others.” (P25)

Moreover, when participants compared people in Hong Kong with people in Mainland China, they always thought that Hong Kong people were better. They also claimed that Hong Kong is a safer city.

“I came from Mainland China too...But really, people in Mainland China cared about themselves only. Especially those people in my hometown, they argued and fought for their own interests. In contrast, some of Hong Kong people are willing to help others. They are willing to help us if we ask them to guide the direction. For instance, I got lost in MTR station and did not know how to pass through. Hong Kong people were very good and enthusiastic, they would help us.”

“Do you think that Hong Kong people can be trusted?”

“Some of Hong Kong people can be trusted.”

“Do you trust a large proportion of Hong Kong people?”

“Large proportion of Hong Kong people could be trusted,..., Hong Kong is safe...We needed to alert people when we arrived Shenzhen.” (P25)

“In mainland China, if we are robbed, no one would pay attention to us. They would pretend not to notice and would not provide us any help. They would be afraid of getting into trouble. Hong Kong people are enthusiastic and do not hesitate to do what is righteous.” (P14)

The sense of security of living in Hong Kong and the positive feeling on Hong Kong people the participants had may affect their action of reciprocity. As P14 said:

“Hong Kong people will donate money on flag days. So do I. I think it is a custom for Hong Kong people to donate money on flag days. It will not happen in Mainland China. People in Mainland China will not do it. I am being affected by Hong Kong people. I think I should help others if people help me. I have this thought as people have helped me a lot. However, I did not have this belief when I was in mainland China. Hong Kong people are caring.” (P14)

It seems that norms of reciprocity could be encouraged among the participants as they also recognized that helping others is a virtue. Hong Kong people are also role model to participants. Hence, if project intervention let the participants gain more positive experiences with local people, the generalized trust as well as the norm of reciprocity could be formed gradually. It is not difficult for us to find that participants' perception of local people has been changed after joining the project:

“You have a chance to get to know some small business during some activities. Did you know them before joining the programme?”

“I did not know them.”

“Have you talked to them before?”

“No, I have not. I seldom go outside.” (P26)

The above dialogue reveals that participants seldom connected with their community before joining the programme. After visiting some small business in the community, participants expressed the following:

“What is your feeling after visiting small business in the community with other participants?”

“My courage has been ‘trained up’.”

“Do you talk to them when you go shopping there now?”

“If they are busy, I would not. But if they are not busy and I am familiar with them, then I would chat with them. I am familiar with those shops near to my home...” (P23)

Obviously, after joining the programmes of the project, participants seemed to open up themselves and connected with others more easily in the community. Daily dialogue with small business vendors may also let them feel less isolated. “Saying hello” is definitely a good start for participants to build up generalized trust with the outside world.

The development of generalized trust is not an easy or a short term task, especially for the participants who came from mainland China and who had negative experiences and feelings about local people. Similar to the development of particularized trust, the chance of face-to-face interactions should be provided for participants to build relationship with people in general, so that their perceptions on local people could be changed from negative to more positive. Hence, the generalized trust could be gradually formed. Putnam (1993a) indicated that one method for transforming particularized trust into generalized trust is the participation in associations. It is worthy to note that the results above coincided with Putnam’s argument.

Trust on formal institution of law and order

Besides generalized trust, trust on government could also be one aspect to

understand participants' perception of the city, which may also affect their willingness to connect with people in the city. A parent had faced domestic violence and shared with me about her experience on dealing with the police in Hong Kong:

“Did you meet the social worker?”

“Yes, the police referred my case to social worker. Then social worker approached me and followed my case.”

“You had a chance to deal with the police, were they helpful”

“Yes, they were. If the police did not care about me, I had to keep on facing the dangerous situation. We might not have any problem, but the problem would be aroused when we had a fight. I did not know when it would happen. I have escaped from the dangerous situation and have overcome the crisis of getting divorced now.”

(P14)

“Police in Hong Kong are good. If you have any problem, you could ask for their help. Police in Hong Kong are different from police in mainland China. It is difficult to distinguish who are police

and who are thieves in mainland China. This will not happen in Hong Kong. This is because Hong Kong has the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). The police in Hong Kong would ensure fairness in their dealings.” (P17)

The above expressions indicated that participants believed Hong Kong police had the ability to maintain law and order, and thus their life and property could be safeguarded and protected. They also believed that ICAC could facilitate Hong Kong to be a just and fair city. This belief may provide participants with confidence to trust people in general. As Rothstein (2000, as cited in Uslaner, 2002) highlights that if we think that those formal institutions (of law and order) work in a fair and effective manner. Then we would believe that it is difficult for people getting away with their treacherous behavior. We will therefore believe that “most people can be trust” as people will refrain from acting in a treacherous manner in this just and fair society.

However, the link between trust in government and generalized trust is being challenged (Uslaner, 2002) and may need to further examined. In fact, we could not ensure participants’ trust on legal system of Hong Kong government

can lead them to trust others. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the sense of security is necessary for people to interact with others. Participants feel secure when living in Hong Kong may facilitate them to build up initial relationships with people in general. It may be an entry point for the formation of generalized trust.

In summary, the interviews with project participants indicate that their norms of reciprocity have been widened and their development in norms of trusts have had a good start after project intervention. The cognitive social capital could be generated among project participants.

Civic Engagement

According to Putnam (2000), civic engagement is an important aspect which correlates to the development of social capital. Civic engagement may not only related to politics (Putnam, 1995, strange disappearance), but also refer to people's connections with the life of their communities. In his study of America, he argues that the decline of social capital of American is related to the falling of their civic engagement. Although Putnam's argument is being criticized, for instance, his measurement of civic engagement was outdated and in fixed

gender based role (Field, 2003), Putnam's thesis still made great contribution towards social capital concepts that people's civic engagement should be taken into account when considering their development of social capital.

In this study, as most participants mainly came from mainland China, their attention to what is happening in Hong Kong, their attention to policy or political events and their participation in political activities are crucial in understanding their social capital development. This is because their attention and their participation could show their extent of connectedness. Moreover, participants' willingness in expressing opinions in public is the third indicator to reveal their readiness to participate in civic affairs.

Attention to what is happening in Hong Kong

Putnam (2000, bowling alone) mentions that newspaper readership acts as a significant indicator of civic engagement. When compared with those who watch and those who read the news, he states that the latter are more engaged and knowledgeable about the world. Putnam further identifies that newspaper readers participate more often in different civic activities, for instance, attend local meetings and volunteer on community project, than those who do not read

newspaper.

In this study, to understand civic participation of project participants, their habits of newspaper reading and news watching were being asked. We can know more about their awareness of what is happening in Hong Kong.

“Yes, I read newspaper, watch news, and pay attention on current affairs.” (P03)

The above expression indicates that most participants had the habit of newspaper reading. They paid attention to current affairs of Hong Kong, especially issues regarding important events, children, domestic violence, new arrivals, food safety, health, disaster and war which happened in the world.

“I felt sad when I watched the news regarding disaster.”(P14)

“I read the news regarding Tin Shui Wai and new arrivals.” (P19_2)

“I noticed that a mother killed two sons. Some mothers always

neglected their children. I got to know these as I always read the news. ” (P23)

From the above, it is shown that project participants connected with the city. They knew what happened in Hong Kong and linked those issues to their daily life. For instance, they would avoid buying toxic food and provide good care for their children. Moreover, their attention on new arrivals and issues regarding Tin Shui Wai indicates that they do not only concern themselves but also care about other people in Hong Kong. If project participants care about other people, have they thought about how to help people who in need? It is worthy to provide more chance for project participants to practice what they believe, and thus, their civic participation could be further encouraged.

Instead of newspaper reading, some participants watch TV news to get to know what happen in Hong Kong:

“I seldom read newspaper, I watch TV news instead.” (P23)

However, there were some factors which might discourage participants from

reading newspaper and watching TV news. Therefore, they did not have much idea on what was happening in Hong Kong.

“I usually buy the newspaper.”

“Did you understand or not when you were reading it ?”

“I did not fully understand.”

“Do you know Simplified Chinese?”

“Yes.”

“How about Traditional Chinese, do you know it too?”

“No, I don’t know.” (P26)

“I cook in the kitchen when the daily news programme is shown.”

(P25)

“I cannot watch the daily news programme as my baby have to sleep.” (P17)

It is obvious that those parents who had language barrier or who were fully occupied with domestic work, they were less likely to read newspaper or watch

TV news. Indeed, newspaper reading and TV news watching do not only indicate participants' concerns about what happened in the city. They are also the indicators to show their adaptation to Hong Kong environment. If project participants do not adapt well, it is also quite difficult for them to participate in more civic activities.

“My son said Hong Kong Science Museum is located at Tung Chung.”

“Did you know the correct answer?”

“I did not know which district it located at until participant P02_2 told me the correct answer. P02_2 asked my son whether he knew or not. My son did not know the correct answer too. ‘Which public transport serves people who live in Yuen Long?’ was another question asked in the examination. My son did not know and copied the answer from his classmates.”

“Did you know the answer?”

“No, I did not know. I understand that we should watch news, but my son does not like watching television news programme. He only watches cartoon.”

“Did you have any chance to discuss the current affairs in Hong Kong with friends?”

“No, I seldom discuss the current affairs with friends.” (P20_2)

The above conversation shows that P20_2 was lack of common knowledge regarding Hong Kong. This does not only bring negative effects on children’s education, parents’ confidence in living in Hong Kong may also be reduced. Their relationship building with others may also be affected. Fortunately, this example identifies the importance of the project in encouraging civic participation. P20_2 got to know P02_2 after joining the project. Their interflow provided P20_2 and her children with a chance to learn more common knowledge in Hong Kong. Indeed, this scenario also let P20_2 understand the importance of paying attention to what is happening in Hong Kong. This could be seen as a big step for her development in civic participation.

Attention to policy or political events and its participation

According to Putnam (2000), another important aspect of people’s civic life is their political participation. He states that the preconditions for active political

involvement are knowledge and interests in political and public affairs. Discussing politics with neighbours, voting and signing petitions are some examples of political participation.

As many project participants are newspaper readers, did they also concern political issues of Hong Kong? Their attention to policy and political events as well as their participation have been explored. When asked about whether they would pay attention to political issues, some participants expressed:

“I just took a look and skipped it...” (P11)

“We seldom concern about political events” (P04)

The above expressions indicate that some participants do not have much interest in political affairs in Hong Kong. When asked about why they did not have much concern, they explained:

“I did not have much information. I do not know whether it is suitable for me to do or not. I am afraid that I would get in trouble.”

(P12)

“This is because those political affairs are not related to us. Even though we try to concern, we are not at that level. We cannot express many opinions. We cannot help much. Therefore, we seldom study this.” (P18)

“I am illiteracy.” (P15)

“Civic affairs and education information are related to us, but not politics. Who is responsible for policy making? It makes no difference to me. Even though I have the right to vote, I don’t think my vote can make any difference.” (P10)

It is apparently that the impression of do not have any influences on political affairs was the main reason which let project participants did not concern this aspect much. They did not have the confidence to understand what happened and they also did not want to be trouble makers. It is obvious that their sense of political awareness was low. This feeling may prevent them from gaining the political knowledge and thus reduce their motives to involve in political activities.

The participants mentioned above did not pay much attention to political affairs. Fortunately, this was only one-sided account. It is not difficult for us to find out some participants who would notice what political events happened in Hong Kong.

“Anson Chan Fang On-sang had a good public image before she decided to stand for the by-election. However, I do not like her now. I think she should not create too many troubles.” (P14)

“I did not think of joining the march on 1st of July...I think Hong Kong is not bad. I support the policy making regarding maximum working hours and minimum paid, as some bosses exploited their staff...” (P08)

“Would I join political march? I should examine my own purpose. If the political activity does not have clear goal or I do not agree with, then I would not participate. If the issue would affect me, I will go!” (P10)

It is apparent that some participants concerned about the political events and policy. For instance, some participants supported the implementation of a statutory minimum wage and recognized the importance of carrying out universal suffrage. Some participants noticed the development of the political system in Hong Kong and showed their willingness to join the political campaign. They also cared about whether the city they live in is just and social harmonic. The political knowledge and interests the participants had showed that they had great potential to involve in political activities. Have they really brought their belief into action?

“I do not have time and energy.”

“Do you think people should take part in political march? Do you recognize those people who participate in political march?”

“Sometimes I thought they had to do it. But sometimes I did not recognize their action, for instance, those people who fought for the right of staying in Hong Kong. It is good for us to express our urges, but it is not necessary to block the traffic in Central.” (P02)

“Petition signing is good. This is because the name we signed only indicated that we expressed our opinion. We did not bring any

influence on others.” (P16)

Many participants stated that they did not join the political march. They felt that the format of these political activities may not be suitable for them to join and it creates troubles and brings negative influences on the society. Nevertheless, most participants mentioned that they were willing to sign the petition if they had the chance. It seems that the kind of involvement was also their main concern in political participation. Compared with political march, signing petition was more peaceful and convenient action for participants.

Expression of opinions in public

Apart from petition signing, expression of opinions in public is another kind of “expressive” forms of behaviors in civic participation (Putnam, 2000). In this study, project participants’ willingness to express their opinions in public was asked. Their views were quite different and some of them could explain why they did not engage so much in civic and political activities.

“Yes, I am really afraid to express my opinions in front of public.

This is because I don’t know whether my opinion is wrong or not.”

(P05)

“People merely listen to those senior officials and to those have power. Who will listen to us? We want to say but we do not know where we could say!” (P18)

“I think it is useless even if we express our opinions.” (P01)

The above expressions indicate that participants thought that they were not capable to express their opinions in front the public. They also thought that their opinions would not be accepted. Moreover, there was lack of channels for them to express even though they were willing to do so. This is an important aspect that we should take notice. If we would like to encourage civic participation of people, we should first empower the participants and let them know they have the right to express their own opinions. The channels for people to express should be found out together with the participants. Our society should also take the responsibility to facilitate people’s involvement in civic participation. This project is an initial attempt. The following expressions from project participants support this claim:

“Were you afraid of expressing your opinions to the school principal?”

“A few parents went together with me. I was not afraid. This is because other parents often expressed their opinions. They gave many suggestions to the Principal.”

“Did you express yours in the end?”

“Yes.”

“If you have not joined this project, do you think that you could discuss with the school Principal?”

“I think we may not have the chance to talk to the Principal.”

“Why?”

“This is because we have no needs. Why I need to talk to him? But my son encouraged me. He wanted me to express my opinions to the school principal. I said a few words in the end.” (P20_2)

Obviously, description of P20_2 shows us her change after joining the project.

She became more confident. After the encouragement of her son, she tried to express her opinions to the school principal. P20_2 expressed opinions to school principal together with other parents may not indicate that she has

engaged in any civic activities, thus, this step out and positive experiences P20_2 gained may encourage her to have more civic participation in the future. Indeed, some participants were willing to express their opinions in public. The following expressions provide with us some ideas:

“I would express my opinions in public if someone asks me. This is because the government could understand more about our situation if we express more. We should let others know our situation as many as we could. We understand that the government may not accept our opinions but it would at least recognize that the problems are existed. If no one steps out and expresses, the government would not recognize the needs. It would not take any action...”

(P08)

“Unless I know how to say and really have knowledge regarding those areas, otherwise, I would not express my opinions.” (P13)

“I need to have the courage and preparation. I would express if I want.” (P02)

P08's description indicates that she recognized the importance of expressing their opinions. The expressions of P13 and P02 also show that they were ready to make their voices heard if they had the preparation and the encouragement.

To summarize this whole section regarding civic participation, we find that the project participants always pay attention to the current and political or public affairs which are happened in the city. Their awareness on what is happening in Hong Kong is the cornerstone for them to acquire the knowledge they need for further civic participation. Moreover, we also find that some participants feel powerless and lack of confidence to express their opinions in front of the public. Nevertheless, this is worthy for us to notice that some participants are willing to make their voice heard if they are prepared and encouraged. Examples shown above provide the evidence on the change after joining the project. Participants showed their confidence and ability to express their opinions in front of the public. Although project participants were not engaged in civic activities very often previously, the discussion in this section comes to a conclusion that they have great potential and tendency to participate more in civic activities.

Civic engagement, as a dimension of social capital, refers to participants' connection with city. Participants care about the welfare of city and people who are in need may work together for the better development of the city. This is the reason why social capital could be considered as "public goods" (Putnam, 1993b). However, it is important to note participants should be empowered and encouraged so that they have more confidence and readiness to engage in civic activities. Skills training which develops ability and competence of the participants for civic engagement is required.

Connections with Community

Small Business

Most participants lived in Hong Kong or the Sham Shui Po district for less than five years. As many participants mentioned, they only went to market and the schools that their children attended. They did not know much about their community. For instance, they did not know the famous shopping malls which are located in their community. They seldom have conversations with others. It seems that participants' connection with their community was quite weak. However, there were some changes after they joined the

community-focused programmes of this project. Social workers brought the participants to visit small business in the community. During the visit, participants gained the opportunities to talk with business vendors, they expressed the following feelings:

“My courage was trained up.”

“Would you talk to the business vendors when you buy the things from their shops now?”

“If they are busy, I would not. But if they are free and we are familiar with each other, I think we could have some conversation.” (P23)

“I felt nervous when I visited the small shops at the first time, even though social workers went with us.”

“But after that, did you visit them on your own?”

“Yes, I gave some presents to them.”

“Did you feel nervous by that time?”

“No, we had contacted business vendors by phone before visiting them. We had a short conversation. This task helped reduce our

nervousness.” (P20_2)

“I got to know many places in our community now.” (P19_2)

Obviously, participants started to build up relationship with the business vendors in the community and they also got to know more places of the district. It was a breakthrough for them. They always felt nervous when they contacted with the shop owner firstly. After having a few tries, they showed more initiative to talk to the shop owners and became more familiar with the business vendors. The positive change was not only appeared in the relationships with particular business vendors which are linked up by the project, but also the shop owners the participants went daily and the strangers as well.

“It is not difficult for me to make conversation with them now. I did not know how to open up the conversation previously. I learnt from others and made some attempts. I felt better after doing practice...I understood that if we say hello to them, they would not look down on us.” (P20_2)

“I am familiar with vendors of small shops which near the place I live now. I would chat with them.” (P23)

The participants built up their confidence and learnt how to communicate with others of different sectors after joining the programme of visiting small business. Their initiative also changed their perception on how other people perceived them. Their positive thinking increased their willingness to communicate with someone they did not know well. This is a key milestone for them to develop bridging social capital. Through their step out, participants started to connect with people of different social sectors. Indeed, their relationships with small business vendors were not only in the status of ‘saying hello’ but also aim at providing mutual benefits to each other.

“Business vendors cared about our children and provided support to our centre. Our communication skills could be trained up.” (P23)

“We introduced our SSPCFN project to them and they could help us to promote it. We looked for some stationery for our programme to use or as souvenir. We could ask them (business vendors) to

donate.” (P02_2)

Business vendors contributed some snacks and stationery for children who came from low-income families and offered some discounts for members of the organization. Participants recognized that business vendors could provide different support to parents group and people in the community as well. Besides providing tangible support, business vendors also participated in developing an environment which was conducive to children growth.

Apart from discussing the contribution of business vendors, participants also expressed that they could contribute something back to those small business.

“Our participants can promote their shops and tell others that they are good and very nice.” (P02_2)

“If those shops offer discounts for project participants, I would encourage more people to join us, so that more people could benefit from the discounts.” (P23)

It seems that the contribution of small business is not unilateral. The image of small business can be improved as people recognized that the business vendors would care about the community and the deprived group. Indeed, business vendors gained benefits after joining the project. Participants have brought a group of young people to visit their shops during another programme, the 819 event, which would be further discussed in the next chapter. Their shops have been promoted through the programme and their transactions may be increased. As a result, the mutual relationship between those business vendors and participants was built up. The business vendors also recognized the contribution of participants in promoting their shops and were willing to participate in the project.

Since those business vendors participants connected came from different social divisions, the formation of this kind of relationship could be seen as the existence of bridging social capital. The benefits the participants gain from these relationships could improve their quality of life to a certain extent. For instance, participants could buy the products with lower price in those shops. Their sense of belonging of living in Hong Kong could be increased since their connections with the community become much closer than before.

However, the development of bridging social capital among project participants is still in the initial stage. It seems that the exchange of resources between networks of business vendors and networks of participants should be further facilitated. Their relationships also need to be consolidated.

When reviewed the record of this project, there were more than 50 small business existed in the network of SSPCFN. However, some SSPCFN participants might not know the existence of networks of small business clearly and hence they could not make good use of the resources from these networks. Participants also expressed that the resources or benefits provided by those shops may not be quite useful to the participants. Therefore, it is worthy to make contact with shops which the products are useful to the participants, so that both business vendors and participants could be benefited from their connection. In addition, as mentioned by some participants, those shops are widely distributed in the community. It may be impossible for every participant to visit all networked shops. Lacking in interaction may affect their relationship building. Therefore, in order to further develop bridging social capital among participants, it is important for us to find the way to maintain the relationships between the participants and business vendors in the community.

Fortunately, we are pleased to know from the above descriptions that the concept of networking and norms of reciprocity are already built up among participants. This could be a crucial element for the formation of social capital in the future.

Schools

Apart from the connections with business vendors, parent participants also built up relationships with schools in the community. Bridging social capital could also be formulated.

Thirty low-income families were recruited to join the project SSPCFN every year. Parents were encouraged to join parents group while their children were encouraged to join after-school programme for one year. Coming into the second year of the project, another thirty low-income families were recruited, the after-school programme was then served those new children participants. Children who came from the first thirty low-income families (1st year children) could not receive the after-school programme anymore. When considered this background, parent club wanted to provide some activities for those children to enrich children's interest in English learning continually. The parents club tried

to find some community resources to support this programme. Finally, “English Playground” programme was carried out by the parents in cooperation with school partner of SSPCFN. When asked parent participants their feelings regarding this programme, they had the following expressions:

“We haven’t thought that we could accomplish this task...I felt that there were many opportunities for us. We could have more understanding of ourselves too...We were not very bad. We should not afraid of having conversation with school principal. Our points of view were quite different from those of professionals. We need some professionals to support us, to remind us.” (P02_2)

“We were ‘housewives’ (師奶仔) only. I was very impressed that we could meet the school principal, a person who highly educated.” (P08_2)

“The school principal was easily to approach (平民化) and seemed not distant. I was not afraid of having conversation with him. It was important for us to communicate with the school principal. We

might have a good plan. However, it was impossible for us to accomplish the task if the school principal did not discuss with us.

(P04_2)

The descriptions above reveal parents' interaction with the secondary school principal. In order to work out the detail of the programme 'English Playground', parents had the opportunities to meet with the secondary school principal and teachers. For parents, they felt a little bit nervous when they first met the people who came from different social class. Since the school principal and teachers were very friendly and respected them, parents tried their best to explore this external resource to fulfill the needs of their children. The teachers of secondary school finally trained up a group of students and provided the 1st year children with a series of English activities. The connection between parents and the secondary school was converted into the resources which brought benefits to the children. Parent participants expressed that the children who joined the programme showed greater interest in learning English. The positive experiences in carrying out this programme in school can act as key milestone for parents to build up their bridging social capital. Since then, parents of the club show greater willingness to explore the external resources that exist in the

community to help those families and children in need.

In fact, parents also recognized that their participation did contribute to the formation of bridging social capital. They realized the importance of their presence in the meeting.

“If the school principal only met the social workers, were there any significant differences?”

“It is definitely different...mainly because we could not know the purpose and the content of the programme if we did not join the meeting. It is important for us to meet with the school principal. The school principal accepted our opinions... we expressed our opinions, they made as references...the content of programme thus has been revised.” (P02_2)

“My daughter joined the programme which I have planned, I was so proud of this. We participated in the planning process...we could see how it worked...”

“Do you think that the programme could fulfill your need?”

“Yes.” (P08_2)

The programme could also be carried out without parents’ participation. However, parent participants could have better understanding of the purpose and the content of the programme after they participated in the programme planning progress. They were willing to make much effort to carry out the programme on their own. In addition, the connection between the parents and school personnel could be built up. This is because they already interacted with others during the programme planning meetings. Instead of school-organization relationship, this ‘parents-school’ relationship is more important for the development of bridging social capital.

In fact, the ‘parent-school’ relationship was not unilateral that parents merely got the resources from schools. Parents were not the ‘receiver’ but also the ‘giver’. Participants built up their relationship with school partners initially through their story-telling activities at different schools. Parents also provided some mutual benefits to those students in the school where the “English Playground” took place.

“They also trained up their students. The programme was good for those students and good for our children.” (P02_2)

Through the programme of “English Playground”, secondary school students could improve their English and their communication skills. Secondary school students were also invited to join community visit programme of the project. Students gained more understanding of the district they lived in or they passed through everyday. It seems that students at schools also received the benefits from joining the project.

To summarize this section, we could see that the parents started to build up relationships with other people in the community. The reciprocal relationships with those business vendors and school partners have strengthened. Different parties coming from different background contributed themselves to the community and gained the benefits from those reciprocal relationships. It is obvious that bridging social capital has already been built up and well-used.

Small-Medium Enterprise

The interactions between different parties in the same community could generate

bridging social capital. The connections with other parties outside the community may bring more benefits to the project participants. This is because those connections may bring in more diverse and abundant resources.

A small-medium enterprise, company U, acted as enterprise partner in this project. It did not only provide their products or money to support the programmes. The staff in this company also actively involved in the programme. For instance, the staff of company U held Christmas party, organized volunteer services and carried out outdoor activities for project participants. A “Pen Friends Programme” was also carried out. Some staff of company U paired up with 1st year children. Children wrote letters and made some hand craft works for their ‘pen friend’ and staff of company U were expected to reply their children pen friend. Through these programmes, there were some face-to-face interactions between those staff and project participants. When asked about their perception of this relationship, participants and their children expressed the following:

"I have met staff of company U in two activities. However, I haven't communicated with the ‘pen friend’ of my daughter." (P01)

“We had visited company U. We visited elderly home with the staff of company U. But for the parents who joined our project during the second year, they did not have the chance since we did not have these programmes during the second year of the project.” (P02_2)

“It may be better for us to have more chance to know how they work. This is because they came from different social class.”
(P08_2)

The above expression shows that most of the parents and their children did not have strong interaction with the staff of company U. Moreover, the participants who joined the project during the second year did not have face-to-face interaction with those staff. Social workers of the project also admitted this situation.

“Did parents contact the volunteers of company U frequently?”

“They did not. They visited the community together once only. Some staff did not become pen friend of children participants.”
(SWA)

When asked about perceptions of staff of company U on their relationships with participants of the project, they shared with us:

“I feel it is quite hard to have face-to-face interaction. We did not have much interaction with the services users until now....We did not have any occasion for us to build up closer relationship....I also questioned whether we could have better relationship with those parents....We did not know much about their difficulties personally. For example, I knew that father of my child ‘pen friend’ was very old, but I have not met him so far....I did not know how to build up the relationship with him....I also felt that the relationship between my buddy and me was not close...I know I should make much effort to encourage the development of our relationship. However, I did not spend much time....I always could not meet my child ‘pen friend’. He did not participate actively. He did not join many programmes.”

(UON)

“We only meet twice during the previous activities.” (UVW)

From the above descriptions, we can see that both staff-children and staff-parents

relationships were not built up very well. Their connections were not close and not in-depth enough.

As a result, bridging social capital among participants did not develop very well.

The benefits the participants gained from the bridging relationships were limited to tangible and materials support. Indeed, most of the staff of company U came from different backgrounds and were more educated. Their social support networks may be wider than that of our participants. Hence, if they can share their information or networks with participants, instead of tangible supports, it may be more helpful for improving their situations. With reference to the staff of the company U, the value of closed relationship is recognized.

“...I believe that if we can have closer relationship with the parents and our staff would have positive manner and suitable knowledge to handle their problems, I think we can help the families and their children....” (UON)

“To have better relationship with the parents, we could not only depend on writing letters. Instead of ‘saying hello’, I think we

should find out more methods for our communication....For example, their children failed in the examination. The parents may want us to talk with the children. The relationship we built up could be 'real' and 'concrete'. But now, my child 'pen friend' would not tell me when he failed in the test..." (UON)

UON realized the existence of other form of bridging social capital. If the staff-parents relationships become closer and in-depth, the staff could act as resources persons to those families. As mentioned by UON, they might act as role model for children and could encourage them to study hard if they failed in test. These are 'real' and 'concrete' benefits that the participants could gain from the bridging relationship with staff of company U.

All descriptions above indicate that the development of bridging social capital among the participants was not very perfect. The concept of social capital emphasizes more on human relationship rather than tangible and short-term resources. The company contributed plenty of financial and material support to provide a better environment for the growth of children. However, apart from providing tangible support, the connection between the staff of the company U

and the project participants (both parents and children) seemed to be quite weak.

To conclude, the generation of bridging social capital within the community (small business and schools) may be better than that outside the community (small-medium enterprise). The difference in here may be due to the content of the programme, the strategies the social workers used and the facilitation of organization, which will be discussed in the later chapters.

Linking Social Capital

Apart from bonding and bridging social capital, linking social capital is another form of social capital. Linking social capital represents the linkage of groups of different parties to the power and resources in the society. The development of linking social capital is the ability of those groups which can mobilize the resources from the formal institutions or those who have the power. The development of linking social capital may involve the cooperation of different parties in the society. Thus, linking social capital is seen as public goods at the macro-level rather than private or individual goods (Halpern, 2003).

In this three-year project, participants started to build up relationships with people of similar background and different groups inside or outside the community. Their development of social capital was at micro-level (bonding social capital) or at meso-level (bridging social capital). It seems that the main focus of the cooperation of parents club with different parties such as schools, small business and small-medium enterprise was on the exchange of resources in this initial stage. Their connections with these parties were still at the developmental stage. Therefore, it is impossible for us to examine the development of linking social capital during the early stage of the project. This is also one of the limitations of this study.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter is to examine the development of social capital among project participants. From the discussion of networks change of participants before and after their participation in the project and the analysis their norms of reciprocity and particular trust on other participants, it is suggested that bonding social capital could be generated among project participants. However, as has discussed in this chapter, participants only started

to build up their connections with different parties in the community. The exchange of different types of resources among these parties should be further encouraged. Bridging social capital was not well-developed among the participants.

Although bridging social capital was not developed well in this project, it is found that participants have strong belief in norms of reciprocity. They also thought that they could contribute to the community they live. They were willing to cooperate with different parties. All these findings suggest us that participants had great potential to generate and well-use their bridging social capital. How to fully utilize their potential, thus, is another question we have to answer.

Chapter Five – Analysis of the Content of Programmes

Introduction

In the last chapter, the development of social capital among project participants is discussed. We have seen that bonding and bridging social capital have been developed to certain extent. However, bridging social capital might not be built up very well when compared with the formation of bonding social capital. What are the reasons for these differences? Are they related to the programme content? As mentioned in chapter two, types, purposes and content of association may affect the formation of social capital. Indeed, through analyzing the programme content, we could know the types of group which participants join in and how their social capital gradually develops. The analysis could also help us to identify whether the programmes are effective in generating social capital or not. Therefore, the discussion is important if we want to develop the strategies for social capital formation.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. To SSPCFN, there were two channels with which the project developed social capital, namely the

family-focus programmes and the community-focus programmes. In the first two parts of this chapter, the family-based programmes and community-based programmes will be described respectively. In each part, the outcomes and the limitations of the programmes would also be identified. In the third part, the implications derived from the analysis of programme content will be discussed. It is useful if we would like to apply similar programmes in the other context or to modify the strategies for social capital formation.

Design of the Project

To achieve the aim of facilitating social capital development among low income families, there were two main foci of the SSPCFN project, namely family focus and community focus. These two foci guided the design and the development of the project.

The project served families with young children through carrying out a series of families focus programmes, which included after-school programmes, parents group and parent club. In order to facilitate the well-development of children, a series of after-school guidance programmes and activities were provided for

ninety children of low income families in three years. Apart from the programmes for children, the project aimed at facilitating the formation of supporting network among parents of low income families. Parents group and Parents Club, therefore, acted as the most significant programmes in the project. Packages of programmes which enabled parents to provide a growth-enhancing psycho-social environment for children were carried out. Parents were encouraged to build up mutual support relationships within the parent group. Parents were also encouraged to form the Parent Club, which provided them with a platform to reach out to help other families and connect with different parties in the community.

In addition to family-based programmes, a series of community-based programmes were carried out in order to mobilize different sectors in the community to participate in “Child Friendly Community Network”. Members in this network would care the needs and the growth of children, and would like to promote the building up of “Child Friendly Community”. Members in this network were also encouraged to provide support or contribute their own resources for the people who in need in the community. Joint programmes with school partners, business vendors from the small shops, staff from the

small-medium enterprise, youth and different resident group were carried out in three years. For instance, story-telling and sharing sessions were hold in schools. Community visiting programmes were carried out by the parents in order to make contacts with the business vendors. A series of programmes were held by the small-medium enterprise to enhance the learning of parents and children. The 819 Event was carried out in order to link up different parties in the community.

Both family-based programmes and community-based programmes share the same theme that encourages mutual help, voluntarism and social participation. Two series of programmes also aimed at bridging the poor families and their children with different sectors in the community. This brief introduction, thus, provide background information to support the following analysis of programme content. The details of the programmes will be discussed in the following parts.

Family-based Programmes

Parents group

The SSPCFN project purposed to serve thirty low income families with children aged 4 to 8 each year and a totally ninety families in three years eventually. In order to start up the project, an entry point must be created, so a parents group (thirty low incomes families) has been formed at the first year of project while they were recruited in October of 2005. Parents were suggested to join the parents group meeting once a week. Normally, each session lasted for one and a half hours.

After reviewing the documents of SSPCFN and interviewing the participants, we could distinguish the content of activities of parents group meeting into several themes:

Information provided and exchanged

Information provided and exchanged was the main theme of the parents group meeting, especially when the project was just initiated. In each session, social workers always provided information for the group participants. The information they provided was related to the activities of the project, centre or

other agencies which were suitable for parents and children. Another kind of information the workers provided was about some resources which were useful to the participants, such as special funding provided by the government that can help to fulfill the needs of their children. The parents could apply for entertainment subsidies such as free tickets for visiting Hong Kong Disneyland.

In the last chapter, it is found that some participants did not have much channel to receive useful information. Even so tailor-made services for them were available; they still could not reach due to lack of information. However, by joining the groups, participants got to know more information regarding the activities and other community resources. They were encouraged to participate in different activities or connect with the community they lived in.

“Yes. I attended more activities than before.” (P09)

“I was very happy because I recognized that there were so many activities held by this centre. I had the opportunities to participate the activities which I liked. If I did not join the project, I will never know that there were so many interesting activities existed here.”

(P19_2)

Participants became more outgoing than before after participating in activities.

Participants got closer to their community and were aware of what happened in the society. Gradually, their channels for receiving information have been opened up. The result of becoming outgoing also let them find out more courses were suitable for them to attend or more resources which they could apply for easily. For example, they attended some retraining courses and language courses that increased their potential of being employed. The result proved that they were benefited from joining parents group.

After joining the parents group and studied in different courses at other community centre, the knowledge that P08_2 learnt became a part of human capital she possessed. She got a chance to teach her classmates the pronunciation after the grammar lesson:

“You could find the meaning of a vocabulary in the dictionary, but you also had to know how to pronounce. I studied the phonetic symbols after my daughters felt asleep. Then I strived to improve

my vocabulary, including meaning and pronunciation of the words.

This is the reason why I built up a good ground in. Once, other parents asked me to teach them about the phonetic symbols. They said that they wanted to teach their children just like me. It was my pleasure to teach them. ” (P08_2)

Since P08_2 gained the experience in teaching, social workers then invited her to provide a course for parents group. It is believed that P08_2 could further develop and gain different opportunities in her later life. The contribution of P08_2 indicated that the parents group was not only a platform for parents to receive but also to give.

Indeed, the programme helped the parents group to build up a norm. They used to exchange information and resources. Parents were willing to share the information which came from their personal source. They would share information regarding part-time job vacancies and special offers from shops. Very often, parents were willing to introduce jobs to each other.

“Have you taken up the part-time job of P08_2 recently?”

“Yes, she found another one. She then passed the job to me. I realized that the little money I earned could subsidize family income.” (P06_2)

Apart from job seeking, information related to Hong Kong or regarding self-development was also exchanged between the parents group:

“P08_2 talked to me yesterday. She asked me to acquire some useful knowledge....I decided to study English, may be there was a little bit embarrassing to me since the level I studied was as same as my daughter’s level. P08_2 asked me to sit in for a while yesterday....I thought the fee of the course was reasonable. I then joined this course.”(P06_2)

“Yes. I knew more people after joining the parents group. I could ask the other parents about the matter which I did not know. For example, I did not know the place where I had to go, I asked them where the location was and how to go to there.” (P12)

At the very beginning of the process of the parents group, participants always depended on receiving information from social workers. Later on, the parents practiced exchanging their information and became givers in the group. Parents group provided a place for parents to interact. It acted as an effective platform for parents to receive and exchange information. With this access to different social resources, participants' quality of life could be improved.

Knowledge and skills training

Besides exchanging information and resources, parents group also provided series of programmes which taught parents knowledge and skills in child care.

“After joining the programme, I understood more about the different emotions of my children.” (P09)

“I understood why my children sometimes shouted at me now.”
(P01)

“I think the parents group is very useful, especially the content related to parenting skills.” (P13)

“I might beat them when they got me angry previously. I could control my temper now.” (SSP01)

“I should give her some positive reinforcement when she performs well now.” (P18_2)

The above expressions show that parents learnt the knowledge and skills in child care. Through the programmes of parents group, parents learnt about aged 4 to 8 children’s characteristics and needs in their developmental stage, emotion management of themselves and their children, parenting skills and how to deal with children who have behavioral problem as well.

Indeed, issues regarding their children are always the top parents’ concerns. Family problems involving children might be reduced by enhancing parenting skills. As the relationship between children or other family members have been improved, parents might feel relieved and were willing to join activities more frequently. The willingness to step out and to participate was important to social capital formation which emphasized on relationships building and community involvement.

Besides learning knowledge and skills in parenting, parents also enhanced their skills in communicating with others.

“I listened to other people’s points of views. I then learnt how to communicate with others.”

Parent participants agreed that the parents group provided with them a chance to talk with different parents. They gradually felt more comfortable when made conversation with others. They recognized that their communications skills were improved. They became more confident and they found that it is not difficult for them to build up relationships with others.

“Apart from the parents in our group, I have the courage to make conversation with those parents I did not know now....I did not talk with them previously because I did not have enough courage.”

(P20_2)

Participants were not only willing to make conversations with people they knew but also someone they might not know. Their courage and communication skills

were enhanced through their participation in parents group. This definitely was a turning point for participants. It is because courage and communications skills were crucial elements for them to build up bridging relationships with different parties such as business vendors and school partners in the community during the later stage of the project.

Supporting network building

As mentioned in chapter four, participants got to know many people after joining the project. As parents shared similar backgrounds and they all concerned their children's growth. This provided a common ground for them to build up support networks. They joined small group activities every week. The regular face-to-face interactions facilitated the development of closer relationship among them. They felt comfortable to express themselves, to talk about their needs and to ask for help in the group. Parents group, therefore, provided an important platform for the formation of supporting networks.

“I always felt sad and repressed when I argued with my husband previously. Sometimes I could not sleep well. I have joined the

project for one year, we still always had conflict, but now I can relieve. I do not have the sleeping problem again.” (P08)

“I suffered from family violence previously. If I did not come to this centre...I would not talk about this. I didn’t want to....This is because I do not know whether they would understand me or not. But for those I am familiar with, such as the parents I knew from the parents group, they had a merciful heart and were kindness. They would not laugh at me. They would not “add insult to my injury” (落井下石)...They really cared about me. I was willing to tell my story.” (P14)

In the last chapter, it was found that participants looked after children of other parents. Besides this tangible support, the detailed descriptions above also indicate that parents receive emotional support from members of the parents group. Norms of expression of feelings were built up within the group, which allow parents to release their pressure. Peer support thus existed in the relationships of parents. It did not only let parents feel happier after joining the project, but also acts as catalyst or positive reinforcement to encourage parents

to involve more in the group continually. In addition, as mentioned by P14, regular gathering also facilitated the development of particular trust since participants felt that they were accepted by the parents group.

Outdoor or indoor activities for entertainment

Apart from learning or network building, parents groups also provided entertainment for the participants. From chapter four as well as the expression of the participants above, it is not difficult for us to find out the lives of participants were quite boring and some parents were living under pressure. Nevertheless, parents always expressed that their lives became different after joining the activities in the parent groups.

“I joined the activities and became more optimistic.” (P15)

“I felt very happy and it was very funny to play those small games with other parents in the group. The process could recall my childhood memories.” (P13)

Social capital development emphasizes on human relationships and community involvement. If parents become more active and optimistic, they are more likely to participate in the activities. Hence, we should not neglect the importance influence of group activities or outdoors activities in the parents groups since they provided entertainment for the parents.

Volunteer services for children and parents group

The parents group also provided opportunities for parents to take up some volunteer services. For instance, parents would prepare the food for children during the tea time of children's after school programme. Parents were also responsible for setting up the activity rooms for the after school programmes. They would also act as tutors in children enrichment corner to play toys with the children during the weekend. Besides those 'internal' volunteer services which serve their children and other parents in the group, parents participated in different 'external' volunteer services which serve the wider community. Story-telling at kindergarten, visiting elderly home and visiting small business in the community were some examples of their 'external' volunteer. The outcomes of external volunteer services will be discussed more in the later part

of this chapter. Indeed, it is important for parents group to provide those practical opportunities for the parents to join in small scale volunteer services. The valuable and positive experiences and the confidence they gained from those ‘internal’ and small scale volunteer services encourage them to have different attempts later on.

“I found that I had the ability to help others. I felt really happy.”

(P25)

“We could get to know each other and could learn more...I really don’t mind to be a volunteer.” (P19_2)

The provisions of volunteer services in parents group indeed consolidated the norms of reciprocity and norms of trust among project participants. They realized that they have the ability to help others. Other parents and children’s positive feedback could be seen as the returns to parents’ contribution.

Parents Club

In order to further develop the networks of participants, Parents Club have been

formed in the mid of second year of the project. Parents were the host of the Parents Club.

A few parents who joined the first year of the project were selected to form a core group. This group of leaders met regularly. They had to plan for the development of Parents Club and to discuss on how the club served their members, their children as well as those in need in the community. During the meetings, instead of being educator and leader, social workers became facilitator and encouraged parents to have different level of involvement. For instance, parents were encouraged to involve more deeply. They acted as the host of the club, suggested the agenda of meeting and made decisions. The parent leaders felt that they had the ability to finish such meaningful tasks and were being respected. They also thought that their participation were important to others, especially when they planned the programmes or services which aimed at fulfilling parents' and children's need. The expressions of P02_2, P04_2 and P08_2 quoted in last chapter support this argument.

The establishment of Parents Club was the key milestone to consolidate the development of social capital among the participants, both in bonding and

bridging social capital. First of all, the formation of Parents Club let all parents who joined this project at different years had the same attachment. The identity of club member together with sense of belongings could strengthen the formation of bonding social capital.

Moreover, as the Parents Club was already formed, it was easier for parents to build up relationships and cooperate with other parties by using their titles in the Parents Club. Although the leaders of core group were always the key persons to connect with other parties, for instance, schools and small business, other club members could still benefit from the process of building up the relationships between the Parents Club and these parties. The most obvious example was the cooperation of English Funny Playground with the school. Few parent leaders worked out the plan with the school and finally at least ten low income families benefited from the programme. The details of the programme will be further discussed later.

The discussion above tries to highlight the importance of further development: the Parents Club transform from the parents group. The ownership of the club may consolidate participants' social capital formation. Parents Club acted as a

platform to promote the development of social capital or social harmony. The expression of P02_2 showed this possibility:

“How the club contributes to the community if it develops continually?”

“More people would receive the message of caring about others and would know that many people who need help in our community....The most important thing we should do is to promote mutual help. Besides providing tangible and material support, sometimes saying only a few words could let people feel warm. Moreover, we could also teach our children that “caring others is more precious than providing material support”. The message is important for the next generation.” (P02_2)

The conversion of the group to the club was not a natural process. Input should be provided to the parents. Around fifteen parents have participated in the leadership training programme. The programme provided some practices in community visits and training in communication skills. Those trainings could enhance parents’ confidence and they had more readiness to be the host of the

club. Parents' positive experiences from their initial participation may encourage their further involvement.

Moreover, it is worthy to note that the modeling effects are very important in the Parents Club. Those parents who joined during the first year of the project (the first year parents) could act as role model for those parents who joined during the second year (the second year parents). The second year parents might see that the first year parents, who had similar backgrounds with them, could step out and involve in the activities actively. The second year parents then understood that it was not difficult for them to participate even though they were not well-educated. It is found that the second year parents showed greater confidence and more readiness to attempt when compared with those first year parents in the same period. As observed by the supervisor of the organization, the second year parents caught up faster with the programme and developed faster than the first year parents. The role model effect might also explain why the first year- parents need to have more time to warm up or to build up the confidence. The discussion here indicates that peer supports and role model may be catalyst for parents' participation.

In summary, this part of discussion tries to highlight the importance of parents group and Parents Club in social capital development. Moreover, we should notice that input should be provided and role model should be existed in order to facilitate the development of the potential of parent participants.

Weaknesses of parents group and Parent Club

In the last chapter, we have seen that some forms of social capital may not have positive development. For instance, bonding social capital could not be built up well among some participants. In order to find out the explanation, we may need to analyze the weaknesses of the programmes.

As discussed above, participation in parents group seems to be an important medium for social capital development. Hence, it is quite important for us to examine whether the group have any weaknesses or limitations. Indeed, the development of parents group was limited by the following barriers.

First of all, many first year parents withdrew from the parents group during the second year of the project.

“I remember that there were many parents join the programme in the first year. But only a few of them joined during the second year.”

(P02_2)

Those first year parents who participated actively in the second year tried to provide some explanations for this phenomenon.

“Concerning your participation in parents group, were there any difference between the first year and the second year?”

“I was more active in year one.”

“Why?”

“The possible reason was that my children also came to here.”

“Would the difference still exist if your children also came to here in year two?”

“Yes.... the parents would be willing to come to here if our children could join. But if our children did not come to here, then we might come to here only if we had time. To be honest, I would not come to here if I did not have time.”

“Hence, did you agree that most parents paid more attention when their children were also at here?”

“Yes. At least, I got the motivation. I thought other parents agreed with me.” (P02_2)

Parents-children parallel group was the main feature of SSPCFN project. During the first year of the project, children joined after school programme everyday and parents attended parents group every week. However, from the beginning of the second year of the project, since after school programme was provided for those children who joined the second year of the project (the second year children), those children who joined the first year of the project (the first year children) could not continually join. But the first year parents were still encouraged to participate in the parents group.

The expression of P02_2 above highlights the limitation of the design of project which affected parents' continuous participation in the group. The motivation of the parents to further participate in the project has been reduced when their children stopped joining the after-school programme. In addition to the negative influence on the motivation, parents also needed to spend more time to take care of their children individually. This also reduced their time thus affected their availability to join the group regularly. The following expression

supports this argument:

“There were some people who help to take care of my children, so we could have some extra time (during the first year). However, I needed to take care of my children by my own during the second year...” (P02_2)

Furthermore, in order to reduce the financial burden from the family, some parents started to do part-time job during the second year of the project. This may indicate the success in social capital formation as they reached out and got the jobs through their networks. P02_2 described this phenomenon:

“...When our children were going to study at whole-day primary school, then parents got a couple of hours to go to work....We had to earn some money. We needed to take care of our children after school as they had a lot of homework to do....How can we spend more time to come to here....” (P02_2)

Parents choose to go to work during the time their children were studying at

school and looked after children after school. Parents' schedules were fully occupied. It affected the attendance of parents in the group very much. Parents participated less in the group and thus lack of face-to-face interactions might bring the negative influence to the parents group. First of all, the bonding relationships they have built up in the first year may be broken down again. The connections between parents who continually joined the second year parents group with those who did not were weakened. Among those first year parents who leaved, only a few of them still had contacts with other parents who attended the group. The dialogues of P02_2 below described the problem that the parents group and Parents Club were faced:

“Group cohesion was better previously. We still had meetings, but you could count the number of attendance very easily now....Some members did not attend anymore....I felt that we did not have strong cohesion.” (P02_2)

Social workers of the project also indicated that the cohesion among members in parents group was weak. They pointed out that a small group of parents who already had strong bonding seldom joined the activities in the second year of the

project. This scenario may indicate the limitations of bonding social capital. As Putnam mentioned (2000), exclusive identities may be reinforced by bonding social capital. The existence of strong bonding may prevent parents from developing relationships with other people who are outside their original circle. Their ability to remobilize more resources may be weakened since they are less likely to connect with people who in different circles. There is the possibility that they may not find relevant support from the group since the resources in homogenous group may be similar and limited.

The chairperson of Parents Club also expressed his worry on this situation. The parents might not receive enough support from the networks of parents group after they left the project.

“Did you worry about that they could not find anyone to help when they were in need?”

“Yes, it was my concern. They did not have much contact with us.

When they faced difficulties, even though just some little problems, they were not willing to call us and talked with us...” (P03_2)

The withdrawal from parents group may reduce the support to those low income families, especially when the group needed to link up with resources from different parties. As a result, the development of bridging social capital among parents may also be affected. It is important for us to explore the way to maintain the relationships between all parents. In relation to this, leaders in Parents Club made some suggestions:

“...if we want to encourage participation of the first year parents...we have to provide some realistic benefits or some positive reinforcement to encourage them to keep joining the meetings. We should let them feel that there is something in the group they are interested in....We should not only play small games in each session as it was quite boring. I would like to find something to do or to learn some new knowledge. I don't know whether other parents have the same thought with me....we should try our best to provide some benefits to them and understand what they thought. If their children do not join the after school project in the second year, we should try to find out the way to encourage them to stay in the group.” (P08_2)

The above expression shows that parents' needs may not be fulfilled in the group is one of the reasons to explain the parents withdrew from the parents group. P02_2 identified the needs of the parents and highlighted how the parents group could solve the 'problem':

“The only method is to find someone to take care of our children after school....If the project can provide a place for children after school, then parents can (continually participate in the group)...”

(P02_2)

For participants, the provision of service which reduces their burden or increases their free time seems to be one of the effective ways to encourage their participation in the group. For programme planner, it is necessary for us to consider the availability of the participants when design the programme. Service provision could be one of the methods to encourage participants' participation. After receiving the services, participant's needs could be fulfilled. Meanwhile, their availability to involve in other programme could be increased. Indeed, the services could be provided by the organization but also could be provided by the participants themselves. For instance, to continually provide

services for the first year children and the second year children, the Parent Club has tried to explore the possibility of carrying out after school programme and the second round of “English Funny Playground”. Although the Parent Club faced many difficulties and they did not have significant progress on carrying out these programmes, the developmental direction of the Parent Club should be recognized. It is also necessary to provide more support and resources for the Parent Club to further develop. Finally, the participants have the motivation to continually involve in the Parents Club and their social capital could have better development.

Community-based Programmes

Programmes with schools

Every child needs to go to school. Schools are often seen as the priority agent for the parents to connect to the community they live in. Apart from formal education services, schools provide different resources to the parents. On the contrary, parents could also provide services to school. Hence, in order to bridge more resources for parents, the initial strategy that the project should take is to consolidate parent-school relationships.

Story-telling at kindergartens

Starting from the first year of the project, parents were trained to be story-telling mothers or fathers. Four-session training course during the parents group gatherings was provided. Parents chose the stories, assigned the roles and used their creativity to make some props. Project social workers then contacted different kindergartens and arranged the parents to go to there to have story-telling sessions for children. The performance of the parents was highly recommended at the end. During the second year, the first year parents became the tutor and helped the social workers to train up the second year parents to be story-telling mothers. Social workers also made contact with different kindergartens; therefore, the story-telling programme could be carried out continuously.

This programme carried out different functions in social capital formation. First of all, the contacts with schools (kindergartens) have been increased and relationships were built up well. All these outcomes may raise the possibility of resources exchange between the kindergartens and the parents in the future. For instance, during the time the parents group needed to find a venue which was appropriate for carrying out the 'English Funny Playground'. It is encouraging

that kindergartens were willing to provide the place actively. Though the 'English Funny Playground' was not taken place at any kindergartens, this incident shows that the reciprocal relationships already existed between them. Parents group can cooperate with those kindergartens next time. Hence, the story-telling programme can be seen as a means of generating bridging social capital.

Moreover, through the story-telling programme, parents have some attitudinal changes which may facilitate their social capital formation.

“We learnt how to tell stories....I was pleased since the children showed great interest when they heard our stories. I had more confidence than before...I was not so useless, at least I learnt the skills in story-telling.” (P14)

“We went to different kindergartens to tell stories. Those kindergartens were benefited. The social workers taught us that we did not need to stay at home whole day. Being a house wife, we could also go outside and help people who are in need. We could

learn something what we want to learn. May be we can learn something special that we haven't imagined before.” (P02)

“I felt a little bit nervous during the first time I told stories at the kindergarten. I could not speak fluently. Indeed, we seldom meet so much people we were not familiar with, it was normal that we would feel nervous...during the second time, I felt much easier. During the third and forth story-telling programme, instead of feeling of nervous, we felt great and satisfy. It seems that we could pass through those different stages.” (P17_2)

The expression of P02 shows us that the positive experiences parents gained through the story-telling programme. The self-image of house-wives seemed to be changed. Most of the parents were lowly-educated and only acted as house-wives at home. They always thought that they were useless. Nevertheless, they felt that they could contribute something to others after joining the story-telling programme. The sense of achievement and sense of ability could encourage them to further equip or develop themselves. Parents may make different contribution after their development. In addition, the training in

story-telling also provides a vehicle for the participants to build up their courage and train up their communication skills. The courage and communications skills are important for them to make contacts with strangers and are the foundation to establish mutual trust. Bridging social capital could also be generated more easily with these two qualities.

Parents sharing at school

Besides, parents also had a chance to share their experiences at school.

“That sharing experience was very impressed.”

“What did you talk about with those parents?”

“The function was the graduation ceremony of the kindergarten. The supervisor of the organization asked me to share with other parents about the feelings of being a parent, to explain what attitudes a responsible parent should have...”

“Did you talk about the changes, the different steps and stages of raising a child?”

“Yes. I knew that all parents concerned their children’s academic development, so I told them it is not necessary for the children to

enter the ideal school. We should try to think positively. It is more important for us to step out to the community. I told them that I got many changes after joining the Parents Club.” (P02_2)

From the above expression of P06_2, we could see that there were at least three benefits from those sharing activities at school. Firstly, parents could consolidate their knowledge and experiences in the parents group through the sharing process at school. Moreover, the parents sharing could bring peer influence to other parents. In order to enhance social capital development, we should first encourage parents to step out and to participate. It is more convincing to have role model. Parents at school got to know the positive changes and the contributions of parents of the project may have greater confidence to step out. Last but not the least, Parents Club and the message in caring for children and bringing mutual benefits to the society could be promoted during the sharing sessions. The positive image and the atmosphere of social harmony may facilitate the better development of Parents Club in future.

The above discussion shows the advantages to coordinate parent activities at school. However, there were not many parents involved in this activity. It may be

better to invite more parents to participate or increase the occasions for sharing, so as to enlarge the positive effects of the activity.

English funny playground

As mentioned before, most of the first year children did not have the chance to attend after school programme during the second year of the project. In order to fulfill the needs of the children and those low income families, Parents Club started to explore the possibility to run after school programme on their own. However, they had difficulties in finding the suitable venue and voluntary tutors. During the period of programme planning, they got the chance to contact with the secondary school principal and teachers, and finally worked out the plan of 'English Funny Playground'. Parents were willing to change their original plan of holding daily after school programme to a more feasible English learning programme. In order to enhance children's interest in learning English, a total of eight sessions of 'English Funny Playground' were provided for the first year children on eight Fridays. Parents were responsible to bring their children to the secondary school and to take care of them during the break of the programme. The secondary school teachers provided some training to their students, so that the students could act as voluntary tutors and played

English games with the children in the programme. All parties were satisfied with the outcomes of the programme in the end.

The 'English Funny Playground' programme represents the success in utilizing community resources and is an evidence of the existence of social capital. First, the reciprocal relationship between the school and the Parents Club was existed. In addition to parents and children, secondary students also benefited from the programme. This is because those students learned the skills during the training and were practiced and developed through their participation in the programme. The public image of the secondary school could also be improved since this programme was reported by the media.

Moreover, this programme is a key milestone for the Parents Club to connect with wider networks. It indicates parents' ability to obtain external resources after joining the project. Instead of depending on the provision of social services by the organization, parents understood that they should explore external resources by themselves in order to fulfill their needs. Hence, the parents group looked for the school partners of the project and finally accomplished their plan. This is an important example to show the presence of

bridging social capital. The success may encourage the Parents Club to find out additional resources in future. They built up the mindset to involve different types of people in running their Parents Club.

“...I think it is better to find some retired people who are educated to help us. This is my opinion.”

“Do you agree that may be you need to invite different types of people to join the club in order to receive more supports?”

“Yes I agree. We need some technical supports, those would benefit to the children and parents of child-friendly networks, and benefit to our families.” (P03_2)

The way of thinking of P03_2 is very important for the Parents Club to develop independently. Instead of using the resources existed, he suggested that the Parents Club should explore more external resources which provide supports to the club. It is also shown that participants recognized the importance of developing bridging social capital.

Indeed, it is not easy for the Parents Club mobilize the resources from the

community on their own. Sometimes, social workers may need to act as the bridge to link up extra resources to facilitate the cooperation between the Parents Club and other parties. The following example may show the importance of role of social workers and the organization which carried this project.

After carrying out the first round of 'English Funny Playground' programme, the Parents Club started to explore the possibilities to organize similar programme to serve the second year children, who also could not join the after school programme during the third year of the project. Nevertheless, the Parents Club faced many difficulties in re-organize the programme this time. The number of children who would like to join the 'English Funny Playground' had been double or triple. Since children were studying in different grades, their English level might have a great difference. In order to carry out the programme, a larger place had to found and more tutors needed to be recruited. Besides, different expectations of the programme were existed between the first year parents and the second year parents. The secondary school also needed to find extra resources to train up the students. All these factors may help to explain why the programme could not been carried out in the end.

From this event, we could see that both Parents Club and the secondary school needed external resources to sustain their services. Indeed, the support from the organization and the social workers might play the key role to deal with the situation. Some meetings had been carried out by social workers to discuss how to match up some funding or financial support from the government or the community. However, they could not find suitable funding or resources to support the programme. Besides, the slowdown of the provision of the services may indicate that the social workers did not link up different resources very well. We have to notice that well planning and suitable strategies are necessary when cooperated with other parties. Further discussion regarding the role of social workers will be presented in the later chapters. Although the carrying out of “English Funny Playground” in the third year of the project was not success, the experience recognized that the cooperation of the Parents Club and school by using the external resources was on the right track and should be continued in future.

The above discussion shows that parent club’s connection with schools could bring different kinds of advantage to participants. It seems that the development of the project as well as the social capital formation could be started up with the

parents-school relationship. This is because it is the easiest way to attract parents' participation and it provides parents with a safety platform to take their first step in connecting with the community. We may conclude that the cooperation with schools has significant contribution in social capital formation.

Small business in the community

In the last chapter, it is found that the participants have built up some connections after visiting small business in the community. How did this relationship initiate? Was this programme already planned at the beginning of the project? When reviewed the original project proposal, the relationships between project participants and business vendors should be started by a series of programmes named 'Dim Sum Plan'. It seems that the programmes carried out are quite different from the original plan. The change in the original plan and its effects is worthy to study if we would like to apply the same strategy in future.

The original idea of 'Dim Sum Plan' emphasized the participation of business vendors. Business vendors would be matched up with one or a group of underprivileged children and were invited to be the "adopter" of the children. The business vendors did not need to take the children into their home and

became their legally parents. Instead, the “adopted” children would visit the shops regularly and the “adopter” was responsible to interact with the children during their visits. The “adopter” was also encouraged to promote the building up of ‘child-friendly’ community, which cares about the developmental needs of the children and emphasizes the provision of better environment for children development. Through the original ‘Dim Sum Plan’, the children would build up bridging relationships with those business vendors. The children and their families could benefit from the programme since the extra resources may be shared to them by the business vendors.

However, the project faced big difficulty in recruiting business partner into the programme. It seems that the above ‘requirements’ were the burden of the business vendors and even those small business which were already existed in the networks of the organization were not willing to participate and worried that they could not make contribution. The expressions of social workers reveal this situation:

“We kept on discuss with the business vendors whether they were in our networks of shops or not. They provided feedback that it is

difficult for them to participate if we required them to support the children in our way (care about the children during the visiting to the shops). We needed to think about the solution. Even though they intended to help the children wholeheartedly, they were worried if the children visit them during their busy time. They expressed their concern that they might not have time or they had to squeeze some extra time to entertain our children...” (SWA)

Due to the failure in recruiting business vendors to be the “adopter”, the “Dim Sum Plan” has been modified. The business vendors were invited to join the “child-friendly network” of the project without any requirement of ‘adopting’ children. Those small businesses which joined the “child-friendly network” were only required to stick a “child-friendly” logo to show that they care about the development of children. Those shops in “child-friendly” network were also encouraged to offer some discounts to project participants. In order to recruit small shops, a series of visiting programmes were carried out during the second year of the project. Both children group and parents group visited the shops in their community.

Four-day programme was carried out in the children group to make contacts with the small business in the community. In this programme, social workers brought a group of children to walk along the streets, and asked the children to select the shops they would like to visit. Children introduced the project to those business vendors. All the visited business vendors were very impressed. They were keen to listen to what the children said and welcomed the children very much. During the visit, social workers also introduced the project and explored business vendors' willingness to join "Child-friendly network". Very often, the business vendors showed their interests to join the project. The children visited them again and gave them a logo sticker which showed their identity of joining "child-friendly network" next day. The relationships between the shops and the projects were gradually established.

For parents group, during the leadership training programme, parents learnt how to make conversation with the shops. A group of parents made an initial attempt to contact the shops during the training sessions. They tried to open up conversation with the business vendors. They introduced themselves as well as the project to the business vendors. Although not all the business vendors they visited were willing to talk to the parents, most of them showed their interest to

understand the project more and some of them would offer discounts for the project participants or members of the organization. After these series of programmes, the number of small business which would like to join the network of the project was increased significantly. The connection with those shops then leads to the development of social capital, especially the generalized trust. In addition, the discounts offered by the shops could be seen as external resources that benefit the participants.

From the above descriptions, it is concluded that the outcome was quite different when the “Dim Sum Plan” was modified. The original plan of “Dim Sum Plan” failed to establish the networks of small business; by contrast, the visiting programme achieved its aim. The success of the visiting programme highlights the importance of involving participants when made the contacts with the shops. Parents and children lived in the districts where the shops located. They would pass by the shops everyday. As the shops would also like to let more people get to know their products and increase their profits, they were willing to entertain the participants and thus the relationships between the participants and the shops could be built up easier. Moreover, those business vendors did not need to fulfill the requirements in the original plan of ‘Dim Sum Plan’. Business

vendors did not worry about the form of their contribution any more. Their willingness to join the “child-friendly network” was increased.

These programmes brought some positive effects on the development of social capital among participants and the mutual relationships between the business vendors and the participants have been augmented. Nevertheless, it seems that the types of resources exchanged were very limited and remained at the material level. Even though some participants passed by the shops every day and would say hello to the business vendors, most of the participants only got the chance to visit the shops during the programmes. They did not know much information regarding discounts offer of the shops. Their connection with those shops was relatively weak. In order to strengthen these relationships, it is worthy to find out the way to consolidate the networks or to enhance the interactions among these two parties. The most suitable method is to increase the chance for the project participants to make contact with the business vendors. The frequency of the programme should also be increased so that participants can meet the business vendors regularly and more frequently. Both parties could become more familiar with others. The familiarity may help facilitate the exchange of resources between business vendors and project participants in future.

Small-middle enterprise (Company U)

There are many enterprises that would like to contribute to the society. Company U is one of them. There wasn't any plan regarding the cooperation with this small-middle enterprise, Company U, in the proposal of project. According to the organization director, company U would like to cooperate with a non governmental organization and practice their CRG. The organization director introduced the project SSPCFN to them and finally company U decided to contribute their resources into the project.

Company U and the project social workers organized a few programmes for the participants in these two years. They were 'Energetic Experience Tour'(活力體驗之旅), 'Energetic Talk'(活力講座), 'Children Enrichment Corner', 'Pen Friends Programme', 'Christmas Parties' as well as some outdoors activities. Those programmes could be distinguished into three categories, namely programmes for learning and entertainment, programmes involving relationship building and programmes involving community services.

Programmes for learning and entertainment

Company U provided plenty of resources to organize some programmes which

brought benefits to the children. For instance, the ‘Energetic Talk’ (活力講座) and ‘Children Enrichment Corner’ aimed to enhance children’s learning. The former programmes invited nutritionist and doctor to give a talk regarding teeth protection, nutrition and eye protection for the children. Company U also provided financial support to buy a lot of educational toys and set up ‘Children Enrichment Corner’. The children learnt and had better intellectual development by playing the toys and games at the corner. Besides programmes that enhanced children's learning, outdoor programmes like “energetic experience tour” (活力體驗之旅) were also provided for children and their families. For instance, the visits to Hong Kong Wetland Park and the Hong Kong Disneyland, which were some places the low income families could not afford to go on their own. The children and their families got a lot of exposure and enjoyed themselves during those activities.

Programme involving relationship building

The programmes ‘Energetic Experience Tour’ (活力體驗之旅) mentioned above did not only provide chance for learning and entertainment but also the opportunities for staff of Company U and low income families to build up relationship. For instance, the first tour was to visit the office of Company U, the

low income families and their children knew the workplace of a business company. Apart from this, through the activities, they got to know each other and interacted. Their relationship started to build up.

In addition to 'Energetic Experience Tour', "pen friends" programme was also carried out which emphasized on relationships building. Each of the first year children was paired up with a staff and formed pen-friend relationship. The children pen friend wrote letters and made some handicraft for their pen-friends while the adult pen friend also tried their best to reply. Social workers of the project acted as the postman who helped both parties to exchange letters or presents. Together with those face-to-face interactions during outdoors activities, the relationships between the children and the staff were gradually built up, especially for those families who joined the first year of the project.

Programme involving community services

Besides serving project participants, staff of Company U also participated in other programmes which served the community. For instance, they set up booths and played mini games with people in the community during the kick-off ceremony and mass programmes of the project. The staff also organized

volunteer services with the participants. During the Christmas party of the second year, they visited an elderly home together. The relationships of staff of company U and project participants then changed from 'giver-receiver' to 'giver-giver'. This is because not only staff of company U acted as givers this time, project participants also played a giver role to serve others in the community.

The evaluation on bridging social capital formation

From the above programmes, we can see that the relationship between Company U staffs and the project participants was formed. However, there were many factors that constrain the development of relationships between two parties and thus the formation of bridging social capital.

From the above presentation, it is found that Company U always provided plenty of tangible resources for the participants. The giver role of Company U was built up very clearly, whereas the low income families and children benefited from the resources and played the receiver role very often.

Is the above relationship a kind of bridging social capital? Instead of providing

tangible resources, bridging social capital emphasized on the development of reciprocal relationship. However, both parties did not recognize the existence of reciprocal relationship. The low income families did not reckon that they could repay something to Company U. They only expressed that they would like to buy the products of the Company U if the prices were reasonable. The Company U also did not expect any kind of return from the low income families.

“I really did not have this kind of consideration” (UON)

This imbalanced relationship among the two parties might have negative effects on the formation of bridging social capital and its effectiveness in improving situation of low income families. It was quite easy to form the giver-receiver relationship especially for the enterprise which was willing to contribute many resources. Nevertheless, this relationship was fragile because the company policy could be changed. The provision of tangible resources to the participants could be terminated and the company would not organize programmes for the project by anytime. The unilateral giver-receiver relationship could not sustain for a long period or even could not exist anymore. Hence, was there any

programme which could make the relationship become reciprocal and more sustainable? It may be better for the project to provide the participants with a chance to contribute to the company, the norms of reciprocal among both parties may help continue the connections.

Apart from the imbalanced relationship, lack of direct cooperation or interaction between two parties in the programmes affected participants' development of bridging social capital. The staff of Company U participated in different programmes actively, it was necessary for them to contact the project social workers very often. However, it was not necessary for the project participants to make contact with the staff of Company U directly. Moreover, as the social workers played the key role in exchanging the letters or presents of the pen-friend programme. There was not any place for the staff of company U and the participants to contact. As a result, parents and staff of company U could only have the opportunities to communicate during the programmes. It seems that the development of bridging relationship between participants and the staff of company U was not significant. Social workers, organization supervisor as well as the staff of company U indicated that the high turn over rate of the company was the main reason why the bridging relationship between

the participants and the staff of company U was failed to form. In addition, the programme content which did not provide enough chances and methods for both parties to contact might be the core reason for the 'failure' in facilitating the participants to build up bridging relationship. If the parents and Company U staff needed to have some interaction during the programmes and they had to contact each other directly, they could be more familiar with others. The relationships between the staff and project participants might not be terminated immediately and they still had the chance to contact other participants on their own even after the staff left the company.

To summarize, it is recognized that Company U really contributed plenty of resources to provide for a better learning environment for children of low income families. Through the programmes they organized, parents also had the chance to get to know them. However, if we focused on building bridging social capital among low income families, the outcome seemed to be not very outstanding. More interactive elements should be added into the programmes to encourage both parties to interact more frequently and thus to foster the development of bridging social capital.

The 819 Event

Among many programmes in the project, the 819 Event was the largest scale community-based programmes. The purpose of the Event was to build up a “children-friendly” environment that could be conducive to children grow healthy in the community. The event involved different parties and has been prepared for more than one year. The event could be seen as the round-up of several programmes, which included “A Children-friendly Community Awareness Campaign” and “A Children-friendly Community Workshop”. Through the mural printing, drawing and photograph taking campaigns, project children as well as other children and youth who lived in the community got the chance to design and create a “Children-friendly” community from their views. Moreover, a group of youth volunteers also participated in “A Children-friendly Community Workshop”. During the workshop, they reviewed the meaning of children-friendly and tried to find out the story of the poor in Sham Shui Po. The achievements of these programmes have been shared to the community during the 819 Event. Those products won the prize in the campaigns were exhibited. The young people also shared their reflections and introspection from the story of the poor to the others during the event. In addition, a group of young people trained up to be volunteers and carried out different games during

the 819 Event. A group of volunteers from the corporate partner, Company U, also set up a game booth and served the participants. There were over one thousand community people who participated in the 819 Event.

Parent participants played an active role in the event. A community guide tour for secondary school students and community people was carried out by the parent participants. They planned several routes and prepared the information about the community and small business they visited before the programmes. They introduced the community they live in and the small businesses which were joined “child-friendly network” of the project to the participants of community guide tour. Through the activity, the parents became more familiar with their community and they had more interactions with different people.

The 819 Event was seen as the major programme to consolidate the development of social capital. This was because different networks in the community were linked up through their participation in the event. For instance, parents group, secondary school students and small business shops have been linked up through the community guide tour. Moreover, the young people also linked with the low income families when the young people explored the story

of the poor. All participants had the opportunity to connect with others and the community they live during the event.

To prepare for this large scale activity, a huge amount of human resources were used. This should be a good chance for different volunteer groups or parties to interact or build up good relationships. However, the interaction among the groups only appeared on the event day. Most of the relationships could not be further developed. The connections between different parties might be broken after the completion of the programme. Although bridging social capital is seen as 'weak tie', lack of contact means may affect its development. Hence, if we intended to build up bridging social capital through the event, it might be better for the parents group to make more contacts with other volunteer groups from the start of the preparation stage. To create opportunity for the formation of bridging relationships, the role of parents should be changed from the helper of the event to the coordinator of the whole programme. If the parents take up the role of coordinator, they would make direct contacts with different parties. Their connections with people of different backgrounds could be consolidated. It is possible that the parent participants could link up these parties and facilitate the exchange of resources when they organize programmes in future.

Implications and Conclusion

In the above two sections, family-based programme and community-based programme have been analyzed. Their outcomes and limitations have also been highlighted. In the third part of this chapter, implications from the previous discussion would be elucidated.

Corresponding strategies of programmes

When analyzed the content of programmes, it is found that the corresponding strategies of programmes might be the main factor which affected their effectiveness in enhancing the development of social capital. The argument could be illustrated by using programmes of parents groups and programmes involving Company U. The objective of the parents group of this project was to enhance mutual support among the low income families. It is definitely a clear objective which regarding the generation of social capital. In order to achieve this objective, the group provided plenty of opportunities for the parents to interact and cooperate with others. Finally, parents became more familiar and were willing to help others. The supporting networks and bonding social capital were gradually formed.

However, it is found that some programmes did not carry out with appropriate strategies, their outcomes in generating social capital among project participants might relatively not desirable. For instance, the social worker trained up parents who came from four primary schools to be “story-telling mother”. Although those parents contributed to schools after being trained and the parents of parents groups were invited to be the “judges” during the story-telling campaign, it seemed that those story-telling mothers would not have so much interaction with the parent participants in group. Neither supporting networks nor reciprocal relationships could be built up. The programme did not provide significant help in generating social capital among project participants.

Besides programme of parents group, the programmes involving Company U or small business also showed the importance of appropriate strategies. The objective of these programmes was to build up bridging relationships through encouraging participants come out and extend their networks to those who come from different backgrounds, but in reality, opportunities for parents to interact with others were insufficient. Bridging social capital did not developed very well finally. It seemed that the strategies of the programme might not be very effective.

Hence, if we would like to enhance the development of social capital among project participants, it is necessary to examine the objectives of the programme clearly and to continually evaluate whether the strategies we used to carry out the programme were appropriate or not. Indeed, social workers are responsible to develop the strategies to implement the project. The further discussion related to this area will be discussed in the next chapter.

Continuous participation in different tasks

In the previous chapter and the first section of this chapter, parents' social capital development has been analyzed. We notice that most of the first year parents were less likely to participate in the project during the second year. Their social capital may not be continually developed. To alter this situation, we may be better to improve the content of programmes.

When compare those 1st year parents who had good development of social capital with those did not, the former took up more tasks than the latter. The former often could build up longer relationships with others and their networks were more extended. This is because those parents were assigned to take up different tasks, they were required to connect with and cooperate with different

group members frequently. Their relationships thus could be maintained. The 'task' in the group may be seen as the determined factor which prevent the withdrawal of the parents and negative influence on the development of social capital.

Hence, if the project recognize the important role of 'task', in order to sustain the development of social capital, it may be better to encourage the participants to take up more tasks of the project. It is also necessary to design the tasks for the participants to take up during the programme planning stage.

When we refer to the theories of social capital, social capital will be disappeared after certain period if it is not used. Especially those bridging relationships or 'weak ties', according to Burt (2002 as cited in Halpern, 2003), in spite of the relationships were higher in value, the peer reputations were positive and the paid was higher, bridging relationships would decay much faster than bonding relationships. However, as mentioned before, the bridging relationships between participants and different parties were not consolidated very well. If the parents do not visit the small businesses for a period of time, the relationships with those business vendors might be weakened. Thus, efforts should be put in order to

maintain those bridging relationships. Participants' continuous participation in different tasks may be one of the ways out and should be encouraged.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the content of project programmes which contributed or failed to contribute the development of social capital has been discussed in this chapter. Indeed, both family-based and community-based programmes could facilitate the formation of social capital. In order to maintain and stimulate both development in bonding and bridging social capital, it is necessary to find out some methods to consolidate the relationships between the parents group and different parties in the community. The programme content may be needed to enrich.

Two implications have been drawn in the last section of this chapter, which provide with us the hint that how to modify the programmes. For those programmes have clear objectives and appropriate strategies, may result in more positive outcomes than those do not. Continuous participation in different tasks may help to prevent decay of social capital as well as the withdrawal of

the group. Hence, provide participation opportunities to participants may be top of the agenda when we design the programme of the project.

The whole discussion in this chapter identifies the importance of programmes content and its influences on the social capital development. It can be seen as the reference for social work practitioners, especially for those who want to design and implement programmes for social capital development in future.

Chapter Six – Analysis of Social Worker Performance

Introduction

The chapter on literature review has discussed the key role a facilitator in associations may play in fostering social capital creation or transformation. In the last chapter, I have analyzed how the content of the programme contributed to the development of social capital among participants. The operationalization of the objectives, including the programme design and the implementation strategies, was important and would affect the effectiveness of the programmes. Social workers are responsible for designing the content of the programmes/activity and implementation strategies. Therefore, the performance of social workers may also be another factor which affects the success/failure of social capital generation.

In social work practice, when we design an intervention model, we first think about our own value position. The outcome of the practice model can only be maximized if we believe the applied concepts or theories could bring benefits to our service users. Besides the attitudes and value we uphold, it is also

important for us to possess the knowledge and skills relevant to the intervention model concerned. Otherwise the effectiveness of the intervention may also be affected, even if we truly believe in the model. As we attempt to 'build up' a practice model for social capital development among low income families in this study, it is imperative for us to gain an in-depth understanding of the social workers' performance by exploring their attitudes and value, knowledge, and skills, so as to analyze the competences of social workers in terms of knowledge, attitude, and skills that are essential to social capital development. Therefore, the three sections in this chapter would discuss each concerned area respectively.

Knowledge

Knowledge here refers to two main issues. One is the social worker's understanding on the purpose and content of the social capital development project. Why is there such a project? What is expected to be done? Social workers have to acquire such information in order to implement the project effectively. But that alone is not enough. The social workers also need to grasp the concept of social capital well. What does it mean? How and when

will it emerge? In the following, I will discuss how much the social workers in the project understood such knowledge and how it may affect the project.

Understanding on purposes and content of project

In the last chapter, it is mentioned that a clear programme design and the implementation strategies may bring positive impact on social capital generation. Indeed, social workers with a clear understanding on the project goal and objectives as well as its content would definitely affect the performance of the project.

When asked about their understanding on the project during the initial stage they were involved in the project, the project social workers expressed that:

“Initially, my boss passed me a thick proposal of the project...I thought it was a project which worked with parents and their children together...it may help those children and parents. They would be encouraged to step out to the community....My boss said it was just a framework. Its further development also depended on the service users we recruited. I felt that we could further develop it

in broad way.” (SWA)

“The job description was quite unclear at the very beginning...I just knew it is a project to alleviate poverty.” (SWB)

“The first question I asked about the project was if it would work. This is because the final outcome looked too perfect....F (the supervisor) told me that I might need to make some changes on myself. Maybe I hadn't been a social worker previously, I didn't think I needed to change. The role of a social worker is to helping people (based on my understanding) previously, however, for this project, participants can empower themselves and contribute to the community after getting the social workers' 'little' help...” (SWB)

The above expressions highlight the social workers' perceptions and their understanding on the project at the initial stage. Generally, they understood that the project was to alleviate low income families' suffering from poverty. The project worked for and worked with parents and their children. The project also involved the community where the service users lived. The social workers also knew their role might need to be changed when carrying out this project: social

workers would not merely help people; they should empower the participants and encourage them to contribute to their community. However, the social workers expressed their worries about the project. To them, the outcome of project looked too perfectionist, however, they doubted whether it could be achieved or not. The social workers were also worried about the continuity of services for the participants and whether there would be enough support for them.

Understanding on social capital concept

As the project aimed to develop social capital among low income families, it is also important to explore social workers' understanding on social capital concept. When asked about their knowledge on social capital at the beginning of the project, the social workers expressed:

“I didn't have a good understanding. I thought it is social participation. It talks about networks building. I could not get the real meaning of it actually. ” (SWA)

“I have not heard of the concept of social capital until I took up this

job. When I studied in college, the content of the courses did not include the concept of social capital.” (SWB)

Their remarks reflect that the social workers did not have enough understanding on social capital concept when they were assigned to take up the project. In order to equip themselves with the knowledge on social capital as well as to gain more understanding on the objectives and content of the project, social workers tried different methods:

“I searched ‘social capital’ through the internet at once....But after I studied for a while, I still did not understand it quite well....I got to know more only after Dr. T provided with us a lesson and shared with us.” (SWA)

“I tried to refer to the other CIIF projects.... The sharing forums of CIIF were *not useless*. They were good....This is because the forums would invite the project operators. Even though I knew they would talk about their successful cases, some of them would share their difficulties and problem solving skills. For instance, how they

initiated and maintained the relationships. Those matters that happened in their projects may also appear in our project. So, it was quite helpful...but if you ask me whether it is good and useful, I don't think so. I only knew more and understood more...but if you ask whether I have reviewed literature. I seldom did this.” (SWA)

In this project, there were two main methods for social workers to learn the concept of social capital. One was to receive a lesson from Dr. T, a university social work scholar who designed this project. The other one was to attend the annual forum held by the project funder, CIIF. They mentioned that, through these channels, they could learn more about the concepts.

After having acquired the knowledge and implemented the project for one and a half year, they tried to explain what social capital was during the interviews:

“It is social participation. It encourages those people who have similar rationale and belief to reciprocate, and enhances the sense of belonging of the community. It helps the community by using human resources. It builds up a network which makes the community more

integrated...” (SWA)

“We may use social capital to do many things very often, but we seldom mention the term. If we carry out a volunteer group, we already use their capital to serve the community, but we do not talk about social capital daily....Social capital is neighborhood relationships among people, which is their input, which describes how they enhance themselves, empower themselves and contribute their abilities back to the community. (It) does not focus on individuals, it makes use of one’s resources and transfers them to others...the networks could be maintained much better...(B)ut is it only about neighborhood relationships? I do not think so. It depends on you. You can invest in your neighborhood relationship or you can utilize it (social capital) in other situations. I think it is also a capital....For instance someone is familiar with tailoring. He comes and helps others to make clothes. This is another kind of social capital.

It may not exist in neighborhood relationships.” (SWB)

Their description such as “human resources”, “excavates the resources they

have and transfer to others”, “capital to serve the community” reveal that social workers have had some more understanding of the nature of social capital. They knew that it is some kind of resources which is useful to the people in society. Besides, social workers mentioned about “neighborhood relationships” which shows their association of social capital with human relationships. The remarks of “belief to reciprocate” and “networks” may show that social workers had some understanding on the forms of social capital. They mentioned about “the sense of belongings” as well as “community more integrated” which indicate their understanding of the value of social capital.

However, the social workers only understood the concept of social capital partially. They were a bit confused about how social capital is different from other kind of resources or ‘capital’. For instance, what kind of capital people can use in voluntary groups when serving the community? Are they using their human capital or social capital? For the person who is familiar with tailoring, instead of social capital, is this a kind of “human capital”? How come human capital becomes “social capital” in these circumstances? In addition, to what extent is social capital related to social relationships? To what extent does social capital correlate to ‘social participation’? Social or civic participation

may show people's connection with their city, but itself is not "social capital".

It seems that social workers did not have a clear understanding or could not provide clear description about the concepts of social capital.

Implications

The above two parts reveal the social workers' understanding on the project and the concept of social capital. In fact, these understandings have already brought different influences on how they carried out the programmes and thus the outcome in social capital generation. There are three implications we could draw from the above discussion.

Enough understanding could facilitate project development

The understanding about the project could act as a foundation for the social workers to begin their work. When social workers knew that the project was to work with parents and children, they prepared well and provided useful information and knowledge of parenting skills in the parents' group.

In addition, their understandings on the concept of social capital may facilitate the development of social capital among participants. For instance, if the social

workers knew that they should enhance participants' abilities and encourage them to contribute to their community, they would provide different training and activities for the parents and would encourage the parents to contribute to the community. Furthermore, if the social workers recognized the importance of network building in social capital, they would facilitate the building of reciprocal relationships within the parents' group.

Therefore, it is noticeable that the social workers' good understanding on the concepts of social capital and the objectives could bring positive influences on the development of project. Their knowledge together with suitable methods and strategies could definitely help the project to achieve its goals or develop on the right track.

Superficial understanding negatively affects project development

The social workers expressed that they only had the framework of the project at the beginning phase and also showed their worries regarding the project development. It seems that their initial understanding of the objective and content of the project was quite superficial. They were also required to work out the concrete plan gradually.

Although the social workers could design and alter the plans according to the needs of participants and the progress of the project, negative influence may also be generated. The uncertainty of programme planning may increase the difficulty of implementation and the development of project is thus slowed down. It may be possible that the social workers lost the direction or re-prioritized their tasks. For instance, that the social workers' low priority for community work in the first year may be one of the reasons for the problem in the original "Dim Sum Plan". If the social workers acknowledged the importance of engaging the community and carried out that part of work more actively, the progress of the community-focused programmes may have been much faster. In addition, there were not enough tasks to engage the first year parents during the second year (see the previous chapter) and thus the participants' social capital development was affected. If we further explored this 'failure', the lack of a concrete plan may be one of the reasons. Hence, if the social workers acknowledged the relationship of continued participation with social capital formation, social workers could have a better programme planning. They would have learnt the relevant knowledge and skills they needed as soon as possible.

For the concept of social capital, social workers' descriptions above indicate that

their understanding were quite general, abstract, and at the preliminary level. Indeed, the insufficient understanding of social capital concepts may be detrimental to the development of the project. The relationship formation between the parents' group with company U could be an example to illustrate the observation. Social workers recognized that they should facilitate the formation of bridging relationships between the parents' group and company U. They were able to convince company U to input a lot of resources for the participants. However, they have ignored the importance of reciprocity in bridging social capital. Therefore they spent less time and effort ton facilitating the parents to think about what they could do in return or how both parties could capitalize the existing resources for the benefit of even more people. And the social workers were not aware of their role in facilitating both parties to reinforce the relationship that they just started. As a result, bridging social capital cannot be satisfactorily established between them.

New knowledge transmission in social work practice

In the previous two parts, we recognized the importance of the social workers' knowledge in facilitating the development of project. Nevertheless, we may notice that the social workers seldom carried out literature review or might not

understand the concept even though they had attempted to search for references on the internet. Is this just an exceptional case in this project or a common problem in social work? Indeed, under the influence of managerialism, most social workers work under heavy workload. It is quite difficult for them to spend time to study the related knowledge and concept before or during the implementation of project. Social workers also expressed their difficulties either in spending time to study the concept regularly or even in supervision sections. Yet for the development of the profession of social work, continual education is a must. Below I will suggest how the involvement of university teaching/research staff may help.

“Did you have any chance to talk with F (the supervisor of social workers) about the skill or the rationale of the project?”

“There wasn’t so much. We just met a few times.”

“So, did you have discussion at the skill level or project rationale level...”

“I think we got more chance to discuss the project rationale at the beginning stage. This is because I haven’t been involved in writing the project proposal, but F asked me and SWB to study it. Then we

tried to understand it based on our ability and carried out the project as it is now. Sometimes, my boss would say, ‘you understand the project better than me now’. I think it’s possible.” (SWA_2)

“Do you mean that your discussion (with the supervisor) focused more on the actual practical tasks of the project?”

“Yes!...We even did not have enough time to handle all the daily tasks.” (SWA_2)

To solve this dilemma, support and learning environment should be provided for social workers, so that they have the opportunities to learn and discuss the new concept and its application. We realize that the involvement of scholars from University could foster learning new concepts in this project. Hence, it is much better to incorporate the expertise into practice and to provide more interactive platforms for social workers to gain new knowledge, such as on-the-job training and review meeting. Supervisors of social workers should recognize the needs of social workers and take the initiative to link up the expertise with the social workers.

However, the above suggestions seem quite remedial. If we recognize that social workers should acquire the related knowledge, it is necessary for us to include social capital and related theories in the social work curriculum. Social workers could grasp the concept in more details when they are still under training to be a social worker. The experiences in applying the theories into practice should also been formally archived or documented for evaluation. Consequently, knowledge could be transmitted. This also is one of the purposes of this study.

Apart from social work education, it is recommended that the social workers should be engaged in the project planning phase as soon as possible. Since this kind of project is not often included in the regular services and may not be initiated by frontline social workers. They always need some time to understand the proposal before engaging themselves in the work. As mentioned by the social workers in this project, it was quite helpful to have sharing sessions with the project designers. They could understand the rationale of the project much more and gain the required knowledge as soon as possible.

Attitudes

Apart from social workers' understanding of project as well as their knowledge in social capital concept discussed in the previous sections, social workers' attitude and their belief would also be critical to their input and performance in the project. Coming to this section, social workers' belief in the value of social capital and community-oriented social work practice, participants' abilities to change as well as the value of this project would be explored to see how these are related to the outcome of the project.

The Value of Social Capital

In social work practice, it is important for us to affirm the value of a concept; otherwise it's difficult for people to work devotedly. The key concept applied in this project is social capital. Therefore, we may need to know the social workers' views on social capital. They had the following comments regarding social capital:

“I think the concept of social capital is about care and concern for other people. We cannot see it and cannot buy it. It is invisible. But

it exists in the community. We could not take it and find it from anybody. But it could be used by everyone and would not have any loss after using it. This is an asset...it also needs somebody to develop it. We can explain it in this way: everybody has his/her own abilities and expertise, which is our capital, but not so many people know what they own or are expert at something, and therefore we should find them out and let people use them to help others. Then they get their power, their confidence could be enhanced, and they could have more motivation to help others...”

(SWA)

“Social capital and poverty alleviation have close relationship. We cannot alleviate poverty by giving money...unless we want to look after the poor for the whole life. I think that the rationale of social capital is right - we try to alleviate poverty by facilitating them to support themselves or making use of their own abilities....For instance, the parent participants are now very smart. They know how to find courses suitable for them...they then told others the information of those courses one by one...their networking is

formed and this networking is social capital...” (SWB)

The above descriptions indicate that the social workers recognize the value of social capital which is very important. If they do not believe that the formation of social capital would bring advantages to the participants, how can they carry out the project and facilitate participants’ development in different aspects according to the concept of social capital? However, as mentioned before, the social workers also had their worries about the possibility to apply different aspects of the concept of social capital very well. It seems that, from the above descriptions, social workers could recognize the value of social capital more or have more confidence when they see some successful real cases.

The Value of Community Work

Apart from social capital, to facilitate the generation of bridging social capital, this project requires a huge amount of community work. When asked about their views or their impressions on community work, they made the following remarks:

“I think it is good to encourage the children and families to step out.

They are the ones who really need the community's care and concern.

When we approached the shops, we were aware of (the difference).

We just work there...but it's different for the parents and children (participants). They may walk past a bakery, a newsstand everyday.

Even if they don't buy anything there, maybe a hello...waving hands with and smiling to the shop owner...I think those interpersonal (interactions) are all signs of care and connection.

(However) this is not what we (social workers who don't really live there) can do. But the parents can. ” (SWA_2)

“If we can recognize them (business vendors) or recall their last name, they would feel especially happy...and they (business vendors) will then serve us especially well. Sometimes we brought children to visit them. They would give some gifts to the children. They actually care about those children” (SWA_2)

“Their networks in the community became stronger....They can gain information and understand the community more. The parents agreed that the community they live in is safe. Their sense of belonging is

stronger.... When compared with the time when they did not know (such information) previously, (now) it is very different...they could talk to the shop owners now...initiate the conversation easily....I think it is their asset.”(SWA_2)

From the above descriptions, we may see that social workers recognized the value of community work. After the promotion and implementation of the project in the community, people may care about low income families and their children. The social workers believed that community work could benefit the participants because they would know that there are some people who care about them. This could help increase their sense of belonging of living in the community. In the project, families’ interactions with the community were also encouraged, which also prevented them from being isolated by the society. Moreover, relationship building with business vendors could also bring advantages to the participants, for instance, children got some gifts after visiting the shops. Obviously, the social workers acknowledged the importance of work that involves the community and believed that it could have positive influence to the participants.

Commitment to work that engages community

Whilst the social workers appreciated the value of social capital and community development in the project, would that automatically turn to impetus to the project? Unfortunately the story was not so simple. Towards social workers' devotion to community work, a sense of uncertainty about the effectiveness of community work, one's understanding of what constitutes professional practices, as well as the their understanding of service quality all could be what impede social workers from being committed to community work. When the project was launched for a year, the social workers' own evaluation of their performance in working with community was examined:

“I understand that we need to do more in the community aspects.

Actually I knew that I had to work at the community level. However, community work is not my strength. This was a challenge for me.”

(SWA)

“In (my) experience last year, the time and opportunities paid to the community were not much....Since the initiation of the project, and then to kick off, and then the cooperation with company U...there

were so many things to handle.” (SWA)

“We did not have time to visit the community! We did not have time reach out! We have contacted some business shops and brought the children to visit them. but in the whole Sham Shui Po district, we still have not built up a ‘child friendly’ (environment)....”

The “lack of time” as expressed by the social workers is worth further examination. In their review, they admitted that the time spent on community work, but not the other aspects, was not enough although they believed it was important. Are there any factors that influenced their priority in time management?

Uncertainties in working in the community

SWA’s view of community work as a “challenge” may provide some hint for us.

Why did she have this impression? Would this impression affect the overall outcomes in working with the community?

“I felt quite difficult at the beginning because we were not familiar

with the community, and I thought that the interpersonal relationships within the community were quite distant even though I worked there.”

“That is you didn’t know much about the community after working for many years?”

“Not much, honestly!” (SWA_2)

Unfamiliarity with the community may reinforce social workers’ perception that it’s a ‘hard’ and ‘difficult’ job. Apart from this, the above remark shows how they perceived the relationships between social workers and community. It seems that they have the thought that they do not have a strong relationship with the community they are working in. This perception may also affect their sense of involvement when they carry out community related tasks. The progress may also be slowed down as the exploration of community and launching any intervention go hand in hand.

This project was initiated by a children and youth centre. Rather than working for community development, the targets of their services used to be children, youth and their families. However, the building up of social capital, especially

for the bridging one, should involve different parties in the community. Were the social workers from such a centre ready to take up the services or activities which involve different sectors in the community? The following expressions show their views:

“I think community work is more difficult than the centre-based tasks because it is necessary to have more detailed planning when we work outside, since we could not control all the things. There are many things we do not know well and we are not familiar with. We do not know the business shops. It is different from the staff in the centre, as we already know who they are and their personality....Hence, at the beginning, we have to be prepared to be turned down. It doesn't matter but we have to expect that the effectiveness (of community work) is not very high....You can't control what'll happen then (when you work in the community). So the challenge is bigger. It's different. When you work with those whom we are familiar with, you can tell who they are from their backs. But outside, you are not sure if they'll say no to you and things like that. The challenge is bigger.”(SWB_2)

The above represented the worry of the social workers who viewed that the nature of community work is so different from the other social work tasks performed within the organization. Is it just their misunderstanding or does it reflect certain phenomenon in social work practice in Hong Kong. Below is the view of their supervisor.

“I see that the outcome of community work is unpredictable!...I always deal with the tasks that are in front of me and that are at hand. That’s easier to arrange my time and I can really see them. (Community work) is like doing outreach work. When you go to the community, you’ll have a little hesitation about the colleagues’ performance. They may not be able to meet the quota – there’ll be nobody or you still can’t start your work even when there are some people but you can’t establish a rapport with them. There’re many things you can’t control....I have a lot to do so of course I’ll do those (centred based-tasks).

Social workers and their supervisor' explanations above highlight that the uncertainty is the source of difficulty in carrying out community work. Social

work intervention in Hong Kong always emphasizes efficiency and outcome. Social workers are required to fulfill certain amounts of workload and have some deliverable outcomes. As they mentioned, the centre-based tasks could be handled very well, since social workers could control both the quality and quantity very well. However, it is very different if you work at the community level. In their impression, the outcome and achievement of community work are not easily operationalized and visible within a short period of time.

It seems to be a dilemma in social work practice. Social workers recognized the worth of community work, especially its importance of forming bridging social capital in this project. Nevertheless, they had other obligations too. They may want to spend a lot of time to other easily quantifiable tasks rather than the tasks full of uncertainty. Lacking confidence in carrying out community related tasks 'efficiently' may be another reason for the low priority for community work on their task list

The discussion so far leads us to rethink a basic question - Is community work really beyond a social worker's control and unable to produce significant and observable outcomes within a short period of time? In my experience of social

work training, social work practices may not only emphasize the outcome but also the whole process. Therefore, I would doubt if the social workers really have not brought any impacts to the business shops during the process even though they have failed many times? Therefore, the remarks actually may point out a tendency for social workers to be obsessed with ‘measurable’ outcomes and thus focus on those services which are believed to produce significant and fast outcomes.

It is possible that we are used to the knowledge and skills of a ‘helping’ profession in our training. However, when there is a change in the nature of the ‘clientele’ who is not there waiting to be ‘helped’, social workers may be confused how they can handle it well.

In the above, we could see the social workers’ hesitation in community work due to the worries about the outcome. Fortunately, with more positive and successful experience or feeling, an increase in the social workers’ willingness to contribute their time and energy to the community was observed.

“It is very interesting, after I started to work in the community, I do

not want to put it aside. It is because we strived hard to build up those relationships. If we do not contact with them for a while, those connections would disappear very easily... Children, parents and community are also very important (in our work) because the community is the place where they live in....without the community, the children and parents may still survive...but they may just have connection with one or two parents. In terms of their understanding of the community...they may lose such knowledge...” (SWA_2)

“Now that we’ve successfully kicked off, I think it’s very worthwhile. Before it started, (I was worrying:) ‘Oh, my God! What can I do? Everybody ignores us!’; ‘The shop owner is away’...we have had many trials and errors.” (SWA_2)

A boost to the social workers’ confidence in community work is very important since social capital is not developing only within the service centre. Otherwise, the service would be limited to bonding social capital only. These expressions also highlight the need to provide support and encouragement for the social workers. Even social workers perceive that community work is not an easy task,

if social workers' positive experiences are consolidated and they understand that their works can benefit the service users, they might have the confidence to accept the challenge. However, who would be the one to help social workers consolidate the experiences as well as provide support to social workers? It seems that the agency which initiates this project should be responsible for this. The discussion about the role of agency would be carried out in the next chapter.

Understanding of professional practice

The above discussion points out that social workers' doubts about the difference in the outcome of community-based work and the other centre-based work may discount their commitment. It seems that community-based work was not well incorporated in the social workers' understanding of social work practice. How would that affect their work in this project? This could act as a reference for social workers who would like to join similar projects in future.

When I asked the social workers and their supervisor about their attitudes toward project of social capital development, they had the following expressions:

“I guess we should have more innovative or creative mind. ...We always focus on how to help the client professionally. Now we need to enlarge by let them stand up and help themselves, and let them use the asset to build up the community...” (F)

“Keep ‘letting go’....We now need to ‘go away’. Let them (participants) change from a service user to a service provider....(I) have got this direction that you have to step down gradually which is unlike the traditional social work approach. We have to give them a chance to affirm their own value so that they would not think in a distorted way. We have to give them a chance to develop and use their ability and relationships so that they would not be alone at last...” (SWB_2)

“Yes (it’s difficult to change them to be a service provider). This is because you need to provide with them plenty of preparation time to discuss and think. They need time to know how to work....we may finish it in one minute whereas they may need an hour to get it done. But we should offer the chance to them, and persuade ourselves to

‘let go’ as long as we believe that the picture (of) the outcome is good. If we do not walk away, they will depend on us forever.”

The experiences of F and SWB_2 highlight the aspects which social workers should notice. First of all, we should understand that the objective of social work intervention has been changed from ‘helping/providing services to clients’ to empowerment, especially in this project. Instead of focusing on how to ‘help’ our participants, asset-building, self-help and mobilization of community resources should also be added to one’s understanding of social work practice. To F, social workers should have innovative mind or creativity to prepare for this change.

Second, due to the change of intervention to ‘self-help’ mode, social workers’ understanding on participants should also be adjusted. We used to examine our participant’s situations from a problem-focused perspective so that we can ‘help’ them. But now, instead of reinforcing the ‘worker-participant’ counseling relationships, we should also notice participants’ own abilities and their contributions to the community. Especially for a project on social capital formation, if a social worker is not aware of the participants’ abilities and does

not believe that they could contribute to their communities, we might not have provided enough opportunities to encourage participants' participation. As a result, participants' confidence may not be built up and their connections with different parties may also be affected. A change in social workers' mentality is what we look forward to.

Besides the relationship with the participants, the social workers also mentioned the difficulty in handling the relationship with business vendors in the community.

It's not about the recognition of the programme...Actually their business is not very good either. How can you ask them to offer something (for the programme)? They have many worries. In terms of engagement (with the business sector in the community), that's indeed a big problem. When two of us go out to approach them, firstly it's not attractive and it sounds like taking advantage of them... (SWB_2)

"I think it's easier to pass the task to them (participants)...It is more

difficult (for a social worker to approach the business sector) because you are not giving them benefits...unless they are really concerned about children very much, and their business is very good, some of them could not have enough time to entertain you....So, I feel that the barrier is difficult to pass through. If we ask the parents to go, as the business shops have direct relationships with the parents and we don't stand in the way in their relationships. The shop owners meet the parents of children, directly and they happen to have kids too, then it's easier to start a conversation. I think this strategy is easier.”(SWB_2)

The difficulty expressed by the social worker regarding approaching the business vendors also reflects the professional social worker image in their mind. Approaching the business owners is so difficult to them because they think they were playing the role to ask for benefits, which is quite different from the ‘giver’ role social workers played traditionally. It seems that social workers in this project failed to go beyond this traditional understanding of social work practice. In addition, the perception of “asking benefits” from the business vendors also indicates that social workers have clear understanding on

the concept of social capital. To build up bridging social capital is not equivalent to get advantages from others. Indeed, it should be a reciprocal relationship.

The discussion here is not to disclaim the strategies of involving participants to visit the small business. But it's interesting to further examine the perception of social workers. Is social worker's role only limited to "service provider"? What is the difference between taking advantage/asking for benefits and empowering others to contribute to the community? It seems that social workers did not have much consideration in this aspect before carrying out this project. But after having launched the project for some time, the social workers also seemed to have a change in their understanding of social work practice at the community level.

"Our mindset needs to be change as we need to approach community. I need to bring the community into our project, and also need to bring our project into the community. I think the most difficult one is how to continue to talk even after multiple failures....maybe (we need to) brazen it out. 'Never mind, try

another shop.' I think we should have such energy, otherwise we could not accomplish this." (SWA_2)

"We must be patient, and use both hard and soft tactics...For instance, in your relationship with the parents, you have to be uncompromising. They say no, you must have them do it. (On the other hand), sometimes you have to 'beg' and comfort them, just like treating a child. But our relationships are very interesting. Sometimes, when you're on good terms with them, they will give you "face" (do you a favour) and come and help you. However, some of them really would not. It's very interesting. I feel this human relationship is very amazing." (SWA_2)

I think it is quite difficult for one to do community work if you are afraid of embarrassment or shyness. We really need to have the spirit of 'never give up'....." (SWB_2)

Social workers have found out different qualities required for community work.

Social workers should be patient, persistent and fearless of failure. Social workers should be prepared for the failure when they tried to engage with

different sectors in the community. At the same time, they should have the motivation to attempt continually. The psychological status of social workers in this aspect is quite important. The spirit of 'never give up' encourages them to work with the community as well as find out more effective strategies in community work.

Understanding of service quality

Apart from a change in understanding about what is social work practice and how the worker-client relationship should be, this project also required the social workers to rethink what it means to be service quality. In order to provide "excellent" services, social workers used to "help" the participants as much and as best as they could. However, if we change our intervention to be more 'self-help' oriented, we may need to provide chance for our participants to grow and to have more new attempts. Therefore, social workers should learn how to 'let go' and prepare for participants to help themselves. For instance, social workers should provide participants with more time so that they could have more involvement in programme planning stage. According to SWB_2, social workers should 'let go' and to provide opportunities for the participants to grow. Letting go means believing in participants' ability to

solve their own problems or letting the participants to play a leading role in the project. However, very often, social workers want to ensure the service quality.

Would 'letting go' have any effect on our services quality? The supervisor, F, may provide us with some hints:

“This is a matter of quality of services....I remember very well that in the first year, we put a lot of resources, energy, time, effort and manpower to raise the kids...and then to raise the parents. We all focused on the individual level...What I'm not sure is whether we have taken very good care of our participants so that they depend on us forever...” (F)

“I guess we always have the thought that we have to provide the best, to serve our client with the top quality....But what is 'the best'? It is quite subjective....For example, we are now providing very good care, using an area of almost 1,000 sq.ft. to look after 30 children. To my colleagues, it's necessary.” (F)

F's thought asks us to have a reflection on 'service quality', especially for this

project which emphasized participants' involvement. Is it necessary for social workers to offer the best conditions for the development of participants? Will this enhance the dependency of our participants? If we do not provide plenty of support, will the service quality be compromised? It is possible that social workers may have actually limited the development of the participants by indirectly encouraging dependency. It is important for social workers to have more consideration on this issue, so that we could strike a balance between helping/ services and independence/ development of participants. Most of the participants were deprived of a lot of resources; crisis always happen which may require a social worker's immediate intervention. Hence, to carry out this kind of project, social workers are required to have various intervention skills. However, if social workers are stuck in a counseling relationship with the participants, this may contradict the objectives of the project.

Indeed, the 'insistence' on the best service quality may also affect the arrangement of manpower in the project. The project social workers would like to provide the best services to the participants, therefore a lot of their manpower and attention were deployed to the parents' and children's groups. As a result, their involvement in community related tasks, especially in the first

year of implementation was cut down. Such an insistence to the best service quality may also affect the social workers' choice when and where to 'let go' although the two are not necessarily contradictory.

Changes in social workers' mentality and relationships with participants

In summary, social workers' recognition of the values of social capital and community work have been found to be important. However, that alone couldn't automatically be transformed into their commitment in community work. Their mentality regarding what professional practices should be and service quality could also influence their commitment. There are few implications which we could draw from the discussion in this section.

First of all, it is necessary for social workers who take up this kind of project to believe in the value of social capital and community work. If they believe social capital development as well as community work can improve the life situations of low income families, social workers could have the motivation to carry out the project which is a new attempt and challenge to them.

Apart from their belief, social workers should be aware of the other factors that

may affect their commitment to the work, and hence the outcome of the project.

The feeling of 'hard' and 'difficult' on community work seemed to be the main concern of social workers. Lack of experiences on community work might be one of the reasons which reinforce these feelings. Indeed, how social workers perceive their own relationships with the community they are working in could also be another factor which affects their perception of difficulty. In addition, we may also notice that social workers worried about the 'uncertainty' when working with the community and whether there are 'significant' achievement. All these factors affect their input on the community work. It is worth noting that the worry about the unobservable outcome in community development actually may not just exist in this project but in the whole field of community social work. Therefore, there is a need for social workers to re-examine our own position when we want to work for the community.

In this section, I have tried to identify some qualities in social workers' attitude towards community work and relationships with participants and the community that are conducive to social capital development. Social workers should recognize that asset-building, self help and community resources mobilization are included in the concept of social capital. Therefore, the focus

of social work intervention should not only be at the individual level, but extend to the whole community. Social workers should not just stay in the 'helper/ carer' role or in a counseling relationships that only involved the worker and the participant; instead, we should provide different opportunities for the participants to grow and enhance their mutual help. Social workers are expected to encourage independence (let go) when working with the participants, especially when the project aimed at promoting self help. Thus, while the worry that the social workers cannot provide the best service to the clients is a barrier for them to work more effectively at the community level, it seems that the guidance on how to 'let go' in order to offer community service should be provided.

To accomplish the tasks related to community work, social workers are required to have different qualities, for instance, they should be patient, active, and even fearless in approaching the community. Among different qualities, social workers have to be prepared for failures. Are they taking advantage of the community or are they empowering the members in a district to develop the community by themselves? It seems that social workers should have more considerations on their relationships with the community they are working

with.

Skill

Working with project participants: parents

In the first and second sections of this chapter, the knowledge and the attitudes that are necessary for social workers to implement this project have been discussed. In the third section of this chapter, the skills which social workers should employ will be discussed.

Parents from low income families are the main participants of this project.

When asked about the skills they had used in carrying out the programmes, the social workers first described how they worked with parents:

“(We have a) few roles. At the beginning, we put more emphasis on our role as an enabler.... most of the participants who joined our project did not have so much confidence and thought that they were not so competent. Hence, we had to enhance their confidence in the initial stage. We also let them know that we trust them and let them

have a sense of self-efficacy.... As a facilitator...(we) encouraged them to finish the tasks by themselves...and let them know what abilities they already had. We also helped them to link up and enhance their networks. Afterwards, we started to work at a different level. Now, the 1st year parents have to push themselves to accomplish some tasks, for themselves, for the centre and also for the community. They have to discuss and plan on their own. They even have to prepare the minutes for the meetings. Our role has been changed a little bit. I would tend to be more leading to motivate them. But now I start to stand behind...so, social workers start to be...I don't know whether we can name it as 'collaborator'..." (SWA)

In the last section, we have discussed the need for a change of roles of social workers. Indeed, the change is not just about mentality but should be observable at the practical level. SWA's identified the role that social workers have to play in different stages of the parents' group. In the beginning stage, social workers took up the enabler's role to provide the participants with different training, so that the participants could have better development.

During this stage, social workers often played the leading role in the group or the programmes who were the key planner and did all preparation for the group and the programmes. As the parents gradually participated in the group and programmes, their confidence and knowledge were slowly built up. They were encouraged to have a higher level of involvement in the group and programmes. Hence, social workers changed the role to be the facilitator and provide participants with some guidance so that participants could have more involvement in the group. As parents' participation and involvement increased gradually, social workers turned to be collaborators who always cooperate with them. The parents gradually took up the 'leading role' in the group, and were involved in the process of making important decisions and carry out different function in the group.

It is worth noting that role change of social workers was related to the development of project participants. Social workers' role shift is essential in a group process but it is difficult for social workers to leave the tasks to the parents if they were not ready. However, to what extent should social workers stay behind the scenes and when should the role shift take place? It seems that the time frame and the degree of 'letting go' are quite dependant on the

workers' professional judgment and experiences and there is no universal and simple rule.

How could social worker's decision regarding how and when to change their role have an impact on the outcome of project? We have recognized that relationship building is a key aspect especially for the generation of bridging social capital. Therefore it is important for us to bridge the parents in the group with different parties in the community. However, if social workers have played the leading role in the group for a long period, there is a risk that only the social worker has built up relationships with different parties while the parents are only connected to others through the social worker. When the tasks were not passed to the parents in time, the parents simply did not have the chance to interact with other parties.

In chapters four and five, it is mentioned that the 819 Event aimed to gather the different parties in the community. It should have been a good chance for the parents to link up with these parties such that bridging social capital could be generated. However, the parents did not play a leading role in the event. They were not asked to make contacts or cooperate with other parties before the

event. They seldom had a chance to interact and to get to know each party more in-depth but could only meet different parties on the day of the 819 Event. Therefore it is difficult for the parents to build up better or closer relationships with the other parties. The participants' bridging relationship with these parties was not satisfactorily developed.

In the 819 Event, if the parents took up more leading roles during both the preparation and implementation stage of the programme, they definitely could have more chance to contact with different parties. Their relationships could be consolidated much better. However, the social workers thought that it was not suitable for them to 'let go' and leave the tasks to the parents since they believed that parents were not yet ready at that moment. According to the minutes of management steering committee, members agreed that parents might not be suitable to take up a 'heavy' role in this large-scale programme which required a relatively long period of preparation. Therefore, our discussion here was not to criticize social workers' judgment at that time, but we just queried whether they had missed the opportunities which might bring benefit to the participants' development in social capital? The timing to entrust the participants with the more important tasks is important.

Working with business vendors

Besides working with the parents, this project also required social workers' skills of working with business vendors in the community. During the first year, social workers knew that they needed to connect with some business vendors.

Therefore they visited the shops:

“We did not have (searched any information beforehand). We just walked in. We just looked around on the street. Sometimes you could tell from one's look that they would reject you. They looked so unfriendly. We judged by their look....We would observe their facial expression and then went to asked them baldly. We'd leave our name cards but almost 100% for sure they wouldn't call you back. (SWB_2)

From the above dialogue, we may see that social workers probably should have some preparation before approaching the vendors in shops. They had observed whether there were many customers in the shops and whether the shop keepers were busy or not. Thus, social workers mentioned that they have used their own 'judgement' to predict whether to approach or not. Would their 'judgement'

helpful or not when building up relationships with business vendors? From the social workers' own reflection of their own engagement skills, we could have more understanding on the the overall outcome in connecting with the shops in the first year.

“(We found that we) should start with some soft or indirect tactics.

When you just go to a shop, maybe we should not introduce ourselves right away, but chat with the business vendors about their products and services....For example we can first talk about something else – what're the ingredients of your herbal tea. You can even buy one and then to start the topic. That is to use soft or indirect tactics rather than start with ‘we are from BGCA and we come here for...because we have a project...’ That was our approach initially and it didn't work. But if you use some soft tactics, (the effect) was better. Maybe you have bought something from them or you have asked them something related...and then tell them actually we also have a project. We work in the BGCA...when they have got more information from us, then it may be possible.”

(SWA_2)

The above reflection provides us with an explanation of social worker's failure in approaching the shops. SWA highlighted that they always approached the business vendors by introducing themselves 'formally', stressing their social worker identity and their organization, followed by the content of the project as well as the purpose of the visit. Their formal introduction, however, may have limited their chance to open up further conversation with the business vendors. Business vendors were always distant and took less interest in the content of the conversation. Social workers finally recognized that they should use some 'soft' tactics and the topics they initiated should be related to the business of vendors. This made the shops owners or keepers more willing to communicate with them. The descriptions of SWA indicated that change in engagement skill could lead to a turning point when making contact with business vendors.

Similarly, the supervisor of social workers also indicated that the ability to open up conversations with people coming from different social background could be an important skill in this project. F further elaborated that social workers may be required to step out from the identity of "helping professional".

"I think everyone is able to talk with a non-client who is not to be

helped. Have some understanding of the practices of people from different sectors and how they can be connected to us, so that we can include them to help promote certain concepts.” (F)

“Yes, this is about a sense of the pulse of community, and an understanding of the diverse types of people in a community that we used to have. We have to widen our horizon again. Someone’s concerned about gender issue while another is from the business sector... how to open up the conversation? or can you connect with whoever they are?...I don’t want to use the term ‘skill’. Are they ‘skills’? Maybe we should put down our professional self, so that you could feel free to talk with anyone! But this may be because I’m particularly alert to the ‘professional image’ personally.” (F)

Social workers are trained to be ‘helping’ professions traditionally. We are all familiar with working with our clients. We learnt how to communicate well and build up good relationship with our clients. Thus, for the business vendors in the community, the same ‘professional’ working skills then may not be applicable. The social workers in the project have already provided with us an

example that a formal introduction in a professional social worker's style may bring negative influences on the outcome when we tried to approach the business vendors. It is necessary for social workers to improve their engagement skill by initiating conversations with people of different sectors. To improve this situation, the agency director also suggested to enhance this skill into social work training, her expression supports this claim:

“I guess the social work training now still includes case, group and community work....But if you talk about the ‘skill set’, how to reach out, how to interact with others, it should be an important aspect. For social workers, how to contact with people in different sectors or to communicate with different people in the community?

We should have the motivation to overcome the barriers and talk with them. This ice-breaking skill is the key area. I think, for me and other colleagues, we took up out-reaching work in the past, we could talk to every one, whoever they were. This skill is trainable and is not innate. If social workers need to improve, when they are still students, we should encourage them to have placement on the street, try ice-breaking with strangers, talk and discuss with people

who come from different sectors. This is an essential skill.”

The above comment by the director of the organization recognized the importance of engagement skill, or ‘ice-breaking’ skill for social workers working in a community. We should consider training social workers with this skill that could prepare them to take up related tasks in future. Apart from the enhancement of intervention skill, social workers should also apply the ‘right’ strategy. This is because a good strategy may facilitate the better outcome:

“Have you done something proactively?”

“For instance, we would gather a group of children. They dressed up with cutie clothes and sang Christmas carols when they visited the small shops. We also gave some gifts to the business vendors, for example, our project’s calendar card. (We tried to provide opportunities) for parents and business vendors to have a chat. From the feedbacks by the parents, the business vendors were willing to talk to them and they also thought they cared about the children...”

(SWB_2)

“When we sent the kids to their shops, they were very happy and talked with the kids. And they didn’t need to have any promise for the ‘adoption’. So it’s done very quickly. What we did was just...actually even the plan was introduced by the kids...yes (so what we did was just to ask) ‘would you like to join our project’s child-friendly shop networks?’ or maybe gave some supplementary information about the roles (of different parties). They accepted quickly. It’s different...even in the same shop! (SWB_2)

After some failure experiences in approaching the business vendors on their own, the social workers changed their strategies. They visited the community together with the children and parents. Instead of taking a leading role to talk with business vendors, social workers stood aside and encouraged the parents and children to communicate the business vendors directly. They also had better preparation for the visiting programme, for instance, social workers would first bring the children to walk on the street. They discussed with the children and identified which shops were suitable for the project to connect with. The group would not visit the shop once only. They kept visiting the shops within a very short period of time. The shops they visited were often very impressed and were

willing to communicate with them or even joined the networks of the project.

Those strategies, as mentioned by SWB above, were more useful than the social workers' original five minutes selling plan. The success of this case reminds us the importance of involving participants in the programmes. Without the participation of the parents and the children, the programmes could not have any meaning. Furthermore, we should notice that business vendors may not accept us easily if we require them too much. Therefore, it is better for us to approach the shops step by step and not to give any pressure on the business vendors at the beginning stage.

Working with business corporate partners

In this project, a business company joined as a corporate partner and provided the project both human and material resources. To facilitate both parties' cooperation, it seems that social workers need to have some changes and apply some skills when worked with them.

“Company U...would like to help some deprived children. We also let them know the profile of the participants. But they were very surprised that two families in the project owned their properties.

‘Are they really poor with their own properties?’ They saw parents’ appearances and had some suspicion: ‘Why did you recruit them into the project? They dressed up quite well. They have their nail painted and hair dyed.’ They had these misunderstanding and hence we needed to talk with them, for instance showing them some data. Of course, we didn’t provide with them the whole profile.”

“Our understanding and definitions of poverty is quite different from their business sector view. We could understand the difference in each family’s situation. But the people from business sector may just focus on the superficial...”

“I would let them know the situations of the parents and children and to see whether their ideas are feasible or not.” (SWA)

SWA described the process they worked with the corporate partner. Obviously, in order to facilitate the cooperation, there are two roles social workers should carry out.

Firstly, it is important for us to note that many business companies are willing to contribute their resources to support NGOs and their projects nowadays. Meanwhile, their expectation and requirement are quite high. They emphasize on cost efficiency and are concerned whether their resources are utilized properly. In this project, most staff members from this company are middle-class. They may have some misunderstanding regarding on the situations of the participants. These misunderstanding may affect the trust-building between them and the participants, and may have negative influences on the formation of bridging social capital finally. Therefore, when working with corporate partners or people from different sectors, social worker should take up the leading role to enhance both parties' understanding and provide with enough opportunities to communicate and exchange ideas.

Moreover, since the agency supervisors had some communications or discussions with the company supervisors, they would work out some ideas or a rough plan. As social workers, we are the one who have good understanding on the actual situations of our participants. Therefore, it is necessary for us to act as a bridge to modify their ideas to be practical and enhance the feasibility of the programmes.

“Our colleagues needed to squeeze some of their own time and energy to train up the volunteers.....the problem we faced during the first and second year is related to the concept of poverty, the perception of poverty. (The image) they could associate was the third world, those skinny children with no shoes. In fact, the poor people in Hong Kong are much better than those in the third world....In the cooperation process, colleagues from the company had many queries....Our colleagues then followed their responses to try to communicate with them. I remember one typical example. A group of staff from the middle management level visited the community. We asked our parents to bring them to observe their living environment to let them know different social classes of people. This is a learning opportunities for both groups of people.

Besides acting as a bridge or providing channel for understanding, as mentioned by L, the director of the organization, social workers also need to have another quality when working with people from different sectors:

“As a social services agency, we need to handle these smart donors.

Actually we are happy to see this. It is positive. They do not only spend money but also contribute their time, which implies that they do care about the society. But for us, we are required to do more because we need more time and presentation effort to bring the issue out....That's really a demand to social workers - we cannot be so defensive, we should be open-minded. We should have solid evidence. We could not make any arbitrary decision.”

With the increasing requirements of our donators, social workers should know how to present the participants' situations or difficulties clearly and systematically. We should also prepare the evidence to support our claims. This could help improve our accountability, especially when we are working with corporate partners who would like to ensure where and how their resources have been contributed to.

In this section, the skills that a social worker needs in order to work with the participants, especially parents, with business vendors as well as the business corporate partner are discussed. There are few aspects that we should pay attention to:

Firstly, when working with participants, social workers should be aware that their role should change according to the different developmental stages of participants in the project. Social workers should note that if they do not 'let go' and let the participants have more involvement in the programmes, some bridging relationships between the participants and the other parties may be impeded. The result seems to be contradictory to the objectives of the project. Social workers should recognize that they should avoid being dominant when working with the project participants.

Secondly, it is important for us to note that a 'professional identity' may be a barrier for social workers to approach the business vendors. The discussion about the experiences of working with business vendors provides with us a support to this claim. Obviously, we should learn to be "laymen" not just at the attitude level but also at the skill level. Social workers should re-examine their working relationships with people who are not their 'clients' originally. Social workers should be equipped the ice-breaking and communication skills for different people. Those 'worker-client' communication style or those formal professional social workers' expressions should be used less. To facilitate their work with the business sectors, it seems that social workers should change their understanding

of what a professional social worker should do as well as equipping another skill set.

Besides working with business vendors, it seems that social workers should play multi-role when working with business corporate partners. We may notice that this is the first time for both parties to cooperate. It is possible that misunderstanding may appear. To avoid this or reduce the negative influences, it is important for social workers to provide more opportunities for different parties to communicate and enhance the understanding. In addition, social workers should act as a bridge to turn the ideas by the agency and corporate partner into some concrete and feasible plan. Social workers are responsible to provide clear and detailed presentation to the corporate partner, so that they can ensure where and how their resources are used.

Working on the project which aims at promoting social capital is not an easy task. Unlike the traditional social services which only serve one or two target groups, social workers nowadays need to cooperate with people who come from different backgrounds. Different skill sets are required. Thus, have social workers already prepared for this change or ready to take up this challenge? It

seems that the support provided for social workers in this project was not enough. They did not have any channel to learn and practice the skills before carrying out this project. Is there any action that should be taken to improve this situation? Who should be responsible for this?

In chapter two, I have mentioned that 'social capital intervention model' did not exist and social workers did not have any guidelines to follow. Indeed, the detailed discussion in this chapter regarding the value, attitude as well as skills for social capital intervention may be useful for social capital intervention model building.

Conclusion

With reference to the discussion in this chapter, we acknowledge that social workers should be equipped with different kinds of knowledge and skills for social capital development. They should recognize the value of social capital and community work on improving people who are suffering from poverty. Besides, social workers also need to open up their mind to take up the challenge. They should learn how to 'let go' and put down their 'professional' status or authority.

All these requirements cannot be easily fulfilled.

However, such discussion is seldom involved in traditional social work training.

Social workers in this project could only learn from their own experience. To better equip social workers for social capital intervention, it is suggested that those discussion and skills learning discussed in this chapter should be included in the social work training. Through these, social workers have the chance to learn the knowledge and skills, they could identify whether the strategies are effective or not, and have more understanding on the concepts and the value that they should uphold. This study ends up by suggesting the building up of social capital intervention model, which provides a reference for social workers who may work for social capital development projects in future.

Chapter Seven – The Role of Organization in the Development of Social capital

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have identified the role of the programme content and competence of social workers in the outcome of social capital development. In this chapter, the role, support and resources that the organization provided for the project and their influences on the entire project would be analyzed. To achieve the purpose of this chapter, representative of the organization, including the director of the organization (L) and the centre supervisor (F) who directly supervised the two project social workers were interviewed. Their participation in this study may help us to have a more comprehensive understanding on the input to the project from the organization.

This chapter is divided into five parts. The conditions for the organization to start the project on promoting social capital development would be discussed in the first part. Afterwards, the operations and influences of project steering committee would be elucidated. In the third and fourth parts, the value of

collaboration between the organization and the university and the virtue of project among the regular services would be discussed. Implications drawn from their experience would be suggested in the last part, which could serve as references for other organizations planning or initiating a social capital intervention project.

Rationale of Organization

The last chapter has identified the importance of social workers to have the knowledge of social capital and to share the belief in working with community and the worth of social capital generation when they work for the project, which also apply to the organization level because the resources and support an organization is willing or can afford to provide for the project may be related to the outcome of the project. From the sharing by the director of the organization (F), we could understand more about the value of the organization:

“In fact, we miss the old Hong Kong very much. Shops in the neighborhood were very familiar with each other. Therefore parents and children could have some care and guidance in the street, which

is different from now when people's relationships are so distant. We observed that Sham Shui Po is an old district, quite compact, so we started up the project there. The district where the centre is located has the need and the features of an old district and that was the first factor that we chose this district." (L)

'Miss the old Hong Kong', 'old district' as well as 'neighborhood' show that the director treasure the value of community, which is an indication of the organization's belief that neighbourhood relationships should not be distant. People living in the same community should look after each other. Social capital is a concept emphasizing on social relationships, hence, an organization with a vision that involves the element of social capital should be the primary condition for them to carry out a social capital formation project. If an organization's rationale does not go with the concept of social capital, it is hard for them to implement such projects.

"They also recognized the importance in the approach of working with parents. Social workers should facilitate their development. Hence we started up the project." (L)

To build up social capital among low income families, an effective way is to approach parents. It is because the development of the social capital of parents can benefit children and the whole families. Hence, the project staffs' recognition of the approach of working with parents should also be an important condition for the centre to start the project.

“The intergenerational poverty is our organizations' strategic direction and so we must tackle it, this is related to the rationale of our organization.” (L)

Besides the recognition the value of working with parents and the community, the most important factor which encourages the organization to initiate the project is its strategic direction for poverty alleviation. The commitment to help the people who are suffering from poverty, as suggested in L's remarks, could be the motivation for the organization to initiate the project.

Indeed, there are different ways to alleviate intergenerational poverty. Why did the leader of the organization choose this project among the others? How did the leader understand on the relationship between social capital and poverty

alleviation?

“I think the definition of poverty may not only refer to material deprivation. Sometimes, people are suffering from economic or material deprivation. Sometimes, they are suffering from social or emotional deprivation. If you use social capital’s dimension to define, different aspects would have different deprivation...we use multiple deprivations as the definition for poverty.” (L)

The illustration from L identified organization’s understanding on the definition of poverty. Using multiple deprivations as the guiding concept implies that they had a comprehensive grasp of the concept of poverty. The knowledge in poverty could enhance its understanding on the situation of low income families and also affect their choice of strategies in tackling poverty. The organization would not only focus on improving the financial or material situations of the service users, they are also concerned about their social lives. Moreover, they also recognize that people’s interpersonal relationship is the key element in social capital. The examples L mentioned also support this claim:

“Even though we lack materials, we could still survive by seeking

support if you have enough friends. For instance, a father would like to take up a part-time job, but then he needs to pay child-care services which he cannot afford. But if he knows many friends, he may not need to buy the service since his friends might help. They have little financial capital, but their social capital can help them. Parents may need to spend money to buy toys for their children. Thus, if you know there are some social centres where children can play many toys, you do not need to spend money to buy toys. They get more information regarding community resources and they could effectively use those resources to help themselves.” (L)

“People were willing to be the mentor of the children of their friends and provided learning opportunities for them. Unfortunately, poor people may not have some friends who can act as a mentor and provide extra resources. Most of their friends may also be poor so how can they help their friends’ children? On the other side, people who come from company U or the business sector, they are never connected with the poor. Then even though they have different opportunities to offer, they cannot reach this group of people. This is

our role; we should link up the chances from business sectors with the people in need. Then, social capital, in this sense could be transformed into financial capital.” (L)

The two examples highlight two important dimensions in social capital. The first example shows that the recognition of the leader in an organization of the importance of social network is the key element of social capital and its benefits. The second example implies that the organization also noticed the importance of bridging social capital and it could be formed by bridging the poor to people from different sectors. These understandings could act as the guideline for the organization to ensure that the project is launched on the right track. Apart from their knowledge in social capital, the organization also recognized the virtue of social capital in improving the situations of low income families. The following expressions could provide us with some evidences:

“Social capital also affects people’s quality of life as well as their happiness. This is because I would feel happier if I have many friends and have the feeling of togetherness and the sense of

belonging...If parents are rich, their children can go to tutorial class to learn English...if they are poor, since they got to know P08 in our centre, P08 could teach them after she finished her study. That means even they do not have the financial capital, their social capital can provide with them other resources which may help reduce their financial needs...foreign studies also show that good social emotional skill can bring the impacts on employment opportunity...” (L)

“If children only stay at home and parents always punish them, they won’t be happy and they would feel bored. If they go out to play with other children happily and interact with other adults, I believe that their performance at school as well as their image on the peers and teachers could also be improved. They could integrate in the mainstream society easily and can gain more chances.” (L)

Obviously, the organization recognized the virtue of social capital on improving low income families’ living conditions. For instance, social capital enhances quality of life; improves people’s abilities to find job as well as bringing

positive influences on children. This recognition could encourage the organization and frontline staffs make more efforts to work on the project.

Preparation of the Organization

In addition to the organization's sharing the rationale of the importance of social capital, organization's previous experiences as well as its history in community work may also affect whether the starting up of the project is smooth or not.

“The centre has carried out a pilot project. The passion of the whole team of colleagues in tackling the problem of poverty was being nurtured as early as then. Meanwhile, society or the whole social environment was also concerned about poverty as well as intergenerational poverty. They could also observe the problem in the community. Their passion and their tendency to work with parents and children group together have been developed from their previous experience in working project which alleviating poverty. These are very important (for the start up of the project).” (L)

The centre which carried out this project is a children and youth centre. The workers have been used to mainly providing developmental services to children, youth and their families. The staff may not have the passion to tackle the problem of poverty. As mentioned by L, the centre had the experiences in carrying out the pilot project which also aimed at tackling the problem of poverty. The experience could raise the passion of the staff to concern the issue of poverty. The more understanding on the problem of poverty results in the more understanding of the situations of the low income families. Workers' passion on poverty alleviation could also be nurtured. Hence, the pilot project could prepare the workers and the whole centre by opening up their mind to work on the problem of poverty. The pilot project may also have speeded up the project SSPCFN as the staff was ready.

Selection of Social Workers and Provision of Relevant Training

In the last chapter, we have analyzed the quality of social workers who are deployed to take up this project. We knew that the knowledge and skills of social workers may influence the outcome of project. Did the organization also notice these influences? The selection of suitable worker to take up the project

indeed may also be one of the key factors that affect the whole development and outcome of the project. The organization has the responsibility to train up the workers so that they could be equipped with the required knowledge and skills.

“F and I had a discussion on the requirement of our staff. We have voiced out such as working experiences related to child care and parenting...” (L)

“He/she should have the thought to make new attempts and willing to take up responsibility. She also should not start from zero but had the understanding regarding the situation of centre and the context of community. Since SWA had the experiences in working with families supporting services, and hence she took up the job finally.” (F)

From the above explanation, we could see that the management of the organization intended to assign the job to workers who had experiences in working with children and families. From their point of view, these social workers also need to have the basic understanding on the organization and the

community. Together with experiences and knowledge, social workers should have an innovative mind and readiness to take up new tasks. Besides these basic requirements, the organization should also provide social workers with training to enhance workers' understanding of the rationale of the project.

“Among our steering committee, one of our core members, G, offered child care training for the two workers; T, another core members, also offered training to our staff....We wanted to make sure we did not only tell them about the contract (for the project), rather we would tell them an outline how they're going to do, how to carry out the project concretely. Hence, we took staff orientation, the on-going training and on-going discussion very seriously, and make sure our mindset are more aligned.” (L)

The training provided a chance for the social workers to align with the ideas of the steering committee members. As mentioned in the last chapter, frontline social workers were not involved in the project planning, the provision of training and channels for communication is necessary.

“The steering committee had carried out assessment very quickly and found that our staff had not taken up these tasks in their original job duties. Then T trained up the social workers immediately, so that they could bring the parents to the community. They should not only focus on in-group, but also need to go outside, communicate with people in the community and invite people to join our project...”(L)

“I find that the social work training in Hong Kong...social workers seldom own all the related skill sets....Social workers in our project need to take care of children and pre-school students, need to do parent work as well as working on community development. Everyone has his/her strengths and weaknesses. That you are good at doing this may not imply that you are also good at doing other tasks. We should also accept the shortcomings....” (L)

In spite of the fact that social workers who were to take up this project had the experiences in working with children and family, the project steering committee noticed, however, as mentioned by L, that two social workers did not have all the skill sets required, especially skills in working with the

community. Therefore, T, as a member of the project steering committee, provided immediate training for them. L believed that this may be the shortcoming of social work training in Hong Kong in which most of social workers usually focus on particular one or two types of skills rather than a comprehensive skill set. The insufficiency of social worker training is a structural problem and can only be remedied by improving the social work education. Thus, at the project level, are there any strategies that could be used to reduce or avoid the negative influences? The idea by L may provide us with some hints:

“How about our staffing if we are to repeat the project again? We need some workers who are good at working with parent and children in the first and second year. For the second year....the worker who has a background of working in community development and is familiar in outreaching can bring those trained parents to start the community work. The development could be faster. But now, we have the same staff to follow the whole project from the beginning to the end...the requirements are not simple but very high...we should try our best to do....” (L)

L expressed that if the organization carries out the project again, in order to improve the development of project, there should be some changes in the staffing. Instead of having the same people for the whole three-year projects, L would like to recruit social workers who are relatively strong in working with community during the middle stage of project for faster development of the project

The suggestion by L is worth noting. The staffing strategies could be one of the crucial factors that affect the development and outcome of the project. Even though the organization is willing to provide relevant training to their staff, if the staff already has the required set of skill, it will certainly be an advantage for the initiation of the project to initiate and efficiency can thus be enhanced. Hence, it is better for the organization to consider the staffing issue carefully.

Organization's Connections with Different Parties

Social workers who took up this project are required to work with different clienteles or people with different backgrounds. Indeed, organization's relationships with different parties in the community may help facilitate the

development of project:

“We are familiar with how the system of primary school operates and their status.....We linked up those relationships we had already had in the community and we tried to explore ways to enlarge the network. For those schools, we try to realize, try to put the concepts in operation, and hence, we produced ‘the child-friendly partner’ schools.....To produce a child-friendly community, we have tried to link up different local organizations and invited them to join this project.” (F)

“We should locate our position in the context of the community. That means we should have a sense regarding the combinations of and the variations in the community, and need to think about how to generate more contacts.” (F)

The organization plays a key role in facilitating the development of social capital among participants, since it can link up those low income families with different networks through the programme intervention. Hence, previous experiences of working with children and families as well as continual relationships and

cooperation with schools and other organizations may be the required conditions for an efficient project development. If not, the organization may need to put a lot of effort on the mobilization of different parties to join the project and the progress may be slowed down. In addition, it is better for the organization to have a good understanding on the context of and the role of the centre in the community since this understanding could help frontline social workers to explore the possibilities of extending more networks.

Besides those parties which the organization has already been connected with, social services organizations often look for extra resources from new sectors to improve the condition of the service users. Another main feature of this project is its collaboration with people and company of the business sectors. The organization already had some experiences in inviting business companies to contribute their material resources, but the cooperation in this project was not just limited to the level of the contribution of material resources, but also involved the contribution of human resources. Look for and building up strong relationships with people or companies to build up social capital wer necessary. Hence, it is worthy for us to taking a closer look at how the organization made contact with the business company.

“Suddenly, they approached us within a short period. At that time, I listened to their intention very carefully. We might not fulfill their needs since we have our own purpose. We serve children but not corporations. Companies are only partners with whom we should have a negotiation process. Very often, from our social services headquarters’ point of view, we are in equal partnership.” (L)

“Firstly, we as a social service organization, we should take a look whether we share similar aims. We could only discuss further if we can match. For what programmes we should carry out, we may consider both sides’ readiness. We were quite open and not restricted relatively.” (L)

The account from L above shows that the organization had a relatively clear position cooperating with the business sector. The organization understood that the relationship with the corporate as an ‘equal partnership’. The first priority of the organization is to serve the service users, in this case children, rather than the corporation. It is very important for the organization to uphold this attitude. We should pay careful attention to the intention of business companies, whether they

approach us voluntarily or those we intend to approach. Although we wish to utilize their resources and to build up bridging relationships with them, we should ensure that a company shares the same/ similar aim coincident with us and will not bring any negative influences to our service users. Social service agencies always play the role of gate keeper and bear the responsibility to protect and serve the people in need. We should make sure the effort we put could bring the greatest benefit to our service users.

Moreover, it is very important for the organization to maintain communication with the corporations through which the organization can get to know if there is any change in the situation of the corporation. Such information can help the organization to examine whether there is a need to change the format of the partnership and the expectations of each other. For instance, it is better for the organization to notice the high turn over rate of the company and to examine how the rate affects the outcome of a pen-friends programme. After this evaluation, the organization could revise their strategies in facilitating the development of bridging social capital among the participants and the overall outcome may be improved.

Project Steering Committee

In this project, the organization input different kinds of resources to support its implementation. Apart from the tangible resources and human resources from the centre, a project steering committee has been formed to steer direction and to provide supervision and support to the project. The project steering committee consisted of the organization director, services supervisor, two scholars from a university as well as two frontline social workers. In the first year of implementation, the committee had meetings every month. For the second and third year, committee members still met every two months. The composition of the committee as well as the frequency of meetings imply that the organization paid much attention to the project. Simultaneously, the committee played a vital role to facilitate the development of the project. After the three years' implementation, what influences the project steering meeting brought on the project? Did it really function well? The following sharing may provide us with some ideas:

“The steering committee should provide steering control and the direction, and make sure that the direction is right. Since, we may be

influenced by the daily busy tasks, we would discuss the rationale of the project every time we met and made sure that we are not going to a wrong way....Through the meetings, we could keep refreshing our mindset and the value. This is very important as colleagues sometimes may feel lost especially when they have a heavy workload. Hence, the steering committee meeting could provide them with a chance to re-organize, to examine and to monitor whether the project was implemented on the right track.” (L)

“I guess the project steering committee play a key role to ensure the project is carried out in the right direction.” (F)

“Yes, I felt lost at the initial stage. It is quite difficult to understand what they said, since I did not understand the concept of social capital much. How to develop it? How to build up interpersonal networks among people....Now, we need to discuss how to finish the project, how to strengthen the parents to step forward to the second stage. I think they take the leading role which helps us to look up to the future direction.” (SWA_2)

“The project steering committee is very useful. This is because we had the route to follow and know how to do....At least we know we need to gather the first year parents to form a club...to establish parents’ initiatives. We only had to take a look and listen to what parents discussed from time to time. The worker did not lead the meeting every time. We could know more about this because we had been talking about the formation of parents club for a year...”

(SWB)

All the members from the organization agreed that the committee carried out the leading role could ensure that the project is implemented in the right direction. We may find that social workers did not understand the ideas of the project very well at the beginning phase. Thus, the committee meeting provided social workers with a platform to understand the project and its rationale much more. During the meetings, social workers reported the progress of the project and the committee members exchanged their opinions. Then social workers got to know how to carry out the project in the next step.

When frontline social workers upheld view points different from the committee,

this mechanism is essential as it acts as a channel for the management and frontline staff to communicate. Frontline social workers carried out the programmes every day and they had more understanding on the actual development of the project. Thus, for the members at the management level, they knew which directions the project should go in so that the objectives of the project could be achieved very well. There is the possibility that a gap existed between the two sides:

“Two scholars from university, my team, me, supervisor and two key staff have different points of view. Therefore, we should have a mechanism for all of us to communicate, so that we would not go far away. A steering committee then fulfilled an important function.”

(L)

“For the community visit, I said we could not find the business shops to join our network, they then asked us to try to bring the children to visit the shops and take some photos. The linkage could then be created. Indeed they were very supportive...” (SWA)

“They (members of the steering committee) would think that the parents in the parents club were mature, so they asked whether we could pass a programme for them to organize. They told us to let parents plan the 819 event. I think they were not mature enough to go to this level. It was not suitable for them to take up this huge programme....the participants had the experiences to hold outing activities, organized and thought about the games by themselves, so we could pass them to take up some events now. But if you asked the participants to plan about the whole process, how to involve the community, the participants didn't try before...they could uphold a small size activity but not the programme so large in scale. How would the participants feel if they were really to take it (the 819 event) up?” (SWA_2)

From the above descriptions, we could see that there were some gaps existed between the members of the project steering committee. Sometimes the frontline social workers did not know what the other members wanted or did not think that the opinions from the members of management level were feasible. The discussion on the 819 event that SWA_2 highlighted recognized

the value of the project steering committee meetings. The members at the management level thought that in order to build up clients' self-help ability and develop their bridging social capital, the parents should take up heavier role in organizing the programmes for the 819 events. Thus, the frontline social workers believed that the parents might not be ready to take up the tasks since the 819 event was quite large in scale which involved the whole community to join. To solve this dilemma, all members of the committee have to discuss sincerely and clarify their expectations.

Besides open and honest discussion in the meetings, indeed, services supervisors had a significant role to enhance the understanding among the members:

“I look like a middleman who can bridge the frontline workers with the others. The frontline workers may find certain problems in the operation, while the committee can provide some help from outside or can redefine the problem. However, the discussion on these always cannot be carried out. All of us were very hurry...the time space for all of us are quite tight”

“After the meeting, have the two workers told you that they did not understand the content of meeting?”

“They haven’t. We would turn to discuss the daily tasks.” (F)

“Very often, F helped us to talk back(駁回) (support social workers’ argument and help social workers to voice out their difficulties). For the 819 event, F said it was not feasible if the parents took up the whole programme. This is because we already input the whole team of our colleagues, many volunteers and parents...the programme with good outcome....Actually we have asked whether we could scale down the event and pass the programme to the parents. But then, the effect of the programme on gathering up in the community may not be so strong...”

“So F took up the role to adjust the expectation in the committee?”

“Yes, of course.” (SWA_2)

“We discussed with F and asked her to clarify (if we don’t know how to do concretely after the meetings). If she did not know, she would ask L....Since she also took part in the meeting, she would

also help us to clarify the thought...” (SWB_2)

Two frontline social workers indicated the significant role of services supervisor, F, during and after the meetings of project steering committee. Even F thought that she has not functioned very well; two social workers agreed that they could receive suitable support from F. F could act as a bridge to help them clarify the situations of the project during the meeting. Since F was involved in the project planning phase, she had more understanding on the the project than the two workers. If social workers did not understand the ideas of other members very well, she would explain to the social workers and thus improve their understanding.

In this section, we have discussed how the project steering committee operated. This is also not a unique case that different opinions arise from different members. Therefore, we should find a way to reduce the negative effects brought about by these differences on the project. From the experience of this project, it is worth setting up a project steering committee. The committee provided communication channels and members in the committee could carry out their own function, for instance, approval of the services and provision of

training. All these can help the project develop better and faster.

Collaboration between the Social Services Organization and University

In the previous two sections, the provisions of on-the-job training by the organization and the operation of the project steering committee in a social capital development project have been discussed. It is apparent that academic members from university made a lot of efforts to facilitate the development of the project. When asked about the virtue of this collaboration, the organization director highlighted some of the advantages in the below:

“I think the collaboration is quite good. This time the academy and non-government organization joined together to apply for a funding.

I think their expertise and their knowledge from the university could provide us with very good support. They could intervene and provide training to our staff immediately....As non-government organization, we bridge the resources in the community and we gain a lot of new support to carry out the project. We also put the theory into the practice or transform it into some programmes to implement.

We are very impressed.....We evolve and develop further based on our practice. If we succeed, we could refine the approach and a new version could be made.....we really build up the knowledge, and link up the knowledge with practice.”

“If you did not have this collaboration, we would not have a practice ground or a field to ‘farm’ (work from the beginning) and to study.”

(L)

L indicated that the involvement of scholars in this project could provide the organization the knowledge or on-the-job training on concepts and theory for the project. Besides, the collaboration facilitated the whole development of social services or social work intervention. During the process, knowledge and skills that were drawn from the theories were integrated into the practice. Both organization and scholars could testify the theories and the approach and consolidate the experiences. This could contribute to the social work practice. F, the service supervisor also noticed the virtue of collaboration. In order to maximize the value, she examined the collaboration to see if any improvement should be made:

“.....how they (committee members) bridge or consolidate the experiences so that the colleagues could have development is another issue. It may not be very perfect...I think we do not have enough space to...we lacking time, we could not concentrate to consolidate...we did not have any retreat to discuss during the second year” (F)

From the views of F, it seems that there was not enough time for the members to have more in-depth discussions on the variations happened in the project or to consolidate the experiences gained from the project. In terms of the frequency of the meeting, the project steering committee met every month or every two months, it is hard to say whether the meetings are enough or not. However, the meetings were always used to discuss the programmes or the tasks which would be carried out within a short period. In order to monitor the progress of the project, it is not possible for the committee to give up these discussions.

To solve this situation, it may be better for us to determine the content of the meetings more carefully and to schedule some meetings especially for

reflecting the development of the whole project. We should consider the actual needs and how to effectively utilize the resources of the committee we have.

Impact of the Project on Regular Services

The organization had input both human and tangible resources to facilitate the development of project. What can the organization get I return. Did the project bring any impact to the organization?

“We hope we could include those good elements gradually into our regular services at last...we should try new strategies and carry out new projects. If the parents group is very effective and if the after school caring service is necessary, then we should examine our services and make sure our daily services could cover these. Then we can further advise, step forward, to explore whether there is any new intervention model that can enhance the services...” (L)

“I think the project could mobilize the development of the whole team (of social workers). They could step forward....This process

(involving in the project) also opened up their (other social workers) mind to develop a community perspective to understand poverty, to lead their youth to understand the meaning of poverty, and also to inspire themselves to think about their contributions to the community....Many networks have been built up in our teams.” (F)

It is obvious that both L and F recognized the value of the project. They believed that the project bring positive influences especially on the level of staff development and the improvement of organization services. Through participating in the project, the understanding and attitude of community work and poverty alleviation of the staff have been changed. Workers are more willing to mobilize resources from the community and bring their service users to care about community. Social workers will probably change their intervention approaches to become more community-oriented. At the organization services level, the experiences they gained from the project can help the organization and the workers identify some effective strategies and approaches which could be used in the future.

Through carrying out this project, we got to know the importance of parents

group in social capital development among low income families. We also understood that the children group was the entry point to attract the families who were in need to join the project. Following the point of view of L, if these successful strategies and approaches could be integrated into the regular services, the quality of the services could be improved. We can believe that more service users could be benefited. In summary, it seems that not only the project participants benefited from the project, the project also brought some advantages to the development of organization, staff or even future service users.

Implications and Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analyzed what and how the vision, mission and past experience of the organization affected the development of the project. The operation of the project steering committee and its value has also been presented. The value of the collaboration between the organization and the university as well as the project has also been discussed. From these discussions, we see that the organization played different roles and should carry out different tasks during different developmental stage of the project.

To initiate the project, the organization should first consider whether social capital concept and poverty alleviation are what they are committed to. If the organization did not set an agenda for tackling these issues or they did not acknowledge that the importance of social capital in their services, the project could not be launched easily and the staff of the organization might not be ready to take part in it.

Secondly, the organization's experience in carrying out similar projects could be seen as an advantage for starting up the project. According to the opinions of L and F, we may see that the pilot project carried out an important function to raise the consciousness and concern of the staff to work for people who are suffering from poverty. Therefore, for organizations without related experience, it is necessary for the organization to examine the readiness of the staff before starting up the project and see if there is any need to find a way to warm up or train up the staff, so that the project could be launched effectively. Having a pilot project could be one of the means.

Besides, the organization should also examine their relationships with different parties in the community carefully. If the organization have clear

understanding on its position in the community and the dynamics of community, it may be much easier for the organization to link up existing networks, to expand the networks and to explore different kind of resources, especially such projects emphasize a lot the formation of bridging social capital. In addition, the organization should always maintain and develop relationships with different parties. The accumulation of the organization's social capital may not only benefit to this project, but also other development in future.

In this chapter, the issues about staffing and the provision of on-the-job training have been discussed. It is necessary for the organization to make clear and right decision on staffing before starting up the project. Apart from this, the organization should play a dominant role to assess the competence of social workers continually throughout the project as different skills are required in different stages of a social capital development project. If there is a need to change the workers or involve different workers with different sets of skill, the organization should be aware of the influences that the decision may create on the progress of project and the project participants. The provision of on-the-job training should be well-timed, so that the workers could have equipped with the essential skills when the time has come so that the project can be carried out

smoothly.

Project steering committee consisting of the management, frontline workers and outside advisors (e.g. scholars) is absolutely essential in the aligning the expectations at different levels and project management. The meetings always provide a channel for the members who come from different levels to communicate. It is a combination of top-down approach and bottom-up approach. The long and detailed discussion regarding the committee supports this claim. It was found that collaboration between university and organization can be very useful in such projects, especially many workers have confusion or misunderstanding about what it means to be social capital. University scholars could help by clarifying problems at the theoretical and conceptual level. Such collaboration could also promote the organization to have a better integration of theory and practice and improve their existing services.

For an effective committee that can serve the above functions, the organization has to make an effort to ensure that every member in the committee is willing to communicate openly and honestly. A clear and definite division of labour, and organized meeting agenda and schedule, are needed for different members

to play their role effectively in the committee.

Apart from the acknowledgement of the project steering committee and the collaboration between the organization and the university, the impact of the project on the organization is also recognized. The project can contribute to social work practice by exploring different approaches as well as expanding social workers' horizons to the community level. Sharing sessions to the frontline social workers within the organization could be one of the ways to help reflect and consolidate their experiences of this project. It is believed that the evaluation of this project as well as the summarization of the knowledge and skills could act as a reference for other agencies or social workers who want to carry out projects that promote the development of social capital. Thus, it is worthy for the organization exploring different methods to facilitate their learning after the project.

Chapter Eight - Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I have delineated the concept of social capital and its importance as well as traced the development of social capital among the participants of the project SSPCFN. I have also examined the influence of various factors in the outcomes of social capital development, including the programme content, social workers' knowledge, attitude, and skills as well as the organization's preparation and strategies. In this chapter, I will summarize the findings of the present study with a proposed intervention model for social capital development. Implications of the findings and recommendations for social work practice and further study will also be discussed.

Summary of Findings

The Development of Social Capital

In this study, I explored the outcome of a project, Sham Shui Po Child-friendly Community Network (SSPCFN), which aimed at developing the social capital among low income families by looking into the progress of the development of social capital of the participants (parents and children). Social capital consists of

different forms including bonding, bridging and linking social capital. The development of different forms of social capital was studied and compared.

Bonding social capital

In Chapter Four, I traced the development of bonding social capital by analyzing the change of social networks, norms of reciprocity as well as particularized trust among parents' group. I found that most participants were quite dependant on their own families when they first came to Hong Kong. Parents of their children's schoolmates acted as the only support network outside family before joining the project. Although nearly half of them received CSSA, the support from formal institutions was merely tangible and very limited. Hence, the participants' support networks had been quite weak. After joining SSPCFN, an expansion of their social networks was observed. They got to know more people and became more familiar with the other parents of the project. Participants could receive various kinds of help when they were in need. The project brought positive effect on the development of social networks.

In this study, the participants endorsed norms of reciprocity in relationships. They would like to repay others after being helped. They were also willing to

help if they were able to do so. The help offered was not only limited to those they were familiar with but also to people they might not know. In general, they did not consider any return before providing help to others. However, some participants had the expectation that people would return to them if they knew each other or had the abilities. However, the norms seemed to have been rooted in their mind for long as they always expressed that “it is instinct” and “do it automatically”. which increased the difficulty to identify the effect of the intervention of the project in reinforcing the norms.

Although we could not be sure to what extent or whether the norms of reciprocity were strengthened by the project, we found that the project provided condition for the norms of reciprocity to develop. A sense of ‘ability’ (or self-efficacy) was often emphasized to be the pre-condition of for offering help in the study. After joining the programme, participants always showed more confidence to interact with others and to help others. The sense of “ability” they gained through participating in the project could help the participants actualize reciprocal relationships. In addition, through the programme, participants got to know and interact with more people, and had many chances to join different voluntary services. Therefore, their norms of reciprocity seemed to be practiced

in a wider community as well as in more forms.

It is evident that particularized trust was built among the parents' group. Parents were often divided into small groups to carry out different voluntary services. Parents became more familiar with each other and were willing to share their personal or family matters with others. Their mutual understanding was thus enhanced. The project therefore provided participants the opportunities to develop their particularized trust.

To summarize, most participants have expanded their social networks through the project. While they may already have endorsed norms of reciprocity in their mind long ago, the project provided more opportunities for them to practice it in a wider community and particularized trust was also enhanced. These suggest that the bonding social capital of these participants was developed through joining the project.

Nevertheless, there were differences in the formation of bonding social capital among different participants. A few participants did not build up 'good' bonding social capital and they were less likely to make contacts with others. This

difference might be due to the different level of involvement of the participants in the project and the design of the programme content. It seemed that for those first year participants who had less involvement during the second year, their interactions with the other members of the parents' group were limited and their relationships with the others became weaker.

Bridging social capital

Bonding social capital sometimes could only provide participants limited help and may not bring much improvement on their situations given that the people involved come from similar backgrounds. Therefore, I also examined the development of bridging social capital in this study to understand whether the participants could reach more resources to improve the quality of life. The development of bridging social capital were explored by examining the participants' norms of generalized reciprocity, generalized trust, civic engagement as well as their connections with the community and a small-medium enterprise which was a partner in the project.

It was found that the participants were willing to help people they were not familiar with. The kinds of help they offered to others were not limited to

manual work. They were willing to contribute money if they were able to. The participants shared the norms of generalized reciprocity.

Most of the participants came from mainland China. To study their generalized trust, I explored their perception of Hong Kong people. I found that those participants who had been cheated tended not to trust other people in Hong Kong. Participants who had the perception that Hong Kong people did not accept and understand them might have greater difficulty in building up generalized trust on Hong Kong people.

Fortunately, most participants thought that Hong Kong was a safe city. They trusted the government institution could protect them when they were in need. These perceptions helped develop their generalized trust. Besides, the projects also provided participants with many opportunities to connect with other people in the community. For instance, they got to know more business vendors during the community visit programmes. Participants became less isolated. The positive experiences in connection with others that these participants gained through the project, thus, seemed to be the turning point for the participants to build up generalized trust.

Civic engagement shows one's connectedness with the community in which they live and thus reflects the bridging social capital one possesses. In order to explore the participants' level of social capital they possessed, I examined their awareness of what is happening in Hong Kong, the policy or political issues and their political participation, and expression of opinions in public before joining the project.

Most participants expressed that they got to know the local news and current affairs by reading newspaper and watching television. These habits indicated that the participants were concerned about the city and were connected with the city. Some participants even expressed an interest in current affairs or political issues which should be one of the important foundations for them to have more civic engagement as they started to connect with the city they live in and show their concerns about the development of the city.

Meanwhile, it is as well important to note that some participants lacked basic knowledge about Hong Kong, for instance, some participants did not know which public transport serves people who live in Yuen Long. Participants also seldom paid attention to or were not concerned about policy or political issues

in Hong Kong. They thought that they did not have the ability to influence the policy. Even for those who were concerned about current affairs and had their own thoughts and opinions, they seldom expressed them in public. Some participants expressed that they would sign a petition but would not take part in any political rally. It is obvious that their level of civic engagement was relatively low before participating in the project.

After joining the project, the participants have shown some changes in civic engagement. They had a chance to know more people. Through interacting with others, they have acquired more basic knowledge and information about Hong Kong. That they started to be aware of what is happening in Hong Kong should be a key milestone for them to have more civic engagement in future. Moreover, through participation in the programmes, the participants always became more confident and had more courage to express opinions in front of others. The programmes in the project acted as a catalyst through which the participants were empowered and their participation was facilitated.

In this project, participants got the chance to build up initial relationships with business vendors in the community they lived. Although they always felt

nervous when they just started to approach the shops, they became more familiar with the business vendors after a few attempts and the experience made them feel less isolated. After gaining some positive experiences through community visits, the participants were more willing to contact with others whom they might not know before and were willing to reciprocate. It seemed that the foundation for the development of bridging social capital has been formed.

In addition to business vendors, the participants also built up relationships with many school partners. They had different collaborations with the schools, for instance, programmes of story-telling and English funny playground from which the school partners, the students as well as the participants all could benefit. Bridging social capital was developed and capitalized at that stage.

Apart from the interactions with different parties in the community, the participants were also connected with a corporate partner, company U, which was a local small-medium enterprise. Company U provided plenty of tangible resources to the project such as financial and material support and their staff also tried to build up initial relationships with the participants. However, the coordinating role of social workers was not performed well. Participants and

staff of Company U only got the chance to meet in a few activities. It seemed that the relationships between the staff of company U and the participants were quite weak. The development of bridging social capital in this aspect was not so satisfactory.

Linking social capital

Linking social capital is seen as a special form of bridging social capital or the vertical dimension of social capital. People who have more linking social capital indicate that they could leverage more resources from the formal institutions or those who have power. In this project, the participants only built up initial relationships with schools and the business sector. The development of social capital was mainly at the micro-level and meso-level. The participants failed to enhance or just to sustain their connections with different parties or residents' organizations in the community.

I have elaborated above the development of different forms of social capital amongst the participants in the project. It was found that not all the forms of social capital were uniformly developed. In particular, the bridging social capital was developed better within the community, such as with the school

partners and business vendors, than outside the community such as company U.

The development of bonding social capital was better for the participants who continued their involvement in the second year of the project. In the following I will continue to summarize the factors related to the varying degrees of development of social capital.

Factors in Social Capital Development

To have a comprehensive understanding of different factors that would influence the development of social capital, I have also explored the programme contents of the project, which reflect the purposes of the association and types of group membership. In addition, I have also examined the influence of the social workers and the organization that led to the outcome of social development.

Programme contents – family vs. community focused

Family-focused programmes and community-focused programmes were two parallel channels to enhance the development of social capital among the participants. The parent participants of low income families attended the parents' group once they joined the project. The parents' group was the main programme

that focused at the family level. It provided a channel to exchange information, thus helped to enhance the parents' understanding of community resources and increase their job opportunities. Training which aimed to enhance parents' knowledge and skills on child care and communication skills were also provided. Through the training, the parents became more confident and more outgoing. They developed a sense of 'competence' and they were willing to connect and interact with others. This also could prepare them to build up bridging social capital. Different kinds of recreational programmes were also provided, through which the parents could relieve their pressure and enjoy life. Besides, the parents in the group would help each other which led to a series of voluntary services. Parents had the chance to contribute to others and society. Their norms of reciprocity could be practiced in a wider social circle. The networks they built also provided different support to them in return. It is obvious that the parents' group set up a good foundation for the participants to develop their social capital.

During the second year, the parents' group was gradually developed into Parents' Club which was a significant step for the development of the participants and the project. The participants could have more chance to organize programmes and interact with others more directly. The formal establishment of Parents' Club

allowed the participants to build up relationships with different parties more easily and helped the participants to consolidate the social capital formed. The relationships the Parents' Club built up with other parties could last longer. The core members in the Parents' Club' also created modeling effects for the parents of the second year and third year.

However, the high withdrawal rate among the first year parents brought negative effects on the development of social capital in the Parents' Club. Lack of corresponding programmes that could stimulate the continuous participation of parents and fulfill the needs of parents could be the explanation for the high withdrawal rate. This indicated the importance of effective strategies for the development of social capital.

In addition to the parents' group, a series of community programmes also provided different opportunities for the participants to build up bridging social capital in the community. Through the programmes with schools, which included story-telling in kindergartens, parents' sharing and English funny playground in primary and secondary school, the parents built up reciprocal relationships with the schools. Different community resources were mobilized to

support these programmes. Their confidence and communication skills were enhanced. They also gained the experiences of cooperating with people from different sectors, which facilitated the generation of social capital. Similar effects were also observed after the participants visiting small businesses in the community.

While the above programmes seemed to be successful in building up social capital, the others did not perform as satisfactorily. For example, the participants also had the chance to connect with a corporate partner, Company U, which offered various kinds of activities to the project participants. However, the reciprocal relationship between company U and parents was not well established. The former often played the giver role while the latter always acted as the recipient. Besides, a lack of direct interaction opportunities between the two parties also limited the formation of bridging social capital among the participants.

Similar limitations were also found in the 819 Event, which was seen as a major programme to consolidate the development of social capital. Although the parents played an active role on the event day, they did not have many

interactions with the other parties involved in the programme. Their relationships with people of the other sectors might not last long after the event. The outcome of bridging social capital development therefore might not have been achieved satisfactorily.

It was found that the content of programmes played a key role in facilitating participants to build up or sustain relationships with different members. In the project, the outcome of the family-focused programmes seemed to be better than those community-focused ones. In the following I will explore the other possible factors that may have played a role in it.

Social workers as key facilitators

After exploring how the content of different programmes could have influenced the development of social capital, I also have examined the contribution by social workers. The knowledge, attitudes and skills that a social worker should have were analyzed and discussed.

It is recognized that social workers' sufficient understanding of the purposes and contents of the project, and the concept of social capital was important for

carrying out the project effectively. For instance, when social workers clearly understand that social network was the key element in social capital, they would be more able to design and launch corresponding programmes to facilitate the building up of social networks among participants. On the contrary, the project development would be adversely affected if social workers only have superficial understanding. Since social workers did not recognize the importance of community work in the first year, the progress of “Dim Sum Plan” as well as the development of bridging social capital were not satisfactory.

Apart from knowledge, social workers’ attitudes towards this project, social capital and community work were analyzed. It is worth noting that although the social workers of the project recognized the value of social capital and community work, their attitudes towards those tasks affected the performance of project. For example, the social workers were a bit hesitant and shy to reach out to business vendors in the community as they did not consider that a “usual” practice of a social worker. When they worked with the participants, sometimes they were also stuck at their role of a “carer” or a “helping” professional to make all the contacts with the corporate partner. As a result, the

participants seldom had the chance to make contacts with others directly, which made it difficult to leave more space for the participants to build up relationships with others. Their bridging social capital may not have been built up as expected. . This was especially noteworthy in the development of bridging social capital.

This study highlighted the importance of a variety of skills that social workers should be equipped with when working with people from different sectors and at different stages of the project. During the initial stage social workers needed to play the “enabler role” and be involved in the programmes more. As participants have gained more skills in communication and working with others, as well as having more confidence in themselves, the social workers’ role should become less dominant, so that participants could have more chance and be more involved in the project

Social workers needed to demonstrate different skills when working with the parents and with business vendors. The skills for “helping” others may not be very useful to engage the business vendors. Social workers should develop new ‘ice-breaking’ or engagement skills set to facilitate relationship building, such

as finding out some topics that interest the business vendors to start up a conversation, rather than sticking to the “professional” or “helping” issues. Social workers should provide more chances for the parents and the business vendors to communicate and facilitate their mutual understanding. On the other hand, social workers also need to have good negotiation skills so that they could act as a bridge to actualize or modify the programme plan of the company and organization supervisors. This is because social workers are the ones who have better understanding of the situation of the participants. In addition, to improve the accountability and let the corporate partners know where and how their resources were spent, presentation skills are also important for social workers to have good preparation and provide some concrete evidence to present the situations of project participants clearly.

Organization's support

In chapter seven, I discuss the organization's support which affected the development of the project. It was found that the recognition of the value of social capital and community work by the organization, and the willingness of the organization leaders to contribute efforts and resources to facilitate the development of project and staff training were conducive to the success of the

project. Moreover, good preparation was needed to initiate the project. Pilot projects were found to be very useful in getting the colleagues prepared. The organization's connections with different sectors in the community would also be an advantage for the project to develop. As discussed above, facilitators played an important role in the project. Staffing and training thus could be seen as the most important issue that the organization should handle.

Furthermore, the setting up of a project steering committee and having regular meetings were also found to be useful in monitoring and ensuring the project was running in the right direction. Both board members and frontline social workers recognized the value of the project steering committee.

Intervention Model for Social Capital Development

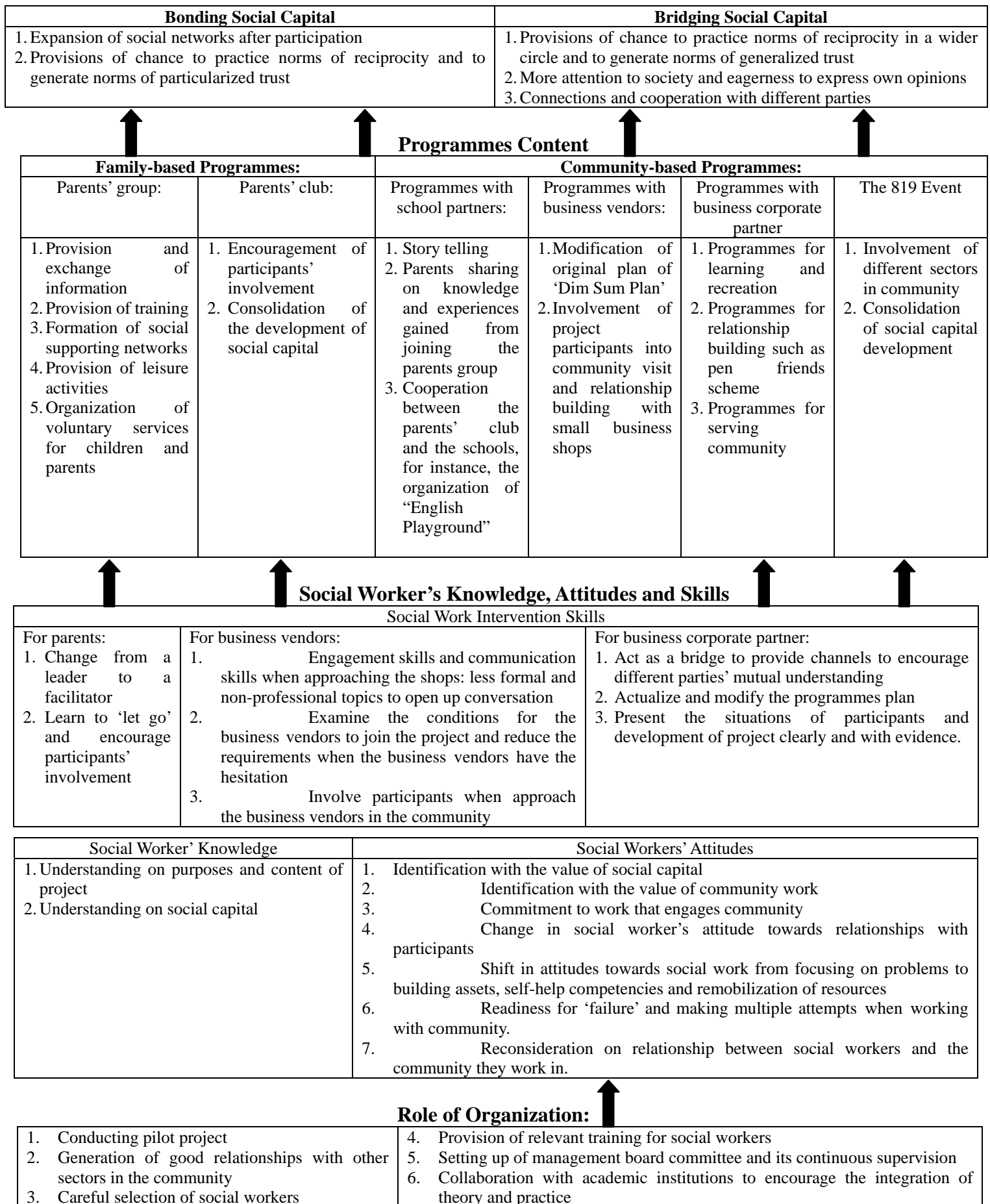
In this study on the development of social capital among participants of SSPCFN, I found that various forms of social capital have been developed in varying degrees. The programme content of the project could bring influences on the outcome of project. Since social workers were responsible to design and carry out the programmes, it is apparent that social workers' competencies should be

the main concern when considering social capital development in which the support by the organization is also essential.

However, as observed in this study, the present social work practice training might not have provided social workers with enough knowledge and skills to take up such a project. Social workers might not be ready or aware that their mindsets or attitudes should have some changes. When the workers were not well equipped, there may be negative effects on the development of project.

One of the possible solutions is to include those knowledge and skills into social work training and practice. In chapter two, I mention that there has not been any social capital intervention model for social workers' reference. Hence, it may be better to formulate a model for further practice. Figure 1 below presents a proposal of an intervention model for social capital development based on the findings of this study.

Figure 1: Intervention Model for Social Capital Development



Implications and Recommendations

I have just presented an overview of the development of social capital in the participants of the project and examined the factors that may have played a role in it. It was found that participants have shown growth in certain forms of social capital while further improvement in some others, especially linking social capital, is still expected. Social capital is gaining attention in society nowadays as it is regarded as a potentially effective way to help the poor without extra cost or causing unnecessary discrimination. Projects on building up social capital for different target groups, such as low-income families, youth-at-risk, women, elderly, homeless people..., have been launched.

There has been controversy regarding the concept of social capital and how to apply the concept to social work intervention. As a researcher with social work training, I have been fortunate to have the chance to study the literature in depth and reflect the application of the concept in real life. I hope my documentation of the experiences of different parties in the project; one of the first of its kind in Hong Kong, as well as the proposed intervention model could shed light on generating knowledge and skills for further practice and

research. Other than the proposed intervention model above, I will discuss the implications and recommendations below for the understanding of social capital and the implementation of intervention on social capital development.

On “Understanding of Social capital”

In this study, it was found that the participants’ social networks have been expanded, their norms of reciprocity were being practiced in different ways and the particularized trust was formed among the project participants. All these indicators showed that participants’ bonding social capital was being developed, suggesting that the project facilitated the formation of bonding social capital successfully.

However, we could not ensure whether the norms of reciprocity were stronger after participation. The short duration of study may be one of the explanations. Moreover, it may be possible that the norms of reciprocity were not studied deeply or the method to study the change of norms may not be adequate. Therefore, we may need to further explore a more suitable method for assessment. Besides, it is also important to note that after participating in the association or in the project, different dimensions of social capital of

participants seemed to have different developmental trajectories. Some dimensions had better or clearer development whereas some of them may be more inconspicuous. Therefore, there is a need to explore whether some dimensions of social capital could be developed easily while some may need to take more time or even have to make a different kind of effort.

In the literature review in chapter two, I have discussed different arguments regarding the role of association in social capital formation. Associational involvement could be seen as a major source of social capital. In this project, we could consider parents' participation in the group or the club as a kind of associational involvement. The findings concerning the development of bonding social capital also indicate that the participants' level of involvement and the design of programme content affected the outcomes of social capital development, which confirms the role of associational involvement on social capital formation. However, mere involvement or participation in association might not imply that social capital could develop well or come out naturally.

The purposes of the association (parents' group in this study) and the type of its membership were two factors that affected the development of social capital. In

addition, it was found that the objective and the strategies of every programme, as well as the continuous involvement and the level of involvement in the parents' group would also bring different levels of influence on the formation or development of social capital. This adds to the understanding of social capital by showing that both the level of engagement in the parents' group or club (association) as well as the time spent on activities should also be considered as important factors which would affect the development of social capital.

Indicators of bridging social capital include norms of generalized reciprocity, generalized trust, civic engagement and participants' connections with community and people of different backgrounds. The findings show that most participants shared the norms of generalized reciprocity. Besides, it is important to note that positive perception of people in a wider social circle as well as a feeling of being accepted are some criteria for facilitating the formation of generalized trust. Social workers should be aware of these criteria and therefore consider whether the programmes of the project could provide the chance for people of different social circles to build up positive perception on each other and promote mutual understanding, which may help facilitate the formation of generalized trust.

Through the intervention, the participants had more chances to practice their norms of reciprocity and trust, their social networks were extended and bonding social capital could be formulated. We noticed that bridging social capital could be generated by modifying certain parts of the programmes or intervention skills. In this study, we found that the participants had the potential and tendency to participate more. Hence, to facilitate the development of civic engagement further, more channels and opportunities should be provided for participants to encourage them to make contacts with the community and people of different backgrounds. It is also worth noting that participants were connected with different parties within the community successfully but more efforts should be made to mobilize the resources among these parties; otherwise, the aim of building up bridging social capital cannot be well achieved.

The participants' linking social capital could not be generated through joining this project. It may suggest that this form of social capital requires more time for its development. In addition, the strategies to generate linking social capital may be different from that for building up bonding and bridging social capital, which should be explored further in future research.

On “Social Work Intervention”

This study, other than trying to gain more understanding on the development of social capital, also aims at giving practical suggestions on the implementations for social work intervention. Social workers nowadays always have the opportunities or challenges to carry out some projects by applying certain theories and concepts borrowed from the West. Social capital development is just an example. The concept first arrived in Hong Kong without any local practice guidelines. Social work practitioners therefore have to make an effort to study the concepts deeply and critically and use their creativity to create some action plans to integrate those theories into practice.

However, under the heavy workload, it may be quite difficult for frontline social workers to have adequately studied or to learn the required concepts and theories before taking any action. Most of them could only learn from the practice. As a result, the outcome of the project may not be as satisfactory as expected. Therefore, based on the empirical findings of the study, an intervention model is proposed in Figure 1. Below I will further discuss the issues related to the implementation of social work intervention on social capital development.

On “Programme Design”

As illustrated in Figure 1, family-focused programmes and community-focused programmes of SSPCFN brought influence on developing bonding and bridging social capital among participants. It was found that the programme design was an important element to facilitate the development of social capital. For instance, the family-focused programmes encouraged participants to connect with other participants in the group whereas the community-focused programmes encouraged people to make contacts with people of different backgrounds. Bonding and bridging social capital were thus gradually generated.

Clear objectives and appropriate strategies of programmes would bring positive outcome of social capital development. However, mere “participation” may not be enough to facilitate the development of social capital. The extent of participation should also be considered. Participants who were more involved and participated continually showed a better development in their social capital. Therefore social workers should consider whether the programmes could encourage participants’ continuous participation. The element of continuous participation of the programme does not only provide participants

with more opportunities to be involved, but also helps maintain the relationships participants built up with people of different walks of life. The need for more interactive elements and the provision of more channels for all the parties to have more contacts are identified as key features of the programmes for building up social capital.

On “Social Work Training, Practice and Belief”

The findings confirm the existing literature that facilitators in an association could carry out an important role in encouraging social capital development among association members. It can be seen from Figure 1 that social workers definitely play an important role. Their knowledge, attitudes and skills all have significant contribution to the development of social capital. Based on the findings in this study, we find that the knowledge, attitudes and skills stated in Figure 1 are essential for social workers to carry out the programmes for social capital development more effectively.

It was found that the development of the project as well as the generation of social capital may be negatively affected if the workers concerned did not acquire enough knowledge about social capital. The findings also reveal that

current social work training may not cover the knowledge for carrying out this project. Social workers also expressed that they may have difficulties in gaining the required knowledge about social capital concepts before or during the project implementation. In response to this situation, it is necessary for three parties namely social workers, organization as well as social work institutions to take corresponding actions.

Continuous professional development seems to be the most effective method to ensure the quality of social work practice as well as the outcome of the project. Besides, the supervisor of the organization could notice the needs of the social workers and provide support and relevant training for social workers. Academics in college could also play key role by providing training for practicing social workers, such as some practice workshops or seminar on social capital theories and community intervention skills for social workers.

The collaboration between organizations and academic institutions is very important and should be further encouraged. In the longer term, the concept and knowledge on social capital should be emphasized in social work training, so that social workers could gain the required knowledge and have more preparation before taking up this kind of project.

The collaboration between the organization and the university in this project highlighted the importance of integration of theory and practice in social work intervention. The participation in this project by scholars helped facilitate frontline social workers' learning and practice. Meanwhile, the practical experiences of frontline social workers also helped the scholars to examine what skills are needed, to what extent the intervention has been effective or the applicability of the concepts in the local context. This win-win situation is highly recommended.

The advantage of having social workers identifying with the value of social capital theory and community work and committed to community work is obvious. It is impossible for social workers to facilitate the participants to make contact with different parties in the community if they simply do not recognize the virtue of this approach. Therefore, it may be better for the supervisors of the organization to consider deploying social workers who have similar beliefs for such projects.

Moreover, it was also found that social workers have to pay attention to their attitudes towards community intervention and social capital intervention,

and relationships with participants during the project implementation. It is better for social workers to prepare for failure and ready to go through many trials and errors when working with the community. Open-mindedness and a collaborative approach are also important. Social workers should remind themselves that they no longer provide social services to “help” their clients. Instead, what they have to do is to provide the opportunities and space for participants to develop and build up their own relationships with people of different backgrounds.

What a social worker has to do varies with different stages of the project. It is important for social workers to make appropriate decision on performing different roles during different stages of the intervention. They should not take up the dominant role once the participants have developed the basic skills and sense of social capital. Social workers also need to be equipped with multiple intervention or engagement skills when working with people of different backgrounds as the people they worked with in the project may not be their original “clienteles”. Social workers’ broker role is very important in social capital intervention as we have to link up the participants with various kinds of resources.

On “Organization’s Back-up”

As shown in Figure 1, the organization played an important role which nurtured the development of the workers, the project and the social capital of the participants. The recognition of the value of social capital and the willingness to set up the agenda to promote social capital formation among participants by the organization implied that more resources and support could be provided for the project as well as the social workers by the organization. For instance, the project steering committee was set up and staff training sessions were provided in this project.

Past experience of the organization and their connection with the community were also crucial factors that may have influenced the overall outcome of the project, especially when the organization would like to facilitate the formation of bridging social capital. Those previous experiences may help prepare the social workers in working with different types of people and the knowledge and skills on social capital development. For organizations that do not have relevant experiences of carrying out similar project, it may be necessary for them to prepare well or build up good working relationships with different parties in the community before initiating such a project. Better relationships

with the community may also help facilitate the project's continuous development.

On “key factors conducive to development of social capital among low income families”

In this study, factors which affected social capital building have been identified through exploring the development of social capital among participants of SSPCFN. It has been found that the content of the programmes, the social workers who carried out the project as well as the organization responsible for the project may all affect the outcome of social capital development.

Amongst the factors listed above, if we try to explore further, “social worker” seems to be the most important catalyst to facilitate social capital formation. Based on this study, a list of suggested requirements for social workers on social capital intervention is shown below:

- ✓ Clear understanding on the project aims

- ✓ Knowledge on social capital concepts
- ✓ Readiness and skills to work with various communities
- ✓ Readiness and skills to work with people of different backgrounds
- ✓ Ability to conduct suitable programme plan and modify the programme contents if needed
- ✓ Ability to seek supports from the organization and to carry out continuous evaluation to ensure the social capital development project is going on the right track.

The above list which this study generates could be seen as the factors or qualities of a social worker that could help develop social capital among low income families. These factors could also be used as a reference for the training and education of social workers in future and could be further consolidated and expanded through continuous practice.

The Road Ahead

To conclude this study, I have shown the experiences of the participants, social workers and the organization in a project on social capital development for low

income families. An initial proposal of a social capital intervention model for low income families is presented. The importance of social workers' training, attitude and skills, organizations' support and design of programmes has always been emphasized. Nevertheless, all of these areas have not been integrated as an intervention model systematically by previous local studies, and thus this study could be seen as an initial attempt. It is recommended that different experiences of social capital development should be documented and examined continually, so that the knowledge and skills for social capital intervention could be further developed.

Further exploration of the usefulness and applicability of the proposed model in different settings and clienteles such as young people or people who are unemployed is necessary. It is expected that further intervention strategies would be added. In addition, given that a wide spectrum of skills are required for social capital development, further studies may also focus on how to train up social workers for carrying out social capital intervention and evaluate its effectiveness. Last but not the least, this study only focused on social capital intervention at the project level. As mentioned in chapter seven, can this model be included into 'regular services'? How to include this model and

what impacts the model can bring? All these areas could be further explored.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview Guides

Participants

個人資料部份

- 1) 出生、年齡、教育水平
- 2) 婚姻狀況、家庭狀況、子女狀況
- 3) 居住、經濟、工作
- 4) 親友社交、與不同人的關係
- 5) 參與計劃前的生活
- 6) 認識及參與計劃的由來

計劃部分

- 1) 家長的參與情況
- 2) 家長同計劃內不同人物的關係
- 3) 家長曾參與的活動及觀感、計劃舉行的時間、地點的觀感
- 4) 家長、小朋友參加了計劃對計劃本身、社區帶來的影響

參加者部份

- 1) 對家長自己所帶來日常生活、生活意義的影響或改變
- 2) 對小朋友所帶來日常生活、生活意義的影響或改變
- 3) 對家人、其他人士所帶來日常生活、生活意義的影響或改變
- 4) 對家長與小朋友的關係、照顧小朋友方法的影響或改變
- 5) 對家長自己與其他人士的關係、日常生活的影響或改變
- 6) 其他

社會資本部份

社會網絡

- 1) 正規、非正規
- 2) 網絡大小及空間、開放/緊閉

信任

- 1) 朋友、計劃內的人
- 2) 陌生人、提防
- 3) 社會、政府

互惠

- 1) 即時報答、將來報答(受助後)
- 2) 即時回報、將來回報(助人後)

公民參與

- 1) 參與、留意政治活動
- 2) 參與、留意社會民生有關的活動(社會福利、不同政策、經濟、醫療健康、整個 社會動態)
- 3) 參與其他團體的活動
- 4) 公開表達個人意見

Representatives of Business Corporate Partner

籌備階段

- 1) 當初係如何開始同小童群益會建立合作伙伴的關係?
- 2) 如何選擇/決定去投放資源在《兒童友好》計劃上, 有冇一 d 先決條件是企業會優先考慮?

企業層面

- 1) 貴公司在計劃內有舉行過活力體驗之旅, 活力講座, 聯合利華豐盛同盟天地, 筆友仔, 聖誕大聯歡等等的活動...出錢出力, 其實是不是貴公司第一次以這類的模式同社福機構合作? 如果係第一次, 感覺係點樣? 如果之前有其他類型的, 這次的經驗同之前又有 d 咩唔同?
- 2) 社福機構好多時都會有機會同不同的商界的企業攤資源去幫助弱勢社群的, 但係哩次你地除左在資源上提供協助之外, 亦都有好多同事參與在不同的服務/活動當中, 你點睇哩個經驗? 同就咁提供錢/物的幫助有 d 咩的分別?
- 3) 由於合作模式不是純資助, 其實在企業層面在人力資源管理方面, 曾經作過一 d 什麼的配合? 在同事方面, 又有冇引來一 d 不同的回響?
- 4) 由於合作模式不是純資助, 與小童群益會之間的溝通應該可能係更加緊密, 咁哩方面, 當中有冇出現過一 d 困難? 如何解決?

個人方面

- 1) 作為筆友仔，你自己點睇哩個活動？
- 2) 你點樣形容與小朋友的關係？
- 3) 你點樣形容同計劃家長的關係？
- 4) 你自己在參與哩個計劃裡面，除左付出之外，有冇一些得益？

總結+未來

- 1) 整體上，你點樣形容你地同事，同計劃及計劃家長的關係？
- 2) 你覺唔覺得大家可以存在著“互惠互利”的關係？
- 3) 你覺得家長/小朋友可以為你們/社會作出一 d 什麼的貢獻？
- 4) 來緊的計劃？會唔會再繼續在資源及人力方面支持計劃？為什麼？

Social Workers

服務對象

1. 服務對象的社會資本的發展的評估
2. 服務對象的其他方面的發展
3. 對於計劃的參與者,你覺得他們有沒有什麼轉變?這些轉變是在那些方面呢? 爲什麼會有這些轉變呢?
4. 你信唔信服務對象是有能力成長?

計劃層面

- 1) 成功的策略
- 2) 需要改善的地方
- 3) 成功的因素
- 4) 發展不理想的原因
- 5) 計劃的成效：
 - 低收入家庭
 - 兒童
 - 社區
 - 其他群體：商戶，學校及青少年
- 6) 再有機會去攪的時候, 有邊 d 活動係應該繼續, 有邊 d 是可以放輕一 d?

7) 對整個計劃在社區，服務對象的評價？

社工層面

1) 你點睇社區工作？

2) 執行這些計劃，社工需要什麼素質或訓練？

3) 對自己表現的評價，強項/弱項

4) 在執行這個計劃的時候，你有沒有遇到一些困難呢？這些困難是什麼呢？你最後如何解決呢？

5) 將來再去實行這些計劃時，有些什麼需要注意/正視？

6) 試下舉下一 d 例子，是在這個計劃內曾經運用的技巧？

7) 工作種類及時間的分配？

8) 時間充足了，效果理想了？

9) 督導足唔足夠？在咩情況下才會求救？

10) 對管理委員會當中每人的角色及評價？

社會資本

1) 計劃需要有什么內容才有助提昇參加者的社會資本？

2) 社區工作與社會資本的關係

3) 對此概念的理解

4) 對此概念的評價

Organization Director/Supervisor

- 1) 當初如何決定找哪一個同事負責? 社工同事需要一 d 什麼素質及訓練, 如: 態度/價值觀; 知識及技巧方面?
- 2) 對同事表現的評價, 在態度, 價值觀; 知識及技巧等三方面的強項/弱項?
- 3) 單位去籌辦這類計劃的時候, 有沒有一些先決條件, 亦曾作出什麼配合, 有沒有必需的配合是有利計劃的發展?
- 4) 機構的文化, 如: 過往點睇同商界的合作或者過往服務類型的傾向, 單位在地區的狀況, 對計劃所帶來的影響(正面或負面)?
- 5) 同事出現時困難時如何作出協助, 曾經有過什麼協助, 有沒有定期的督導時間, 督導是否足夠?
- 6) 同事經常都有提過有咩時間出去做一 d 社區工作, 究竟同事的工作量係點樣? 佢地除左計劃之外, 還有沒有其他方面的工作, 係一 d 咩類型的工作, 大概佔了同事幾成的時間?
- 7) 作為機構的督導主任, 你點睇哩一類的獨立計劃, 相比起正規的服務, 這些計劃的價值在邊度呢? 機構提供了 d 咩的支援予這類的計劃?
- 8) 在計劃層面, 你認為成功的策略, 需要改善的地方及其原因是些什麼? 將來再去執行同類計劃時, 有 d 咩需要去注意?
- 9) 服務對象的社會資本的發展的評估?

Appendix II: Profile of the Informants (Background)

Participant

Interviewees who joined the first year of the project:

Code of Interviewees		Year of Immigration to Hong Kong	Marital Status	Housing Type	Financial Status	No. of the children
1 st round interview	2 nd round interview					
P01	/	2003	Married	Public Housing	Low Income	2
P02	P02_2	1997	Married	Public Housing	Low Income	3
P03	P03_2	2002	Married	Public Housing	CSSA	2
P04	P04_2	1997	Married	Public Housing	Low Income	2
P05	/	2005	Married	Private Housing (Rental)	Low Income	1
P06	P06_2	2002	Married	Public Housing	Low Income	2
P07	/	Born in HK	Divorced	Public Housing	CSSA	1
P08	P08_2	2004	Married	Private housing	Low Income	2
P09	/	1997	Married	Public Housing	CSSA	2
P10	/	1999	Married	Public Housing	Low Income	1
P11	/	2005	Married	Private Housing (Rental)	Low Income	2
P12	/	2003	Married	Private Housing (Rental)	CSSA	2
P13	/	2005	Married	Public Housing	Low Income	1
P14	/	2000	Divorced	Private housing (Rental)	CSSA	2
P15	/	2000	Married	Public Housing	Low Income	2
P16	/	1967	Divorced	Public Housing	CSSA	2

Interviewees who joined the second year of the project

Code of Interviewees		Year of Immigration to Hong Kong	Marital Status	Housing Type	Financial Status	No. of the children
1 st round interview	2 nd round interview					
P17	P17_2	2005	Married	Private Housing (Rental)	Low Income	1
P18	P18_2	2000	Married	Public Housing	CSSA	1
P19	P19_2	2003	Married	Public Housing	CSSA	3
P20	P20_2	2003	Widowed	Private Housing (Rental)	Low Income	1
P21	P21_2	2005	Married	Public Housing	Low Income	1
P22	P22_2	2004 (Two-way Exit Permit)	Widowed	Public Housing	CSSA	2
/	P23	2005	Married	Private Housing (Rental)	CSSA	1
/	P24	Two-way Exit Permit	Married	Public Housing	Low Income	1
/	P25	2006	Married	Public Housing	CSSA	2
/	P26	2001	Married	Private Housing (Rental)	CSSA + Low Income	2

Other Types of Informants

Types of Informants	Position	Code of Interviewees	
		1 st round interview	2 nd round interview
Representatives of business corporate partner	Human Resources Director	UON	
Representatives of business corporate partner	Human Resources Manager	UVW	
Social workers of the project	Project In-charge	SWA	SWA_2
Social workers of the Project	Assistant Project In-charge	SWB	SWB_2
Supervisor of the social workers	Supervisor	F	
Director of the organization	Director	L	