

Exploring the Masculinities of Young Men in Hong Kong

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Executive Summary

In 2019, The Women's Foundation commissioned the authors of this report to conduct an independent study to investigate the masculinities of young men in Hong Kong.

Goals and Objectives

The study examined young men's perception, understanding and evaluation of gender roles, women's rising status, and changing gender and sexual relationships. With a focus on male university students, it also investigated what factors might be shaping the gendered attitudes of young, educated men. Moreover, it assessed whether taking gender-related courses or programmes makes a difference in young men's understanding of gender roles and masculinity.

Research Design

Mixed methods were employed in this study – a quantitative survey questionnaire and qualitative focus group interviews. The mixed-method study was conducted in two phases. In Phase I, from September to December 2019, we conducted a representative questionnaire survey among male university students from 11 universities collecting 1,768 self-administered questionnaires with an overall response rate of 54.6%. In Phase II, from March to June 2020, we undertook focus group interviews among 48 participants aged 19-23. The research participants were recruited from 11 universities in Hong Kong, of which eight are publicly funded and three are private universities.

Key Findings: Survey Questionnaire

Respondents were asked to name gender attributes that they identified with. The five attributes that participating male university students in Hong Kong identify with most are: 'aware of the feelings of others', 'helpful to others', 'independent', 'emotional' and 'understanding of others'. While 'independent' is a conventional masculine attribute, the other four are more commonly understood to be feminine traits. This finding suggests that there are some significant changes in gender attributes identification among younger, educated men in Hong Kong, who are ready to embrace 'feminine' qualities in their gender (viz. male) identities.

The questionnaire detected four types of male role norms, based on respondents' attitudes. These were – 'paternalistic', 'liberal', 'macho' and 'restrained'. Nearly half of the sampled men were 'paternalistic', characterised by their emphases on 'protection' and 'toughness'. Less than one-quarter of the sampled men were categorised as 'liberal', meaning they do not agree with all the traditional norms. Over one-fifth of the sampled men were found to be 'macho' and agree with almost all the traditional norms. A small minority, less than 5% of the sampled men, were found to belong to the 'restrained' type, who tend to reject feminine traits in their male role norms. Altogether, three-quarters of the sampled men were found to belong to the three non-liberal types of male norms.

In order to categorise respondents into the four types of male role norm (paternalistic, macho, liberal and restrained), four different scales were used to measure the men's attitudes towards changing gender relations in Hong Kong. These scales were 'Kong Nui' (Hong Kong Girls) – 'troublesome and nasty Hong Kong women' (Chu 2014: 134) stereotypes feminism and the women's movement (FWM), violence against women, and the #MeToo movement (#MeToo).

The 'macho' men (21.77%) are the most conservative. They agree the most strongly with traditional women's roles and state preferences for their/an ideal partner possessing most traditional feminine characteristics. They are the most negative towards *Kong Nui* stereotypes and hold the most negative attitudes towards FWM. Young men in this category agree most strongly with rape myths and are the only group of men who agree with the negative effects of #MeToo on men.

The 'paternalistic' group (48.84%) are also conservative, albeit to a lesser degree than the 'macho' group. They identify strongly with 'compliance to traditional women's roles' as an important attribute of an ideal partner. At the same time, this type shows the most positive attitude to FWM and #MeToo. This may relate to their strong identification with the traits of 'protection' and 'concern for others'.

The 'restrained' group (4.89%) are also conservative, although not as conservative as the 'macho' group. More specifically, this group strongly agree with traditional women's roles, hold negative attitudes towards FWM, and believe strongly in rape myths.

The 'liberal' group (24.51%) are the least conservative. They do not agree with traditional women's roles and show the strongest support to FWM. This group do not

believe that feminism and the women's movement or #MeToo have a negative effect on men.

In summary, the men who hold conservative attitudes towards normative gender roles and/or tend to be have a negative perception of changing gender relations constitute the largest proportion of the men sampled in the survey.

Key Findings: Focus Group Interviews

The research participants named a range of normative masculine qualities that define being 'successful' for them, among which having money is a very important dimension of ideal manhood. To be successful, participants believe that a man should be wealthy, morally upstanding, have a satisfactory career and a happy family. Being a responsible economic provider and a protector of women, particularly those he cares about, is important too, and is even regarded as men's 'natural' duty.

Participants do not associate 'showing emotion' or 'being warm to others' with being un-masculine; instead, they see these qualities as being congruent with the 'protector' role, viz. a key element being a man. While these young men still abide by traditional male norms and prize the role of economic provider, most of them also embrace some qualities that are conventionally defined as feminine. This suggests some positive developments towards gender equality.

The authors used six topics to gauge participants' understanding and evaluation of changing gender relations in Hong Kong during focus group interviews. The young men's views appear to be diverse, ranging from liberal, flexible, egalitarian, to conservative and even negative.

Women's rising status: In general, the men interviewed do not feel threatened or disadvantaged by women's improved opportunities in education and employment. However, their views are less positive when gender comes closer to home. In particular, many participants have reservations about accepting a smart and capable partner/girlfriend, with only a few participants accepting this possibility.

Gender roles in the family: In general, most participants rule out the traditional family model, viz. 'men as breadwinner and women as homemaker', as they find it unrealistic for a family in Hong Kong to live on a single income. Some participants support equality when it comes to shared family responsibility between couples. A

few participants would consider a reversal of traditional roles, becoming househusbands if their partner were more successful in their career and earned more than them. Nonetheless, more participants admit that they are traditional and accept the traditional model as their family ideal.

Kong Nui stereotypes: The views of the participants are divided on this topic. Some see *Kong Nui* as a phenomenon created by the media and online chat platforms, while others criticise *Kong Nui* of exerting unreasonable control over their boyfriends and making unjustifiable, materialistic demands. They also believe that the problem of *Kong Nui* occurs mainly among 'weak' men who have been too generous or failed to 'discipline their spoilt girlfriends'.

Female sexuality: In general, our participants are ambivalent or hold contradicting views about women's sexual autonomy. They prize female virginity, but regard sex as normal in an intimate relationship. They are also reluctant to accept and even object to women's past sexual experiences.

Sexual violence and the #MeToo movement: Most of the participants do not think that sexual violence is a serious problem in Hong Kong and believe that the #MeToo movement has a positive impact on the victims and to society. However, their views on whether and how men are affected by the movement vary. Some believe that honest men are not affected; some suggest that male victims should be included more fully in the movement; and others criticise #MeToo for unjustly accusing innocent men of perpetrating sexual violence).

Feminists and feminism: Feminism is seen as an unfair ideology against men, upsetting the balance between men's rights and women's rights. Participants think that feminists, in the name of gender equality, are asking for special benefits rather than equal rights. Some participants accuse self-proclaimed feminist KOLs of unfairly depriving men of their 'natural' (sexual) rights.

Overall, our results show that these young men enrolled at universities in Hong Kong are not a homogeneous group with unitary views. Our quantitative and qualitative analyses clearly indicate a range of gender ideologies among them, whether in their attitudes towards male roles and norms, in their assessments of #MeToo, or in their views on the traditional family model, viz. 'men as breadwinner and women as homemaker'. These different views aptly illustrate that 'masculinities' are plural. Diversities aside, we see positive changes, persistent emphases, inherent

contradictions, as well as emerging mistrust and anger in the perspectives of these young men.

The survey questionnaire and focus group interviews have identified factors that may have shaped the men's gendered ideologies.

Our statistical analyses found that the young men who hold a more conservative gender ideology and have a negative attitude towards changing gender relations are more likely to be from the following backgrounds: not locally born; without female siblings; from a band 1 or band 2 secondary school; from a co-ed secondary school; active in sports; majoring in non-social sciences/ humanities programmes at university; active participants in online forums; and least satisfied with life.

We are particularly concerned about the possible influence of social media on men's gender ideologies, as we find a contradiction between survey analyses and their subjective evaluations. Our survey data show that young men's active participation in online forums is significantly associated with their conservative gender ideology and their conservative/negative attitudes towards women and changing gender relations. As mentioned above, our focus group interviews also find that some participants constantly reference online discussions and debates when asserting their views. However, these young men, who are frequent users of the online platforms, are confident that their gender ideologies are not influenced by those messages and arguments because they are 'mature enough to judge what is right or wrong' (quoted from a participant's interview). We believe more research on gender awareness and the impact of social media use is essential.

In view of men's understanding of gender and the persistence of conservative gender ideology among this new generation, we believe that some form of gender education for everyone, in particular for male students, is essential and would have a beneficial impact. In this report, we offer suggestions to educators and social service providers, to help increase awareness and improve the effectiveness of gender education in parenting education, primary and secondary schools, and universities.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Gender relations in Hong Kong have undergone significant changes in the past few decades. Because of improved educational opportunities, more young women are able to complete higher education and female students now outperform male students in some disciplines at university. Women's labour force participation rate and the number of women in middle and senior management positions are also rising steadily. At the same time, because of the decline of manufacturing industries and the rise of the knowledge economy with a booming service sector, young women are more likely than working class young men to find jobs.

However, instead of celebrating women's improved status, these changes are sometimes interpreted as a sign of 'a crisis of masculinity'. In the first systematic study on men's gender ideologies in Hong Kong (Equal Opportunities Commission [EOC], 2012), men of various ages were found to still uphold traditional gender stereotypes, believing that men should be the breadwinner and should earn more than women, especially their wife. The difficulty of attaining this gender ideal in a restructured economy explains why men report greater work stress than before and even say experience identity crises. However, some male participants attribute their 'crisis' to women's economic independence, their rising social status and even feminism in general (Leung and Chan 2012). In 2016, some men's groups campaigned for greater public attention to 'men in crisis', saying that, 'men are also the weak; we suffer from domestic violence, unemployment and health problems as much as women do'¹.

The negative emotions of 'men in crisis' can also be detected in public discourse, such as the outcry over *Kong Nui* (Hong Kong Girls) – 'troublesome and nasty Hong Kong women' (Chu 2014: 134), which emerges time and again including after almost every appearance of 'unpalatable' female characters on reality TV shows (e.g., Chu 2011; 2012).

¹ A columnist report was released on *Mingpao*, 16 March, 2006, titled 〈男士高呼我也是弱者，有冤無路訴，盼爭專有服務〉. It reported that a group of men, comprising men of various backgrounds, from professionals to construction workers, formed a mutual help group called 'Men's Right Concern Group'. They wanted to draw attention of the authorities to men's rights. They suggested that there should be a Men's Commission (男性事務委員會), in parallel with the Women's Commission in Hong Kong. Reference: 〈男士高呼我也是弱者，有冤無路訴，盼爭專有服務〉，《明報》，2006年3月16日。

Recently, criticism of Kong Nui on social media platforms have widened to include female KOLs who become new targets of attack after declaring themselves feminists. After repeated debates around sexual harassment and men's sexual behaviours, some netizens increasingly try to discredit feminism, defaming not only feminist KOLs but also any feminist groups, as man-haters and extremists. The emergence of a derogatory slang term, 'Feminist L' (女權撚, L is a short form of 'lon', and a coarse Cantonese word), circulating on male-dominated chat platforms and frequently on social media², aptly illustrates men's discontent, even hostility, towards feminism.

Equally perplexing are the relentless attacks from young netizens on a female athlete who, inspired by the #MeToo movement, disclosed her experience of sexual harassment by her former coach, sharing it on social media³. While the #MeToo movement has successfully encouraged many victims of sexual harassment around the world to come forward and stand up against sexual violence, the young female athlete in Hong Kong was accused of being an opportunist who defamed a man for her own good. The incident was surprising as several surveys have clearly indicated that sexual harassment in Hong Kong, whether in schools, universities, or workplaces, is a problem that needs to be tackled (EOC 2013; 2018; 2019). Again, these attacks by young netizens on self-proclaimed feminists reveal men's adherence to traditional gender ideologies but also their anger and frustration in general.

It is against these changing socio-economic contexts, rising tensions, and complex sentiments that we conducted this study, which aimed to examine young men's perspectives of their roles and their feelings about the rising status of women and changing gender and sexual relationships. In 2019, The Women's Foundation (TWF)

² Some examples of these arguments and comics can be found at these links:

〈女權主義者看世界的樣子〉, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1888086291426015&id=1841720146062630&substory_index=0; 〈一幅圖，剖析了女人、女權撚及婦女團之荒謬及社會對男性之不公。香港高登討論區〉, https://md.hkgolden.com/view_amp.aspx?message=6774169&page=2; 〈女權大撚晒呀〉, <https://medium.com/from-asso-to-u/%E5%A5%B3%E6%AC%8A%E5%A4%A7%E6%92%9A%E6%99%92%E5%91%80-10cde56f284d>.

³ The female athlete, a renowned hurdle athlete in Hong Kong, revealed on her personal page on Facebook in 2017 that she was assaulted sexually by her former coach 10 years ago when she was a junior secondary student. In the post, she said that inspired by the sexual abuse survivors, she decided to disclose what had happened to her when she was young, in order to draw public attention to the problem of child sexual abuse; to encourage other victims to stand up and to speak out; and to demonstrate that we should not feel embarrassed and ashamed to discuss sexual issues openly. Soon after publishing her experience, the police began an investigation and arrested the coach in January 2018. Public opinions on the issue have been divided ever since the incident was first brought to light. Athletic associations, politicians, NGOs, media columnists, press editorials, government officials (including the Chief Executive), showed support to the athlete's action of exposing the incident. Some individuals, however, used social media platforms to question the truthfulness of the accusation and the motive of the athlete in disclosing the incident on social media rather than reporting to the police. Reference: Report of the Facebook post by the athlete: 〈港隊跨欄好手呂麗瑤：我曾被前教練性侵，我不感到羞愧〉, <https://www.thenewslen.com/article/84453>.

commissioned the authors of this report to conduct an independent study to investigate the masculinities of young men in Hong Kong.

This research focused on male university students for three reasons. First, while the masculinity of male university students is a relatively well-researched topic in other economies, it is under-researched in Hong Kong. Secondly, as young, educated men will go on to occupy key positions and play vital roles in shaping society's future, their perspectives will give us an indication of our coming gender order. Thirdly, as educators in higher education, we are particularly interested in understanding whether and to what extent gender (or sexuality) education courses could make a difference to young men's perspectives and understanding. We believe the findings of the last point will help us and other educators formulate and implement better gender related courses at university or secondary school level.

This study has **four** research questions:

1. How do young, male university students in Hong Kong define and construct their masculinity in the 21st Century? What gender ideologies do they share?
2. How do these educated young men make sense of changing gender and sexual relations? Do they perceive the rise of women's social status as undermining their masculinity?
3. What are the possible social influences shaping young men's perceptions and understandings of gender ideologies, gender relationships and issue of gender inequality? How do factors, such as socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics, schooling experiences, university subject choices/courses, exposure to social media and gender-related courses/programmes, contribute to different views among these men?
4. Will gender-related courses/programmes make a difference to young men's understanding of gender roles and masculinity?

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual underpinning of this study was inspired by critical masculinity studies (Connell 1995 [2005]; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005); Kimmel 2005; Robinson 2000), and the key concept – masculinity (or masculinities, a 'singular-plural', see Benyon, 2002: 2) – has several important emphases. To start with, masculinity is not regarded as being inborn, naturally inherent in men, but is socially and culturally constructed. Popular understanding would have us believe that manhood is innate, and that men

are born with some distinctive physical attributes and psychological traits that make them fundamentally different from women. Contrary to this popular belief, and based on research, we view masculinity as closely linked to culture, which involves socially acceptable roles, expressions, and codes of behaviours that men are socialised into and expected to enact (Benyon 2002: 1-2). Masculinity, as a gender identity, involves sets of ideas, values, and priorities that men constantly develop, change, or challenge as they grow and interact with others (including both men and women) and with the world around them (Kimmel 2005: 25; Messner 2002: 125). Role expectations or identity aside, masculinity is also about the 'pattern of practice', i.e. the things that men do to perform their masculine ideals or to assert their difference from or even their superiority to women (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832). In short, masculinity in this study will be understood as gendered roles and expressions, identity, and practices, the meanings of which are socially constructed and involve men's active enactment. As such, masculinity is plural, because there are different ways of being masculine and performing masculinity⁴. It is relational, as men develop in relation to women (as well as other men). Last but not least, it is culturally specific and historically shifting, as individuals exist in changing socio-political-economic contexts. These ideas have guided us to investigate the gender ideologies of young male university students, such as their views of what 'real men' or an 'ideal partner' should be and should do in the twenty-first century.

In addition, in view of the rising concerns over 'men's crisis', we also drew on the suggestions of Munsch & Gruys (2000), and examined men's fear, anxiety and anger over the perceived threat to their sense of manhood from changing gender relations, sexuality and sexual violence. Regarding the specific Hong Kong context, we investigated men's perceptions and evaluations of changing gender relations in terms of the rise of women's status in education and employment, *Kong Nui* stereotypes, the #MeToo movement, sexual violence, and feminism in Hong Kong.

1.3 Research Design

We addressed our research questions by means of a mixed-method study: a quantitative survey questionnaire and qualitative focus group interviews. The survey questionnaire employed various gender-related scales to investigate possible

⁴ By recognising the plurality of masculinities, we are also aware of the existence of 'hegemonic masculinity', which denotes the socially and culturally ideal masculine characteristics expected of a man (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 832). Even though few men can fully embody this ideal, its normative power requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it. However, as this study is the first of its kind in mapping and exploring Hong Kong young men's masculinities, we were not able to utilise this important concept.

patterns and associations, while the focus group interviews allowed the research participants to share their understanding and elaborate their views.

The mixed-method study was conducted in two phases. In Phase I, from September to December 2019, we conducted a representative questionnaire survey. In Phase II, from March to June 2020, we undertook focus group interviews. The research participants were recruited from 11 universities in Hong Kong, of which eight are publicly funded and three private universities. Table 1.1 shows the distribution of participants from the different universities.

In the following sections, we will first report results from the quantitative survey questionnaire (Section Two) and then findings from the focus group interviews (Section Three). In the last section (Section Four), by using the results based on the two methodologies, we highlight some key themes about the masculinities of young male students at university in contemporary Hong Kong and make recommendations.

2. Quantitative Survey Questionnaire Report

2.1 Questionnaire Design

A questionnaire is designed to measure the sampled men's perception of gender ideology and their attitudes towards changing gender relations. The questionnaire consists of ten sections. Four sections collect information about the respondents' personal and family background, in order to identify possible factors that shape their perceptions of gender ideology and changing gender relations. The remaining questions comprise four main components:

1. Masculine and feminine attributes: Conventionally, masculinity and femininity are regarded as separate, distinct attributes to be owned exclusively by either males or females respectively. In reality, these attributes can co-exist to varying degrees in both men and women (Bem, 1974; Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp 1975: 31). To assess how the sampled men identify themselves in the masculinity-femininity spectrum, Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), a commonly used measure of gender identity, was used. The scale consists of a mix of instrumental and expressive attributes. The instrumental attributes are defined as conventionally masculine traits and the expressive attributes are defined as conventionally feminine traits (Moneta 2010).

2. Traditional male role norms: To measure the degree to which participants endorse traditional masculine ideology, the Male Role Norms Inventory-Revised (MRNI-R) is adopted (Thomas & Bennett 2015; Levant et al. 1992; 2016). The original MRNI-R scale covers seven subscales. To reflect the specific sociocultural background of Hong Kong⁵, we added the subscale of 'protection' into the established MRNI-R.
3. Ideological conservatism towards women: In this study, we adopted and developed two scales to measure different aspects of men's ideological conservatism towards women. First, we used the Sex Role Attitude Scales (Renzetti 1987) to gauge participants' level of awareness and traditional orientations towards women. We also developed another subscale specifically to measure the desired qualities sought in an ideal partner. These two subscales reveal men's underlying attitudes towards women.
4. Negative attitudes/Negativity towards changing gender relations: We developed and applied four subscales to measure men's attitudes towards changing gender relations. A subscale was specially designed to measure the men's attitude towards the *Kong Nui* stereotypes. Three other subscales were adapted from existing studies: a scale to measure men's attitudes towards feminism and the women's movement (Fassinger 1994); a scale to measure men's attitudes towards and awareness of violence against women (Nayak et al. 2003); and a scale to measure men's attitude towards the #MeToo movement (Kunst et al. 2019).

Between September and October 2019, we carried out the survey in the 11 universities with the assistance of 11 student helpers. The student helpers were sent to different universities and approached students there to conduct face-to-face interviews. The helpers successfully collected 1,768 self-administered questionnaires, with an overall response rate of 54.6%. For details, please see Table A and Table B in the Appendix.

2.2 Respondents' Profiles

The average age of the sampled men is 21 years old. Around 30% of them are first year students, 20% of respondents are second year students, 26% are third year students, and 20% of the men are fourth year students. Less than 3% of the respondents are in year five or above. Most of the respondents are studying pure

⁵ Previous studies on gender stereotypes and men's challenges have shown that playing the role of breadwinner is indispensable for Hong Kong men in constructing their masculine identity (EOC 2012).

science or engineering (45.1%), followed by those whose majors are in humanities and social sciences (23.1%), business or economics (21.5%), and nursing or medicine-related courses (8.3%).

Despite Hong Kong being a city with a lot of immigration, the overwhelming majority (84.5%) of the respondents were born locally, with only 15.5% born elsewhere. Of the 15.5% non-locally born students, the majority were born in Mainland China, with a negligible percentage born in Taiwan or elsewhere. More details of immigrant status can be found in section 2.5.2. Regarding their parents' birthplace, only 45.7% of respondents have two local parents, almost one-third have two non-local parents (29.5%), and around 25% have one local and one non-local parent.

In terms of household structure, around 80% of the sampled men come from two-parent families and 16% from single-parent families; 38% of the sampled men have male siblings at home and 38.4% have female siblings at home. More than two-fifths of these men are the youngest child, followed by 22.5% of respondents who are the eldest child at home. Around 5% of students are middle child in the family. There is also a significant proportion (31%) of the sampled men who are an only child. In terms of socio-economic backgrounds, the median household income level of all sampled men is at around \$30,000 - \$39,999, indicating that they are mostly from a lower-middle class background. In comparison, the median income for domestic households with three people and four people are \$32,000 and \$42,400 respectively, in the third quarter of 2019.

Table 1.1: Respondents' background characteristics

Variables	%	Variables	%
University Education Background		Socio-demographic characteristics	
<i>Institution</i>		<i>Household Income</i>	
Education University of Hong Kong	9.3	< HKD 9,999	4.3
Hong Kong Baptist University	8.8	HKD 10,000 – HKD 19,999	13.6
City University of Hong Kong	8.8	HKD 20,000 – HKD 29,999	19.9
Open University of Hong Kong	8.8	HKD 30,000 – HKD 39,999	20.3
Hang Seng University of Hong Kong	8.8	HKD 40,000 – HKD 49,999	13.5
Shue Yan University	9.1	HKD 50,000 – HKD 59,999	8.9
Lingnan University	8.9	HKD 60,000 – HKD 69,999	5.0
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	8.9	≥ HKD 70,000	14.5
University of Hong Kong	8.9		
University of Science and Technology	8.9	<i>Students' Birthplace</i>	
Chinese University of Hong Kong	10.6	Hong Kong	84.5
		Outside Hong Kong	15.5
<i>Faculty</i>		<i>Female Siblings</i>	
Humanities, Social Sciences, Education	23.1	No female sibling	61.6
Business, Economics	21.5	Has female sibling(s)	38.4
Pure Science, Engineering	45.1		
Nursing, Medicine-Related Subjects	8.3		
Others	2.0	<i>Types of Secondary Schools</i>	
		Single-Sex	17.0
		Co-ed	83.0
<i>Year at University</i>		<i>School Banding</i>	
Year 1	29.9	Band 1	59.8
Year 2	22.0	Band 2	29.6
Year 3	26.3	Band 3	10.6
Year 4	18.8		
≥ Year 5	2.9		

For details, please read Figure A, Tables C, D and E in the Appendix.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Perceptions and understanding of gender ideologies and masculinities

2.3.1.1 Self-identification with masculine and feminine traits (PAQ)

The Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) consists of 25 personal attributes. The sampled university men were asked to indicate their identification with each personal attribute item on a scale of 0 to 4 (0 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree). The mid-score is 2 which indicates a neutral attitude towards that particular trait. A score above 2 represents a stronger identification with that particular trait, while a mean score below 2 represents a weaker identification with that trait.

Table 2.1 shows the mean scores of two sets of attributes. One set is coined as instrumentality which consists of eight conventionally defined masculine traits. The other set is coined as expressivity which consists of eight conventionally defined feminine traits. The overall mean score of instrumentality for the sampled men is 2.09. This implies that overall, the sampled men have a slightly more than neutral tendency to identify with the masculine traits. The overall mean score of expressivity is 2.48. This shows that the men identify with both masculine and feminine traits, with a stronger identification with feminine traits.

Table 2.1: Traditional Masculine and Feminine Traits – Personal Attribute Questionnaire (PAQ)

Gender traits	Mean (SD)
Instrumentality	2.09 (0.52)
Independent	2.66 (0.88)
Copes well under pressure	2.32 (0.97)
Doesn't give up easily	2.25 (0.90)
Self-confident	2.11 (0.93)
Competitive	1.98 (1.03)
Proactive	1.92 (0.95)
Feels superior	1.80 (0.89)
Can make decisions easily	1.68 (1.01)
Expressivity	2.48 (0.55)
Aware of the feelings of others	2.71 (0.93)
Helpful to others	2.70 (0.87)
Emotional	2.54 (0.98)
Understanding of others	2.48 (0.82)
Able to devote self completely to others	2.42 (0.90)
Cultured	2.38 (0.98)

Kind	2.33 (0.88)
Warm in relations to others	2.25 (0.84)

Under instrumentality, the sampled men show a strong identification with the traits of 'independent', 'copes well under pressure', 'doesn't give up easily', and 'self-confident'. But they are less likely to identify with these socially expected masculine traits: 'active', 'feels superior' and 'can make decisions easily'. For the commonly defined masculine trait, 'competitive', they are more or less neutral in their identification with it.

Under expressivity, all items were scored above 2, showing that the respondents identify with all these feminine attributes. In particular, they identify more strongly with 'aware of the feelings of others', 'helpful to others', and 'understanding of others', which are related to the sense of communion with others, a socially expected feminine trait. We also note that 'emotional', a trait that is conventionally deemed to be unmasculine, is scored the third highest among all feminine traits.

The top 5 attributes that male university students in Hong Kong self-identified with most are: 'aware of the feelings of others', 'helpful to others', 'independent', 'emotional' and 'understanding of others'. While 'independent' is the only conventionally masculine attribute, the other four traits are more commonly understood to be 'feminine'. These results suggest that there are some significant changes in the identification with gender attributes among young, educated men in Hong Kong, who are ready to embrace 'feminine' qualities in their gender (viz. male) identities.

Figure 1: Correlation between the Masculine and Feminine Traits

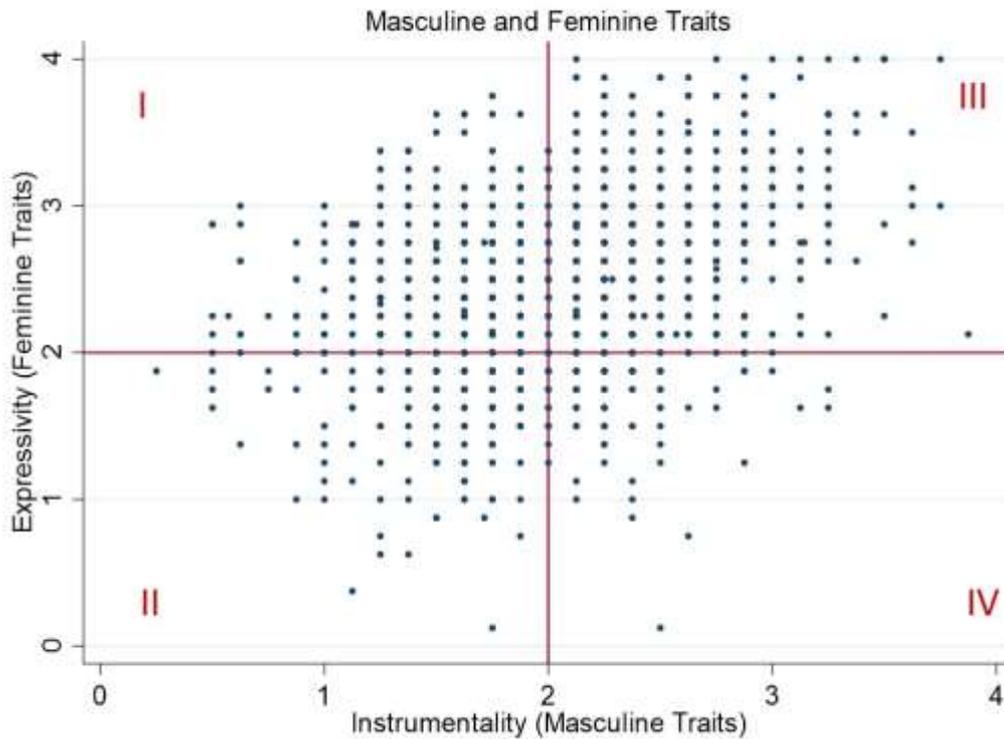


Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by personal attributes. The two red lines indicate the mid-score of instrumentality and expressivity. Divided by the vertical line, the dots on the right represent those who rate high (larger than mid-score) in masculine traits and the dots on the left represent those who rate low (smaller than mid-score) in masculine traits. Divided by the horizontal line, the dots above represent those who rate high in feminine traits and the dots below represent those who rate low in feminine traits.

Quadrant III has the largest numbers of dots, indicating that the largest number of respondents identify with both masculine traits and feminine traits. Quadrant IV has the smallest number of dots, implying that the lowest number of respondents identify mainly with masculine traits but tend not to identify with feminine traits. This pattern suggests that a considerable number of the respondents identify with both masculine and feminine traits and that only a small minority of the self-identified masculine men do not identify themselves with any feminine traits.

2.3.1.2. Traditional Male Role Norms (MRNI-R scale)

The revised Male Role Norms Inventory Scale (MRNI-R) is adopted to measure respondents' perceptions of the 27 traditional male role norms listed in the scale. The respondents were asked to give scores on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The mid-point 4 indicates a neutral attitude towards a particular norm. A mean score above 4 indicates a higher tendency to agree with that norm, while below 4 indicates a tendency to disagree with that norm. For analytical purpose, the 27 norms are classified into eight subscales as shown in the abbreviated description table below.

Abbreviated description of MRNI-R

Subscale	Description (Men should ...)
Restricted Emotionality	NOT show emotions. NOT let others know how he is feeling. be distant from emotionally charged situations. NOT share grievances with others.
Avoidance of Femininity	watch sports matches rather than TV dramas. like kungfu movies more than romantic novels. NOT wear make-up. be good at sports. NOT carry handbag for his partner. NOT be responsible for housework.
Importance of Sex	always prepare for having sex. never reject sex. be lustful.
Negativity towards Homosexuality	Homosexual men should NOT kiss in public. reject legalising homosexual marriage. NOT have intimacy with another men.
Dominance	take the leadership role. be responsible for providing for the family.
Self-reliance through mechanical skills	know how to repair his computer/mobile phone, and fix objects and equipment at home.
Protection	protect women. make wise decisions for his partner.
Toughness	be strong under adversity. be physically strong. be adventurous despite the risk of being hurt. find his own path in life. make decisions easily.

Table 2.2 shows the pattern of how the sampled men responded to the traditional male role norms. The overall mean score of 4.03 indicates that the men have a slightly more than neutral attitude towards the male role norms. However, **among all the norms, the men show a stronger identification (mean scores above 4) with ‘protection’, ‘toughness’, ‘self-reliance’ and ‘dominance’.** ‘Protection’ is the most identified male norm among the respondents.

The 4 norms that were rated below 4 are regarded by the sampled men as not important. They do not agree that men should not show emotion, men should avoid being feminine, men were born lustful, or that men should hold negative attitudes towards homosexuality.

Table 2.2: Construction of Male Role Norms Inventory - Revised (MRNI-R) scale

	Mean (SD)
Overall MRNI-R Scale	4.03 (0.77)
MRNI-R Subscales	
Restricted Emotionality	3.92 (1.12)
Avoidance of Femininity	3.57 (0.98)
Importance of Sex	3.93 (1.32)
Negativity towards Homosexuality	3.09 (1.47)
Dominance	4.25 (1.27)
Self-reliance	4.41 (1.25)
Protection	5.06 (1.21)
Toughness	4.65 (0.96)

We performed latent class analysis to investigate whether we could group the men by their different attitudes towards the traditional male role norms. The results indicate that **the sampled men in Hong Kong can be categorised into 4 heuristic types: paternalistic, liberal, macho and restrained,** as shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Four types of attitudes towards Male Role Norms (Probability of aligning with the norms)

	Paternalistic	Liberal	Macho	Restrained
Distribution of Class Membership	48.84%	24.51%	21.77%	4.89%
Probability to agree on ^a				
Restricted Emotionality	40.14%	11.16%	79.05%	64.54%
Avoidance of Femininity	16.11%	2.74%	81.40%	85.85%
Importance of Sex	39.60%	15.37%	74.62%	57.63%

Negativity towards Homosexuality	13.18%	8.16%	47.50%	37.74%
Dominance	52.81%	2.70%	92.97%	26.49%
Self-reliance	64.39%	22.49%	80.32%	44.60%
Protection	91.16%	39.24%	96.66%	46.43%
Toughness	92.08%	20.86%	99.99%	54.62%

^a The percentage indicates the proportion of men in that particular type of attitude that agree with that norm.

Almost half of the sampled men fall into the 'paternalistic type' (48.84%). We characterise these respondents as paternalistic because of their higher tendency to identify with 'toughness', 'protection', 'self-reliance', and 'dominance', and in particular their strong emphasis on protection and toughness.

Slightly less than one-fourth of the sampled men, the second largest group, are categorised as 'liberal' (24.51%). We characterise them as 'liberal', as only a small minority of them identify with traditional male role norms. Having said that, a substantial proportion of them also identify with 'protection', 'self-reliance' and 'toughness', but the percentages of 'liberal' men identifying with these norms are far lower than those of the other three groups.

The third type is 'macho' (21.77%). They are characterised as such because of their higher tendency to align with almost all of the traditional male role norms. These men represent the most conservative among the four types. In particular, over 90% of them put an emphasis on 'toughness', 'protection', and 'dominance'. Even though less than half of them agree that 'being a man' means they should reject homosexuality, the proportion who agree with this sentiment is still the highest among the four groups.

There is a small group of men (4.89%) whose attitudes towards male role norms is categorised as 'restrained'. Among all the male role norms, the participants in this category tend to put more emphasis on 'avoidance of femininity', 'restricted emotionality', and 'importance of sex'. The notion of being 'restrained' here refers to men's avoidance of femininity, including showing emotions, in their perception of normative male roles.

We note that **among the young men in this study, the largest group belongs to the 'paternalistic' type and the second largest belongs to the 'liberal' type. Taking all the non-liberal types together, a large majority (75.49%) of them agree with the traditional male role norms to varying degrees, of which over one-fifth agree with almost all the traditional male role norms.**

Summary of findings on perceptions and understanding of gender ideologies and masculinities

The results of the PAQ show that the sampled men identify with both masculine and feminine traits and identify more strongly with feminine traits. The five attributes that the young men in Hong Kong self-identified with most are: 'aware of the feelings of others', 'helpful to others', 'independent', 'emotional' and 'understanding of others'. While 'independent' is the only conventional masculine attribute in this list, the other four attributes are more commonly understood to be 'feminine'. The participants are more or less neutral to the attribute 'competitive', a commonly defined masculine trait, but identify strongly with 'emotional', a trait conventionally deemed not masculine that is scored the third highest among all feminine traits that the men identify with. These ratings suggest that there are some significant changes in gender attributes among younger, educated men in Hong Kong, who are ready to embrace 'feminine' qualities in their gender (viz. male) identities.

The results from the MRNI-R scale show that young men at university in Hong Kong have a slight tendency to agree with traditional male role norms, including strong identification with some of the traditional male role norms, namely 'dominance', 'self-reliance', 'protection', and 'toughness'. Statistical analysis shows that their attitudes can be grouped into four types – paternalistic, liberal, macho and restrained (in order of their proportion among all respondents). Nearly half of the participants, the largest group of the sampled men, are categorised as 'paternalistic' and are characterised by their identification with 'protection' and 'toughness'. Less than one-quarter of the sampled men, the second largest group, belong to the 'liberal' type, who do not agree with all the traditional norms. Over one-fifth of the sampled men belong to the 'macho' type, who agree with almost all the traditional norms. A small minority, less than 5% of the sampled men, belong to the 'restrained' type, who tend to reject feminine traits in male role norms. Taking all the non-liberal types together, over three-quarters of the sampled men agree with the traditional male role norms to varying degrees.

2.3.2 Ideological conservatism towards women

2.3.2.1 Attitudes towards traditional women's role

This study adopted two scales to assess the men's 'ideological conservatism towards women'. The first scale measured their attitudes towards traditional women's roles and the second scale measured their mating preferences, that is, the qualities that they desire in their ideal female partner. Participants were asked to give scores on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The mid-score is 4 which denotes a neutral attitude. A score above 4 indicates a more conservative attitude while, scores below 4 indicate a less conservative attitude.

Table 2.4: Perception of traditional women's roles

Stereotypes of women's roles	Mean (SD)
For women, marriage is more important than her career.	3.79 (1.27)
A woman needs a man to be happy.	3.56 (1.40)
A woman should follow where her husband goes.	3.40 (1.30)
A woman's appearance is more important than her ability.	3.80 (1.33)
A woman should prioritise the role of mother over her career.	4.28 (1.39)
A woman should know how to do housework.	4.14 (1.35)
A woman should be cute and gentle.	4.30 (1.27)
Women at workplaces are masculine.	4.19 (1.28)
Some jobs are not suitable for women.	5.13 (1.33)
Overall mean score of traditional women's roles	4.06 (0.84)

The overall mean score of 4.06 for the first scale indicates that the sampled men tend to be slightly more than neutral, i.e., conservative, towards these traditional women's roles. That is to say that, overall, they tend to agree slightly more than disagree with the statements. However, 5 out of the 9 items are scored above the mid-point 4. The results tell us that the **men's conservative attitudes towards women are related to several specific elements in this table: they believe that 'some jobs are not suitable for women', 'a woman should be cute and gentle', 'a woman should prioritise the role of mother over her career', 'women at workplaces are masculine' and 'a woman should know how to do housework'**. Comparatively, they tend not to believe that 'marriage and having a man are important to a woman', 'she has to give up her career to follow where her husband goes', and 'a woman's appearance is more important than her ability'. These items are scored below the mid-point 4.

2.3.2.2 Gendered mating preferences

Table 2.5 shows the results of the scale which measures the men's mating preference viz. the desired qualities of their ideal female partner. The scale consists of three subscales in which the men rated their preference on a scale of 1 to 7. The mid-score is 4, which indicates a neutral attitude to that attribute. A score above 4 indicates that the attribute is important while a score below 4 implies that the attribute is not important. The higher the score is, the more preference is given to that particular attribute.

Table 2.5: Quality of the ideal partner

Qualities	Mean (SD)
Compliance with traditional women's roles	5.01 (0.83)
Obedient	4.55 (1.29)
Helpful to others	5.33 (1.07)
Understanding of others	5.68 (1.03)
Know how to do housework	4.48 (1.34)
Feminine appearance	4.38 (0.99)
Shorter than me	4.39 (1.67)
Beautiful appearance	5.00 (1.21)
Good body shape	4.61 (1.31)
Younger than me	3.52 (1.50)
Independence and abilities	4.57 (0.75)
University graduate	3.95 (1.57)
With strong self-confidence	4.54 (1.18)
Independent	4.78 (1.16)
From wealthy family	3.45 (1.35)
Ambitious in career	4.26 (1.22)
Assertive	4.92 (1.07)
Proactive	4.98 (1.07)
Smart	4.96 (1.19)
Reliable	5.56 (1.16)
Overall ideal partner score	4.28 (0.65)

The overall mean of 4.28 in the scale indicates their conservative ideology in choice of potential mate. If we look at this scale more closely, the respondents score above 4 in all the 3 subscales. However, among the 3 subscales, 'compliance to traditional women's roles' is rated as the most important (with a mean score 5.01). Among the four qualities in this subscale, stronger emphases (mean score above 5) are placed on 'helpful to others' and 'understanding of others' whereas lesser emphasis is on

'know how to do housework'. At the same time, they also rate highly the subscale 'independence and abilities' in women and put stronger emphasis (mean score above or close to 5) on being 'reliable', 'proactive', 'smart' and 'assertive'. We note that these young men do not have a strong preference for a university graduate as a partner; nor do they expect that their partner should come from a wealthy family (mean score below 4).

Taking into account of all the qualities which have mean scores above 5, **an ideal female partner among the young men is one who possesses a range of qualities: understanding of others, reliable, helpful to others, and who is beautiful. If the qualities which have been scored close to 5 are also included, this 'perfect woman' has to be proactive, smart and assertive as well.**

Summary of findings on ideological conservatism towards women

The results show that the sampled men tend to be slightly conservative towards traditional women's roles. Their conservative attitudes towards women are related to several specific qualities: they believe that 'some jobs are not suitable for women', 'a woman should be cute and gentle', 'a woman should prioritise her role of mother over her career', 'women at workplace are masculine' and 'a woman should know how to do housework'.

The respondents' conservative ideology towards women is also reflected in their mating preferences. Among the three subscales of desired qualities in their ideal partner, 'compliance to traditional women's roles' is rated as the most important. Their ideal female partner is a 'perfect' woman who should be beautiful, understanding of others, reliable, helpful to others, proactive, smart, and assertive.

2.3.3 Negative attitudes towards changing gender relations

In relation to the specific Hong Kong context, four scales were designed to measure the sampled men's attitudes towards gender changes in areas that may generate particular responses or attitudes in Hong Kong. The topics covered were: 'Kong Nui stereotypes', 'feminism and the women's movement' (FWM), 'violence against women' and the '#MeToo movement'. The men were asked to give scores on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The mid-score is 4 which implies a neutral attitude. A mean score above 4 indicates a negative attitude and a mean score below 4 indicates a positive attitude.

2.3.3.1 Perceptions on Kong Nui stereotypes

On the *Kong Nui* stereotypes scale, there are six statements that negatively describe 'Hong Kong Girls', which correspond to the popular stereotypes about *Kong Nui*. The overall mean score of 4.44 implies that these men tend to hold negative attitudes towards *Kong Nui*. The respondents tend to think that *Kong Nui* are 'unfair to men', who 'are overly concerned with their appearance' and are 'materialistic', 'spoiled' and 'not gentle'. We notice that they do not think 'excessively interested in their own fame' is an attribute of *Kong Nui*.

Table 2.6: Negative perceptions towards *Kong Nui* (Stereotypes about 'Hong Kong Girls')

Kong Nui stereotypes (Hong Kong women are ...)	Mean (SD)
Unfair to men	4.96 (1.26)
Are overly concerned with their appearance	4.77 (1.15)
Materialistic	4.51 (1.12)
Spoiled	4.25 (1.27)
NOT Gentle	4.14 (1.08)
Excessively interested in their own fame	3.99 (1.19)
Overall mean of Kong Nui stereotypes	4.44 (0.75)

2.3.3.2 Perceptions of feminism and the women's movement

Table 2.7 shows the respondents' attitudes towards feminism and the women's movement (FWM) in Hong Kong. **The overall score of 3.73 indicates a positive attitude towards FWM.** When looking into the sub-scores on this scale, the men generally hold positive attitudes towards FWM (4.38). In particular, they agree that 'the goal of FWM is correct', and that 'feminist principles should be applied to other areas of social lives' (the highest mean scores, 4.54 and 4.48). Similarly, **they do not hold strong negative attitudes against feminism and the women's movement in Hong**

Kong (3.82). Nevertheless, they tend to agree (mean scores above 4) that ‘there are better ways than FWM to improve gender equality’ and that ‘feminist perspectives are too radical and too extreme’.

Table 2.7: Attitudes towards feminism and the women’s movement – FWM Scale

Attitudes	Mean (SD)
Positive attitude	4.38 (0.80)
Feminist principles should be applied to other areas of social lives.	4.54 (1.18)
The goal of FWM is correct.	4.48 (1.15)
More people should support FWM.	4.41 (1.11)
FWM has a positive influence on gender relations.	4.35 (1.19)
I am happy that Hong Kong has FWM.	4.26 (1.12)
FWM contributes to gender equality and women’s political power.	4.24 (1.10)
Negative attitude	3.82 (0.85)
There are better ways than FWM to improve gender equality.	4.42 (1.04)
Feminist perspectives are too radical and too extreme.	4.15 (1.31)
Feminist ideas are unrealistic.	3.86 (1.28)
We have enough women leaders in Hong Kong.	3.85 (1.24)
Women are threatening men’s status at work.	3.80 (1.32)
FWM is threatening the city and the world.	3.62 (1.42)
The educational system is unfair to men.	3.42 (1.45)
Gender equality is unfair to men.	3.41 (1.36)
Overall mean of FWM	3.73^a (0.68)

^a The value of each item of positive attitudes are reversed in the calculation of the overall mean of FWM scale. For the overall mean of FWM scale, a higher score indicates a more negative view a respondent holds.

2.3.3.3 Perceptions and attitudes towards violence against women

Table 2.8 shows the result of the scale that measures men’s attitude towards violence against women (VAW). The overall score 3.34 shows that **men are against VAW**. When looking in more detail, the men do not agree with all of the statements in the subscales ‘victim-blaming beliefs’ (2.95, a mean score far below 4) and ‘spousal physical violence’ (2.85, a mean score far below 4). In other words, they tend to be sympathetic to victims of sexual assault and do not put the blame on women who are victims of domestic violence.

However, the men surveyed tend to agree with all the statements under the subscale, ‘beliefs in myths towards sexual assaults’ (commonly known as ‘rape myths’), where all mean scores are above 4. In particular, respondents agree that ‘beautiful women are more likely to be assaulted’. They also believe that rapists are mostly impulsive

men, who improvised and were drunk, and that rapists are not ordinary men, but are aggressive men, even in ordinary situations. The results indicate that rape myths are commonly held among young male university students in Hong Kong.

Table 2.8: Attitudes towards violence against women (VAW) Scale

	Mean (SD)
Subscale – Victim-blaming beliefs towards sexual assaults	2.95 (0.98)
The woman reporting a sexual assault is seeking attention.	3.17 (1.30)
She is making false accusations to protect her reputation.	3.16 (1.25)
She is flirtatious.	3.15 (1.40)
She enjoys verbal sexual harassment.	3.11 (1.48)
She refuses to have sex with the man.	2.58 (1.30)
She is dressed like a slut.	2.55 (1.44)
Subscale – Beliefs in myths towards sexual assaults (rape myths)	4.29 (0.95)
Beautiful women are more likely to be assaulted.	4.65 (1.40)
Sexual assaulters are mostly impulsive.	4.22 (1.62)
Rapists are aggressive men in ordinary situations.	4.22 (1.35)
The man is drunk.	4.20 (1.47)
Sexual assaults are mostly improvised.	4.16 (1.46)
Subscale – Attitudes towards spousal physical violence	2.85 (1.14)
She has done something wrong.	3.10 (1.43)
The wife provokes domestic violence.	2.99 (1.37)
Domestic violence is acceptable if she cheats.	2.94 (1.57)
She is not obedient.	2.64 (1.46)
She deserves it.	2.59 (1.58)
Overall VAW score	3.34 (0.83)

2.3.3.4 Attitudes towards the #MeToo movement

Table 2.9 shows the results of the scale measuring the sampled men's attitudes towards the #MeToo movement. **The overall score 3.60 indicates that the men tend to be positive towards the #MeToo movement.** When looking into the subscale of positive attitude, **they think the movement is a good opportunity for victims to speak out about having been sexually assaulted or harassed and believe that the movement accurately reflects the situation of sexual violence in real life. They are also sympathetic to the victims. Equally, they do not hold strong negative attitudes towards the movement. Nevertheless, they tend to agree that innocent men are put at risk by the movement.**

Table 2.9: Attitudes towards the #MeToo Movement – Composition

Attitudes	Mean (SD)
Positive attitude	4.75 (0.97)
The #MeToo movement is a good opportunity for the victims to speak out.	4.93 (1.09)
I am sympathetic to the victims.	4.81 (1.12)
The #MeToo movement accurately reflects the situation.	4.50 (1.23)
Negative attitude	3.77 (1.01)
Innocent men are put at risk by the #MeToo movement.	4.12 (1.29)
Most accusations under the #MeToo movement are false.	3.90 (1.19)
The #MeToo movement encourages false accusations.	3.88 (1.21)
The #MeToo movement does more harm than good.	3.66 (1.22)
The #MeToo movement is unfair to men.	3.56 (1.37)
The victims should call the police promptly instead.	3.49 (1.40)
Overall #MeToo attitudinal score	3.60^a (0.87)

^a The value of each item of positive attitudes are reversed in the calculation of the overall mean of #MeToo attitudinal score.

We performed latent class analysis to investigate whether we could further categorise the respondents by their different attitudes towards the #MeToo movement. As a result, we identified four types of attitudes towards the movement among the young men: supportive, ambivalent, suspicious, and mistrustful, as shown in Table 2.10. The table shows how closely each group aligns with the negative attitude.

Table 2.10: Negative attitude towards the #MeToo movement (Latent Class Analysis)

	Supportive	Ambivalent	Suspicious	Apathetic
Distribution of Class Membership	57.88%	28.96%	10.20%	2.96%
Probability they agree with				
Unfair to men	2.67%	37.58%	98.34%	2.25%
Most accusations are false	2.36%	52.58%	94.70%	6.06%
Victims should call police	6.07%	34.41%	79.83%	0.00%
Encouraging false accusations	5.45%	49.59%	95.73%	4.00%
More harm than good	2.78%	26.46%	80.24%	6.83%
Puts innocent men at risk	7.71%	69.74%	98.64%	10.71%
NOT sympathetic to the victims ^a	2.71%	7.50%	15.77%	86.98%
NOT a good opportunity for the victims to speak out ^a	0.69%	7.17%	17.50%	91.16%
NOT accurately reflecting the situation ^a	3.73%	26.51%	43.21%	79.11%

^a The values of these items are reversed from the subscale of positive attitude. A small numeric value here indicates positive attitude while a big numeric value indicates negative attitude.⁶

The largest group of respondents (57.88%) belong to the 'supportive' type. The respondents in this group are very positive towards the movement and are sympathetic to the victims. They think that the movement provides a good chance for the victims to speak out about the problem and that it reflects the actual situation of sexual violence in real life. Among this group, only a very small minority (2.36-7.71%) of respondents hold any negative attitude towards the movement.

The second largest group (28.96%) belong to the 'ambivalent' type. Most of the respondents in this group are sympathetic to the victims and supportive of the movement. However, about half of them believe that the movement 'encourages false accusations' and that 'most accusations are false'. Over 60% of them agree that 'innocent men are put at risk' by the #MeToo movement.

Around one-tenth (10.20%) of the respondents belong to the 'suspicious' type. A large majority (80-95%) of the respondents in this group agree with most of the negative statements about the movement. Over 90% of these men agree that the movement 'puts innocent men at risk', is 'unfair to men', 'encourages false accusation', and that 'most accusations are false'. Though they are negative towards the movement, these men are still sympathetic to victims and still believe

⁶ Please refer to the note of Table 2.10. The figures of the three 'NOTs' are reversed from the positive attitude. Hence, the figure 0.69% (not a good opportunity to speak out) should be read as follows: 99.31% of the men belonging to the supportive type believe that the #MeToo movement is a good opportunity for the victims to speak out about their situations.

that the movement provides a good chance for the victims to let their voices be heard.

There is a very small number of men (2.96%) who hold an 'apathetic' attitude towards the #MeToo movement. They do not show negative attitudes towards the movement, nor do they show sympathy to the victims. Over 80% of them are NOT sympathetic to the victims. 80-90% of the 'apathetic' group do not believe that the movement has made a positive impact. Because of this contrast, their lack of sympathy to the victims and the lack of trust in the movement can be far more worrying than the attitudes of the 'suspicious' group.

Summary of findings on negative attitudes towards changing gender relations

Four scales are designed to measure the sampled men's negative attitudes towards topics that are related to changing gender relations in Hong Kong.

The results show that the sampled men tend to hold negative attitudes towards *Kong Nui*. They think that *Kong Nui* are 'unfair to men', who 'overly concerned with their appearance' and are 'materialistic', 'spoiled' and 'not gentle'.

The men generally hold positive attitudes towards FWM. In particular, they agree that 'the goal of FWM is correct', and that 'feminist principles should be applied to other areas of social lives'. They also agree that 'there are better ways than FWM to improve gender equality' and that 'feminist perspectives are too radical and too extreme'.

As far as sexual violence is concerned, the sampled men do not agree with all the statements under the subscales of 'victim-blaming beliefs' or 'spousal physical violence'. They are sympathetic to the victims of sexual assault and do not put the blame on women who experience domestic violence. However, they tend to agree with most of the beliefs towards sexual assault, indicating that rape myths are commonly held among university-aged men in Hong Kong.

In general, the sampled men tend to be positive about the #MeToo movement. However, a range of attitudes, namely supportive, ambivalent,

suspicious, and apathetic, co-exist. The largest group of respondents belong to the 'supportive' type, who are very positive about the movement and are sympathetic to the victims. The 'ambivalent' type (the second largest group) are those who are sympathetic to the victims, supportive towards the movement, but also believe that 'most accusations are false', and that 'innocent men are put at risk' by #MeToo. The 'suspicious' type (around one-tenth of the respondents) feel that the movement has definitely had a negative impact on men, who, however, are sympathetic to the victims and still believe that the movement has helped the victims positively. The 'apathetic' type (a small group of men making up less than 3%) do not feel negatively towards #MeToo, but their serious lack of sympathy towards victims and their lack of trust in the movement is worrying.

2.4 Bivariate Analysis

In Section 2, a typology of the men's attitudes towards male role norms – 'paternalistic', 'liberal', 'macho' and 'restrained' – was developed, which indicates the different levels of importance they place on traditional male role norms. We performed a series of bivariate analyses to further understand the relationships between the typology and other measurements. To do this, we examined the associations between the men's different attitudes towards traditional male role norms and their self-identified gender traits, their attitudes towards women, and their attitudes towards changing gender relations respectively.

The results show that there are significant relationships between the typology and other measurements. The relationship tables are listed below.

2.4.1 The association between male role attitudes typology and gender traits

Table 2.11 shows how men with different attitudes towards male role norms identify with the gender traits under the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ). The results show that **there is a significant relationship between the types of male role attitudes and their identification with gender traits.**

The respondents in the 'macho' group have the highest overall score (2.22) in their identification with masculine traits and they identify with most items listed in masculine traits in the PAQ. They also have a high score (2.52, the second highest) in their identification with feminine traits. It implies that the 'macho' men recognise and accept both masculine and feminine traits in themselves. While they think they are independent, self-confident, cope well under pressure and do not give up easily, they also identify with these feminine traits: 'helpful to others', 'aware of the feelings of others' and 'understanding of others'.

The 'paternalistic' and the 'restrained' groups show similar patterns in their identification with gender traits to the 'macho' group. The 'paternalistic' group give the second highest score in masculine traits, followed by the 'restrained' group, but with fewer items of masculine traits than the 'macho' group. The set of gender traits that they put emphasis on, 'independent', 'active' and 'cope well under pressure', 'helpful to others' and 'aware of the feelings of others', is almost the same as the 'macho' group. The 'paternalistic' group identify more (2.61) with being 'emotional' than the 'macho' group (2.52).

The 'liberal' group differ from all of the above three groups in that the 'liberal' men give the lowest scores in both masculine and feminine traits. Their overall score in masculine traits is below 2, implying that they have a low tendency to identify with masculine traits. Nevertheless, they still identify with 'independent', 'do not give up easily' and 'cope well under pressure'.

Table 2.11: Bivariate relationship between male role attitudes typology and subscales of gender traits

Gender traits	Male Role Attitudes Typology				Statistical significance
	Paternalistic	Liberal	Macho	Restrained	
Masculine traits					
Independent	2.71	2.53	2.72	2.57	$p < .01^a$
Active	2.88	1.78	2.08	2.07	$p < .001^a$
Competitive	1.98	1.83	2.19	1.96	$p < .001$
Can make decisions easily	1.65	1.68	1.76	1.62	Not sig. ^b
Do not give up easily	2.29	2.12	2.31	2.08	$p < .01$
Self-confident	2.11	1.91	2.35	2.06	$p < .001$
Feel superior	1.78	1.69	1.96	1.94	$p < .01$
Stand up well under pressure	2.34	2.25	2.35	2.33	Not sig.
Average score of all masculine traits	2.10	1.98	2.22	2.08	$p < .001$
Feminine traits					
Emotional	2.61	2.42	2.52	2.50	$p < .05^a$
Able to devote self completely to others	2.44	2.29	2.52	2.24	$p < .01$
Cultured	2.42	2.21	2.44	2.42	$p < .01$
Helpful to others	2.74	2.62	2.73	2.51	Not sig.
Kind	2.38	2.17	2.40	2.35	$p < .001$
Aware of the feelings of others	2.79	2.56	2.75	2.45	$p < .001$
Understanding of others	2.53	2.33	2.54	2.33	$p < .001$
Warm in relations to others	2.33	2.11	2.24	2.31	$p < .001$
Average score of all feminine traits	2.53	2.34	2.52	2.39	$p < .001$

^a $p < .001$, $p < .01$, $p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

^b 'Not sig.' indicates that the differences are statistically significant at .05 level.

2.4.2 The association between male role attitudes typology and ideological conservatism towards women

Table 2.12 shows the association between the men's attitudes towards traditional male role norms and their attitudes towards women.

The respondents of the 'macho' group are the most conservative with respect to their attitudes towards traditional women's roles and mating preferences. They give the highest scores in all of the subscales, agreeing the most with traditional women's roles (4.66). They give the heaviest weight to 'compliance to traditional women's roles' (5.36) and the least weight to 'independence and abilities' (4.79). In addition, among all of the groups, the respondents in the 'macho' group are the ones who strongly stress feminine appearance in an ideal partner (the highest mean score of 4.92).

The 'liberal' group are the least conservative. They do not agree with traditional women's role (3.45, mean score below 4) and do not show a strong preference for 'feminine appearance' as a desired quality of an ideal partner (3.92, mean score below 4).

The 'paternalistic' group and the 'restrained' group are in-between the 'macho' group and the 'liberal' group in terms of scores. The 'paternalistic' group tend to identify strongly (5.09) with 'compliance to traditional women's roles' as an important attribute of an ideal partner, and the 'restrained' group tend to identify strongly (4.32) with traditional women's roles. These two groups hold strong conservative attitudes, although to a slightly lower degree (mean score at lower value), than the 'macho' group.

Despite these differences, there are similarities across the groups. All of the men are conservative towards mating preferences, as all the mean scores are above 4. All of them give the heaviest weight to 'compliance to traditional women's roles' and rate it as the most desirable quality of ideal partner. Both the 'macho' group and the 'paternalistic' group regard this quality as very important, evident by the high scores above 5. Though the score of the 'liberal' group for 'compliance to traditional women's roles' is the lowest (4.58) among the four groups, it is still higher than the other qualities.

Table 2.12: Bivariate relationship between male role attitudes typology and subscales of ideological conservatism towards women

Subscales	Male Role Attitudes Typology				Statistical Significance ^a
	Paternalistic	Liberal	Macho	Restrained	
Traditional women's roles	4.08	3.45	4.66	4.32	$p < .001$
Gendered mating preferences ^b	4.28	4.07	4.50	4.23	$p < .001$
Compliance to traditional women's roles	5.09	4.58	5.36	4.79	$p < .001$
Feminine appearance	4.36	3.92	4.92	4.40	$p < .001$
Independence and abilities	4.60	4.30	4.79	4.49	$p < .001$

^a $p < .001$, $p < .01$, $p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

^b The values of 'independence and abilities' are reversed in the calculation of the overall mean scores of gendered mating preferences.

2.4.3 The association between male role attitudes typology and attitudes towards changing gender relations

Table 2.13 shows the result of the bivariate analysis of the men's attitudes towards male role norms and their attitudes towards changing gender relations.

The 'macho' group are the most negative towards different aspects of changing gender relations. They hold the most negative views about *Kong Nui* (the highest mean score of 4.77), have the most negative attitude towards FWM (the highest mean score of 4.24), and agree the most strongly to rape myths (the highest mean score of 4.53). They are also the only group who agrees with the negative effect of the #MeToo movement on men (the mean score of 4.02).

The 'liberal' group give the lowest scores to most of the subscales, implying that they are the least negative towards changing gender relations. Among all the groups, they show the strongest support to FWM, the least negative attitude towards FWM, and the least support to victim-blaming beliefs and myths about spousal physical violence. They are also the least negative towards #MeToo.

Again, the 'paternalistic' group and the 'restrained' group are in-between the 'macho' group and the 'liberal' group in their scores. However, the 'paternalistic' group is distinct in two attitudes: they show the most positive attitudes to FWM and #MeToo. This may relate to their strong identification with the traits of 'protection' and 'concerns for others'.

Despite these differences, there are similarities among the groups. All of the men agree with the *Kong Nui* stereotypes. Though the liberal group are the least negative compared to the other three groups, they also agree with the stereotypes. With respect to changing gender relations, all the groups are positive towards the #MeToo movement. They do not support violence against women; nor do they support victim-blaming beliefs towards the victim of sexual assault and domestic violence. However, all of them believe in rape myths, though to different degrees.

Table 2.13: Bivariate relationship between male role attitudes typology and subscales of changing gender relations

Subscales	Male Role Attitudes Typology				Statistical Significance ^a
	Paternalistic	Liberal	Macho	Restrained	
Kong Nui stereotypes	4.40	4.19	4.77	4.69	$p < .001$
Feminism and the women's movement	4.35	4.39	4.00	3.91	$p < .001$
Positive attitude	4.44	4.34	4.34	4.06	$p < .01$
Negative attitude	3.71	3.57	4.24	4.20	$p < .001$
Violence against women	3.26	3.06	3.74	3.77	$p < .001$
Victim-blaming beliefs	2.85	2.70	3.39	3.40	$p < .001$
Rape myths	4.30	4.01	4.53	4.46	$p < .001$
Spousal physical violence	2.73	2.53	3.35	3.53	$p < .001$
#MeToo movement	3.55	3.47	3.79	3.87	$p < .001$
Positive attitude	4.84	4.70	4.66	4.28	$p < .001$
Negative attitude	3.74	3.56	4.02	3.96	$p < .001$

^a $p < .001$, $p < .01$, $p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

* The figures in bold are those above the mid-score 4; those in blue are the highest scores if compared horizontally; and those in green are the lowest scores if compared horizontally.

Summary of the associations between the male role norms typology and their self-identified gender traits, their attitudes towards women, and their attitudes towards changing gender relations respectively.

The results of bivariate analysis show that there are significant relationships between male role attitudes typology and self-identified gender traits, ideological conservatism towards women, and negative attitudes towards changing gender relations respectively.

For gender traits, the 'macho' men identify the most with masculine traits but they also identify strongly with some feminine traits. While they value the

qualities 'independent', 'self-confident', 'cope well under pressure' and 'do not give up easily', they also show the sense of communion with others, such as 'helpful to others', 'aware of the feelings of others' and 'understanding of others'. The 'paternalistic' group and the 'restrained' group show similar patterns in their identification with gender traits as the 'macho' group, but they identify more with 'emotional' than the 'macho' group. The 'liberal' group gives the lowest scores in both masculine and feminine traits. They tend not to identify with masculine traits, though they still identify with 'independent', 'do not give up easily' and 'cope well under pressure'.

All of the men surveyed identify with being 'independent', 'do not give up easily', 'cope well under pressure', 'helpful to others' and 'aware of the feelings of others', a composite of masculine and feminine traits.

Regarding their attitudes towards women and changing gender relations, the 'macho' group are the most conservative and they agree the most with the traditional women's roles. On the qualities of an ideal partner, they give the heaviest weight to 'compliance to traditional women's roles' and the least weight to 'independence' and 'abilities'. They are also the type who most strongly prefer a feminine appearance in an ideal partner. They are the most negative towards *Kong Nui* and hold the most negative attitudes towards FWM. They agree the most to rape myths and are the only group who agree with the negative impact of the #MeToo movement on men.

The 'paternalistic' group are also conservative, albeit to a lesser degree than the 'macho' group. They tend to identify strongly with 'compliance to traditional women's roles' as an important attribute of an ideal partner. At the same time, this group shows the most positive attitude to FWM and #MeToo. This may relate to their strong identification with the traits of 'protection' and 'concern for others'.

The 'restrained' group are also conservative, although not as conservative as the 'macho' group. More specifically, they identify strongly with traditional women's roles, are negative to feminism and the women's movement and believe strongly in rape myths.

The 'liberal' group are the least conservative. They do not agree with the traditional women's roles. They show the strongest support to FWM, and the least support to victim-blaming beliefs and myths about spousal physical

violence. They do not believe that feminism and the women's movement, or #MeToo, have had a negative impact on men.

Despite these differences, **all the sampled men would prefer their ideal partner to be compliant to traditional women's roles, are negative to *Kong Nui*, and believe in rape myths. These are the shared conservative attitudes among the men.**

2.5 Factors Shaping Men's Gendered Attitudes

To explore the factors that might shape these young men's perceptions of gender ideology and attitudes towards changing gender relations, we performed bivariate analysis between selected background factors and all the subscales of this study.⁷

Table 2.14 is a summary of the results from the bivariate analysis. 'Yes' indicates the presence of a statistically significant relationship between that particular factor and the respondents' perception of gender ideology and attitudes towards changing gender relations. 'No' indicates that our study did not find a statistically significant relationship between the two.

The table shows that each factor is associated with the scales differently. For example, socioeconomic status is associated with gender traits but not with other scales. On the other hand, 'online forum participation' and 'sports participation' are associated with most of the scales. We will look into each factor below where significant relationships are detected.

⁷ The findings from bivariate analysis show whether there are significant statistical relationships between the factors concerned and male university student's attitudes towards gender relations. The relationships have to be understood as an association between the two variables rather than a causal relationship or as a direct impact as such.

Table 2.14: Bivariate relationship between measuring scales and respondents' background

Background factors	Significant relationship							
	Gender traits	Traditional male role norms	Ideological conservatism towards women		Negative attitudes towards changing gender relations			
			Traditional women's roles	Gendered mating preferences	Kong Nui stereotypes	Feminism & the women's movement	Violence against women	The #MeToo movement
Socioeconomic status (SES)	Yes/+ve^a	Partial yes/-ve	No	No	No	No	No	No
Immigrant status	No	Yes/+ve	No	No	No	Yes/-ve	No	Yes/-ve
Sibling status	Partial yes^b	Yes/-ve	Yes/-ve	No	No	Yes/-ve	No	No
School banding	No	Partial yes/+ve	No	No	No	No	Yes/+ve	No
Co-ed/single sex schooling	No	Yes/-ve	No	No	No	No	No	No
Sports participation	No	Yes/+ve	Yes/+ve	Yes/+ve	Yes/+ve	Yes/+ve	Yes/+ve	No
SSH programmes	No	Partial yes/-ve	Yes/-ve	No	No	No	Yes/-ve	No
Gender courses	Yes/-ve	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Online forum participation	No	Yes/+ve	Yes/+ve	Yes/+ve	No	Yes/+ve	No	Yes/+ve
Life satisfaction	Yes/-ve	Partial yes/-ve	Yes/-ve	No	Yes/-ve	Yes/-ve	No	Yes/-ve

^a +ve denotes positive relationship, i.e., the factor is positively associated with the respondents' conservative ideology; -ve denotes negative relationship, i.e. the factor is negatively associated with the respondents' conservative ideology.

^b Partial yes indicates that there is no significant relationship between the overall score and that factor but there is a significant relationship between certain subscales and that factor.

2.5.1 Socioeconomic status (SES)

The sampled men's SES⁸ is associated with the subscales of gender traits only, and not with any other subscales. Table 2.15 shows that there is a significant difference in both masculine traits and feminine traits across men from different SES backgrounds. The young men from a middle SES background tend to identify more with feminine traits than those from the upper and lower SES backgrounds. Those from a higher SES background identify more with masculine traits than the other two groups and identify equally strongly with feminine traits as the middle SES group. In other words, the men from an upper SES background identify more strongly than the other two groups with both masculine and feminine traits. On the other hand, those with a lower SES background identify less with both masculine and feminine traits than the other two groups.

Overall, the men with a higher SES background score higher in both masculinity and femininity than the lower SES groups.

Table 2.15: Bivariate relationship by socioeconomic status (SES)

	Lower SES	Middle SES	Upper SES	Statistical Significance ^a
Masculine Traits (Instrumentality)	2.04	2.08	2.15	p < .05
Feminine Traits (Expressiveness)	2.44	2.50	2.49	p < .05

^a $p < .001$, $p < .01$, $p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

2.5.2 Immigrant status⁹

Table 2.16 shows that a significant association exists between the immigrant status of the men and their perceptions of male role norms (MRNI-R) and their attitudes towards feminism and the women's movement (FWM). Non-locally born men tend to hold more conservative attitudes towards traditional male role norms than locally-born men. In particular, they align more with 'importance of sex', 'dominance', 'protection' and 'toughness' than locally-born men. They tend to be more conservative than the locally born men towards women too. However, the non-

⁸ Socioeconomic status (SES) is measured by the respondent's family income, the number of rooms and toilet at home and the number of cars owned by the family.

⁹ Immigrant status refers to those students who were Hong Kong residents but were not born in Hong Kong. This questionnaire, which is written in traditional Chinese characters, was distributed to Chinese students who can read and write Chinese. All surveyed respondents are local students in universities, of which 84.5% were born in Hong Kong (which are categorised as 'locally-born' in the report) and 15.5% were born in Mainland China, Taiwan and elsewhere (which are collectively categorised as 'non-locally born'). In other words, all of the respondents are local Hong Kong residents with different birthplaces.

locally born men are less negative than the locally born ones towards FWM and the #MeToo movement, as indicated by their lower scores in these two subscales.¹⁰

Overall, immigrant status does not have a consistent relationship with the men’s gender ideology and perceptions towards women and changing gender relations.

Table 2.16: Bivariate relationship by immigrant status

	Non-locally born	Locally- born	Statistical Significance ^a
Overall MRNI-R Scale	4.12	4.02	p < .05
MRNI-R Subscales			
Importance of sex	4.09	3.90	p < .05
Dominance	4.44	4.21	p < .05
Protection	5.22	5.03	p < .05
Toughness	4.77	4.63	p < .05
Feminism and the women’s movement	3.65	3.75	p < .01
#MeToo Movement	3.48	3.62	p < .05

^a p < .001, p < .01, p < .05 indicates the level of statistical significance.

2.5.3 Sibling status

Table 2.17 shows how the presence of female siblings affects the sampled men’s conservative ideology. Those who do not have female siblings tend to align with the traditional male role norms slightly more than those with female siblings. In particular, they align with ‘avoidance of femininity’ at a level much higher than those with female siblings, though both of them give a score below the mid-point 4. Young men with no female siblings also tend to align more with traditional women’s roles. Though the score they give to FWM is below the mid-point 4, the score is higher than that of those with female siblings. These results denote a more negative attitude towards feminism and the women’s movement.

Overall, the men without female siblings are more conservative in their attitudes to gender roles and more negative towards FWM than the men with female siblings.

¹⁰ The scores for positive attitude under FWM and the #MeToo movement are reversed in the calculation of the overall mean of these two attributes respectively. Therefore the higher the score is, the more negative the respondents feel about FWM and the #MeToo movement.

Table 2.17: Bivariate relationship by sibling status

	Does not have female sibling	Has female sibling(s)	Statistical Significance ^a
Overall MRNI-R Scale	4.06	4.00	p < .05
MRNI-R Subscales			
Avoidance of Femininity	3.62	3.50	p < .05
Traditional Women's Roles	4.11	3.99	p < .01
Feminism and the Women's Movement (FWM)	3.76	3.69	p < .05

^a $p < .001$, $p < .01$, $p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

2.5.4 Characteristics of secondary school – school banding¹¹

Table 2.18 shows that the banding of the secondary school that the sampled men attended is associated with one scale only - violence against women. Though all the mean scores are below the mid-point 4, men who attended band 1 and band 2 schools give a higher score than the men who attended band 3 schools. **Comparatively, men from band 1 and band 2 schools (who tend to be students of higher academic ability) hold a more conservative attitude towards violence against women than the men from band 3 schools (students who tend to achieve lower academic scores).**

Table 2.18: Bivariate relationship by secondary school characteristics – school banding

	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Statistical Significance ^a
Violence Against Women	3.32	3.39	3.28	p < .05

^a $p < .001$, $p < .01$, $p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

2.5.5 Characteristics of secondary school – co-ed/ single-sex school

This factor only has an effect in the MRNI-R scale. Table 2.19 shows that there is significant difference in the overall MRNI-R scale and 3 of the 8 subscales under this scale. It was found that men from co-ed schools align more with the traditional male role norms than the men from single-sex schools. They particularly align with the

¹¹ In Hong Kong, schools are divided into three bands which take in students of different academic ability. A band 1 school usually takes in students of higher ability, whereas a band 3 school usually takes in students with lower ability than schools of the other two bands.

'negativity towards homosexuality', 'dominance' and 'protection'. **Overall, men from co-ed schools are more conservative in male role norms than those from single-sex schools.**¹²

Table 2.19: Bivariate relationship by secondary school characteristics – Co-ed schools vs. single-sex schools)

	Co-ed schools	Single-sex schools	Statistical Significance ^a
Overall MRNI-R Scale	4.04	3.95	p < .05
MRNI-R Subscales			
Negativity towards homosexuality	3.10	2.95	p < .05
Dominance	4.67	4.06	p < .05
Protection	5.08	4.86	p < .01

^a p < .001, p < .01, p < .05 indicates the level of statistical significance.

2.5.6 Sports participation

Table 2.20 shows that sports participation is significantly related to many subscales used in this study. We note that **sports participation is significantly associated with the men's gender ideology and ideological conservatism towards women and negative attitudes towards changing gender relations.**

The men who are active in sports are more conservative than those who are not.

Table 2.20: Bivariate analysis by participating in sport activities at secondary schools (e.g., sports teams)

	No	Yes	Statistical Significance ^a
Overall MRNI-R Scale	3.92	4.16	p < .001
MRNI-R Subscales			
Restricted Emotionality	3.83	4.01	p < .01
Avoidance of Femininity	3.44	3.72	p < .01
Importance of sex	3.76	4.11	p < .001
Dominance	4.06	4.44	p < .001
Self-reliance	4.33	4.50	p < .05

¹² We cannot find strong theoretical or empirical support to elaborate this point. It has been suggested that gender stereotyping of attitudes and behaviour is more pronounced in co-educational schools than in single-sex schools. As co-educational are more likely than single-sex schools to be characterised by gender segregated activities, cross-sex interaction, status-hierarchy between females and males, and teachers' preferential treatment to one's sex over the others, students are more likely to develop more conservative gender ideologies in the former setting. However, the evidence for this claim is not conclusive as most studies are qualitative in nature or focus mainly on girls than on boys (Brutsaert, 1999). The effects of the gender context of the school can be further complicated by other social influences, such as class and ethnicity (as most single-sex schools are also elite schools or admit only white students), for details, see Williams (2016).

Protection	4.91	5.21	$p < .001$
Toughness	4.53	4.79	$p < .001$
Traditional Women's Roles	3.97	4.17	$p < .001$
Kong Nui Stereotypes	4.40	4.48	$p < .05$
Mating Preferences	4.24	4.31	$p < .001$
Feminism and the Women's Movement	3.77	3.69	$p < .001$
Violence Against Women	3.29	3.39	$p < .05$

^a $p < .001, p < .01, p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

2.5.7 Studying social sciences and humanities related programmes at university (SSH programmes)

Table 2.21 shows that the sampled men's university course in SSH programmes is significantly related to two scales. Those who do not study SSH courses tend to support traditional women's roles and hold a more negative attitude towards violence against women than those studying SSH courses.

Overall, the non-SSH students are more conservative and negative in gender attitudes than the SSH students.

Table 2.21: Bivariate relationship by studying social sciences and humanities related programmes at university

	No	Yes	Statistical Significance ^a
Traditional Women's Roles	4.09	3.96	$p < .01$
Violence Against Women	3.37	3.24	$p < .05$

^a $p < .001, p < .01, p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

2.5.8 Taking gender/ sexuality related courses at university

Table 2.22 shows that taking gender/ sexuality related courses (GSC) at university are significantly associated with two scales only. Those who have taken GSC tend to align with both masculine traits and feminine traits more than the non-takers. However, they also tend to align more strongly with *Kong Nui* stereotypes than the non-takers.

The men's exposure to GSC does not have a significant relationship with the men's perceptions towards male role norms, or their attitudes towards women and changing gender relations.

Table 2.22: Bivariate analysis by exposure to gender/sexuality related courses (GSC) at university

	No GSC	GSC	Statistical Significance ^a
Masculine Traits (Instrumentality)	2.07	2.19	<i>p</i> < .05
Feminine Traits (Expressiveness)	2.46	2.55	<i>p</i> < .001
<i>Kong Nui</i> Stereotypes	4.41	4.54	<i>p</i> < .01

^a *p* < .001, *p* < .01, *p* < .05 indicates the level of statistical significance.

2.5.9 Online forum participation

Table 2.23 shows that the sampled men's participation in online forums is significantly related to many scales used in this study. Without exception, those who spend more than 60 minutes per day participating in online forums align more with the traditional male role norms than those who do not. They also align more with traditional women's roles and gendered mating preferences than those who do not. Although these men score below the mid-point 4 to support for the women's movement and the #MeToo movement, they surpass those who are not active online forum participants on these 2 scales. This means that they hold negative attitudes towards changing gender relations.

Overall, the amount of time young men spend in online forums is significantly associated with a more conservative gender ideology towards women and negative attitudes towards changing gender relations.

Table 2.23: Bivariate relationship by online forum participation (spend more than 60 mins per day)

	No	Yes	Statistical Significance ^a
Overall MRNI-R Scale	3.98	4.18	<i>p</i> < .001
MRNI-R Subscales			
Restricted Emotionality	3.87	4.09	<i>p</i> < .05
Avoidance of Femininity	3.53	3.73	<i>p</i> < .001
Importance of sex	3.85	4.19	<i>p</i> < .01
Dominance	4.22	4.31	<i>p</i> < .05
Self-reliance	4.34	4.64	<i>p</i> < .001
Protection	5.01	5.20	<i>p</i> < .01
Toughness	4.58	4.87	<i>p</i> < .001
Traditional Women's Roles	4.03	4.16	<i>p</i> < .05

Mating Preferences	4.60	4.70	p < .01
Feminism and the Women's Movement	3.70	3.82	p < .05
#MeToo Movement	3.54	3.76	p < .05

^a $p < .001$, $p < .01$, $p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

2.5.10 Life satisfaction

In our bivariate analysis, we find that there is a significant relationship between life satisfaction and many of the scales used in this study. Table 2.24 shows that those who are the most satisfied with life align themselves more with both masculine traits and feminine traits. They have a lower tendency to align with negative attitudes towards *Kong Nui* stereotypes, FWM and the #MeToo movement. On the contrary, those who are less and least satisfied with life tend to be more negative towards *Kong Nui* stereotypes, FWM and the #MeToo movement than the most satisfied group.

In summary, **the more dissatisfied the respondents are with life, the more they align with negative attitudes towards changing gender relations. It should be noted that the men who hold more conservative ideologies towards women and changing gender relations are not as happy as the other groups of men in life.**

Table 2.24: Bivariate analysis by life satisfaction

	Least satisfied	Less satisfied	Most satisfied	Statistical Significance ^a
Masculine Traits (Instrumentality)	1.92	2.14	2.30	p < .001
Feminine Traits (Expressiveness)	2.37	2.50	2.62	p < .001
Traditional Women's Roles	4.00	4.15	4.07	p < .05
<i>Kong Nui</i> Stereotypes	4.51	4.43	4.33	p < .001
Feminism and the Women's Movement	3.79	3.77	3.62	p < .001
#MeToo Movement	3.68	3.62	3.44	p < .001

^a $p < .001$, $p < .01$, $p < .05$ indicates the level of statistical significance.

Summary of factors shaping men's attitudes

Although the selected background factors have an impact on the participants' gender ideology in various ways, we still identified some key patterns. The men with the followings background factors tend to hold more conservative gender ideology and/or negative attitudes towards changing gender relations than their counterparts in the respective groups:

- non-locally born
- without female siblings
- from band 1 or band 2 secondary school
- from co-ed secondary school
- active in sports
- not taking social sciences/ humanities programmes
- active participation in online forums
- least satisfied with life

In particular, active participation in online forums and sports participation have significant associations with men's traditional gender ideology, conservative and negative attitudes towards women and changing gender relations.

Conventional wisdom would suggest that higher SES and a person's exposure to gender-related courses should influence a man's gender ideology and attitudes towards changing gender relations. However, our survey data did not find positive relationships between these two factors and men's gender ideology as expected.

3. Focus Group Interviews Report

3.1 Interview Design

In the second phase of data collection, i.e., from January to June 2020, Hong Kong was badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The partial lockdown of the city and social distancing regulations severely constrained the recruitment of participants and the setting up of face-to-face focus group interviews. With much effort, nine focus group interviews were conducted. A total of 48 participants were recruited through different channels. Twenty-six were respondents of the survey questionnaire in Phase I who had indicated an interest in joining a focus group, while the remaining 22 participants were recruited through the researchers' social networks and the help of NGOs (such as TWF). While we strove to recruit equal numbers of participants from different universities, including sending research assistants to some targeted universities to distribute information leaflets to students, this was very challenging as campus security was very tight across the universities, restricting access after the social movement in 2019, and almost all university learning and teaching was being conducted online because of the pandemic.

Furthermore, because of the partial lockdown of the city, instead of meeting face to face, all the interview meetings were conducted via Zoom, a popular online communication tool adopted by most universities during that period. The meetings lasted from 1.86 to 2.66 hours, with an average of 2.24 hours per interview. With the consent of all participants, the zoom interviews were recorded, and were then transcribed verbatim for closer analysis.

3.2 Profiles of the Participants

Altogether, 48 participants from 11 universities (see Table 3.1) took part in focus group interviews. There were more participants from CUHK, HKU, EdUHK and HKBU than other universities. Despite difficulties in recruitment, we were able to engage at least one participant from OpenU, Shue Yan, Lingnan and HKUST. Among all the participants, a larger proportion (27/48) came from humanities, social sciences, and education programmes/courses/faculties, 11 came from business and economics, and a total of 10 have science, engineering, medicine or medicine-related backgrounds. Their educational years span all years, with a higher proportion in the second year and the fourth year. In terms of age range, most participants were aged from 19 to 23, the expected age range for university students.

Table 3.1: Focus group participants' university and faculty

Variables	Number of participants	Variables	Number of participants
<i>University</i>		<i>Educational Years</i>	
Education University of Hong Kong	8	Year 1	9
Hong Kong Baptist University	7	Year 2	13
City University of Hong Kong	3	Year 3	8
Open University of Hong Kong	2	Year 4	16
Hang Seng University of Hong Kong	4	≥ Year 5	2
Shue Yan University	1		
Lingnan University	1		
		<i>Age</i>	
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	4	18	2
University of Hong Kong	8	19	10
University of Science and Technology	1	20	7
Chinese University of Hong Kong	9	21	10
		22	7
		23	8
<i>Faculty</i>		24	3
Humanities, Social Sciences, Education	27	25 or above	1
Business, Economics	11		
Pure Science, Engineering	7		
Nursing, Medicine-Related Subjects	3		

3.3 Results

The focus group interviews were conducted to examine the views, understanding, and perceptions of the young men in four main/key areas:

- Gender ideology and masculinity
- Changing gender relations
- Social influences shaping their gender ideologies
- The importance and value of gender education

In the following pages, we will report findings for each area, illustrated by selected quotes from participants. In order to convey their precise meaning, Cantonese expressions are included in some instances. To protect the identity of our participants, we assigned an alpha-numbered code to each participant. For example, FG1_P1 indicates that this is Participant 1 from Focus Group #1.

3.3.1 Gender ideology and masculinity

While the questionnaire survey adopted measurements and scales, the focus group interviews studied the participants' subjective understanding of manhood (男子氣概), manliness (男性化) and masculinity (男性特質). More specifically, they explored what assumptions young men draw on in describing manliness, what ideal male role models they refer to, how they define success for a man, and what social roles a 'real' man should take up. We also paid attention to their anxieties, struggles, and negotiations when fulfilling those social ideals.

Some of the participants point out that ideal manhood is just social norms imposed upon men. For example, in one of the focus groups, no participants agree that men should conform to one fixed model of ideal manhood.

An ideal man is the one who can solely provide for the family (頂起成頭家), to care for the family (照料頭家). For me, I don't care what ideal manhood (男子氣概) is. I prefer to live my true self (做回自己). (FG8_P2)

Your sex is your natural being. Although you were born a boy, your role should not be defined by your sex. (FG8_P3)

It's normal that people have expectations of you, but whether I would fulfil their expectations is a different thing. (FG8_P4)

You have to behave in a certain way because many people expect you to be like this. I don't think this is a sensible way of living. If this is not my own wish, I won't force myself to fit with the expectation. (FG8_P1)

This group of participants seem to suggest that they can easily ignore social expectations about what 'a man' should be. However, this view is not shared by other groups. In fact, most of the participants are acutely aware of the demands of what an 'ideal' or 'real' man should be; they feel pressure to live up to, rather than ignore, social expectations. They mention a range of qualities that society expects an ideal 'man' to have, including being tall and smart, sporty, strong academically, ambitious in their career, responsible, morally upstanding and have a happy family. In the following pages, we will detail some of their key ideas.

3.3.1.1 Being a successful man

Among our participants, 'being successful' is regarded as the most important quality of ideal manhood. They refer to global figures like Bill Gates, Ma Wan and Tom Holland (a famous movie star) as 'successful men' and admire their wealth and popularity. Some participants also mention that white-collar men working in Central, in particular those in the financial sector, are regarded as successful. Most participants also underscore the importance of money as a measure of a man's success, as it symbolises power and enhances one's self-esteem.

Money is the most direct method to measure or to quantify how successful you are. If you were a poor guy, but after much effort you become a rich man, your success is even bigger. (FG4_P2)

In the contemporary world, especially in Hong Kong, life is very stressful. If your income cannot catch up with the living standard, or if you don't have an apartment and have to pay rent, you will be under tremendous pressure. So, money is power. If every time when you eat out, your girlfriend is the one who pays the bill, how can you show your manhood? Definitely not! (FG6_P3)

Money alone is not a sufficient condition of being a successful man. In one of the focus groups, the participants add more components, namely moral values, family, and hard work to modify money as a measure of success. Two more figures are quoted as examples of success.

Like Li Ka Shing, he contributes his wealth back to the society. It's not only about making a lot of money, [to be successful] one has to show his social responsibility. If he didn't do that, I would say he is only a successful merchant. (FG4, P4)

Another successful figure is Jay Chou (周杰倫). He earns a lot of money and he has a happy marriage and a harmonious family. (FG4_P1)

In summary, a successful man should be wealthy, morally upstanding, have a flourishing career and a happy family. Becoming wealthy at a young age is regarded as a more valuable component of success. Tom Holland, the actor known for playing Spiderman, is used as an example of this kind of success, because of his wealth and reputation at the age of 24.

3.3.1.2 Being a protective man

For the young men in this study, being a responsible man – protecting and providing for their family – is another important dimension of ideal manhood. One of the participants was brought up by his mother in a single parent family. He was taught to be 'responsible for providing for the family' since he was a young child. Participants from families with two parents are also aware of men's responsibility to the family. Although our participants are still single and young, they anticipate that they will have to take up this responsibility for the family when they become a husband or a father; some even assume the role of an economic provider when they are in a relationship.

I think men at different ages have different things to do. 'Responsibility' is something relevant only after you are married. When you have a family, you are responsible for your family, your partner and your next generation. As I am still unmarried, I don't feel any pressure from this right now. (FG2_P6)

I have a male friend who takes this [responsibility] very seriously. Being a boyfriend, he is very concerned about whether he is good enough, whether he provides the best for his girlfriend, in particular giving her a sense of security. He is doing two part-time jobs, so that he can provide for his own expenses as well as his girlfriend's. Maybe this is an extreme case but this is a real case. (FG1_P3)

Most participants define 'protection' in economic terms. For them, being an economic provider is a natural duty of a 'man', and the ability to provide also symbolises his greater strength and capability over the weak, who may include his sister, girlfriend and female partner.

How does a man find his manhood (男子氣概)? He shows his masculinity by protecting the weak, right? This is very natural. For example, I want to protect my family, my sisters, and my girlfriend. (FG6_P2)

I think as a man, he has to take care of his partner and his family. If you are capable, why don't you choose to be an economic provider, why do you

choose to be taken care of? On the contrary, if you are not capable, then you have no choice but to be provided for by your wife. So it is natural that a capable man wants to have the ability to protect his spouse and his family. (FG6_P4)

In my family, when we eat out, it is my father who pays the bill. At home, he pays all the family bills – water and electricity, rates and taxes, etc. I never see my mother do it. I think this is men's responsibility, this is what a man should do for his family. (FG1_P2)

3.3.1.3 Anxieties, struggles and negotiations as economic provider

Because of the importance of the role of economic provider, all the men interviewed are aware of the need to find a good job after graduation and to plan their careers. However, at the time of interview, most participants are also aware that, even with a university degree, they face more difficulties, compared to previous generations, in finding a well-paying job. The difficulties identified include fewer opportunities than those in the past, the inflation of educational qualifications, and rising levels of wealth expected. Most of the interviewees also share the view that the recent social, economic and political uncertainties have further aggravated their difficulties. Yet, we also notice that some participants are more optimistic than others. Their university courses appear to be crucial in developing their confidence in meeting the challenges ahead.

The men who are studying a professional or competitive degree are more confident about their future career.

I (studying double degree in law and business) am still exploring my interests. I chose the law degree because this is a professional degree. At the same time I am also studying business. So I have a choice of different specialties. (FG9_P1)

I am studying medicine, so I am likely to work as a medical doctor in 5 or 10 years' time. (FG5_P5)

Needless to say, some professions are always needed by the society, for example construction. Taking me as an example, I am studying Engineering, so I don't think I need to worry about the future. (FG7_P2)

I am studying accounting. I will do an internship to gain experience in accounting firms, and very shortly I will be a chartered accountant. After graduation, I believe I will work as an accountant for a period of time. (FG4_P4)

In contrast, participants who are studying a non-professional degree, especially those at lower-rank universities, are pessimistic. They do not see a clear direction ahead and are not as ambitious as those who are studying in specialised disciplines.

I study creative media. In Hong Kong, all kinds of creative industries including filmmaking are now in the 'Ice Age'. So, after graduation, I will go to Taiwan to study a master's degree, to pave the way for me to find opportunities there. (FG3_P5)

I am studying Philosophy. This discipline does not offer us any future. Hopefully I will find a job after graduation. I don't have special expectations; I just hope I will not be unemployed for the next 20 years. (FG4_P5)

I am studying an inter-disciplinary programme. In short form we call it 'China Studies'. After graduation I will continue my studies. In the long run, I don't know what I will do in future. I don't have a solid plan, maybe I will work in the education sector. (FG6_P1)

In general, quite a number of participants are worried about their future career. Apart from the nature of the academic discipline chosen, the uncertainties due to the current social-political situations and the COVID-19 epidemic have weakened their confidence about the future. The young men employ various methods to meet the challenge. Some equip themselves with more social and cultural resources, such as learning a foreign language, studying a master's degree, or going on a working holiday, while some give up their original plan and adopt a wait-and-see stance. For example, FG6_P3, a social science student, has learned German in order to work for trading companies that do business between Germany and China. FG8_P1, a history student, will go on a working holiday for one year in Japan, in order to be more proficient with the language and gain experience in Japanese companies. FG4_P3, an education student, will study a master's degree as a transition to finding jobs either in education or in other sectors. A notable example, participant FG3_P4 is preparing himself to work in less desirable jobs.

It will be definitely very hard to find a job, especially for graduates from Chinese Studies. You know what it is like in society, this is a discipline with no particular occupational orientation. I will study for a language qualification and work as a Japanese tutor, for example. Because of the COVID-19 epidemic, I have more worries. I have got a driving license, so I may be working in transportation if there are no other choices. I may acquire a security license as well. How to say, if you have more skills, you will have some way to secure an income. (FG3_P4)

Their lack of confidence about the future is also reflected in their thoughts about having children. We mentioned earlier that our participants place significant importance on the role of protector. They tend to extend their responsibility for protection to their girlfriend/partner, but not so much to their future children. **Except for a few who are keen on having children in future, most participants are hesitant to raise children in Hong Kong, for both economic and political reasons.** Some admit that they might consider having children if they were able to settle in another country.

I like children, but there are too many changes in society. I am not sure if I would be jobless. If I am not able to provide a good life for my children, why would I have them in the first place? (FG9_P2)

Under the current uncertainties, how do you bear responsibility for your family? If you can't let them breathe in the air of freedom, why would you give birth to children? I am asking myself this. (FG8_P4)

First, I don't know what my future will be. Second, the environment in Hong Kong is not so good. If I have children, I am rooted to that society. Right now, Hong Kong is not a good choice for my future children. (FG4_P2)

Apart from Hong Kong's specific situational factors, the participants also shared that the value and perception of children has changed. None of the participants expect that they would rely on children when they grow old, and hence having children is no longer a must in their life.

3.3.1.4 Being a warm and caring man

Compared to previous generations, the young men in this study are more accepting of 'showing emotion' and 'being warm to others' as their gender traits. **'Showing warmth' is not considered unmasculine; instead, they see these qualities as being congruent with the 'protect role, viz. an ideal role of being a man.**

I don't think there is a contradiction between being manly (男性化) and warm-hearted. A warm man is a person who shows keen concern (關懷備至) for females. This is what a man should do. (FG1_P2)

There must be different levels of warmth to different people. Showing his warmth to the girl he loves is different from supplying his warmth to everybody as a 'central heating machine'. If he shows his concern specifically to his girlfriend, this is fine. He is admired when his warmth is focused. (FG2_P6)

Their notion of 'protection' encompasses 'showing warmth' and 'giving care and concern to females', in particular the female he cares about. In other words, our participants are aware of the new demands in intimate relationships and are prepared to incorporate these new elements to shore up their masculinity. When discussing masculinity, some of the participants are mindful of women's perspectives. They are conscious of what women find attractive in a man: he has to be good looking, gentle and soft, and ambitious in his career. A strong but not necessarily muscular body will be even better.

Women usually consider those with a strong and muscular body build and a handsome face 'male gods'. If he is athletic, women will find him more attractive. (FG1_P4)

Nowadays many girls would say they prefer a man who is gentle and soft (溫柔) and good at cooking. So men of this kind are more popular than the 'manly' men [who are muscular and strong]. (FG2_P3)

He doesn't need to be very muscular. He can be like DiCarpio, Edison Chan, Edison in a vest is already very handsome. (FG3_P5)

I think women would look at both appearance and personality. On appearance, a strong body build would give women a stronger sense of security. On personality, women prefer a man who is self-motivated and ambitious (上進心). (FG7_P2)

'Being emotional' is another new element in masculinity. **These young men do not consider that expressing emotion is unmasculine, and they think that nowadays men are less reticent than previous generations about expressing their emotions in public.** Some of the men share frankly that they would cry when reading novels or watching movies.

I am very emotional (感性). I am the type who would cry when watching sentimental movies. This is normal, I don't mind being teased. (FG3_P2)

On Instagram you see some men share their emotions about their daily lives. Maybe you hardly find sharing of this kind from men of the previous generations. But now I also have a few friends who would do this. (FG1_P3)

In the past, men felt restrained (拘謹) from expressing their feelings. But now, our education is different, and society is more open-minded. Men are encouraged to express their emotions in front of others. (FG2_P1)

Summary of participants' views towards manhood, manliness and masculinity

In this section, we looked into how the male university students subjectively describe and define manhood, manliness and masculinity. Although our research participants name a range of normative masculine qualities, being successful, viz. having money, is a very important dimension of ideal manhood. Most consider the model of a successful man is wealthy, morally upstanding, with a flourishing career and a happy family. Being a responsible economic provider and a protector is even more important as it is regarded as the 'natural' duty of men. Interestingly, many participants tend to restrict their 'protector' role to female partners and are less inclined to raise and protect children.

However, a university degree is certainly not enough to help the participants to live up to these ideals. While some choose to ignore social expectations and pressures, many of the participants employ various methods to enhance their employability.

We also detected new components of masculinity in our participants. Compared to the previous generations, the research participants do not see 'showing emotion' and 'being warm to others' as compromising their masculinity. 'Showing warmth' is not considered unmasculine; instead, they see the quality as being congruent with the 'protector' role, viz. an ideal trait of being a man. While the participants still abide by traditional male norms and prize the role of economic provider, most of them also embrace some conventionally defined feminine qualities. This suggests some positive changes towards gender equality.

3.3.2 Perceptions of changing gender relations

We examine participants' views towards changing gender relations in Hong Kong with respect to six domains: the rise of women's status, gender roles in the family, *Kong Nui* stereotypes, female sexuality, sexual violence and the #MeToo movement, as well as feminists and feminism. More specifically, we asked our participants to evaluate the changes and challenges that have emerged in those domains, as well as whether and in what ways they feel disadvantaged and their masculinity threatened by changing gender relations.

3.3.2.1 Women's rising status

In general, the young men do not feel threatened by women's improved opportunities or status in education and employment. Nor do they find themselves disadvantaged compared to women. Many of them believe that meritocracy exists in Hong Kong's educational system and employment market, and that the more capable person, regardless of their gender, always wins out over the less capable. For example, in one of the focus groups, when we asked them about the rising status of women, the participants shared the following views:

There must be someone who performs better than you. (FG3_P5)

It's just that the person is a girl. (FG3_P3)

I don't have any problems with this. (FG3_P4)

The participants attribute the improvement of women's status to the expansion of educational opportunities. For example, FG4_P2 finds the existence of competent females a natural phenomenon since his childhood.

I studied in a co-ed school and used to compete with girls. I met female students from a young age. I don't feel threatened, I always thought this [the presence of competent females] was natural. (FG4_P2)

Some also notice that gender segregation exists in academic disciplines and in some part-time jobs. They think male dominance in some academic disciplines is due to natural gender differences. For women's concentration in certain part-time jobs, their explanations range from gender differences and individual characters to gender stereotypes. On the whole, the men do not find gender discrimination an issue.

Traditionally girls are not good at mathematics, and therefore there are fewer girls in Engineering. This is reasonable. But if girls get the same grade

as boys, and if they are smart and capable, they can be admitted into Engineering too. (FG8_P3)

I worked in a tutorial school and a restaurant before. In the tutorial school, I found there were more female tutors than males. I think female teachers were more attentive (細心) while the male teachers were stricter (威嚴) with discipline. However, in the restaurant, my boss was a woman who was very strict in managing the staff. So there are many factors shaping a person's character, not only gender. (FG3_P4)

Initially my boss preferred female staff to male, but in the end I was employed. At the beginning, he had some stereotypes. He thought that girls and boys were different in working attitudes and abilities. When I proved my attitude and ability to him, he got rid of his biases. (FG4_P2)

In general, the men believe gender equality has been more or less achieved in educational and employment opportunities in Hong Kong. However, when gender comes closer to home – whether they would consider a smarter and more capable female as a girlfriend or partner – their views diverge. Only a few men will accept partners that have higher educational or career achievements than they have.

I don't think you should treat your partner as a competitor. Instead, a couple should complement each other. If my partner focuses more on career advancement, I will spend more time on housework and focus less on my career. (FG8_P3)

I don't have the mindset that the male has to be superior and the female inferior. I don't mind if, after I am married, my wife provides for me and I stay at home to take care of children. (FG4_P5)

However, a larger number of the participants would not accept a girlfriend or partner who has higher educational attainment or who earns more than they do. They tell us frankly that they would feel bad, unhappy, inferior and stressed.

If you are more capable, with higher education and higher income than your partner, you feel normal. If she is better than you, she will look down upon you, and you will feel bad. (FG9_P3)

If my partner earns more money than I do, I will question my ability; my pride will be hurt. (FG7_P2)

It's hard for me to accept that my partner earns more money than me. Maybe 1 to 2K is okay, but if it is 5K more, it is unacceptable. (FG2_P7)

If I earn just above 10K while she earns 20-30K, we will be under strong social pressure from our parents and relatives. If we are at the stage of getting married, this will be a source of pressure. (FG6_P3)

Two participants share honestly that they are currently in this kind of situation – one has a girlfriend who will earn more than he will after they graduate; and another has a girlfriend who comes from a wealthier family. It is interesting to see how they develop justifications to /buffer themselves from the perceived ‘threat’.

My girlfriend is studying Nursing and I am studying IT. I have no choice but accept the reality that after graduation, her income will be much higher than mine, probably 10K more. If I don't accept this reality, the only way out is to break up with her. So I began to develop this view: nursing is a difficult job, it is dirty and harsh, so it deserves a higher salary. On the other hand, IT has a lot of room for promotion. Maybe after 5 years, 10 years, I will have a higher income than she does. (FG6_P6)

My girlfriend lives in Heng Fa Chuen, where an apartment is worth over 10 million dollars. But I am living in a public housing flat, which is worth less than a million dollars. You see, I do have this traditional mindset: Should I step back from this relationship? Does her family feel unhappy about my background? Should I find someone with a similar background? I thought about these over and over. Right now, I use this [difference in family backgrounds] as a driving force to push myself to work harder. (FG3_P3)

When a man is in a relationship with a smarter woman, they feel uneasy, hurt, or fear being perceived as inadequate, as they consider themselves below their partner.

Some express worries that their lower income may force them to take care of housework, conventionally defined as women's work. Therefore, to pre-empt this undesirable situation from happening, participants consider marrying a partner who is equal to or below them in background and earning potential.

A man will not choose a perfect woman to be his girlfriend because he doesn't want to match upward. He usually chooses someone of similar or lower qualifications than he has. (FG2_P6)

If I have a stronger partner, I will have this feeling: she is looking down on me; when I compare myself with her, I seem to be a loser (輸蝕). So when I choose a partner, I will find someone with lower educational attainment. (FG7_P3)

If you choose a very capable woman, a doctor or a lawyer, of course she must work for income, and then you have to take care of housework. So, for me, I will choose someone who has a similar background, so that we are not too different from each other. (FG4_P3)

3.3.2.2 Gender roles in families

We examine the men's views towards the notion of 'the man focusing on the outside and the woman focusing on the inside' (男主外、女主內, or male as breadwinner and female as homemaker), and whether they would accept a reversal of gender roles, such that the man becomes a 'house husband' who takes up more responsibility in housework and child care while the woman provides for the family.

The participants regard the idea of men on the outside and women on the inside a 'traditional' idea (傳統思想). Despite being traditional, some young men still adhere to it. We identify four views with regards to this traditional notion, indicating the diverse opinions among young men on gender relations within the family.

The first view among the respondents represents a/the practical consideration. They think that due to the high cost of living in Hong Kong, two incomes from a working couple are necessary, especially when there are children at home. Therefore, they believe their spouses will also work and they will turn housework and childcare over to a domestic helper and/or grandparents.

There is no way for us to adopt the traditional mode. It is very likely that both spouses have to work for income to sustain a family. This is a matter of need, rather than a deliberate choice of the couple. (FG1_P1)

In most families, both parents have to work because they need a lot of money to provide for the children's education. We often hear that in Hong Kong you need 4 million dollars to raise a child. (FG4_P3)

The second view represents the egalitarian perspective, in which men prefer shared responsibility between/within the couple. They recognise that women have interests in career achievement as men do and they have the right to pursue it, regardless of whether their husbands are earning enough for the family.

If we form a family, this is a joint operation. I prefer not to confine either one to childcare and housework only. I prefer both of us to work for income. I won't leave my partner at home as a housewife. We should share it [the housework] together. (FG7_P4)

Women's status has improved. Many women wish they could pursue their dreams in their career. In addition, many women choose not to have children. The working couple can handle the housework together. There is no need to divide the family roles anymore. (FG2_P5)

Your partner is not your subsidiary. You can't say, "I can provide for the family, so you don't need to work." If your partner has her own work, this is

good, as it proves that there is equality between you and your partner.
(FG4_P2)

The third type of view comes from those who are flexible towards men's role in the family. These men would accept a role reversal between themselves and their partner, if this arrangement fit them better. They explain that flexible work settings and liberal thinking in the modern age make this possible. In addition, a few participants admit that they would prefer to stay at home as they are not career men.

I heard that some men are responsible for housework, cooking, and online shopping. Maybe because he is an IT worker in his home office while his wife has to go to her office. In addition, people's mindset is now more open. A role reversal is no longer an odd thing. (FG4_P4)

I hope my partner will focus on the outside and I will stay at home, because I am not so keen on pursuing a career. For me, I am happy staying home and handling household matters. [Are you worried about social pressure?] It depends on who is criticising me. If my wife feels unhappy about it, I will go to work because I love her. If other people are criticising me, I will try to explain to them. If they don't agree with me, I won't care what they think. (FG7_P1)

The fourth view represents a more traditional attitude. These respondents would not accept men taking the role of "house husband" in the family, even if their partners earn more than they do. Some explain that they would feel like they were losing face, as 'house husband' is a stigmatised label. Some hold on to the family ideal in which the husband provides for the family and the wife takes care of the family. Two participants straightforwardly admit that they are traditional family men.

It's very hard for the men to stay at home because they are worried about being labelled as 'sponging off a woman' (食軟飯). This is a matter of 'face' (面子, or reputation). (FG2_P6)

My mindset is that men should earn more than women do. I would prefer my partner to stay home to take care of our children. If the children do not have their mother around them, or if we depend on a domestic helper or a relative to take up this role, it will have a disastrous impact on the children. I am quite traditional in this respect. (FG7_P3)

Overall, young male university students have diverse views regarding gender roles in families: practical, egalitarian, flexible and traditional. However, in our rough assessment, more participants agree with shared responsibility at home and dual income earners than being the sole provider of the family. But for housework and

childcare, very few men agree to take these up as their main responsibility. Many of our research participants consider that women are born to be caring and are more capable than men in taking care of children.

3.3.2.3 *Kong Nui* stereotypes

We are curious to know, because of women's rising status, whether the young men consider that women their age in Hong Kong have become unreasonable, whether they subscribe to the popular negative stereotypes about Hong Kong women (i.e., *Kong Nui*) and whether they find men are disadvantaged in intimate relationships, especially if they have a *Kong Nui* type girlfriend.

Many participants reflect that they do not find any *Kong Nui* among their friends. Most of their female friends are reasonable, easy to communicate with, happy to share responsibilities in group activities, such as carrying heavy objects when necessary, and willing to share expenses equally. Some suggest that *Kong Nui* is a constructed phenomenon on the Internet rather than a real type of person.

Having said that, many participants still list a number of descriptive adjectives about *Kong Nui*: gossipy (八卦, 講是非), picky (奄尖), and materialistic (物質主義). *Kong Nui* are young women who are only interested in shopping, buying clothes, and food, and are superficial, unintellectual, unable to engage in serious conversations about history, philosophy and/or politics. Some of the participants quote a video on the Internet entitled '14 slaps of a *Kong Nui*'¹³ to illustrate how *Kong Nui* can be extreme, unreasonable, and bad-tempered. FG1_P2 quotes a story he knows of from his friends.

They [*Kong Nui*] are materialistic. Sometimes they ask their boyfriends to pay for their material enjoyment. I know a girl who has a new boyfriend. Shortly after they started to date, she made him pay for a vacation trip. After the trip, she asked for a break-up. Obviously, she set him up. This is a typical case of an intolerable *Kong Nui*. (FG1_P2)

To these young men, the most negative comment about *Kong Nui* is that a woman enjoys having the upper hand over the man in an intimate relationship, and hence she asks him to pay for her material enjoyment. Most of the examples quoted by the college men are about how *Kong Nui* lure their boyfriends to pay for meals in

¹³ This video was widely circulated on the Internet in 2014, in which a girl slapped the face of a kneeling man many times. This scene happened on a busy street in Hong Kong and was recorded by some of the passers-by with their mobile phone.

expensive restaurants. As the example below illustrates, the girlfriend, a *Kong Nui*, is described as having used her temper to control the man.

My friend always defers (被食住) to his girlfriend. For example, yesterday we had a party with workmates. He couldn't come because his girlfriend was in a bad mood (發脾氣). He had to appease her so he couldn't join us. There is no way to change it. One is to beat up and the other enjoys it ('It takes two to tango' in English, 一個願打一個願捱 in Cantonese). If they are happy with this kind of relationship, what can I say? (FG7_P4)

When exploring why the seemingly unfair relationship persists, many participants use the idiom – 'it takes two to tango' – as an explanation. In other words, participants tend to see the *Kong Nui* phenomenon as a joint project between an unreasonable woman and a weak man who is willing to defer to the woman/ to be disrespected. Some participants even think that those 'weak' men are responsible for producing *Kong Nui* in the first place.

Kong Nui is the consequence of a man spoiling his girlfriend. A boy, in order to win the heart of a girl, tries his best to fulfil all of her demands, even though some are unreasonable. Girls in Hong Kong are spoilt. They always compare their current boyfriend with their ex-boyfriend(s) or others' boyfriends. When the man can no longer tolerate the pressure from these girlfriends, they use the term *Kong Nui* to explain the relationship. Boys should reflect on what they have done. (FG2_P1)

I think some men spoil their girlfriends to the degree that the girls become *Kong Nui*. I have a female friend who was an ordinary, normal girl. Her boyfriend takes care of her in every possible way (無微不至), making her a spoilt girl. After a few years, she becomes a *Kong Nui*. (FG9_P3)

Apparently, **our participants, albeit critical in their views, suggest that *Kong Nui* have not threatened men's superiority; they are just spoilt girlfriend produced by weak men who have tried too hard to keep women happy or failed to regulate women's unreasonable demands.**

3.3.2.4 Female sexuality

What if a woman takes an active role in initiating a relationship? Can young men accept that women should/ enjoy sexual autonomy? Many participants think that as they believe there is gender equality in modern society, both men and women should have the same right to take the initiative in a relationship.

I think the society has become more equal. In the past it was the man who took the initiative. Now in the modern society, the girl can take the lead, she can even propose marriage. (FG2_P7)

This topic deserves discussion simply because we seldom see girls taking the lead. Usually we hear boys say, "It takes me so much energy to date this girl." We seldom hear girls talk about this. If we talk about gender equality, both genders have the right to date the one he/she is in love with. (FG6_P6)

We are now in the 2020s, we should abandon the stigmatisation against girls taking the initiative. If boys can ask girls on a date, why not girls ask boys on a date? (FG8_P1)

Not all men accept that women can/should take the initiative, or more precisely that women be sexually autonomous. Some participants criticise a woman if she looks easy and open to sexual relationships. Some participants even use a derogatory label, 'smelly chicken' (臭雞, a derogatory name for prostitutes), to describe women who they perceive as flirtatious. Their reservations about women's sexual autonomy can be even more vividly shown when discussing female virginity.

In principle it is okay [if my girlfriend is not a virgin] but in reality I would feel bad. (FG6_P2)

Everyone has his/her own history. Would it be realistic if you limit your choice to "A0" only? I think it is only normal if N is greater than 1.¹⁴ (FG6_P4)

I know this is not realistic, but I hope I am not her nth boyfriend. I hope the value of N of my girlfriend is not too large. (FG6_P2)

The best is her N equals to 0, isn't it? (FG6_P4)

It is fine if N=1 or 2. If N is 6, 7, 8,..... (FG6_P2)

She is a 'smelly chicken'! (FG6_P6)

In traditional society, a virginity plaque was a virtue. Even nowadays, I still think this mentality [virginity is important] remains not only with the men, but also with many others in the whole world. (FG6_P1)

If you choose people, people choose you too. If you have had many sexual partners, you do not have a right to judge your girlfriend's virginity. (FG6_P4)

¹⁴ 'A0' is how young people describe a person who is available for a relationship but has no romantic experience. The first alphabet 'A' stands for 'available' and 'O' stands for 'occupied'. The second is a numeric digit indicating the cumulative number of romantic partners that the person has. So 'N' is represented in a digit. For example, a man who is in a relationship with his second partner would describe his relationship status as 'O2'. In this case, N=2.

The debate on female virginity among this group of participants indicates the changing and sometimes ambivalent attitudes of men towards women's changing sexuality. While some participants (like P4) have become more liberal in sexual norms, there are others who remain ambivalent about the change. For those who care about female virginity, they say they would be careful when choosing a partner. Otherwise, they would feel stressful in the relationship. In another focus group (FG7), one participant (P2) encourages another participant to look at women's virginity from a win-win perspective. The analogy of a gambling game and his mocking tone aptly captures men's ambivalence of women's changing sexuality.

If you ask me, I of course care about (介意) her history. But I won't ask her about this; if I happen to know that she has had sex with others before, I don't think I let go [of that information] easily (介懷). (FG7_P3)

How about you take it as a gambling game and try to bet on both sides? If she is a virgin, you are fortunate that she reserves her first time for you. You feel good about it. If she is not, then you are lucky that she is experienced, and you may enjoy sex more. In this way, you win in either case. (FG7_P2)

3.3.2.5 Sexual violence and the #MeToo movement

We asked the participants their views on whether sexual violence is a serious problem in Hong Kong and whether they support the #MeToo movement. In general, the men do not find sexual violence to be a serious problem in Hong Kong. They trust the law enforcement institutions in Hong Kong, which, they believe, can effectively keep this problem under control. They also trust that most ordinary men would behave themselves when they socialise with women. They think sexual violence is a serious problem only in societies where a patriarchal culture persists, such as in Korea.

I think right now this [sexual assault] is not a serious problem, because women's status has improved. If something of this kind happens, even one single incident, the whole society would react and speak up for the girl. Social opinions always stand with the girl. (FG1_P4)

I don't think there are many cases [of sexual assault] nowadays, because the educational level of people has improved. In secondary school, we learn Confucian culture. At home, our parents teach us not to be too close to the opposite sex. (FG2_P6)

I think this kind of incident [the N room incident in Korea]¹⁵ is related to the Korean culture. They have a clearly defined status hierarchy by gender and by generation. The young must pay respect to the elders; and men dominate women. In this context women are vulnerable to men's abuse. (FG1_P1)

Furthermore, **most of the participants have heard about the #MeToo movement and see it as a social movement that protects survivors of sexual violence and that raises public awareness of the problem.** Those who have a positive attitude towards #MeToo believe that honest men will not be affected by the movement.

The movement is to encourage everyone to speak out if they come across something bad. It aims to improve women's status. (FG1_P1)

You may say that if someone is sexually harassed, she should put the abuser on trial (控告). I think it is because she has no way to put him on, trial as there is not sufficient legal evidence or the incident happened long time ago. What can you do to protect yourself? You can use #MeToo. (FG4_P2)

I think #MeToo has more positive effects than negative effects. It depends on your conduct. If you are a good guy, you won't be affected. (FG9_P6)

Some point out that the protection of the movement should be extended to male victims because male victims are overlooked and seldom speak out publicly about their experiences of assault. They emphasise that with gender equality, male victims should have the same rights as women to confront their abusers.

There are social stereotypes about men: men should not talk about personal matters/issues, and men should be strong. That's why male victims seldom talk about their experiences. If we promote #MeToo to men, more men may come forward to speak out about their pain too. (FG9_P4)

If this is a weapon, men should be able to use this weapon as well, not only women. This is a concept of equality. Men can also take action against the woman who has abused him sexually. If the victim does not have enough evidence against the perpetrator, he/she should use #MeToo to make the accusation. (FG4_P2)

¹⁵ The 'N Room' incident is a criminal case of sex crime in South Korea. 'Nth Room' refers to a group on encrypted messaging application Telegram where graphic videos of violent sex acts, involving underage girls, were shared to more than 260,000 members. These 'customers' paid in cryptocurrency to join the group and access content with anonymous identity. The 'Nth Room' reportedly sprang up on Telegram in 2018 and the administrator of the group was arrested in March 2020. He is accused of leading a group that coerced and blackmailed girls into sharing sexual videos. Some 74 people including underage girls were exploited. Reference: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52030219>; <https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/entertainment/article/3077514/k-pop-stars-speak-out-nth-room-telegram-porn-scandal-urging>.

However, several participants are also critical of #MeToo, in particular, its possible unfair impact on men. They point out that the most serious problem with the movement is that innocent men may be unjustly treated by false accusations. They posit that, as the identity of a victim is anonymous, this encourages some women to put forth false accusations. Moreover, there is no formal mechanism to make a fair judgement for each case, meaning that the reputation of an innocent man might be destroyed by unfounded attack on the Internet. More specifically, the case of a female athlete is repeatedly quoted as an example of these problems.¹⁶

I think that the movement has become a weapon to attack people when it is used by those who are irresponsible, because the one who makes the accusation does not have to take any responsibility. She discloses the name, age and the personal data of the man on the Internet. And then the man becomes identifiable on the Internet. For example, the case of the female athlete. The personal details of the male coach are all disclosed. In the end he was proved innocent (有罪) by the court.¹⁷ Yet, he lost his job, his reputation and everything. (FG2_P1)

The worst problem about #MeToo is that once a girl poses an accusation on the internet, all netizens make the judgements against the accused. There is no fair mechanism to assess the truthfulness of the claim, and a judgement is already made before a trial (未審先判). (FG8_P4)

We note that these views are largely based on incorrect information and messages on the Internet about the case of the female athlete, as explained in footnote #12.

¹⁶ The female hurdle athlete disclosed in November 2017 that she was sexually assaulted by her former coach 10 years ago (see footnote #2 on p.7). The coach was put to trial in May 2018 and was ruled ‘not guilty’ in the court in November 2018. After the court ruling, social opinions continued to be divided. The opponents said the athlete owed the coach an apology because he was ‘proved innocent’. On the other hand, social commentaries discussed the loopholes/weaknesses of the legal framework in giving justice to sexual abuse victims. In one of the commentaries, the authors (who were legal professionals) concluded that the ruling does not necessarily reflect the truth. In the verdict, analysed by the authors, the magistrate went through point by point the reasonable doubts in the prosecution’s evidence, in particular the testimony of the complainant (that is, the athlete), but he commended her for being willing to report the case and testify in open court. Whilst the court did not fully accept the evidence and acquitted the defendant, the authors explained, it did not automatically accuse the complainant as a perjurer (偽證者, a person who tells lies in court). In accordance with preferring a wrongful acquittal to a wrongful conviction (寧縱毋枉) and the presumption of innocence (假定無辜), the possibility of letting a criminal off the hook has always been an issue. Genuine complaints may be considered flawed and the criminals may not be convicted for many reasons. Whilst this may be a day-to-day occurrence in all levels of criminal courts, these situations are seldom considered as indicative of a frame-up (誣陷) to the defendant. Reference from 〈性侵案不成立，法律程序不反映事實？〉，《法夢》，The News Lens, 19th November, 2018, <https://www.thenewslens.com/article/108440>.

¹⁷ We translate it as ‘proved innocent’ in order to distinguish it from the legal term ‘not guilty’ as explained in footnote #12. In Cantonese, 「有罪」 should be literally translated as ‘not guilty’. But ‘not guilty’ in common sense means a person did not commit crime, which does not correspond to ‘not guilty’ in legal sense. We understand that most of the focus group participants use 「有罪」 to mean 「無辜」、「清白」 (innocent). So we use ‘proved innocent’ in the quote.

3.3.2.6 Feminists and feminism

We asked our participants about their views on feminism and, interestingly, **most of them do not support feminism even though many of them claim that they support gender equality**. The men attempt to discredit feminism and feminists in various ways.

First, they describe feminists as man-haters, who are ridiculous, unreasonable, greedy, and selfish. Some described feminists as either victims of misfortune who turn their negative experiences into radical action, or greedy women who use feminism as an excuse to seek unreasonable privileges from men.

Very often feminists are very extreme. They package themselves as 'feminists' but in fact they are seeking special privileges. They make radical arguments which justify women's domination over men. (FG9_P1)

There are two types of feminists. One group is radical feminists, they must have experienced something bad growing-up. These unfortunate experiences have pushed them to seek compensation. Another group of feminists are those who don't have any hardship. They claim to be feminists just for the sake of their own interests. (FG2_P2)

Second, they see feminism as an ideology that is unfair to men, upsetting the balance between men's rights and women's rights. They think that feminists, in the name of gender equality, are asking for special benefits rather than legitimate rights. Some participants assert that there should be a men's movement to counteract the women's movement.

When they fight for women's rights, they turn these into women's special privileges (女性特權), not gender equality anymore. I sometimes find they're asking too much. They put women's rights over men's rights. This is not gender equality anymore. They are sore losers (輸打贏要). (FG7_P2)

What we want is gender equality, and not women's rights over men's rights. Many of them argue that women have a very low status. In fact, in many circumstances, men have been treated unfairly, but no one comes forward to fight for men's rights. (FG9_P3)

However, none of these participants provide concrete examples or information to substantiate their views.

Other participants point out that these views reflect the prevailing debates on social media platforms in Hong Kong, especially Golden, LIHKG, and even Facebook. The debates involve two opposing sides. On one hand, there are some well-known female KOLs who initiate these feminist discussions; and on the other side, there is the

opposite camp of anti-feminists. The two camps are always in a war of words, using offensive language to attack one another. **These participants warn us not to take the online discussions seriously because the users are anonymous and will not be held responsible for what they say.**

Most of the netizens on LiHKG, or Golden are male. Anybody can post their comments on any topic however they like. I think that some users vent their frustration at life through the Internet. (FG1_P1)

Not only LiHKG, but also sometimes on Facebook, you can find those feminist and anti-feminist arguments. The language is irrational. They bring up extreme cases to discuss and take things out of context (斷章取義). I treat their debates as jokes; I couldn't care less about them. (FG8_P3)

However, some participants do take these online posts seriously and accuse those feminist KOLs of unfairly depriving men of their natural rights as men, especially in the domain of male sexuality. For example, in one of the focus groups, some participants question some feminists for unnecessarily interfering in men's sexual fantasies, their private arena, which they consider a natural mental activity for men.

In fact, the woman being gazed at by a man does not need to know about the man's fantasy. Some extremist feminists say that, "You should treat a woman as a person, not an object of your fantasy." "You should not objectify women." I want to ask, "Are you going to control my mind?" (FG6_P2)

FG6_P2 admits that he regularly frequents these chat platforms but seldom expresses his views on the platforms, in order to avoid the war of words. He believes the worst thing about those feminists is that they attach extreme labels to those who disagree with them.

I need time and space to elaborate my points. But on the Internet, it's impossible to fully express my views. The feminists would quickly label me as a supporter of rapists of the N room incident, or a 'patriarch', etc. (FG6_P2)

In another focus group, similar critiques towards feminists centre on men consuming pornography. **They consider that men are unfairly judged by feminists as 'lustful' (鹹濕) and 'abnormal' (變態). They comment that the development of feminism has become oppressive to men. A few participants suggest that there should be proper courses on feminist theories in order to encourage meaningful discussions on the Internet.**

Summary of participants' evaluations of changing gender relations

There are six topics that we used to gauge men's understanding and perception of changing gender relations in Hong Kong. Their views appear to be diverse, ranging from liberal, flexible, egalitarian, to conservative and even negative.

Women's rising status: In general, the men do not feel threatened or disadvantaged by women's improved opportunities in education and employment. Many of them attribute women's improved status to the existence of meritocracy in the educational system and employment market. They think that people who are more capable are justified in achieving more than less capable people, regardless of their gender. However, their views are less positive when gender comes close to home, i.e., whether they would accept a smart and capable woman to be their partner/girlfriend. While a few participants would accept this possibility, many others show reluctance and reservation. They admit that they might feel stressed and even hurt if their partner were stronger and smarter than they were and would prefer to choose an equal partner or match downward.

Gender roles in the family: Regarding family roles, in particular the traditional model of 'men as breadwinner and women as homemaker' as an ideal family model, the men have different views, which can be categorised as 'practical', 'egalitarian', 'flexible' and 'traditional'. In general, most participants rule out the traditional model, as they find it impractical for a family in Hong Kong to live on a single income. Some participants advocate shared family responsibility between the couple based on egalitarian principles. A few participants contemplate the possibility of a role reversal and becoming a househusband if their partner performs better than they do in their career and income. Nonetheless, some participants continue to adhere to the traditional model. They admit that they are traditional and accept the traditional model as their family ideal. They reject the idea of a role reversal, even if their partner has a better job and earns more, to avoid being labelled a 'househusband' -- a negative stigma.

Kong Nui stereotypes: We examine if the young men have subscribed to the popular negative stereotypes about women in Hong Kong (*Kong Nui*). The views of the male participants are divided – some see *Kong Nui* as a phenomenon created by the media and online chat platform, while some

delve into the difficulties that men have encountered in intimate relationships. The latter criticise *Kong Nui* of exerting unreasonable control over their boyfriends and making unjustifiable demands on their boyfriend for material enjoyment. However, they also state that the problem of *Kong Nui* occurs mainly among 'weak' men who have been too generous or failed to discipline their spoilt girlfriends.

Female sexuality: Young male university students, on the principle of gender equality, agree that women should enjoy the same rights as men in terms of initiating an intimate relationship. Yet, they have negative opinions of a female if she is regarded as flirtatious and too easy. In general, our participants are ambivalent about women's sexual autonomy. They prize female virginity, but regard sex as normal in an intimate relationship. Despite this, they are reluctant to accept and even object to women's past sexual experiences.

Sexual violence and the #MeToo movement: Most of the research participants do not find that sexual violence is a serious problem in Hong Kong. They trust law enforcement institutions here, which they believe can effectively control this problem. They also trust that most ordinary men would not sexually assault a woman. Furthermore, most of them hold positive attitudes towards the #MeToo movement and think that it has a positive impact on victims and to society.

However, they have different views on whether and how men are affected by the movement. Some believe that honest men are not affected; some suggest that the movement be more inclusive to male victims; and some criticise #MeToo, as innocent men may be unjustly hurt by false accusations. We also note that their criticisms against #MeToo are largely based on hearsay on the Internet.

Feminists and feminism: Most of our participants do not support feminism, even though many of them claim that they support gender equality. Feminism is seen as an unfair ideology against men, upsetting the balance between men's rights and women's rights. They describe feminists as man-haters, who are ridiculous, unreasonable, greedy, and selfish. They think that feminists, in the name of gender equality, are asking for special benefits rather than equal rights. Some of them assert that there should be a men's

movement to counteract the women's movement.

Their negative views about feminists echo the prevailing debates on feminism on social media platforms in Hong Kong, especially Golden, LIHKG, and even Facebook. While some participants refer to those online debates as jokes, others accuse feminist KOLs of unfairly depriving men of their natural (sexual) rights. A few participants suggest that there should be proper courses on feminist theories in order to encourage meaningful discussions on the Internet.

3.3.3 Social influences shaping gender ideologies

3.3.3.1 Family and school

Most participants reflect that they were socialised with a set of conservative values towards manhood, whether from their parents or in primary and secondary schools.

The core message of the gender ideology is that boys should be strong and males should protect females.

Gender stereotypes come from socialisation. For example, when I was small, schoolteachers told us that boys should not cry, so did the relatives around me. (FG1_P2)

My parents are/belong to the traditional type (守舊). They have strong preferences as to what a man and a woman should do. For example, my mother always pushes me to eat more, to grow stronger. She would say, 'You are so thin. How do you find a girlfriend? How do you protect your girlfriend?' So in my mind, males should protect females. (FG2_P5)

Some suggest that religious schools are the most conservative while schools with lower banding are more open and liberal.

I studied in a co-ed school. Maybe it was a traditional Christian school, they taught us traditional gender ideology. (FG4_P2)

I wonder if social class background affects a person's gender ideology. I studied in a band 3 school and most of the students come from families of grassroots background. Some of us were quite poor, they quit school after F.6 because they couldn't afford higher education. But when we spent time together, we didn't care about gender, everybody played with each other happily. But in the university, perhaps because most of them come from good schools, the atmosphere is very different. (FG1_P1)

Interestingly, **some participants understand gender in terms of communication between opposite sexes, so they think only students from single sex schools lack proper knowledge about gender.**

I also have friends from boys' schools who don't understand how females think. It takes them quite some time to understand how to socialise with females. They integrate with girls slower than boys from co-ed schools. (FG8_P4)

This issue will be taken up again in the section below (3.3.4.3) on gender education in primary and secondary education.

3.3.3.2 University experiences

Some participants consider that their experiences at university have had a positive impact on their gender ideology. They reflect that they have become more liberal and more open-minded since starting university. Some are influenced by the learning environment, some by the new groups of friends, some by the general atmosphere at university, and some by the hall culture in which they reside. For example, FG1_P5 thinks that as after joining a female-dominated department, he has become less rigid in his understanding of gender ideology.

I was educated to accept a fixed mode of boyhood. When I went university, probably because I study Nursing, I started to realise that there are no fixed rules to being a boy. I begin to think that gender roles could be more 'blurred' (模糊). I want to break through the gender stereotypes. (FG1_P5)

The men's exposure to related subjects has also presented them with new ideas about gender. For example, FG3_P3 evaluates that his thinking about gender has changed since attending university.

I was educated with traditional ideas of gender (傳統男女觀念) in primary and secondary schools. When I go to university, my horizon is broadened. I see things from a wider perspective. Maybe it is related to my major, Philosophy. (FG4_P5)

I am inspired by a lecturer in the class where we have discussed 'oppression' upon men. In the past I used to think that men are strong and would not imagine how men could be 'oppressed' [under social stereotypes]. (FG3_P3)

3.3.3.3 Social media

As discussed above, some of the participants have a lot of opinions against the heated debates on feminism circulating on social media platforms. This same group of participants, who are frequent users of the platforms, do not think their views are in any way influenced by those online arguments/debates because they are mature enough to judge what is right or wrong. The dialogue in this focus group shows how they evaluate the influence of social media.

Interviewer: Many young people are fond of web surfing; do you think the content of social media platforms will have any impact on them?

FG3_P5: The stuff on LiHKG, you should take them as jokes, don't take it seriously.

Interviewer: Many netizens are making comments. Are they all joking?

FG3_P3: Of course not.

FG3_P5: Some are serious but some are not. The ones who are serious do not know that others are not that serious. So they become agitated by the negative replies. The ones who are not serious feel unhappy about the serious ones. That's why there are wars of words on LiHKG.

Interviewer: Why do people join the chat wars?

FG3_P5: For leisure, just leisure. Everybody likes 'eating peanuts' (食花生, a colloquial term meaning watching funny events). Life in Hong Kong is too stressful, so they need peanuts and jokes for fun.

FG3_P2: I think we should not share these meaningless posts. I think LiHKG has a tremendous impact on younger people.

FG3_P5: When Golden (a social media platform) was popular, as a secondary school student, I was not allowed to have an account. I could only read but not write. We [The Golden users] didn't want the 'primary chickens' (小學雞, meaning young and naïve students) joining the chats. We enjoyed more 'nutritious' (有營養, meaning quality) discussions. Nowadays in LiHKG, secondary school students are allowed to open accounts. So you find many immature views circulating on the platforms. Primary students, junior secondary students, they all treat LiHKG as their guiding light. LiHKG is destroying two generations of youths.

Interestingly, **the participants believe that the discussions on social media only affect young minds, i.e. those of primary and secondary students, who are not mature enough and lack the knowledge to make rational judgement. As university students, they believe they are not affected.**

Summary of social influences shaping gender ideologies

Most participants reflect that they were socialised with a set of conservative gender ideologies on manhood, whether from their parents or in primary and secondary schools. The core message of the gender ideology is that boys should be strong and should protect females. Some suggest that religious schools are the most conservative and that schools of lower banding are more open and liberal.

Some participants consider that their experiences at university have a positive

impact on their gender ideology. They believe that they have become more liberal and more open-minded after starting university.

We have revealed the negative views of some research participants against #MeToo, which are similar to the hearsay on the Internet. We also find some participants have negative remarks against feminists and feminism, which again echo the debates on social media platforms. However, participants, including those frequent users of the platforms, are confident that their views are not influenced by online messages and debates because they think they are mature enough to judge what is right or wrong.

3.3.4 The importance of gender education

3.3.4.1 The impact of gender/sexuality-related courses/programmes

In this study, we collected the participants' thoughts on the gender/sexuality-related courses they have taken at university or in their previous Associate Degree programmes. Their evaluations vary. **Some find the gender/sexuality-related courses inspiring, giving them new values and making them more conscious of the issues of gender differences and (in)equality.**

I took a sexuality course during my Associate Degree. I studied people's reactions to intimate behaviours in public areas. I found that people accept public displays of intimacy by lesbians and heterosexual couples but not gay guys. I also learnt about the scientific approach to explaining gender differences, such as hormones. I learned more about gender which is helpful to me. (FG2_P7)

I took a course on women's history. The lecturer told us how women in traditional societies promoted their status under difficult situations. I learned a lot of theories, which have had an impact on my values. (FG8_P1)

I think the course changed some of my perspectives. In the past, when I talked about sexual minorities, I used terms like gay lo (基佬, literally meaning gay men but a derogatory term in Hong Kong), a ladyboy (人妖, a freak), and showed no respect to people of different sexual orientations. (FG1_P1)

I took a gender course at university. I am thinking of studying gender for my master's degree. I think many social phenomena and social problems are related to sex and gender. There are many misconceptions about gender and that's why some social norms have worsened the problem [of female subordination]. (FG3_P2)

Other participants are less positive about their gender-related courses; they do not find the course contents have any relevance to their lives.

I learned some theories from the course, but the theories are very old, those from the 1990s. The course provides me with some basic knowledge, but I have to interpret the real-life situations by myself. (FG6_P2)

I got in touch with some topics, for example, gender inequality in job promotion. I know more about it, but the course gives us no solution to this problem. I have no way to correct the root problem. (FG1_P5)

I took a sexuality course. But to really understand the content, you need to go and meet some sexual minorities, meeting these people as friends. (FG1_P2)

Most of the time, the lectures were about history, such as the origin of feminism, why feminism is important. I didn't hear much about gender relations. So, it didn't help change my gender consciousness. (FG2_P3)

These participants admit that they learned more concepts and knowledge but do not find these useful in real life. In particular, they do not regard history and feminist theories as useful as they cannot change the problem of inequality with this kind of knowledge.

3.3.4.2 Gender education for university students

We note that many participants regard gender education as an opportunity to improve communication skills between men and women. As such, many of them do not think that a course on gender education is useful for university students, as they should have already learned the related communication skills from actual real-life situations. If there must be some form of gender education, all of them suggest that it should not be compulsory or graded by assignments or examinations.

I hope we can understand each other more. We can convey our messages to the other side (female side) directly, we don't need to guess what they (females) mean. We won't misunderstand each other, which often leads to conflict and dispute between men and women. (FG1_P1)

I don't think it is useful to teach this (communication skills) at university. University students have independent minds and the ability to communicate with different kinds of people. It will only waste their credits and their time. (FG8_P3)

Some participants also suggest that gender education must be practice-oriented, both in terms of content and format. They find gender theories and history to be the

least useful type of knowledge, and if theory courses are to be offered, these should be confined to those whose courses are in humanities and social sciences, such as history, sociology and social work. Regarding the format, they want more practical knowledge which is applicable to real life situations.

I don't think this kind of course is useful. It won't help us in our future career development, unless you are going to be a social worker. (FG2_P6)

If this is not a compulsory course, I won't take it. If it teaches us theory only, I wonder how useful it is for us to handle gender relations. I am not interested unless it uses the method of social experiment. If there are experiments to test out something, I may consider taking this. (FG2_P5)

One participant (FG5_P3) shares his related experience when he was in secondary school. He got a chance to join a programme organised by an NGO (TWF) and he found the experience mind opening. He remembered visiting 'Toys R Us' where gender stereotypes in toys abound; and they discussed the gendered career choices among young people. He found this kind of real-life experience was more useful than a formal course.

3.3.4.3 Gender education for primary and secondary school students

Most participants consider that **gender education should be provided to primary and secondary school students, especially those in single-sex schools, who should acquire more skills to communicate effectively with the opposite sex.**

I observe that in the university, boys from boys' schools socialise with boys only, and girls from girls' schools socialise with girls only. Those from co-ed schools, as they come from more open environments, are more communicative. Males and females are at a distance from each other. The students from boys' schools or girls' schools should learn how to build trust in the opposite sex and learn how to socialise with each other. (FG1_P4)

Some participants think that Liberal Studies at senior secondary level should be expanded and strengthen its gender-related content. One suggestion is that it include information on sexual harassment. But another set of opinion proposes to trim down the curriculum. Proponents of the latter think that short talks on gender during school assemblies are good enough.

Many participants suggest that there should be gender education to correct the rigid views about gender among primary and secondary school students. They believe it

should start as early as primary school, in order to eradicate gender stereotypes and gender-related bullying.

I think gender education should be provided to children as early as possible. There are many cases of young children being bullied by their classmates. Boys who act like a female or girls who look too strong for a female, i.e., those who do not conform to social expectations, are made fun of and excluded by others. I first learned of 'gender stereotypes' when I was in secondary school. I suggest that primary schools can use documentaries about real examples to promote empathy (同理心) to young children. There is a concept called 'do gender'. In reality, not everybody must conform to or 'do' the socially expected gender norms. This should have been taught when we were young children. (FG9_P5)

For primary and secondary school students, it is very important for them to have the correct concepts of gender when they are young. For example, we should not fix our occupation by gender, e.g., boys must be policemen or firemen, girls can only be nurses. (FG3_P5)

Some of the participants argue that though there is sex education in secondary schools, the information/content does not cover enough on gender relations.

In the secondary school, we were taught about biological differences between males and females, but we were not taught about interpersonal relationships between boys and girls. For example, girls should know how to handle the circumstances when they see a boy's 'physiological response' [in their male organ]. Boys should know how to adjust their behaviours when socialising with girls. (FG6_P1)

Not all participants agree that primary and secondary schools are proper places for gender education. A few participants worry that the gender courses, if the instructors are Christians (who are regarded as supporters of traditional gender ideology), may not be as effective as those in the universities. Some suggest that schools can make use of good quality online courses or teachers may integrate concepts of gender/sexuality into the existing curriculum.

There are many good quality online courses overseas. I think these online courses are better than classroom teaching in local schools. The teachers have become very inflexible as their minds are entrenched with religious thoughts, whereas the mentalities of the children are not yet fixed. If the children are inspired by liberal thinking from online courses overseas, they will have a better chance to learn something good. (FG4_P2)

When I studied English literature, I found that many novels are related to feminism. I will be an English teacher in future. I think I will 'embed' the concepts of feminism in teaching English in the classroom. So, we don't

need to have a separate subject for gender or sexuality, and we can still teach feminism at school. (FG3_P2)

A few participants suggest that if a child should be socialised with correct concepts of gender, **there should be gender education for parents as well, which can be offered to them as early as in pre-natal classes.**

I have a brave suggestion. There should also be gender education in prenatal classes. The parents should learn about what gender is. We should start gender education in the family, so that the new-born babies grow up under the proper conception of gender. Otherwise it is very difficult to change their views when they are grown-up. (FG4_P4)

Summary of the importance of gender education

Participants who have taken gender/ sexuality- related courses at university or in their previous Associate Degree programmes have varied responses to the effectiveness of these courses. Some find the courses inspiring, giving them new values, and raising their awareness about equality and diversity; but others are less impressed with the topics. They do not find the course content has any relevance to their lives. In particular, they regard history and feminist theories as not useful, as they cannot see how this kind of knowledge can change the problem of inequality.

Many participants define gender education narrowly, as a training session to improve communication skills between the opposite sexes. It is also the main reason why many of them do not find GSC in the form of formal courses 'useful' and necessary. Obviously, there should be proper education to improve their knowledge and awareness about gender.

Many participants consider that gender education should be provided to students in single-sex schools as they think that those students need to acquire more skills to communicate effectively with the opposite sex.

Many participants suggest that there should be gender education to correct the rigid gender views among the primary and secondary school students. It should start as early as in primary schools to eradicate gender stereotypes and the problem of bullying. However, their views diverge as to how the education can be delivered. Some suggest that the Liberal Studies at senior secondary level should be expanded and strengthened, while some consider short talks at school assemblies are good enough.

A few participants suggest that there should be gender education for parents as well, which can be offered to them as early as pre-natal classes.

4. Discussion and Recommendations

We set out to examine young men's perspectives and understanding of gender roles, women's rising status, and changing gender and sexual relationships. Our results clearly show that young male students at university in Hong Kong are not a homogeneous group with unitary views. As our quantitative and qualitative analyses clearly indicate, we see a range of gender ideologies among them, whether in their attitudes towards male role norms, in their assessments of the #MeToo movement, or in their views on the traditional family model, viz. 'men as breadwinner and women as homemaker'. These aptly illustrate that 'masculinities' are plural. Diversities aside, we also see positive changes, persistent emphases, inherent contradictions, as well as emerging mistrust and anger in the perspectives of these young men.

4.1 Key Themes Identified

4.1.1 Positive changes

Unlike the previous generation, or their western peers, the sampled men define their masculinity differently. Rather than avoiding femininity, they embrace it. For instance, a great majority of the surveyed men identify with both masculine and feminine traits, and the top 5 attributes that they identified most with are (in order of importance): 'aware of the feelings of others', 'helpful to others', 'independent', 'emotional' and 'understanding of others'. These attributes indicate not only a combination of both masculine and feminine traits, but also their stronger emphasis on feminine traits. Similarly, in the focus group discussions, interview participants do not consider 'showing warmth' as unmasculine. Instead, they see 'showing emotion' and 'being warm to others', viz. conventional feminine qualities, as acceptable and valuable traits for men of this age.

Moreover, in contrast to the findings of a previous study (EOC, 2012), the men are positive about women's rising status in education and employment. They attribute women's advancement to the existence of meritocracy in Hong Kong. The men do not feel themselves (to be) disadvantaged or threatened by women's improved opportunities, probably because of these men's relatively good educational background. In general, they are optimistic about gender relations, believing equality has been achieved and gender discrimination is rare.

Furthermore, contrary to our initial concern, the participants are, in general, supportive, and sympathetic to female victims of sexual assault and domestic

violence. Many of the survey respondents hold positive attitudes towards the #MeToo movement and think that it has a positive impact on the victims and on the society.

4.1.2 Persistent emphases

Despite these positive signs, these men remain traditional in their understanding of male roles. The results from the MRNI-R scale of the survey show that they identify strongly with the traditional male role norms, namely 'dominance', 'self-reliance', 'protection', and 'toughness'. A closer analysis indicates that the attitude of most surveyed men falls into the category 'paternalistic', who put strong emphases on 'protection' and 'toughness'.

Similar emphases can be found in the focus group interviews. The research participants see the importance of wealth/money in defining a 'successful man' and regard the ability to protect and provide for the family as a man's *natural* duty and responsibility. In other words, even though young men embrace more feminine qualities in their expression of being a man, most of them still see 'protection' as an essential characteristic in defining *what* a 'real' man should be/do. This important stress on being an economic provider in the family is consistent with the findings of previous studies, which show that Hong Kong men, regardless of their age, identified the role of breadwinner as central to their identity (EOC 2012). Our findings echo the discussions of recent feminist studies, which identify responsibility as one of the key dimensions in defining Chinese masculinity (Ho, Jackson and Lam 2018; Kong 2019),

However, young men have to struggle to live up to this ideal manhood. At the time of the interviews, Hong Kong's economy was badly affected by the political upheaval in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic from Jan 2020. Apart from a few participants who hold a professional degree in medicine, engineering or accounting, who stayed confident about their career development, most participants were worried and gloomy about getting a proper job after graduation. They did not feel their university degree, which used to be seen as a graduate's ticket to success, could shield them from unemployment. They contemplated the use of various methods to enhance their employability. The uncertainties in regard to Hong Kong's political and economic future is often used as a reason to justify their hesitance to raise children, which appears to be a sensible strategy to scale down their roles of economic provider and protector.

The challenge in fulfilling this ideal manhood also explains why few focus group participants subscribe to the traditional family model – man as the breadwinner (i.e.,

economic provider) and woman as the homemaker. While a few men assert the principle of shared family responsibility, most of them are simply practical: in an expensive Hong Kong, dual income from a working couple is a must to sustain a family. Role reversal remains an undesirable option that few will consider. To most of these young men, 'house husband' or a wife who earns more is not simply a social stigma; it is worse because 'my pride will be hurt'.

4.1.3 Inherent contradictions

In fact, we identified some interesting contradiction between the young men's public views and personal preferences, between open support and inner ambivalence. For instance, while they see education and employment as level playing fields for both genders, they are conservative in their views about women's roles. The surveyed respondents believe that 'some jobs are not suitable for women', 'a woman should be cute and gentle', 'a woman should prioritise the role of mother over her career', 'women at workplaces are masculine' and 'a woman should know how to do housework'. Their conservatism is also vividly illustrated in their mating preferences. All of the respondents prefer their female partner to be 'compliant to traditional women's roles', wanting their ideal partner to be understanding and helpful to others and possess traditional feminine qualities (in particular, being beautiful). However, they also want her to be independent and capable. In viewing these different expectations together, young men are both conservative and contradictory in their mating preferences.

Some young men voiced their ambivalence about women's rising status in the focus group interviews. They do not take issue with women advancing in the workplace. They do, however, feel stressed by the idea of having a girlfriend / wife who performs better than they do in educational attainment, income level, and career path. They feel it is 'normal' to be the stronger gender in an intimate relationship, and that a more competent female partner would diminish their sense of confidence, significance, and 'manliness'. To avoid potential stress or tension arising from these disparities, they would rather choose an equal partner or match downward.

Participants also express ambivalence and contradictory feelings when discussing the topic of female sexuality. On the principle of gender equality, they agree that women may initiate a romantic relationship as they feel like. While they regard sex as essential to a healthy relationship, they still value female virginity and are not accepting of women's active sexual agency, e.g., women who exhibit flirtatious behaviour or who are open to sexual relationships with different men. Because of this, many participants find it hard to deal with a girlfriend's sexual past.

4.1.4 Mistrust and emerging anger

While the surveyed young men are sympathetic to victims of sexual assault, they also agree with most rape myths regarding sexual assault. In particular, **respondents believe that rapists are mostly impulsive men, who improvised and were drunk, and that rapists are not ordinary men, but are aggressive men. Even in ordinary situations.** These beliefs reveal a distinct understanding of sexual violence: that only aggressive men or men who lose control will commit sexual assault. Similar understanding can be found in the focus group interviews. Most participants think sexual violence is a serious problem only in patriarchal societies and not in Hong Kong. They also trust that the majority of men will behave themselves when interacting with women.

As such, although many young men are supportive of the #MeToo movement, they are wary of its potential adverse impact on innocent men. Both in the survey questionnaire and focus group interviews, participants express concern that some women might make false accusations placing innocent men at risk; and that unfair judgement against the 'accused' will be made before actual court trial. When the focus group participants expressed worries about the unfairness of #MeToo to men, their views are closely related to the hearsay and accusations on the Internet against the case of the female hurdle athlete. These views prompted our concern about the influence of social media on men's knowledge of gender issues in Hong Kong.

The most significant concern regarding the young men's gender ideologies is their negative and sometimes angry views towards self-proclaimed feminists. Although the surveyed respondents generally hold a positive attitude towards feminism and the women's movement (FWM), they also agree that 'there are better ways than FWM to improve gender equality' and that 'feminist perspectives are too radical and too extreme'.

Their contradictory views on feminism and feminists in particular become more pronounced in the focus group interviews. Some participants assert that they do not support feminism even though they support gender equality, as feminism is unfair to men because it prizes women's rights over men's rights. Some express discontent and hostility against self-proclaimed feminists (certain KOLs in particular), disparaging those women as man-haters, who are seen by these young men as ridiculous, unreasonable, greedy, and self-serving. They also criticise these feminist KOLs as manipulative and hypocritical, who, in the name of gender equality, seek special privileges for themselves rather than defending legitimate rights. Their criticisms reference the heated debates between pro- and anti-feminists circulating on social

media platforms, which is further evidence of the strong influence social media has on gender ideologies among young men.

4.1.5 Factors and social influences on men's gender ideologies

Our statistical analyses identified some key factors that may have shaped the male university student's gender ideologies. Those who hold a more conservative gender ideology and negative attitude towards changing gender relations are more likely to be from the following backgrounds: non-locally born; without female siblings; from a band 1 or band 2 secondary school; from a co-ed secondary school; active in sports; majoring in non-social sciences/ humanities programmes; active participation in online forums; and are least satisfied with life.¹⁸

With reference to existing studies, we identified factors that may have shaped the men's gender ideology. For example, Chan & Cheung (2018: 45) found that male (secondary school) students who hold stronger gender stereotypical beliefs in STEM ... have a higher intention to study STEM in university. It seems possible that university students from non-SSH disciplines (namely pure sciences, engineering and medicine-related programmes) are likely to be more conservative in gender ideology than SSH students. As sport is associated with masculine characteristics such as muscularity, strength, competitiveness and aggression (McSharry 2017; Mooney & Hickey 2012), so it is possible that sports participation has significant influence on young men's conservative gender ideology.¹⁹

We surmised that socialisation and exposure may have influenced gender ideologies. Young men who have fewer close interactions with female siblings and those who have more exposure to environments that promote gender stereotypical messages and beliefs, are more likely to develop a conservative gender ideology. Similarly, the more often young men participate in online forums, which can contain a lot of anti-

¹⁸ It is possible for life satisfaction to relate to gender ideology. Based on a study of 435 students who enrolled in women's and gender studies programmes, Eisele & Stake (2008) conclude that students' feminist attitude and feminist identity are positively related to their mental health in the form of feeling greater self-efficacy. Saunders & Kashubeck-West (2006) also suggest that women's feminist identity is positively related to their psychological well-being. However, as both studies are on female students only, we need further study to verify the relationship between gender ideology and life satisfaction among male students.

¹⁹ However, we cannot find any relevant studies or consistent support to explain the influences of other factors, such as immigrant status (birthplace in Mainland China), having female siblings, school banding and life satisfaction. As mentioned in footnote 12, the influence of sex composition of schools on gender ideology is varied and complicated. For example, while boys-only classes or groups can sometimes exacerbate a problematic macho culture such as more fighting and more roughness (Jackson 2002), boys in co-educational school settings may sometimes use heterosexist language practices as a 'policing' tools against those boys who are seen as 'unmanly', 'un-macho' or 'feminine' (see Dalley-Trim, 2007).

feminist messages and views, the more likely they are to have negative views towards feminism and the women's movement.

We are particularly concerned about the possible influence of social media on men's gender understandings, as we found a contradiction between the survey analyses and their subjective evaluations in the focus group interviews. Our analyses found that young men's active participation in online forums had a significant association with their conservative gender ideology and their conservative/negative attitudes towards women and changing gender relations. Our focus group interviews, as mentioned above, also found that some participants frequently reference online discussions and debates in asserting their views. However, those focus group participants who are also frequent visitors to online forums are confident that their gender ideologies have not been influenced by those messages and arguments because they are 'mature enough to judge what is right or wrong'.

It is significant to note the importance and relevance of gender education. Although our statistical analyses did not show significant associations between men's exposure to gender/sexuality-related (GSC) and their gender ideology and attitudes towards changing gender relations, some of the focus group participants, however, provided encouraging feedback on this front. Some men find attending gender-related courses inspiring, which provide them with new values and raise their awareness about gender equality and differences. At the same time, we were mindful of the negative evaluations for some gender courses. In particular, some participants find feminist history and theories dated, abstract and irrelevant to their lives. The diversity of participant views prompted us to reflect on the content and approach of gender education, which will be discussed further in the recommendations section.

We also noticed that some focus group participants have a simplistic and erroneous misunderstanding of gender and/or gender education. In their view, gender is narrowly understood as the social interaction between two sexes. Some participants who previously studied in co-ed secondary schools, suggest offering gender education to improve the communication skills of single-sex school students. However, contrary to their expectations, our survey findings showed that respondents who attended co-ed schools are more conservative than those who attended single-sex schools. This illustrates the need for proper gender education to enhance students' understanding of gender and rectify their bias.

4.2 Recommendations

‘Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.’²⁰

According to the United Nations, gender equality is one of the top five goals in its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are needed to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.²¹ Gender equality is indeed critical to all areas of a healthy society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection and well-being of girls and boys.²² By providing equal rights and opportunities for girls and boys and helping all children fulfil their potential,²³ a society creates a solid foundation to achieve sustainable economic growth and social development. By valuing women and men as equal and educating women and men on how to cultivate equal, respectful relationships with one another, a society becomes safer and healthier. In short, gender equality is beneficial to everyone, men and women, young and old.

In view of many misunderstandings about gender and the persistent conservative gender ideology among this new generation of young men, we would like to propose some recommendations to educators and social service providers, which aim to raise awareness, particularly among men, around sexism in different social domains and of the benefits of gender equality for broader society.

4.2.1 Suggestions for educators and social service providers

As male students from band 1 and band 2 co-educational schools, of immigrant status, without female siblings, or those participate more in sports are more likely to have conservative gender ideologies, educators and social service providers may

²⁰ The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

²¹ The 17 goals are: ‘no poverty’, ‘zero hunger’, ‘good health and well-being’, ‘quality education’, ‘gender equality’, ‘clean water and sanitation’, ‘affordable and clean energy’, ‘decent work and economic growth’, ‘industry, innovation, and infrastructure’, ‘reduced inequalities’, ‘sustainable cities and communities’, ‘responsible consumption and production’, ‘climate action’, ‘life below water’, ‘life on land’, ‘peace, justice and strong institutions’ and ‘partnerships’. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

²² Gender equality: Why it matters, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/5_Why-It-Matters-2020.pdf

²³ The visionary slogan of UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality>

want to take note of these socio-demographic backgrounds when designing and providing gender education programmes.

From the very beginning, gender is part of our everyday lived experience. Early on, children begin learning and integrating messages about gender into their identities and behaviours. Focus group participants remember being taught a set of conservative values by their parents, such as 'boys should be strong', and 'boys should protect girls'. While a few participants view these teachings as limiting, the majority feel pressured to live up to these axioms with some young men internalising these messages as a man's 'natural' duty. We propose incorporating gender awareness into parenting education so that parents can become more mindful of the adverse impact of gender stereotyping on their child.

Gender equality education should be provided as early as in primary school, if not kindergarten, and be continued in secondary school and university. For primary and secondary schools, the purpose of gender education is to enable young children to understand how gender stereotypes can limit personal growth and why they should not stigmatise classmates who do not conform to stereotypical images of boys or girls. Because students will be socialised and exposed to gender stereotypes or conservative ideologies in other social domains, we believe a whole-school approach to gender education will be more effective than a single course or piecemeal activities to change the consciousness of students. The content should be relevant, concrete, and grounded in Hong Kong-specific culture and context as well as incorporate diverse voices and an inclusive approach. Educational activities that are designed to encourage students to feel connected are more likely to inspire participants to take action for change.

For universities, based on our focus group interviews, we observed that male students may not identify with topics that only focus on women, so instructors of gender related courses may want to widen their focus to include real-life experiences of both female and male students. In terms of format, we recommend adopting a more participatory, interactive and practical-oriented approach in which activities and hands-on experiences are included.

4.2.2 Suggestions for further research

As the first exploratory study on young men's gender ideologies and identities in Hong Kong, there are many areas to further explore and research – two of which we believe are of particular concern.

First, in relation to our suggestions on gender education programmes for parents and schools, we see the need to conduct a systematic evaluation to examine and compare the effectiveness of such gender education programmes in changing gender attitudes, in particular between and among male and female participants.

Secondly, we propose to look into the causal relationship between men's gender ideology and their awareness of the influence of social media in shaping their opinions and behaviours. Currently there are educational attempts to promote the awareness of digital citizenship but gender awareness is not included.²⁴ If future studies are able to identify a positive association between open and liberal gender ideology and a higher level of awareness among media users, this would then warrant the inclusion of gender awareness in media education in Hong Kong, and help cultivate critical media consumers and responsible media producers.²⁵

²⁴ For example, the Council of Europe promotes digital citizenship education for young people, who are exposed to vast quantities of information online, so that they are educated and empowered to participate safely, effectively, critically and responsibly in a world filled with social media and digital technologies. But there are not yet studies or efforts to increase critical awareness of social media in shaping young people's gender ideology. Reference: Council of Europe Portal, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/home?desktop=true>

²⁵ Over the last decade, media education has been promoted in Hong Kong by youth organisations, religious organisations, universities, primary and secondary schools, the government education department, media organisations, social service organisations and media concern groups (Lee 2010).

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<https://www.littleeggplanet.com/feminism-misconception/>

Appendix: Profile of respondents of survey questionnaire

Table A: Student Response Rate

Students approached	3,605
Eligible students	3,239
Students participated	1,768
Students declined	1,801
Total response rate	54.6%

Table B: Sample Size

University	Total Population of Male Students ^a	No. of Male Students in this sample
Education University of Hong Kong	1,231	164
Hong Kong Baptist University	2,421	156
City University of Hong Kong	6,145	156
Open University of Hong Kong	3,240	157
Hang Seng University of Hong Kong	2,056	158
Shue Yan University ^b	2,067	160
Lingnan University	950	157
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	7,163	158
University of Hong Kong	7,806	157
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	5,759	158
Chinese University of Hong Kong	7,879	187

Note: ^a All the most recent data of the total male students are dated 2017, except the following: Open University of Hong Kong (2015); University of Hong Kong and Hang Seng University (2018); Lingnan University (2019).

^b The sex ratio of the student population is not available for the Shue Yan University. Hence, the number of male students at Shue Yan University is obtained by dividing the total population of students into two equal parts.

Figure A: Respondents' Age Profile

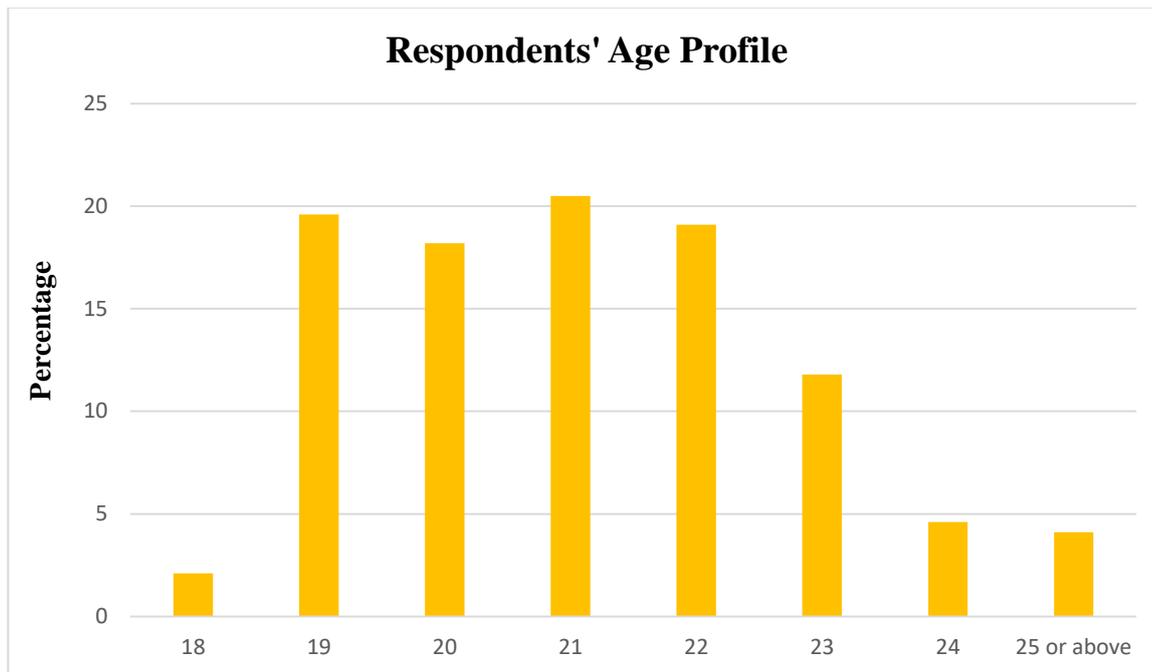


Table C: Respondents' education characteristics

Variables	%
University educational background	
<i>University</i>	
Education University of Hong Kong	9.3
Hong Kong Baptist University	8.8
City University of Hong Kong	8.8
Open University of Hong Kong	8.8
Hang Seng University of Hong Kong	8.8
Shue Yan University	9.1
Lingnan University	8.9
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	8.9
University of Hong Kong	8.9
University of Science and Technology	8.9
Chinese University of Hong Kong	10.6
<i>Faculty</i>	
Humanities, Social Sciences, Education	23.1
Business, Economics	21.5
Pure Science, Engineering	45.1
Nursing, Medicine-Related Subjects	8.3

<i>Educational years</i>	
Year 1	29.9
Year 2	22.0
Year 3	26.3
Year 4	18.8
≥ Year 5	2.9

<i>Experience of student exchange</i>	
No	94.3
Yes	5.6

<i>University hall experience</i>	
No	66.0
Yes	34.0

<i>Participation in student associations</i>	
No	76.7
Yes	23.3

<i>Working part-time</i>	
No	35.2
Yes	64.8

Secondary education background

<i>Extracurricular activities</i>	
Sports team(s)/ activities	
No	52.0
Yes	48.0
Uniformed group(s)	
No	81.5
Yes	18.5
Arts-related activities	
No	75.4
Yes	24.6
Community services	
No	54.8
Yes	45.2

<i>Types of secondary schools</i>	
Single-sex	17.0
Co-ed	83.0

<i>School banding</i>	
Band 1	59.8
Band 2	29.6
Band 3	10.6

Table D: Respondents' family characteristics

Variables	%
<i>Students' birthplace</i>	
Hong Kong	84.5
Outside Hong Kong	15.5
<i>Parents' birthplace</i>	
No parents born in Hong Kong	29.5
One parent born in Hong Kong	24.8
Both parents born in Hong Kong	45.7
<i>Indigeneity</i>	
No parents are indigenous inhabitants	91.4
One parent is indigenous inhabitant	5.2
Both parents are indigenous inhabitants	3.4
<i>Household structure</i>	
Two-parent family	80.8
Single-parent family	16.0
Others	3.2
<i>Male siblings</i>	
No male sibling	61.6
Has male sibling(s)	38.4
<i>Female siblings</i>	
No female sibling	61.6
Has female sibling(s)	38.4
<i>Position within family</i>	
Youngest child	41.5
Middle child	4.9
Eldest child	22.5
Solitary child	31.0

Table E: Respondents' socioeconomic characteristics

Variables	%
<i>Household income</i>	
< HKD 9,999	4.3
HKD 10,000 – HKD 19,999	13.6
HKD 20,000 – HKD 29,999	19.9
HKD 30,000 – HKD 39,999	20.3
HKD 40,000 – HKD 49,999	13.5
HKD 50,000 – HKD 59,999	8.9
HKD 60,000 – HKD 69,999	5.0
≥ HKD 70,000	14.5
<i>Father's education</i>	
Primary Education	12.6
Junior Secondary Education	21.1
Senior Secondary Education	39.6
Post-secondary	19.9
Postgraduate	6.8
<i>Mother's education</i>	
Primary Education	12.7
Junior Secondary Education	20.1
Senior Secondary Education	45.9
Post-secondary	16.0
Postgraduate	5.3
<i>Parents' employment status</i>	
Both parents are unemployed	8.1
Only mother is employed	11.1
Only father is employed	21.8
Both parents are employed	59.1
<i>Domestic helpers</i>	
No domestic helpers	93.5
Has domestic helpers	6.5
<i>Number of room(s) at home</i>	
0	3.5
1	9.1
2	41.6
≥ 3	45.7

<i>Number of washrooms at home</i>	
1	76.2
2	20.6

<i>Number of car(s)</i>	
0	78.5
1	16.1
2	3.6
3	1.8
