Women and Girls in Hong Kong
Current Situations and Future Challenges
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Edited by

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The issues facing Hong Kong women are numerous and complex. Some of these issues are particular to gender, most relate to pressing social issues—from rising incidents of teen pregnancies to integration challenges faced by the constant tide of new arrival women from the mainland to Hong Kong’s rapidly ageing population. Resolving these issues requires concerted efforts and collaboration across the public and private sector. At The Women’s Foundation, we believe these efforts can only be effective if they are grounded on objective and reliable data and an understanding of the fundamental root causes.

The Women’s Foundation has been a leading voice in filling the critical gap in objective and incisive gender research in Hong Kong. In 2006, The Women’s Foundation published our ground-breaking study on The Status of Women and Girls in Hong Kong to review the status of women in Hong Kong. Building on this study, starting in 2008, we launched an 18-month long stakeholder engagement process comprising focus groups, individual interviews, and public symposia to better understand the barriers faced by women and girls.

In 2010, to raise greater awareness of gender issues, we launched a monthly column in the *South China Morning Post* and the *Hong Kong Economic Journal* website. The column features pieces from leading local and international voices on a diverse range of topics relating to women and gender issues in Hong Kong.

Since our first study in 2006, we have seen an improvement in some areas, some not at all, and in some the situation has further deteriorated. Hong Kong’s Gini coefficient has worsened with
more people living at the poverty line; Hong Kong’s rapidly ageing population (with women significantly outliving men) is straining welfare programmes and housing and health services; while at the other end of the spectrum, the needle has not moved for women in political office or on corporate boards and in senior executive positions. At the time of writing, the new Hong Kong Administration is showing signs that it is serious about tackling these issues which is encouraging. The growing number of CSR-minded businesses which are engaging with and supporting the NGO sector in their work to help the disadvantaged is another optimistic note. We hope our research can help identify challenges and gaps in current social welfare and education policies and programmes to inform and influence strategy and resource allocation by all stakeholders seeking positive change. We also hope our research will be a useful resource for shadow reports submitted by international and local human rights watchdogs and other groups as part of the United Nation’s next hearing on Hong Kong’s compliance with the United Nation’s Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2014.

Building on our earlier research in 2006 and 2008, The Women’s Foundation launched a new series of quantitative and qualitative research studies in 2010, working in collaboration with The Chinese University of Hong Kong’s Gender Research Centre, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, and Civic Exchange.

This publication is the outcome of our collaboration with the Chinese University. We are very grateful to the Gender Research Centre, in particular Professor Fanny M. Cheung and Professor Susanne Y. P. Choi, for sharing their time and expertise in producing this anthology.

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In closing, we know that words alone cannot meet the needs of Hong Kong’s most vulnerable populations. Our greatest hope is that this research will serve as a catalyst for long-term systemic change by spurring efforts to pursue the changes needed to achieve the full participation of women in Hong Kong society.

Kay McArdle
Board Chair
The Women’s Foundation

Su-Mei Thompson
CEO
The Women’s Foundation
Introduction

Susanne Y. P. Choi and Fanny M. Cheung

Background

This publication, which includes 11 chapters on the most pressing issues concerning women and girls in Hong Kong, was a joint initiative of the Gender Research Centre (GRC) and The Women’s Foundation. Initially, the publication was intended as a follow-up to the 2006 report, *The Status of Women and Girls in Hong Kong*, published by The Women’s Foundation. Its original goal was to review progress on the advancement of women’s status in Hong Kong before the hearing on Hong Kong’s third report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW; United Nations, 1979) from the Hong Kong Government to the United Nations CEDAW Committee. However, as this publication evolved, it now not only serves as an alternative to Hong Kong’s third CEDAW report by providing a comprehensive review of the current status of women and girls, it also constitutes a valuable source of information on the latest developments regarding gender issues in Hong Kong.

As the first centre established in Hong Kong to promote research on gender issues, the GRC has pioneered gender scholarship using
sex-disaggregated data and gender-based analysis. In 1993, the GRC was commissioned by the Hong Kong Government to conduct the first public opinion survey on gender equality in Hong Kong, which confirmed the need for legislation on sex discrimination. In 1995, the GRC published the first statistical profile on the status of women in Hong Kong, which served as the blueprint for the subsequent publication—starting in 2001—of the annual report on the *Women and Men in Hong Kong: Key Statistics* by the Census and Statistics Department of the Hong Kong Government. The GRC also published the first comprehensive scholarly review on gender issues, *EnGendering Hong Kong Society: A Gender Perspective of Women’s Status* in 1997 (Cheung, 1997). An updated volume, *Mainstreaming Gender in Hong Kong Society*, was published in 2009 (Cheung & Holroyd, 2009). Taking into account the complexity of gender issues, these publications provide a multi-level analysis of gender statistics to provide a gender-sensitive assessment of women’s status in Hong Kong. This publication could therefore be viewed as a further update. The 11 chapters deal with issues of education, economy, poverty, health, violence against women, family, leadership, media, ethnic minority and immigrant women, issues related to the girl-child, and institutional mechanisms of gender equality.

This summary first presents some background information on CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). Secondly, it discusses the current situation of women and girls in Hong Kong. Finally, it provides an assessment of the major challenges that need to be overcome in order to improve women’s status and achieve gender equality.

**CEDAW in Hong Kong**

CEDAW was extended to Hong Kong by the British colonial government in October 1996, less than one year before the reunification of the island with China. The initial report on the implementation of CEDAW in Hong Kong was submitted to the United Nations as part

In this initial report (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, 1998), the major achievements reported by the Hong Kong Government included the enactment of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance in 1995 and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance in 1997 as well as the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission in 1996. While the CEDAW Committee commended Hong Kong for its efforts in advancing the status of women, one of its major recommendations was for the Hong Kong Government to “establish a high-level central mechanism with appropriate powers and resources to develop and coordinate a women-focused policy and long-term strategy to ensure effective implementation of the Convention” (para. 318) (United Nations, 1999). This recommendation provided one impetus for the eventual establishment of the Women’s Commission in Hong Kong in 2001.

Hong Kong’s second CEDAW report (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, 2004) was submitted to the United Nations as part of China’s combined fifth and sixth reports in 2004, and the related hearing was held at the CEDAW Committee in August 2006. One of the report’s highlights included the achievements of the Women’s Commission under its three-pronged strategy to promote the advancement of women: gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women, and public education. Around the time this report was submitted, domestic violence was a major concern and the Hong Kong Government’s zero tolerance policy towards domestic violence and relevant measures were also presented. However, the CEDAW Committee (2006), urged the Hong Kong Government to further strengthen its efforts to eliminate violence against women in general, and to enhance women’s access to justice and services. Another major recommendation from the Committee was the inclusion of the budget allocation for these purposes in the next periodic report from Hong Kong. Finally, the CEDAW Committee also recommended that temporary special measures such as a quota system, should be adopted to improve the low political representation of women at various levels of elected bodies.
Beijing Platform for Action

International instruments provide the framework and standards to evaluate the achievements of a state party in advancing the status of women. Under CEDAW’s obligations, a signatory government has to submit periodic reports, approximately every four years, on their CEDAW implementation progress. The BPFA (United Nations, 1995), adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995, sets out strategic objectives under 12 critical areas of concern to promote women’s advancement. The Hong Kong colonial government delegation, which joined the British delegation, was one of the signatories to the BPFA. Although it was not mandatory, the Hong Kong Government submitted its first report on the implementation of BPFA in 2000, its second report in 2005, and its responses to the questionnaire on recent developments in 2010 (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, 2000, 2005, 2010).

The BPFA’s critical areas of concern point to specific barriers affecting the advancement of women in public and private life. The 11 chapters of this publication are based on the BPFA’s framework with some amendments to reflect the local situation. First, while women and armed conflict, and women refugees were areas of concern for the BPFA, the armed conflict chapter has been replaced with a chapter on women and family in light of the salient role families play in shaping gender equality in Chinese society. Second, instead of a chapter on women refugees, there is one on migrant and ethnic minority women. While the number of female refugees has remained small in Hong Kong, the vast numbers of mainland marriage migrants, female foreign domestic helpers and ethnic minority women from South Asia, all of whom have been marginalized by society, raise serious challenges for gender equality. Third, because there were overlapping issues related to human rights and institutional mechanisms for gender equality, there is no specific chapter on human rights. Fourth, the area of women and the environment is not covered in this publication. Although environmental issues and their effects on women’s roles have become increasingly important, limited data and academic
research in this area exists in Hong Kong. Therefore, this topic has been left for future discussion. Finally, the order of the chapters in this volume is slightly different from the BPFA framework because it is sequenced to reflect the interrelationships between the status of women in different domains in Hong Kong. Thus, this publication provides an assessment of women’s status in Hong Kong that is in line with international standards while also reflecting the local context.

**Current Situations of Women and Girls in Hong Kong**

*Education*

Mak’s analysis (Chapter 2) shows that educational participation and outcomes are the areas that have achieved the greatest gender parity in Hong Kong in the past decade. By 2010, the attendance rates in compulsory schooling were similar for both genders, and on average, girls stayed longer in schooling at post-compulsory levels. The share of women in research postgraduate programmes more than doubled between 1986/87 and 2009/10. With respect to educational outcomes, since the 1990s girls have caught up or outperformed boys in general. Moreover, not only have girls continued to excel in languages, the gender gap in science and mathematics has narrowed. Despite this progress, gender biases in schooling processes persist. For example, although there was an impressive increase of women studying science and engineering between 1996/97 and 2009/10, women remained a minority in these subjects and continued to be overwhelmingly represented in traditionally “feminine” fields such as arts and social sciences. Text books were still full of traditional gender role stereotypes or neglected the female presence altogether. In addition, the curriculum continued to transmit and reinforce gender role stereotyping (e.g., in the gender division of labour) in extracurricular activities. Finally, the lack of female leadership in educational settings not only suggests that unequal distribution of power and leadership between the genders is an issue within educational settings, but also implies a negative influence on students, particularly female students,
as they lack role models to inspire them to choose academic subjects that transcend traditional gender stereotypes.

**Economy**

With an increasing number of educated women in Hong Kong, Ngo (Chapter 3) suggests that their participation in the labour market and occupational attainments have improved in the past decade. In particular, more educated women have taken up managerial and professional jobs, and achieved income parity with their male peers. A large number of women have also entered clerical jobs for which the income differential between the sexes is insignificant. On the other hand, an increasing number of older women have either left the labour force earlier than statutory retirement age or taken up part-time employment because of limited employment opportunities and care responsibilities at home. Moreover, there is evidence of increasing occupational segregation by gender with more Hong Kong women concentrated in clerical and low-end sales jobs and men predominantly in managerial, craft, construction and production work. The persistent gender pay gap, which showed that on average women earned about 70.8% as much as men in 2009, is further evidence of continued gender inequalities in the labour market. Overall, there appears to be increasing polarization among women in the labour market with younger and better-educated women achieving the most gains, while older women are trapped in low-paid, piecemeal jobs with little job security.

**Poverty**

Given the persistent disadvantages experienced by older and less educated women in the labour market, it is not surprising that there is an increasing number of female “working poor,” defined as employed females whose income is lower than a specified poverty line. Wong and Fong (Chapter 4) chose 40% of Hong Kong’s median monthly income as the threshold of working poverty, and calculated that in 2010 the female working poor numbered 111,700 whereas the comparative figure for men was 55,200. Furthermore, changes in
demographic composition, for instance, the increase of female single-headed households and rapid rise in the number of women who are 65 years and older have all contributed to the feminization of poverty in Hong Kong. Since 2001, female Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients have outnumbered male recipients, an indicator that more women are experiencing absolute poverty in Hong Kong than men.

**Health**

Ho and Wong (Chapter 5) report a general pattern of improvement in the health of Hong Kong women. Improvements are most visible in the continued decrease in infant and maternal mortality rates. However, health issues, such as breast cancer, colorectal cancer, cervical cancer, postnatal depression, obesity, and HIV have emerged as increasingly affecting women. Breast cancer remains the most common malignancy in women since 1994 and accounted for 24.0% of all new cancers diagnosed in women in 2009. This was followed by colorectal cancer, which accounted for 15.7% of new cancer cases in women in 2009. Cervical cancer was the ninth most common cause of death from cancer among women in 2009. In addition, although in general maternal and child health has improved significantly, there is evidence of an upward trend of postnatal depression. Obesity and its associated negative health consequences like cardiovascular risks have emerged as another major health challenge among Hong Kong women. Finally, although the prevalence of HIV/AIDS remains low in Hong Kong and heterosexual transmission has decreased, there is still the need to curb increasing HIV infection among both men and women given the growing interconnectedness between Hong Kong and neighbouring regions in greater China, and the growing traffic in commercial sexual exchanges following regional economic integration. Bearing in mind that most emerging health risks concerning women could be prevented or treated with preventive programmes, the issue of ensuring equal access to these programmes among women of different socioeconomic backgrounds is of paramount importance.
Violence Against Women

Chiu and Choi (Chapter 6) review the situation of intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women in Hong Kong. Between 1998 and 2008, the number of women who reported being abused by their intimate partners to the Social Welfare Department increased dramatically from 970 to 5,575, representing a 474.7% jump. Community surveys conducted between 2003 and 2007 showed that the prevalence of intimate partner physical violence ranged between 4.4% and 10.7%. Intimate psychological violence against women is also common, with reported rates ranging between 35.6% and 39.8%. Some groups of women such as pregnant women and mainland Chinese women who married Hong Kong men, are particularly vulnerable to intimate partner violence. Similar to intimate partner violence, there has been a growing trend in the number of reported cases of sexual violence against women to the Social Welfare Department with 339 newly reported cases of sexual violence against women in 2010. Among these cases, indecent assault constituted the highest proportion (over 70%) followed by rape (around 20%). Furthermore, half of the perpetrators were strangers, 19.0% were friends, 14.0% were employers, employees or colleagues, and 7.8% were family members or relatives. However, since the stigma of sexual violence remains widespread, these cases are likely to represent only the tip of the iceberg. The Government has made concerted efforts to combat intimate partner violence against women. These include setting up a special task force, increased funding to NGOs working to assist victims of violence, and changes in legislation. However, because Hong Kong lacks a central mechanism to coordinate policies related to intimate partner violence against women, it has not developed an overall framework outlining the goals, policies, and programmes on the intervention and prevention of intimate partner violence against women, and lacks a specialized court to handle this problem.

Family

While there are multiple links between gender and family, ranging from violence to love and intimacy, Ting and Lam (Chapter 7) review
three major issues that intersect with gender and family. First, they investigate the impacts of married women’s labour force participation on the re-organization of family life. Second, they examine if employment income earned by women has changed their position in the family. Third, they consider whether traditional gender division patterns regarding domestic work have been redistributed to reflect women’s increased economic role in the family. On the positive side, they show that married women who participate in the labour force manage, in general, to maintain a high level of satisfaction in terms of their relationships with their children and spouses. Although women’s employment has only a small impact on their decision-making power in the family, overall, Hong Kong women have considerable say in many family issues such as their own employment and fertility, whereas men exert greater influence in decisions with large financial implications. The issue where gender inequality figures most prominently is the division of domestic work, which remains women’s responsibility regardless of their employment status and income contribution to the family. For married women, hiring domestic help has relieved them of many of their domestic chores, but child care responsibilities continue to be shouldered mainly by mothers. Working mothers in Hong Kong are, therefore, particularly prone to stress resulting from the need to balance work and family responsibilities. Compared with other countries, the Hong Kong Government has played nearly no role in supporting dual-income families. Currently, there is no explicit family-friendly policy or child care policy to support these families and relieve the dual burden of working mothers.

**Leadership**

Although Hong Kong women have made headway in education and have progressed in the economy, their advancement in politics and public life is relatively slow. Cheung and Lee (Chapter 8) show that Hong Kong women’s representation in the Executive Council, the Legislative Council, District Councils and government advisory bodies has not increased significantly in the past decade, and is low by international standards. However, women’s lack of representation may not reflect their lack of aspiration or interest in public life, but
rather their lack of opportunities. When given opportunities, Hong Kong women have shown their ability to lead. For example, out of the 59 extra seats in the District Council election—which represented an increase between 1994 and 2007—71.2% were won by women. Women’s representation in the Government also lags behind men with women constituting 32.3% of the Government’s ministers. Progress in women’s leadership in the corporate sector is even slower than in the public sector with women constituting 2.3% of top executives (presidents, CEOs or managing directors) from Hong Kong’s 42 blue chip listed companies in 2009. Women are also underrepresented at the top levels of the judiciary, and women leaders remain a minority in higher education. Moreover, there is no female president or vice-chancellor among the eight government-funded tertiary institutions in Hong Kong in 2012; women constitute less than 10% of senior administrators (e.g., vice-presidents, pro-vice-chancellors, or faculty deans) in these institutions.

**Media**

Women’s participation and leadership in public life is one dimension by which to gauge their status in society, while the images of women in the media reflect how society at large views them. Fung and Yao (Chapter 9) document the types of gender stereotypes that still persist in the Hong Kong media. For example, the ideal notion of femininity is significantly restricted by the ideology of “the skinnier, the prettier.” Chinese women are still portrayed in the media as less knowledgeable and lacking objectivity as compared to men. In media representations, women are also still required to be family oriented regardless of their career achievements. Disappointingly, although gender stereotypes are pervasive in Hong Kong, to date very few empirical studies have systematically analyzed the causes (e.g., how media producers and practitioners rationalize their stereotypical portrayals), and the impacts of these stereotypes on the younger generation’s gender socialization as well as on shaping gender ideologies and identities in Hong Kong. Equally lacking are studies on how the existing knowledge gaps between the genders on information communication technologies shape their life chances.
Migrant and Ethnic Minority Women

In addition to addressing gender inequalities in general terms, this publication includes two chapters that examine the situation of two particularly vulnerable groups of women: migrant and ethnic minority women, and girl-children. Tam and Tong (Chapter 10) review the situation of female foreign domestic helpers, migrant women from mainland China, and South Asian minority women. By 2010, there were around 285,681 foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong. Foreign domestic helpers have contributed to the local economy by enabling Hong Kong mothers to take up full-time employment. In doing so, foreign domestic helpers have changed the patterns of domestic division of labour, and child care arrangements and practices in Hong Kong. Despite their contribution, they remain a marginalized group, and relatively little is known about the impact of their employment in Hong Kong on their own families left behind. Female migrants from mainland China constitute the biggest group of mainland migrants in Hong Kong because many of them come to join their Hong Kong husbands. In 2010, a total of 52,558 marriages were registered in Hong Kong of which 18.4% (9,655 marriages) involved Hong Kong men and mainland Chinese women (Census and Statistics Department, 2011, pp. 9–10). Mainland wives of Hong Kong men have, on average, lower educational qualifications compared with local women and limited English proficiency. Further crippled by the low transferability of a mainland education to Hong Kong, most of these mainland wives earned, on average, 40% less than the population as a whole, after they had migrated to Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2006). Equally, if not more disadvantaged, are ethnic minority women from South Asia. According to the population by-census in 2006, 342,198 ethnic minorities live in Hong Kong, constituting 5.0% of the whole population. The breakdown categories are as follows: Filipinos, Indonesians, whites, Indians, mixed, Nepalese, Japanese, Thais, Pakistanis, Koreans, other Asians, and others. Aside from these legal residents, there are refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong, past statistics show that most of whom were from Southeast and South Asia, with a much smaller percentage from Africa. Tam and Tong argue that among the different groups
of resident minorities in Hong Kong, people of South Asian and African origins suffer the most cultural misunderstanding and social discrimination on a daily basis.

**Girl-children**

In this publication Lee, Cheung, and Zhong (Chapter 11) analyze the situation of the girl-child, defined as girls under the age of 18, in Hong Kong. They identify sexual abuse and physical abuse as the two main types of maltreatment involving girl-children. Analysis of data between 2003 and 2009 shows that the incidence rates for physical and sexual abuse against girl-children doubled during this period, while neglect increased more than sixfold. Another major risk confronting the girl-child is drug abuse, which this chapter reveals, has increased so rapidly that the traditional gender gap in this area is shrinking fast. The narrowing of the gender gap in drug abuse is particularly visible among younger people such as those in the 10–15 age group. The authors argue that this is mainly due to the growing availability of recreational drugs to young girls, who are increasingly unafraid to experiment with illicit drugs. In addition to illicit drug use, minor offenses have also increased dramatically among the girl-child group as evidenced by the rising number of female arrests. In particular, the increase in the number of girls aged 10–15 being arrested has resulted in the closing of the gender gap in arrest figures. Previous studies also showed a close relationship between childhood experiences of victimization and abuse, and later experiences with illicit drugs and criminal offenses. The intersection of these phenomena is particularly worrying among girl-children as they are the main targets of sexual abuse.

**Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women**

The earlier chapters review the situation of women and girls in Hong Kong. Barrow (Chapter 12) discusses what major government initiatives have been developed to improve gender equality. In particular, she draws attention to the role of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), a statutory body formed in May
1996 to implement anti-discrimination legislation, and the Women’s Commission (WoC), an advisory body on women’s affairs, formed in 2001. The main roles of the EOC include receiving complaints and initiating a process of investigation and conciliation, suggesting legislative amendments to combat discrimination, and developing educational resources to combat sexual harassment. Despite the EOC’s contributions to the fight against gender inequalities, critics argue that it has failed to adequately explore the powers within its remit, and the process of conciliation tends to lean towards alignment with traditional Chinese cultural value of harmony rather than dispute resolution. Furthermore, critics argue that the limited legal assistance the EOC gives to individual cases has constricted the number of complaints reaching the courts. Finally, critics are concerned that the Home Affairs Bureau, the government bureau under which the EOC functions, has exerted too strong an influence on the Commission, hampering its independence and contravening the Paris Principles. Regarding the WoC, critics commend its efforts in raising consciousness among the general public about persistent gender inequalities in both the public and private domains, and for advancing the concept of gender mainstreaming. However, criticisms have also been levied against the WoC for being conservative and lacking awareness of women’s concerns. Finally, as an advisory body rather than a central mechanism (i.e., a policy bureau), it lacks accountability and influence.

The Way Forward

In sum, the different chapters of this book suggest that although the status of women and girls in Hong Kong has been improving over the past few decades in key aspects such as education and health, gender inequalities have persisted in various domains. Despite making headway in educational attainments, the process of education remains tainted by gender stereotypes. Furthermore, although a considerable number of highly educated women have entered professional and managerial jobs, an increasing number of older and less educated women are trapped in low paid and part-time employment without
much job security or protection. This, in turn, has exacerbated the problem of female poverty. Placed within institutional contexts, gender inequalities have remained in the family, particularly in the areas of spousal violence against women, and unequal gender division in terms of child care and domestic work; in public life with respect to women’s lack of participation in decision-making and the fact that they continue to be the main victims of sexual violence; and in the media, which has continued to be plagued by the portrayal of both female and male stereotypes. Specific groups of women are particularly disadvantaged in Hong Kong. This publication draws attention to the disadvantages endured by female foreign domestic helpers, female migrants from mainland China, ethnic minority women from South Asia, and girl-children. Although the Government has put in place some institutional mechanisms to combat gender inequalities in Hong Kong, most notably the establishment of the EOC and the WoC, more policy and legislative work needs to be done to improve the situation of women and girls.

To understand the situation of women and girls in Hong Kong, however, involves not only an historical perspective, but also a comparative perspective. In what ways are Hong Kong women and girls doing better than their counterparts in other parts of the world? And in what ways are they lagging behind? What lessons can we learn from other countries in their efforts to improve gender equality? What insights can the Hong Kong case contribute to our broader understanding of factors shaping gender equality? In each chapter the contributors have chosen one or several countries as a comparison, and from these comparisons some general insights have emerged. First, compared with Western democracies, Hong Kong’s anti-discrimination legislation generally lags behind and focuses on negative rather than positive obligations. Second, specific protection for the disadvantaged, including the majority of low income women, migrant women, foreign domestic helpers, and ethnic minority women, remains minimal. Third, Hong Kong lacks a central mechanism to coordinate policy and legislative efforts to combat violence against women. Fourth, the Government has so far been reluctant to develop any cohesive family policy to address the double burden of women in
dual income households in order to reduce gender inequalities in the family. Finally, gender equality remains a marginalized issue and is featured only peripherally in any government short-term or long-term policy planning.

In light of these insights, the principal question is: What policy and legislative changes can be implemented to improve gender equality in Hong Kong? In each chapter, the contributors have summarized the policy and legislative changes needed to achieve this goal. Based on these summaries, gender equality will only be achieved if concomitant changes are pushed through on four levels:

1. Culturally, there must be a transformation of conservative gender norms into more egalitarian norms based on universal human rights that also recognize the specific needs of men and women.

2. Institutionally, real gender equality can only be achieved if inequalities in the family, education, the economy, the media, and the polity are tackled simultaneously.

3. Politically, we think that a central mechanism must be in place to advocate gender mainstreaming, and ensure that the Government integrates gender perspectives in its legislation and programmes, incorporates men’s and women’s experiences and needs into the design, implementation and evaluation of policy, and makes certain that there is equitable access to and benefit from society’s resources and opportunities. Although gender mainstreaming has been advocated by the WoC, it remains largely a slogan rather than a concrete policy mandate. Existing decision-making does not systematically take into account the specific concerns and needs of women, and few policy assessments have explicitly evaluated how different policies may affect women and men differently.

4. To help policy-makers identify the needs, concerns, constraints, and values of different groups of women in various domains of life, more information and sex-segregated data should be collected and analyzed. As such, we suggest more academic research on specific gender issues. For example, more studies need to be done to systematically examine how gender
stereotypes in the media have influenced gender socialization. Furthermore, more data are required to understand the concerns of marginalized groups of women such as migrants from mainland China, foreign domestic helpers, and ethnic minorities from South Asia. In addition, the Government has to be more forthcoming with data sharing. Since 2001, the Government has compiled gender segregated data on the main demographic and socioeconomic issues, and published the annual report *Women and Men in Hong Kong: Key Statistics*. However, access to the original data for more refined and detailed analysis is not granted unless academics submit an application. Furthermore, such data are not accessible to NGOs and non-academic institutions such as think-tanks. To increase public awareness and facilitate public discussion on gender issues, the availability of data is a precondition, and henceforward must be pursued.

**Hong Kong Women’s Development Goals**

The Women’s Commission (2011) has recently published a set of “Hong Kong Women’s Development Goals,” which made reference to the key aspects covered in the CEDAW and BPFA. This is the first time that a systematic review and proposal have been made in order to develop a policy to promote the role of women. Since it was released after the authors of this publication completed their individual chapters, the proposed development goals are summarized here.

The 14 development goals, which were formulated with proposed strategies for their achievement, cover major aspects of women’s status including participation in decision-making, health, safety, education, economics, and a system for women’s development. These goals are specifically to:

1. Enhance women’s participation in decision-making in public affairs
2. Promote a balanced gender representation and composition in advisory and statutory bodies
3. Enhance women’s health education as well as their understanding of relevant services
4. Enhance women’s awareness of breast cancer
5. Improve medical facilities for disabled women
6. Strengthen support for victims of domestic and sexual violence
7. Strengthen education for women and raise their awareness of violence and safety, with a view to fostering a culture of “zero tolerance to violence”
8. Promote and facilitate well-rounded and life-long learning of women, and enhance their leadership skills
9. Strengthen gender and parent education
10. Improve measures which are conducive to enhancing women’s economic status
11. Eliminate discrimination against the working ability of women
12. Strengthen protection for part-time employees
13. Study the needs of women in order to develop better strategies for further promoting women’s development
14. Further the implementation of gender mainstreaming within and outside the Government

The proposed development goals and strategies vary in specificity and depth. Nevertheless, they provide a useful framework for monitoring government initiatives and responses to the short-to medium-term needs of women. This exercise has engaged the relevant stakeholders to address their common concerns and to identify strategies to achieve the goals. However, the effectiveness of this exercise depends on whether a mechanism can be established to monitor and evaluate the Government’s resolve to follow through with these recommendations.

Conclusion

Enhancing the status of women and girls in Hong Kong requires ongoing and coordinated efforts by all stakeholders. By examining the intersections between gender and other social dimensions, this publication presents the diversity of gender issues, multi-level
analysis, and multidimensional courses of actions that are needed to address these concerns. We believe that this publication will provide a useful framework for promoting changes to achieve a better future for women and girls in Hong Kong.

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Women and Education

Grace C. L. Mak

Introduction

Gender and education in Hong Kong as a social phenomenon has undergone considerable change as a result of a combination of public policy and other key factors. The notion of gender difference in education is itself evolving. In the past, it tended to be about girls lagging behind in the education system. Recent years, however, have seen a reversal, with a focus on boys as underachievers. Clearly, the current state of gender and education in Hong Kong and the underlying causes of these changes need to be examined. In doing so, it is necessary to ask whether educational participation has to be a zero sum game between males and females. We also need to examine ways of revisiting the notion of gender in the new social context. Most importantly, we need to ask what can be done in policy and pedagogy to support all students in learning to their full potential.

This chapter examines the current state of participation in education and schooling processes in Hong Kong in gender terms. Participation includes enrolment, distribution in fields of study, and academic performance, and is presented mainly with statistical evidence. Schooling processes cover the formal and hidden curricula, and students’ lived experiences. Understanding schooling processes
involves drawing on both quantitative and qualitative evidence. While the studies on participation unveil the macro-level phenomena, those on processes probe into micro-level perceptions and social interactions, and serve to complement and explain the former, and in some cases to debunk the myth of a new gender gap. The analyses of these two dimensions will demonstrate that progress in gender parity is impressive in the area of educational participation, but that an implicit and explicit sex bias in schooling processes has persisted, so that girls’ schooling remains a complex experience marked by gender identity struggles.

Considerable changes have also taken place in ways of studying the role of gender in education. Before the mid-1990s, the dominant approach focused on status attainment, i.e., how girls could close the gender gap. Systematically charting the evolving pattern of access is an important approach, but the findings mask the complexities of the lived reality of schooling. Since the 1990s, by building on this approach, researchers have probed into the less visible dimensions of schooling. They typically employ qualitative forms of methodology to investigate how the transmission of overt and covert messages in school socializes students into prescribed gendered paths, and whether and how students resist or conform to them. Some of these studies were conducted as postgraduate theses. Their authors, as a new generation of feminists, are as much the beneficiaries of educational expansion as the agency to changing the education system.

**Participation in Education**

The educational profile of the Hong Kong population has improved notably both in general and in terms of gender parity. The proportion of females aged 15 and over who had attained at least a lower secondary education was 50.0% in 1986, 72.0% in 2006, and 74.0% in 2009, compared with 61.0%, 79.5%, and 80.7% for males (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. 50). The educational profile of both sexes has registered a slight improvement since 2006. The gender gap will further close as the generations that have benefited from educational expansion move up the population pyramid.
Increases in educational opportunities for girls should be placed in the larger context of policy and social change. The pivotal impetus was the introduction of a policy in 1978 of nine years of compulsory free education for all Hong Kong children. Meanwhile, rapid economic growth since the 1960s has transformed Hong Kong into an affluent society and, its demographics have thus changed dramatically. Fertility rates have steadily declined from 65.2 live births per 1,000 women in 1981 to 28.9 in 2009 (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. 37). A nuclear family with a single child or two children is now the norm. The existence of more better-off families with fewer children presents a far more favourable set of conditions for educating girls. Expanded opportunities for girls have in turn brought changes in the demographic profile of Hong Kong women. In 1986, 11.9% of women in the 30–39 age group were in the “never married” category as compared to 28.2% in 2009 (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, pp. 30, 33). Better education and skills allow women the option of economic independence from men. This is a new social phenomenon that has resulted from increased opportunities in education and employment for women.

**Increased Enrolments**

Table 1 shows the active response of girls to expanded opportunities in education. The consistency of the trend illustrates the sustained impact of the nine-year compulsory education policy. The attendance rates in compulsory schooling are similar for both genders, while girls tend to stay in school at the post-compulsory levels for longer. The Hong Kong phenomenon is not unique. In most member countries of the European Union, girls also stay in education longer than boys (European Commission, 2009, p. 104). In Hong Kong these high rates are reflected in the percentage of girls who sit the public examination at the end of Secondary 5 and Secondary 7, respectively. In 2010, for the first time, girls represented 50.1% of the day school first attempters who took the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and 54.5% of those who sat the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2010a, p. 39, 2010b, p. 20).
In the last decade, girls have been more likely than boys to be enrolled in the top-ranking schools. An unintended turnaround in the compulsory education policy has stimulated a re-examination of the meaning of equality in both its legal and conceptual aspects. Until 2001, boys and girls were allocated an equal quota for admission to secondary schools. Since girls as a group perform better than boys, they would need higher scores than boys to get admitted to the same secondary school. However, a landmark High Court decision ruled that from 2002 onwards, secondary school admission would be based solely on individual performance. With the removal of the gender quota, more girls than boys have been admitted to top-ranking schools.

In the past, the high participation rates of girls in primary and secondary schools dropped abruptly at the tertiary level. The pattern has changed. Table 2 shows a steady increase in the enrolment of women in tertiary education over two decades. In the academic year 2009/10, women constituted 53.9% of the students attending programmes supported by the University Grants Committee, sustaining a trend since the late 1990s of their having had a slight lead over boys in that regard. The conventional pattern of the overrepresentation of women at the lower level of tertiary studies and their underrepresentation at the postgraduate level is still evident. However, the most notable
change has been in the proportion of women enrolled in research postgraduate programmes, which has more than doubled from 20.0% in 1986/87 to 42.5% in 2009/10. The pattern in Hong Kong is quite similar to that of developed countries like Canada and the European Union (Appendix 1). The high level of enrolment of women in tertiary education in Hong Kong has its roots in another benign public policy. In 1969, a new financial aid scheme was introduced to ensure that no qualified student at either of the two universities that then existed in Hong Kong would be denied an opportunity to pursue a tertiary education (University and Polytechnic Grants Committee of Hong Kong, 1976, p. 62). This policy boosted the options for bright students from families of humble means. Like the compulsory education policy, this scheme had social class equality as its rationale, although gender equality was the associated effect. Gender equality in education was thus an outgrowth of social class equality.

The proportion of women is related to the nature of the institutions. For example, women constituted a minority of the graduates of Vocational Training Council craft and technician courses, at 32.1% in 1996/97, 33.7% in 2006/07, and 38.6% in 2008/09 (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. 63). However, by 2001 they made up more than half (52.0%) of those enrolled in part-time and distance learning post-secondary courses, which cover a broad range of fields (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. 65).

### Table 2  Women as a percentage of students enrolled in UGC-funded programmes by level of study, 1986/87, 2006/07, and 2009/10 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of study</th>
<th>1986/87</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-degree</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught postgraduate</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research postgraduate</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2010, p. 56).
Because of the high demand for tertiary education and the limited local supply, large numbers of Hong Kong students go abroad to study. The picture would therefore be incomplete without an examination of this aspect of the tertiary situation. In 2010, of the 71,600 Hong Kong students between the ages of 16 and 25 who studied outside Hong Kong, 28,600 (39.9%) were female (Census and Statistics Department, 2011, p. 16). This relatively high percentage of girls is likely due to the combined factors of greater affluence and lower fertility mentioned earlier in this chapter.

**Gendered Distribution in Fields of Study**

Public examination data provide information on the territory-wide distribution of students by subject. The gender divide in subjects remains, but has narrowed. The pattern delineated below has changed little since 2006. In the HKCEE, Chinese, English, and Mathematics as compulsory subjects conceal gender differences in numbers. In the non-compulsory subjects, the sciences continue to attract more boys and arts and social science subjects more girls, as Table 3 shows. The gender divide is more pronounced when viewed from another perspective. Girls as a percentage of all candidates in the following subjects in the HKCEE in 2010 were: Physics (37.7%), Additional Mathematics (38.2%), Chinese History (55.4%), History (57.7%), and Chinese Literature (67.4%) (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2010b, pp. 52–56).

The pattern is similar at the HKALE. Table 4 shows a continuation of the male association with Physics and Pure Mathematics, the latter no longer a compulsory subject for all students, and female association with a more mixed spread of social science and science subjects. The gender divide is also obvious when viewed by subject. Females as a percentage of all candidates in the following subjects at the HKALE in 2010 were: Applied Mathematics A (22.6%), Physics A (33.3%), Chinese History A (61.7%), History A (63.5%), and Chinese Literature A (74.8%) (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2010a, pp. 55–58). These figures demonstrate an intensified gender divide in subjects from Secondary 5 to Secondary 7.

This divide continues on to higher education, where women are
Table 3  The 10 most popular subjects for male and female candidates in the HKCEE, 2010 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>English Language</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Language</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>Chinese Language</td>
<td>83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>Chinese History</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>Principles of Accounts</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Mathematics</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese History</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N) (65,711) (61,451)

Source: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2010b, p. 38).

Table 4  The 10 most popular subjects for male and female candidates in the HKALE, 2010 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of English</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>Use of English</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Language and Culture</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>Chinese Language and Culture</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure Mathematics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics and Statistics</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>Mathematics and Statistics</td>
<td>AS</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>Principles of Accounts</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of Accounts</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>Chinese History</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N) (18,976) (20,798)

Source: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2010a, p. 43).
overwhelmingly represented in traditionally “feminine” fields, as shown in Table 5. They continue to be a minority in “engineering and technology,” despite an impressive increase from 14.1% in 1996/97 to 34.0% in 2009/10. This is an international phenomenon. For example, in the European Union as a whole, women constituted 55.2% of the total student body in tertiary education in 2006, a trend that has become pronounced since the late 1990s. In spite of this, the gender imbalance in STEM subjects has not improved, with women accounting for approximately 75% of those enrolled in the fields of “education” and “health and welfare,” 66.1% of those in “humanities and arts,” but only 37.2% in “science, mathematics, computing,” and 24.4% in “engineering, manufacturing, construction” in 2006, with some variation between countries (European Commission, 2009, pp. 114, 117–118). Thus, it is necessary to ask why the field of engineering is so resistant to participation by women. A probe into the underlying causes of this situation is urgently needed. A qualitative study of the experience of 20 doctoral students in science and engineering disciplines in Hong Kong offers a plausible explanation. In these disciplines, male students benefit more than female students from relationships with their academic supervisors and their peers, who in both groups are predominantly male. This gendered process facilitates the career aspirations of male students towards a research-oriented path and female students towards a teaching-oriented path (Luk, 2008). These findings suggest that engineering as a profession continues to be male-dominated and that the barriers to entry into this profession have more to do with social interaction than cognitive abilities.

**Academic Performance**

In studies on gender differences, no clear conclusion has been reached on differences in academic performance. A large-scale review of gender differences by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) found that, apart from a persistent pattern of female students having an advantage in verbal skills and male students in mathematics, it was difficult to tease out their abilities as measured in educational assessments. Another review (Gipps & Murphy, 1994) identified a similar pattern.
Later analyses confirmed this pattern, but found that these gender differences are narrowing (Nowell & Hedges, 1998; Willingham et al., 1997). These studies posited that gender differences in academic achievement are not “natural,” but are the result of various social factors. The way that test instruments, which cannot be completely culturally neutral, are constructed, can be another factor underlying differences in achievement. The findings of studies on the same subject (e.g., mathematics) may vary over time or by sample or research instrument. What seems consistent is that girls as a group are ahead in language development. However, there are variations between schools and social classes, such that some sub-groups of boys excel and girls do poorly in language development, and the same applies to mathematics. The shifting research findings show that, rather than being biologically determined, gender differences in academic performance appear to be derived from a mix of environmental factors, and the achievements of boys and girls change as these factors change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic programme category</th>
<th>1996/97</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>68.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and technology</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and management</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and humanities</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>73.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2010, p. 58).
Women and Girls in Hong Kong

A similar trend can be found in Hong Kong. Studies carried out since the 1990s have revealed that: (a) girls tend to catch up with or outperform boys in general, (b) they continue to excel in language subjects, and (c) there are signs that the gender gap is closing in science and mathematics. However, these are general trends. They are prone to intra-group variations due to factors such as type of school, family support, and others. Few in Hong Kong would dispute that school quality and parental support in both material and moral terms are powerful indicators of student achievement, whether of boys or girls. In addition, some recent studies, conducted at a time of increased gender equality in schooling, suggest that gender as a factor in school achievement is becoming less significant as gender barriers recede.

There is a growing view that girls tend to outperform boys in primary and secondary education (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1999, chap. 4; McCall, Beach, & Lau, 2000; Wong, Lam, & Ho, 2002). Data from the HKCEE and the HKALE also show that, in general, girls do slightly better than boys. However, these findings are misleading if taken at face value. Gender differences in achievement by subject are changing in mixed ways. The differences remain, but have narrowed with regard to the results of local public examinations. The HKCEE and HKALE data show that girls continue to achieve higher scores in language subjects, with their lead in this area being pronounced from the onset. It contributes to their higher total scores than boys as a group in secondary school, and this increases their eligibility for admission to the top-ranking schools in Hong Kong. A good secondary school education in turn increases eligibility for admission to tertiary education. Thus, the high representation of females in tertiary education is partly a result the proficiency of girls in language since the early grades. In science and mathematics, the gender gap has narrowed, but boys do slightly better than girls in the HKCEE and significantly better in the HKALE (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority 2010b, pp. 52–57; Mak, 2009, pp. 33–39).

The factor of gender is less evident in the performance of Hong Kong students in international assessments. The 2009 results
of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), an international study that compares and evaluates the learning achievement of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics, and science, show that, since 2000 girls as a group have continued to score higher than boys in reading, while boys continue to take a slight lead in mathematics, but there are fewer gender differences in science (OECD, 2010, pp. 71, 136–137, 153–154, 197, 224, 228). Thus, the traditional gender divide still exists to some extent in the PISA results. In another set of data, the effect of gender on the achievement of Hong Kong students can be shown to be diminishing. The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), an international assessment of the achievements of Primary 4 and Secondary 2 students, found no significant gender difference in its 2007 results for Hong Kong in mathematics, a pattern that has continued since the first TIMSS study in 1995 (Mullis, Martin, & Foy, 2008, pp. 56–61). In science the earlier lead in average achievement of Hong Kong boys in Secondary 2 in 1995 and 2003 had diminished by 2007 (Martin, Mullis, & Foy, 2008, pp. 56–57, 60–61).

The most recent studies point to new insights into the factor of gender in school achievement. An interesting study of the creativity scores of primary and secondary students in Hong Kong using the same instrument found no gender differences in the first study (conducted in 1994) but notable gender differences in the second one (conducted in 2002), with girls in the lower secondary grades doing better than boys (Cheung & Lau, 2010). The authors attributed the change to more gender-fair secondary schooling practices that served to unleash the creativity of girls. This followed the court decision that from 2002 admission to secondary schools should be based on the individual performance of students rather than on a quota system of equal allocation to boys and girls. In information technology, a study of undergraduate students found that girls were less confident of their abilities and possessed lower information technology skill levels than boys before starting their university education. Yet girls achieved greater improvement in computer skills than boys after completing one year of studies (Lee, 2003). This finding highlights the powerful
effect of the affective dimension on academic achievement. Lau’s (2009) study of students learning computer programming in secondary schools found no gender differences in programming performance, but some in learning style.

The above review shows that the literature on gender differences in learning achievement is inconclusive. A number of non-innate factors are at work, although it is difficult to disentangle them. Indeed, boys do better than girls in mathematics in 35 of the 65 participating countries in the PISA 2009 assessment, and girls do better than boys in five of these countries (OECD, 2010, p. 137), suggesting that gender is an insufficient explanation for differences in achievement.

**Gendered Schooling Processes**

The above account shows a trend towards a diminishing or even reversed gender gap in education. Studies of schooling processes reveal a more mixed picture that highlights the complexity of the issue and point to areas that need to be addressed. In areas which public policy fails to reach (e.g., cultural norms in daily life), gender stereotypes persist. This persistence discounts the positive impact of the structural factors conducive to girls’ education. The interaction between the structural and cultural contexts exposes hidden issues in girls’ education, marked by the tension between expanded access to education and continuing discrimination within it, as well as within the simultaneous forces of liberation and oppression. The latter can take place through both the formal and the hidden curricula.

**The Formal Curriculum**

The component of the curriculum most prone to gender bias is textbooks. Since the 1980s, studies have found that textbooks, typically those in history and language subjects (Huang, 2002), and more recently in primary school science textbooks, present male and female figures in traditional gender role stereotypes or neglect the female presence. This lags behind the social reality in which women and men play more diverse roles. There have been some signs of slow
change in recent years. A study of a set of English language textbooks found the continuing presence of stereotypical gender roles and teachers and students reinforcing the gender biases in their dialogues, but teachers and students also at times expressed views against the stereotypes (Au, 2004). More recent studies of English language textbooks for grade 1 students (Yang, 2011) and for secondary students (Lee & Collins, 2008) observed a trend of heightened sensitivity on the part of textbook writers in terms of the more frequent appearance of females, although males were still mentioned first. In the curriculum, sex education is taught as a subject in school, but like other non-academic subjects, it is generally not seen as important by teachers and students alike (Fok, 2005; Hui, 2006).

The Hidden Curriculum

The hidden curriculum includes all aspects outside of the formal curriculum that constitute the daily routine of school life, such as school philosophy, school buildings, personnel organization, teacher-student interactions, and extracurricular activities. Studies of the hidden curriculum tend to underscore its power in transmitting and reproducing gender role stereotyping in education. The most pervasive message of these studies is the persistence of the hierarchical power structure at all levels of teaching, with the proportion of women declining as the level goes up. Similarly, women are underrepresented in educational leadership. In Hong Kong in 2009, women made up 78.7% of all teachers in primary schools, but only 58.9% of school heads. In secondary schools, they made up 57.5% of the total number of teachers, but only 31.1% of principals (Education Bureau, 2010, pp. 9, 55). An ethnographic study revealed how this power imbalance takes place in primary schools, where teachers actively construct and reproduce gender inequalities, with women assigned to teach lower grades and men to higher grades and positions of discipline and authority (Chan, 2004). In higher education, the share of women in the faculty at UGC-funded institutions was 27.4% in 1996/97, 32.4% in 2006/07, and 34.4% in 2009/10 (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. 60). Apart from a brief few years when the Hong Kong Institute of Education had a female president, the leaders of UGC-
funded institutions have always been men. The pattern is similar in the European Union, where classroom teaching is a predominantly female occupation and school management a male-dominated one (European Commission, 2010, chap. 7). Considering that teaching is an occupation most open to women, this deep-seated power imbalance raises the question of whether we are truly approaching gender equality in education.

As authority figures in school, teachers have a strong influence on students with regard to gender-specific behaviour and choice of school subjects. Teacher-student interaction is quite a popular theme in postgraduate theses. These studies are typically small-scale and qualitative in nature. Though not generalizable, their findings invariably reveal how individual students are socialized in everyday life into prescribed gender roles and choice of school subjects. This explains the collective pattern shown in the above section on participation in education through teacher-student interaction, classroom routines, and extracurricular activities from kindergarten onwards (Chen, 2006; Luk, 2005; Ngai, 1995). A study of the discourses and discursive messages implied in the gender-making process shows how schools and students construct gender identities (Kwok, 2003), one of the results being a gendered choice of school subjects. Gender and education is a topic that is often included in teacher education courses, but it is not a compulsory one. While teachers have a certain degree of awareness of gender issues, they have a limited understanding of it, resulting in pedagogic practices that are not always supportive of diverse gender constructions (Luk, 2005).

Schooling Experiences

Since the mid-1990s a delightful trend in research has emerged, which probes into the schooling experience of students. The construction of adolescent femininity is an active and complex process (Wong, 1995), and is anything but deterministic, contrary to the assumptions of many. Another study explored how three “underachieving” girls negotiated their gender identity in a class-divided society that rewards hard work, intelligence, and conformity (Tang, 1998).
Their femininity sometimes contradicted the ethos of achievement. This study speaks eloquently to the system-level data that present a one-dimensional picture in which girls are presented primarily as achievers. Another ethnographic study revealed how a school uses different forms of behavioural control to “construct’ girls” according to the traditional ideal of a “good” girl, which perpetuates unequal gender relations (Tong, 2001). These studies managed to debunk many myths on gender differences in achievement. They are valuable in getting inside the system and revealing that a great deal more needs to be done before our education system can claim to be truly gender-fair. Many of these young feminist researchers connect research and social activism. They form groups that promote women’s rights and autonomy in sex orientations, and these groups join the larger multitude of activist groups that seek social progress in different dimensions of our society. These authors are, at the same time, beneficiaries of a more open education system and, with a heightened sense of individual rights and social awareness, can become an agency to change the system for the better.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

The above discussion highlights the transient nature of gender differences in education. Gender differences are fluid and cultural rather than fixed and natural, and will likely change as contextual factors change. This awareness is important to policy makers and education practitioners. The free nine-year compulsory education policy and the higher education grant and aid scheme are classic examples of the far-reaching impact of benign education policies on the promotion of social equality. Policy makers should continue to introduce measures to promote a gender-fair curriculum and affirmative action in school personnel organization.

Teachers and school heads should have a critical understanding of gender and education. Regrettably, however, they do not tend to take the subject seriously. They themselves are often products of gender role stereotyping and transmit these stereotypes to the young. While there are early signs of increasing gender sensitivity in
textbooks, visible changes in teacher attitudes and behaviour relating to gender roles in contemporary society are not yet very apparent. Pre-service and continuing teacher professional development courses should include critical analyses of gender and education as core topics. Individual academics and teachers have attempted to promote awareness of this topic among teachers. Commitment from top levels of the education sector, such as from the Education Bureau, teachers’ groups, and the Equal Opportunities Commission, are needed to further the efforts of these individuals.

In school practices, there are few known strategies to support student learning from the perspective of gender. It is important to recognize that there are underachievers among boys as well as girls, and that the socioeconomic background of students has a more powerful influence on their achievement than gender. We need to identify the barriers to learning, how students make study and work choices, and how these affect their later life chances, and design strategies to improve their attitudes towards learning.

The literature in the field is growing. So far we have managed to produce a broad-brush picture of the field, containing many gaps. Efforts in three directions will advance our knowledge. First, to chart the changes we need studies of phenomena over time, e.g., longitudinal studies of changes in textbook presentations of males and females, a more systematic approach to studying gender differences in academic achievement by subject, and so on. Second, in-depth studies of schooling processes, such as the perceptions and lived experience of male and female students and teachers in the new social context, should be encouraged. Some stimulating work in this area has already been done. Concerted efforts, such as support from university research centres or women’s organizations, to further cultivate the potential of a new group of feminist authors will contribute much to the field. Third, the view of gender differences has shifted from a focus on a deficit of girls to a “problem” with boys. The shift shows that the notion of gender, and its new meaning in changing contexts, invites re-examination both in research and practice.
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OECD. (2010). PISA 2009 results: What students know and can


Tong, K. M. (2001). Being a tomboy: An ethnographic research of young schoolgirls in Hong Kong. (MPhil thesis). Department of Sociology (University of Hong Kong). Hong Kong.


## Appendix 1  Key education indicators for Hong Kong, Canada, and selected European Union member countries (%) 

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary education: Net enrolment rates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>92(^1)</td>
<td>100(^3)</td>
<td>98(^5)</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>93(^1)</td>
<td>100(^3)</td>
<td>99(^5)</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPI</td>
<td>1.01(^1)</td>
<td>1.00(^3)</td>
<td>1.00(^5)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary education: Net enrolment rates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75(^1)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>77(^1)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPI</td>
<td>1.02(^1)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tertiary education: Percentage of female students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCED 5A</td>
<td>51(^2)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCED 5B</td>
<td>48(^3)</td>
<td>52(^4)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCED 6</td>
<td>42(^2)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>50(^2)</td>
<td>56(^4)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes:  
GPI = gender parity index.  

ISCED 5 = International Standard Classification of Education: Level 5 (first stage of tertiary education); 5A = theoretically based programmes, e.g., history, mathematics, etc.; 5B = professional programmes, e.g., medicine, architecture, etc.  

ISCED 6 = International Standard Classification of Education: Level 6  
Second stage of tertiary education leading to an advanced research qualification.

1. National estimation.  
3. 1999 data.  
4. 2002 data.  
5. 2000 data.
Introduction

Since the early days of industrialization, women have played a crucial role in the Hong Kong economy. They have provided a committed and diligent workforce that fuels economic growth and contributes to economic prosperity. Despite this, owing to traditional views of gender, women are often regarded as a “reserve army” in the labour market. Their significance and contributions to the economic development of Hong Kong have been underrecognized. Substantial gender differences in hiring and remuneration have been noted by local researchers (Chiu & Lee, 1997; Levin, 1991; Ngo, 1990). Over the past few decades, few government policies have been adopted to facilitate their involvement in the labour market, improve their economic status, and address their specific needs regarding career advancement and work-life balance.

One decade into the new millennium, the situation has not improved much, despite the fact that women have entered the labour market in increasing numbers. Worse still, some new employment-related issues and challenges have emerged that adversely affect the economic well-being of working women. For example, some middle-aged women have suffered from serious employment discrimination
based on their sex and age (Ngo & Pun, 2009). Female managers have often encountered “the glass ceiling” in their progression towards senior positions in the organization. To achieve greater gender equality and to better utilize the female labour force, more attention from the Government, employers, and the public should be paid to these issues.

The main purpose of this chapter is to examine the role and status of women in the local economy. Three key questions are addressed concerning their employment. First, what are the trends and patterns in female labour force participation (FLFP) in Hong Kong? Second, what types of jobs do women hold in the labour market? Third, how large is the income differential between the two genders? In fact, these questions are related to one another. For example, when more women join the labour force, some of them will take up newly created jobs in growing industries, while others will have to accept low-skilled and low-status jobs at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. These developments alter the occupational distribution by sex. Moreover, the jobs that women hold are closely related to their economic rewards. Female-dominated occupations generally pay less than male-dominated ones. In addition, a substantial rise in women’s income is often a main cause of the increase in their labour force participation.

Apart from describing current patterns in the employment of women in Hong Kong, I also attempt to explain these patterns in light of labour supply conditions (e.g., educational attainment, marriage, and family patterns) and labour demand conditions (e.g., economic restructuring and gender discrimination). It has been pointed out that women’s roles and positions in the economy are largely determined by the interaction of the factors of labour supply and demand (Brinton, Lee, & Parish, 1995). A comparison of the patterns of employment of working women in Hong Kong with those in some Western countries, e.g., the European Union (EU) countries and Canada, will also be made. Finally, based on our analysis, some policy implications will be raised to help improve the economic status and well-being of working women.
Female Labour Market Participation

The overall level of labour market activities for women can be indicated by the FLFP rate. This refers to the proportion of economically active females among all women aged 15 and over. In Hong Kong, the FLFP rate increased steadily after World War II, owing much to the growth of the manufacturing sector, which led to a huge demand for manual labour. The restructuring of the local economy over the past two decades, however, has subtly changed labour demand conditions, hence affecting the role played by women in Hong Kong’s economy.

Table 1 displays the total number of women in the labour force, their percentage of the total labour force, and the FLFP rate in Hong Kong for the period 1991–2011. Obviously, the total number of women in the labour force increased sharply from 1.07 million in 1991 to 1.80 million in 2011. During that period, women as a percentage of the total labour force also rose from 38.0% to 48.3%, reflecting a significant change in the sex composition of the workforce. Despite these upward trends, the overall FLFP rate has grown only slightly, from 49.5% in 1991 to 53.4% in 2011. To better understand the underlying reasons for this apparent inconsistency, in Figure 1 I have plotted the age-specific FLFP rates in selected years. Similar to other advanced economies, a single-peak pattern of FLFP can be observed in Hong Kong. Because of their enrolment in secondary and tertiary education, young women below the age of 20 have a lower rate of participation in the labour force than those of other age groups. Overall, the rate increases with age and reaches a peak in those aged between 25 and 29 years. It then falls gradually for women in their thirties and forties. For the older generations (i.e., those aged 50 and over), early retirement is the main reason for the decline in their rates.

A remarkable change in the age pattern of FLFP during the period from 1996 to 2009 is the increase in the rate for those aged 30–44, a period of child bearing and rearing for women in Hong Kong. Given the gender division of labour in the family, marriage and parenthood are the salient factors affecting women’s involvement in the labour market. However, due to delayed marriage, spinsterhood,
Table 1  Female labour force participation in Hong Kong, selected years from 1991 to 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total number of women in the labour force</th>
<th>Women as a percentage of the total labour force</th>
<th>FLFP rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,068,731</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1,257,402</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,489,016</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1,642,053</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,799,769</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 1  Female labour force participation rate by age group, selected years from 1996 to 2009

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2010, p. 75).
and declining fertility, women in their thirties and forties now assume fewer household and child care responsibilities than those of earlier generations. Accordingly, the FLFP rate in these age groups has increased over time. It is also worth noting that in 2009 the FLFP rate of never married women (67.5%) was close to that of men (66.0%), the rate of ever married women was 46.8%, up from 38.3% in 1991 (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. 76).

In a study of married women’s employment in Hong Kong using census data, Ngo (1990) identified several supply-side factors as crucial determinants of the decision of married women to work, including (1) education and training, (2) age (which reflects family life cycle and cohort effects), (3) the financial needs of the family, (4) child care responsibilities, and (5) the availability of domestic helpers. Although the study was conducted two decades ago, these supply-side factors continue to exert a substantial impact today on the decision of women to work. In particular, the improved educational attainment of younger generations, the desire to have a high living standard, delayed marriage, childless families, and the wide use of domestic helpers has all led to a larger labour force of married women in Hong Kong than in the past. Household responsibilities, especially child care, have become less of a constraint for women who choose to work outside the home.

An important supply-side factor that is strongly associated with FLFP is educational attainment. From Table 2, we note that the more education a woman has, the more likely she is to enter into the labour force. Since the potential earnings of women increase with education, the opportunity cost for women with higher education to exit the labour market is higher than that of their counterparts with less education. Higher education also raises the career aspirations of women and makes them more competitive with men in the labour market (Lee, 1996). In Hong Kong, over the past two decades the educational attainment of women has improved substantially and has become equal to that of men at the tertiary level. To a large extent, this explains the higher FLFP of the younger generation.

On the labour demand side, structural changes in the economy and a growing demand for workers in the service sector have been the
main reasons for the increasing number of working women in Hong Kong (Ngo, 2000). In 1991, the service sector employed 1,770,800 workers and 40.7% of them were women. In 2009, it employed 3,038,400 workers and 51.5% of them were women, indicating a clear trend of feminization in this sector. Women have been predominant in the categories of “community, social, and personal services” and “educational, medical, and other health services” within the service sector (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, pp. 78–81).

### Occupational Sex Segregation

In the labour market, men and women tend to concentrate in different occupations, industries, jobs, and levels in the workplace hierarchies. The term occupational sex segregation (OSS) refers to the different distribution of men and women across positions within the occupational structure. OSS is a pervasive and persistent labour market phenomenon in advanced economies. As a major source of gender inequality, OSS not only affects the job opportunities of women, it also leads to the devaluation of women’s work, symbolized by less pay, power, and prestige (Padavic & Reskin, 2002).

Similar to other advanced economies, in Hong Kong women

### Table 2  Educational attainment, income, and female labour force participation rate, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational attainment</th>
<th>Median monthly income of women (HK$)</th>
<th>FLFP rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No schooling/Pre-primary</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>5,300</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth form</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary (non-degree)</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary (degree)</td>
<td>16,875</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

are concentrated in clerical and low-end sales and service work, while men are predominant in managerial, craft, construction, and production work (Ngo, 2000). In 2009, as shown in Table 3, 72.7% of clerical workers and 64.7% of those employed in elementary occupations were women. On the other hand, women were less well represented in managerial and administrative positions (29.6%), and have a very low representation in “craft and related workers” (3.5%) and “plant and machine operators and assemblers” (6.5%).

Some supply-side factors are influential in women’s occupational choices. First of all, because of sex-role socialization, men and women are inclined to develop different traits, skills, preferences, and work values that are appropriate to sex-typical jobs (Marini & Brinton, 1984). Women tend to select those occupations that are congruent with their gender role. In addition, due to child bearing and other family responsibilities, women’s employment histories are often characterized by interruption. They may make their choice of occupation with the thought of minimizing the “wage depreciation” that results from exiting from the labour market. Accordingly, they are likely to take up those jobs that have few restrictions on access by those who re-enter the labour market after a long break, such as personal service and sales work (Polachek, 1981).

Labour demand conditions also have a key role to play in affecting the placement of women in jobs. For example, discrimination or exclusionary behaviour by employers may result in the overcrowding of women in a small number of occupations (Blau, 1984). Some institutional barriers in the processes of recruitment, job assignment, and promotion also restrict the access of women to certain jobs (Roos & Reskin, 1984). Another important labour demand factor pertains to economic restructuring, which is associated with the growth and decline of occupations (Ngo, 2000). Women are inclined to move into those occupational groups in which employment is expanding. In particular, when the job growth in some emerging occupations raises the demand for labour beyond the number of qualified men available, employers may allow young and better-educated women to fill the vacancies (Reskin & Roos, 1990). Moreover, with the shrinkage of some manufacturing industries, women have tended to leave their
Table 3  Working population by occupational group and sex, 1991 and 2009

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Percentage of female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers and administrators</td>
<td>198,857</td>
<td>50,390</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>68,516</td>
<td>30,815</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate professionals</td>
<td>164,121</td>
<td>115,788</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>135,665</td>
<td>295,986</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers and shop sales workers</td>
<td>230,823</td>
<td>128,496</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and related workers</td>
<td>352,264</td>
<td>45,728</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant and machine operators and assemblers</td>
<td>234,929</td>
<td>130,897</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary occupations</td>
<td>280,434</td>
<td>223,398</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>20,757</td>
<td>7,239</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>1,686,366</td>
<td>1,028,737</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

jobs more quickly than men and shift to the growing service economy. These job movements have altered the pattern and extent of OSS.

OSS is commonly measured by two indexes (Jacobs, 1989; Ngo, 2000). The first is the index of dissimilarity (ID), which is defined as follows:

\[
ID = \frac{1}{2} \sum |m_i - f_i| * 100
\]

where \(m_i\) and \(f_i\) are the respective percentages of the male and female labour force employed in occupation \(i\). The index ranges between 0 and 100, where 0 implies perfect gender integration and 100 implies complete segregation. A straightforward interpretation of the index value is that it indicates the percentage of men (or women) that would have to change their occupations if women were to be distributed in the same manner as men. In general, a more detailed occupational classification scheme will yield a higher index value.

The ID measures only one major dimension of segregation—unevenness. It reveals the degree to which two groups (e.g., men and women) are unevenly distributed over a set of occupational categories. Another key dimension of segregation is concentration, which is represented by the concentration index (CI). This index indicates the proportion of a particular group of workers who would have to change occupations to be evenly distributed across all occupations. It compares the actual distribution of women (or men) to an equal distribution, instead of comparing the distribution of women to that of men. The CI can be calculated for male workers (MCI) and for female workers (FCI). A measure of relative concentration (RCI) can be also obtained, showing the extent to which women are more concentrated across occupations than men. The mathematical definitions of FCI, MCI, and RCI are as follows:

\[
FCI = \frac{1}{2} \sum |f_i - (1/n)| * 100
\]
\[
MCI = \frac{1}{2} \sum |m_i - (1/n)| * 100
\]
\[
RCI = \frac{1}{2} \sum |f_i - (1/n)| - |m_i - (1/n)| * 100
\]

where \(n\) is the total number of occupational categories and \(f_i\) and \(m_i\) are the respective percentages of women and men in the labour force employed in occupation \(i\).
Women and Girls in Hong Kong

Table 4 reports the various segregation index values for the period of 1991–2006. To make the data from different census years comparable, some occupational categories in the original classification scheme have been collapsed and the index values have been calculated based on 29 occupational categories. The ID value declined slightly from 39.41 in 1991 to 37.70 in 2006. On close scrutiny, the overall degree of OSS first increased and then decreased during the period. Economic restructuring in Hong Kong has led to several significant changes in the labour market that affect OSS in several ways (Ngo, 2000). First, owing to the growth of the service sector, there has been an expansion of typically female jobs, including healthcare workers, clerks, receptionists, beauticians, cashiers, and shop assistants. These jobs have absorbed a large number of young women who have left secondary school. Second, as a result of the contraction of the manufacturing sector, many middle-aged women have left this sector and men have become highly concentrated in blue-collar jobs. With limited job opportunities available, those women have been crowded into low-skilled, low-paying elementary occupations such as cleaning, personal care, and food service. Third, young women with higher education and better qualifications have been able to make inroads into the managerial, professional, and semi-professional jobs. Hence, these occupations have become more gender equal than before.

However, some emerging jobs in the information technology, logistics, and finance industries continue to be heavily dominated by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index of dissimilarity</td>
<td>39.41</td>
<td>39.80</td>
<td>40.99</td>
<td>37.70</td>
<td>−1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male concentration index</td>
<td>42.86</td>
<td>43.59</td>
<td>46.18</td>
<td>43.41</td>
<td>+0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female concentration index</td>
<td>53.18</td>
<td>52.26</td>
<td>57.55</td>
<td>55.98</td>
<td>+2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative concentration index</td>
<td>10.32</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>11.37</td>
<td>12.57</td>
<td>+2.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women and the Economy

Notwithstanding the above changes in the sex composition of occupations, the overall degree of OSS remains high in the local labour market.

Also worth noting is that both the MCI and FCI show an upward trend. The value of FCI was 55.98 in 2006, much higher than the value of MCI (43.41). This implies that women were more concentrated than men in the occupational structure, especially in clerical and elementary occupations. In 2009, 50.6% of working women were employed in these two occupational categories. With such a high level of occupational concentration among women, the value of RCI increased from 10.32 in 1991 to 12.57 in 2006.

As compared to men, women are more likely to take up part-time employment, which generally offers fewer economic rewards and reduced job security. According to government statistics, in April–June 2009, 102,300 women worked on a part-time basis, constituting 64.4% of all part-time employees (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. 107). The majority of those women (63.1%) were in the 40–59 age group, reflecting the difficulties that older women encounter in finding and securing a full-time job. Those who are married and have less education are more likely to engage in part-time employment (Ngo, 2002). Unexpectedly, women have a relatively low level of representation among casual employees, which refers to employees who work on a day-to-day basis or for a fixed period of less than 60 days. In 2009, only 21.5% of casual employees were female (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. 103).

Gender Pay Gap

Throughout the world, men earn more than women, even though they are employed in comparable jobs. The gender pay gap has long been viewed as an important dimension of gender inequality. For example, the gender earnings differential is one of the components of the “Global Gender Gap Index” developed by the World Economic Forum (2005). In Hong Kong, the median monthly earnings in 2009 for working men and women were $12,000 and $8,500, respectively (Table 5). Women on average earned 70.8% of what men earned.
Women and Girls in Hong Kong

From a labour supply perspective, women earn less than men because women generally have less human capital such as education, qualifications, and work experience. Labour economists highlight the gender differences in work skills and productivity as one of the main sources of the gender pay gap. Because of household responsibilities, women often have less commitment to a job, and hence receive less remuneration (Padavic & Reskin, 2002). From the labour demand perspective, the pay differential between men and women can be attributed to discriminatory behaviour by employers and to OSS (Blau, 1984). As mentioned above, female-dominated jobs tend to pay less than male-dominated jobs.

In Hong Kong, the gender pay gap can be measured by the female-to-male income ratio. This ratio, which is calculated by dividing the median monthly earnings in main employment of women by that of men, indicates how much women earn for each dollar a man earns. Table 5 shows the trend in the gender pay gap in Hong Kong. The female-to-male income ratio rose steadily during the 1990s. As suggested by some local researchers, the closing of the gender pay gap during that period was due largely to the substantial improvement in women’s income caused by their higher educational attainment, fewer domestic obligations, stronger presence in the labour force,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Median monthly income (HK$)</th>
<th>Female-to-male ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>8,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>11,500</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>8,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women and the Economy

and their move into high-paying jobs (Mak & Chung, 1997; Tang et al., 2000). Under a booming economy accompanied by tight labour markets, local employers used to offer high incomes to attract and retain female employees. However, in the new millennium, the female-to-male income ratio has declined. One possible explanation for this development is the increasing income polarization in the labour market (Chiu & Lui, 2004; Ngo & Pun, 2009). More women than men have been employed in low-paying jobs, and thus the income disparity between the sexes has widened in recent years. According to government statistics, 400,400 women and 99,600 men earned less than $5,000 a month from their main employment in 2009 (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. 117). In other words, currently about one-quarter of working women in Hong Kong earn a poverty-level income.

Education has been viewed as a major supply-side factor that affects women’s income and hence the gender pay gap. To evaluate its effect in Hong Kong, the female-to-male income ratio at various educational levels is shown in Table 6. Clearly, income differentials between men and women exist at all levels of education. The disparity is larger, however, at the lower levels of education, such as primary and lower secondary. Women with less schooling tend to be employed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No schooling/Pre-primary</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>0.612</td>
<td>0.579</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>0.616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary</td>
<td>0.722</td>
<td>0.610</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>0.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary/Sixth form</td>
<td>0.727</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.727</td>
<td>0.727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary (non-degree)</td>
<td>0.824</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary (degree)</td>
<td>0.720</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>0.740</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.708</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women and Girls in Hong Kong

in low-skilled elementary occupations that offer low pay. Consistent with the general trend in the overall female-to-male income ratio, the ratio for the upper secondary level rose during the 1990s, followed by a decline. Among all groups, the ratio was highest at the non-degree tertiary level, at 0.800 in 2009. Equipped with vocational skills, women can undertake some “male identified” technical and semi-professional jobs and receive an income close to that of their male colleagues. For degree holders, a large income differential can be found between men and women. The female-to-male income ratio has improved gradually over time, suggesting that the economic returns of higher education have increased for women. Applying the decomposition method to the local census data, Lee, Li, and Zhang (2009) reported that the unexplained part of the gender earnings differential (i.e., gender discrimination) is larger for the secondary level and smaller for the tertiary level.

The gender pay gap also varies greatly among occupations. Table 7 provides information about the female-to-male income ratio in broad occupational groups. Several points are striking. First, in high-paying managerial and professional jobs, the gender pay gap is smaller than in other categories. Given a continued strong demand for labour in these occupations, employers are willing to offer high pay to attract and retain talent, regardless of gender. Second, women earned as much as men in associate professional and clerical work, where they have a high level of representation. Unlike other countries, in Hong Kong the trend of feminization in these occupational groups has brought about a reduction in the income disparity between the two sexes. As employers try to maintain a stable workforce by offering competitive compensation to their employees, qualified women can earn as much as their male colleagues. Third, in service and shop sales occupations, women earned about 70% of the pay of men. Fourth, a sizable gender pay gap persists in blue-collar jobs, probably because women generally lack the technical skills and physical strength required for these occupations, and hence receive less income than their male co-workers. Lastly, the gender pay gap was greatest in the elementary occupations, in which the income of women was only about half that of their male counterparts in 2009.
Owing to economic restructuring, women have been entering these low-skilled and poorly paid jobs in increasing numbers. Given the abundant supply of female workers competing for these jobs, employers were able to keep their remuneration low. Consistent with the above observation, Lee et al. (2009) found that in clerical, craft and technical, and elementary occupations, there was a higher level of gender discrimination (as indicated by a large unexplained portion of gender earnings differential), while the level of gender discrimination was much lower in managerial, administrative, and professional occupations.

Table 7 lists the female-to-male income ratio by occupational group, selected years from 1996 to 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers and administrators</td>
<td>0.909</td>
<td>0.933</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.938</td>
<td>0.933</td>
<td>0.938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate professionals</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers and shop sales workers</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.650</td>
<td>0.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and related workers</td>
<td>0.737</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td>0.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant and machine operators and assemblers</td>
<td>0.558</td>
<td>0.600</td>
<td>0.579</td>
<td>0.695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary occupations</td>
<td>0.543</td>
<td>0.520</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.708</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Owing to economic restructuring, women have been entering these low-skilled and poorly paid jobs in increasing numbers. Given the abundant supply of female workers competing for these jobs, employers were able to keep their remuneration low. Consistent with the above observation, Lee et al. (2009) found that in clerical, craft and technical, and elementary occupations, there was a higher level of gender discrimination (as indicated by a large unexplained portion of gender earnings differential), while the level of gender discrimination was much lower in managerial, administrative, and professional occupations.

Table 8 lists the female-to-male income ratio by age group. The data clearly indicate that women earned less than men in all age categories. With the exception of the older age group (i.e., 60 and over), the gender pay gap widens with age. This reflects the cumulative disadvantage of women in the labour market, owing largely to their family responsibilities, interrupted employment history, diminished job training and development opportunities, the gender-based prejudices against them, and the greater barriers that they face in
Women and Girls in Hong Kong

For the young generation, the income differential between the two sexes is much smaller. This is because young women (i.e., those under 30) have comparable levels of education and work experience as their male counterparts. In the early career stage, men and women tend to have similar incomes. Research on the gender earnings differential by Lee et al. (2009) provides another picture of the age effect. They show that even though young females exceed young males in characteristics of productivity, the former group does not earn more than the latter group. Additionally, among various age groups, it is the young cohort who has the largest unexplained portion of gender earnings differential, suggesting that gender discrimination remains a serious issue for young women.

Comparison with the European Union and Canada

Some of the phenomena described above concerning female employment are not unique to Hong Kong. In some Western countries, similar patterns of gender inequality can also be observed. Below, we use the EU and Canada as illustrative examples, and we start with the level of labour force participation. In the EU-27 (i.e., consisting of 27 countries), the employment rate increased from 52.0% in 1998 to 59.1% in 2008. Among its member countries, some have higher

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15–19</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–29</td>
<td>0.944</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>0.941</td>
<td>0.889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>0.607</td>
<td>0.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>0.619</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td>0.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>0.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>0.708</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

rates, such as Germany (65.4%) and Sweden (71.8%) (European Commission, 2010, p. 286). In Canada, the proportion of women in the labour force grew from 42.8% in 1986 to 47.9% in 2009. Its FLFP rate was 58.3% in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2010, p. 5). As compared with these Western countries, the FLFP rate in Hong Kong has been lower, considering Hong Kong’s high level of economic development.

A high degree of job segregation by sex is also found in these countries. As expected, women are concentrated in traditional female occupations like clerical and service work, as well as in part-time jobs. For example, in Canada 75.5% of clerical and administrative workers and 56.9% of sales and service workers were women in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2010, p. 21). A high degree of OSS as indicated by the ID has been noted in all member countries of the EU (European Commission’s Expert Group on Gender and Employment, 2009). Moreover, in the EU-27 31.1% of working women were employed part-time in 2008 (European Commission, 2010, p. 292), suggesting that this form of employment is popular among European women. Similar to the rate in Hong Kong, in Canada 67.5% of part-time employees were women in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2010, p. 13).

Income differentials between men and women are a world-wide phenomenon. In the EU, the gender pay gap (i.e., the difference between the average hourly earnings of females and males) was 17.5% in 2007 (European Commission, 2010, p. 307). Among member countries within the EU, there are significant variations in income differentials between men and women. In Germany and Sweden, the female-to-male income ratio in 2010 was 0.64 and 0.74, respectively. In Canada, the ratio was 0.71 (World Economic Forum, 2010, pp. 98, 144, 280). Similar to the patterns in Hong Kong, the gender pay gap in Canada also varied greatly among different educational, occupational, and age groups.

**Changes in Gender Inequality**

Has gender inequality in the local labour market in Hong Kong grown or diminished over time? The picture seems to be a mixed one. On
the one hand, an increasing number of women have joined the labour force. With a lighter domestic burden due to lower fertility levels and the wide use of domestic helpers, young women have a stronger commitment to paid employment than women of earlier generations. In particular, those with better education and qualifications have achieved greater representation in prestigious occupations such as managerial and professional jobs. Even though they are in the minority in these occupations, they earn nearly as much as men. Women have also made significant gains in holding white-collar jobs in which the income differential between the two sexes is relatively small. On the other hand, older women have left the labour force earlier, probably because of limited employment opportunities available to them. In addition, certain gains by women at work have been facilitated by other women assuming domestic duties and the work of caring for children and the elderly at home. Discussions of the difficult labour conditions faced by domestic helpers are often ignored, as well as a larger philosophical discussion of how men avoid while women assume the majority of care work in all employment sectors. A large number of middle-aged, less-educated women are confined to several elementary occupations that are at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, and on average they earn about one half the wages of their male co-workers. These women also have a high participation rate in part-time employment.

One way to understand the above changes is to examine recent developments in the local labour market and the positions of women in it. Economic globalization and the associated changes in the occupational structure have deepened labour market segmentation (Ngo & Pun, 2009). According to labour market segmentation theory, the labour market is made up of several distinct segments, each with different rules for wage determination and employment policies. There are also barriers between different segments, which restrict the ability of workers to move from one segment to another. In the primary labour market (Doeringer & Piore, 1971) (i.e., the superior segment), jobs offer high pay, good working conditions, job security, and promotion opportunities, while in the secondary labour market (i.e., the inferior segment), jobs lack these desirable attributes. In Hong
Kong, a polarization of jobs into these two segments has been noted in recent years. Within the primary labour market, better-educated women have taken advantage of their increased human capital to occupy decent, high-paid jobs. To a large extent, these women are able to achieve greater gender equality at work. In contrast, within the secondary labour market, owing to their deficiency in human capital (i.e., education and marketable skills), many middle-aged women have been crowded into a small number of low-paid and dead-end jobs that offer little job security. With an abundant supply of female labour, a process of “ghettoization” has taken place in that sector (Ngo, 2000). As victims of gender and age discrimination, women in the secondary labour market have little bargaining power with their employers. Their employment situation has deteriorated over time, and they have become the lowest income group.

Policy Implications

The employment situation and job experience of women in the primary and secondary labour markets are in sharp contrast to one another. They have different concerns regarding their paid work and economic well-being. To address their concerns and to help them overcome some of the disadvantages that they face at work, different measures should be taken by the Government and employers.

For women in the secondary labour market with low pay and low job security, the fundamental issue is their employability. Without sufficient qualifications and vocational skills, they have been confined to a small number of low-status elementary occupations. Owing to a huge supply of labour (including middle-aged, poorly-educated women, and new immigrants from mainland China), they have little bargaining power and are prone to exploitation by their employers. The recent implementation of a statutory minimum wage may help to protect them by ensuring them an income above the subsistence level. However, some employers may circumvent this policy and avoid their obligations to their employees by forcing their employees to enter into a self-employment contract or unilaterally amending the employment contract in order to remove some existing entitlements.
such as lunch breaks and paid holidays. Offending employers should be prosecuted by the Government to protect the statutory rights and benefits of such employees, who are predominantly female. More inspections of workplaces are also needed to ensure that employers are complying with the new law. The implementation of the minimum wage may only protect those who are already in the labour market. In order to protect those who have been excluded, other measures are needed to enhance the employability of this group of women and the demand for their labour. The Government may consider creating new employment opportunities for them, particularly in the public sector and in social enterprises. It could also provide tax incentives for some labour-intensive industries, as well as short-term employment subsidies for local employers to hire middle-aged women, thus increasing their job choices and job mobility. Assistance with job seeking and career counselling would also be helpful. It is equally important for this group to upgrade their vocational skills through better-designed, job-relevant training and retraining programmes. People are eager to receive training and invest in human capital when they realize that this can enhance their marketable skills and raise their future income.

Moreover, the Government should continue its efforts to eliminate workplace discrimination. Apart from gender discrimination, age discrimination has also been an acute problem, particularly in the secondary labour market. To protect the rights of middle-aged and older women at work, legislation to curtail age discrimination is necessary and urgent. Public education is also important in order to reduce sex role stereotyping and gender-based biases in the workplace. Finally, government subsidized child care services needs to be more widely available.

Women who are employed in the primary labour market often encounter various barriers that adversely affect their job involvement and career progression. It is true that some of these women occupy managerial and professional jobs that offer high pay and prestige, such as those in accountancy, law, and medicine (Women’s Commission, 2011a). However, the existence of a glass ceiling impedes their
progression to senior-level positions in an organization. For example, in Hong Kong, women held only 9.0% in 2012 of the 634 directorships in top companies included in the Hang Seng Index in 2009 (Banerji & Vernon, 2012, p. 2). According to a large-scale survey conducted by the Women’s Commission in 2010, more than 70% of the respondents pointed out that discrimination against women was still common in the workplace. Most respondents also thought that being a woman was an obstacle to one’s career development and promotion prospects (Women’s Commission, 2011b, p. 8).

Among managerial and professional women, exclusion from an organization’s informal networks restricts them from building vital contacts and networks, which are critical for career success. Mentoring programmes could be introduced to help young women overcome this disadvantage. Compared to men, women are more likely to experience additional stressors at work, such as gender role stereotyping, biases and prejudices, sexual harassment, tokenism, a lack of role models, high work pressure, and work-family conflicts. They need to spend more time and effort than men in dealing with these issues, which in turn undermines their work commitment and performance.

The Government should encourage local organizations to adopt family-friendly work practices (FFWPs), which are employer-sponsored programmes and policies that are designed to help employees manage the demands of work and personal life. These programmes and policies generally include flexible work schedules, dependant care assistance, leave arrangements, counselling, and referral services. The provision of FFWPs can be seen as a way to create a supportive organizational culture and promote equality in the workplace. Previous research has demonstrated that the availability of FFWPs is associated with low levels of work-family conflicts, less stress at work, and low rates of absenteeism and turnover among employees (Ngo, Foley, & Loi, 2009). Married women particularly benefit from FFWPs, which gives them greater flexibility to balance work and family life.
Conclusion

Over the past two decades, more women have joined the labour force and contributed to the rapid development of Hong Kong’s robust economy. Paid employment has become increasingly important in the lives of women and their families in Hong Kong. While some have a significant sense of achievement in terms of job position, enjoying high status, power, and economic rewards, many still suffer from gender discrimination and various disadvantages in the workplace. To improve their economic status and to enhance their economic well-being, it is important to break down cultural and institutional barriers that restrict success at work. These barriers are commonly found in the family, educational and training institutions, the mass media, and the labour markets. The Government has a key role to play in removing some of the obstacles that working women face, including a disproportionate burden of family care, the persistence of the glass ceiling, bias and discrimination against women, and limited job mobility. Some public policies can be designed to help women to overcome barriers to accessing education, training, and employment opportunities, as well as to ease their domestic burden and the stress caused by gender role stereotyping, prejudice, sexual harassment, and work-family conflicts. Last but not least, the Government should also encourage local employers to establish a discrimination-free and family-friendly work environment. By doing so, women can enjoy more autonomy, power, and choices at work, and at the same time fully utilize their skills and capacity for the future development of Hong Kong’s economy.

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Introduction

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was extended to Hong Kong in 1996. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) submitted its first and second periodic reports as part of China’s report in 1998 and 2004 respectively to the CEDAW Committee of the United Nations. A hearing on the second periodic report was held by the CEDAW Committee in 2006.

In response to the hearing, Oxfam Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2005) reviewed the situation of women’s poverty and submitted a paper to the Panel on Welfare Services of the Legislative Council in 2005. The paper examined the economic participation and situation of poverty of women during the period from 1996 to 2004. Although the economic participation of women in Hong Kong had increased, women still faced the problems of low wages, poor working conditions, and gender inequality. The authors found that the HKSAR Government had failed to address the phenomenon of women’s poverty, which was caused by economic and social restructuring. The escalating problem of poverty among
women in Hong Kong should receive greater attention from society and actions should be taken to improve the situation. The submission highlighted the exacerbation of poverty among women and the failure of government policies to alleviate such poverty. Its discussion of the causes of women’s poverty in Hong Kong was brief, however, and did not address the underlying structural causes.

Also in response to the CEDAW hearing, the Hong Kong Women’s Coalition on Equal Opportunities, a collection of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) advocating for women’s rights in Hong Kong, submitted its Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee in June 2006. The Coalition (2006) suggested that among the causes of women’s poverty were gender inequality in the labour market, the displacement of women from the manufacturing sector, the Government’s lack of sensitivity to the feminization of poverty, the inadequate protection offered by the Employment Ordinance to casual women workers who work less than 18 hours a week, and the lack of universal retirement protection. The Coalition called for societal attention to be paid to women’s poverty and urged the HKSAR Government to take active steps to alleviate the situation.

In 2006, Hung Wong was commissioned by Oxfam Hong Kong to examine the problem of working poverty in Hong Kong. In the Briefing Paper “Employed, but Poor: Poverty among Employed People in Hong Kong,” Wong (2007) reported that 13.1% of the working population (representing 418,600 workers) earned incomes that were less than half of the median income of the working population in 2006. Between 1996 and 2006, the number of working poor had increased by 87.9%. Women constituted the majority of the working poor. Women (excluding foreign domestic helpers) comprised 63% of the working poor in 2006. The study clearly stated that working poverty in Hong Kong is a gendered phenomenon. Although women may re-enter the labour market after marriage or childbirth, most of them are trapped in low-paid and low-skilled jobs in the services sector. This study only focused, however, on the poverty of women in relation to the labour market, the public sphere. It did not offer an in-depth discussion of the unequal distribution of resources and power of the different genders inside the family, the private sphere.
In this chapter, we first identify and measure women’s poverty in Hong Kong with reference to the concepts of absolute and relative poverty. We then demonstrate that the feminization of poverty in Hong Kong is evident, whereas the existence of hidden poverty among women is overlooked by society. By elaborating on the gender income gap and discussing other structural causes, we attempt to account for women’s poverty in Hong Kong. Finally, we make recommendations on the alleviation of poverty among women in Hong Kong.

Women’s Poverty in Hong Kong

Measurement of Women’s Poverty

There is no one correct, scientific, or agreed-upon definition of poverty because poverty is inevitably a political concept—and thus inherently a contested one (Alcock, 1993). Definitions and measurements of women’s poverty, which have been challenged from a gender perspective, are even more hotly contested.

First of all, poverty is a social construct that may be defined as “absolute poverty,” “relative poverty,” and “relative deprivation.” Absolute poverty is commonly defined as the lack of material or financial resources necessary for survival or meeting basic needs, whereas relative poverty implies exclusion from a way of life deemed to be minimally decent or acceptable in the society in which someone lives (Alcock, 1993; Gordon et al., 2000; Townsend, 1979). The relative deprivation approach gives a broader picture of poverty by using deprivation indexes that are based on items of goods and services that people are deprived of because they cannot afford them. The following elaboration will focus on measuring women’s poverty using the approaches of absolute poverty and relative poverty.

Women in Absolute Poverty

Absolute poverty refers to being unable to afford basic human needs, which is actually not absolute but relates to the time and place of the society in question. Therefore, the standard of extreme poverty set by the World Bank as someone living on less than US$1.25 (purchasing
power parity) per day may not be applicable to a world city like Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, which is the major income-support scheme, serves as a safety net and sets the threshold of absolute poverty. Recipients of CSSA need to meet residence requirements and pass stringent tests on income and assets. The amount of CSSA provided, which is determined by the HKSAR Government, is intended to provide the recipients with a basic but minimal living standard. The recipients of CSSA can be regarded as constituting the core group of the poor who live in absolute poverty in Hong Kong.

The number of CSSA recipients is often considered a measure of the scope of absolute poverty in Hong Kong. Table 1 shows that among the 223,384 CSSA recipients, there were more men (113,140) than women (110,224) in 1996. In 2001, the position reversed, and among the rising number (397,468) of CSSA recipients, there were more women (206,791) than men (190,677). In 2009, among the 482,001 CSSA recipients, 250,421 were women and 231,580 were men. The total number of CSSA recipients decreased in 2010, but female recipients still outnumbered their male counterparts by 18,838.

The number of female CSSA recipients per 100 male CSSA recipients increased sharply from 97 in 1996 to 108 in 2001. The number further increased to 110 in 2006, then decreased slightly to 108 in 2009 and 2010 (Figure 1). The feminization of CSSA recipients signifies the feminization of absolute poverty in Hong Kong.

The change in eligibility criteria has also caused hardship for

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>110,244</td>
<td>206,791</td>
<td>272,999</td>
<td>248,309</td>
<td>250,421</td>
<td>242,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>113,140</td>
<td>190,677</td>
<td>248,612</td>
<td>227,316</td>
<td>231,580</td>
<td>223,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>223,384</td>
<td>397,468</td>
<td>521,611</td>
<td>475,625</td>
<td>482,001</td>
<td>466,066</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2011, p. 203).
The most important policy directive of the 1998 Review of the CSSA was to provide temporary financial assistance for people of working age who are genuinely unable to find work (and for their dependants, if any), and at the same time, to encourage and help them to rejoin the workforce so that they can lead independent and productive lives. (Social Welfare Department, 1998, para. 31)

Since then, it has been mandatory for all able-bodied adult recipients to join the Support for Self-reliance Scheme, which requires the recipients to actively search for jobs and perform unpaid community work. As many able-bodied women recipients are carers for their families, the requirement to look for a job and perform community work places an extra burden on them on top of their caring roles.

A significant gender difference can be found in the CSSA categories of “old age” and “single parent” (Figure 2).
In 2010, the number of female CSSA recipients in the “old age” category was 102,811, which was significantly greater (by 8.3%) than that of older male recipients (94,971). This can be explained partly by the longer life expectancy of women. In 2010 the life expectancy of women was 85.9, whereas that of men was 80.0 (Census and Statistics Department, 2011, p. 13).

Furthermore, many housewives who have already left the labour market are excluded from participation in the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) Scheme, which is the sole compulsory retirement scheme in Hong Kong. As the Coalition (2006, p. 28) mentioned in its Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee, “MPF is a gender insensitive retirement scheme. Unpaid homemakers are predominantly women and women who are not engaged in employment due to disability, chronic illnesses etc are excluded from the scheme.” Without any
kind of universal retirement benefit, those older women can only rely on CSSA to support their living.

**Women as single parents**

In 2010, the number of female CSSA recipients in the “single parent” category was 53,054, which was 67.9% greater than that for male single-parent recipients (31,590). In 2010, 62.7% of single-parent CSSA recipients were female. It is evident that the primary carers of children in separated and divorced families are mostly women. As women who are single parents need to take care of their young children, it is difficult for them to be employed. It follows that they need to live on social security. Some female single parents have been driven to depend on CSSA because they do not receive alimony.

The situation of some single-parent CSSA households is further worsened by their status as new arrivals. In 2004, the HKSAR Government raised the minimum criterion for eligibility for CSSA from one year to seven years of residence. This new policy measure has successfully prohibited women with fewer than seven years of residence from receiving CSSA, although their children are exempted from this requirement. These single-parent households then have to face acute poverty, as the whole household (including the mother) can only live on the CSSA payment to their children. Therefore, it is quite common for a mother and child to live on the payment for a single child, or a mother of two children to live on the payment for two children. Facing extreme financial difficulty, these newly arrived female single parents are distressed and in need of financial assistance (Society for Community Organization, 2011). It is known that many of these women rely on food banks and support from friends and relatives to survive.

Owing to this change in residence requirement, the number of women in absolute poverty may be underestimated, as some of the new arrivals could have been excluded from the CSSA. Single-parent CSSA cases increased sharply from 25,902 in 2000 to 39,536 in 2004. After the enforcement of the new residence requirement, however, the number gradually decreased to 36,233 in 2009 (Census and Statistics Department, 2010, p. FC4).
Women in Relative Poverty

Whereas the measurement of absolute poverty is more relevant to developing countries, the measurement of relative poverty is commonly adopted in developed countries as the official poverty rate. The main poverty line used by member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a level of income set at 50% of the median equalized household income (OECD, 2009), whereas the European Union (EU) has set the poverty line at 60% (Lelkes and Zólyomi, 2008). The poor are those who are not able to participate in the normal activities of society, and in a more affluent nation such participation requires more resources.

Following the concept of relative poverty, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service established a poverty threshold by defining low-income households as those with a monthly household income of less than or equal to half of the median monthly household income for the corresponding household size. This definition treats the household as the unit of analysis. Women living in low-income households are considered to be women in poverty.

According to the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2011), in January–June 2010, of the 1.26 million poor people in Hong Kong, 663,200 were women and only 596,800 were men. The figures for 1996 show that among the 950,700 poor people, 485,500 were female. During the period from 1996 to 2010, the number of poor females increased by 177,700 (36.6%), whereas the number of poor males only increased by 131,600 (28.3%) (Table 2).

Figure 3 shows that the women’s poverty rate increased sharply from 15.4% to 17.4% between 1996 and 2006. From 2006 to 2009, the rate decreased slightly to 16.8%. Nevertheless, it rose to a record high of 17.7% in 2010.

The number of women in low-income households per 100 men was 104 in 1996, increasing to 108 in 2006 and further increasing to 111 in 2010 (Figure 4). These figures confirm the rising trend in the feminization of poverty in Hong Kong since the mid-1990s. “The ‘feminisation of poverty’ means that women have a higher incidence of poverty than men, that their poverty is more severe than that of
Women and Poverty

The above figures and analysis clearly illustrate the feminization of poverty in Hong Kong since the 1990s. More women than men have been living in poverty, but the magnitude of the inequality and

**Table 2**  Number of males and females in low-income households, selected years from 1996 to 2010 ('000)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010 &lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>465.2</td>
<td>580.0</td>
<td>578.3</td>
<td>581.8</td>
<td>577.0</td>
<td>572.3</td>
<td>596.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>485.5</td>
<td>606.6</td>
<td>627.2</td>
<td>641.2</td>
<td>635.3</td>
<td>623.8</td>
<td>663.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>950.7</td>
<td>1,186.6</td>
<td>1,205.5</td>
<td>1,223.0</td>
<td>1,212.3</td>
<td>1,196.1</td>
<td>1,260.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2011).
Note: 1. Figures for the first half of 2010.

**Figure 3**  Women’s poverty rate, selected years from 1996 to 2010 (%)

Source: Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2011).
Note: 1. Figures for the first half of 2010.

men and that poverty among women is on the increase” (Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, 2007, p. 1).

**Hidden Poverty of Women**

The above figures and analysis clearly illustrate the feminization of poverty in Hong Kong since the 1990s. More women than men have been living in poverty, but the magnitude of the inequality and
deprivation faced by the poor women in Hong Kong may not be completely disclosed in the above analysis because measurements of both absolute and relative poverty use the “household” as their basic unit of analysis and are “income-based” approaches.

The household income-based approach is problematic because it assumes that there is a fair share of income among all members of a household and only counts the income of a family without due regard to the distribution of income within the family. This approach ignores the livelihood of individual women. Although poverty affects a household as a whole, owing to the gender division of labour and responsibilities for household work, women are more likely to receive the least resources among the members of a family. Women also bear a disproportionate burden in attempting to manage household consumption and production.

Bradshaw et al. (2003) showed that in low-income families the burden of responsibility for managing family finances always falls on women. When there is not enough food and clothing or other

**Figure 4** Number of females in low-income households per 100 males, selected years from 1996 to 2010

Source: Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2011).
Note: 1. Figures for the first half of 2010.
resources, women often do without to ensure the health and welfare of other members.

Lone mothers are especially likely to cut back their consumption because there is no other adult in the family to share their burden. Some mothers thus may choose to take low-paid or part-time work as there are no other alternatives. Child care obligations set restrictions on the hours a woman can work, and some employers take advantage of this to fragment the jobs available. Fewer working hours mean less pay.

When a family is in debt or has barely enough to go around, women often do without basic necessities themselves (Lister, 2005). Such stress can damage the health and self-esteem of women, which in turn can affect their job prospects and parenting abilities.

Women in poverty is a hidden phenomenon worldwide. In a report submitted to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2007, p. 9) highlighted the fact that “even if a woman does not live in a poor household, she may nevertheless find herself in a situation of poverty by not having fair access to the household income…. The rapporteur considers it important to address hidden poverty among women and the gap between individual income and expenditure, since women spend more on the children.” Rosenblatt and Rake (2003, p. 1) reiterated that the “true extent of women’s poverty may be hidden by household measurements of poverty that overlook differences in individual control over resources.”

The above description of the disaggregation of poverty counts by sex in Hong Kong, defined by approaches of both absolute poverty and relative poverty, do not consider the intra-household distribution of resources. As women may have less access to goods and services than men in the same household, additional poor women may be found in some non-poor households. In 2010, there were 689,600 female unpaid homemakers (Census and Statistics Department, 2011, p. 87), amounting to 20.9% of women aged 15 and over, who had neither earned income nor MPF protection, so the impact of the intra-household distribution of income may be more significant among them than among other groups. More studies from a gender perspective are
needed to provide a more detailed analysis of the impact of gender on the extent of poverty among women.

At the same time, we should also pay special attention to the subjective dimension of how women experience poverty. Poverty should not only be measured as income deprivation but also as the experience of powerlessness, gendered family obligations, and limited life chances.

The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) compiled by the United Nations Development Programme (2011) represent an attempt to measure gender inequality rather than gendered poverty.

GDI measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the HDI [Human Development Index] does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men…. [GEM] examines the extent to which women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision-making. (United Nations Development Programme, 2011)

We employ the concept and measurement of working poverty, which uses the individual as a unit of analysis, to illustrate the gender income gap and further elaborate the scope and causes of women’s poverty. We discuss the structural causes of women’s poverty in the next section.

**Structural Causes**

*Lower Labour Participation Rate for Married Women*

The female labour force participation rate increased steadily from 48.9% in 1986 to 52.0% in 2010. Conversely, the labour force participation rate for men decreased from 80.5% in 1986 to 68.6% in 2010. From 1986 to 2010, the increase in the number of women in the labour force was 726,800 (73.7%), whereas the corresponding increase for men was only 227,200 (13.3%) (Census and Statistics Department, 2011, pp. 87, 96).

One major reason for the rising female labour force participation
rate is the mounting number of foreign domestic helpers. On the one hand, they enter the Hong Kong labour market as women workers; on the other hand, by shouldering most of the housework, foreign domestic helpers enable a significant number of local women to participate in the labour market. Increased educational opportunities for women and the social trends of late marriage and remaining single have also contributed to the increase in the participation of women in the labour market.

In Figure 5, a substantial increase in the labour force participation rate (excluding foreign domestic helpers) for women between the ages of 30 and 59 from 2001 to 2010 can be seen. For the 40–49 age group, the female labour force participation rate increased from 56.7% to 65.9%, whereas for those aged 50–59, the rate increased from 41.2% to 48.3%. The overall female labour force participation rate (excluding foreign domestic helpers) reached a record high of 49.7% in 2008, remaining high at 48.4% in 2010 (Census and Statistics Department, 2011, p. 97).
A wide gap exists, however, between female and male labour force participation rates, especially in the case of married women. According to the Census and Statistics Department (2011, p. 98), the labour force participation rate for ever married women in 2010 was 45.7%, which was much lower than that for ever married men (70.5%) and also significantly less than the rate for never married women (66.5%).

**Women in Working Poverty**

The International Labour Organization (2010) introduced the concept of “working poor” to define those whose income is lower than the specified poverty line even though they are employed. The working definition of working poor refers to those employed persons living in households in which the per capita income/expenditure is below the poverty line. In essence, employment status is determined at the individual level, but poverty status is determined at the household level.

In 2006, the government-appointed Commission on Poverty (2006) used the individual as the unit of analysis and defined the working poor as employees with a monthly income of less than half of the median income of all employees. For reasons that are unclear, however, the Commission’s definition excluded employees who “voluntarily” work part-time and all self-employed persons or employers. Such a definition is not gender-sensitive, as it excludes a large number of women who work only part-time outside the home owing to their role as the primary carer in their families. The definition also fails to count the large number of low-paid workers who have been forced by their employers to become self-employed or contract workers subsequent to the introduction of the MPF. These shadow employers are evading their obligation to make employer contributions to the MPF by changing the status of their employees into that of self-employed persons.

In the following analysis, which uses available data for the period 2001 to 2010, we define the working poor as those employed persons (including part-timers and the self-employed, but excluding foreign domestic helpers) whose monthly earnings are less than $4,000 (about
Women and Poverty

40% of the median monthly income of the total employed population. First, as we wish to explore the gender gap in income, it is preferable to use the individual rather than the household as the unit of analysis. Second, by choosing 40% of the median income as the threshold of working poverty, we focus our analysis on those who are relatively deprived in the labour market. Furthermore, it is the threshold usually quoted by the HKSAR Government and the media in Hong Kong.

Table 3, which excludes data on foreign domestic helpers, shows that in 2001, 101,300 women (8.3% of employed females) earned less than $4,000 a month, whereas only 51,900 men (2.8% of employed males) earned less than $4,000. Women constituted 66.1% of the working poor population. In 2009, a growing number of employed women (130,500) earned less than $4,000 a month, representing a 28.8% increase in eight years, and the female working poverty rate was as high as 9.2%. In 2010, the number of female working poor

| Table 3 | Employed persons with monthly earnings of less than $4,000 (excluding foreign domestic helpers), selected years from 2001 to 2010 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| With monthly earnings of less than $4,000  | 2001  | 2006  | 2008  | 2009  | 2010  |
| Number of female employed persons (’000)  | 101.3  | 137.8  | 130.0  | 130.5  | 111.7  |
| Number of male employed persons (’000)  | 51.9  | 69.3  | 57.9  | 67.5  | 55.2  |
| Total number of employed persons (’000)  | 153.2  | 207.1  | 187.9  | 198.0  | 166.9  |
| Percentage of women among total employed persons  | 66.1%  | 66.5%  | 69.2%  | 65.9%  | 66.9%  |
| Female working poverty rate  | 8.3%  | 10.1%  | 9.1%  | 9.2%  | 7.9%  |
| Male working poverty rate  | 2.8%  | 3.8%  | 3.1%  | 3.7%  | 3.0%  |

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2011, p. 177).

Note: Female and male working poverty rates are the proportions of female and male employed persons with monthly earnings less than $4,000 among all employed persons of the corresponding sex.
decreased to 111,700, and the female working poverty rate decreased to 7.9%.

In short, it is evident that of every 10 to 12 working women in Hong Kong, one can be classed as belonging to the working poor, whose earnings have been below $4,000 a month in the last decade, and that over two-thirds of the total number of working poor are female. This demonstrates clearly that working poverty in Hong Kong is fundamentally a gendered phenomenon that reflects the extremely low wages of some working women.

Table 4 illustrates the income ratio between males and females by educational attainment. Income ratio is expressed as men’s income to women’s income. From 1986 to 1996, the overall income ratio decreased from 1.50 to 1.25, signifying an improvement in the gender wage difference from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. The situation reversed after the mid-1990s, however, with the ratio eventually increasing to 1.44 in 2006 and remaining at the high level of 1.41 in 2009. The situation improved slightly in 2010, as the income ratio decreased to 1.33.

Scrutinizing the data, we discover that the income disparity between females and males cannot be reduced simply by providing more education for girls. The income ratio for post-secondary degree
Women and Poverty

holders was 1.33 in 1986, increasing to 1.50 in 2001, and staying at the high level of 1.40 in 2010. The income ratios for post-secondary degree holders in both 2001 and 2010 were higher than the overall disparity for all levels of educational attainment. Therefore, increasing the female education level alone is not an effective way of lowering the gender gap in income.

Joining the labour market does not mean that women can break away from poverty, as most women earn less than men in similar trades or with similar levels of education in Hong Kong. Women constitute the majority of the working poor population. Figures 6 and 7 show that the median monthly employment earnings of female employed persons are lower than those of their male counterparts. In 2006, the male and female median monthly income increased to $11,500 and $8,000 respectively and the ratio between them increased to its highest level at 1.44. In 2010, the median monthly income for males was $12,000, while for females it was $9,000, with the ratio decreasing to 1.33.

The gender income gap can be partially explained by the concentration of females engaged in elementary occupations, which usually offer lower wages. The median monthly employment earnings of female workers in elementary occupations was $3,600 in 2010, as against $7,000 for their male counterparts, whereas in 2001 the corresponding figures were $3,900 for women and $7,500 for men. A large number of women workers in elementary occupations are foreign domestic helpers. Their monthly wage is normally less than $4,000. If foreign domestic helpers were excluded, the median monthly employment earnings would be $6,000 for women and $7,000 for men in elementary occupations in 2010 (Census and Statistics Department, 2011, pp. 172, 188).

After years of heated debate, and owing to the long-term and persistent campaign of women’s NGOs, labour groups, and advocacy groups, the Minimum Wage Ordinance was finally enforced on 1 May 2011. The statutory minimum wage (SMW) of all employees was set at an hourly wage of $28. According to the HKSAR Government, the SMW regime is “aimed at striking an appropriate balance between forestalling excessively low wages and minimising the loss of low-
**Figure 6**  Median monthly income by sex, selected years from 1991 to 2010

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2011, p. 190).

**Figure 7**  Male-to-female income ratio, selected years from 1991 to 2010

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2011, p. 190).
paid jobs while sustaining Hong Kong’s economic growth and competitiveness. SMW provides a wage floor to protect grassroots employees” (Labour Department, 2011). Working women are one of the groups vulnerable to exploitation. The SMW may be significant in alleviating poverty among working women in Hong Kong.

**Other Structural Causes**

Attempts have been made to disentangle the extent to which women’s poverty is the result of women’s childrearing responsibilities, lesser employment skills, discrimination by employers, and other factors. Here, one should refer to the article by Lee, Li, and Zhang (2009) on gender earnings differentials, in which this issue is addressed by means of a thorough econometric analysis.

A survey by the Women’s Commission on “What do Women and Men in Hong Kong Think about the Status of Women at Home, Work and in Social Environments?” claimed that,

> in response to the proposition that “men’s job was to earn money while women’s job was to do household work and take care of the family,” men’s percentage of agreement was significantly higher than that of women. 44.4% of men agreed, while only 34.1% of women indicated agreement with the statement, representing a gap of more than 10 percentage points. (Women’s Commission, 2011, p. 2)

Obviously, a large proportion of men still apply gender stereotypes to confine women to the private world of housework and caring for family members. This may hinder women from taking up or resuming paid employment.

Those who have taken paid employment have to face structural factors that put them at a disadvantage in their career. Discontinuity of work owing to their caring duties, particularly pregnancy, hinders them from advancing in their career. Subsequently, child care obligations set restrictions on the potential working hours of women, and some employers take unfair advantage of this to fragment their jobs. Apart from childbearing, other duties such as caring for elderly,
disabled, and chronically ill family members also pose a threat to the income-generating capacity of women.

According to the same survey by the Women’s Commission,

among the women who were neither studying nor having a full-time job, “having to look after other family members” and “having to do housework” were the main causes that prevent them from looking for a job. This reflected that family responsibility was the major reason that kept women from seeking employment. (Women’s Commission, 2011, p. 5)

Some argue that it is indirect rather than direct effects that are responsible for women’s poverty. Lower levels of education, for instance, are partly responsible. However, it should be borne in mind that, as aforementioned, increasing the female education level alone is not an effective way of lowering the gender gap in income.

Taking up employment does not mean that a woman can escape from poverty. A substantial proportion of women have taken jobs as casual workers and part-timers. The Women’s Commission found that,

married or cohabiting women with child(ren) (11.6%) and divorced/ separated or widowed women (14.4%) had a higher percentage of part-time employment when compared with women of other marital status. It was believed that family duties were part of the reason why these women choose to work part-time instead of full-time. (Women’s Commission, 2011, p. 6)

Furthermore, the same survey revealed that the percentage of women (8.4%) doing part-time jobs (i.e., working fewer than 30 hours per week on average) was distinctly higher than that of men (2.6%) (Women’s Commission, 2011, pp. 5–6).

These casual workers and part-timers face inadequate protection from labour legislation. For instance, as most casual workers or part-timers do not meet the definition of continuous employment, they are not covered by the normal employment rules.

Also, as a substantial number of working women belong to the
working poor, their contribution to and benefits accrued from the MPF are so meagre that their return is not sufficient for retirement.

The structural causes of poverty among individual groups of poor women, such as elderly women, single parents, and new arrivals to Hong Kong, have been discussed above. Disabled women face a lack of job opportunities and inadequate support. It is believed that women of ethnic minorities are another group of deprived women, owing to their exclusion from the mainstream.

Last, but not least, gender-blind public policies may have amplified the scale of poverty among women. For instance, thanks to the gender-insensitive MPF, more women suffer from a lack of retirement protection. Moreover, owing to gender-insensitive job creation programmes, more jobs that have been newly created for the unemployed go to men than to women. Word limits allow us only to highlight the possible causes of women’s poverty in Hong Kong. Further study on the structural causes is recommended.

Comparison between Hong Kong, the European Union, Canada, and the United States

As a world phenomenon, women’s poverty has received great attention. A better understanding of the situation in Hong Kong may be obtained by comparing it with that in other countries. According to Oxfam International and the European Women’s Lobby,

all over the world, women remain poor in relation to men. This is true in every member state in Europe, although differentials vary from country to country. Just under 17 per cent of women in the EU’s 27 countries are classed as living in poverty, and across a range of indicators in the labour market and in social protection, the structural causes of poverty have a disproportionate impact on women. (Oxfam International and European Women’s Lobby, 2010, p. 4)

The continued existence of women’s poverty has long been a concern of the EU. A range of measures by the EU supporting gender
equality and tackling women’s poverty demonstrate the continuing significance of women’s social inclusion on the agenda.

In Canada, the poverty rate is known as low income cut-off (LICO). It is intended to represent an after-tax income threshold below which a family will probably devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing than the average family. The poverty rate for women was 9.9% in 2008, a decrease from 12.1% in 2001; and the poverty rate for men was 9.0% in 2008, a decrease from 10.3% in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2012, Table 12). Townson (2009, p. 11) also highlighted two types of Canadian women living in poverty in 2007: 23.6% of women raising children on their own and 14.3% of single older women. This compares with a poverty rate of 9.5% among children. Townson argued that women’s poverty stems from the gender wage gap. Women who work full time year-round earn only 71.4% of the average earnings of men who work full time. Wage gaps between women and men are even higher when hourly wage rates are compared. According to Townson, most women do not have pension plans at work, nor do most men, but the low wages of women make it almost impossible for them to save for retirement.

In the United States, the women’s poverty rate in 2010 was 14.5%, the highest rate in 17 years, with more than 17 million women in the United States living in poverty that year (Bennetts, 2011).

According to the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), in 2009 there were 10.4 million working poor in the United States and the working poverty rate was 7.0%. Women who maintained families were more likely than their male counterparts to be among the working poor. The working poverty rate, however, continued to be higher for women (7.5%) than for men (6.6%). The largest difference between the working poverty rates of men and women was in the black ethnic groups, with the rate for black women being 14.2% and that for black men 10.1%.

In the 27 countries of the EU, “about 8% of persons in employment were considered as working poor, meaning that 8% of the working age population (18 years and over) was working and nevertheless living under the poverty threshold” in 2007. The female working poverty rate was 7%, which was lower than the male working poor rate of 8%
In comparison, the women’s poverty rate in Hong Kong in 2010 was 17.7%. This is more or less the same as that of the EU countries, higher than that of the United States, and much higher than that of Canada. On the other hand, the women’s working poverty rate (excluding foreign domestic helpers) in Hong Kong was 9.2% in 2009, which was significantly higher than the men’s working poverty rate of 3.7%. These figures signify that women’s working poverty in Hong Kong is more severe than that in the United States and the EU.

Last, but not least, the definitions and measurement methods of both poverty and working poverty are not the same in the countries or areas under comparison. The above comparison is crude, with only a very preliminary comparison having been attempted. A more comprehensive comparison between all of these countries requires further data collection and discussion.

Implications for Change

Alcock (1993, p. 4) argued that “debate about poverty is not merely descriptive, it is prescriptive. Poverty is not just a state of affairs, it is an unacceptable state of affairs—it implicitly contains the question, what are we going to do about it?”

Socioeconomic Policy

Enhancing women’s economic and social participation

One of the most effective strategies in alleviating women’s poverty is to provide women with more choices and opportunities for economic and social participation. The focus should be on the following:

- To enable women in general, and homemakers as well as single mothers in particular, to participate in the labour market. Well-designed “Active Labour Market Policies” such as job creation, public employment services, and retraining/on-job training should be adopted by the Government.
- Childcare is central to an understanding of the disadvantaged
position of women in the family and the labour market. We need to provide adequate and appropriate child care support to maximize women’s choices, e.g., flexible provision of child care, etc.

Narrowing the gender income gap

Another policy objective is to narrow the gender income gap, especially for low-waged and low-skilled women. The following points should be noted:

- The Minimum Wage Ordinance has been enforced in Hong Kong since May 2011. It is expected that the legislation will bring positive wage effects for the working poor, most of them women. In the long run it will provide a wage floor to prevent further wage cuts for the working poor. The impact on working conditions and number of jobs should be examined in detail, however.

- Casual workers and part-timers, who are predominantly women, are vulnerable to becoming “unprotected workers” owing to the definition of continuous employment as working at least 18 hours each week for four consecutive weeks. Consideration should be given to redefining the meaning of continuous employment so as to enable casual workers and part-timers to be covered by employment laws and enjoy employees’ rights. For instance, women’s NGOs and labour groups have advocated counting employees’ benefits on a pro rata basis, so that casual workers and part-timers would also be able to enjoy labour benefits to a certain extent.

Social Security

To improve the livelihood of poor women, the following social security measures should be taken:

- Universal old age or retirement benefits would allow all women, especially homemakers and the low-waged, to have a basic pension for financial protection in their old age. With the
introduction of a gender-sensitive retirement protection scheme, the number of elderly women in poverty would be reduced.

- The provision of a family tax credit or children’s tax credit is a good policy initiative for working families with children, especially single-parent households, which are predominantly led by women.

- Other than taking care of youngsters, women are also likely to take care of family members who are old, disabled, and chronically ill. Hong Kong becomes an ageing society, and the role played by women in taking care of the elderly will be more prominent than before. Most carers are home-bound, socially disengaged, and financially vulnerable. A carer’s allowance should be introduced to help tackle the financial difficulties faced by these carers, who are predominantly women.

- A review of the seven-year residence requirement for CSSA is recommended.

**Community Services and Resources**

Another useful means of alleviating the poverty of women and enhancing their well-being is to provide necessary services and resources directly to them:

- Flexible and extended child care services should be enhanced and promoted.

- Women’s centres should be set up to facilitate mutual help and self-help activities among homemakers, single mothers, new immigrant women, and others.

- Community support services should be provided to carers to lessen the burden of their caring duties. Carer-centred support services that provide timely and essential emotional and social support to carers should be introduced.

**Public Education**

It is also important for society to jettison stereotypes:
• Public education should be enhanced to change the stereotype of women as family carers.

• With regard to income discrimination, it should be reiterated that under both the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (passed in 1995) and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (passed in 1997), it is unlawful for an employer to treat an employee less favourably with respect to terms and conditions of employment on the grounds of his/her gender and family status.

**Statistics and Research**

More research on women’s poverty in Hong Kong should be conducted:

• To make visible the hidden poverty of women and to make a more accurate estimation of the extent of women’s poverty, the conceptualization and measurement of poverty should be made on an individual basis rather than on a household or family basis.

• Poverty figures are based on accumulated household income and assume that income is distributed evenly within households; thus income-related poverty among women is likely to be underestimated. The current indicators of income-related poverty should be revised to better reflect gender differences in the distribution of resources and power within households.

**Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Budgeting**

The HKSAR Government and public bodies should take the lead in addressing and alleviating women’s poverty by means of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting:

• The Government and public bodies should undertake a gender impact assessment on the impact of the recession and track subsequent changes over time—especially because women are likely to be disproportionately affected by any cuts in public spending and services (both as employees and users). Governments should use these gender impact assessments
to focus on building the resilience of poor women to future shocks.

- The Government should adopt gender budgeting to ensure that socioeconomic policy frameworks address women’s poverty in an appropriate manner. For instance, job creation programmes should be gender-sensitive, so that jobs for women will also be created.

- Legislation and administrative practices to ensure that women have equal rights and access to economic and social resources should be examined. For instance, the Equal Opportunities Commission should investigate the gender income gap and recommend policy and legislation to achieve the objective of equal work and equal pay. The Women’s Commission, being the central mechanism to advise the Government on a strategic overview of women issues as stipulated by the CEDAW Committee of the United Nations, should keep a close watch on the feminization of poverty in Hong Kong. The Women’s Commission should be given the authority and resources to monitor the Government’s initiatives to effectively alleviate poverty among women.

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Women and Poverty


Women’s Health Today

People in Hong Kong generally enjoy good health. Key health indices show that the infant mortality rate continues to decline and is now at an all-time low of 1.7 per 1,000 live births, while the life expectancy of the Hong Kong population has continued to rise concurrently over the past two decades. The average life expectancy at birth for Hong Kong women is 85.9 years, which is ahead of Hong Kong men at 80.0 years (Census and Statistics Department, 2011a). These health statistics put Hong Kong at amongst the best in the world (Table 1).

Despite this, women in Hong Kong still face great challenges. Beyond well-recognized risks such as reproductive health and gynaecological cancers lies the threat of non-communicable diseases amongst an ever-ageing population. In 2011, of around 7.07 million Hong Kong residents, a significant 13.3% were aged 65 or above. Of the 941,312 people in this age group, the majority (53.4%) were women. As women tend to live longer, it is not surprising that they make up nearly two-thirds of those aged 80 or above (Census and Statistics Department, 2012). Current projections for the next 20 years envisage that a quarter of the Hong Kong population will be
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over 65 years of age and that women will comprise a significant proportion of this group. In achieving a healthier older population, the need for a life course approach to good health from childhood, through adolescence, adulthood, and beyond is acknowledged. The urgent need to adopt a more holistic approach to women’s health permeates the report of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2009), entitled *Women and Health: Today’s Evidence, Tomorrow’s Agenda*. Pertinent to the Hong Kong context is the need to break down the social and economic barriers that contribute to gender inequalities in health and to introduce reforms that will enable more women to have a central role in the design and delivery of health care services.

This chapter highlights key health issues for Hong Kong women of reproductive age, through midlife and beyond. Current progress and shortfalls in healthcare are discussed and recommendations made. Further research is also proposed to improve the health of Hong Kong women.

### Health Issues for Women of Reproductive Age

#### Cervical Cancer Screening

Cervical cancer was the seventh most common form of cancer and the ninth most common cause of death from cancer amongst women.
in Hong Kong in 2009. There has been a decreasing trend in the incidence of cervical cancer in Hong Kong in the past 20 years. In 2009, there were 453 new cases and 128 deaths from cervical cancer, equating to an age-standardized incidence rate of 8.4 per 100,000 standard population and an age-standardized mortality rate of 2.2 per 100,000, respectively (Hong Kong Cancer Registry, 2012; Figure 1).

This downward trend may be explained by a growing awareness of the disease, and perhaps, in later years by the launch of the cervical screening programme in March 2004. The cervical screening programme promotes women to have regular cervical screening with public or private health care organizations and has seen a steady increase in women registering to the cervical screening information system which facilitates quality assurance, follow up and reminders. The current screening policy targets women of 25 to 64 years of
age at three-year intervals. By the end of 2011, 436,461 women had registered to receive the service (less than 20% of the eligible female population) (Department of Health, 2012b).

In 2004, a study by the University of Hong Kong, which was commissioned by the Department of Health, examined in part the proportion and characteristics of women who had received cervical screenings (Leung et al., 2008). A representative sample of 3,484 women were successfully interviewed before the advent of the cervical screening programme. Screened women were more likely to be in the 40–49 age group (53.3%), married, born in Hong Kong, have a higher level of education up to secondary and tertiary level, a higher personal income, and to undergo regular health checks.

Since 2004, the Behavioural Risk Factor Survey has helped to monitor cervical screening behaviour using territory-wide telephone surveys. In surveys conducted in 2005–2010, an optimistic picture was revealed, with around 55% of females indicating that they were up to date with their cervical screening procedures (within the last three years) (Department of Health, 2011c). Interestingly, in its 2010 survey, of the 63.0% females that have had a smear (n = 684), around 40% of those (n = 284) had regular cervical smears as often as once a year (Social Sciences Research Centre, 2011). Perhaps, in order to reach the programme’s screening target of 80%–85%, the focus should be more on low-income, poorly educated women and migrants who tend not to have regular health checks and, as a consequence, suffer poorer health outcomes than those who have already participated.

In addition, vulnerable women such as female sex workers in Hong Kong have been rather neglected. A survey at an outreach clinic in 2004–2005 demonstrated that these women are almost twice as likely to have pre-cancerous lesions CIN I–III than the general Hong Kong population, at 9.8% versus 5.5% respectively (Wong et al., 2008). Female sex workers are also less likely to participate in a cervical screening programme, with only 27.5% ever having had a cervical smear in 2004 (Wong et al., 2006).

Overall, cervical screening in Hong Kong falls short of targets achieved in Western countries, with the screening rate in the United Kingdom and the United States at about 80% (Centers for Disease
However, as the incidence of cervical cancer has already dropped to a very low level comparable to that of Western countries, the cost benefit of mass screening beyond that of the current approach of opportunistic screening in Hong Kong will require further discussion. Additional studies exploring current coverage in vulnerable populations and interventional studies in reducing cultural barriers to screening would be beneficial.

**Human Papillomavirus Vaccination**

In the past five years, there has been another dimension in the fight against cervical cancer—vaccination against the human papillomavirus (HPV). Chronic HPV infection is a known precursor to cervical cancer. In Hong Kong, HPV types 16 and 18 make up 70% of cervical cancers; available vaccines target primarily these two types and there is now much evidence of their efficacy beyond five years. Since February 2007, women and girls in Hong Kong have been given the opportunity to receive vaccinations. The stance on HPV vaccination is similar to that of cervical screening, which is that vaccination is opportunistic and requires payment. The cost of a HPV vaccination ranges from HK$800 to HK$1,200 per injection and the recommended course involves three injections in a six-month period. Many Western countries have incorporated HPV vaccinations into their national immunization programme, e.g., girls of 9–13 year olds in Canada and 12–13 year olds in the United Kingdom.

In Hong Kong, the uptake of the HPV vaccine is unknown, but research suggests that it is low. Studies have explored the attitudes and factors affecting the acceptability of the vaccines by Chinese adolescent girls and their mothers. A focus group study of adolescents in 2007 by the University of Hong Kong showed that the participants’ knowledge of cervical cancer and HPV was poor (Kwan et al., 2008). Despite perceived family, peer, and medical support, there was little urgency for vaccination. Some of the barriers highlighted included the high monetary cost, uncertainty over the length of the effectiveness of the vaccine, a low perceived risk of HPV infection, and fear of the pain of injections. In 2008, the Family Planning Association of
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Hong Kong (2009a) interviewed 500 mothers whose daughters were between 9 and 16 years of age at 18 locations across the territory. It was evident that the media had played a significant role in disseminating knowledge about the importance of HPV vaccination; 81% of the mothers had obtained information from television or radio and 53% from newspapers. However, understanding remained poor with only 30% aware that HPV is the main cause of cervical cancer. The rate of uptake of the vaccination was startlingly low, with only 4% of the mothers reporting that their daughters had received the vaccination, 38% that they were considering the vaccination, and the remaining 59% rejecting the idea of having their daughters undergo the vaccination. Exploring attitudes amongst the latter 294 mothers revealed that their reasons for rejecting vaccination included wanting more information (46%), worrying about the side effects of the vaccine (41%), cost (30%), and a concern that vaccination would not completely prevent the development of cervical cancer (29%). Nevertheless, 80% of the mothers agreed that the Government should introduce a free HPV vaccination programme in schools to mitigate costs, but wanted further consideration to be given to the safety and long-term efficacy of the vaccines.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus

The Centre for Health Protection has been keeping records of reported cases of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) in Hong Kong since 1984. To date, there have been 5,392 HIV cases and 1,281 AIDS cases (Department of Health, 2012c). A comprehensive analysis in 2010 revealed 389 and 79 reported cases of HIV and AIDS, respectively. These numbers were similar to those of previous years, and showed that most of the HIV cases involved males, with females accounting for only 27.8% of cases. Sexual transmission continues to be the major means through which HIV is spread in Hong Kong (42.4% homo/bisexual contact, 30.1% heterosexual contact, 3.9% injecting drug use, 0.8% perinatal, and 22.9% undetermined). As the prevalence of HIV in antenatal women is only 0.02%, the current universal antenatal testing programme and uptake of antiviral prophylaxis in Hong Kong
appears to be working effectively (Department of Health, 2011b). In 2001–2004, of the 160,878 recorded deliveries in Hong Kong, 75% of pregnant women had been tested for HIV before delivery; of this number, 28 mothers had tested positive and 15 babies had been born to these mothers, one of whom was HIV positive (Lee & Wong, 2007). While the number of cases of HIV transmission amongst men who have sex with men continues to rise, heterosexual transmission has been decreasing. The fact that, overall, HIV infection in men and women remains on an upward trend makes arresting the spread of the infection a matter of urgency.

In recent years, engaging in casual sex in mainland China has been identified as one of the important risk factors for HIV infection in Hong Kong people. Almost twice as many Hong Kong people with a sexually transmitted HIV infection were likely to have acquired it through casual sex on the mainland than in Hong Kong (Lee & Ho, 2008). A study in 1998 revealed that over 90% of all women infected with HIV had been infected by a husband or stable partner (Fung & Chung, 1998). The use of barrier methods remains an important preventive measure. The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (2009b), in its survey in 2007, showed that the principal contraceptive method was the use of condom (63.0%). However, knowledge and use of contraceptives and condoms appear variable. This is highlighted by an induced abortion rate of 20.6% despite over half having practised contraception and the remainder having discontinued or not used contraceptives.

Sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and unwanted pregnancies bring a considerable physical and psychological burden to individuals, relationships, marriages, families, and society in general. Multi-level and inter-sector strategies such as interventions to target men, women, healthcare, and the community are necessary to respond effectively to the evolving roles and needs of women in their local communities and within their families. This may include conducting sex education in schools, the workplace, and the community, improving the accessibility and reducing the stigma of HIV testing, and catering to the psychosocial sequelae of broken and dysfunctional marital and family relations.
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Maternal Health

Hong Kong mothers should be reassured by the ever decreasing infant mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio, now at an all-time low of 1.7 per 1,000 live births and 1.1 per 100,000 live births respectively in 2010 (Census and Statistics Department, 2011a). However, global fertility rates are on the decline, with Hong Kong having one of the lowest—1.09 children born per woman. This falls behind Taiwan (1.16), South Korea (1.23), Japan (1.39), and Western countries such as Canada (1.59), the United Kingdom (1.91), and the United States (2.06) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (2009b) in its serial territory-wide survey explored the attitudes of couples towards issues of fertility. “Have enough children,” “the financial burden of raising children is heavy,” “too much responsibility involved in raising children,” were consistent responses from both husbands and wives in 2002 and 2007. Interestingly, in 2007, becoming “too old” was expressed by 35.2% of husbands, 37.2% of wives (an increase from 0.1% and 4.6% respectively in 2002). “Too busy at work” is also increasingly an issue, although this was a more modest response at 9.0% for husbands and 8.6% for wives (an increase from 1.6% and 0.9% respectively).

It appears that Hong Kong women spend most of their reproductive age busily working. In 2010, the participation of women in the labour force was 86.4% in the 25–29 age group, with at least 75% of those of reproductive age (aged 20–44) in paid employment in Hong Kong. Women were more likely to be employed in community, social welfare, education, health, and other personal services (Census and Statistics Department, 2011b; for a more detailed discussion on women’s labour force participation, see Chapter 3 of this volume). The results of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (2009b) survey were also consistent, with half of the female respondents reporting that they hold a full-time job and 39.2% indicating that they were housewives (down from over 60.2% in 1982).

The Hong Kong Government is doing little to support women in their pregnancy and early family life. A Hong Kong female employee on a continuous contract for not less than 40 weeks is entitled to 10 weeks of maternity leave at four-fifths of her pay, and two to four
of the weeks must be taken before the expected day of the birth. An additional period of leave of not more than four weeks may be given in the event of illness or disability when certified by a registered Western or Chinese medical practitioner (Labour Department, 2012). This period of maternity leave is amongst the lowest of the countries in Asia, with mainland China at 98 days, Singapore at 16 weeks, and Japan at 14 weeks extendable to one year of partially paid leave. In Canada, there is 15 weeks of maternity leave with an additional 35 weeks of unpaid parental leave, which can be shared with the father. In the United Kingdom, maternity leave is 26 weeks partially paid starting as early as 11 weeks before baby’s due date. British fathers can also have two weeks paternity leave which can be extended up to 26 weeks. More research is needed to explore the impact of maternity leave arrangements on the physical and mental health of women upon returning to work, as well as on the long-term health and well-being of their families.

**Postnatal Depression**

Most research on maternal health has been conducted in the area of postnatal depression. Up to 12% of Hong Kong mothers suffer from postnatal depression (Lee et al., 1998). A 2004–2006 study of 2,178 Hong Kong women showed that 9.9% of pregnant women in the second trimester, 7.8% in the third trimester, and 8.7% at six weeks postpartum scored high on the Edinburgh postnatal depression scale, which is used for identifying women with clinical depression. However, in this prospective study, only 610 mothers were able to complete the study through to the final postpartum questionnaire (Lau, Wong, & Chan, 2010). The resulting small sample \( n=53 \) was unable to produce any clear indicators regarding factors affecting maternal mental health, although it did highlight depressive symptoms in the second trimester as highly predictive of postpartum depressive symptomatology. An earlier prospective study described factors contributing to postnatal depression, many of which were similar to studies conducted in the West, including past psychiatric history, temporary housing accommodation, financial difficulties, two or more previous induced abortions and also, interestingly, if
the spouse was disappointed with the gender of the newborn (Lee et al., 2000). Qualitative studies also showed that, like Western women, Hong Kong women diagnosed with postnatal depression experience feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, loss of control, ideas of infanticide, and self destruction. However, many Hong Kong mothers also appear to hear “phantom crying,” which appears to be a common but previously unreported phenomenon (Chan & Levy, 2004). Further research is needed in developing interventions to provide psychosocial support for pregnant and postpartum women. Such research may explore traditional cultural practices such as zuoyue, a social custom in which a woman is confined to her home for the first month after childbirth, and the effects on the psychosocial status of new mothers. Little is known about the effects of the increasing trend of hiring a peiyue or “confinement lady,” which was traditionally the role of the mother-in-law and may have wider implications if the effects are positive.

Health Issues of Midlife and Beyond

Menopause

With the postwar baby boomers approaching midlife and menopause, about one-third of women in Hong Kong were aged 50 or above in 2010 (Census and Statistics Department, 2011a). While most of the information on menopausal experiences is based on Western women, recent data have shown that symptoms vary amongst different ethnic groups. Experiences during this life stage are not solely related to physiological and hormonal changes, but also to a host of social and cultural factors and to a process of transition requiring physical, social, and psychological adjustments and coping. It is common among women in midlife to report symptoms, but the highest prevalence of symptoms is amongst women undergoing menopause. Factor analyses of data from a survey of Hong Kong Chinese women aged 45–55 have identified five groups of symptoms: psychological, somatic (e.g., joint pain, backaches, gastro-intestinal problems), non-specific somatic (e.g., headaches, dizziness, lack of energy), respiratory, and vasomotor (Ho et al., 2003). As also observed by studies in other...
Chinese populations in Sydney (Liu & Eden, 2007) and Singapore (Loh et al., 2005), generally, less severe vasomotor symptoms were reported compared with those found in Western women. The most prevalent symptoms among Hong Kong and many Asian women are muscle and joint pain, usually trailed by psychological complaints such as a lack of concentration, irritability, insomnia, feeling blue or depressed (Ho et al., 2003; Ling, Wong, & Ho, 2008; Liu & Eden, 2007; Loh et al., 2005). Although hormonal changes or fluctuations during the menopausal transition may sensitize women to symptomatic responses, experiences of social and physical stress during this stage of life were found to be strongly associated with complaints of symptoms (Ho et al., 2003; Liu & Eden, 2007). Moreover, vaginal dryness and loss of sexual desire are common amongst Asian women, but they seem to be less disturbed by these changes than their Western counterparts. A multi-country study observed that the prevalence of sexual dysfunction, such as reduced sexual desire, was high, but a majority did not seem to be greatly bothered and seemed to accept this as part of the process of ageing (Liu & Eden, 2007).

However, the prevalence of a host of chronic diseases such as hypertension, dyslipidaemia, and osteoporosis begins to increase dramatically from midlife onwards, but many of the sequelae, e.g., cardiovascular events and fractures, are preventable with early detection and/or lifestyle modifications.

**Breast Cancer**

Breast cancer has been the most common malignancy in women since 1994 and accounted for 24.0% of all new cancers diagnosed in females in Hong Kong in 2009. There has been an upward trend in the incidence of breast cancer over the past two decades. The age-standardized incidence rate was 54.9 per 100,000 standard population, with 2,945 new cases, in 2009 (Department of Health, 2012a).

Breast screening in Hong Kong is opportunistic, in that it occurs on a voluntary, self-financed and self-referral basis. One breast-screening centre in Hong Kong has shown a cancer detection rate of 5.9 per 1,000 in the 40–49 age group and 3.7 per 1,000 in those 50 years or older. The cancer detection rate was 58.5 per 1,000 in the
high-risk group (aged less than 40 but with a positive family history) (Lui et al., 2007). However, opportunistic breast screening may not be enough. A study of 702 consecutive patients referred to a hospital with newly diagnosed breast cancer from 2001 to 2006 showed that a routine mammography only accounted for 8% of the presentation, the majority (over 80%) were diagnosed after the individual herself discovered a lump in her breast (Leung et al., 2007). Late diagnosis and presentation remains a concern. Another study of 158 patients in 2006–2007 showed that breast lumps were the first presenting symptoms of 87% of patients. Alarmingly, the mean delay from the time when patients first experienced symptoms to their first consultation was 13.1 weeks, which was the primary component in the delay in receiving treatment (mean total delay 21.7 weeks) (Yau et al., 2010). Gaps in knowledge may account in part for the delay. A survey of 1,012 women between the ages of 18 and 69 revealed that most women (58%) had never heard of mammographic screening and 47% had the misconception that a mastectomy was the only cure (Chua et al., 2005). Although innovative measures can be helpful, such as a community health van to disseminate knowledge on breast cancer and self-examinations to women across Hong Kong (Chan et al., 2007), this does not displace the need for a more proactive approach to improving the utilization of mammography for susceptible target groups.

National breast screening programmes have long been implemented for older women in many Western countries, e.g., Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The population lifetime risk of breast cancer varies amongst these countries (1 in 8 in the United States, 1 in 9–11 in the United Kingdom, and 1 in 11 in Australia). This is in contrast to Hong Kong of 1 in 20 (Cancer Expert Working Group on Cancer Prevention and Screening, 2010a). There is still uncertainty about the efficacy of breast screening in Hong Kong and this topic is likely to reemerge in the coming years as the incidence of breast cancer continues to rise.

**Colorectal Cancer**

The age-standardized death rate for colorectal cancer was 19.0 for
males and 11.5 for females per 100,000 in 2009, with an overall upward trend over the past three decades. It is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women, accounting for 15.7% of new cases in 2009 (Hong Kong Cancer Registry, 2012). The risk factors for colorectal cancer include a diet low in dietary fibre and high in red and processed meat, physical inactivity, smoking, obesity or abdominal fatness, alcohol consumption, some chronic intestinal disorders (e.g., ulcerative colitis), and hereditary bowel diseases (e.g., familial adenomatous polyposis). Many of these risk factors are modifiable. Education on awareness of early symptoms and primary prevention through lifestyle modifications are important strategies for lowering the risks of the disease and the health care burden (Cancer Expert Working Group on Cancer Prevention and Screening, 2010b).

**Cardiovascular Risks**

Cardiovascular diseases are second to cancer as the most common cause of mortality in the Hong Kong population and among women. In 2010, 3,157 deaths in women were due to heart disease (Women’s Commission, 2011). Cardiovascular risks, such as diabetes, dyslipidaemia, hypertension, and metabolic syndrome, all tend to increase in midlife, and are partly attributable to hormonal and unfavourable metabolic changes, and ageing. Territory-based surveys conducted in Hong Kong in 1995 and 2003 to 2004 showed the notably high prevalence of these conditions in women in midlife (Department of Health & Department of Community Medicine, 2005; Janus et al., 1996). Similar observations have been made in studies conducted in Korea and elsewhere, suggesting that the risk of developing cardiovascular disease increases in women after the onset of menopause (Choi et al., 2005; Hidalgo et al., 2006; Yu et al., 2008). The prevalence of diabetes increased dramatically in the younger (25–44), midlife (45–64), and older (65–84) age groups at 0.6%, 8.8%, and 23.3%, respectively. The prevalence of diabetes in older women even exceeded that of men of similar age (19.8%). With the exception of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, mean lipid concentrations are higher in men than women, but the differences narrow with age with a cross-over at midlife. The fastest increase
in the prevalence of dyslipidaemia in women is observed between young adulthood and midlife (Department of Health, 2007).

Hypertension is an important risk factor of heart disease and cerebrovascular disease. The Population Health Survey 2003/2004 revealed that the prevalence of hypertension amongst people aged 15 or above was 27.2%, with 30.1% for males and 24.9% for females. The study also revealed that about one-quarter of those aged 50–64 with hypertension were not diagnosed and had not received treatment (Department of Health & Department of Community Medicine, 2005). An earlier survey on risk factors for cardiovascular disease showed that cases of women with definite hypertension (systolic blood pressure ≥160/diastolic blood pressure ≥95) exceeded that of men from midlife onwards, rising from 11.3% in the 45–54 age group to 26.8% and 35.7% in the 45–64 and 65–74 age groups, respectively. Amongst women who had been identified as suffering from hypertension, about 29% were not receiving treatment (Janus et al., 1996). The Hong Kong Heart Health Survey 2004/2005 also showed that one-third to 44% of the surveyed women in the midlife (aged 45–64) to older (65–84) age groups had high prevalence of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (≥3.4 mmol/L) (Department of Health, 2007). These data are strong evidence of the increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease faced by women from midlife onwards. Furthermore, the high prevalence of unawareness of these risks is worrying.

**Overweight and Obesity**

Better standards of living, over-nutrition, and a decrease in physical activities have led to the increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity. Evidence is accumulating to show the existence of a relationship between obesity and many chronic diseases: adult-onset diabetes, hypertension, coronary vascular disease, cerebrovascular disease, and certain types of cancer. Body weight is the leading modifiable risk factor for these conditions. Data from Western countries show that the prevalence of obesity is rising continuously, and similar trends have been reported for Asian populations. In China, a national survey in 2002 found that the prevalence of overweight and obesity
in Chinese adults had nearly doubled in the previous 10 years to 23% (Ding & Malik, 2008). Similar trends were found in Taiwan and Korea (Chu, 2005; Kim, Ahn, & Nam, 2005). A collaborative cohort study showed that the prevalence of obesity is among the highest in Hong Kong amongst various Chinese communities such as mainland China and Taiwan (Asia Pacific Cohort Studies Collaboration, 2007).

According to the Asian standards of the WHO, overweight is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 23 to 24.9 (weight in kg/height in metres squared), and obesity as a BMI of 25 or more. The Population Health Survey conducted in Hong Kong in 2003–2004 showed that 38.8% of the surveyed populations were overweight or obese (42.5% of males and 35.9% of females). Overweight and obesity generally increase with age and peak at midlife. While about one-third of the population aged 25–44 were overweight or obese, the prevalence increased to about 50% in the 45–64 age group and was slightly lower in the 65–74 age group (Department of Health & Department of Community Medicine, 2005).

The risks of obesity depend not only on the amount of body fat but also on its distribution. Abdominal or central obesity, as the commonly adopted indicators, have been shown to be even more important predictors of cardiovascular diseases (Dagenais et al., 2005; Yu et al., 2008). In total, 19.7% of men (with a waist circumference of 90 cm or more) and 27.5% of women (80 cm or more) had abdominal or central obesity (Department of Health & Department of Community Medicine, 2005). While BMI, an indication of general obesity, declines with age in the elderly population (Teh, Pan, & Chen, 1996; Woo, Ho, & Sham, 2001), abdominal obesity persists into old age. Central obesity rises with age amongst women, increasing from 30.5% to 54.0% and 68.7% in the respective age groups of 25–44, 45–64, and 65–84 (Department of Health, 2007). Scientific studies suggest that with menopause there is a tendency for body fat to be redistributed, with more fat accumulating in the abdominal region. A 2002–2004 study in Hong Kong of early postmenopausal women aged 50–64 showed that general obesity (BMI of 25 or more) and central obesity (waist circumference of 80 cm or more) were associated with subclinical atherosclerosis and plaque formation (Yu et al., 2008).

Furthermore, visceral or intra-abdominal fat, which surrounds the
internal organs, may lead to both metabolic and vascular abnormalities, including insulin resistance, diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, triglycerides, metabolic syndrome, and cardiovascular diseases (Carr et al., 2004; Chuang et al., 2006; Grundy, 2000; Hayashi et al., 2003; Katsuki et al., 2003; Nieves et al., 2003; Ohnishi et al., 2005).

Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of metabolic abnormalities associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease morbidity and mortality, and type 2 diabetes. These include increased blood pressure, elevated insulin levels, excess body fat around the waist (central obesity), or dyslipidaemia occurring together. The Hong Kong Cardiovascular Risks Study in Midlife Women found a high prevalence (23.2%) of metabolic syndrome in midlife women (Yu et al., 2008). Individuals with metabolic syndrome are seemingly also susceptible to other conditions, notably polycystic ovary syndrome, fatty liver, cholesterol gallstones, asthma, sleep disturbances, and some forms of cancer (Grundy et al., 2004). The high prevalence of metabolic syndrome in midlife women deserves more public health concern, prevention, and treatment of abnormal components.

**Atherosclerosis**

Atherosclerosis is a disease in which plaque (made up of fat, cholesterol, calcium, and other substances from the blood) builds up and narrows the arteries. This can affect many parts of the body, leading to serious problems such as heart disease, stroke, or even death. A study of Hong Kong Chinese women in midlife revealed that increasing age, abdominal obesity, and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (Pan et al., 1997; Yu et al., 2008) were significantly associated with the presence of plaque or atherosclerosis.

**Stroke**

Stroke has been the third/fourth leading cause of death in Hong Kong during the past 20 years and accounted for 8.4% of all deaths in 2009 (Department of Health, 2010). A recent analysis based on first hospitalizations for stroke in Hong Kong (2000 to 2007) captured by the Clinical Management System of the Hospital Authority revealed
that women had a lower incidence of stroke than men in the 35–84 age group, but a higher adjusted 30-day case-fatality rate than men among those aged 85 or above (Wu et al., 2012). The lower incidence of stroke in Hong Kong women is consistent with data collected elsewhere (Appelros et al., 2002; Lewsey et al., 2009). Explanations may include healthier lifestyle patterns and dietary practices followed by women than men (Department of Health, 2011a). The prevalence of smoking, hypertension, obesity, and alcohol consumption was found to be higher in Hong Kong men than women between 2000 and 2011 (Department of Health, 2011c). Researchers have suggested that the differential care and treatment received in acute stroke units might result in higher cases of fatality in elderly women (Andersen et al., 2005; Kapral et al., 2005). But the higher case-fatality rate may also be attributed to greater disease severity and greater frailty in elderly women (Woo et al., 2008).

**Osteoporosis**

Together with coronary heart diseases and stroke, fragility fractures pose a huge burden on social and health care. The incidence of hip fractures, an indicator of osteoporosis, continues to increase. Approximately 1.7 million hip fractures occurred worldwide in 1990. By 2050, this number is projected to reach between 4.5 million and 6.3 million, and about 50% of osteoporotic fractures will occur in Asia (Cooper, Campion, & Melton, 1992; Gullberg, Johnell, & Kanis, 1997). Women are three to six times more susceptible to osteoporotic fractures than men. Nearly 75% of all hip fractures occur in women (Jordan & Cooper, 2002). The burden of osteoporotic fractures includes not only the direct cost of treatment, hospitalization, convalescence, and rehabilitation, but also pain, diminished quality of life, and increased mortality in those who are affected (Center et al., 1999).

The incidence of hip fractures in Singapore in 1998 increased five times in women compared with cases observed in the 1960s. In Hong Kong, it increased threefold from the 1960s to 1990s, but stabilized from 2001 to 2006, possibly due to improved awareness, the availability of medical intervention, increases in body weight,
the increased use of hormonal therapy, and improved fall-prevention strategies (International Osteoporosis Foundation, 2009; Lau et al., 1999).

Vertebral fractures can lead to back pain, loss of height, deformity, immobility, increased number of bed days, and even reduced pulmonary function (Gold, 2001; Lips et al., 1999; Lyles, 2001; Nevitt et al., 1998; Pluim et al., 2002; Robbins et al., 2001; Tosteson et al., 2001). Vertebral fractures also have a significant impact on self-esteem, activities of daily living, and quality of life (Adachi et al., 2002; Hall et al., 1999). The prevalence of vertebral fractures in Hong Kong is estimated at 29% in women and 16% in men between the ages of 70 and 79 (Lau et al., 1996; Lau et al., 2000). The underdiagnosis of vertebral fractures is a worldwide problem, with only one-third of women with vertebral fractures coming to clinical attention (Cooper et al., 1992). Data based on measurements of bone mineral density and according to the WHO definition of osteoporosis (a bone mineral density that is 2.5 standard deviations or more below the average value for young healthy women) reveals that the prevalence of osteoporosis of the spine increased dramatically from about 10% in the age group 50–59 to 45% in the group aged 60–69. Osteoporosis of the hip increased exponentially with age, with over half of women aged 70 or above suffering from osteoporosis of the hip (Ho & Lau et al., 1999).

Osteoporosis affects over two million people in the United Kingdom; more than double the number of people affected by dementia (Breaking Point, 2011). Both menopausal related hormonal deficiency and ageing contribute to the increasing prevalence of osteoporosis after menopause. Preventing the state of low bone mass is one of the most important strategies in the prevention of fractures. The relatively long lead time from bone loss, usually occurring in the early menopausal years, to the subsequent incidence of fractures should theoretically present an opportunity for screening and prevention or treatment. Local data support the view that lifestyle measures are conducive to the attainment of peak bone mass and to lowering the risk of fractures. Such measures include adequate exercise, particularly weight-bearing activities, good
general nutrition, the adequate intake of dietary calcium and vitamin D, and the avoidance of excessive indulgence in alcohol and tobacco. The concomitant strategy is preventing falls in the elderly population, with older women more prone to falling than men.

**Lifestyle**

About one-third of the most common cancers and circulatory diseases are preventable (World Cancer Research Fund & American Institute for Cancer Research, 2007). Lifestyle modifications are key to reducing premature death, illnesses, and social and health care costs. There is strong evidence to suggest that maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active on most days, consuming more dietary fibre and less red and processed meats, limiting alcohol consumption, and stopping smoking are effective means of preventing the occurrence of many cancers and chronic diseases from midlife onwards.

A follow-up study of Hong Kong women in midlife indicated that maintaining body weight and physical fitness have a protective effect against bone loss (Ho et al., 2008). Furthermore, a follow-up study on the Hong Kong elderly population revealed that a higher level of physical activity, even at moderate levels such as morning walks and Tai Chi, is associated with lower mortality and hospitalization rates (Ho, Woo, & Sham, 2006; Woo, Ho, & Yu, 2002). Many studies also indicate that physical activity may enhance self-esteem, improve mood states, reduce anxiety, and lead to greater resilience to stress (Fox, 1999).

The accurate perception of body weight is an important determinant of the success of weight-related behavioural intervention programmes. Overweight people tend to underestimate their body weight, and thus may be less aware of their need to reduce weight and more vulnerable to obesity-related diseases (Powell et al., 2010). A recent study shows a tendency for the female population, including nurses, to underestimate their body weight (Xie, 2011). Moreover, some data has revealed obese subjects are less likely to report that a physician has discussed lifestyle interventions with them (Powell et al., 2010). Therefore, health professionals working in clinical
settings may need to be more aware of the need to discuss with their overweight patients matters such as weight status and the potential adverse health outcomes of being overweight.

Recent Hong Kong data from a 9–14 years follow-up study indicated that a dietary pattern consisting of a high intake of vegetables, fruits, legumes, and fish was associated with a reduced risk of developing diabetes, while a diet rich in red meat, milk products, and refined grain was associated with an increased risk of developing diabetes (Yu et al., 2011). Higher levels of saturated fat and carbohydrates may predispose individuals to hyperglycemia and hyperinsulinaemia, and to a higher risk of diabetes. Another local study found that the daily consumption of fish, a moderate intake of alcohol, and not smoking were protective factors for better health outcomes amongst Hong Kong’s elderly population (Woo et al., 2002).

Growing evidence seems to suggest that dietary soy intake, a traditional Chinese staple food, is associated with better cardiovascular and bone health (Ho et al., 2007; Ho et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2010). A lifelong habit of consuming soy foods, particularly during the adolescent years, may lower the risk of breast cancer (Wu et al., 2002). Adequate calcium intake and sources of vitamin D are essential for bone health and may also be beneficial for other chronic diseases. Thus, sensible sun exposure (5–30 minutes, twice a week) together with natural sources of vitamin D from fatty fish and eggs, are means to ensure adequate levels of vitamin D (Holick, 2007).

Smoking is linked to many adverse health outcomes, including respiratory illnesses and cancer. A large collaborative cohort study on smoking in the Asia-Pacific region confirmed that cigarette smoking is an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease and stroke, and female smokers were observed to be at a higher risk than men (Asia Pacific Cohort Studies Collaboration, 2005). A study on Hong Kong elderly people also observed more adverse effects from smoking in women than in men (Ho & Zhan et al., 1999). The Thematic Household Survey conducted from December 2007 to March 2008 amongst adults aged 15 or above indicated that 3.6% of women and 20.5% of men were daily cigarette smokers. Although the
prevalence amongst women was low, 6.1% to 6.4% of young women aged 20–39 were smokers (Census and Statistics Department, 2009). Given the increasing trend of smoking among young women and their consequent elevated risk of developing cardiovascular disease, in the coming decades cardiovascular disease in women is expected to be an issue of great concern in public health.

Psychological stress has been shown to be associated with cardiovascular disease (Yu et al., 2010). Psychological factors may affect health through health behaviours such as smoking, diet, or physical activity or through biological processes such as altering lipid metabolic processes. A recent study of women in midlife conducted by Yu et al. (2010) revealed an association between perceived stress and trait anxiety with atherogenic lipid profiles and physical inactivity. Thus, early intervention among psychologically strained women in midlife will help to lower their risk of developing cardiovascular disease, a major threat for the ageing female population.

Summary

Women in Hong Kong are enjoying a long life, but they are also facing a number of health challenges through the course of their life. This chapter has highlighted the major health issues and concerns particularly during the vulnerable periods—the reproductive and menopausal years and thereafter. Although the incidence of cervical cancer has been decreasing as the uptake of opportunistic cervical cancer screening and HPV vaccination has increased, there are still vulnerable groups that require closer attention and monitoring, such as poorly educated women, recent migrant women, and sex workers. Sex health education that is culturally sensitive, responsive to the needs of society, and empowers women may have a further impact on the transmission of sexual infections such as HIV. Much more could also be done to support women in their pregnancy and early family life in terms of psychosocial support and changing maternity policies and employment practices.

As more and more postwar female baby boomers reach midlife and the age of menopause, a number of challenging health issues
are emerging. These include menopause-related symptoms, which often reflect a host of physical, mental, and psychological issues and concerns; and an increasing risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, metabolic syndromes, obesity, osteoporosis, and common cancers such as breast and colorectal cancers.

Policy Implications

Primary prevention programmes are particularly important for women, as many of the conditions are preventable or can be treated early to reduce the burden of disease in later life. In addition, because of the multiple (often care giving) roles of women in society and their centrality in the home, their health condition and improvements in their health have a direct impact on their family and community. In Hong Kong, many organizations are involved in the delivery of primary preventive measures, each with their own resources and approach. To realize the capability of these organizations to extend their service and to increase coverage amongst the Hong Kong population, there needs to be more emphasis on strategic planning, with incentives for enhancing collaboration across organizations and across sectors and for targeting those with the greatest health needs.

Primary preventive measures against common cancers like colorectal and breast cancers, and education on awareness of symptoms, are important. Currently, the benefits of mass mammography screening in Hong Kong are being deliberated (Cancer Expert Working Group on Cancer Prevention and Screening, 2010a), as well as the modalities of screening tests and the frequency of the screening to be adopted for colorectal cancer screening. The results of on-going population studies and further research into attitudes and the acceptability of cancer screening modalities will provide more evidence for future recommendations. Health services for women in primary care could also play a greater role in the primary and secondary prevention of disease risks in women. By utilizing opportunities at every stage of life, great gains can be made in reducing disabilities and premature deaths in Hong Kong.
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Introduction

Violence against women is considered a major public health problem and the most pervasive yet underrecognized violation of human rights (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; WHO & LSHTM, 2010). Not only does this type of violence cause deaths and a wide range of physical, mental, sexual, reproductive, and maternal health problems, it also results in isolation, an inability to work, loss of employment and wages, a limited ability to provide child care, a high utilization rate of health care services, and an increase in the use of social services (WHO, 2011). Until recently, violence against women was regarded as a type of gender-based violence rooted in inherently unequal gender power relations. International organizations have come to recognize that the eradication of gender-based violence via a gender mainstreaming approach is essential for gender equality and empowerment (Tang, 2009). Violence against women has been found to be associated with the low social status of women (WHO, 2011). Furthermore, due to the social stigmatization connected with violence against women, it is
universally underreported (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002) and has thus been overlooked by governments (Venis & Horton, 2002). This review profiles the prevalence of and policies concerning violence against women in Hong Kong, focusing in particular on intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence. The scope of the review covers government documents such as policy papers and research reports, official statistics from the Hong Kong Police Force and the Social Welfare Department, reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and territory-wide and community-based studies conducted between 2005 and 2011 on the prevalence of this type of violence.

Comparisons will be made between various sources of data. Official statistics compiled by governmental bodies are believed to have underestimated the problem as they rely on victims to take the initiative to report abuse. As previously mentioned, underreporting is likely to occur due to social stigma, and the pressure to preserve the honour and stability of the family. In contrast, results from prevalence studies are more representative as data are collected from territory-wide or community-based surveys. Comparisons are also made between local policies concerning IPV in Hong Kong with those in other countries. We conclude with recommendations for prevention and intervention policies regarding violence against women.

**Definition of Intimate Partner Violence**

Although violence against women occurs in different contexts, violence by an intimate partner is by far the most common form. IPV encompasses a range of physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse that is perpetrated by a current or former spouse, or partner in a marital, cohabiting, or dating relationship (Hattery, 2009; United Nations General Assembly, 2006; WHO & LSHTM, 2010). Specifically, IPV may take the following forms (United Nations General Assembly, 2006; WHO & LSHTM, 2010):

- Physical aggression such as slapping, hitting, kicking, and beating.
- Emotional and psychological abuse such as intimidation,
constant belittlement and humiliation, stalking, and threats to destroy a partner’s possessions or harm a partner’s loved ones.

- Controlling behaviours such as isolating a partner from their family and friends, monitoring their movements, and restricting their access to information and assistance.
- Economic violence including denying a partner access to and control over basic resources.

Although victims of IPV are not exclusively women, significant gender differences have been observed. The majority of international studies consistently show that women are much more vulnerable than men to victimization. Specifically, they are more likely to be physically assaulted, injured, murdered, raped, or sexually exploited by a current or former intimate partner than by any other person (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; WHO and LSHTM, 2010; Worden, 2002). Some may use the terms “spousal abuse,” “domestic violence,” and “IPV” interchangeably, but these terms do not make explicit the fact that the majority of partner abuse cases involve male perpetrators and their female partners. The terms “wife abuse” and “wife assault” are also problematic as they exclude cases of violence between couples that are cohabiting or dating (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). Thus, in this chapter the type of IPV highlighted is IPV against women, and the discussion centres on the various forms of violence against a female partner that take place in an intimate relationship.

Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence in Hong Kong

Although international efforts are increasingly being made to collect data to capture the prevalence of different types of violence, most of the data collected by government bodies and academics in Hong Kong focus on psychological, physical, and sexual violence against an intimate partner and do not include controlling behaviours and economic violence. Despite this limitation, the existing data suggest that IPV against women is a common problem in Hong Kong. As reported by the Hong Kong Police Force (2012), 2,157 criminal cases of domestic violence were recorded in 2010, representing a 19.1% increase from 2006. This figure has fluctuated between 2,157 and
2,505 since 2007 (Figure 1). Most of these reported cases involved disputes over money and relationships.

However, these police statistics are far lower than the statistics collected by the Social Welfare Department. In 2010, newly reported battered spouse cases numbered 3,163. Among them, 83.6% (2,643 cases) of the victims were women (Social Welfare Department, 2012). Approximately 85% of reported cases involved physical abuse, 9.0% psychological abuse, 0.3% sexual abuse, and 6.1% involved multiple forms of abuse (Figure 2). Over 66% of the perpetrators of violence were the victim’s husband, 8.0% a boyfriend, 5.7% a male cohabitant, and 3.2% a separated or divorced husband (Figure 3). Between 1998 and 2008, the number of women who reported being abused by their intimate partner increased dramatically from 970 to 5,575, representing a 474.7% jump in these types of cases being reported to the Social Welfare Department (2012). As shown in Figure 4, there has been

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1. Statistics on cases of domestic violence only became available starting from 2006. Starting from 2008, miscellaneous cases of domestic violence were no longer recorded in the statistics, with only criminal cases of domestic violence being recorded thereafter.
**Figure 2** Types of newly reported battered spouse cases, 2010 (%)

![Bar chart showing types of newly reported battered spouse cases, 2010.](image)


**Figure 3** Abuser’s relationship with the battered spouse victim, 2010 (%)

![Bar chart showing abuser's relationship with the battered spouse, 2010.](image)

a decline since 2008. This may be due to greater public awareness of the broader protection offered by new legislation following the amendment of the Domestic Violence Ordinance in 2008 (Women’s Commission, 2009). However, some have attributed this decline to a change in the classification of certain cases as family disputes instead of domestic violence cases (Cheung & Liu, 2010).

Due to the social stigmatization associated with violence against women, underreporting is a serious problem. Both population and community surveys conducted in Hong Kong generally indicate a much higher prevalence of IPV than police figures or cases reported to the Social Welfare Department. An international study on dating violence among university students indicates that 24.7% and 3.3% of female respondents reported having experienced physical assault and physical injury, respectively, by a dating partner in the previous year (Chan & Straus et al., 2008). Moreover, a territory-wide study conducted in 2005–2006 revealed that, among 3,245 pregnant women participants, 9.1% reported having been abused by their intimate
partner in the preceding year. Among them, 6.7% were abused emotionally and 2.5% were abused physically or sexually (Chan et al., 2009).

Another territory-wide household survey conducted in 2003–2004 on spouse battering in Hong Kong showed that 15.7% and 7.4% of women reported having ever experienced violence and having experienced violence in the previous year, respectively. The rates of physical assault, physical injury, and psychological violence in a lifetime were 10.1%, 4.0%, and 57.6%, respectively. The rates of physical assault, physical injuries, and psychological violence in the previous year were 4.4%, 1.6%, and 39.8%, respectively (Chan, 2005).

In 2007 a community study based on a representative couple sample in Yuen Long where both husband and wife were interviewed was conducted to compare the prevalence of violence among marriage migrants from mainland China versus local women (Choi, Cheung, & Cheung, 2012). Cross-checking the reports of husband and wife showed that the percentages of couple reports that were in agreement were 77.7%, 57.0%, and 51.5% for psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion, respectively. The percentages of husbands underreporting their involvement in the perpetration of violence were 6.5%, 22.6%, and 25.3% for psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion, respectively. The percentages of wives underreporting violence directed at them by their husbands were 15.8%, 20.4%, and 23.2% for psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion, respectively. To partly remedy the problem of underreporting, the reports of both husband and wife should therefore be taken into account when calculating the prevalence rates of violence. For example, a woman may be considered a victim of IPV when she reports such an experience, or when her partner reports using violence against her. Using this criterion, the above survey showed that the percentages of women experiencing psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion by a spouse in the previous year were 35.6%, 10.7%, and 11.4%, respectively. Among those experiencing physical assault, 9.3% experienced a minor
physical assault, 5.1% experienced a severe physical assault, and 3.2% suffered injuries as a result of the assault (Choi et al., 2012).

Sexual Violence

Although sexual violence is also a form of IPV, it involves a wide spectrum of contexts and perpetrators and is therefore dealt with separately in this chapter. Perpetrators of sexual violence could be an intimate partner, a family member, a colleague, an acquaintance, or a complete stranger. Sexual violence encompasses a broad array of unwanted sexual acts directed against women. Reports and documents use the terms sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual violence interchangeably. According to the World Health Organization and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (2010), sexual violence refers to “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting including but not limited to home and work.” Specific acts of sexual violence fall into four categories (Basile & Saltzman, 2002):

- A completed sex act without the victim’s consent, or involving a victim who is unable to consent or refuse. This includes contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus involving penetration, however slight; contact between the mouth and penis, vulva, or anus; or penetration of the anal or genital opening of another person by a hand, finger, or other object.
- An attempted but not completed sex act without the victim’s consent, or involving a victim who is unable to consent or refuse.
- Abusive sexual contact. This includes intentional touching, either directly or through clothing, of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks of any person without his or her consent, or of a person who is unable to consent or refuse.
- Non-contact sexual abuse, including acts such as voyeurism; intentional exposure of an individual to exhibitionism; unwanted
exposure to pornography; verbal or behavioural sexual harassment; threats of sexual violence to accomplish some other end; or taking nude photographs of a sexual nature of another person without his or her consent or knowledge, or of a person who is unable to consent or refuse.

**Prevalence of Sexual Violence in Hong Kong**

Official statistics reported by the Hong Kong Police Force (2012) reveal a general increase in rape crimes in the past few years. From 2000 to 2010, the number of reported rape cases totalled 1,111, and fluctuated between 70 (in year 2003) and 136 (in year 2009) (Figure 5). However, “rape” usually involves the sexual act of penetration and hence is a much narrower category than “sexual assault” or “sexual abuse.” Data on sexual violence collected by the Social Welfare Department showed a total of 343 newly reported cases of sexual violence (men and women altogether) in 2010 alone (Figure 6). The majority of victims were females (98.8%, 339 cases). Among those 343 cases, indecent assault comprised the highest proportion (70.8%), followed by rape (21.0%) and multiple incidents (6.1%) (Figure 7). In terms of the relationships between victims and perpetrators of sexual violence, 50.7% of the perpetrators were strangers, 19.0% were friends, 14.0% were employers, employees, or colleagues, and 7.8% were family members or relatives (Figure 8).

However, the data collected by the Social Welfare Department represented a relatively small number of sexual assault incidents because most victims did not report their cases to either the police or the Social Welfare Department. RainLily, Hong Kong’s first rape crisis centre, was approached by 1,839 female victims of sexual violence from 2001 to 2010. Their cases comprised 68% of rape, 28%

2. Rape cases are separately counted in police crime statistics.

3. Sexual violence perpetrated by an intimate partner is separately counted in the Social Welfare Department report.
Figure 5  Rape cases in Hong Kong, 2000–2010

Source: Hong Kong Police Force (2012).

Figure 6  Newly reported cases of sexual violence by sex, 2004–2010

Figure 7  Types of newly reported cases of sexual violence, 2010 (%)


Figure 8  Abuser’s relationship with victims of sexual violence, 2010 (%)

of indecent assault, and 4% of sexual harassment. Most victims of rape and indecent assault were between age 19 and 29. The majority of offenders were people the victim knew previously (81%) rather than strangers (19%). A further breakdown of these non-stranger perpetrators showed that 31% were friends, 16% were relatives, 15% were colleagues or bosses, and 12% were intimate partners. In the category of relatives, 40% of offenders were the victim’s father or stepfather. Offences occurring within intimate relationships had the highest rate of physical violence. In contrast, offences perpetrated by friends mostly involved drug use, and offences by relatives usually continued to occur over a longer period of time. In addition, an increasing number of service recipients at the Association Concerning Sexual Violence Against Women reported their violence victimization to the police (Figure 9; Association Concerning Sexual Violence Against Women, 2011). However, it should be noted that the percentage of RainLily clients who filed a report with the police did not increase until 2008. Before then, nearly half of them did not
report their plight to the police. The factors inhibiting victims of sexual violence from making a report to the police should receive further attention.

A study of victims of sexual violence involving a telephone survey with 60 respondents and in-depth interviews with 12, conducted in 2009–2010, showed that only 20% sought help from the CEASE Crisis Centre, and that up to 29% did not call for help until after 1–10 years had passed since the violence started. This study concluded that the traditional patriarchal ideology has had a profound impact on the attitudes of survivors of sexual violence towards sex and sexual assaults (Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, 2011). Specifically, it has had a direct, negative influence on their ability to resist violence and their willingness to seek help. Victims might have chosen to remain silent due to their inferior position or fear of the possible social stigma attached to sexual assault.

Another territory-wide household survey on spouse battering reported that 8.9% and 4.0% of the female respondents had been sexually coerced by their spouse in their lifetime and in the preceding year, respectively. Those who were sexually coerced by their spouse experienced an average of 9.4 acts of sexual coercion in the year prior to the survey (Chan, 2005). In a more recent study conducted in 2007 on spousal violence in Yuen Long, 11.4% of respondents reported being sexually victimized by an intimate partner (Choi et al., 2012).

Furthermore, a study among university students indicated that 15.1% of female participants reported sexual coercion by a dating partner in the preceding year (Chan & Straus et al., 2008). A territory-wide study of 3,245 pregnant women recruited from seven public hospitals showed that 2.5% of the respondents reported having suffered physical or sexual abuse (Chan et al., 2009).

The gap between the number of cases known to the Social Welfare Department and the police, and the prevalence rates reported in community studies implies that a considerable number of victims do not report incidents to the police or the Social Welfare Department. Barriers to reporting may include the belief that family problems are private issues, social stigmatization against victims of violence, and fear that disclosure may bring disgrace to the family (Chan, 2012).
Victims of sexual violence are further discouraged from reporting due to the traditional emphasis on chastity, and their low expectations of the outcome of reporting. Some victims, for instance, worried that the police would be rude or would violate their confidentiality, while others thought that reporting would cause trouble and might provoke the offender to seek revenge (Chan, 2009b).

Therefore, due to the high rate of underreporting, the records kept by the police and the Social Welfare Department very likely reflect only the tip of the iceberg. On the other hand, figures from NGOs, such as RainLily and the CEASE Crisis Centre, only capture the situation of those who seek their services. As such, community surveys recruiting respondents from a representative population likely present a more accurate picture of the problem.

**Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence**

Although IPV occurs among people of different ages, employment statuses, and income levels, studies have found that certain groups are particularly vulnerable to violence.

**Cross-border Marriages**

A study conducted in 2007 showed that Chinese women who migrated to Hong Kong from mainland China after marrying a Hong Kong man are more vulnerable to spousal violence as compared to local women. The rates of psychological aggression, sexual coercion, and physical assault were 38.6%, 13.8%, and 12.6%, respectively, among Chinese female marriage migrants. The same figures for local women were 31.7%, 8.2%, and 8.2%, respectively (Figure 10).

**Unemployment and Financial Stress**

Violence was more common in families where the husband was unemployed and under financial stress. Cheung and Choi (2010), for example, found that compared with non-abused women, physically abused women were more likely to be from the following types of
families: families with women as the sole income earners, dual-earner families where the wife earns substantively more than the husband, and families where both the husband and wife are unemployed.

**Lack of Resources and Resources Inequalities**

Previous research has shown that women’s lack of resources, as indicated by their employment status, income level, and need to care for young children, is a risk factor that triggers violence (Gibson-Davis et al., 2005). For example, a scarcity of economic resources may compel women to rely on their husbands/partners and tolerate violent relationships (Bornstein, 2006; Rusbult & Martz, 1995; Woffordt, Mihalic, & Menard, 1994). Furthermore, resource inequalities often interact with conservative gender role ideologies to cause violence. Past studies have shown that while resource-poor women are at a higher risk of domestic violence, resource-rich women may be at risk
of domestic violence as well if they possess more resources than their partner, particularly if the partner holds conservative ideas about gender roles. If men are socialized to embrace stereotypical beliefs about masculinity such as being the breadwinner or sole provider, when they are unemployed or their wife possesses more resources than them, they may have a masculinity crisis and resort to using violence to reclaim their lost power and dominance (Pyke, 1996).

A Hong Kong study on couple violence in Yuen Long has confirmed that the more traditional a husband’s gender role attitude is, the more vulnerable to violence his wife will be if she earns substantially more than her working husband. These higher-earning wives were viewed as transgressing the conventional gender norms of husband-provider/wife-homemaker and posing a challenge to the husband’s supremacy and masculinity (Cheung & Choi, 2010). In Chinese society, “face” symbolizes one’s social standing. Chan (2006) showed that the more face-oriented a man is, the greater the stress presented by the masculine gender role, and thus the greater the likelihood that he will use violence against a female partner. This study confirms the intersection between social standing, gender norms, masculinity, and violence.

**Pregnancy**

Previous studies have shown that pregnancy is significantly associated with a higher likelihood of IPV. Financial difficulties, an unplanned pregnancy, and conflict with in-laws were found to be associated with IPV during pregnancy (Tiwari et al., 2007). In another population study, 11.9%, 9.1%, and 18.8% of male respondents reported having committed physical assault, sexual violence, and any violence or injury, respectively, against their pregnant female partner in the preceding year. These rates were significantly higher than those of the non-pregnant group. Demographic (e.g., age, income, and social security), behavioural (e.g., alcohol abuse, drug abuse, anger management, and parental violence witnessed in childhood), and relationship (e.g., conflict with in-laws) risk factors were found to account for the higher likelihood that pregnant women experienced violence in the preceding year (Chan et al., 2011).
In-law Conflicts

Violence against women is also considered to be a product of the interlocking systems of gender and generational hierarchies in the family (Fernandez, 1997). Traditionally, Chinese women are expected to obey the authority of their parents-in-law within the family. Studies have found that in-law conflict is a risk factor for IPV against Hong Kong women (Chan & Brownridge et al., 2008), including pregnant women (Chan et al., 2009; Chan et al., 2011; Tiwari et al., 2007).

Co-occurrence of Intimate Partner Violence and Child Abuse and Neglect

IPV has also been found to be associated with child abuse and neglect. Data reported by parents have shown that, among the perpetrators of child maltreatment, 37% and 36%, respectively, admitted that they had also been perpetrators and victims of IPV in their lifetime (Chan, 2011c). A similar study using data reported by children showed that among families reporting IPV, 54.4% and 46.5% had mistreated their children in their children’s lifetime and in the year prior to the study, respectively (Chan, 2011a).

Other risk factors of IPV include low levels of education, a husband’s abuse of alcohol and drugs, chronic illness, having a family member with a chronic illness, unplanned pregnancy, and a larger than average number of children (Chan & Brownridge et al., 2008; Chan et al., 2009; Chan et al., 2011). Relationship risk factors include relationship stress and conflict, extramarital affairs, cross-border marriages, and a large spousal age difference (Chan, 2009b).

Policies Concerning Intimate Partner Violence in Hong Kong

Intervention and Prevention

In Hong Kong, intervention and prevention concerning cases of violence against women, particularly intimate partner or spousal violence, are generally handled by the Social Welfare Department in accordance with the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships
Violence Ordinance. The Social Welfare Department provides one-stop services that include outreach, social investigation, and crisis intervention to victims and/or witnesses of violence. Other social services for domestic violence victims provided by the Social Welfare Department and NGOs, both subsidized and non-subsidized, include: hotline services; counselling services; crisis intervention; individual and group therapeutic and supportive treatment; medical social services; an escort for reporting to the police, if necessary; statutory protection; and the arrangement of referrals for other services including financial assistance, legal services, schooling arrangements, job placement, housing assistance, and other community resources (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, 2010).

While the Social Welfare Department takes on spousal or cohabiting battery cases known to the department, other NGOs also provide interventional assistance to victims of IPV and sexual violence and their family members. Currently, there are a total of five refuge centres that provide temporary accommodation and support services to women and their children who encounter domestic violence or family crisis. These are the Wai On Home for Women, Harmony House, Serene Court, Sunrise Court, and Dawn Court. Other crisis centres providing support services for victims of IPV and sexual violence include: the CEASE Crisis Centre operated by the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals; the Family Crisis Support Centre operated by Caritas-Hong Kong; RainLily operated by the Association Concerning Sexual Violence Against Women; and the Hong Kong Association for the Survivors of Women Abuse (Kwan Fook) (Social Welfare Department, 2011).

**Funding**

The Government also funds violence intervention and prevention work by NGOs. For example, in 2010 the Social Welfare Department allocated around HK$5 million to Po Leung Kuk to operate a “Victim Support Programme for Victims of Family Violence.” The main objectives of this programme are to strengthen the protection accorded to victims and to assist them in returning to normal life as early as possible. The new programme provides legal information,
emotional support, temporary child care, and guidance and training to victims on basic skills in personal care. It also provides support to vulnerable victims or witnesses of family violence by accompanying victims and/or their family members to help locate different services or community resources (Information Services Department, 2010).

**Investigation**

On the investigative level, the Hong Kong Police Force has maintained a Central Domestic Violence Database since 2005 to identify high-risk cases in the early stage. When multiple instances of domestic violence involving the same family occur within 12 months or less, supervisory officers are notified via an automatic alarm. The police have also adopted a “One Family One Team” approach to handling different cases involving the same family. This helps officers spot risk factors for timely intervention. Additionally, in 2008, a protocol on Victim Management was set up for victims of serious cases of domestic violence (Women’s Commission, 2009).

**Legislation**

The major ordinances in Hong Kong relating to IPV and sexual violence include the Crimes Ordinance (Cap 200), the Offences Against the Person Ordinance (Cap 212), the Domestic Violence Ordinance (Cap 189), and the Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance (Cap 213). In particular, the Domestic Violence Ordinance allows the court to grant an injunction containing a non-molestation order to restrain the perpetrator from approaching the victim and his/her child. To offer women greater protection against violence, the Crimes Ordinance states clearly that marital rape is a criminal offence (Women’s Commission, 2006).

In 2008, the Domestic Violence Ordinance was amended in order to: (1) extend its scope to include former spouses, former cohabitants, and immediate and extended family members, apart from the inclusion of harassment between spouses and heterosexual cohabitants; (2) empower the court to attach a power of arrest; (3) empower the court, when granting a non-molestation order, to order a
perpetrator participation in an anti-violence programme, which aims at changing the participants' attitude and behaviour, and preventing recurrence of violence; and (4) extend the duration of the injunction (Information Services Department, 2008a). Remarkable results have been achieved. In the two months following the amendment of the Ordinance, the Court had already issued seven mandatory orders, as compared with 13 cases in the preceding seven months (Information Services Department, 2008b).

In 2009, the Ordinance was revised to become the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance. First, a gender-neutral definition of “cohabitation relationship” was introduced, defining it as “a relationship between two persons (whether of the same sex or of the opposite sex) who live together as a couple in an intimate relationship and includes such a relationship that has come to an end.” Second, recognizing the fact that a similar power interface, dynamics, and risk factors between heterosexual cohabitants might also exist between same-sex cohabitants in intimate relationships, the revised Ordinance has extended its scope to cover same-sex cohabitants. These amendments enable a party to a cohabitation relationship, regardless of whether the relationship is same sex or opposite sex, to apply to the court for an injunction against molestation by the other party (Information Services Department, 2009). Under this Ordinance, the Court may also order the offender to participate in an anti-violence programme aimed at changing his/her attitude and violent behaviour (Hong Kong Judiciary, 2011).

**Special Task Force**

In addition to work by the Social Welfare Department and the legislation to combat violence, in 2001 the Hong Kong Government also set up a special task force called “the Working Group on Combating Violence” to coordinate various government bodies to address domestic violence problems (Lee, 2008). This body, however, is an ad hoc working group rather than an established central mechanism to develop, plan, and coordinate policies against violence. Currently, seven government departments are involved in providing services and implementing policies related to violence against women (Table
1). In view of the lack of a central coordinating body, the steps taken by these departments may not be consistent with each other.

**Comparison between Policies Concerning Intimate Partner Violence in Hong Kong with Those in Other Societies**

*The Lack of a Central Coordinating Mechanism*

The first major difference between Hong Kong and other countries is that Hong Kong lacks a central mechanism to coordinate policies related to violence against women. At present, the responsibilities are scattered across seven departments and coordinated by the Social Welfare Department. As such, most domestic violence cases are handled on the welfare level, rather than being viewed as public health and criminal issues (Women’s Commission, 2006). In contrast, societies such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, and Singapore have adopted a central mechanism to monitor the legislation and implementation of policies on domestic violence. Most of the aforementioned societies have appointed two authorities, usually the Department of Justice and the Public Health Commission, to oversee the responsibility of tackling domestic violence (Lee, 2008).

*The Lack of a Comprehensive Framework*

Moreover, these societies have also developed an overall framework outlining the goals, policies, and programmes on the intervention and prevention of domestic violence. Among them, Canada was the first country to set up a comprehensive domestic violence programme, the Family Violence Initiative in 1988. This initiative involves the federal government and 15 partner departments and is coordinated by the Public Health Agency. Under this type of coordination, the issue of family violence has been integrated into an ongoing programme across different departments that works on realizing a common vision and a coordinated approach to the issue (Chan, 2011b; Department of Justice Canada, 2011). The United States passed the Violence Against
Women and Girls in Hong Kong

Women Act in 1994 and established the National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women in 1995 to provide guidelines on policy implementation. The United Kingdom set up the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence in 2003 to lead government bodies in carrying out anti-violence measures. Taiwan also established a Sexual

<table>
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<th>Government body</th>
<th>Services provided for domestic violence victims</th>
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<tr>
<td>Labour and Welfare Bureau</td>
<td>Formulating and reviewing policies and legislation relating to domestic violence in consultation with departments and NGOs concerned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare Department</td>
<td>Tackling family violence through crisis intervention, supportive services, and preventive education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Police Force</td>
<td>• Protecting domestic violence victims and the children involved from attack;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Preventing the affected persons from further attack;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Taking firm and positive actions against perpetrators;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Investigating offences; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Referring victims and/or perpetrators to appropriate government bodies for assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Aid Department</td>
<td>Providing legal aid to eligible domestic violence victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Department</td>
<td>Providing housing assistance to domestic violence victims where appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Authority</td>
<td>Providing medical services to domestic violence victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Affairs Department</td>
<td>Building up and maintaining general community support network that fosters and encourages mutual care and support for members of the community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lee (2008, p. 5).
Assault Prevention Commission in 1997 and a Domestic Violence Prevention Commission in 1998. These bodies were later merged into a Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Commission in 2002 (Chan, 2011b; Lee, 2008).

The Lack of a Specialized Court for Family Violence Cases

The third major difference between Hong Kong and other societies is that the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, and Singapore have set up various specialized courts and dedicated legal procedures to facilitate the process of dealing with cases of domestic violence, better support victims of domestic violence, and offer more appropriate sentencing. In 2003, an Integrated Domestic Violence Court was set up in New York. This arrangement embraces a “one family-one judge” concept that allows all interrelated cases to be transferred to the court and permits a single judge to hear a family’s related cases (e.g., criminal offence, assault, divorce, custody, etc.) where the underlying issue is domestic violence. This helps to promote informed judicial decision making, maintain consistency in protection orders, reduce court appearances, enhance services to victims, and increase offender accountability, while protecting the rights of the litigants. Since the 1980s, Canada, in accordance with the “no-drop prosecution policy,” has had a specialized court to handle cases of family violence, aiming at prompt court processing, strict prosecution, and more appropriate sentencing. Furthermore, family violence courts were established in Winnipeg in 1990 and Ontario in 1997 to handle cases of spousal, child, and elderly abuse (Chan, Chiu, & Chiu, 2005).

In contrast, although there is a family court in Hong Kong, it merely deals with civil cases involving divorce and custody disputes, and is not for criminal cases involving violence. The lack of a specialized court to handle all criminal and civil cases involving allegations of domestic violence or violations of an injunction in Hong Kong means that the same victim might have to give evidence several times and the defendant may present different stories in different courts. Inconsistent judgments may also be made by different judges.
based on different ordinances. This approach inhibits the ability of the judicial system to hold perpetrators of violence accountable.

**Discussion and Recommendations**

Violence is both a manifestation and a means of maintaining the unequal power relationships that men have over women within intimate relationships, within the family, and in society generally (Choi & Ting, 2009). Increasingly, there is an international consensus on regarding the abuse of women and girls as a type of gender-based violence that fundamentally derives from the subordinate status of women in society (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Tang, 2009). Power and dominance over women are often major themes in the narratives of perpetrators of violence (Gelles & Cornell, 1990). Sexual violence, whether committed by family members, acquaintances, or strangers, is a means through which men display and enact their masculinity, rather than simply satisfy sexual needs (Totten, 2003). Resource inequalities have also been found to interact with conservative gender role ideologies to cause violence against relatively more resource-rich women.

Thus, to address violence against women, we must first address gender inequalities in society and tackle the deep-rooted gender role stereotypes that prescribe a subordinate status to women, and a traditional male-provider/female-homemaker norm in the home. Not only do these stereotypes fundamentally violate the ethos of equality, they also do not reflect the situation in Hong Kong. With an increasing number of Hong Kong women joining the labour market and earning more than their husbands/partners, how this trend will pose challenges to masculinity and the impact this will have on violence against women are issues of great concern for society and the Government.

However, as history has shown, reducing gender inequality in society and eliminating gender stereotypes are difficult tasks that may take generations to accomplish. Meanwhile, state intervention to prevent and combat violence is particularly important. In this respect, Hong Kong is currently lagging behind other countries in Europe,
North America, and even other Asian societies such as Singapore and Taiwan. First and foremost, to reduce IPV against women, a central mechanism urgently needs to be established to plan, oversee, implement, and coordinate various departments to handle domestic violence. Second, the formation of a specialized court to handle cases involving domestic violence would greatly facilitate the efficacy of using legal and criminal tools to combat violence. Third, more comprehensive and integrated one-stop centres offering outreach, intervention, counselling, medical check-ups, medical care, assistance with reporting to and dealing with the police, legal advice, and temporary shelter, should be established to better cater to the needs of IPV and sexual violence victims. A user-friendly, one-stop approach to services would reduce the trauma that victims experience in undergoing multiple prosecution, medical, and legal procedures when reporting abuse, therefore enhancing their willingness to seek help and report their cases to the relevant authorities.

At the level of legislation to reduce IPV, the Hong Kong Government could also consider following the example of other countries such as Canada in legislating mandatory reporting, charging, and prosecution against IPV. This legislation would help to remove the responsibility of initiating criminal charges from the victims of violence and ensure that police investigators give priority to cases of arrest involving spousal violence (Chan, 2011b; Department of Justice Canada, 2011). Other possible legislative reforms may include extending the scope of “protected persons” to cover dating partners as is the case in the United States (Family Violence Prevention Services, Inc., 2011; USLegal, 2011), and extending the power of arrest to cover psychological and emotional abuse. In fact, societies such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Singapore, and Taiwan have already included psychological abuse in their definition of violence. As mentioned above, the most severe forms of IPV such as intimate terrorism, often involve controlling behaviours and psychological abuse. To reduce this type of violence, revising the definition of violence, by replacing the current legal phrase “has caused actual bodily harm to” with “has used or threatened to use violence against” may be an important step.
At the intervention level, the existence of a mandatory intervention programme by court order is crucial to ensuring that perpetrators of violence attend these intervention programmes. Studies have shown that Chinese men heavily emphasize “face.” Due to their rigid definition of masculinity, losing “face” challenges their masculinity, resulting in anger and shame, and might even trigger violence (Chan, 2006). To relieve the stress created by masculine gender roles, a gender mainstreaming approach can be adopted. The ideology of gender equality and flexible gender roles should permeate the intervention programmes in the form of group sharing or group therapy. Such programmes should include knowledge and skills regarding effective communication, anger control, and conflict resolution to rehabilitate perpetrators of violence through education and counselling. Emphasis should also be put on the perpetrator’s responsibility for ending violence by avoiding internalization of the belief that marital violence is just a familial and, thus, private matter. These mandatory programmes are not only an integral part of legal and social interventions to stop domestic violence, they also convey a message to the public that domestic violence should not be treated as a private matter and that society does not tolerate it (Chan et al., 2005). Moreover, as Chinese men seldom seek help or disclose personal problems due to their fear of losing “face” (Chan, 2009a), the gender mainstreaming approach should extend to all general programmes targeting men in clinical, social welfare services, and educational settings. This could help men to redefine their masculinity, enhance their self-awareness and ability to manage anger, and detect symptoms of stress and violent behaviours at an earlier stage.

Furthermore, special attention and intervention should be given to high-risk groups. First, as women newly arrived from mainland China are particularly vulnerable to IPV, the Government urgently needs to strengthen services for this population. Second, since pregnant women are at a higher risk of IPV, routine screening for IPV among pregnant women in clinical health care settings as well as in communities is needed. Third, screening and risk assessments for IPV should include the issues of in-law conflict, child abuse, and the coexistence of multiple forms of violence within the same family.
Indebtedness, financial problems, depression, and suicidal ideation, as well as alcohol and drug abuse among husbands, should also be taken into account in routine universal screening and risk assessments for IPV in health care settings. Fourth, there is a need for family-based interventions, such as home visitations, in order to include the perspectives of both victims and perpetrators.

Regarding sexual violence, four major steps could be taken by society and the Government to help reduce this type of violence. First and foremost, changing social norms that see women as sexual prey, and educating the public to have zero tolerance against sexual assault would help to prevent sexual violence. Second, changing social stereotypes that blame the victims of sexual assault will help to reduce social stigmatization against victims and encourage them to report this type of violence to the police. Third, providing protection for victims of sexual assault while processing criminal cases and in court would help to minimize the suffering that victims experience when recalling their painful experiences. Fourth, gender-based violence sensitivity training should be provided for service providers and officers at clinics, hospitals, social welfare agencies, police stations, and law courts. Last, but not least, strict confidentiality and the safety of the victims should be ensured to protect them from retaliation by their perpetrators. Thus, a comprehensive support and referral system is of paramount importance.

In sum, violence against women is a pervasive problem that stems from societal and cultural factors, and creates great health, social, economic, and developmental burdens for society as a whole. Despite the devoted efforts of NGOs, civil society groups, working groups, and professionals, much still needs to be done to successfully combat IPV and sexual violence against women. IPV does not only exist within marriage, but also in cohabiting and dating relationships. Prevention and intervention efforts targeting youths and adolescents should begin as early as possible to combat violence that occurs during different stages of the family life cycle. Further research should be directed to the factors that contribute to violence against women in different relationship contexts. In helping victims escape from abuse, it is also of paramount importance to explore protective
factors, the reasons hindering female victims from leaving abusive relationships, and the impact of cultural beliefs on the help-seeking behaviour of victims. All in all, coordinated efforts by communities, the Government, and society are vital and urgent in order to promote a violence-free environment for women and girls.

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Intimate Partner Violence Against Women


Introduction

The structure and functions of the family have undergone major changes in response to the rapid transformation of modern society during the last few decades—families are getting smaller and family relationships are becoming more fluid (Cherlin, 2004). This chapter outlines how these changes have been experienced by women in Hong Kong. The task would be impossible, however, if we focused exclusively on changes in the family without reference to changes in society as a whole. Women take on many roles in the family, and each role carries unique expectations, aggravations, and satisfactions. Our discussion focuses on the experiences of women in the roles of wife, mother, homemaker, and, more recently, provider. These experiences will be examined from the perspective of change, as their lives are situated in a society in constant transformation. We also provide a comparative perspective, which will help to reveal whether Hong Kong’s experience is distinct from those of Western and other Asian societies.

With rapid economic development, Hong Kong has become a highly modernized society in just a few decades. The World Bank
(2012) ranked Hong Kong’s per capita income 36th in the world in 2010, indicating that its development is on par with many advanced Western economies. With people drifting away from traditional lifestyles, the family as an important social institution has had to change to fit this new reality. Many of the challenges and adaptations faced by Hong Kong families are common to families in other developed societies. However, in Hong Kong these transitions have occurred within a much shorter time span. This chapter focuses on three major issues that families have to deal with. The first issue is whether the huge number of married women entering the labour force has led to a re-organization of family life. The second issue, closely related to the first, is whether employment income has led to any changes in the position of women in the family. And the third issue is whether domestic labour, a key aspect in the organization of family life, has been redistributed to reflect the economic role of women in the family.

Our discussions on the family experience of women closely relate to the empirical work reviewed by Choi and Ting (2009). According to the authors, studies on the division of domestic labour and marital relations have shown that traditional gender norms were still prevalent in Hong Kong up to the year 2000. We intend to update and expand the scope of their discussions with a special focus on women. In the last decade, several important surveys have been conducted to understand the current situation on families in Hong Kong. They include the Family in Flux survey in 2005 (Koo & Wong, 2009), the survey on Relationships among Family Members in 2009 (Census and Statistics Department, 2010), the Family Life Survey in 2009 (Ting, 2011), and the survey on the Status of Women and Men in 2010 (Women’s Commission, 2011).

While these studies contain rich information on family dynamics, they vary in their coverage of family issues and depth of focus on gender. As a part of the World Value Survey, the Family in Flux study paid little attention to the aspect of women’s experiences in the family, especially to the issue of spousal relationships. The Survey on Relationships among Family Members interviewed 8,044 households and is by far the largest family sample ever in the
territory. Unfortunately, their analysis, published in the Thematic Household Survey Report series, lacked a gender perspective. For example, reports on marital satisfaction and intimacy failed to capture family life as experienced differently by men and women. The Status of Women and Men survey, by contrast, focused exclusively on gender differences in family and work experiences. While this study provided valuable up-to-date information on the division of duties and decision making in families, it lacked sufficient details for a full picture of the family process. In view of these limitations, we used multiple sources of data to analyze recent changes in the family experience of women.

This chapter relies on official statistics, especially those from various censuses, to construct the macro trends that shape the family life of women. These data mainly come from *Demographic Trends in Hong Kong: 1981–2006, Hong Kong 1991 Population Census: Main Report*, and *2006 Population By-census: Main Report*. At the micro level, we use data from the 2009 Family Life Survey in Hong Kong to analyze family processes. In this survey, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 1,177 people aged 60 or younger who were or had been married. The subjects were drawn from a random sample of household addresses provided by the Census and Statistics Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. Among the households that the survey contacted, the response rate was 49.4%.

**Economic Role and Family Life**

Two centuries ago, the Industrial Revolution separated economic activities from the home, creating a divide between the so-called private and public spheres. Since then, gender roles in the family have become more distinct, and until recently women were expected to stay at home and be full-time homemakers. The last few decades, however, have witnessed the return of women to economic production, which has fundamentally reconfigured family life, with gender roles needing to be re-aligned to deal with the fact that both men and women need to work. The implications of women in the labour force are so pervasive
and far-reaching that Smith (1979) called the phenomenon a “subtle revolution.”

In Hong Kong, for a very long time, the entry of women into the labour market was considered a temporary arrangement. Except in cases of financial necessity, most women were expected to be full-time housewives after they married or had children. However, this changed as the economy began to take off, with Hong Kong becoming an industrial city in the 1960s and then a regional financial hub in the 1980s. Table 1 compares the size of the female labour force in Hong Kong with that in other developed economies between 1980 and 2010. In 1980, female workers accounted for 34.3% of the labour force in Hong Kong. This percentage is low when compared not only with advanced Western societies such as the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, but also with Japan and Singapore (for a more detailed discussion on women’s labour force participation, please see Chapter 3 of this volume). By 2010, however, the percentage of female workers reached 46.0% in Hong Kong, surpassing that of most developed economies in both the East and the West.

With regard to their economic role, women are more than a mere presence in the labour market, having made aggressive inroads into

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<td>Singapore</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

competitive sectors. Between 1991 and 2006, where the occupational
categories were comparable, the economy created nearly half a million
high-paying jobs such as managers, administrators, professionals,
and associate professionals. Although these jobs demanded stricter
qualifications, women were able to fill these positions because their
education had improved over the years — the number of women aged
15 and over with a college degree increased from 4.4% to 14.1% in
this time period. As a result, women took 52.8% of these new jobs
(Census and Statistics Department, 1993, p. 73, 2007a, p. 91).

The assumption that women’s work and family are incompatible
has been challenged. In each succeeding generation, an increasing
number of young, married women have taken up employment.
According to the population censuses of between 1981 and 2006, the
labour force participation rate among married women aged 25–34
increased from 45.4% to 71.3% (Census and Statistics Department,
1993, p. 90, 2007a, p. 124). For the majority of young women,
combining family and work has become the norm, and they have had
to find ways to resolve conflicts between family life and employment
activities. Some of their responses include marrying later, delaying
motherhood, having fewer children, redistributing household chores,
and hiring domestic help.

Since the 1980s, we have witnessed vital changes in the family life
of women due to their work commitments. An obvious development
is a delay in marriage and parenthood. The timing of family events
is important because it affects how the events are experienced (Falci,
Mortimer, & Noel, 2010). Between 1981 and 2006, the median age
of first marriage for women increased from 23.9 to 28.2 (Census and
Statistics Department, 2007b, p. 73), a deferral of 4.3 years in 25
years. The extent of the delay in first marriage was much greater than
in the United States, where comparable figures changed from 22.3 to
25.5 in the same period (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). In Hong Kong,
the timing of marriage seems to be closer to the late marriage pattern
of advanced European countries: 29.7 for the United Kingdom, 29.2
for France, and 29.6 for Germany in 2006 (United Nations Economic
Commission for Europe Statistical Database, 2012). Although the
trend towards late marriage is common in modern societies, the pace of change has been particularly rapid in Hong Kong.

A direct consequence of late marriage is that women enter parenthood later in life. The median age for a first birth in Hong Kong increased from 25.1 to 29.2 between 1981 and 2006. In addition to marrying later, women in Hong Kong waited longer after marrying before giving birth to their first child. The waiting period was 14.7 months in 1981, lengthening to 27.5 months in 2001 and 21.9 months in 2006 (Census and Statistics Department, 2007b, pp. 23, 98). These trends suggest that women in Hong Kong have better control over the tempo of their family lives and are spending more time preparing for important family transitions. An important consequence of this is a smaller family size due to a decline in fertility rates.

Figure 1 compares total fertility rates (the number of expected births per woman) in Hong Kong with trends in other advanced societies. In the early 1960s, Hong Kong’s fertility rate was comparable to Singapore’s and much higher than the rates in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, or Japan. By the mid-1980s, however, Hong Kong’s fertility rate was lower than the rates in those countries. Hong Kong’s total fertility rate dropped from 5.2 to 1.9 between 1960 and 1981, plummeting to below replacement level. The decline continued until it reached 1.1 in 2010, giving Hong Kong one of the lowest fertility rates in the world. This comparison shows that the decline in fertility rates in Hong Kong has been very drastic since the 1960s. An important implication of this is that women’s labour force activities have become less constrained by child care responsibilities, which are demanding and non-negotiable, especially when the child is young (LaRossa & LaRossa, 1989).

Using data from the 2009 Family Life Survey, we compare three factors that predict whether a woman will decide to take up paid employment, by means of a statistical method known as logistic regression and using data on 676 married women. The findings show that married women who were born more recently were more likely to be employed, with the probability of labour force participation differing by 7.9% for married women who were born a decade apart. As for education, each additional year of schooling raised the
probability of labour force participation by 2.1%, suggesting that education is a strong motivator for married women to work. With young women receiving more education in recent years, the trend towards higher female participation in the labour force is certain. The presence of young children, in contrast, decreased the probability of working by 25.2%, indicating that having young children is a strong inhibiting factor in women’s labour force activities. This finding corroborates results from other local studies. For example, the Women’s Commission (2011, p. 9) reported that in 2010 almost 30% of women did not return to work after giving birth. Lau, Ma, and Chan (2006, p. 98) showed that in 2002 while 72.0% of Hong Kong women worked full time before the birth of their first child, the level
of participation dropped to 42.7% after the arrival of the child, and further fell to 37.9% when the first child started schooling.

Clearly, families with fewer or no children give women greater flexibility to seek employment. The trend towards low fertility ensures that married women will maintain a high rate of labour force participation in the future. With more married women planning to stay in the labour market on a long-term basis, the effect of their employment on the quality of their family life, especially on whether it compromises the welfare of their children, has become a major public concern (Ruhm, 2004). Managing heavy workloads and long working hours can be stressful, particularly for women (Hochschild, 1990). In a cross-national study, Wharton and Blair-Loy (2006) found that compared to employees in the United States and England, employees in Hong Kong reported greater worries about the impact of long working hours on their personal and family lives, and that such worries were more common among women than men.

Combining work and family can lead to role overload, and such stress may spill over to different domains of family life (Aryee et al., 1999; Stoeva, Chiu, & Greenhaus, 2002). We used data from the 2009 Family Life Survey to compare the responses of working and non-working women to questions relating to their satisfaction with their spouses, with family relations in general, intimacy with their children, and communication with their children. All of the items were measured on a seven-point scale running from 1 (very undesirable) to 7 (very desirable).

Table 2 presents the average scores of these four items categorized by women’s employment status. The results suggest that the married women in our sample had satisfactory family lives in these four domains, as most scores were close to 6. The t-test comparing the two groups of women reveals that working women experienced a lower level of satisfaction with their spouses than non-working women, but both groups of women were equally satisfied with their family relationships. Working women maintained the same level of intimacy with their children and communicate with them as frequently as their non-working counterparts. Overall, employment did not seem to damage the quality of women’s family lives, especially not their
relationships with their children. This, however, does not mean that managing work-family conflicts is easy, as working women in Hong Kong continue to perform more housework and caring duties than their husbands (Women’s Commission, 2011).

**Table 2** Family experience by employment status among married women (average score)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family life</th>
<th>Not working</th>
<th>Working</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with spouse</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with family relations</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy with children</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with children</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01

Income and Family Decision Power

An immediate implication of women’s employment is their contribution to the family income. Armed with better education and a stronger commitment to their careers, women have been making inroads into a working world long dominated by men and are gaining access to high-status and high-paying jobs (see Chapter 3 of this volume for a more detailed discussion of this topic). More recently, there have been reports in the media suggesting the beginning of a new trend in which wives have become the key providers in families, earning higher incomes than their husbands. However, there have been no studies documenting the prevalence of this situation. In 2006, women made up 46.5% of the labour force but occupied only 33.2% of the highest-paying jobs, i.e., professionals, managers, and administrators (Census and Statistics Department, 2007a, p. 128). The male advantage in the labour market is reflected in the family, with the husband typically earning a higher income than his wife.

In the United Kingdom, women earned the same amount or more than their partners in 44% of all couples in 2006, compared to 18% in 1968 (Wallop, 2010). In the United States, wives earned a
higher income in 22% of married couples in 2007, compared to only 4% in 1970 (Fry & Cohn, 2010, p. 1). In our Hong Kong sample of 515 dual-career couples in 2009, we classified monthly income into 13 categories to compare the couples’ incomes. The spread in each income category varied from HK$2,000 at the low-income end to HK$10,000 at the high-income end. The comparison revealed that the husband had a higher income in 62.5% of the families and the wife had a higher income in 22.2% of the families. If we consider families falling into the latter category as non-traditional, then the percentage of non-traditional families is quite substantial, although still far from being the norm in Hong Kong. Furthermore, having a husband with a higher salary does not mean that the wife’s contribution is unimportant. According to the 2006 census data, on average, a woman’s income accounts for 43.9% of the couple’s total income; thus, although wives still earn less than husbands, their income makes a considerable difference to the family’s living standard (Pong, 1991).

The advantageous financial position of men is present from the beginning of a marriage. According to the 2009 Family Life Survey, based on the respondents’ own assessment, 66.6% reported that the bridegroom earned more than the bride, while only 8.7% reported that the bride’s income was higher at the time of marrying. This gender difference in earnings within a family partly reflects the labour market situation and partly the common practice of hypergamy, in which women are expected to marry upward. The preference for hypergamy has changed over time, albeit slowly. By comparing marriages that took place in four different decades, we found that the proportion of marriages in which the bride had a higher income increased steadily from 4.5% in the 1970s to 6.0%, 10.4%, and 12.8% in the subsequent three decades. This reflects the gradual improvement in the education of women, and hence their position in the labour market, during the past few decades.

Differences in financial position between spouses have implications for family life. Such differences may affect the status of each spouse, interactions, and the decision-making process in the family. The exchange perspective, often cited in studies of power relationships in the family, suggests that patriarchal power in families
Women and Family

is mainly based on the income that they bring in. Hence, women’s employment may undermine male dominance in the family (Tichenor, 1999). To address this issue, we used data from the 2009 Family Life Survey to assess the wife’s participation in family decisions as an indication of her power in the family (McDonald, 1980). As power is always asymmetrical and zero-sum in nature, we asked the respondents whether the decisions on the first seven items listed in Table 3 were made mainly by the husband or by the wife, as rated using a five-point scale from −2 (mainly by husband) to 2 (mainly by wife), with 0 indicating a joint decision. We averaged these items to construct the last item, which measures the overall decision-making power in a family.

Table 3 reports the average score on each family decision item. The findings based on the full sample reveal that decision scores on having children, taking care of elderly parents, and expensive purchases are quite close to 0, meaning that joint decisions were common for these items. For the other four items, the wife had more say on whether she should stay home or work, daily expenditures, and children’s discipline, whereas men had slightly more say on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision item</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Not working</th>
<th>Working</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wife works or stays home</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>−0.29***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Daily expenditures</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Children’s discipline</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Having children</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Taking care of elderly parents</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>−0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Expensive purchases</td>
<td>−0.09</td>
<td>−0.18</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>−0.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Important financial decisions</td>
<td>−0.19</td>
<td>−0.27</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
<td>−0.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall decision-making power</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>−0.09**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05  ** p < .01  *** p < .001
important financial decisions, such as buying an apartment and making a financial investment. The score on overall decision-making power, which takes all decision items into consideration, indicates that women had slightly greater decision-making power than men, but this partly reflects the case that some items, such as daily expenditures and children’s discipline, are traditionally considered women’s responsibilities.

A closer look into whether the wife’s employment influences the family decision-making process shows several interesting patterns. As shown in Table 3, working women have greater decision-making power than non-working women in three decision items: whether the wife should work, expensive purchases, and important financial decisions. It is interesting to note that working women felt more strongly that to work or not to work was more their own decision, whereas non-working women felt less certain about it. Clearly, non-working women had less say than working women on matters involving larger sums of money. However, it should be pointed out that the differences in decision-making power due to women’s employment status are not large; the correlation coefficient between the wife’s employment status and overall decision-making power is 0.08. Although the correlation is statistically significant, the explanatory power is very small ($r^2 = 0.0068$).

Our next analysis focuses on a subsample of 515 dual-career couples and examines the effects of income on decision-making power. The correlation coefficient between the wife’s income and overall decision-making power is only 0.02, which is not statistically significant. This suggests that the wife’s income had no influence on her decision-making power in the family. The correlation coefficient between the husband’s income and overall decision-making power is −0.09, which is statistically significant. It means that the husband’s decision-making power increased as his income rose. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies suggesting that income and occupational status are gendered resources—they help men but not women in acquiring family power (Tichenor, 1999). However, it should be noted that the explanatory power of the husband’s income
is very small, accounting for only 1% ($r^2 = 0.01$) of the variation in family decision-making power.

**Domestic Division of Labour**

Taking on an economic role does not always mean that women are relieved of their domestic duties; doing housework and taking care of children remain mostly women’s responsibilities in the West (Thompson & Walker, 1989) and in Hong Kong (Choi & Ting, 2009; Women’s Commission, 2011). Based on the 1994 International Social Survey, Fuwa (2004) compared the relative share of household work between husbands and wives in 22 countries. The measurement is based on a five-point scale, which we have adjusted to run from –2 (mostly done by husbands) to 2 (mostly done by wives), with 0 indicating an equal share of household work. All countries show a positive value ranging from 0.70 in Canada to 1.49 in Japan, meaning that wives do more household work on average in all of the surveyed countries. The values for the United States and the United Kingdom were 0.72 and 0.92, respectively.

Using the 2009 Family Life Survey, we replicated questions from a 1996 study that measured the division of domestic labour between husband and wife in Hong Kong (Ting, 2000). The two studies surveyed a wide range of domestic work, including cooking, washing dishes, shopping, washing/ironing clothes, cleaning, taking children to school, supervising children’s studies, financial management, and household maintenance. The measurement scale on each item was comparable to Fuwa’s (2004). In addition, we averaged all of the items to create a summary variable indicating the overall distribution of domestic labour in the 2009 survey. Table 4 reports the average scores on each domestic work item.

A common feature of the 1996 and 2009 figures in Table 4 is that, with the exception of household maintenance, all domestic items scored positively, meaning that the wife shouldered a greater share of the responsibilities than the husband in these areas. The husband did more household maintenance because it fits the gender stereotype that men should do the heavier chores. Clearly, there is a strong
### Table 4  Distribution of domestic labour between husband and wife, 1996 and 2009 (average score)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Taking children to school</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>–0.32</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.51***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Supervising children’s studies</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>–0.07</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cooking</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>–0.34</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.66***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Washing/ironing clothes</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>–0.32</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.59***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shopping</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>–0.30</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.47***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cleaning</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>–0.21</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Washing dishes</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>–0.27</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.49***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Financial management</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>–0.16</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>–0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Household maintenance</td>
<td>–0.77</td>
<td>–0.72</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>–0.60</td>
<td>–0.84</td>
<td>0.24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall distribution</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p* < .05  ** *p* < .01  *** *p* < .001
gender element in the distribution of domestic labour in terms of the relative share and the type of domestic chores involved. In 2009, the most gender-skewed domestic duties were those relating to children; mothers were more responsible for taking children to school and supervising their studies. The gendered division of domestic labour appeared to weaken between 1996 and 2009, as the scores on all items moved a bit closer to zero, indicating a more equal share of household duties. The average score on overall distribution of domestic labour was 0.73, which is quite close to that of the United States in Fuwa’s (2004) study.

Since the 1970s, the number of foreign domestic helpers has been on the rise; they constituted about 4% of the population in Hong Kong in 2010 (for a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 10 of this volume). Close to one in seven households hired a live-in foreign domestic helper in 2010. Hiring domestic help is a common strategy for married women to resolve tensions between employment and domestic duties. Although domestic helpers reduce the amount of domestic work for women, it is not clear whether their presence helps to balance the relative share of domestic work between spouses. Due to the small number of families who hired domestic helpers in our sample, we cannot give a full assessment of whether using hired help balances the gendered division of domestic labour. The 2009 data seem to suggest that domestic helpers reduced women’s duties in washing dishes, cleaning, shopping, washing/ironing clothes, and cooking, but taking care of children remained largely a mother’s job. The average scores on overall distribution of domestic labour were 0.52 for families with domestic help and 0.75 for those without such help. The difference between these two groups of families is not large, but is statistically significant.

Explanations for the domestic division of labour generally fall into three major categories: time availability, bargaining power, and gender role ideology (Shelton & John, 1996). These explanations ultimately relate to women’s employment. In Table 4, we compare the differences in the domestic division of labour between working and non-working women. Except in two items, supervising children’s studies and financial management, there were significant differences
between these two groups of families. The results consistently show that working women do relatively less housework than non-working women, as the average scores on overall distribution of domestic labour drops from 0.95 among non-working women to 0.52 among working women.

We used the statistical method of regression analysis to assess the effects of time availability, bargaining power, and gender role ideology on the domestic division of labour. In this analysis, we used the wife’s employment status and overall decision-making power to measure time availability and bargaining power, respectively. For gender role ideology, we combined two questions in the survey asking whether a husband working and a wife staying at home is best for the family and whether supporting the family is mainly the husband’s responsibility. All three factors were statistically significant and together explained 13.8% of how domestic labour was divided between spouses. Comparing these factors on the same scale, we found that time availability and bargaining power were more important than gender role ideology in determining the distribution of domestic labour. (The standardized effects were –0.24, 0.26, and 0.10, respectively, for women’s employment status, decision-making power, and gender role ideology.)

**Summary and Discussion**

The pace of development in Hong Kong during the last few decades has been truly remarkable, and the changing family experience of women is largely due to the constant transformation of society. A constellation of factors, such as improvements in women’s education, women’s employment, and reduced fertility, are responsible for redefining the position of women and reshaping their experiences of family. Although it would be difficult, if not impossible, to tease out the causal sequence of these factors, the opening up of the job market to women has been pivotal to bringing about many of the changes in women’s family lives. In the last two decades, the growing economy in Hong Kong has provided employment opportunities for women and also access to good jobs and high positions in society.
Increasing employment has altered women’s family lives in several major ways. Examples include not marrying, marrying at an older age, deferring motherhood, having no or fewer children, redistributing household chores, and hiring domestic help. Although some of these changes may threaten traditional family life, causing some concern for the future of the family, we find no evidence that family life has been deteriorating. Overall, women have maintained a high level of satisfaction with their spouses, even though their employment has caused complaints about the spousal relationship. Women also have shown a high level of satisfaction with family relationships in general. As mothers, employed or not, they communicate frequently with their children and maintain an intimate relationship with them.

As more women earn a respectable income, some of them have become the main provider for their family, contributing more than their husband to the family income, although a husband with a higher income remains the norm. With the abolition in the 1980s of the policy that female civil servants should be paid 20% less than their male counterparts for comparable work and the enforcement of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance in 1996, wage discrimination by sex has ended in the public sector, but still exists in the private sector; men still have an advantageous financial position, and only 30.8% of top/senior management positions were held by women in 2010 (Census and Statistics Department, 2011). Our analysis shows that employment has a small effect on women’s decision-making power in the family, but their income has no impact at all. Despite the limited effects of their employment, women have a lot of say on many family issues, particularly on important family decisions relating to their own employment and fertility. Men still exert greater influence on family decisions with large financial implications.

Although the data suggest that the distribution of domestic labour has become more equal between men and women, women continue to do more household chores and tend to hold more responsibility as a parent. The data also indicate that the hiring of domestic help changes women’s family lives by relieving them of much of the burden of domestic duties, but child care responsibilities are still
largely theirs. Women remain the main caregivers in the family and maintain close bonds with their children. However, the result may also be role overload for working women, and their responsibility for housework needs to be adjusted. The distribution of domestic chores in Hong Kong is largely determined by the employment status (time availability) of women and their family decision-making power (bargaining power), while the influence of gender role ideology is secondary.

There is no evidence to show that women’s employment has a strong adverse effect on the quality of their family lives, although conflicts exist between the demands of home and work particularly when it comes to parenting. Working mothers experience work-related stress, feelings of ambivalence towards family and work, conflict between work and home, and stress about parenting (Brown, 2010; Hochschild, 1990; Lam, 2011; Leung & Lam, 2009). Compared with other countries, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government plays a relatively passive role in supporting dual-income families, and there is no clear family-friendly policy or child care policy to support working mothers.

The population pyramid of Hong Kong highlights the issue of ageing. An increasingly ageing population puts pressure on women, as daughters and daughters-in-law are more likely to shoulder the bulk of caregiver responsibilities. Changing family dynamics, including a rise in the number of both working mothers and the number of elderly parents, have created an increased need for child and elderly care. Today, women are giving up work mid-career not only for marriage and motherhood but also to care for elderly relatives. Norms of filial piety, and traditional gender beliefs and practices in Chinese societies place demands on adult daughters and daughters-in-law to assume caregiving responsibilities (Zhan & Montgomery, 2003). The overburdening of women and the challenges associated with caring for children and the elderly deserve to be addressed by policy and service support.

The family is a dynamic institution that is strongly resilient to changes imposed by internal or external forces. The return of women to an active economic role is by no means a new phenomenon.
What makes Hong Kong’s experience unique is the speed of the transformation, which is unparalleled in comparable societies. Behavioural responses have been equally rapid. A good example can be seen in the fertility rate, which has dropped drastically over the last few decades. The issue is not whether the family will survive or continue to be viable in light of the changes in women’s lives; the problem lies in the cultural lag and policy gap that fails to recognize and legitimize the new family norms that have emerged.

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8 Women in Power and Decision Making

Fanny M. Cheung and Eliza W. Y. Lee

Introduction

The participation of women in decision making and leadership positions is an important condition for improving the status of women. The Beijing Platform for Action declared that “without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.” The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) originally endorsed the target of having women in 30% of positions at decision-making level by 1995. However, at the United Nations’ Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, it was noted that “women are largely underrepresented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies, and have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or in achieving the target endorsed by the Economic and Social Council.” The two objectives under this strategic area are to “take measures to ensure women’s equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making,” and to “increase women’s capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership” (United Nations, 1995).
Fifteen years later, many countries still fall short of the ECOSOC target. The response of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) (2010) to the United Nations’ questionnaire to governments on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action focused on developments between 2004 and 2009. The section of the HKSAR Government’s report on “Women in Power and Decision-making” covered the participation of women in public affairs (i.e., as voters and councillors in elected bodies and rural elections), the civil service, and advisory and statutory bodies appointed by the Government. There is very little information in the report on women in decision-making positions in the corporate world that underpins the economic power structure in Hong Kong society, as well as in the academic setting that shapes the training of future leaders.

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) included in the Human Development Report 2009 (United Nations Development Programme, 2009) provides international comparisons of the level of political participation and economic empowerment of women. The indicators of GEM include seats in parliament held by women; female legislators, senior officials, and managers; female professional and technical workers; the ratio of estimated female to male earned income; the year that women first received the right to vote and to stand for election; the year that a woman first became the presiding officer of parliament; and women in ministerial positions. Since only the national parliamentary data collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union is used in the calculation of GEM, Hong Kong is not included in this ranking. However, the Women’s Commission (2009, p. 56) used the number of female Legislative Council members in Hong Kong to estimate the GEM of Hong Kong. Relative to other Asian countries, Hong Kong’s ranking would be around 19th out of a total of 109 countries, slightly behind Singapore (16th), but ahead of Japan (54th) and the Republic of Korea (64th). According to the Human Development Report 2009, the highest-ranking countries on the GEM were the Scandinavian countries: Sweden (1st), Norway (2nd), Finland (3rd), and Denmark (4th), followed by the Netherlands (5th),
Women in Power and Decision Making

Belgium (6th), and Australia (7th) (United Nations Development Programme, 2009, p. 186).

In the Human Development Report 2010 (United Nations Development Programme, 2010), a new Gender Inequality Index (GII) replaced the GEM, which had been criticized for its strong bias towards urban elites and reliance on indicators that are more relevant to developed countries than developing ones. The new index only covers the ratio of female to male representatives in parliament, and gender differences in secondary and higher educational attainment as indicators of empowerment. It is less directly relevant than the GEM when comparing the proportion of women in positions of power and decision making.

The World Economic Forum’s (2005) measure of women’s empowerment focuses on the participation of women in power and decision making to reflect political empowerment. The indicators include the number of years in which there has been a female head of state in the past 50 years; the percentage of women in ministerial positions; the percentage of women in parliament; and the percentage of women serving as legislators, senior officials, and managers.

Few international reports provide a broad-based comparison of women in positions of power in public affairs as well as in the economy. This chapter presents the latest statistics on women’s leadership in public affairs, government, and the corporate world. It also includes information on women in the judiciary as well as women in academia since leadership in tertiary education has an impact on women’s empowerment through decisions relating to higher education and training.

**Women’s Participation in Public Affairs**

**The Executive Council**

In Hong Kong, the Executive Council forms the apex of the Government’s decision-making power. Constitutionally, it is the advisory body of the Chief Executive, and previously of the Governor before 1997. It consists of both official and non-official members
appointed by the Government. During the colonial period, the Executive Council was heavily dominated by male members from the business and professional sectors, and this situation continued after 1997. In 2012, aside from the Chief Executive as the presiding officer, the Executive Council has 15 official members and 13 non-official members. Women constitute six or 21.4% of them (i.e., three official and three non-official). Women’s representation in the Executive Council has not shown any increase in the past decade. Since the implementation of the Principal Officials Accountability System (POAS) in 2002, which is described below, all Policy Secretaries have become official members of the Executive Council. In 2005, the new Chief Executive, Donald Tsang, also appointed more non-official members. However, with all of these new developments, the percentage of women in the Executive Council has actually declined.

Strictly speaking, the Executive Council does not have comparable counterparts internationally. It comprises all ministers with a policy portfolio and a substantial number of members without a policy portfolio, thus resembling a “supercabinet.”

The Legislative Council

The Legislative Council, which is the legislative body for Hong Kong, has 60 members, 30 of whom are elected by geographical constituencies through direct elections and 30 by functional constituencies. In the current Legislative Council, which was elected in 2008, 11 (18.3%) of the members are women. Four of them were elected by functional constituencies and seven by geographical constituencies. This shows that functional constituencies, dominated by the business and pro-establishment sectors, are not conducive to providing women with opportunities to obtain political office. The current number of women in the legislature represents a slight increase from 7 (11.7%) in 1995. The major gain, however, has come only from the geographical constituencies. Women’s share of seats in the geographical constituency sector increased from 15.0% in 1995 to 23.3% in 2008, whereas its share remains at 13.3% in the functional constituency sector (Table 1). The share of women in Hong Kong’s
legislature lags behind that of the national parliaments (i.e., single/lower house) in Europe where women constitute an average of 24.2% of the membership. Hong Kong is on par with Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic and Lithuania (European Commission, 2010, p. 49). In another international comparison, in member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), women’s share of parliamentary seats is 20.6% versus 18.1% among non-OECD countries (United Nations Development Programme, 2010, p. 160).

**District Councils**

The District Councils are local advisory bodies. The 18 District Councils elected in 2007 had a total of 507 members. Of these members, 102 were appointed by the Government and the rest were elected in direct elections. There were 97 women district councillors, 19 of whom were appointed and 78 elected. In other words, 18.6% of government appointees were women while the figure for elected members was 19.3%. In the latest District Council election in November 2011, the proportion of women elected was similar to that in 2007 with women winning 19.2% or 79 out of 412 elected seats. However, despite the Government’s pledge to engage more women in decision making, the percentage of females appointed as councillors decreased to 14.7%, or 10 out of 68 appointed seats. The corresponding figures for appointed and elected female councillors were 14.7% and 14.6% in 1999 (Table 2).

The representation of women in the local councils is also low by international standards. In several European countries, there is much better gender balance in local assemblies than in national ones. France, for instance, has female representation as high as 49% in regional assemblies and 35% in local ones. International experience also shows that regional and local assemblies are stepping stones for political participation at the central level (European Commission, 2009, pp. 24–25). In Hong Kong, the low level of women’s participation at the local level means that they are not gaining a strong foothold in moving upwards to politics at the central level.
Table 1  Legislative Council members by sex, 1995 and 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical Constituency</td>
<td>3 (15.0%)</td>
<td>17 (85.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Constituency</td>
<td>4 (13.3%)</td>
<td>26 (86.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Committee</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>10 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7 (11.7%)</td>
<td>53 (88.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Calculations are based on lists of members.

Table 2  District Council members by sex, 1999, 2007 and 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected member</td>
<td>57 (14.6%)</td>
<td>333 (85.4%)</td>
<td>390 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed member</td>
<td>15 (14.7%)</td>
<td>87 (85.3%)</td>
<td>102 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72 (14.6%)</td>
<td>420 (85.4%)</td>
<td>492 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Women’s Commission (2009, p. 41) and calculations are based on District Council (2012).


**Advisory and Statutory Bodies**

According to the Government’s latest document, there are 447 advisory and statutory bodies in Hong Kong (Home Affairs Bureau, 2012). They are officially classified into: advisory boards and committees; non-departmental public bodies; regulatory boards and bodies; appeal boards; advisory and management boards of trusts, funds and funding schemes; public corporations; and miscellaneous boards and committees (Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs, 2005, pp. 1–2). The system has been criticized since not only are business people and professionals overrepresented in these bodies, but the percentage of women in these bodies is also quite low. In 2004, the Home Affairs Bureau set a working target of at least 25% representation for each gender in advisory and statutory bodies. The target was raised to 30% in 2010. The data show that the percentage of female members has increased over the years, from 16.4% in 1998 to 22.6% in 2003 to 27.6% in 2008 (Women’s Commission, 2009, p. 43). Due to the unavailability of data, it is unclear whether women tend to be limited to certain portfolios such as those concerning women’s issues and social affairs. However, in response to a question raised by Emily Lau in the Legislative Council in July 2010, the Secretary for Home Affairs indicated that “the Government has no plan to set a deadline for all ASBs [advisory and statutory bodies] to achieve the new 30% gender benchmark.” Some delays in implementing this target in several of the advisory and statutory bodies have been attributed to the fact that the majority of practitioners in those sectors are male, and the candidates for those advisory and statutory bodies were recommended by the relevant professional bodies (Legislative Council, 2010). The Government should now consider specifying a deadline to reach the higher gender benchmark and taking proactive measures to enable lagging sectors to make their gender ratio more equitable.

**Political Parties**

Political parties provide a platform for nurturing political leaders and fostering political participation. In many places, they are the major
avenue through which citizens gain access to a political career. There is no legislation in Hong Kong governing political parties, and thus no legal definition of what constitutes a political party. Most political parties and groups are registered either as limited companies or societies. This review includes the major political groups that identify themselves as parties and those who field candidates at various levels of election.

Among the seven major political parties in Hong Kong, there are two in which women hold the position of party chairperson. Furthermore, of the 16 vice-chairpersons in these seven parties only five are women. In terms of proportion, the total percentage of women chairs and vice-chairs among these political parties is 28.6% and 31.3%, respectively (Table 3).

Most of the women in these leadership positions are accomplished professionals in their own right. However, as discussed in the next section, having women in political party leadership positions has

### Table 3  Chairpersons/Vice-chairpersons of major political parties by sex, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political party</th>
<th>Chairperson</th>
<th>Vice-chairperson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Party</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People’s Livelihood</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League of Social Democrats</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New People’s Party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(28.6%) (71.4%) (31.3%) (68.8%)

Sources: Calculations are based on information from the website of each political party as of 23 May 2012.
not resulted in the more equal representation of women candidates in elections. Despite having women in leadership positions, only one party, the Democratic Party, has specifically identified the promotion of gender mainstreaming as a task by setting up a Gender Mainstreaming Steering Group with a female convener. In short, there is no clear strategy among the political parties to promote the political participation of women.

**Registered Voters, Voter Turnout, and Candidates**

In Hong Kong, permanent residents aged 18 or above are eligible to vote and run for office in the Legislative Council and District Council elections. The number of female registered voters is slightly lower than male at 1.67 million women and 1.70 million men in 2008. Women also have a slightly lower voter turnout rate than men. In the 2008 Legislative Council election, the female voter turnout rate was 48.9% while that of male voters was 51.1% (Table 4).

However, the percentage of women candidates in these elections was much lower than that of registered voters and voter turnout. In the 2007 District Council election, 18.4% (i.e., 167 out of 907) of the candidates were women. The success rates for male and female candidates were comparable with 44.2% of the male candidates and 46.7% of the female candidates getting elected. However, given the much lower number of female candidates, the percentage of elected District Council members who are female was likewise lower (19.3%). In the 1994 District Board election, women constituted 12.8% (i.e., 97 out of 757) of the candidates and 37.1% of the women and 47.0% of the men were elected. Thus, in district elections, women have gained both in terms of percentage of candidates and their success rate. Unlike the Legislative Council election in which the number of seats has remained unchanged since 1995, the number of District Council seats increased from 346 in 1994 to 405 in 2007. Of the extra 59 seats, women successfully captured 42 while men won 17 (Table 5). This shows that expanding the number of seats can provide women with more opportunities in electoral competition.

In the latest Legislative Council election in 2008, women constituted 18.9% (i.e., 38 out of 201) of the candidates. In terms of
**Table 4** Registered voters and voter turnout in District Council and Legislative Council elections by sex, 2007/2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of election</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registered voter</th>
<th>Voter turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Female %)</td>
<td>(Male %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Council election</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,626,056 (49.3%)</td>
<td>1,669,770 (50.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>574,535 (50.0%)</td>
<td>574,280 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative Council election</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1,674,379 (49.7%)</td>
<td>1,697,628 (50.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>745,676 (48.9%)</td>
<td>778,573 (51.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Table 5** Candidates and elected members in District Board/Council and Legislative Council elections by sex, 1994/1995 and 2007/2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of election</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Elected member</th>
<th>Success rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Female %)</td>
<td>(Male %)</td>
<td>(Male %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Total %)</td>
<td>(Total %)</td>
<td>(Total %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Board/Council election</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>97 (12.8%)</td>
<td>660 (87.2%)</td>
<td>36 (10.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>167 (18.4%)</td>
<td>740 (81.6%)</td>
<td>78 (19.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative Council election</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>15 (10.9%)</td>
<td>123 (89.1%)</td>
<td>7 (11.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>38 (18.9%)</td>
<td>163 (81.1%)</td>
<td>11 (18.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2010, p. 150).
success rates, 28.9% of the female candidates and 30.1% of the male candidates were elected. In the Legislative Council election in 1995, 10.9% (i.e., 15 out of 138) of the candidates were women, and 46.7% of the female candidates and 43.1% of the male candidates were elected (Table 5). This shows that both men and women have a poorer success rate in 2008 than a decade ago because more candidates are running for the same number of seats. In this context, women suffered a steeper decline in their success rate than men as the competition increased.

There are much wider gender discrepancies in the Village Representative election, in which adult original inhabitants in the New Territories are eligible to vote. In the 2011 election, 47.3% of the registered voters were women. Of the 1,752 candidates running for election, only 39 (2.2%) were women. Out of the 1,358 members that were elected, 30 (2.2%) were women (Table 6).

### Women’s Leadership in Government

According to Article 48(5) of the Basic Law, principal officials broadly include Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of Departments, Directors of Bureaux, the Commissioner Against Corruption, the Director of Audit, the Commissioner of Police, the Director of Immigration, and the Commissioner of Customs and Excise. Before 2002, these officials were all civil servants. After the implementation of the POAS in July 2002, the Secretaries of Departments and all Directors of Bureaux are no longer civil servants. Instead, they are appointed on contract

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate</td>
<td>39 (2.2%)</td>
<td>1,713 (97.8%)</td>
<td>1,752 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected member</td>
<td>30 (2.2%)</td>
<td>1,328 (97.8%)</td>
<td>1,358 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered voter</td>
<td>86,425 (47.3%)</td>
<td>96,277 (52.7%)</td>
<td>182,702 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information provided by the Civil Service Bureau.

Table 6 Candidates, elected members, and registered voters in Village Representative election by sex, 2011
terms and allowed to serve for a term of five years as long as the Chief Executive who appoints them remains in office. This change also means that the Chief Executive can actively seek personnel from outside the civil service to become principal officials, who were previously predominantly administrative officers. In 2008, the POAS was further expanded to add a number of politically appointed Under Secretaries and Political Assistants.

**Secretaries of Departments, Directors of Bureaux, Under Secretaries of Bureaux, and Political Assistants to Directors**

The Secretaries of Departments, Directors of Bureaux, Under Secretaries of Bureaux and Political Assistants to Directors in Hong Kong are analogous to the ministers and junior ministers in many countries. Immediately before the implementation of the POAS when all of these positions were still held by civil servants, six of the 16 policy bureaux were headed by female administrative officers. Together with the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Secretary for Justice who were then both women, women comprised 42.1% of what was equivalent to the ministerial-level leadership. When the POAS was implemented in 2002, the 16 policy bureaux were consolidated into 11 and only three of them were headed by women. As of May 2012, the ministerial-level leadership consisted of three women out of the 15 members (20.0%). There were also four female Under Secretaries of Bureaux out of seven (57.1%), and three female Political Assistants to Directors out of nine (33.3%). As a whole, women constituted 43.8% of the junior ministers, or 32.3% of the senior and junior ministers combined (Table 7).

---

1. The official titles here follow the rankings and government structure specified in the *Basic Law*. Within the HKSAR Government, the Secretaries of Departments consist of the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Financial Secretary, and the Secretary for Justice. The Directors of Bureaux carry the title of Policy Secretaries.

2. Here, ministerial-level leadership refers to the three Secretaries and the 12 Directors of Bureaux.
Table 7  Secretaries of Departments, Directors of Bureaux, Under Secretaries of Bureaux, and Political Assistants to Directors by bureau/unit and sex, May 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bureau/Unit</th>
<th>Minister (Secretary of Department/Director of Bureau)</th>
<th>Junior minister</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Secretary for Administration</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Secretary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary for Justice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Service Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and Economic Development Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Health Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Affairs Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour and Welfare Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and Housing Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(20.0%) (80.0%) (57.1%) (42.9%) (33.3%) (66.7%)

Source: Calculations are based on Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (2012a).
Table 8  Directorate officers by sex, selected years from 1991 to 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9.8%)</td>
<td>(15.4%)</td>
<td>(20.6%)</td>
<td>(23.0%)</td>
<td>(27.9%)</td>
<td>(30.5%)</td>
<td>(31.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,182</td>
<td>1,147</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(90.2%)</td>
<td>(84.6%)</td>
<td>(79.4%)</td>
<td>(77.0%)</td>
<td>(72.1%)</td>
<td>(69.5%)</td>
<td>(68.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,311</td>
<td>1,355</td>
<td>1,219</td>
<td>1,289</td>
<td>1,183</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Directorate Officers**

As of 31 March 2012, the civil service numbered 159,195, of which 35.6% (56,606) were women (Civil Service Bureau, 2012b). Directorate officers refer to those civil servants whose salaries are on the Directorate Pay Scale or its equivalent. Government data show that the number of female directorate officers has been increasing significantly from 129 (9.8%) in 1991 to 251 (20.6%) in 1998, 368 (30.5%) in 2008, and 382 (31.4%) in 2009 (Table 8). However, the data show that the civil service as a whole is still male-dominated.

Although the number of women at the directorate level is now closer to reflecting the proportion of women in the civil service as a whole, one should note that a substantial number of directorate-level women actually come from the administrative officer grade. The administrative officer grade is an elite group within the Government. In the colonial years, they possessed major political and policy-making power. Today, they are still the Government’s core policy advisors and senior managers. Although as of 31 March 2012 this elite corps of administrative officers consisted of only 632 people out of the 167,011 civil servants, 300 of them were in the directorate grade. Since there were only 1,306 civil servants on the Directorate Pay Scale or its equivalent, administrative officers constituted a significant percentage of the directorate-grade officers (Civil Service
Bureau, 2012a, 2012b). Partly due to its generalist nature, women have performed very well in this grade and the high visibility of this group of elite women often projects an image of “equal opportunity” in the civil service. Indeed, as of 31 March 2012 the gender ratio of all administrative officer grade officers was 46% male and 54% female. The number of women directorates from the administrative officer grade was 152. These figures show that women are not only much more favourably represented in this grade than in the civil service as a whole, but also that senior women administrative officers constitute a significant percentage (i.e., 50.7%) of the directorate-grade officers.\(^3\)

As such, the impact of the profound political change brought about by the implementation of the POAS must be understood in the context of administrative officers’ career path changes. Whereas previously the top policy-making posts (i.e., Policy Secretaries and the two “super” Secretaries, the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary) were the top step of the career ladder for administrative officers, under the new POAS system administrative officers can, at best, become subordinates of those secretaries by being promoted to the Permanent Secretary level unless they are selected by the Chief Executive as one of his/her political appointees. As of May 2012, of 18 Permanent Secretaries in the civil service structure, six were women (33.3%) (Table 9).

Women’s representation in leadership positions in governments across the world varies widely. In the European Union, women made up over half of senior ministers in Austria in 2006 followed by Spain, Sweden, and Norway, where women accounted for half of those occupying such posts. The proportion of women in senior government positions was just under half in Finland, more than one-third in the United Kingdom, and marginally below a third in Germany. The figure was under 20% in 14 of the 20 remaining countries in the rest of the European Union (European Commission, 2008, pp. 67–68). Among members of the European Union in 2009, on average, women constituted just under 26% of the senior and junior ministers combined (European Commission, 2010, p. 56).

\[^3\] Information provided by the Civil Service Bureau.
Women’s Leadership in the Corporate Sector

Women’s representation in corporate leadership trails far behind the public sector, even though it has been demonstrated that companies with more women in top management and executive committees record better financial performance (McKinsey & Company, 2010). A review of the 2009 annual reports for the 42 blue chip listed companies in Hong Kong’s Hang Seng Index (HSI) reveals one woman (2.3%) and 42 men (97.7%) who hold the top executive position of President, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Executive, or Managing Director. Table 10 summarizes the proportion of women in

Table 9 Permanent Secretaries by bureau/office and sex, May 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bureau/Office</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive’s Office</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Service Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and Economic Development Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Health Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Affairs Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour and Welfare Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Bureau</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and Housing Bureau</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(33.3%) (66.7%)

Source: Calculations are based on Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (2012c).
these executive positions, while Table 11 lists these positions in the individual companies.\footnote{The HSI follows the stock prices of Hong Kong blue chip companies, which constitute the HSI. Only the top executive positions, regardless of the title used, is counted for each company.}

According to the report *Standard Chartered Bank Women on Boards: Hang Seng Index 2012*, among the 634 directorships in the top Hong Kong companies included in the HSI, 57 (9.0\%) are held by 50 different women. There are no women represented at this level in 20 (41.7\%) of the 48 HSI companies. Furthermore, these figures are comparable to those in Australia, but lower than in other Western developed economies. The corresponding figures in 2011 were 10.9\% in Australia’s ASX 200, 15.0\% in the United Kingdom’s FTSE 100, and 16.1\% in the United States Fortune 500 (Banerji & Vernon, 2012, p. 12).


---

**Table 10**  Top executive positions in 42 constituent companies of the Hang Seng Index by sex, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources: Hang Seng Indexes Company Limited (2009) and calculations are based on the 2009 annual report of each blue chip listed company.*
Table 11  Top executive positions in the constituent companies of the Hang Seng Index by sex, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank of China</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of China (Hong Kong)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of Communications</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of East Asia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathay Pacific</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Construction Bank</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminum Corporation of China Limited (CHALCO)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheung Kong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Life</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Merchants Holdings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Mobile</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Overseas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Resources</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Resources Power</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Shenhua</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Unicom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citic Pacific</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLP Holdings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosco Pacific</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprit Holdings(^1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foxconn International</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang Lung Properties(^1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11  Top executive positions in the constituent companies of the Hang Seng Index by sex, 2009 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hang Seng Bank</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson Land</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK &amp; China Gas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HK Electric</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKEX</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSBC Holdings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchison</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICBC(^2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li &amp; Fung</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTR Corporation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New World Development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PetroChina</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping An</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino Land</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinopec Corporation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Hung Kai Properties(^1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swire Pacific A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tencent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wharf Holdings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Hang Seng Indexes Company Limited (2009) and calculations are based on the 2009 annual report of each blue chip listed company.

Notes:  
2. ICBC’s annual report for 2009 was not available. According to the annual report for 2008, the tenure of the company’s President, Yang Kaisheng, was from October 2008 to October 2011.
companies rated by the corporate governance research and rating firm, 7.6% of the board directors were women. This percentage was higher than the figures for Japan (0.9%), Singapore (5.7%), Taiwan (6.4%), and mainland China (6.6%), but lower than those for Australia (9.9%), New Zealand (11.4%), Canada (11.3%), and the United States (11.4%). GovernanceMetrics International (2011, pp. 3–8) has also listed the latest statistics for women on boards for the year 2011. The worldwide aggregate percentage of board seats held by women was only 9.8% as compared to 9.2% in 2009. The three countries with the highest aggregate percentage of female directors were Norway (35.6%), Sweden (27.3%), and Finland (24.5%). Japan, with 0.9%, was one of the lowest among the industrialized economies. In Hong Kong, the aggregate percentage of women on corporate boards was 9.4% in 2011 as compared to 7.8% in 2009. In Finland and Sweden, all of the surveyed companies (100.0%) had at least one woman on their board of directors as compared to 9.9% for Japan, 15.4% for Korea, and 60.8% for Hong Kong.

According to the European Commission’s (2008, p. 71) report, *The Life of Women and Men in Europe: A Statistical Portrait*, there were no European Union countries in which women made up over 25% of the management board members for their 50 largest enterprises. Women made up over 20% of the management boards in only two countries, Bulgaria and Sweden. There were only two European Union member states, Bulgaria and Slovenia, in which women were presidents or chairpersons of more than 10% of these enterprises. In the European Commission (2010, p. 6) report, *More Women in Senior Positions: Key to Economic Stability and Growth*, it was noted that Norway stands out as the only country that approaches gender equality in the board room, with women comprising 42% of the boards of the largest listed companies. This high percentage was attributed to the implementation of a legal quota in 2006.

Generally, these figures show that women’s representation in decision-making positions in the corporate world is low even in developed economies. In Hong Kong, this is one key area in which women lag far behind in terms of holding leadership positions.
Women in the Judiciary

Women are also underrepresented at the top levels of the judiciary. In the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal, there is not a single woman among the three Permanent Judges and the 19 Non-permanent Judges in 2012. In the High Court, the percentage of women judges including the Recorders of the Court of First Instance is 16.7%, which includes three females (30.0%) as compared to seven male Justices of Appeal of the Court of Appeal; four females (18.2%) versus 18 male Judges of the Court of First Instance; and no female Recorders (Table 12).

Among European Union member countries, women comprise an average of 31% of supreme court judges (European Commission, 2010, p. 7). In 2006, women also made up over half of the national supreme court members in Latvia, Hungary, and Romania, almost half in Slovakia, and over 40% in Belgium and Bulgaria. In Greece, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, and the United Kingdom, they accounted for less than 10% (European Commission, 2008, p. 70). In the Supreme Court of the United States (2012), there are three females out of the nine justices (33.3%), two of whom were appointed in the past three years. In the Supreme Court of Canada (2012), there are four females out of nine justices (44.4%) and the Chief Justice is a woman.

Women’s Leadership in Institutions of Higher Education

A university education is one of the avenues that prepares women to take up future leadership positions and increases their capacity to participate in decision making. Although the percentage of women enrolled in tertiary education in most developed economies has now surpassed that of men, few women have risen to top academic positions where they can impact decisions in higher education. Among the European Union member states, women accounted for less than 25% of the most senior positions in academic institutions in 2004, except for Latvia and Romania (European Commission, 2008, p. 75).

The percentage of women enrolled in undergraduate programmes
Women and Girls in Hong Kong

in Hong Kong reached 53.2% in 2009/10. Along with the increase in higher education among women, by 2010 the percentage of women faculty members reached 34.4% in the eight government-funded tertiary institutions in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Court of Final Appeal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Justice</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Judge</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>3 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-permanent Judge¹</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>19 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>23 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Court</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Judge</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal¹</td>
<td>3 (30.0%)</td>
<td>7 (70.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge of the Court of First Instance</td>
<td>4 (18.2%)</td>
<td>18 (81.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorder of the Court of First Instance²</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>9 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>7 (16.7%)</td>
<td>35 (83.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>7 (10.8%)</td>
<td>58 (89.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculations are based on Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (2012b).

Notes:
1. The Hon. Mr Justice Tang, the Hon. Mr Justice Stock, and the Hon. Mr Justice Hartmann were appointed Non-permanent Judges as well as Justices of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court. To present the full picture on judges, we included them in the calculation of both categories.

2. According to Section 6A(1) of the High Court Ordinance, “the Governor may appoint a person who is eligible to be appointed to be a judge of the High Court under section 9(1) or (1A), to be a recorder of the Court of First Instance for such period as may be specified in the instrument by which the appointment is made” (http://www.hklii.hk/eng/hk/legis/ord/4/s6a.htm). To present the full picture on judges, we included them in the calculation.
However, there was no female president or vice-chancellor in any of these institutions as of May 2012. Currently, among the eight institutions there are three women (9.1%) out of 33 senior administrators who are serving as vice-presidents or pro-vice-chancellors, and only three females (5.6%) out of 54 faculty deans (Table 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Vice-president</th>
<th>Faculty dean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Baptist University</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Institute of Education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Polytechnic University</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong University of Science and Technology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingnan University</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0%)</td>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Calculations are based on information from the website of each university as of 25 May 2012.

Note: In the figures for faculty deans, we included the deans of faculties and the dean of the graduate school at each university.
Barriers Women Face to Achieving Their Full Potential and Reaching the Top

Since the implementation of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance in Hong Kong, discrimination in the employment and advancement of women has been unlawful. However, there are many implicit and explicit barriers that block women from reaching the top levels in various sectors (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). The glass ceiling effect has been discussed extensively in studies of women’s leadership (e.g., Cotter et al., 2001). According to a recent survey by the Women’s Commission (2011, p. 8), around 70% of female and male respondents agreed that being a woman is a barrier to promotion and development in the workplace.

According to traditional gender roles, men and women should assume major responsibility for the separate domains of work and family, respectively. Despite the increased participation of women in higher education and the labour force, these outdated gender stereotypes still prevail in Hong Kong (Women’s Commission, 2011) as well as worldwide. For women, the work-family interface is particularly challenging. Women with family responsibilities are at a disadvantage when advancement entails putting in longer hours away from home. Especially in the financial and business sectors, long working hours and a competitive environment have become corporate norms. Many women may opt out of the demands of senior positions to achieve a better work-family balance. Others may fear the limelight, as a female leader can threaten the traditional power structure in a marital relationship (Halpern & Cheung, 2008).

There are traditional networks and mentoring relationships in organizations that help junior staff to navigate the “labyrinth” of the power structure to reach the top echelons (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These authors prefer the term “labyrinth” over “glass ceiling,” as the former implies numerous barriers, both apparent and subtle, that women need to discover and overcome in their circuitous path to the top. There are fewer role models and mentors who are sensitive to diversity and target the special needs of women. It is especially difficult for women
in large corporations to gain the experience and skills to compete for leadership positions (Halpern & Cheung, 2008).

Many women and men hold traditional stereotypes about gender roles in which men are expected to have superior status over women. A survey of over 3,000 Hong Kong residents conducted by the Women’s Commission (2011, p. 6) showed that 36.8% of women and 32.8% of men still agreed that male supremacy exists in their families. A spouse or partner may feel threatened by a female counterpart in a high-profile leadership position. Moreover, around the world it is common for more women leaders to be single or childless than their male counterparts. McKinsey & Company’s (2007, p. 16) global survey of middle and senior managers found that 33% of female managers were single as compared with 18% of men. A study of women leaders in successful marital relationships showed that their husbands and others close to them endorsed egalitarian values and were supportive of their success (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). The promotion of gender awareness and egalitarian values require ongoing and concerted cultural changes in society.

**Government Responses**

In Hong Kong, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women’s Commission were set up as the central mechanisms to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. The Sex Discrimination Ordinance and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance provide protection against unlawful discriminatory practices. However, empowering women to take up positions of power and decision making requires concerted efforts to achieve policy and cultural changes.

The Women’s Commission’s strategy of creating an enabling environment focuses on promoting gender mainstreaming, and advocating family-friendly employment policies and practices. To enhance women’s participation in public decision making, the Women’s Commission has lobbied the Home Affairs Bureau to increase the percentage of women in government advisory and statutory bodies. The original target of 25% was set in 2004 and
reached in December 2005. However, this increase has yet to translate into other leadership positions. Since its initiation in 2002, the gender mainstreaming strategy has progressed slowly. So far, the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist has been applied to 39 specific programmes or policy areas with only four or five programmes or policies being implemented each year. This is far from achieving the objective of integrating gender perspectives and needs in legislation, policies, or programmes in every area and at all levels.

The European Commission (2010) has taken a strong lead in supporting the efforts of European Union countries to implement their objectives regarding promoting gender balance in decision making through gender research, legislation, and policy strategies. The use of legislation to require gender quotas has been controversial, although these quotas may be effective in boosting greater representation of women in decision-making positions. In the private sector, the European Commission has recommended greater balance in gender representation on the boards of listed companies, and good diversity practices through the use of corporate governance codes that play a major role in determining the composition of company boards.

**Non-governmental Responses**

In the business sector, more companies are setting up diversity and family-friendly policies. There is a greater awareness of the need for gender balance in senior positions among the large multi-national corporations. Women’s organizations are also now reaching out to corporate partners. For example, The Women’s Foundation has launched a mentoring programme for women leaders as a means of increasing the number of women in decision making and leadership positions.

In Europe, the business sector has taken greater initiative in integrating women into their organizations. The report by the Lehman Brothers Centre for Women in Business (2007, p. 17) identified four waves of intervention among the 61 European organizations included in the study:

1. Measurement and reporting of gender diversity (representation
at different levels of management, targets and accountability, uptake of flexible work options);
2. Enabling women to be wives, mothers, and carers (work-family responsiveness, flexible work options, leave programmes, re-entry programmes);
3. Creating supportive networks (mentoring, coaching, formal networking programmes); and
4. Preparing women to be leaders (training, talent management, stretch assignments).

These are good practices that are not only applicable in the corporate sector, but in the promotion of women in all areas of decision making.

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Introduction

The intimate relationship between gender and the media can be broadly understood in three ways. First, media products, such as books, newspapers, television programmes, films, and music, can reflect various gender-related values, beliefs, and norms. One can understand how a society constructs men and women and how it expects men and women to behave by analyzing the content of its media products. Second, biased and/or stereotypical portrayals of men and women in the media can influence the gender-related perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of media users. Researchers believe that the media, as a collective, are one of the most important forces for gender socialization. People, particularly young people, take their cues from the media about how men and women should look and act. Third, a gender difference in the ways in which media products are made available, accessed, and used is symptomatic of broader social issues related to gender inequality. Under this general three-category framework, this chapter aims to provide a general review of research on gender and the media in Hong Kong. Findings from a number of recent studies conducted in Hong Kong will be discussed. Although not a primary focus of our review, theoretical perspectives and studies
from other countries, particularly the United States, will also be cited for comparison. We hope to identify gaps in the current research on gender and the media in Hong Kong and highlight some interesting yet understudied research areas.

**Media Representation and Gender Stereotyping**

While a person’s sex is determined by genetic and biological factors, gender is a socially constructed concept through which a society defines what it means to be masculine or feminine. Central to the process of social construction are cultural artifacts such as folk stories, literature, and films. These cultural products produce and reproduce various gender archetypes, and serve as vehicles that will carry these gender archetypes from one generation to the next. As such, culture and media products are viewed by many researchers as the ideal texts for gaining knowledge and drawing conclusions about the social construction of gender and gender roles.

A core concern of studies on the media and gender that employ content analysis is to identify thematic, recurring, and often stereotypical portrayals of both genders. For example, Leaper et al. (2002) systematically analyzed the portrayals of different characters in children’s television cartoons in the United States and found that almost all of these programmes contained highly gender-stereotypical messages consistent with traditional gender roles. Male characters were more often portrayed as heroes, whereas female characters were more often depicted as dependent and weak. Orenstein (2002) traced the origins and the evolution of “Little Red Riding Hood,” the beloved children’s story, across different cultures and literary genres. She concluded that variations in the narrative as well as the character presentation of the story could be interpreted as the shifting fault lines of morality, sexuality, sexual violence, and gender. Most recently, England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek (2011) analyzed the behavioural characteristics of the princes and princesses and their climactic outcomes in nine animated feature films from Disney and found stereotypical portrayals of men and women in all of these films.
Even though both men and women are subjects of media stereotyping, research in this area has been dominated by studies of three negative stereotypes of women: (1) women depicted in traditional gender roles as domestic, weak, and submissive; (2) women depicted as sex objects; (3) idealized portrayals of the female body that would conform to unrealistic and unnatural beauty standards (e.g., being slim, having big breasts, etc.). In the United States, for example, Smith and her colleagues conducted a series of large-scale content analyses of mainstream American media products (Smith & Cook, 2008; Smith & Granados, 2009; Smith et al., 2006). They found that despite constituting 50% of the United States population, females were consistently underrepresented in film and television. The media still show many girls and women in traditional and stereotypical roles, such as caregivers and/or housewives, which very much distorts the reality that women comprise about half of the American workforce. In these studies, females are also more likely than males to be younger and sexier, even in children’s programmes. In addition to television, film, and literature, negative stereotypes of women can also be found in a variety of other media products such as advertisements (Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010) and video games (Dill et al., 2005).

It is important to note that the extent to which we can generalize findings from the descriptive and/or interpretive analyses of gender representations in the media would be determined by the size and quality of the sample and time frame of the analyses. For example, the gender stereotypes typically found in sports magazines targeting male readers would obviously be very different from those found in women’s magazines, and standards of beauty would often shift quite quickly over time. Moreover, the interpretations of findings in content-based studies are also highly sensitive to normative perspectives and/or cross-cultural differences. For instance, depictions of strong and sexually assertive female characters would be regarded as liberation from traditional gender-roles from one perspective, but as sexual exploitation from another. Nonetheless, existing research on media representations of gender, particularly those from the United States,
show that biased and stereotypical portrayals of women are pervasive across media types, genres, and the general media culture.

Portrayals of Men and Women in the Hong Kong Media

Generally speaking, three types of female stereotypes are frequently found in Hong Kong’s mainstream media. First, the ideal notion of femininity is significantly restricted by the ideology of “the skinnier, the prettier” (Lee & Fung, 2009). The models in print advertisements and actresses in various television programmes are often unusually thin and attractive. This representation of women overtly reinforces the importance of having a slim figure as a female standard of beauty. Although the empirical data is lacking to accurately describe the pervasiveness of such a “slim body” reorientation in the Hong Kong media, one does not need to travel far in Hong Kong to see body slimming advertisements all over public spaces such as shopping malls and subway stations.

A second stereotypical portrayal of women found in the Hong Kong media is the notion that Chinese women are less knowledgeable than men and lack objectivity, while Chinese men are more logical and independent (Bond, 1991). For example, Chu and McIntyre (1995) analyzed the personality and appearance attributes of 277 male and female cartoon characters in 31 randomly selected children’s television cartoons aired in Hong Kong; they found that characters in these programmes tended to conform to traditional gender-role stereotypes. Specifically, male characters were more likely to be portrayed as aggressive, sloppy, and strong, whereas female characters were more likely to be portrayed as more beautiful and feminine. More males (25.6%) were placed in important job positions than females (9.4%).

A similar stereotypical pattern was also discovered in television documentaries about older men and women aired on the two major television channels. Tam (2010) found that older male characters are more favourably portrayed than older female characters in terms of personality traits, self-care ability, and economic conditions in these documentaries, which are supposedly more objective and reflective of reality than television dramas. Furnham, Mak, and Tanidjojo (2000)
analyzed the contents of 175 television commercials in Hong Kong and found significant gender differences in the ways in which men and women were portrayed, particularly in terms of mode of presentation, credibility, and role. Specifically, men were more frequently depicted as the central figures in these advertisements (68.3%). Women were depicted as product users (78.5%) more often than men (23.6%), but men were more frequently portrayed as authority figures (76.4%). Furnham and Chan (2003) applied the same content coding scheme from Furnham et al. (2000) to compare gender representations in television commercials aired on an English channel and a Chinese channel in Hong Kong. They found a similar pattern of gender inequality, but only in commercials aired on the Chinese channel. Interestingly, however, when Furnham and Li (2008) analyzed 147 food and beverage television commercials in Hong Kong using a similar methodology, they found very few gender differences.

The third gender stereotype often found in the Hong Kong media is that of the “perfect woman.” The ideal modernized female portrayed in the Hong Kong media is someone who is strong, independent, and resilient, but also family-oriented, tender, and loving. In other words, these women are able to strike a balance between family and work, and somehow achieve success in both arenas (Lee, 2004). For example, the public personas created by the news media of almost all of Hong Kong’s female political leaders highlight their accomplishments in the domestic realm. They are, it would seem, perfect mothers, wives, and domestic goddesses. However, the same standard is seldom applied to male public figures. Even though such portrayals of women are not overtly sexist and stereotypical in a conventional sense, these idealized and unrealistic depictions of women might be as problematic as other gender stereotypes.

In addition to the gender stereotypes typically found in the mainstream media, highly biased portrayals of women are most frequently found in sexually explicit materials (e.g., pornography). It is generally believed by researchers around the world that most sexually explicit media content is predominately created for men by men. As such, these materials inevitably objectify women from the perspective of men. Some feminist scholars have gone so far as to argue that all
pornography contains scenes in which women are dominated, coerced, humiliated, or even sexually assaulted (MacKinnon, 1987). Although there has been no systematic examination of gender portrayals in sexually explicit media content in Hong Kong, much of the anecdotal evidence points to the fact that women are indeed almost always portrayed as objects of sexual desire in a highly degraded manner.

Unlike highly offensive and/or sexual materials, gender bias and misrepresentations in the media are often subtle and unnoticeable to average viewers. Many stereotypical gender portrayals in the mainstream media (e.g., women as domestic and submissive) can simply be dismissed as cultural norms. Even in the case of pornography, where many people might be offended by the explicitly sexual nature of the material from moral and religious perspectives, few people outside the feminist community would explicitly note its implication of sexism. To this extent, the existing regulatory and judicial bodies, such as the Broadcasting Authority and the Obscene Articles Tribunal, are ineffective in dealing with questionable gender portrayals. For example, the Broadcasting Authority of Hong Kong was established in September 1987 to regulate licensed television and radio broadcasters in Hong Kong.\(^1\) One of its key objectives is to ensure that the broadcasting services that are being provided are up to expectations, and do not offend public tastes and decency. However, while the public can technically launch complaints against biased or prejudicial gender portrayals through the Broadcasting Authority, very few complaints are made.

Overall, there are only a handful of empirical studies systematically examining gender stereotypes in the Hong Kong media in the last two decades. Compared with research in this area from other regions, particularly the United States, studies from Hong Kong are fewer in number, smaller in scale, and less systematic. It seems that much of the intellectual discussion surrounding gender

\(^1\) With effect from 1 April 2012, the Communications Authority takes over the functions and responsibilities of the Broadcasting Authority and the Telecommunications Authority.
stereotyping and the media in Hong Kong relies on anecdotes and casual observations instead of empirical data, leaving a glaring hole in this area of research.

**Consequences of Exposure to Stereotypical Gender Representations in the Media**

As discussed in the last section, findings from a relatively large body of content studies conducted around the world show that women are consistently and disproportionately underrepresented in the media. When they are presented, women are often portrayed stereotypically as passive and weak, objects of sexual desire for men, and/or unrealistically thin and beautiful. Naturally, we ask: “What are the consequences of being exposed to such media representations?”

Most researchers agree that the media, as a collective, are one of the most pervasive and influential forces for gender socialization. People, especially children, learn from the media ideas about how men and women ought to behave (Scharrer, 2005; Ward, 2002). American researchers found a consistent link between the amount of television viewing in general, and gender-role stereotyping among children and adolescents (Gunter, 2002); the more television children watched the more likely they were to hold stereotypical views about men and women. This finding is particularly interesting as women are generally underrepresented, and the images of both men and women on American television tend to be stereotypical and traditional ones (Signorielli, McLeod, & Healy, 1994). Many researchers also strongly believe that repeated exposure to the stereotypical gender representations typically found in television advertisements, such as sexually objectified women and idealized beauty standards, will contribute to a broad range of social problems, including sexist attitudes and beliefs, sexual harassment, violence against women, eating disorders, and stereotyped perceptions of and behaviour towards men and women (UNESCO, 1980).

In a comprehensive review of theories and empirical studies on media and gender socialization, Smith and Granados (2009) identified a number of specific effects that may occur with exposure
to gender stereotypical media content. First, the inequality of gender representations, such as fewer females being portrayed as the central figure, may communicate the idea to the audience, particularly children, that stories about girls and women are not as important as stories about boys and men. Such a belief might negatively affect the self-esteem of girls and foster the idea that men are more valuable than women in society.

Second, gender stereotypes in the media may also affect the attitudes and beliefs of viewers about different types of jobs. Because media portrayals of occupations are often gendered, exposure to such imbalanced and stereotypical gender representations will lead to an increase in gender stereotypical perceptions of occupational roles and the cultivation of gender-role attitudes in both adults and children (Herrett-Skjellum & Allen, 1996; McGhee & Frueh, 1980; Signorielli et al., 1994). People are more likely to believe that some jobs are more appropriate for men while others are more appropriate for women. This view might affect the education and career decisions of individuals, and negatively impact labour participation and the economy in the long run.

Third, the unrealistic beauty standards and body images portrayed in the media can lead to dissatisfaction with one’s body and unhealthy diet behaviours. Lavine, Sweeney, and Wagner (1999) found that both men and women became dissatisfied with their own body after they were exposed to television advertisements containing sexually objectifying images of men and women. Frequent and repeated exposure to thin and sexy female figures will not only cause young girls to feel dissatisfied with their body and appearance (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008), but will also create among boys and men the belief that girls and women are to be valued for their appearance and give them unrealistic expectations about how their female partners should look, dress, and act.

In addition to the socialization effects discussed above, a separate body of literature has also examined the influence of sexual media content on the attitudes of men towards women. Studies have shown that exposure to violent sexual content in which women appear to be responsible for their own victimization or appear to be aroused by
sexual aggression can result in an increase in the acceptance of sexual violence (Donnerstein, Linz, & Penrod, 1987). Previous research has also found that male subjects exposed to sexually objectified depictions of women in the media were more likely to think of women as sex objects and engage in inappropriate sexual advances in a subsequent interaction with a female (Mulac, Jansma, & Linz, 2002; Rudman & Borgida, 1995). When men are exposed to media portrayals of women as sex objects who are receptive to sexual advances, they will develop negative attitudes towards women (Gunter, 2002; Linz & Malamuth, 1993). In a recent experiment conducted in the United States, Yao, Mahood, and Linz (2010) demonstrated that male participants who were cognitively primed with sexist thoughts towards women showed a greater tendency to engage in sexual harassment after a mere 25 minutes of playing a video game containing sexually objectified female characters.

Media and Gender Socialization in Hong Kong

As noted earlier, analyses of the Hong Kong media have in general shown biased constructions of femininity and gender roles. However, only a handful of studies in Hong Kong have empirically and systematically examined the effects of gendered media on related attitudes and practices (Lee & Fung, 2009).

The Equal Opportunities Commission (2009) commissioned the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong to conduct a study on public perceptions of portrayals of the female gender in the Hong Kong media. The study involved a large-scale household survey and a series of focus group interviews. The respondents reported that the most common female images shown in the local print media could be described in terms of the words: “figure,” “negative,” “female artist,” “appearance,” “sexy,” “photo of women’s body accidentally revealed,” “exposed,” “sex,” and “slim and beauty.” Interestingly, magazine reading was also found in this study to be correlated with worries about self-image and a desire to improve one’s self-image. However, this does not mean that females agree on the need to tackle these stereotypic images. Based
on qualitative interviews with 16 teenage girls in Hong Kong, Chan et al. (2011) found a mixture of both conventional and contemporary role models among the gender roles for females as perceived by these teenage girls. On the one hand, in contrast to traditional females who comply with stereotypical female roles such as dependence, submissiveness, and domesticity, the females that were interviewed had a strong interest in non-domestic issues such as environmental awareness, public health, and media controversies. They also showed interest in content that was intended to target adults. On the other hand, in their private life, they appeared conservative in terms of sexual openness. They generally rejected a “sexy” outlook and pre-marital sexual relations. We can see that, in general, young females in Hong Kong have an ambivalent attitude towards their own gendered values and depictions.

Fung and Ma (2000) interviewed 2,020 respondents in Hong Kong to examine the effects of watching television on people’s beliefs in stereotypical views of gender roles. These stereotypes are that Chinese females should be dependent, gentle, sympathetic, and shy, whereas Chinese males should possess a strong personality and leadership abilities at work and in the family. In this study they found a noticeable difference between entertainment programmes and informational programmes on television in shaping such a gendered ideology. Specifically, those who primarily used the media for entertainment purposes had higher scores on stereotypical views of females than those who used the media for informational purposes.

Lam and Chan (2007) examined the prevalence of viewing online pornography and its psychosocial correlates among a sample of young Chinese men in Hong Kong. They found that participants who reported viewing more online pornography had higher scores on measures of premarital sexual permissiveness and proclivities towards sexual harassment.

In addition to the few quantitative studies that examined the effects of the media on gender-related attitudes and behaviour, the influence of the media and gender socialization has also been discussed in a number of qualitative analyses. Fung (2002) argued that the media play an important role in constructing not only a gendered identity for
a female audience, but also an imagined consumer community when women interact with the popular media. Arriving at a similar result, Leung (2004) concluded that magazines construct and cultivate “an upscale and high-class femininity” for professional women in Hong Kong.

While there is ample evidence from international research to suggest that gendered media representations have a negative influence on an audience’s gender-related attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, many researchers also believe that media users are not simply passively affected by questionable media content. In a study of comic works in Hong Kong, Wong and Cukl anz (2002) examined the work of three popular female comic book artists and suggested that these popular media products could subtly or directly challenge the dominant gender ideology through their counter-stereotypical portrayals of confident, smart, but unattractive and/or intensely progressive female characters. Female audiences may also have a strong tendency to produce an oppositional reading of popular culture (Lai, 2004). For example, females connecting with each other through various formal or informal networks are more united than males, hence having higher cultural capital to resist the dominant cultural ideology, whereas individual females might lack the power and conviction to fight against gendered stereotypes alone. In a study of international women’s magazines in Hong Kong, Loong (2006) illustrated how female readers have appropriated this “foreign” content to (re)construct their femininities in a Westernized-cum-predominantly-Chinese society. Hong Kong readers thus construct a hybridized femininity of being “glamorous, cosmopolitan, and successful,” which creolizes the dominant discourse of Western femininity, an alternative/local understanding of femininity, and an aesthetic sense of consumerism.

As a whole, research on the media and gender socialization is sparse in Hong Kong. Few studies have provided reliable evidence to support the widely held view that exposure to stereotypical portrayals of women and men in the media has a negative impact on the development of self-perception, self-esteem, and other gender-related attitudes and behaviours. The few studies that have been
conducted are mostly data-driven as opposed to theory-driven, often making it difficult for researchers to come to conclusive findings. For example, in a large-scale study commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission (2009), an attempt was made to build a predictive model for gender-related attitudes purely based upon empirical links instead of theoretical reasoning. While there is a large body of literature worldwide in sociology, psychology, anthropology, and communication, which supports the view that the media can indeed have an impact on gender socialization and related behaviour, most of these studies were conducted in a Western context. Given the significant differences between the Chinese and Western cultures and their media ecosystems, our understanding of the impact of gendered media in Hong Kong is extremely limited in the absence of theory-driven empirical research conducted in the local context.

**Gender Differences in Media Access and Use**

In addition to the research discussed above on media content and its effects, gender differences in the ways that people access and use the media, particularly the Internet, have also been the subject of many scholarly works. The unequal access, knowledge, and/or use of information and communication technologies by men and women might be significant barriers to the full participation of women. First, gaps in media and technology use could lead to a growing “knowledge gap” (Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1970) between men and women. While both men and women might benefit from the information and knowledge gained by using new media technologies, men would benefit more. Over time the digital gender gap could contribute to other types of gender inequality. For example, as online banking becomes the dominant form of financial management, those who are familiar with and able to use the technology effectively would benefit more than those who are not. The digital gender gap, in this case, would potentially lead to men gaining more financial power and control over women. Research has also shown that male users of home personal computers are three times more likely to solve their own information technology problems than women (Garnham, 2007).

Not only can digital gender gaps be found in underdeveloped
regions such as Africa and Southeast Asia, this problem also exists in wealthy and technologically advanced countries. The UCLA World Internet Project, for example, found an average gap of 8% between men and women using the Internet worldwide (UCLA, 2004). These digital gender gaps were as high as 20.2% in Italy and as low as 1.6% in Taiwan. In the United States, 73.1% of men used the Internet compared to 69.0% of women. Numerous studies have also shown that females tend to report higher levels of computer anxiety than males (Brosnan & Davidson, 1996; Farina et al., 1991; Igbaria & Chakrabarti, 1990; Okebukola & Woda, 1993). The findings from a number of studies show that although girls possess the ability to learn and use computers they do not want to be associated with “geeky” stereotypes (Herald Sun, 2000). This suggests that gender-role stereotypes are involved in the differences between the genders with regard to anxiety over using technology (Chivers, 1987).

Hong Kong has some of the highest rates of Internet connectivity in the world. In 2008, 98% of homes were connected to the Internet and 68.7% of adults aged 18–74 are Internet users. However, a gender gap was consistently found in the Internet penetration rate from 2000 to 2008, ranging from 6% in 2000 to 13% in 2007 (Department of Media and Communication, 2009). There are significant differences in the use of technology between girls and boys of Hong Kong secondary schools (Volk & Yip, 1999). Specifically, boys in Hong Kong expressed a significantly more positive attitude towards computer technologies than girls in terms of interest, difficulties, consequences, school curriculum, and career aspirations. Although the significant differences in the attitudes of girls and boys towards the role of computers in their lives and in their perceptions of the difficulties of technologies had disappeared in a more recent study, gender gaps in other attitudinal categories were still found (Volk, Yip, & Lo, 2003). These gender differences in motivation may lead to a gap in the benefits gained by men and women from using information and communication technologies. As such, even though a gender gap in accessibility might not exist in a developed region such as Hong Kong, a knowledge gap may still hinder the social and economic growth of females.
The Way Forward

Though few in number, studies on gender and the media in Hong Kong seem to suggest that far from emancipating women, the Hong Kong media reinforce gender stereotypes. Studies on media representations of gender still show a great deal of biased and stereotypical portrayals of both men and women. In general, these studies argue that biased gender representations in the media reinforce gender differences, which in turn reproduces and worsens gender inequality in Hong Kong.

The debate on gendered media is not only about media content and its social and psychological effects on the users, but also about media producers and practitioners. In Hong Kong, various media, including both the news and entertainment media, are sites for constructing gender discourses and hence perpetuating gender inequality. In a newsroom setting, even professional female journalists might not be successful at empowering themselves amidst institutional and structural traditions (Lee & Man, 2009). Revealing the unequal division of labour between female and male journalists, Lee and Fung (2009) found that females are often responsible for entertainment news and soft reports, whereas financial news and hard reports are often left to male journalists. Erni (2005) contended that, in general, Hong Kong’s music industry narrates the interests and perspective of men, as musicians and lyricists are rarely women. This area of research has yet to be fully explored.

Few studies related to gender and the media in Hong Kong were conducted in a comparative framework. In one of these few studies, Leung (2004) discovered that the notions of femininity in the original United States Cosmopolitan magazine are adapted and modified locally to fit the tastes of a Hong Kong audience. The original Cosmopolitan aims at a middle-class audience in America, while in Hong Kong it has been upgraded to a magazine targeting upscale and professional women. Other comparative studies on gender and the media have mainly focused on Hong Kong and other Asian countries or regions. There are few studies comparing Hong Kong with Western countries on important topics on gender and the media in a globalized context,
such as the impact of global hybridization or the homogenization of gender ideology.

Although a couple of cross-cultural studies have indeed compared gender representations in the Hong Kong media with those representations in other countries (e.g., Moon & Chan, 2002; Siu, 1996), these studies have tended to suffer from methodological limitations, and their findings are somewhat inconsistent. For example, Furnham et al. (2000) discovered that there were more stereotypical gender-role portrayals in Hong Kong television commercials than in Western advertisements, with women more likely to be represented as product users in Hong Kong television and thus seldom playing a central/authoritative character. However, eight years later, contrary to the findings in earlier studies, Furnham and Li (2008, p. 297) claimed that “gender-role effects were non-significant in a majority of the content categories” in their comparative analysis of commercials produced in Hong Kong and those in Western contexts. These research results suggest that until nowadays researchers still do not have a conclusive answer to the difference in mediated gender role between the Asian and non-Asian setting.

Finally, while studies on femininity would be considered mainstream research, research on masculinity is uncommon, and comparative studies on this topic even more so. In one of the very few such studies in Hong Kong, conducted by Tam et al. (2009), it is suggested that in a commercial context the media suppress men as much as they do women. Studying men’s magazines in Hong Kong, they concluded that in Hong Kong the media representation of men is characterized by “heterosexualization, commercialization, and politicization of the term in the language of men’s liberation” (Tam et al., 2009, p. 356).

In a nutshell, gender and the media in Hong Kong is a discipline that is underresearched, as reflected by the scarcity of relevant studies and the limited local scholarship, both in terms of quality and quantity. Notwithstanding the value of existing studies, there is an enormous knowledge gap about gender and the media in Hong Kong. According to a bibliography of gender studies research in Hong Kong maintained by the Gender Research Centre at The Chinese University
of Hong Kong, a total of 73 scholarly works published between 2004 and 2009 were related to gender and the media (Tam et al., 2010). However, while these works cover a wide variety of media texts ranging from Cantopop (Erni, 2007) to wedding photos (Cheung, 2006), a vast majority of the publications do not provide empirical and generalizable data. The gender-focused media research in Hong Kong seems to be dominated by qualitative and interpretive analyses of media texts from the feminist and cultural studies perspectives. This is not a criticism of the rich and in-depth analyses of gender representations in various media texts provided by cultural studies scholars. The real concern here is the surprisingly small number of high-quality quantitative studies on the subject matter. Theoretical perspectives and research methodologies from other social science disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and communication are disproportionately underrepresented in media and gender research in Hong Kong. As such, much of the current discussion on gender stereotyping and the media by government agencies and non-governmental organizations has to rely on descriptive and anecdotal examples, which significantly hinder their efforts to develop meaningful programmes to combat gender stereotyping and close the gender gap. Systematic examinations of gender-related media representations and the roles of the media in shaping gender ideologies and identities in Hong Kong are urgently needed.

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Migrant Women and Ethnic Minority Women

Siumi Maria Tam and Yu-ying Tong

Introduction

Migration is the movement of people across internal or international borders. The direction of movement while traditionally one-way is increasingly circular and recurrent, creating transnational connections that are complex and fluid. Movement can also be individual and/or familial which further leads to variations on multiple sociocultural levels. In addition to these differences, migration is frequently a highly gendered phenomenon, as the nature and level of a person’s mobility is strongly influenced by their gender roles and status in his/her place of origin. Women and men often migrate for different reasons, and the consequences of migration may vary greatly according to one’s gender.

Migrants are also affected by the sociopolitical situation of their destination. The migration policies of both the source and the destination countries, for example, are frequently a result of labour market needs and political calculations that decide whether men and women are both able to emigrate, the kinds of work individuals of
different genders to take up in the host society, and hence how social mobility differs for each gender after migration.

Migrants in Hong Kong are a heterogeneous group. They are diverse in terms of their backgrounds and motivations for migration. Furthermore, their living conditions in Hong Kong differ according to factors such as class, ethnicity, occupational characteristics, and gender. This chapter will discuss the circumstances of the major groups of migrant women in Hong Kong, namely migrant domestic workers, mainland Chinese who are “new arrivals” to Hong Kong, and ethnic minorities. It will also highlight the interplay of institutional factors and individual actions among these groups by reviewing recent studies.

Migrant Domestic Workers

Documented migrant workers in Hong Kong consist of individuals of non-Chinese nationality who have come to Hong Kong legally to take up employment under contract working visas. An overwhelming proportion (about 85% in 2006) are foreign domestic workers (FDWs) who under government policy are called “foreign domestic helpers.” Other types of migrant workers include professional or skilled workers, who are referred to as expatriates (or “expats” as they are locally called) and constituted about 7% of all migrant workers in 2006. Among the expatriates, about 35% were women including those who came as spouses and family members of male expatriates (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, pp. 24–25, 62).1 From time to time, the Hong Kong Government has also imported workers from mainland China to work in construction and other jobs considered undesirable by local people such as farming. Due to the small numbers

1. Statistics for the proportion of expatriates among migrant workers are not readily available. Thus, we used the population by-census data from 2006 to calculate it. Here, we assume that the majority of women from India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand are FDWs.
in these groups as well as the lack of systematic data, these groups will not be addressed in this chapter.

In 2010, FDWs made up approximately 4% of Hong Kong’s population, and 98.4% of them were women (Census and Statistics Department, 2011b, pp. 8–9). FDWs began to enter the Hong Kong labour market during a period of economic growth in the 1970s, and their numbers increased continuously through the 1980s and 1990s. Historically, the Philippines has been the main source country of FDWs. However, in recent years Indonesia has gradually taken over as the major source of imported domestic workers in Hong Kong. In 2010, there were 285,681 FDWs in Hong Kong, 49.3% of whom were from Indonesia, 48.1% from the Philippines, and 1.3% from Thailand. Other source countries included Sri Lanka and Nepal, each comprising between 0.2% and 0.3% of FDWs (Census and Statistics Department, 2011a, p. 42).

Currently, about 10.1% of private households in Hong Kong employ an FDW (Census and Statistics Department, 2012, p. 126), which is where most FDWs work and are required to reside. By law, FDWs must receive the minimum wage of HK$3,740 per month (as of 2 June 2011), and carry out “five broad categories of domestic duties, namely household chores, cooking, baby-sitting, child-minding and looking after aged persons in the household” (Immigration Department, 2011). There is, however, a gendered division of labour among female and male FDWs. In general, the small number of male FDWs are given more “masculine” jobs such as gardening and driving. As household work is carried out on a need-to-do basis, and FDWs live in their employer’s home, they generally do not benefit from stipulations that regulate daily maximum working hours. While little statistical data is available, anecdotal evidence suggests that many female FDWs also perform duties such as washing cars and menial jobs in their employer’s shop even though this is prohibited and the employer is liable to criminal prosecution. What constitutes domestic work and who has the authority to define it is a tricky issue that remains a point of contestation between the Government and employers, over which FDWs have little say.

Among the two biggest groups of FDWs, Indonesians and...
Filipinas, the latter is more likely to have tertiary education. Statistics show that about 20% of Filipina FDWs have university degrees and many held white-collar jobs before working in Hong Kong. In contrast, 3% of Indonesian FDWs have a university education (Cortes & Pan, 2009, p. 6). The majority of Filipino women speak English with their employers in Hong Kong, while many Indonesian workers can speak Cantonese due to the pre-departure training programmes offered by recruitment agencies in Indonesia.

Although most FDWs come to Hong Kong as independent labourers, many have relatives and people from their hometown also working in Hong Kong as FDWs. They maintain close networks organized along linguistic, ethnic, regional, and religious lines. These groups and networks provide mutual help in a variety of ways, including financial aid and companionship. They are also important sources of job-related information such as workers’ rights and provide ways to meet cultural, health, and emotional needs (see Constable, 1997; Holroyd, Molassiotis, & Taylor-Pilliae, 2001; Knowles & Harper, 2009). Religion also plays a very important role in the life of many FDWs in Hong Kong. The majority of domestic workers from the Philippines are Roman Catholic. Muslim women come mainly from Indonesia, with smaller numbers from Thailand, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India (Constable, 2010). Nakonz and Shik (2009), for example, discussed how Filipina FDWs have found engagement in their religion to be a coping strategy in times of hardship.

The impact of FDWs on Hong Kong society can be understood on different levels and is often a source of ambivalence among the local population. On the financial level and according to conservative estimates, FDWs’ incomes constitute about HK$13.8 billion per year, which is equivalent to almost 1% of Hong Kong’s annual GNP (Asian Migrant Centre, 2004). Another study has shown that the relative advantage of hiring FDWs varies with class, the age of children in the household, as well as the education level of the mother and whether the mother is engaged in salaried work (Cortes & Pan, 2009). In addition, FDWs undoubtedly contribute to the local economy as users of services such as international remittances, shipping, and local public transport. They are also consumers of commodities such
as food, mobile communications, clothing, grooming products, and leisure services such as theme parks and cinemas. However, there is a dearth of research on the consumption patterns of FDWs and on the micro economy, which often differs by nationality, that has been generated over the decades since they first arrived in Hong Kong.

Popular discourse often claims that FDWs have contributed to the local economy because they have “liberated” the adult women in local families by enabling them to take up full-time employment. This argument, which views FDWs as having replaced housewives as caregivers and homemakers, is problematic because it reinforces the stereotypical gender division of labour that assigns household duties only to women (see Chapters 7 and 8 of this volume). The view that a woman’s primary duty is in the home is a major source of the triple burden borne by Hong Kong women (i.e., child care, elderly care, and work responsibilities), a situation that has not improved despite the presence of FDWs (Choi & Ting, 2009). In fact, ironically, this view has contributed to the continuous discrimination that women face in employment and career development because they are not recognized as substantial financial contributors to their families in their own right. Furthermore, the ambivalent relationship between the FDW and the female employer has been documented and discussed by scholars. In this relationship, FDWs are sometimes seen as competitors in the household to the mother-wife for the emotional attachment of the children and the sexual interest of the husband. As a result, the FDWs’ relationship to the children and male employers are targets of control, often manifested in dress codes, curfews, and monitoring for appropriate behaviour (see Chang & Ling, 2000; Constable, 1997, 2007; Tam, 1999). However, this competition between two females for influence over the family is a structural problem that has its roots in patriarchal social relations, and should be understood in this way.

The contribution of FDWs on the social level is another area that requires more understanding. With regard to the role of FDWs in their realm of work, they provide Hong Kong families with alternatives in terms of employment, care-giving, and child-rearing choices. FDWs’ participation in the local labour market has changed patterns of household management, child-minding traditions, and socialization...
values, not to mention leisure and dining behaviour among local families. These deserve to be systematically studied and substantiated with in-depth data. Kennelly (2008) provided a comprehensive view of the life of FDWs, including the institutional elements that serve both as restriction and resource, while Chan (2005) focused on how FDWs affect parental roles and family dynamics. Recently, researchers have been examining the ways in which FDWs have reshaped the public space in Hong Kong. Law (2001) and Yu (2009), for instance, examined how as FDWs engage with their religious beliefs, family ties, languages, modes of social contact, and cuisine, they have influenced the cultural landscape of their host society. Along similar lines, Lorenz (2009) showed the ingenuity of FDWs in crafting private space under the public gaze. In terms of public participation, Constable (2009, 2010) has recorded how Filipino and Indonesian domestic workers have played visible roles in public protests. However, little research has been done on the role of FDWs in charitable activities such as volunteer programmes and religious activities.

According to government regulations on hiring a FDW, FDWs can stay in Hong Kong for a period ranging from a few months to decades, depending on their employment status. Unlike other foreigners such as expatriates who may apply for permanent residency after seven years, FDWs cannot acquire permanent residency regardless of their length of stay and thus, have limited access to the range of rights enjoyed by residents. This immigration policy has helped to ensure that FDWs remain a transient workforce in Hong Kong who are treated unequally despite the fact that they are indispensable in the local economy. Although the Hong Kong Government has launched a series of legal reforms to ensure the basic rights of FDWs such as payment, rest days, statutory holidays, and personal protection from verbal and physical abuse, serious problems of inequality, discrimination, and operational deficiencies still exist. A survey carried out by the Asian Migrant Centre in 2000 indicated that 14.2% of FDWs were underpaid; 19.1% were not given a weekly mandated rest day; 23.1% were not given their 12 statutory holidays per year; and 24.1% suffered from verbal and physical abuse, of
whom 4.4% experienced sexual abuse (Chiu & Asian Migrant Centre, 2005, pp. 26–28, 31).

The Hong Kong Government has also facilitated the establishment of centres for FDWs. The Home Affairs Department oversees their implementation while the Hong Kong Bayanihan Trust sponsors and manages the centres (Home Affairs Department, 2011). In addition, an increasing number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are championing the rights of foreign workers and lobbying the Government on different fronts to improve the protection and enforcement of FDWs’ rights in Hong Kong (see Bell & Piper, 2005; Briones, 2009; Law & Nadeau, 1999). The work that these numerous NGOs carry out can be categorized into the following areas: workers’ rights, public education programmes, leisure and entertainment, professional training, health-related services, visas, individual counselling, legal advice, and temporary shelter.

New Arrivals from Mainland China

The second largest group of migrant women in Hong Kong consists of female immigrants from mainland China. Categorized as “new arrivals” by the Hong Kong Government, these are women who have entered Hong Kong legally through One-way Permits. The One-way Permit scheme is a points-based mechanism used by the mainland authorities to determine priority for family reunion in Hong Kong. The quota is set at about 55,000 per year (Bacon-Shone, Lam, & Yip, 2008). Among the One-way Permit holders, women vastly outnumber men. For example, in 2010 the sex ratio for One-way Permit holders was 394 males per 1,000 females. This is largely a result of the fact that many Hong Kong men have married mainland Chinese women,

2. Although we use the term “new arrivals” in this chapter, we by no means agree with the negative legal implications and social connotations associated with the term. For a discussion of the change in official terminologies for mainland Chinese migrants and their social meanings, see Lau (2008).
who have applied for permission to come to Hong Kong to join their husbands. This group, together with the large number of FDWs, led to a change in the sex ratio in Hong Kong from 1,087 males per 1,000 females in 1981 to 881 males per 1,000 females in 2010 (Census and Statistics Department, 2011b, pp. 2, 6).

According to the Hong Kong Government’s survey in 2005, there were 241,000 new arrivals, which accounted for 3.5% of the population in Hong Kong. It was estimated that these persons lived in 157,600 different households, or 6.9% of all households in Hong Kong. As the new arrivals group consisted mostly of wives from mainland China reuniting with their Hong Kong husbands, 73.7% of the new arrivals were females in contrast to 52.2% of the general population were females. Also, the population of female new arrivals was relatively younger, with a median age of 34 years as compared to the median age of the entire female population in Hong Kong which was 38. The proportion of new arrivals with more than a secondary level of education, however, was smaller than that for the general population in Hong Kong. Furthermore, less than half of new arrivals were economically active, possibly due to their lower level of education and child care responsibilities. Statistics also show that a majority of the new arrivals aged 15 and over did not possess office work skills such as typing, accounting, and knowledge of computer software applications. Indeed, the majority of new arrivals were homemakers. Their median monthly household income (HK$10,100) was significantly lower than the median monthly household income of the general population in Hong Kong (HK$18,900). Moreover, since most of the new arrivals had limited English language skills they had difficulty obtaining jobs with more attractive career prospects. Currently, most female new arrivals are employed in lower-level service jobs such as restaurant servers, janitors, and salespersons. A majority of the new arrivals surveyed expressed the hope that they would be able to receive more job training such as in computer-related office skills (49.7%), domestic helper skills (32.3%), and job-seeking and interviewing skills (31.4%) (Census and Statistics Department, 2006, pp. 31–34, 43–44).

Since nearly all of the female new arrivals come to Hong Kong as
a result of a cross-border marriage to a Hong Kong man, the services targeting this group are also highly gendered. The Government provides assistance in child care including day nursery care, subsidies for child care centres, after-school child care services, and temporary child care services as well as a range of services in comprehensive family service centres. However, a survey in 2002–2003 showed that only a very small number of the new arrivals (3.4%) had used these services (Census and Statistics Department, 2004, p. 7). On the other hand, NGOs play an important part in providing services and training to female new arrivals including government-sponsored programmes such as pre-departure programmes for wives who have been granted One-way Permits, which provide information and training for them on how to adapt to life in Hong Kong. There are also numerous post-arrival programmes that seek to engage female new arrivals, from make-up and cooking classes to parent-child relations and volunteer groups. Apart from the cost involved and the class timings, there are deeper reasons behind the unsatisfactory response from potential users of these programmes. Studies have found that the providers often regard the women as passive recipients of services, and may misunderstand the social situation and cultural background of the users. They also often find that the design and content of the programmes are tailored more to the local population, and seek to instill values that ultimately contribute to a hierarchy that places mainlanders on a lower rung of Hong Kong’s social hierarchy than local people (Lau, 2008).

A further distinction is made within the new arrivals group by the Government who consider those who have been in Hong Kong for less than three years as being more vulnerable, and hence in need of more support than those who have been in Hong Kong for a longer period (Home Affairs Department, 2004). They are referred to as the “very new arrivals.” Among this group, 66.5% were females, and their median age was 32 years according to a 2002–2003 survey. In comparison, male new arrivals were mostly young children. Among the very new arrivals aged 15 and over, 28.5% had primary and below school education, 67.8% had a secondary school education, and only 3.7% had tertiary education. Less than half (46.4%) participated in paid economic activities while many of them stayed at home as full-
time homemakers. In terms of income, more than 75% had a household income of less than HK$15,000. The median monthly household income of this group was HK$10,600, which was much lower than the median monthly household income of HK$20,000 for the general population in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2004, pp. 59, 71–72).

To facilitate integration of the new arrivals to Hong Kong society, the Government has published a *Service Handbook for New Arrivals*, and has established a thematic service that includes “integration activities.” These activities cover sight-seeing, interest groups, carnivals, exhibitions, and volunteer programmes among others. However, while 69.0% of the very new female arrivals had obtained the Handbook, only 10.5% of the women participated in the integration activities (Census and Statistics Department, 2004, pp. 73–74). The low participation rate may be attributed to a mismatch between the services provided and the needs of the women. For example, many of the very new arrivals interviewed in the survey pointed out that what they really need is training in typing, computer skills, accounting, and other office skills to allow them to quickly find a job so that they can increase their household income and improve their living conditions (Census and Statistics Department, 2004, p. 61). The new arrivals hope to find employment, and their sense of frustration over the mismatch of government resources and their genuine needs stands in stark contrast to the stereotypical impressions of many local residents that the mainlanders are intrinsically lazy and abusers of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme.

Indeed, in Hong Kong the terms “new arrivals,” “new immigrants,” and “mainlanders” are used interchangeably, and are highly charged with the identity politics that exist between Hong Kong and mainland China. Particularly on the economic level, mainlanders are stigmatized as poor and less-educated individuals who abuse the local welfare system and the generosity of Hong Kong people. On a cultural level and as depicted in popular literature and films, mainlanders are often negatively portrayed as lacking sophistication and hygienic habits while also bringing violence and crime. New arrivals are therefore constructed in diametrical opposition to local
values. Even after they acquire permanent residency, they will still be considered new arrivals or perpetual outsiders. This social rejection of new arrivals is worse for women, who are assumed to be ignorant, greedy, and willing to use sexuality to achieve upward social mobility. For example, they are often represented in the media as seductresses who destroy other people’s families (Shih, 1998). Female new arrivals are also categorically discriminated against by the families of their Hong Kong husbands and social service providers (New Women Arrivals League, 2009). Thus, the difficulties that they face are not only complex, as they encompass economic, social, and cultural factors, but also pervasive across this group. Moreover, these issues need to be dealt with on different levels simultaneously including through public education and equal opportunity legislation.

Female new arrivals in Hong Kong have recently become more active in organizing self-help associations and making their voices heard in mainstream society such as through public participation and publications. One such example is the New Women Arrivals League (Tonggen She), an NGO initiated and led by female new arrivals who offer mutual support through counselling, legal advice, and empowerment programmes. Academic and applied research related to new arrivals has also become more diverse in recent years. Kwok (2004), for example, has focused on the environmental stress that female new arrivals face. Using the concept of habitable space for users and by users, the study proposes a participatory approach in which newly arrived women and children take part in designing their own living areas. These developments will help to improve local society’s understanding of mainland migrant women, and perhaps cause them to be willing to involve new arrivals in making changes.

Ethnic Minorities

“Ethnic minorities” in Hong Kong refer to “persons of non-Chinese ethnicity.” According to the 2006 population by-census, a total of 342,198 ethnic minority individuals lived in Hong Kong constituting 5.0% of the whole population. The breakdown was as follows: 32.9% Filipinos, 25.7% Indonesians, 10.6% whites, 6.0% Indians, 5.3%
mixed, 4.7% Nepalese, 3.9% Japanese, 3.5% Thais, 3.2% Pakistanis, 1.4% Koreans, 2.3% other Asians, and 0.6% others (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, pp. 2, 17). Aside from these residents, there were 749 refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong as of January 2012 (UNHCR, 2012). According to earlier statistics from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, slightly more than one-third of this group were female (i.e., 39% as reported in the *UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2009*) (UNHCR, 2010). In 2005, most of the refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong were from Southeast and South Asia, especially Viet Nam and Sri Lanka, with a much smaller percentage from Africa (UNHCR, 2007, p. 361). For ease of discussion, the following description excludes FDWs and refugees.

Among the different groups of resident minorities in Hong Kong, people of South Asian and African origins suffer more cultural misunderstanding and social discrimination on a daily basis. Indians have been in Hong Kong since the beginning of British colonization in the nineteenth century and now work in many different occupations. In contrast, Africans came in the late 1990s mostly as traders. Regardless, ethnic minorities in Hong Kong are constantly non-differentiated, and little effort is made by the Government or in popular discourse to understand their very different traditions and religions. Furthermore, regardless of length of stay, they are considered outsiders due to their skin colour and their cultural practices, although many of them were born and raised in Hong Kong, and speak Cantonese fluently. The convergence of government-led identification and public discourse thus causes minorities to be rendered invisible, leading to further physical isolation and social marginalization.

In contrast to both local and newly arrived women, the participation of ethnic minority women in the labour force is very high. According to a research carried out by the Equal Opportunities Commission in 2006, 89.2% of minority women were economically active in the labour force, but it was speculated that many of them held low-paying jobs because of their lower educational attainment (Chu, 2011). In the same presentation, Chu reported that although 73.7% of ethnic minority individuals spoke English, only 25.1% had received
Migrant Women and Ethnic Minority Women

a post-secondary education while 75.4% engaged in elementary occupations. He also argued that the significant school drop-out rate among minority women aged 19–24 meant that they generally did not go on to post-secondary education. In addition, ethnic minorities are often in a disadvantaged position compared to ethnic Chinese who have the same qualifications. In a 2004 survey carried out by the Department of Social Work of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 67% of respondents believed that they were discriminated against because of their race. Furthermore, almost two-thirds (62.9%) thought that racial discrimination was a serious social problem in Hong Kong and more than half (58.6%) believed that their ethnicity determines their prospects. It is also important to note that almost half (48.2%) believed that they were treated as second-class citizens (Department of Social Work, 2005).

Among the various ethnic communities, numerous associations and groups have been formed that serve various functions including consolidating regional and linguistic communities, bringing a sense of belonging to caste and ethnic groups, bringing together those with common sports interests and occupational affiliation. The Government also sponsors some NGOs to offer a range of services for ethnic minorities including language and skills courses, psychological counselling, information packages, and temporary shelters.

However, for many minority women access to these groups and activities is restricted because of their gender. Women are often reluctant to join these activities because by being active in these male-dominated programmes and organizations, they may run the risk of ruining their reputations. Thus, many ethnic minority women suffer from double marginalization; discrimination by mainstream society as a minority person, and further discrimination by their own ethnic community because they are women (Tam, 2010).

Conclusion

Migrants are “others” that are constructed according to the needs of the host society. As such, the labels change over time with social transformations in mainstream society. The differences among migrant
groups and mainstream society are maintained in an institutionalized hierarchy and practised in everyday life. Such differences are further given symbolic meanings and reinforced through popular discourses. However, the migrant experience is varied and migrant women should not be treated as a homogenous group. This chapter has focused on the larger groups of migrant women in Hong Kong who face obvious difficulties in their life.

There are female migrants who are not covered here in this short chapter, namely women expatriates who have come to Hong Kong for their work, and women and girls who have migrated to Hong Kong as wives and daughters of male expatriates. Historically, expatriate women have played various significant roles notably in the development of local education, charity, religion, healthcare, and legal reforms concerning marriage and family, and their contributions have been well documented by historians (see for example Jaschok & Miers, 1994). In recent years, fewer researchers have paid attention to the participation of expatriate women in Hong Kong society, although there are some exceptions such as the work of Findlay and Li (1998), Ford (2011), and Li et al. (1995) on women professionals in the expatriate community.

Discrimination against migrants occurs in most societal spheres including economic, social, political, and religious, which tend to reinforce each other. Hence, such discrimination is very difficult to eradicate. In the case of women migrants, it is well documented that in comparison to their male counterparts they suffer more problems in employment as a result of long-distance migration (see Chattopadhyay, 1998). Studies have also shown that gender role beliefs are a major reason for the downward social mobility of the wives of migrants (see Cooke, 2005). To understand the many problems that migrant women face, it is essential to contextualize the varied effects of domesticity on women and girls. Female migrants of different generations and in different stages of life need to be given their own voice. More in-depth data should be collected on factors that affect their access to social and cultural resources, particularly in the areas of education, employment, health, lifestyle, and public participation. This essential information can then be used as the basis for designing sound policies
that tackle the real problems that migrant women and girls face. We also believe that a participatory approach that respects women as knowledgeable agents and equal partners, and that involves them as partners of change, is the way to go forward.

Although long-term structural changes are needed to address the inequalities that migrant women in Hong Kong currently experience, in the short-term policy reform is critical to reduce the discrimination faced by different groups of migrant women, facilitate their integration in Hong Kong society, to tailor services to match their needs. For example, with regard to FDWs, although their pay, rest days, and other aspects of their employment are protected by the law, employers commonly violate these regulations. Under current legislation, if an FDW sues her employer for violating the law, she needs to apply and pay for a short-term visa while her case is being heard. The high fee for a visa extension, the need to finance her own living costs in Hong Kong in the interim, and other legal restrictions have inhibited FDWs from holding abusive employers accountable. For women newly arrived from mainland China, the current seven-year residence requirement has excluded them from accessing housing and other forms of social welfare when they are in need, thus rendering them more dependent on their husbands and more vulnerable to domestic violence. For ethnic minority women in Hong Kong, the current education system has seriously restricted their choice of schools and deprived them of the opportunity to learn Chinese. While minority women are trying hard to break the cycle of poverty for themselves and their children by enrolling in language education programmes, it is the responsibility of the Government to bring about policy-level changes to ensure that social and cultural marginalization is not reproduced in future generations.

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Victimization and Risk Behaviours among Girl-children

King-wa Lee, Nicole W. T. Cheung and Hua Zhong

Introduction

There is both global concern and long-standing academic interest in the West about whether, to what extent, and through what mechanisms girl-child status is improved or worsened by the process of development (Lewis, 1992; United Nations, 2010). According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a girl-child is defined as every girl under the age of 18 (United Nations, 1989). This chapter examines problems experienced by girl-children, namely, victimization, drug abuse, and offending behaviours, since the 1990s in Hong Kong. Much local research on these three issues has thus far employed cross-sectional analysis. This study goes beyond previous studies by approaching the issues from a longitudinal perspective and mapping out time-series trends.

Some scholars were optimistic that girl-child status would be enhanced by social development because the women’s liberation movement had reduced gender inequality (Adler, 1975; Simon, 1975). Yet many now argue that the social crises faced by girl-children are in fact increasing and that the participation of girls in
risky behaviours is approaching that of boys, because girls encounter more strain (including victimization) in modern societies and tend to cope with it through negative behaviours (Heimer & De Coster, 1999). Additionally, social development may lead to more young female “delinquents” or “offenders.” For instance, the normalization of recreational drug use among youths may make such drugs more available and acceptable to girls (Parker, Aldridge, & Measham, 1998). Conversely, as social constructionists argue (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996), the gender gap in delinquency/crime is closing not only because of a real upsurge in the delinquency/crime rates of girls but also because of the increased apprehension of girls for minor offences. The growing intolerance towards the deviancy of girl-children may also be a global institutional reaction to weakening patriarchal systems (Gray, 1997).

Our study attempts to connect these Western experiences to the Hong Kong milieu. There has been rising public concern over the victimization and deviant behaviour of girls in Hong Kong. Local girls are more reluctant to report incidents of abuse, which is seen as a taboo topic, than are their Western counterparts (Tang, 2002). Meanwhile, girls have been condemned for bullying schoolmates (Fong, 2009a), ganging up to rob people (Fong, 2008), taking drugs, and participating in compensated dating or *enjo kosai* (an imported Japanese custom in which girls exchange sexual favours and companionship for money and luxury gifts) (Fong, 2009b). To explore the status of girl-children in Hong Kong in this regard, we pose three questions:

1. What is the trend of child abuse victimization and consequent gendered strain among girl-children in Hong Kong?
2. Is there a change in youth drug culture among girl-children in Hong Kong?
3. How far does the trend in arrests of girl-children reflect public tolerance and official reaction to girl-child delinquency and crime in Hong Kong?

These questions will be addressed using various time-series data (child abuse victimization data from the Child Protection Registry, drug abuse data from the Central Registry of Drug Abuse, and arrest data from the Hong Kong Police Force) from the mid-1980s to the
2000s in Hong Kong and by comparing the data with relevant trends in the United States. It should be noted that the term girl-child in our analysis is extended to those aged under 21 because of the constraint of classifying age groups in the existing datasets. The United States is used as a comparator because there is greater availability of time-series data on the three girl-child issues of concern here. The comparison should help us to see how far trends in Hong Kong differ from those in the West. In short, this piece will help inform policymakers and service providers by offering a fuller picture of the social crises confronting girl-children, their changes over time, and the potential social forces behind these changes in Hong Kong.

**Girl-child Victimization: Child Abuse**

**Child Abuse in Hong Kong**

Following the Social Welfare Department’s (2011) *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases (Revised 2007)*, child abuse in Hong Kong is defined as any act of commission or omission that endangers or impairs the physical/psychological health and development of an individual under the age of 18. Our analysis is based on data for the period between 2000 and 2009 retrieved from the Child Protection Registry, a database jointly maintained by the Social Welfare Department, non-governmental organizations, and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (Social Welfare Department, 2012). In light of the number of newly reported cases, we include the child abuse incidence rates for girls and boys, computed as (number of newly reported juveniles being abused / number of juveniles in the Hong Kong population) × 100,000. We use the female-to-male percentage of child abuse cases to describe the gender gap, calculated as [female incidence rate / (male + female incidence rates)] × 100. This measure gauges the girl-child share of the incidence of child abuse victimization after adjusting for the sex composition of the target population.

Table 1 shows that the overall incidence rate of newly reported abuse cases (per 100,000) for children aged under 18 has more
Table 1  Sex-specific incidence rates (per 100,000) of newly reported child abuse cases and gender gap (female percentage) by age group in Hong Kong, selected years from 2000 to 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–2</td>
<td>Female rate</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male rate</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female percentage</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>Female rate</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male rate</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female percentage</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–8</td>
<td>Female rate</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>137.6</td>
<td>108.6</td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male rate</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>115.7</td>
<td>132.7</td>
<td>117.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female percentage</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9–11</td>
<td>Female rate</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>100.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male rate</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>106.2</td>
<td>109.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female percentage</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–14</td>
<td>Female rate</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>101.5</td>
<td>117.2</td>
<td>134.5</td>
<td>137.6</td>
<td>177.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male rate</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female percentage</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–17</td>
<td>Female rate</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>109.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male rate</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female percentage</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>Female rate</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>101.0</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>111.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male rate</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>69.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female percentage</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

than doubled, rising from 36.2 in 2000 to 89.6 in 2009, indicating that child abuse could be worsening in Hong Kong. The increase in incidence rates across age groups was steady between 2000 and 2003, but has escalated rapidly since 2004. The Tin Shui Wai family violence tragedy in 2004 that resulted in four deaths generated public pressure on the Social Welfare Department to improve its protocols. This tragedy also prompted the Hong Kong police to change their arrest and prosecution guidelines to monitor cases of child abuse and spousal violence more closely. The second leap in incidence rates from 2006 (67.3) to 2009 (89.6) coincided with the implementation of the new *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases (Revised 2007)*.

Girls as a whole are more likely to be victimized than boys. As indicated in the sub-total row of Table 1, the incidence rate of child abuse in girls was 41.4 in 2000 but nearly tripled to 111.8 in 2009, whereas the risk of abuse in boys was generally lower but also increased from 31.3 in 2000 to 69.5 in 2009. Rates of child abuse in boys tended to increase with age, peak at the ages of 6–8, and then decline rapidly from the age of nine onwards. Yet for girls, the risk of being abused continued to rise after the age of eight before peaking at the ages of 12–14. A similar observation that the victimization of girls peaks at a higher rate and later than boys also emerges in community-based survey studies (Tang, 1998, 2002). The overall female-to-male percentage of the incidence of child abuse across all age groups rose steadily from 57% in 2000 to 62% in 2009, implying that girls’ share of victimization is gradually surpassing that of boys. The victims of child abuse in the age groups of 12–14 and 15–17 were predominantly girls (68% to 88%), indicating their heightened risk of abuse compared with boys in the same age range (Table 1).

Sexual abuse and physical abuse are the two leading types of child maltreatment involving girls in Hong Kong. Specifically, the incidence rates for physical abuse almost doubled between 2003 (23.9) and 2009 (43.7). As for sexual abuse incidence rates, these more than doubled between 2003 (20.2) and 2009 (54.7). Incidence rates for neglect soared most rapidly among all types of abuse of girls (from 1.3 in 2003 to 8.0 in 2009), although here the difference between
genders was not obvious. The incidence rates for the psychological abuse of girls were stable (Table 2).

**Table 2**  Sex-specific incidence rates (per 100,000) and percentages for different types of child abuse in Hong Kong, 2003, 2006, and 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of abuse</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological abuse</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple abuse</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total (number)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>303</td>
<td></td>
<td>467</td>
<td></td>
<td>589</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>178</td>
<td></td>
<td>339</td>
<td></td>
<td>404</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The sub-total is the number of newly reported cases.

**Child Maltreatment and Neglect in the United States**

American national data on child maltreatment and neglect was retrieved from reports published by the Children’s Bureau (various years) of the Department of Health and Human Services. The Bureau gathers data from child protection agencies and analyses them through the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. Table 3 shows that the prevalence rate for child maltreatment in the United States declined from 1,340 (per 100,000) in 1990 to its lowest rate of 1,010
Victimization and Risk Behaviours among Girl-children

Between 1990 and 2008, the prevalence rates for neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse dropped by 10%, 55%, and 58%, respectively (Finkelhor, Jones, & Shattuck, 2010; Jones, Finkelhor, & Halter, 2006). The percentage of female victims among all reported child abuse cases remained steady at 51% to 54%. The general decline in child abuse has been attributed to the economic prosperity of the United States during that period, an increase in the number of agents engaged in social intervention, and generational change (Finkelhor & Jones, 2006).

The relationship between age and the risk of being abused differs between the United States and Hong Kong. As Figure 1 indicates, with little gender disparity, American children under the age of one had the highest victimization rate at 2,170 (per 100,000) in 2008. The rate halved to 1,290 when the child was a year old, and continued to decrease as the child grew older. The gender gap widened when American children reached the ages of 12–15, with girls being subject to much more victimization than boys. In stark contrast, a child’s risk of being abused in Hong Kong tends to follow an inverted U-shaped pattern of age distribution (Table 1). This implies that these two societies should adopt different child abuse prevention strategies. Significant resources should be allocated to preventing the abuse of infants in the United States, whereas in Hong Kong the focus should be on issues of abuse arising from a child’s growth.

**Table 3**  Child abuse prevalence rates (per 100,000) for both sex and percentage of females among all reported victims in the United States, selected years from 1990 to 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Prevalence rate</th>
<th>Female percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1,470</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1,380</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1,180</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,240</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Children’s Bureau (various years).
Our trend data on illicit drug abuse by girl-children, as a form of risk behaviour, in Hong Kong from 1986 to 2010 are derived from the Central Registry of Drug Abuse, a database managed by the Narcotics Division (2012) of the Security Bureau. The Central Registry of Drug Abuse is not based on a representative survey design. Instead, it forms a reporting network that covers various healthcare, social service, welfare, drug counselling and treatment, and law enforcement organizations. It collects anonymous information on a voluntary annual basis from drug abusers who come into contact with the networking agencies. Despite limitations such as convenience sampling, the underreporting of social service agencies, and the exclusion of hidden drug users, the Central Registry of Drug Abuse offers useful data that reflect patterns and trends of illicit drug use.
in the Hong Kong population. Here, we include the drug abuse prevalence rates for female and male adolescents, computed as (number of reported juvenile drug abusers / number of juveniles in the Hong Kong population) × 100,000. We use the female-to-male percentage of drug abuse cases to measure the gender gap (the girl-children’s share of drug abuse), based on the formula of [female prevalence rate / (male + female prevalence rates)] × 100.

Drug abuse among girl-children has risen from 1986 to 2010. For the group aged 16–20 (Figure 2), the prevalence rates (per 100,000) of female drug abusers increased slowly from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s (from 110 in 1986 to 133 in 1992), after which the female rates rose rapidly (to 391 in 2000) and then remained at relatively high rates during the 2000s (reaching 314 in 2010). For the younger age group of those aged 10–15 (Figure 3), the female rates (while lower than in the older age group) saw an overall tenfold increase, with a sharp rise from 12 in 1986 to 118 in 1994, and then accelerating at the beginning of the first decade of the twenty-first century (129 at 2000) and at the end of the decade (180 in 2009). The scale of the growth in prevalence in this younger age group far exceeds that in the older group aged 16–20, whose increase was threefold over the period concerned.

Furthermore, the two decades since 1990 have witnessed a shrinking gender gap in juvenile drug abuse, suggesting that drug abuse by girls is catching up with that of boys. For the 16–20 age group, the female-to-male percentage of drug abusers (female percentage, hereafter) grew steadily over the 1990s (from 18% in 1986 to 23% in 1990 and 25% in 1999) and the 2000s (from 28% in 2000 to 31% in 2010) (Figure 2). In comparison, the narrowing of the gender gap in the younger age group (10–15) intensified, with a steeper rise among the female proportion of this age group throughout the 1990s and 2000s (from 27% in 1986 to 41% in 1990, 45% in 2000, and then 55% in 2010) (Figure 3).

With regard to the types of drugs being abused (Table 4), heroin, which has dominated the Hong Kong drug scene since the 1960s, was the primary drug of choice for girls aged under 21 (the 10–15 and 16–20 age groups combined) with its use reaching 77%
Figure 2  Sex-specific prevalence rates (per 100,000) and gender gap (female percentage) of drug abuse among those aged 16–20 in Hong Kong, 1986–2010

Source: Narcotics Division (2012).

Figure 3  Sex-Specific prevalence rates (per 100,000) and gender gap (female percentage) of drug abuse among those aged 10–15 in Hong Kong, 1986–2010

Source: Narcotics Division (2012).
### Table 4

Sex-specific percentages of the abuse of selected types of drugs among all reported female and male drug abusers aged under 21 in Hong Kong, selected years from 1986 to 2010 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Heroin Female</th>
<th>Heroin Male</th>
<th>Marijuana Female</th>
<th>Marijuana Male</th>
<th>Ketamine Female</th>
<th>Ketamine Male</th>
<th>Ecstasy Female</th>
<th>Ecstasy Male</th>
<th>Ice Female</th>
<th>Ice Male</th>
<th>Cocaine Female</th>
<th>Cocaine Male</th>
<th>Cough medicine Female</th>
<th>Cough medicine Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>67</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Narcotics Division (2012).

Notes: The percentages may add up to more than 100% as drug abusers may report the abuse of more than one type of drug.

— = nil; @ = < 1%; n.a. = data not available.
(of all reported cases of girls’ drug abuse) in 1986 and around 40%–60% during the 1990s; afterwards, its use and popularity reversed, dropping significantly in the 2000s (reaching its lowest rate of 1% in 2010). The abuse of psychotropic substances became rampant among girl drug users in the 1990s. The popularity of such substances further soared during the 2000s, to such an extent that the use of such substances surpassed that of heroin. The kinds of psychotropic drugs most favoured by girls were marijuana (cannabis), cough medicines, and ice in the 1990s, followed by ecstasy (MDMA) and ketamine in the early 2000s with the arrival of the dancing-on-drugs rave culture and the sole dominance of ketamine in the late 2000s. In recent years, despite the fading of the clubbing culture, ketamine use among girls is still likely to happen on an occasional basis and, apart from raves/discos, has spilled over into leisure and school life, along with a slight renewal in the popularity of ice (Joe Laidler, Hodson, & Day, 2004; Joe Laidler & Hunt, 2008). Male teens showed a similar pattern in the types of drugs abused to that of girls. By the 2000s, the gender difference was negligible with regard to the particularly high tendency to abuse psychotropic substances compared with heroin (Table 4).

**Drug Abuse in the United States**

We also present some data for 1985 to 2010 retrieved from the Monitoring the Future Study. Funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the study has measured substance abuse in high school students (eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades) through an ongoing nationwide representative student survey from 1975 onwards. Each year, a total of approximately 50,000 students are surveyed (Institute for Social Research, 2012). Table 5 reports the sex-specific percentages of students abusing selected substances (marijuana, cocaine, inhalants, and ecstasy) in the previous 30 days among all student respondents. Marijuana is the most preferred choice of drug in the United States, but the percentage of girls using it within the previous 30 days fell from 22.4% in 1985 to 16.9% in 2010. Cocaine was the second most favourite drug among girls in 1985, but the percentage of those who had used it within the previous 30 days fell from 5.6% in this year to 0.7% in 2010. In the United States, a gender gap exists in the use of
marijuana, cocaine, and inhalants, with somewhat lower percentages of schoolgirls abusing these drugs, but the gender gap is not obvious in such clubbing drugs as ecstasy, a scenario common to Hong Kong as well. The proliferation of clubbing and recreational drug use, especially ecstasy and gamma-hydroxy-butyrate, is also evident in the United States (Banken, 2004). What is different from the United States, however, is that marijuana and cocaine never became the dominant drugs in Hong Kong.

**Normalization and Gendering**

The remarkable upsurge in the abuse of illicit drugs (notably such psychotrophic substances as ecstasy, ketamine, marijuana, and ice)
among girls, and the narrowing gender gap in drug abuse since the 1990s in Hong Kong, may be due to the so-called “normalization of recreational drug use” in youth populations. Evidence of a trend towards normalization has been found in the United Kingdom (Parker et al., 1998), Australia (Duff, 2003), the United States (Banken, 2004), and European countries (Hakkarainen, Tigerstedt, & Tammi, 2007; Pape & Rossow, 2004). Hong Kong has also experienced this normalization, although at a slower pace than in the West (Cheung & Cheung, 2006). The term “normalization” encompasses several dimensions, including easier access to illicit psychotropic drugs, higher rates of use among the ordinary youth population, and growing tolerance of recreational use. Today’s recreational users see themselves as recreational consumers, not drug users. Diverging from the traditional image of drug use as a subculture, a more significant marker of normalization is greater accommodation of sensible recreational drug use (taking calculated risks) as a peripheral yet normal option for managing leisure time. Although youngsters realize some of the problems associated with the recreational/occasional use of psychotropic drugs, they believe that these problems are bearable consequences compared with the intolerable costs of a career as an addict, in which drugs dictate lifestyle and thus severely undermine regular life.

Gender is linked to the trend towards normalization in the sense that the gender gap in recreational drug use appears to be closing, with rising numbers of young girls having greater access to and experimenting with illicit drugs (Parker et al., 1998). Under normalization, notions of consumption (just like ordinary consumption) as unproblematic and pleasant rather than causing dependency, marginalization, and misery are evident not only in today’s boy drug users but also in their female counterparts who have moved away from their past portrayals as double-marginalized drug addicts (being a deviant and a female role violator) and victims discriminated against in the primarily male-dominated illicit drug market (Maher, 1997). The gender identity in normalizing recreational drug culture is attained in the overlapping recreational spheres of men’s and women’s accomplishment of both masculinities.
and femininities through their drug consumption (Measham, 2002). One typical example concerns the gendered expectation of drugs: young men tend to relate the high level of intoxication derived from taking club drugs to street masculinity, whereas girls are more likely to exercise self-policing and minimize intoxication/loss of control so as to stay within the traditional boundaries of femininity.

**Girl-child Offenders: Arrest Trends**

*Arrests in Hong Kong*

The Hong Kong Police Force (2012) maintains a central bank of official statistics on arrests for crimes broken down by sex-age group. The limitations of the official data on arrests have been discussed extensively, such as the underreporting of crimes and the probable sensitivity of the data to macro social and policy changes (Mosher, Miethe, & Phillips, 2002). Despite these shortcomings, police arrest statistics in Hong Kong are valuable for systematic studies of long-term trends in offences committed by girls/boys and the official responses to these offences. The arrest rates of girls and boys were calculated using the following formula: (number of juveniles arrested / number of juveniles in Hong Kong population) × 100,000. To determine the gender gap, we further calculated the percentage of arrests involving females through the following formula: ([female arrest rate / (male + female arrest rates)] × 100. We looked chiefly at the overall arrest trends from 1986 to 2009 because of space limitations (Figure 4 for ages 16–20; Figure 5 for ages 10–15).

As Figure 4 illustrates, despite some slight increases in the early 1990s and some fluctuations, the overall crime arrest rates (per 100,000) for girls aged 16–20 were relatively stable: at around 400 during the period from 1986 to 2009. Conversely, Figure 5 tells us that the arrest rates for overall crime of girls aged 10–15 increased continuously until the mid-1990s. The rate of increase was roughly sevenfold, from 93 in 1986 to about 675 in 1995. After that, the rates for this age group dropped slightly, but remained at 500 in the 2000s.
Figure 4  Sex-specific rates (per 100,000) and gender gap (female percentage) of all arrests among those aged 16–20 in Hong Kong, 1986–2009

Source: Hong Kong Police Force (2012).

Figure 5  Sex-specific rates (per 100,000) and gender gap (female percentage) of all arrests among those aged 10–15 in Hong Kong, 1986–2009

Source: Hong Kong Police Force (2012).
(even higher than their senior counterparts), still five times the 1986 rate.

Notwithstanding some increases from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the rate for boys aged 16–20 decreased sharply from 3,680 in the peak year of 1994 to 1,655 in 2009, nearly 1.5 times lower than its original level in 1986 (Figure 4). For boys aged 10–15, the rates gradually fell from 2,475 in 1989 to 1,198 in 2009 (Figure 5).

The rising trend of female arrest rates in Figures 4 and 5 indicates a narrowing gender gap. This narrowing has mainly been driven by a drop in the arrest rates of boys during this period. In the younger age group, however, increases in female arrests have also contributed greatly to closing the gender gap so that the magnitude of the change is more dramatic. Specifically, the female proportion of youngsters aged 10–15 increased from 10% of overall arrests in 1986 to 30% in 2009, indicating that younger girls accounted for one-third of the overall arrests in this age group. This growth is much larger than the increase in the percentage of females arrested in the older age group of 16–20 (from 12% in 1986 to 20% in 2009).

**Arrests in the United States**

Arrest trends in the United States were also reviewed using the Uniform Crime Reports. This official dataset on arrests has been gathered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation since 1930 and contains detailed annual sex-by-age breakdowns (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012). Based on the 1986–2009 Uniform Crime Reports, we derived the sex-specific trend figures on United States total arrest rates and the gender gap for young people (Figure 6). The formulas for calculating female (male) arrest rates and the gender gap are the same as those that we used in the above analyses for Hong Kong. Here, girls are young females under the age of 21. Unlike Hong Kong, arrest trends for female juveniles of different age groups in the United States have not differed greatly from each other in the past two or three decades (Zhong & Schwartz, 2010). It is thus unnecessary for us to compare younger and older girls in the United States. Notably, the actual arrest rates of girls in the United States are at least five times higher than the
rates in Hong Kong. Here, we chiefly compare the changing trends in female arrests and the gender gaps in the two societies.

For girls aged 10–20, the total arrest rate steadily increased until the mid-1990s, before stabilising at the level of 5,000 per 100,000, 1.5 times the 1986 rate. Scholars have argued that this rise is not entirely driven by real behavioural changes in girls but result from changes in law enforcement and penal policy (Social Constructionist Explanation). Specifically, the visible upsurge in young female offenders is the result of more punitive criminal justice policies targeting female-dominated offences and less tolerant public/media attitudes towards wild girls in the United States in recent years (Steffensmeier et al., 2005). Although the arrest rates of girls in the United States are much higher than the rates for Hong Kong girls, the increase in the arrests of younger girls in Hong Kong (fivefold) seems faster than that of their American counterparts. This further indicates that Hong Kong society may have developed certain mechanisms that have boosted the arrests of younger girls more quickly since the 1990s.

Figure 6  Sex-specific rates (per 100,000) and gender gap (female percentage) of all arrests among those aged 10–20 in the United States, 1986–2009

For boys aged 10–20, the trends in the United States and Hong Kong are similar: the United States also experienced a continuous decline in the total arrest rates of boys after the mid-1990s. This drop in the boys’ rates and rise in the girls’ rates narrowed the gender gap: the female percentage of total arrests increased from 20% in 1986 to 29% in 2009.

**Social Constructionist Explanation**

Similar to the United States, the popular discourse in Hong Kong not only portrays a rising trend of girl-child offenders, but also displays a tendency to hold girl-children responsible for the deviant acts that were committed (Man, 2009). Local scholars have implicitly admitted that such changes are socially constructed and largely due to the macro-level social transformation of Hong Kong (Leung, 1996). Building upon Beck’s (2000) thesis, we suggest that since gender equality in post-industrial Hong Kong has greatly improved through the relatively equal access of the genders to education and employment, various social crises such as the offending behaviours of women are increasingly less likely to be perceived as social problems with structural causes than as the personal failure of individual females. Females, especially young girls, are no longer deemed to be passive “victims” (Moulds, 1978) but active agents seeking their own path. Individual female offenders, including girls, should thus be responsible for their own behaviour, and the criminal justice system should not show any sympathy to them, unlike in the past. Such shifts are likely to exacerbate the negative impressions of girl-child offenders held by legal practitioners and the public/media.

Moreover, the increasing amount of attention paid to minor offences in the criminal justice system of Hong Kong may have unintentionally led to an upsurge in juvenile delinquency/crime among younger girls. The penal philosophy has shifted towards the use of preventative punishment, emphasizing early identification and the enhanced formal control of problematic individuals, especially young people (Garland, 2001). Police initiatives thus include the proactive formal treatment of minor violations of the law as a strategy for controlling serious criminality. As a society with extraordinarily
low crime rates and a well-staffed and well-trained police force (Traver, 2009), the Hong Kong police have both the intention and the ability to focus on minor offenders. Also, the standardized commercial practices in supermarkets and convenience stores in Hong Kong that make the reporting of theft compulsory may render such minor offences as shoplifting by girls more visible (Leung, 1996; Li, 2009). Targeting low-level offenders for legal intervention, however, may inadvertently have caused the arrest rates of girls to spike disproportionately compared with those of boys, because the offences committed by younger girls are usually less serious/chronic in nature than those committed by boys (Steffensmeier et al., 2005).

Policy Implications

This chapter has examined the status of girl-children in Hong Kong by assessing their child abuse victimization, drug use, and offending behaviours. In this section, we discuss the policy implications of this data.

The United States experience of child abuse prevention and intervention suggests that population-level prevention initiatives, based on the public health approach, are the most promising options for reducing maltreatment rates (Finkelhor & Jones, 2006). These initiatives target the modification of caretakers’ health behaviours (e.g., mental health and drinking) in order to decrease the risk of child abuse from this quarter. A similar public health approach recommended by the World Health Organization is currently operating in Hong Kong. This approach has had a positive reception and, more specifically, has given rise to various organizations offering preventative education and victim support services in Hong Kong (Chan, Chiu, & Chiu 2005). The Hong Kong Government has achieved several policy objectives since then. First, legal reforms to strengthen sanctions against child abuse have been carried out via the amendment of the Domestic Violence Ordinance to the Domestic and Cohabitation Relationships Violence Ordinance. This amendment has extended the scope of legal child protection from the children of married couples to the children of parents who are cohabiting but not married. Second, the Procedural
Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases (Revised 2007) has been implemented by the Social Welfare Department (2011) to improve the ways in which child abuse cases are handled and reported by the social service professions. Third, since 2005 the Government has adopted various anti-poverty measures, such as the introduction of social enterprises. These measures are helping to ease the child care burden of marginalized families, thereby lowering the risk of child abuse in such families.

In addition, the life course impact of child abuse interventions on girl victims warrants closer examination. Previous research has demonstrated that girl-children who are abused tend to undergo early ageing (Foster, Hagan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008) and cope with strain by behaving in deviant ways throughout life. For instance, stressors from physical and sexual abuse are related to substance use (Ireland, Smith, & Thornberry, 2002) and criminal violence (Widom, 1989) in adolescence and adulthood. Effective interventions for girl victims should not only alleviate child abuse and strain, but also divert these victims from drifting into deviant behaviour or even into a life of crime. Longitudinal research in the United States has confirmed that the risk of child abuse and neglect can be largely reduced by prenatal and early childhood home visits (Olds et al., 1997). Hence, policy makers and service providers in Hong Kong should explore whether this risk reduction mechanism can be built into the current postnatal and child care services offered by various local social enterprises.

Sexual abuse is a particularly acute problem among teenage girls. The sexual objectification of girls maintains the dynamics of dominance/submission that defines the current situation of gender inequality (MacKinnon, 1983). One possible preventative strategy targeting sexual abuse involves the setting up of a sex offender register, which is currently in progress by setting up a mechanism for checking sexual conviction records for those engaged in child-related work (The Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong, 2010). For forensic examinations, police interviews, and the treatment of sexual assault victims, a one-stop crisis centre is also advocated. However, the only centre in operation, run by RainLily, a local non-governmental organization, has been under financial strain owing to
the inconsistent support of the Government (Beh, 2005) (for more details, see Chapter 6 of this volume). Finally, underreporting has long been a headache for those involved in handling child abuse cases. The Chinese concept of face and its emphasis on the integrity of a family has added to the stress of the child victim, who finds it difficult to report abuse (Chan, 2009). Chinese culture often leads to a perception that little will result from the reporting of a case, thus reinforcing reluctance among the community to report child abuse (Lau et al., 1999). Although education on risk assessment has been provided for professionals to help them better identify hidden cases, culturally specific and gender-specific approaches to preventative education and interventions regarding the abuse of girls should be strengthened: for example, removing the Chinese cultural taboo on the disclosure of sexual victimization, sorting out the power relations of girl-children with family members and teenage intimate partners that lead to the abuse, and empowering girl-children to cope with victimization-related stress. The heightened strain among girls in the face of the escalating risk of being abused urges interventions to minimize the life course impact of such abuse.

Our analysis of illicit drug use among girls suggests that the normalization of a recreational drug culture reduces the gender gap in juvenile psychotropic substance abuse. Drug researchers have advocated strengthening the application of harm reduction principles to the intervention of normalizing recreational drug use, as both approaches construe illicit drug use as an unavoidable and increasingly widespread social activity rather than as a pathological form of behaviour subsisting at the margins of society (Erickson & Hathaway, 2010). However, harm reduction will have to go beyond the conventional confines of drug addiction, as the conventional reference point of harm reduction has been the minimization of harm on the basis of drug dependency. The reference point of harm reduction for recreational drug use should be the maintenance of less harmful use and the prevention of progression to dependency. That means that any proposed policy on drugs should consider more harm reduction strategies in relation to the trend of normalization.

Specifically, for example, given the potential capacity of today’s
recreational drug-using youngsters, including the female ones, to engage in reflexive thinking, the next generation of harm reduction measures should equip young people with the capability to make informed and proper choices in relation to hierarchies of harm in drug use, and move beyond the message of just saying “no” to drugs, which may not appeal to drug-taking teens. Also, harm reduction can utilize the drug-using peer culture, which may be a helpful feature in containing the problem. Peer support and informal control within the culture of normalization have been found to be particularly instrumental in maintaining occasional use, practising precautions against overdosing, and raising awareness of the health risks arising from the drugs that youngsters are taking (Gamble & George, 1997). Such harm-reducing peer subcultures can minimize the likelihood of youngsters slipping into problem use, lead to the enhancement of health, and eventually motivate cessation, as the practical benefits of harm reduction can be communicated among teens in a way that resonates with their own experiences, including the gendered ones. Of greater importance in devising these harm reduction measures is the recognition of gender-specific elements alongside the persistence of gendering in normalization. For instance, the self-policing awareness of drug intoxication found in today’s recreational drug-using girls would help to strengthen harm minimization among girl peers. Other examples of harm reduction measures for girls include a skin test and a sexual risk test. These appear to be more appealing to girls, who can visualize the immediate effect and the hidden risk of drugs (Chan et al., 2006). In Hong Kong, harm reduction strategies devised for the recreational drug-using youth population are still limited, await development, and will have to take into account the dimension of gender.

The gender gap in the commission of offences has also been narrowing, with girls’ arrest rates surging and boys’ arrest rates declining. As discussed earlier, changes in law enforcement and penal policy might have boosted the arrests of delinquent girls from the social constructionist perspective. More attention could be paid to the possible consequences of arresting and prosecuting young girls for minor offences: these girls will probably be labelled as criminals
for the rest of their lives. To protect these girls, local law enforcement officials could consider the Australian, Canadian, or American experience of community-based restorative justice, usually as an alternative to the formal prosecution of delinquents in juvenile courts (Roche, 2006). The community-based restorative justice model is a particular method for dealing with offences that brings together the offender, the victim, and their families to discuss the harm that the offender has done, the steps necessary to repair the harm, and how to help the offender recognize the harm. Such initiatives can improve the compliance of juvenile offenders without imposing formal legal penalties and criminal labels. Indeed, rather than simply relying on criminal justice interventions in adolescence, appropriate support should be provided to girl-children before they reach the breaking point that leads to delinquency (Acoca, 1999). Current early recognition of, and intervention in, the misbehaviours of pre-adolescent girls (e.g., those aged 8–10) by local community-based social service agencies could include family counselling, specialized educational services for learning problems, and mentoring programmes.

Lastly, our analysis in this chapter is based on official statistics known to be sensitive to varying reporting behaviours and bureaucratic practices, so it should be interpreted with caution. Future research should incorporate longitudinal community surveys and compare the findings with official data to reveal a full-fledged picture of changes in victimization and risk behaviours among girl-children in Hong Kong. This chapter also signifies the need to move beyond the conventional focus on the status of girl-children in terms of health, education, and employment to recognize other dimensions such as deviant behaviours and their gendered processes.

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In the early 1990s, no specific institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women existed in Hong Kong. The enactment of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (Cap 383) in 1991 strengthened consciousness of rights (Petersen & Samuels, 2002, p. 24), though discriminatory practices continued. The existence of Chinese customary laws, which prevented indigenous women from inheriting land, led to the female inheritance movement in 1994, and focused the attention of the public and policy makers on gender equality and the relevance of international human rights instruments in the local context (see Merry & Stern, 2005).

During this period, the Women’s Joint Political Platform, a coalition of 12 women’s groups, advocated the extension of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, United Nations, 1979) to Hong Kong (Cheung & Chung, 2009, p. 370). Parallel to these political developments, the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA, United Nations, 1995) at the international level in 1995 highlighted
the instrumental role of institutional mechanisms in supporting the advancement of women.

Strategic objective H of the BPFA outlined the importance of national machineries or governmental bodies as a vehicle to drive the integration of gender into legislation, public policies, programmes, and projects.¹ The design and form of institutional mechanisms are not specified under strategic objective H, although an indication is given of how institutional mechanisms should operate, notably that national machineries should be a “central policy-coordinating unit inside government” (para. 201). Despite the widespread adoption of national machineries by member states, the BPFA notes that institutional mechanisms are “uneven in their effectiveness, and in some cases have declined,” and further, they are “often marginalized in national government structures” (para. 196). Significantly, strategic objective H outlines a number of actions to create or strengthen national machineries or governmental bodies.

Shortly after the adoption of the BPFA, CEDAW was extended to Hong Kong by the British colonial government in October 1996. Following the 1997 handover to the People’s Republic of China, under the “one country, two systems” principle, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region must provide regular reports concerning Hong Kong’s compliance with CEDAW’s treaty obligations, submitted as part of China’s national report to the CEDAW Committee. The extension of CEDAW to Hong Kong strengthened the impetus to support the advancement of women. Two principal institutional mechanisms exist, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), a statutory body formed in May 1996 to implement anti-discrimination legislation, and the Women’s Commission (WoC), an advisory body on women’s affairs, formed

¹ For specific details on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, including expectations of the remit and responsibilities of national machineries designated to coordinate and mainstream gender in government programmes and policies, see section H of the BPFA (United Nations, 1995).
subsequently in January 2001. Both organizations play a central role in promoting public awareness of gender equality. This chapter will examine and evaluate the role and functions of the EOC and the WoC as institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, drawing comparisons with experiences of anti-discrimination legislation and gender equality in Australia and Britain.

Equal Opportunities Commission

Formed in May 1996 under section 63 of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (Cap 480, SDO), the EOC is the principal statutory body charged with eliminating discrimination and advancing equality in Hong Kong. Similar to the Australian and British institutional non-discrimination mechanisms, the EOC administers a number of non-discrimination ordinances covering, amongst other fields, education, employment, and the provision of goods, facilities or services. Following the adoption of the SDO and the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap 487, DDO) in 1996, the EOC’s regulatory role has gradually expanded to include the administration of the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (Cap 527, FSDO) passed in 1997 (Cheung & Chung, 2009, pp. 372–377), and more recently, the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap 602, RDO) passed in 2008.

With no powers of adjudication, the EOC’s role is limited to those functions and powers prescribed under section 64 of the SDO. The EOC (2012a) is charged with working towards “the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, disability, family status and race” and “the elimination of sexual harassment, and harassment and vilification on the grounds of disability and race.” A further objective of the EOC is the promotion

2. The EOC legal framework, mechanisms, and processes are similar to those of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (renamed the Australian Human Rights Commission on 5 August 2009), the specialists from which were charged with reviewing the EOC (Cheung & Chung, 2009, p. 378).
of equality of opportunity between men and women.\textsuperscript{3} Besides the EOC’s primary role of enforcement, which involves the investigation and conciliation of complaints under the anti-discrimination ordinances, the EOC conducts research and produces publications on best practices guidelines in addition to facilitating training and other outreach events.\textsuperscript{4}

\textbf{Enforcement: Complaint Investigation and Conciliation}

In working towards the elimination of discrimination, the EOC receives complaints and has the capacity to initiate a process of investigation and conciliation. Conciliation must be attempted first; if it fails, only then will legal assistance be provided by the EOC in a limited number of cases where it would be unreasonable to expect an applicant to take forward a case independently (Cheung & Chung, 2009, p. 380). In the absence of a formal complaint, the EOC may conduct a formal investigation with the purpose of fulfilling its core functions.\textsuperscript{5} In practice, the EOC has only initiated two such investigations. One of these was on the grounds of sex, concerning the direct and indirect sex discrimination arising from the Secondary School Places Allocation System, which led to a landmark ruling, and another investigation regarding discrimination and harassment on the grounds of disability (Kapai, 2009, p. 348). The EOC also has the capacity to draw up and submit proposals to the Chief Executive for amending the SDO.\textsuperscript{6}

With regard to the complaints and investigation procedure, from 20 September 1996 to 31 December 2010, a total of 4,654 complaints were received under the SDO by the EOC. Of these complaints 81.8\% were made by females and 15.0\% by males. Cumulatively, statistics

\begin{itemize}
  \item[3.] SDO section 64(1)(b).
  \item[4.] For further details of the EOC’s role and remit of work, see EOC (2012c).
  \item[5.] SDO section 70.
  \item[6.] SDO section 64(1)(e).
\end{itemize}
on the investigation and conciliation of complaints reveal that during this period of the EOC, conciliations attempted under the SDO were successful in the case of 64.6% of complaints investigated.\(^7\)

The overall rate of success of conciliation under the SDO, FSDO, DDO, and RDO is 63.5%; 66.5% of conciliations that were attempted involved female complainants. The vast majority of the conciliation processes that are entered into are brought under the SDO and DDO. As the RDO was only enacted in 2008, the extent to which complaints are to be investigated or conciliated under this ordinance remains unclear. To date, compared with the SDO, FSDO, and DDO, it appears that the majority of conciliations attempted under the RDO concern males, although only 28 conciliations had been attempted by the end of 2010 under the ordinance (Table 1).\(^8\)

While the EOC’s powers are extensive, critics have suggested that the Commission follows the law too closely and does not push the envelope (Cheung & Chung, 2009, p. 382). Kapai argues that the EOC has failed to adequately explore the range of powers and responsibilities within its remit, citing the EOC’s preference for conciliation as a self-imposed limitation (Kapai, 2009, pp. 342–343). The process of conciliation is often considered to be more in alignment with traditional Chinese cultural values of harmony than the adversarial process of dispute resolution (Cheung, 2010, pp. 283–284).

However, the “conciliation-first” model potentially undermines anti-discrimination laws and in many respects the EOC’s role in promoting equality, as the outcome findings do not reach the public domain and thus have a limited educational impact (Kapai, 2009, pp. 343–344). Further, as Kapai (2009, p. 343) suggests, the conciliation-first model potentially risks a complainant being pressured into accepting “meagre remedies,” particularly in those cases where litigation is not financially viable or where the EOC is not in a position to provide legal assistance. The heavy reliance on investigation and

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7. Personal communication received from the EOC on 19 May 2011.
8. Personal communication received from the EOC on 19 May 2011.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conciliation attempted under</th>
<th>Successful conciliation</th>
<th>Unsuccessful conciliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conciliation attempted under SDO</td>
<td>1,224 (100.0%)</td>
<td>163 (13.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conciliation attempted under FDSO</td>
<td>84 (100.0%)</td>
<td>12 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conciliation attempted under DDO</td>
<td>1,220 (100.0%)</td>
<td>519 (42.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conciliation attempted under RDO</td>
<td>16 (100.0%)</td>
<td>13 (81.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,544 (100.0%)</td>
<td>707 (27.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal communication received from the EOC on 19 May 2011, percentage distribution added in parentheses.

Note: Information regarding the sex of the complainants is not available in all cases. For example, out of conciliations attempted under the SDO, the total number of male (163) and female (1,032) complainants who successfully completed conciliation (1,195) does not correspond with the total number of successful conciliations carried out (1,224). The EOC’s explanation for any discrepancy in the data is that the EOC must comply with the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. Complainants might opt to provide personal data such as their sex, age, and occupation when initial enquiries were lodged with the EOC, but they were not required to do so. In some cases, enquiries were received from representatives of unions or companies on behalf of a complainant (personal communication received from the EOC on 1 August 2011).
conciliation as an enforcement mechanism rather than the courts has been criticized by some women’s organizations (Petersen, 2002, p. 110) given the potential importance of litigation in public interest cases.

**Enforcement: Legal Assistance**

Generally, there has been resistance towards the notion of Hong Kong becoming a litigious society as well as a tendency to focus on education rather than litigation as a means of changing people’s behaviour (Wu, 2008, p. 72), which may, in part, explain why the EOC focuses on conciliation. Restrictive legal aid conditions have discouraged complainants from pursuing legal redress for discrimination in the courts (Cheung & Chung, 2009, p. 380). Individuals bringing cases under anti-discrimination legislation are not provided with legal aid, in contrast with cases brought under the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (Kapai, 2009, p. 347).

Given that the provision of legal assistance by the EOC is limited, very few individual cases have reached the courts. From September 1996 to April 2012, there were a total of 31 legal actions taken for those cases granted legal assistance by the EOC under the SDO (EOC, 2012d). However, when considered alongside the figure of 670 unsuccessful conciliations attempted under the complaint investigation process during the period 1996–2010 (Table 1), the relatively low figure of legal actions indicates that only a minority of cases granted legal assistance will proceed to the courts.

From the period 2006–2010, the EOC received 72 applications for legal assistance under the SDO. Of these applications, 63 female complainants sought legal assistance compared with nine male complainants. The EOC granted legal assistance in 48.6% of cases. Out of those cases granted legal assistance under the SDO, 48.6% were settled out of court. In the same period, only one trial involving a female complainant was concluded under the SDO.9

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9. Personal communication received from the EOC on 30 May 2011.
In the case of L v. David Roy Burton, L claimed damages for sexual harassment and sex discrimination in the workplace. L refused persistent sexual advances from her superior during a period of three months after which the relationship with her superior deteriorated, leading to her dismissal. Based on L’s evidence, the District Court found that L’s dismissal was a direct consequence of the sexual harassment that had taken place (para. 21). L was awarded a total of HK$197,039 in damages for injury to her feelings, exemplary damages, and loss of earnings (para. 35). L had been prepared to settle the case out of court for a sum of HK$60,000 along with an apology, but this was not forthcoming (para. 39). With the legal assistance of the EOC, the damages awarded were much higher than if L had settled out of court. Further, details of the case including the outcome entered the public domain and thus potentially reinforced the public’s understanding of the type of inappropriate behaviour that amounts to sexual harassment. As such, cases supported by the EOC may not only benefit the victims in sexual harassment claims but could have a stronger deterrent effect than educational resources alone. Increased funding and support for legal assistance by the EOC is thus vital.

Although the funding for legal assistance is limited, the EOC has played a key role in fighting systemic discrimination. Most notably, the EOC carried out a formal investigation and subsequently a judicial review into the Government’s Secondary School Places Allocation System adopted in the secondary school admission process, which was found to violate the SDO by the Court of First Instance in the case of EOC v. Director of Education.11 Petersen (2007, p. 8) suggests


<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<th>2009</th>
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<th>2011</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of applications received</td>
<td>30 (100.0%)</td>
<td>29 (100.0%)</td>
<td>37 (100.0%)</td>
<td>57 (100.0%)</td>
<td>50 (100.0%)</td>
<td>203 (100.0%)</td>
<td>203 (100.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of applications not granted</td>
<td>14 (46.7%)</td>
<td>15 (51.7%)</td>
<td>15 (40.5%)</td>
<td>30 (52.6%)</td>
<td>32 (64.0%)</td>
<td>7 (N/A)</td>
<td>113 (55.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of applications granted</td>
<td>13 (43.3%)</td>
<td>13 (44.8%)</td>
<td>13 (35.1%)</td>
<td>31 (54.4%)</td>
<td>13 (26.0%)</td>
<td>3 (N/A)</td>
<td>86 (42.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settled(^2)</td>
<td>10 (76.9%)</td>
<td>11 (84.6%)</td>
<td>8 (61.5%)</td>
<td>12 (38.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>41 (47.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial concluded</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (7.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (7.7%)</td>
<td>2 (2.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal communication received from the EOC on 30 May 2011, percentage distribution added in parentheses.

Notes: 1. These statistics do not include applications under consideration as of 30 April 2011, of which there were two, one under the SDO (female) and one under the DDO (female). In addition, two applications were withdrawn after being submitted to the Legal and Complaints Committee, both under the DDO (one female, one male).

2. “Settled” refers to cases where a dispute is concluded outside of the courts, often involving a sum or payment of compensation to a complainant by the party alleged to have discriminated against the complainant.
that without the involvement of the EOC and judicial review of the Secondary School Places Allocation System it is unlikely that the System would have been reformed.

In 1999, the EOC did request a legislative review with the aim of extending its power to allow for the direct provision of declaratory and/or injunctive relief for unlawful acts and conduct under the anti-discrimination laws (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1999, p. 35). The proposed Equal Opportunities Tribunal (EOT) would create a specialist tribunal with a statutory framework and would be presided over by ex-officio District Court judges (Kapai, 2009, p. 345). The EOT’s aim would be to provide an accessible and user-friendly mechanism by which discrimination cases could be reviewed. The EOC (2009) suggested that an informal design would allow the facilitation of self-representation by lay persons if desired. Until the EOC’s powers are revised in this way by legislation, Cheung and Chung (2009, p. 382) believe that tensions with the EOC’s role will remain.

Amendments to the Sexual Discrimination Ordinance

During the past five years, there have been a number of amendments to non-discrimination legislation, which extend protection from discrimination to settings previously excluded. Significantly in 2008, the Government extended the definition of a sexually hostile environment under the SDO to include educational settings as well as the workplace. The EOC had recommended the extension of provisions on sexually hostile environments as early as 1999. However, it was

12. The Legislative Council’s functions include enacting, amending, or repealing laws. The Council also has the ability to debate issues concerning the public interests and to raise questions on the work of the Government. For further details of the functions and powers of the Council, see http://www.legco.gov.hk/english/index.htm. The EOC must make annual reports to the Council and is thus able to influence policy making.
not until the enactment of the RDO in July 2008 that the Government made “consequential provisions to amend the definitions of terms such as ‘sexual harassment’ in the SDO” (EOC, 2008).

Under the SDO, sexual harassment is broken down into two categories. First, unwelcome sexual advances, gestures, or other conduct of a sexual nature directed at a victim are recognized as one form of sexual harassment. Second, conduct of a sexual nature that creates a sexually hostile work environment is also recognized as a form of sexual harassment. Sexual jokes or the display of pornographic material in the workplace may amount to a sexually hostile environment and thus be considered unlawful. Prior to the amendment, the second category only applied to the workplace. Obscene slogans or the display of materials or posters with a sexual content, which might otherwise have been perceived as creating a sexually hostile environment, would not have been considered unlawful in an educational setting.

Awareness-raising, Community Outreach, and Research

In addition to legislative amendments made under the SDO, the EOC has also developed educational resources as part of its initiatives to combat sexual harassment including for example, an online training module for university students and other awareness activities such as school plays, workshops, and television programmes. The EOC (2012b) has also promoted equal opportunities through its Community Participation Funding Programme, whereby non-governmental organizations, community groups, and schools can apply to the EOC on an annual basis for maximum funding of HK$50,000 to carry out awareness campaigns that promote public understanding of equal opportunities. Although the EOC has played an instrumental role in raising awareness on different types of discrimination, given the

13. Sex discrimination against women is defined under SDO section 5, and other sexual harassment is defined in section 24.
EOC’s limited funding Kapai (2009, p. 348) cautions that it may be wiser for the EOC to concentrate its resources on investigations into policies, practices, and incidents, which may have a greater impact, rather than researching community trends, which tend to be resource-intensive.

The EOC, along with the Gender Research Centre at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, undertook an “Exploratory Study on Gender Stereotyping and Its Impacts on Male Gender.” Over the course of 2011, several public seminars were conducted to consider the relationship between masculinity and gender identity in Hong Kong, and whether men are being marginalized.14 Some men’s groups have voiced discontent that the support afforded to women by women’s organizations and bodies such as the WoC has led to a situation of reverse discrimination, whereby men are discriminated against due to the changing gender dynamics within society. Furthermore, this has significantly impacted the relationship between men and women in the workplace and at home.15 The project aims to address the root causes of men’s problems and to generate discussion on what gender equality within society means for men and women. Although, undoubtedly, it is important to deconstruct masculinities in the Hong Kong context and evaluate men’s experiences alongside women’s experiences, a sudden shift to a focus on the status of men could be misconstrued as signalling that women have achieved equality of opportunity and that the scales of equality are now unevenly balanced to the detriment of men. As the EOC statistics reflect (Table 1), the majority of attempted conciliations are carried out on behalf of female complainants under the SDO, which highlights the continuing challenges posed by sexual harassment and sexual discrimination cases.


15. See, for example, Radio Television Hong Kong (2009).
Independence of the Equal Opportunities Commission

The Home Affairs Bureau was initially charged with a number of responsibilities to support the advancement of women including the promotion of equal opportunities, the coordination of reports under CEDAW, and ensuring that the actions stipulated in the BPFA were implemented. However, the relationship between the EOC and the Bureau was criticized on the basis that the Bureau exerted too strong an influence on the Commission, contravening the Paris Principles (Kapai, 2009, p. 354). The Paris Principles stress the importance of independence from the government, and pluralism of membership of national human rights institutions as well as adequate funding. Several areas of concern include the EOC Chairperson’s appointment procedure and problems stemming from inadequate funding, which potentially undermine the EOC’s legitimacy as an independent statutory body (Wu, 2008, p. 76). Members of the EOC are appointed rather than being nominated by organizations representing different groups within society, which has led to a lack of transparency.

In 2005, the Independent Panel of Inquiry suggested in a report on Incidents Relating to the Equal Opportunities Commission that the EOC’s institutional framework needs to be strengthened by, for example, inviting nominations of suitable candidates with sensitivity to equality of opportunities and from organizations representing different sectors of the community (Cheung & Chung, 2009, pp. 384–385). Following significant criticism, the Government agreed to adopt an open recruitment process for selecting the EOC Chairperson. In 2010, the current Chairperson, Mr Lam Woon-kwong, was appointed following an open recruitment exercise (EOC, 2010). Since the reorganization of policy bureaux of the Government Secretariat in July 2007, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau has taken over responsibility for the housekeeping of the EOC as well.

16. For details of the Paris Principles, see http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/parisprinciples.htm.
as other human rights matters.\textsuperscript{17} It is not yet clear what impact this reorganization has had on the EOC’s independence in practice.

\textbf{Women’s Commission}

While the EOC has played an instrumental role in promoting equality and monitors the SDO, DDO, FSDO, and RDO, in 1999 the United Nations CEDAW Expert Committee identified a gap in Hong Kong’s institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and suggested that a national-level machinery for women should be created (Cheung \& Chung, 2009, p. 387). The WoC came into existence in 2001, several years after the establishment of the EOC. Positioned to promote the advancement of women’s status, the WoC acts as an advisory body to the Government\textsuperscript{18} and has been recognized as the primary enforcement body for CEDAW (Petersen, 2009, p. 402). While this enforcement role may not appear explicit, the WoC (2010a) is charged with responsibility for assisting the Government to implement CEDAW and BPFA.

The WoC undertakes educational and research activities focused on women’s issues. However, the WoC was set up under the then Health and Welfare Bureau, which Cheung and Chung (2009, p. 388) have suggested reinforces the stereotype that women’s interests are linked to the family and private sphere. Following the reorganization of the policy bureaux of the Government Secretariat in 2007, the WoC was repositioned under the Labour and Welfare Bureau. As an advisory body rather than a central mechanism within the Government Secretariat like the policy bureaux, the WoC lacks accountability. The WoC’s early membership, consisting of a chairperson, three ex-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} The Home Affairs Bureau retains the responsibility for policy on social enterprises and legal aid.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} The WoC (2010c) coordinates with a range of advisory and statutory bodies with the aim of strengthening women’s participation in policy making.
\end{itemize}
officio members, and 17 non-official members, has been criticized by women’s organizations for being conservative and lacking a clear awareness of women’s concerns. Instead, emphasis has been placed on the plurality of the membership rather than on members’ expertise on women’s issues (Cheung & Chung, 2009, pp. 388, 394).

Although the WoC was initially heavily criticized by activists for being unresponsive to the urgent needs of women, the WoC has raised awareness of key issues including domestic violence against women, and has linked power imbalances within the family to an increase in the number of cross-border marriages between Hong Kong men and mainland Chinese women (Cheung & Chung, 2009, pp. 391–392). While lacking the statutory framework and extensive powers afforded to the EOC, the WoC has the capacity to raise awareness of types of inequality that are not specifically covered by the anti-discrimination legislation. For example, with respect to gender stereotyping the WoC (2010b) recently undertook a large-scale survey to evaluate how women and men view the status of women at home, in the workplace, and in the social environment.

The WoC has also advanced the concept of gender mainstreaming, a policy initiative formally adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1997 to evaluate the impact of policies, programmes, and legislation on the equality of men and women at all stages of design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (United Nations, 1999). In order to help facilitate gender mainstreaming by policy makers and programmes, the WoC took a leading role in producing a Gender Mainstreaming Checklist, which was initially piloted in three government bureaux in 2002 (Cheung & Chung, 2009, p. 389). Further, the Chief Executive’s (2010, p. 66) 2010–11 Policy Agenda outlined a number of commitments including the Government’s continued support of the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist in policy programming, in addition to working with the WoC to promote gender mainstreaming. However, a checklist approach is potentially problematic because it creates a bureaucratic tool to evaluate whether gender mainstreaming has been implemented. By focusing on implementation rather than on an ongoing and regular process of evaluation, the Government risks gender mainstreaming being
regarded as a superficial exercise. The WoC should therefore consider viable alternative methods of promoting gender mainstreaming in addition to the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist.

A comparison between Hong Kong, Australia, and Britain

In terms of institutional mechanisms to advance the women’s status, the Hong Kong model of non-discrimination is very similar to Anglo-Australian institutional mechanisms for non-discrimination. The principal institution charged with monitoring equality in Australia is the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). The AHRC receives and investigates complaints related to anti-discrimination legislation at the Commonwealth level. The Australian Sex Discrimination Act 1984 is largely modelled on the British Sex Discrimination Act 1975. In terms of procedure, complaints must first be investigated and Alternative Dispute Resolution attempted. Only if Alternative Dispute Resolution fails will an individual be able to

19. This comparative analysis draws on experiences in Australia and Britain, which have primarily influenced anti-discrimination legislation in Hong Kong. There is limited material available in English on how Hong Kong fares in Asia in terms of whether institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women have allowed for women’s empowerment and gender equality. However, the Government’s responses to the Beijing + 15 questionnaire give a sense of the efforts being made to implement the BPFA. See http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/national-level.html#res.

20. In addition to the AHRC, separate state agencies exist in each Australian jurisdiction.

21. Alternative Dispute Resolution is an umbrella term which applies to a wide range of dispute mechanisms including conciliation and mediation. It provides an alternative form of legal redress to litigation.
undertake private enforcement of the law at a court or tribunal (Rees, Lindsay, & Rice, 2008, pp. 610–614).

Unlike in the Hong Kong system, the AHRC adjudicated complaints directly under Commonwealth legislation for many years, though technically it was not constitutionally permissible for the AHRC to exercise this judicial function in determining whether unlawful discrimination had occurred. Since April 2000, cases of discrimination brought under Commonwealth legislation must be heard by a lower-level Federal Court and the Federal Magistrates Court, both of which exercise concurrent jurisdiction (Rees et al., 2008, p. 613).

According to Chapman (2000, p. 322), only around 5% of complaints in Australia reach the hearing stage, which suggests that (as in Hong Kong) the majority of complaints only reach the investigation or conciliation stage. Although, traditionally, Chinese communities shun adversarial processes in favour of mediation (Petersen, 2009, p. 423), it seems that even within Anglo-Australian common law jurisdictions there has been a shift towards Alternative Dispute Resolution. Alternative Dispute Resolution is seen as potentially less alienating for intended beneficiaries, particularly women, persons with disabilities, and minority groups (Chapman, 2000, p. 322).

While the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 provided the model for drafting Australia’s Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Rees et al., 2008, p. 218), there have been significant changes to anti-discrimination legislation in Britain and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of equality. The shift towards a single commission, the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2007, brought together the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Disability Rights

22. The former Equal Opportunities Commission in Britain experienced similar institutional constraints as the EOC in Hong Kong in that members were initially drawn from trade unions and employers, and not the women’s movement, which meant that the Commission took an overly cautious approach in its efforts to advance gender equality (Dickens, 2007, p. 475).

Prior to the enactment of the Equality Act 2010, a range of anti-discrimination legislation existed. The first generation of anti-discrimination legislation, the Race Relations Act 1965, was based on the concept of formal equality whereby equality could be achieved if all persons are treated alike (Hepple, 2010, p. 12). Over the course of several years, the aim and purpose of anti-discrimination legislation expanded and evolved. By the 1970s, third generation anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of sex, including the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, had shifted away from formal equality to substantive equality (e.g., equality of opportunity), introducing the concept of indirect discrimination and policy initiatives including positive action (Hepple, 2010, p. 12). Fourth generation anti-discrimination legislation covering grounds of disability and secondary legislation covering age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation in employment and related fields were subsequently adopted in the 1990s, and represent a shift towards comprehensive equality (Hepple, 2010, p. 13).

The enactment of the Equality Act 2010 was, in part, a response to the widespread criticism levelled at the body of piecemeal anti-discrimination legislation, which was perceived to be “outdated, fragmented, inconsistent, inadequate, inaccessible, and at times incomprehensible” (Hepple, 2010, p. 13). The Act largely harmonizes existing anti-discrimination legislation by incorporating nine pieces of primary legislation and over 100 pieces of secondary legislation. Under the Act, protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and

23. The Equality Act 2010 does not apply to Northern Ireland, which has devolved powers on matters of equality and has yet to streamline existing anti-discrimination legislation (Hepple, 2010, p. 11).
maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Act extends indirect discrimination to disability and gender reassignment, which were previously not covered. Further, the Act also introduces the prohibition of direct discrimination in schools on the grounds of pregnancy, maternity, and gender reassignment.

Hong Kong’s anti-discrimination legislation lags behind that of Australia and Britain. To date, the Hong Kong Government has argued that it is not in a position to legislate on sexual orientation discrimination or transgender issues largely due to public opinion, despite growing activism on sexual diversity (Petersen, 2009, p. 409). The EOC has also generally failed to take a proactive position on sexual orientation discrimination in the absence of specific legislation on the basis that the EOC has no jurisdiction to consider the matter (Kapai, 2009, p. 350). Such apathy reinforces conservatism towards minority rights.

Without legislation on age, sexual orientation, and other forms of discrimination, women may be disadvantaged, particularly as it is inherently difficult to pursue the intersection between different inequalities such as sex and sexual orientation or sex and ethnicity (McLaughlin, 2007, p. 113). To date in Hong Kong, the EOC’s codes of practice on anti-discrimination laws issued to employers have primarily focused on negative rather than positive obligations and duties (Kapai, 2009, p. 349). Positive equality duties aim to compel duty bearers to anticipate the occurrence of inequality and seek to prevent or pre-empt it (McLaughlin, 2007, p. 115). Conversely, negative equality duties are only able to provide a means of redress for discrimination that has already taken place (McLaughlin, 2007, p. 112).

McLaughlin (2007, p. 113) suggests that one of the drawbacks

24. For further details on the changes, see Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012a).

25. Age discrimination is covered by a voluntary code of practice (Labour Department, 2006).
of negative equality duties is that “social identity” tends to be viewed as a fixed concept, which overlooks the intersection between multiple aspects of identity such as sex, ethnicity, and sexuality. In some cases of discrimination, individuals are effectively forced to limit their claim to one aspect of identity, for example, either sex or ethnicity rather than sex and ethnicity combined. Recent reforms in Britain, which aim to shift the balance from substantive to transformative equality (i.e., focusing on positive duties of equality), are potentially useful in the Hong Kong context.

In addition to streamlining existing anti-discrimination legislation into a single statute, the Equality Act 2010 seeks to expand public authorities’ positive duties to advance equality. In Britain, positive equality duties previously applied only to race, sex, and disability under each of the respective anti-discrimination acts. The Equality Act 2010 introduces a single equality duty for the public sector, which also covers age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, and sexual orientation (Hepple, 2010, p. 18). Accordingly, public authorities should seek, for example, to “remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic” (section 149(3)(a)) and “take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it” (section 149(3)(b)).

The introduction of a single positive equality duty “constitutes a shift away from legislative reliance on a retrospective, individualized victim-centred complaints approach, towards pro-active, pre-emptive action by power-holders” (Dickens, 2007, p. 473). However, critics are concerned that the operation of this single equality duty could lead to a “tick-box” approach, which focuses too heavily on procedures and less on outcomes (Hepple, 2010, p. 19). Certainly, the shift from anti-discrimination legislation to the promotion of gender equality initiated by the adoption of a positive equality duty may be

26. The legal term “claim” means to demand enforcement of a right in law or damages.
undermined if procedural commitments do not translate into concrete outcomes.

Aside from the significant changes to anti-discrimination legislation and the creation of a single Equality and Human Rights Commission, recent institutional reforms in Britain may adversely affect the advancement of women. Set up in 1969 as an independent advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB), the Women’s National Commission was designed to put forward the views of women to the Government and represented over 500 women’s organizations throughout England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. As part of a cost-cutting drive, the Women’s National Commission was closed in December 2010 during a Coalition Government review of NDPBs (Government Equalities Office, 2010). During its 40 year tenure, the Women’s National Commission (2010) worked independently on a diverse range of issues including raising awareness on the issues faced by minority ethnic women and other groups of women (e.g., widows), supporting women’s access to decision-making processes, giving a voice to asylum-seeking women, and tackling violence against women.

Although the Hong Kong Government is not faced with similar constraints in terms of budgetary deficits, the closure of the Women’s National Commission despite its significant history, demonstrates the vulnerability of women’s commissions, particularly during periods of political reform. As an advisory body rather than a central policy mechanism, the WoC is weakly positioned. Inadequate funding undermines the WoC’s ability to demonstrate its credibility and added value.

**Facing Forwards: Implications for Changes**

Both the EOC and the WoC have helped to raise awareness of gender equality and the existence of discrimination within society, though both institutions require greater recognition. For instance, in the Chief Executive’s 2010–11 Policy Address and Policy Agenda, limited attention was paid to women’s interests in general. Without any statutory framework, the WoC can potentially be bolder in its
aims and objectives, and highlight discrimination that falls outside of legislation. However, as an advisory body the WoC does not operate as a central mechanism within the Government Secretariat despite claims to the contrary, and this potentially hinders the WoC’s ability to mainstream gender within government policies and programmes. Additionally, the current status of the WoC risks undermining the Government’s adherence to CEDAW’s treaty objectives.

The need for a central mechanism such as a Women’s Affairs Bureau within the Government Secretariat and headed by a Secretary or Minister for Gender Equality, remains. If the WoC were situated under a Women’s Affairs Bureau, this would potentially allow for a more coordinated policy response, thus enhancing the legitimacy of women’s interests as a substantive policy concern.

At present, the WoC receives inadequate funding to play a significant role in driving forward its policy objectives. In the 2010–11 budget, the WoC received an estimated HK$23.8 million (Financial Secretary, 2010a, p. 485). In its current form, the WoC needs to strengthen its core membership and should be comprised of representatives with a clear understanding of gender equality. Without this type of representation or adequate funding, the WoC’s role in generating activities and research of significance as well as relationships with women’s organizations will be weakened.

Particularly given its statutory framework, the EOC is in a position to safeguard women’s rights. However, institutional concerns relating to the independence of the EOC and its appointment procedures have undermined the Commission’s credibility. Some commendable reforms have taken place including an open recruitment exercise to appoint the current EOC Chairperson. Nevertheless, the overall independence of the EOC and the transparency of its work may hinder the EOC’s role as an institutional mechanism to advance the status of women.

A preference for conciliation over the courts means that much

27. The WoC refers to itself as a high-level central mechanism (see Women’s Commission, 2010a).
of the EOC’s work fails to reach the public domain, and therefore gives no clear insight into the nature and extent of discrimination and inequality that exists within society. In order to enhance the EOC’s ability to maximize its statutory powers and responsibilities to the fullest extent, funding needs to improve.  

Some commentators have suggested that it is time for a full-scale review of the EOC’s role and the relationship among anti-discrimination legislation, the Basic Law, and other human rights-related laws (Kapai, 2009, p. 340). Certainly, it seems that the passage of anti-discrimination legislation has been particularly slow, and that the EOC has refrained from pushing the agenda on sexual orientation and other forms of discrimination, which are currently not legislated against.

While the EOC has successfully fought systemic discrimination in the landmark ruling of EOC v. Director of Education concerning the Secondary School Places Allocation System, the Commission has otherwise tended to adopt an overly cautious approach despite its statutory powers and can hardly be viewed as trailblazing. This is unfortunate given that the EOC is positioned at the forefront of society and should play a key educational role. At present, it does not seem feasible to streamline existing anti-discrimination legislation into a single ordinance as in other jurisdictions, particularly given the fact that the RDO was only recently adopted in 2008. However, the shift from substantive equality to transformative equality is the direction Hong Kong should be moving in. A focus on negative equality duties sustains the focus on a victim-centred approach, limited by legislative provisions. A shift towards positive equality duties, which seek to identify and pre-empt inequality, should be supported by the EOC.

Overall, in terms of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women it appears that some progress has been made in Hong Kong to establish institutions, which support the principles of gender equality and the empowerment of women. However, the International

28. The estimated funding for the EOC in the 2010–11 budget was HK$83.1 million, an increase of 3.6% from the previous budget (Financial Secretary, 2010b, p. 356).
Council on Human Rights Policy (2005, p. 9) suggests that national human rights institutions should set “(a) standards against which they can assess themselves; and (b) specific measures that tell them how effectively they are working.” A combination of benchmarks and indicators should be employed to measure the effectiveness of national human rights institutions in terms of performance over time. The EOC (2012a) sets out a corporate statement with organizational values and strategies, and both the EOC and WoC include terms of reference. However, without explicit benchmarks or quantitative and qualitative indicators, it is difficult to give a clear and credible assessment of the impact and effectiveness that these international mechanisms have had in practice. Both the EOC and WoC need to develop clear, transparent benchmarks and indicators to strengthen their accountability as institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.

References


29. The EOC (2000, p. 47) has undertaken some work to develop benchmarks but it is not clear that performance benchmarks have been developed to measure the effectiveness of the EOC as an institutional mechanism for the advancement of women.

30. Statistics alone will not give an accurate assessment of the performance of the EOC or the WoC, and qualitative data should supplement any quantitative indicators.


