



2010 Spring Workshop

Challenging Times: Myths and Realities of Growing Up in Hong Kong

Date / Time: Saturday, 15 May 2010 / 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Venue: The Reading Room (Room G-4),
Tang Chi Ngong Building, HKU

Each spring, the HKU Women's Studies Research Centre brings together students, faculty, and members of the community to consider gender-related research as it intersects with the latest trends, issues, and developments within and beyond the academy. This year the workshop aims to bring together individuals who research/work with different youth groups in Hong Kong. Their findings highlight the complex ways in which young people here make sense of their everyday lives. Two panels facilitate an interdisciplinary exploration of a range of age groups, institutions, and developmental issues. From gender socialization in Hong Kong preschools to cyber dating among adolescents, the topics addressed in the workshop will facilitate lively discussion among panelists and participants. Some of the questions we hope to discuss this year include: Do young people in Hong Kong live in the same world or in many worlds? Which organizations offer youth creative approaches to facing the challenges of growing up in a global, post-industrial world? The workshop will deal with issues related to the girl-child and young women (up to 25 years of age) but will not focus exclusively on the female population. Relevant findings and insights that highlight the gender concerns of all are equally welcome.

Programme

9:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.	Registration/Welcome
Chair: Evelyn Ng (Co-convenor, Women's Studies Research Centre, HKU)	
Panel 1	Growing Up Gendered: Private Lives and Institutional Realities
9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📖 "Gender Socialization during the Early Years in Hong Kong" Nirmala RAO (Professor, Division of Learning, Development & Diversity, Faculty of Education, HKU) 📖 "Building up Culturally Responsive Schools: Fulfilling the Diverse Needs of Ethnic Minority Students" HUE Ming-Tak (Associate Professor, Department of Special Education and Counselling, The Hong Kong Institute of Education) 📖 "Young Women in Politics?" Alice WU (SCMP columnist/political consultant)
	Comment: Odalia Wong (Head & Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Hong Kong Baptist University)
10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Q & A Session
11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Coffee Break
Panel 2	Growing Up in 21st Century Hong Kong: Sex Talk
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📖 "Trends in Dating and Sexuality among Hong Kong Youth" Susan FAN (Executive Director, The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong) 📖 "Participatory Action Research on Young Girls' Cyber Dating" Linda TO (Executive Director, HER Fund) 📖 "Teenagers Talking Love and Sex: Preliminary Findings from a Recent Study" Annie CHAN (Associate Professor, Department of Politics and Sociology, Lingnan University)
	Comment: Staci Ford (Department of History, Co-Convenor, Women's Studies Research Centre, HKU)
12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Q & A Session

ABSTRACTS

- Nirmala RAO (Professor, Division of Learning, Development & Diversity, Faculty of Education, HKU)

Gender Socialization during the Early Years in Hong Kong

While the government may promote gender equality, families and schools condition girls and boys to take on the different roles and behaviors which reflect local norms and values. Against the background of these socio-cultural constraints, this paper considers family and preschool influences on gender socialization during the early years in Hong Kong. First, it considers whether son preference and male privilege which were pervasive in traditional Chinese society are manifest in Hong Kong families today. Second, it focuses on gender socialization in preschools as children spend increasing amounts of time in educational settings as they mature. Drawing on the work of Chen (2004) in four kindergartens, the behaviours of teachers and children are analysed. Findings indicated that these educational contexts were not gender neutral. Teachers subtly conveyed traditional Chinese gender values through their repeated use of gendered routines in the kindergartens and their behaviors reflected gender stereotypes. Children tended to congregate in gender-segregated groups during free play and were dismissive of attempts by opposite-sex peers to initiate cooperative play. Key barriers to promoting gender equality in Hong Kong preschools include gender bias among educators and administrators, the lack of male role models, and the gendered use of curriculum and activities. Third, interventions needed for gender fair early environments for young children at the family, school, community and policy levels are discussed using Bronfenbrenner's conception of the child's social environment. Building strong foundations for gender equality during the early years is critical as it benefits young learners, their families and communities.

- HUE Ming-Tak (Associate Professor, Department of Special Education and Counseling, The Hong Kong Institute of Education)

Building Up Culturally Responsive Schools: Fulfilling the Diverse Needs of Ethnic Minority Students

Many schools are concerned about the growing number of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. It is asserted that they have academic, personal and social difficulties. The question of how schools cater to diverse student needs is a critical one. This paper aims to examine how teachers and students construct the identities and needs of ethnic minority students from India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand. The data discussed here is drawn from interviews reflecting the views of twenty-four students and twenty-four teachers from three secondary schools. Additionally, three focus-group interviews with 15 parents were conducted. Author field notes constitute a supplementary source of data. Results showed that the behaviour and needs of Chinese and non-Chinese students and their parents were constructed differently, in terms of social behaviour, cultural practices, gender identities, languages, and educational aspiration. It is also clear that the school, home and community environments were disconnected from each other. This paper argues that to implement the ethos of caring, it is not only necessary for the school and government to develop culturally-responsive approaches to catering for the needs of students, but it is equally important to develop a connected schooling ecology where ethnic minority students and parents can be consistently supported in the classroom, in school, at home and in community at large.

- Alice WU (SCMP columnist/Political consultant)

Young Women in Politics

Despite being active behind the scenes, women are still a minority among office holders. Young women are more politically conscious and involved today. Though still a minority, more young women are joining political organizations, causes and, some are running for public office, even before the highly controversial high speed rail propelled outspoken and expressive young women as well as men into the limelight. This presentation will first look into reasons (i.e. social acceptance, popular female politicians /

role models, etc.) for this increase in political interest and participation, and consider what they mean for young women of today and tomorrow. The presentation will then focus on the career paths of women in politics, and how, over time, it has merged with those in the entertainment industry. Women in both fields must be packaged in sexually biased ways in order for their talents to be recognized. One must project glamour and charisma in order to succeed and gain access to media coverage. This has become the only way for female politicians to secure connectivity to, communication with and support from the community. The "starlet culture" in politics has reinforced gender bias in the media's portrayal of female public figures. The media packaging of successful women in public life and the reinforcement of the gender bias in the media is, by far, the largest hurdle for young women entering politics. Is the new generation of civic-minded and passionate women ready to clear this hurdle?

- Susan FAN (Executive Director, The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong)

Trends in Dating and Sexuality Among Hong Kong Youth

The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong (FPAHK) has been conducting Youth Sexuality Studies every five years since 1981, monitoring changing trends in young people's lives in matters concerning their knowledge, attitudes and behaviors concerning dating and sex. Dating among Form 3-7 secondary school students is increasingly commonplace and the prevalence of those who had sexual intercourse reached 11% overall in the latest survey in 2006. 4.7% of girls and 6.8% of boys said that they had their first sexual intercourse before the age of 15. Both percentages had doubled in the last decade. However the rate of contraceptive practice was low. 59% of female respondents and 55% of male respondents in the 18-27 age group indicated they would get married in the future. In this cohort, there was increased interest in cohabitation before marriage. The pregnancy rate among young women (18-27 yrs) dropped from 16% in 1991 to 10% in 2006. 28% of the pregnancies resulted in live births and 50% were aborted.

- Linda TO (Executive Director, HER Fund)

Participatory Action Research on Young Girls' Cyber Dating

HER Fund is a Hong Kong organization that raises donations and makes grants to advance the rights of women and girls. In 2009, HER Fund made a grant to support a project organized by YMCA Kornhill Centre Integrated Service Centre. The project aimed to empower young girls to speak for themselves and to express their personal views about cyber dating. Young girls participated in the process of researching, gathering data to express their concerns and to plan further action on the issue. The research offers adults and the general public a glimpse into the impact of cyber dating and an opportunity to understand girls' perspective on the issue.

- Annie CHAN (Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Policy, Lingnan University)

Teenagers Talking Love and Sex: Preliminary Findings from a Recent Study

This paper presents preliminary findings from a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews with 40 Hong Kong adolescents between the ages of 13 and 16 from diverse backgrounds. The objective is to (1) identify teen views on intimacy, going steady (pak tall) and sex; and (2) examine how love and sex feature as a part of their lives. Findings indicate that there is a wide range of values, attitudes and behaviours, and that these need to be understood against the context of the individual's personal and social characteristics. Most interviewees have highly articulate and coherent views about love and sex, and the various conceptions of their sexual selves reflect important features of Hong Kong society. Several themes recur in the narratives: (1) pak tall as part of adolescence, (2) the relationship between sexual behaviour and intimacy, and (3) factors shaping decisions about pak tall and sex.