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Formal vs. Informal Use of Television and Sex-Role Stereotyping in Hong Kong

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This study examines the relationship between media use and gender stereotyping in Hong Kong, where Western liberal thoughts meet Chinese traditional and patriarchal norms. Although mainstream media studies center on the general impact of television on sex-role stereotyping, this study distinguishes the formal use of television for information from the informal use for entertainment, the latter of which is often neglected, but the impact is far more encompassing. A baseline survey on gender equality commissioned by the Hong Kong Government with 2,020 successful face-to-face interviews was conducted and the sample was of the Equal Probability of Selection Method (EPSEM) type provided by the Census and Statistics Department. The participants are all Chinese from all class strata (51.5% below HK$10,000; 39.4% between HK$10,000 and HK$24,999; and 19.1% above HK$25,000 with US$1 ~ HK$7.8). The BSRI measurement was modified to gauge the gender-role stereotype. The results show that despite influence by Western culture, gender stereotyping of the public in Hong Kong still exists. In particular, the self-reported functional television for entertainment (rather than for information) as well as exposure to entertainment programs on television have reinforced the female stereotypes, and females have a lower cultural awareness toward male stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, nowadays more women have moved into the workforce and have gradually taken vital roles in society. These role transformations

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have openly challenged the notion of male dominance and a gendered division of labor supported by culture and tradition (Vega, 1990). However, the reality reflected by participation of women in the work force as well as the various efforts by feminist movements has not led to gender equality or an abolition of gender stereotypes in our daily life, media, or society at large. Various scholars have suggested that media lag far behind the social changes that are taking place in the world today (Durkin, 1985; Meyrowitz, 1985; Butler & Paisley, 1980), and that media themselves are the main sources for constructing and reinforcing social stigmas and stereotypes. Empirical studies (Echabe & Castro, 1999; DeYoung & Crane, 1992) in the West echo the presence of dominant themes that portray women as homemakers and sex objects, incapable of making important decisions. Content analysis of media in some studies suggests that such stereotypical depiction of women continues (e.g., Soley & Reid, 1988) despite the fact that there is a trend toward a less biased depiction of women than there has been in the past (McBroom, 1984). With the ever-increasing popularity of mass media and the capillary nature of media culture, the influence of the portrayal of women (and men) on the attitudes of audiences has always been staged as a controversial debate in society, on both the governmental level as well as within academia. Nonetheless, the causal relationship between media portrayal and any societal stereotyping is rarely demonstrated (Huston *et al.*, 1992).

In view of the above phenomenon, our study examined the notion of and people's response to the television portrayal of gender in Hong Kong, about which a systematic study of this kind is rare. In this baseline study, we designed a set of questions to examine public attitudes and awareness and evaluation of gender stereotypes and explored the relationship between stereotypic perceptions and various media habits. This questionnaire may serve as a valid and reliable index for assessing gender stereotypes in a Chinese context.

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES AND OBJECTIVES

Two Traditions of Media Effects

Studies about women and television have taken two main forms: (1) content analyses of television programs and (2) the investigation of the effects of television messages on the audience's perception of social reality (Zemach & Cohen, 1986). The two main research traditions on gender-role studies have diverged in terms of their methodologies (for an overview, see Palmer, 1998): The former examines the images and portrayal of women

by means of analyzing the content of media text. The results, however, are not unanimously agreed upon. Since the 1970s, although some researchers in this tradition have concluded that the stereotypical depiction of women on television, advertisements, and in print news persists, others have suggested that with the rising awareness of gender inequality in society, stereotyping has been eliminated (Atkin, 1991; Canadian Radio–Television and Telecommunications Commission, 1982; Gilly, 1988; Seiter, 1986; Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992; Venkateson & Losco, 1975; Whipple & Courtney, 1980).

Content Analysis of Media Portrayal

Based on content analysis, many Western studies showed, for example, that women generally had fewer major roles on screen (Henderson, Greenberg, & Atkin, 1980; Korsgaard & Andersen, 1978; Weibel, 1977) and were frequently more confined to the role of housewife (Downs, 1981; Friedman, 1978; Geraghty, 1991; Heide, 1995; Korsgaard & Andersen, 1978; Nuita, 1979; Scheibe, 1979). On screen, women were portrayed as taking more traditionally "feminine" occupations, such as nurses, secretaries, teachers, servants, or actresses (Zemach & Cohen, 1986). The characters were often passive, dependent, submissive, subservient, emotional, and weak, whereas their "counterparts," male characters, were strong, dominant, rational, independent, and active (Geis, Brown, Jennings, & Corrado-Taylor, 1984; Canter & Meyerowitz, 1984; Rapin & Cooper, 1980; Craig, 1992; Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1993; Chesaina, 1994; Mwangi, 1996; Peirce, 1997; Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). In some cases, women were also portrayed as sex symbols or as objects to satiate male sexual desire (Korsgaard & Andersen, 1978; Zillmann & Bryant, 1988). Replicated studies in other countries such as Britain (Furnham & Bitar, 1993; Livingstone & Green, 1986; Manstead & McCullon, 1986), Australia (Mazzella, Durkin, Cerini, & Buralli, 1992), and Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989) also revealed the same disparities in gender role.

The weakness of this tradition is that the evaluation of gender stereotypes in the media is limited to the analysis of contents of television programs and falls short of an examination of the bona fide influence of the media message, both latent and manifest, on the actual attitudes and perceptions of the audience. Content analyses, from which inferences about television effects are made, may actually be poor indicators of audience perceptions (Butler & Paisley, 1980; Perloff, Brown, & Miller, 1982). The links between media content and discourse and the attitudinal aspects of audience are therefore often neglected.

Audience Perception of Sex-Role Portrayals

The second tradition focuses on the public perception, attitudes, and awareness of stereotyped televised gender-role portrayals and the effects of these portrayals. Some studies of this tradition (e.g., Zemach & Cohen, 1986) combined the analysis of both social reality and symbolic reality that facilitates a comparison between the perceptions of two conceptually different realities. Due to the heavy stereotyping on television, studies of these variables indicate a tendency toward a positive correlation between viewing and traditional attitudes (McGhee & Frueh, 1980; Loudal, 1989; Thompson & Zebinos, 1997).

Self-concept measures were used in gauging the stereotypical gender role of the respondents. Female respondents tend to rate themselves higher on self-concept measures that tap the ability to maintain harmonic relationships with others and on measures that reflect moral goodness and virtue (Gadzella & Wiliamson, 1984; Skaalvik, 1986; Stake, 1992). Males generally tend to rate themselves higher on measures that gauge the ability to be persuasive, dominant, and leader-like, and on measures that reflect the capacity to cope with pressure (Andrews, 1987; Stake, 1992; Zuckerman, 1989).

Studies (e.g., Atwood, Zahn, & Webber, 1986) that investigated representation of gender role in media showed a stable pattern. Three-quarters of the respondents categorized women on television as positive because they were seen as strong, intelligent, professional, and realistic. Consistently, about two-thirds of the respondents described women on television as negative because they were shown as weak, exploited victims, or alternately portrayed as demented housewives and sex objects.

Results of studies on public gender-role conceptions, however, may not echo the influences of television as suggested by content analysis studies (Gunter, 1992). Gender-role orientation has not been conclusively linked to the stereotypical attitudes that are present in the media. This is mainly due to the fact that the measurement and thus the subsequent interpretations are subject to demographic, cultural, and ethnically induced variation (DeYoung & Crane, 1992) and that attitudes toward the portrayal of women in the media may simply be based more on demographic variables, development effects, or induced by the product itself in the course of advertising (Absi-Semaan, Crombie, & Freeman, 1993).

Conception of Sex-Role Stereotypes and Counterstereotypes

Another set of literature deals with the reason behind stereotyping. In general, *stereotype* can mean a subjective perception or a "picture in

our head'' about the characteristics, shapes, attributes, forms, or traits of a person or an object in reality (Lippmann, 1922). The subjective perception may be an intuition, a prejudice, an imagination or a past impression of what a person has seen. Hence, it may not reflect or even be close to the reality, or such a reality may not have existed, and yet the person may still act on or make a decision based on his or her stereotypic notion. Gender stereotype is one type of subjective perception of what a male or female should be or how one should behave. From the social psychologist's point of view, it has often been regarded as a type of schema involved in processing televised information and in organizing memory (Martin & Halverson, 1981). Renn and Calvert (1993) interpreted gender stereotypes using an information processing model and suggested that gender schema enhanced recall of stereotypic information. In other words, those who are considered gender typed and gender schematic tend to organize their sense of self around socially prescribed sex-role characteristics and other socially designated behaviors that differentiate men and women and that are implicitly and uncritically accepted (Bem, 1983). The existing sex roles exert real pressures on individuals to behave in prescribed ways (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972).

In Hong Kong, such stereotypes may variously be the legacy of the Chinese tradition, formed because of influence from peer groups or created as a result of the images formed after media messages are processed. For example, a stereotypic Hong Kong Chinese may perceive that although Chinese males are always independent, females are dependent on males and should be gentle, sympathetic, and shy, whereas males should possess strong personality and leadership abilities in work and family, and thus are aggressive and assertive. However, both males and females are not necessarily so, and people who have a counterintuitive notion or perception regarding such stereotypes are counterstereotypic (Cheung, 1997).

Stereotype, Social Learning, and Cultivation

Television has long been said to contribute to the public's, and in particular children's, gender-role socialization by providing reference models (Gunter, 1992). Various long-term cultivation studies in the West have shown that television has aggravated the stereotyping effect, as greater exposure *per se* to television contents results in greater television-biased responses (see Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Continuous exposure to television may cultivate public beliefs about various social entities that are consonant with images of these entities portrayed on television.

Another perspective, the social–learning approach, also arrives at the

same conclusion related to sex-role portrayal. This approach argues that children may be rewarded for imitating members of their own gender, and therefore attend more closely to and learn more from same-sex models (Grusec & Brinker, 1972).

Assessment of Gender Stereotype

The effects of the aforementioned televised female stereotypes on the public are commonly assessed by use of experimental settings or by employing closed-ended survey methods. In both cases, children are used as research subjects (Morgan, 1982; Pingree, 1978; Zuckerman, Singer, & Singer, 1980). Large-scale studies that have involved adult audiences or representative samples of the population are not common (Goff, Goff, & Lehrer, 1980; Tuchman, 1979). Addressing the methodological problems that specifically relate to this research tradition, our study gauged the perception of various televised gender stereotypes using a representative sample. Our objective was threefold:

1. To measure the public perception of gender or sex role, particularly the extent to which they possess the stereotypic and counterstereotypic gender notion in Hong Kong
2. To gauge the public evaluation and hence awareness of televised gender roles
3. To investigate the relationship between television exposure and its uses and any stereotypic notion toward gender

In the long term, this baseline data will also allow us to better assess changes in attitudes over time.

MEASUREMENT OF STEREOTYPES AND MEDIA AWARENESS

The three major variables measured were sex-role stereotype, media use, and media awareness.

Gender Stereotype

For gender stereotype, we basically adopted the apporach of many earlier studies (e.g., Sherriffs & McKee, 1957) that demonstrated the existence of sex-role stereotypes by asking subjects to select from a list of traits that characterized men and women. We devised a questionnaire

that contains a list of items to assess individual perceptions of ''typical'' masculine and feminine behaviors, traits, and characteristics. The subjects were asked to evaluate a series of personal traits and indicate to what extent they believed each of them characterized mostly men, mostly women, or both equally.

We evaluated many early studies (e.g., Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968) that measured sex-role stereotype by the same approach. These studies showed that the positively valued masculine traits formed a cluster of related behaviors that included competence, rationality, and assertion, whereas the positively valued feminine traits formed another cluster that consisted of attributes such as gentle, sensitive to the feelings of others, tactful, warm, quiet, and expressive of tender feelings. Studies reported that these items, referred to as the ''warmth and expressiveness'' cluster, were characteristics that men were stereotypically perceived as lacking (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972). In the initial stage of questionnaire development, we located the pattern of such kinds of characteristics by informal interviews.

Based on the items used in previous studies, and in particular the scale developed by Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz (1972) and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) (1981), which contained a very comprehensive list of such characteristics, we developed a set of items that could be understood in a Chinese context. The items, excerpted and modified, are stable and valid measures for appraising the gender-role orientations (and are commonly used in measuring the influence of the media and advertising). Because BSRI scale items were based on Anglo-American cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity, the current study was particularly selective and sensitive in choosing a culture-specific sex-role inventory for use among non-Anglo segments (Harris, 1994). This is a response and supplement to those previous studies by Tzuriel (1984), who had proposed the development of culture-specific gender-role inventories for Israel and Harris (1994), who had proposed the African-American ''BSRI.''

Based on Bem's role repertoire, we calculated two subscale scores (and a neutral item)—masculinity and femininity scores were analyzed as continuous variables—to represent ''feminine'' and ''masculine.'' The scores on the subscales indicate whether the female or male in question possesses stereotypic or counterstereotypical characters. Gender-stereotyped persons are more motivated to correspond to the socially bounded desirable male and female behaviors in their expectations, self-descriptions, and actual behaviors. In general, people who perceive that the adjectives (or items) in the masculine subscale are ''masculine'' or are ''somewhat masculine'' may be regarded as those susceptible to a male-stereotypic

conception. Similarly, people who think that the items in the feminine subscale are "feminine" or are "somewhat feminine" are female-stereotypic. Marsh and Myers (1986) had fitted a two-factor structure to 14 feminine and 14 masculine BSRI items in a sample of 269 adolescent females, and found that the two factors were correlated dimensions, rendering orthogonal solutions for the BSRI problematic and determining that the two factors were in psychometric reality not polar opposites. However, Harris (1994) later found that the factors can be significantly improved by eliminating some negative feminine traits. Thus, included in our measurments are traits that are not particularly negative.

For those who think that the items in the masculine subscale are feminine or, conversely, that items in the feminine subscale are masculine, we interpret them as counterstereotypic regarding sex-role. Respondents were asked to choose on a scale from 1 to 5 on these items, where 1 stands for "very masculine," 2 stands for "masculine," 3 stands for "both masculine and feminine," 4 stands for "feminine," and 5 stands for "very feminine." In this respect, respondents who scored low on the masculine items or scored high on the feminine items are considered stereotypic, whereas those who scored high on the masculine items and scored low on the feminine items are those considered to be counterstereotypic. There are also "androgynous" persons who are much less sensitive to and seldom conform to these definitions of desirable gendered behavior (Bem, 1974).

The 17 items (traits) selected and rated are: (1) willing to take risks, (2) has leadership abilities, (3) strong personality, (4) defends own beliefs, (5) independent, (6) willing to improvise, (7) aggressive, (8) assertive, (9) loves children, (10) shy, (11) sensitive to the needs of others, (12) gentle, (13) compassionate, (14) affectionate, (15) sympathetic, (16) understanding, and (17) conscientious. The first eight items belong to the masculine subscale and the remaining eight items to the feminine subscale. The last one is a neutral measure. Besides measuring the stereotypic perception (or counterstereotypic perception), ultimately (by means of factor analytical techniques and a test of reliability), we attempted to confirm the validity of using this scale in a non-Western context and develop a stable and objective index for measuring gender stereotypes.

Media Awareness

The second part of the questionnaire measured the public's evaluation of a mediated stereotype that we called *media awareness.* Respondents were asked to evaluate the role of male and female in terms of the desirable "place for women/men," "the dependence of women on men," "men's

protection of women,'' women's and men's ''capability of making an important decision,'' and their subjective evaluations on the print and electronic media. These measures were also widely used in various communication studies (e.g., Lysonski & Pollay, 1990). Respondents were asked to give a range from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning ''strongly disagree'' and 5 meaning ''strongly agree.'' Consciousness-reasoning or awareness might actually mean an increase in the degree of criticism and boycott intentions (Lysonski & Pollay, 1990). People were also asked whether they were satisfied with televised discrimination against men and women, and the response was also measured by the same 1 to 5 scale.

Media Habits

To a certain extent, the public's attitudes on gender are influenced by their socioeconomic background as well as the media culture (which has unconsciously penetrated our daily discourses). Thus, in addition to the demographic variables, the third part of the questionnaire measured media habits in terms of media exposure (frequency in terms of minutes per day) and media use (types of programs watched) in order to assess how much the public was susceptible to television influence. By measuring the uses (assessed by respondents' self-reported function of television for information vs. entertainment) and the amount of time the public spent on media, we explored people's conceptions of gender and various stereotypes in relation to their viewership of television programs, the portrayal of certain groups or events on television and other nonmedia variables. This further helps explain how and why people in Hong Kong have formulated their conception of gender.

METHODS

The questionnaire was administrated to Hong Kong Chinese people age 16 years or older in a survey. The sampling method involves a multistage design. A random sample (of the EPSEM type) of 4,800 residential addresses was obtained from the Census and Statistics Department of the Government, and the effective sample was 3,850 after nonresidential, unoccupied, and demolished addresses were screened out. A random table preattached to each address is used to select a household if there is more than one household at the selected address, and a modified Kish grid is employed to select one interviewee from the household. A face-to-face interview was then carried out to complete the questionnaire. The inter-

views were conducted by 469 interviewers recruited from seven local universities or equivalent educational institutes, all of whom were given a 2-hour briefing about the questionnaire and the sampling procedures. After the study, a team of checkers called up the all respondents to validate the household composition, the sampling procedure, the length of the interview, gender of the interviewer, six to seven selected questions, and the sampling procedures.

The questionnaire was designed and examined by members of research teams from different departments of the universities in Hong Kong. The diversity of expertise ensured that the instruments were well designed. The entire project commissioned by the government measured people's subjective perception of gender and sex roles in relation to media, education, family, work, and community participation (but the parts on education, family, work, and community are not the focus of this article). To test the instruments, a pilot test of 30 successful cases with quota sample based on sex, age, and educational attainment was carried out in September 1996 by five interviewers. Only the session on gender stereotypes and media with the BSRI as the measurement was analyzed in this study. The survey was conducted from October 8 to November 30, 1996. We successfully interviewed 2,020 subjects with a response rate of 52.5%. All interviews were checked by an independent group of checkers. (51.5% below HK$10,000; 39.4% between HK$10,000 and HK$24,999; and 19.1% above HK$25,000, with US$1 ~ HK$7.8). A comparison with the 1996 Hong Kong by census (census conducted every 2 years) data shows that there is little discrepancy between the sample and the population data for every major sociodemographic aspect such as gender, age, educational attainment, labor force participation rate, occupation, industry, personal monthy income, and housing type (EOC, 1997).

ANALYSIS

The Overall Stereotypic and Counterstereotypic Perception

The data collected shows that Hong Kong people are very stereotypic regarding gender relationships. The mean scores of all the responses on each item (or characteristics) were calculated. In general, the respondents perceived that all the adjectives in the masculine subscale were masculine with a mean score attainment of below 3.0 (on the scale, 1 and 2 mean "somewhat masculine" or "masculine," respectively). In general, people tended to believe that males are "independent," "aggressive," "assertive," "willing to improvise," and are always defending their own beliefs. "Strong

personality," "leadership abilities," and "willingness to take risks" were all perceived to be masculine characteristics. This confirmed our belief that Hong Kong Chinese were gender stereotypic in terms of masculine characteristics and values.

On items of the feminine subscale, respondents scored higher compared to the items of the masculine subscale. The higher scores indicated that people perceived that items on the scale were mostly female characteristics. This also means that Hong Kong Chinese are stereotypic on feminine character. The tendency is obvious as all the adjectives in this scale are above 3.0 (on the masculine–feminine scale, 4 and 5 mean "somewhat feminine" or "feminine," respectively). The adjective "gentle" was rated with a mean of above 4.0, whereas in general, characteristics such as "shy," "gentle," "compassionate," "affectionate," "sympathetic," and "understanding" were all perceived to be attributes of females. Females were also perceived to be "children-loving" and "sensitive to the needs of others."

One neutral adjective in the BSRI scale was put into the test that further affirmed the validity of the measurement in a Chinese context. As expected, respondents tended to perceive a "conscientious" character as both masculine and feminine with a mean of approximately 3.0 ($SD = .84$, $n = 1{,}972$). However, a combined sample of both male and female may have washed out a significant gender difference. Thus, scores of both males and females on these items were then compared (Table I).

A breakdown of male and female perceptions revealed that neither Hong Kong females nor Hong Kong males possessed any degree of counterstereotypic tendency; in other words, they were not considered to be at all androgynous. Males tended to score lower on all items of the masculine subscale than did females, and these lower scores imply that the stereotypic tendency of males on some masculine characteristics tends to be stronger. Eight items, "willing to take risks," "has leadership abilities," "independent," "willing to improvise," "aggressive," "assertive," "strong personality," and "defends one's own beliefs" were perceived to be different, $p < 0.001$. The item "willing to improvise" was the only one that had a mean of more than 3.0 ($SD = .78$, $n = 979$). Such differences also indicate that the counterstereotypic notion of females toward male characteristics was quite weak.

Hong Kong Chinese males scored significantly lower on the feminine subscale than did females, $p < 0.001$, meaning that females' stereotypic tendencies on feminine items are even stronger than those of males. Males and females responses on six items out of eight—"shy," "sensitive to the needs of others," "compassionate," "affectionate," "sympathetic," "understanding," "loves children," and "gentle"—are in particular different, $p < 0.001$. This suggests that males may have a very weak counterstereotypic

Table I. Comparison Between Male and Female on the BSRI

	All			Male			Female		
Masculine Subscale	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Willing to take risks[a]	2.17	.81	1,948	2.04	.78	950	2.30	.82	998
Has leadership abilities[a]	2.47	.77	1,966	2.36	.78	959	2.57	.75	1,007
Strong personality[b]	2.69	.85	1,972	2.63	.85	962	2.75	.85	1,010
Defends own beliefs[b]	2.92	.85	1,949	2.86	.89	948	2.97	.82	1,001
Independent[a]	2.63	.81	1,978	2.41	.79	964	2.83	.78	1,014
Willing to improvise[a]	2.88	.79	1,928	2.73	.78	949	3.02	.78	979
Aggressive[a]	2.33	.73	1,975	2.23	.70	963	2.43	.74	1,012
Assertive[a]	2.46	.87	1,933	2.35	.85	947	2.55	.87	986
	All			Male			Female		
Feminine Subscale	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Loves children[b]	3.49	.75	1,980	3.44	.75	964	3.55	.75	1,016
Shy[a]	3.52	.82	1,956	3.45	.82	948	3.59	.80	1,008
Sensitive to the needs of others[a]	3.52	.81	1,890	3.45	.81	928	3.60	.81	962
Gentle[b]	4.01	.69	1,992	3.98	.71	967	4.04	.67	1,025
Compassionate[a]	3.51	.70	1,992	3.42	.69	966	3.60	.70	1,030
Affectionate[a]	3.46	.67	1,996	3.37	.65	958	3.54	.68	1,009
Sympathetic[a]	3.40	.68	1,960	3.33	.68	951	3.47	.67	1,009
Understanding[a]	3.42	.74	1,941	3.26	.75	945	3.57	.70	996
	All			Male			Female		
Neutral Item	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Conscientious[a]	3.0	.84	1,972	2.84	.81	962	3.17	.83	1,010

[a]Significant at 0.001.
[b]Significant at 0.01.
[c]Significant at 0.05.

tendency. In general, Hong Kong males and females still cling to traditional Chinese thoughts and stereotypic notions. This is consistent with earlier studies that have suggested that people tend to rate themselves higher on self-concept measures. Studies (Marsh *et al.*, 1985; Stake, 1992; Zuckerman, 1989) have shown that although women ranked themselves higher on the ability to establish and maintain harmonious relationships with others and on measures reflecting morals and virtue, men ranked themselves higher on leadership, persuading others, and the ability to cope with pressure.

As expected, further analysis by means of factor analysis showed that the modified BSRI scale falls into two main dimensions. A principle component analysis of two factors explained 31% of the variance and the dimensions were rotated based on varimax criterion. Again, as expected, eight items reflecting the male stereotype all loaded moderately high on one dimension, with factor loadings ranging from .43 to .57. The eight items

reflecting the female stereotypic tendency loaded moderately on another dimension, with factor loadings ranging from .33 to .69. "Conscientious," which was the neutral item, loaded moderately on both dimensions.

Factor analysis of the items confirmed the validity of the modified BSRI scale used in a Chinese context. The reliability test of the masculine subscale was .67 (alpha), whereas that of the feminine subscale was .68 (Table II).

The eight items in the masculine dimension and eight items in the feminine dimension were then summed up (additional model) to form the male stereotype indicator or index and the female stereotype index, respectively, and subsequently examined for additions and correlations. Because "masculine" and "somewhat masculine" are scored 1 and 2, respectively, a lower mean on the male stereotype index suggested that people tend to perceive the characters described as more masculine. Similarly, a higher mean on the female stereotype index implied that people perceived the characters described as more feminine. The calculation of the overall male and female stereotype index further sums up the gender stereotype tendency of the people. The indexes are also useful indicators for other analyses of relationship with media use later.

Male respondents ($M = 19.6$, $SD = 3.5$, $n = 891$) had a lower mean than females ($M = 21.5$, $SD = 3.3$, $n = 889$) on the male stereotype index. Females tended to have a higher mean ($M = 29.0$, $SD = 3.32$, $n = 908$)

Table II. Factor Loadings of the Feminine and Masculine Dimensions

	Factor Loadings	
Masculine dimension		
Willing to take risks	−.10351	.49652
Has leadership abilities	−.00222	.56709
Strong personality	−.05798	.55619
Defends own beliefs	.07906	.42788
Independent	−.02427	.57419
Willing to improve	.07907	.50162
Aggressive	−.12355	.55960
Assertive	−.14939	.53799
Feminine dimension		
Love children	.54162	−.04547
Shy	.38270	−.34415
Sensitive to the needs of others	.33587	.01014
Gentle	.59402	−.19720
Compassionate	.67673	−.04887
Affectionate	.69142	.04466
Sympathetic	.64287	−.08915
Understanding	.48716	.19126
Neutral item		
Conscientious	.32015	.43913

than males ($M = 27.8$, $SD = 3.0$, $n = 875$) on the female stereotype index. This suggests that both males and females tended to have a stronger notion of themselves. It seems possible that both females and males had an internalized gender notion and were not aware of their stereotypic sex role (Table III).

Evaluation of Media Stereotypes

Although studies in the West have shown a marked tendency to regard symbolic reality as more stereotypic than social reality, in most of the gender traits, roles, and occupations examined, the Hong Kong public was quite weak in their awareness of the media stereotype (i.e., the respondents thought that the media stereotype was not particularly serious). On the questions related to the media's portrayal of women, approximately the same percentage of people who disagreed and agreed (combining "strongly agree" with "agree," and "strongly disagree" with "disagree") with the statement that "mass media always describes the family as the place for women" (42.2% agree and 41.5% disagree). There were even more people who disagreed with the statements "mass media always describe women as dependent on men" (50.5% agree and 32.2% disagree) and "media always describe women as incapable of making important decisions" than those who agreed (65.9% agree and 18.0% disagree). This reflected Hong Kong peoples' belief that the media stereotype of females was not serious at all, or perhaps they did not perceive that media stereotypes existed. However, cautions should be exercised when interpreting these figures. The wordings of the original statement may have influenced people's agreements. For example, if the word "always" was taken out of the original statement, the percentage of agreement would have increased slightly. However, owing to the literal use in common Hong Kong context, the word "always" was not removed after the pilot test (Table IV).

However, there is no doubt that results yield more significant findings when figures of perceptions of male and female stereotypes are compared. Male stereotype in the media was perceived to be more serious. The statement, "mass media always describe men as belonging to the workplace than to family" showed that 72.8% of people agreed or strongly agreed, and 71.4% agreed or strongly agreed that "mass media always portray men as protecting women." The statement, "mass media always describe men as capable of making important decisions" showed that 62.4% of respondents agreed. This suggests that although the public may believe that the mass media were forerunners in promoting female equality, male dominance in the media is relatively neglected.

Table III. The Overall Male and Female Stereotype Index

	All			Male			Female			Mean Difference		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Male stereotype index	20.55	3.50	1780	19.63	3.50	891	21.47	3.20	889	1.83	.16	1780
Female stereotype index	28.40	3.23	1783	27.78	3.01	875	29.00	3.32	908	1.21	.15	1783

[a]Significant at 0.001.

Table IV. People's Awareness Toward Media Stereotype

Mass media always describe family as the place for women						
Agreement	*All*	*n*	*Male*	*n*	*Female*	*n*
Disagree	42.2	826	44.0	422	40.4	404
So-so	16.4	321	17.3	166	15.5	155
Agree	41.5	813	38.7	371	44.2	442
Total	100.0	1960	100.0	959	100.0	1,0001
Mass media always describe women as dependent on men						
Agreement	*All*	*n*	*Male*	*n*	*Female*	*n*
Disagree	50.5	995	47.1	452	53.9	543
So-so	17.2	339	18.8	180	15.8	159
Agree	32.2	634	34.1	327	30.5	307
Total	100.0	1,968	100.0	959	100.0	1,009
Mass media always describe women as incapable of making important decisions						
Agreement	*All*	*n*	*Male*	*n*	*Female*	*n*
Disagree	65.9	1295	64.3	617	67.4	678
So-so	16.0	315	17.2	165	14.9	150
Agree	18.0	355	18.4	177	17.7	178
Total	100.0	1,965	100.0	959	100.0	1,006
Mass media always describe men as belonging to the workplace than to the family						
Agreement	*All*	*n*	*Male*	*n*	*Female*	*n*
Disagree	14.7	289	14.7	141	14.8	148
So-so	12.5	245	11.9	115	13.0	130
Agree	72.8	1433	73.4	708	72.3	725
Total	100.0	1,967	100.0	964	100.0	1,003
Mass media always describe men as protecting women						
Agreement	*All*	*n*	*Male*	*n*	*Female*	*n*
Disagree	13.2	261	17.0	95	16.5	166
So-so	15.4	304	11.2	108	19.4	196
Agree	71.4	1410	79.0	763	64.1	647
Total	100.0	1,975	100.0	966	100.0	1,009
Mass media always describe men as capable of making important decisions						
Agreement	*All*	*n*	*Male*	*n*	*Female*	*n*
Disagree	19.3	378	14.7	142	23.7	236
So-so	18.4	360	16.9	163	19.8	197
Agree	62.4	1221	68.3	658	56.5	563
Total	100.0	1,959	100.0	963	100.0	996

Comparisons between males and females using an independent *t*-test showed ambiguous results on awareness of female media stereotypes. Females ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.01$, $n = 1001$) were more critical than men. Regarding the statement, "the mass media always describe family as the place for women," females ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .99$, $n = 959$) disagreed, $p < 0.001$. There was, however, no significant difference on the item related to women's dependence on men and women's decisions on important matters.

The three items evaluating the media's female stereotype were then combined to formulate a score showing the degree of awareness of the media's female stereotype. There was no difference between males and females on the score for awareness of the media's female stereotype as a whole. Similarly, the three items evaluating the media's male stereotype were added. Males ($M = 10.98$, $SD = 1.78$, $n = 953$) were clearly more aware of the stereotype in the media than were women ($M = 10.51$, $SD = 2.07$, $n = 974$), with a higher combined score. Among the three items, with the exception of the item, "mass media always describe men as belonging to workplace than to family," male respondents (in "mass media always describe men as protecting women," $M = 3.76$, $SD = .75$, $n = 966$; and in "mass media always describe men as capable of making important decisions," $M = 3.59$, $SD = .83$, $n = 963$) had a higher awareness (or score) than females ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .87$, $n = 1009$; and $M = 3.35$, $SD = .95$, $n = 996$, respectively), $p < 0.001$ (Table V).

On the whole, people's awareness of the media's male stereotype was much stronger than that of the female stereotype. This was shown by a higher combined score on evaluation of the media's male stereotype ($M = 10.75$, $SD = 1.95$, $n = 1927$) than that of females ($M = 8.26$, $SD = 2.18$, $n = 1925$), the latter score in fact showing that people perceived that the female stereotype in the media did not exist.

Media Use, Stereotype, and Awareness

Contrary to the commonly held view, there was no significant correlation between a person's television exposure (total time spent on watching television) and his or her gender stereotype and awareness of gender stereotype in the media. We categorized people as either heavy or light users of television; heavy users were defined as who those spent more than the median time (2 hours daily on television). Heavy and light television users did not show any difference regarding their media awareness of female

Table V. Awareness of Media's Stereotype

	All			Male			Female			Difference	
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Mass media always describe family as the place for women	2.99	1.00	1960	2.94	.99	959	3.04	1.01	1001	−.10[a]	.19
Mass media always describe women as dependent on men	2.81	1.00	1968	2.87	.99	959	2.75	.94	1009	.13[b]	.04
Mass media always describe women as incapable of making important decisions	2.46	.91	1965	2.50	.88	959	2.43	.88	1006	.07n.s.	.07
Combined score on awareness of media's female stereotype	8.26	2.18	1925	8.31	2.10	942	8.21	2.26	983	.10n.s.	.09
Mass media always describe men as belonging to workplace than to family	3.64	.87	1967	3.63	.86	964	3.64	.88	1003	−.01n.s.	.09
Mass media always describe men as protecting women	3.64	.83	1975	3.76	.75	966	3.52	.87	1009	.24[c]	.17
Mass media always describe men as capable of making important decisions	3.47	.90	1959	3.59	.83	963	3.35	.95	996	.24[c]	.16
Combined score on awareness of media's male stereotype	10.75	1.95	1927	10.98	1.78	953	10.51	2.07	974	.47[c]	.10

[a]Significant at 0.05.
[b]Significant at 0.01.
[c]Significant at 0.001.

and male stereotypes, nor did they show any differences regarding gender stereotypes.

Despite there being no effect on the amount television exposure, there was a close relationship between television uses (or habits) and gender stereotypes and awareness. Most of the people (57.5%) in general used the media for information, whereas 35.5% used the media for some sort of entertainment purpose. On the whole, media use influenced users' feminine stereotype and critical awareness of the male stereotype. We conducted *t*-tests to compare the group who used media for entertainment purpose and the group who used media for informational purpose. People who used the media for entertainment purpose ($M = 28.91$, $SD = 3.34$, $n = 630$) had a higher mean than those who were exposed to more informational materials ($M = 28.18$, $SD = 3.11$, $n = 1043$), $p < 0.001$. This suggests that exposing one to the entertainment media tends to create a stronger female stereotype. This is inconsistent with the commonplace conception that entertainment media are gender unaware and permeated with gender-unequal information. However, the public's exposure to entertainment and informational programs did not have any effect on their masculine stereotype (Table VI). As for critical awareness of stereotypes, those who are exposed to more informational type of programs had a higher mean on critical awareness of male stereotypes in the mass media ($M = 10.84$, $SD = 1.88$,

Table VI. Gender Stereotypes and Media Habit

	General Perception		Awareness of Media	
	Female Stereotype	Male Stereotype	Female Stereotype	Male Stereotype
Media use				
For entertainment	28.91[a]	20.65	8.29	10.61[b]
For information	28.18	20.46	8.24	10.84
Exposure to television				
Light users	28.31	20.59	8.27	10.80
Heavy users	28.54	20.49	8.26	10.73
Types of newspaper				
Popular newspapers	28.30[b]	20.55	8.15	10.69
Elite newspaper	28.82	20.64	8.33	10.63
Types of television programs				
Entertainment programs	28.59[b]	20.73	8.23	10.70
Information programs	28.27	20.44	8.28	10.77

Note: Higher scores on female stereotype reflect greater tendency for female stereotypic perception, whereas lower scores on male stereotype represent greater tendency for male stereotypic perception.

[a]p values are for column differences, $p < .01$.

[b]$p < 0.05$.

Source: Baseline Survey of Equal Opportunities, EOC. Research Report No. 1. Table compiled by the author.

n = 1,128) than did those watching entertainment (M = 10.61, SD = 2.04, n = 678), $p < 0.05$. However, the type of media used had no effect on people's critical awareness of the feminine stereotype in the media.

To further confirm the self-reported functions of television, the functional use of the media was categorized by the types of media the public were exposed to. Television programs are classified into two types: informational and entertainment. The informational programs include news documentaries, current affairs programs, cable news programs, and some news programs other than the Chinese evening news, to which almost all people are exposed; the other programs, most of which are drama and soap operas, are considered to be entertaining programs.

The data showed that those who watched more recreational or entertaining types of television programs had a significantly higher score on the combined feminine stereotype index (M = 28.59, SD = 3.26, n = 713) than those who watched informational programs (M = 28.27, SD = 3.20, n = 1,070), $p < 0.05$. Recreational programs on television were filled with stereotypic images that were relatively less prominent in informational television programming. Thus, it is ones' exposure to popular programs and not to informational programs that can induce a higher stereotypic influence. However, the functional use of television programming did not influence people's evaluation of various media stereotypes. A similar analysis using ANOVA with feminine stereotype index as the dependent variable, and with media use, exposure to television, types of newspaper, and television programmes as factors also showed the same results, $F(5,888)$ = 14050.88, $p < 0.001$. However, no significant interaction effect is observed (the model with interaction effect is not shown). Other indexes with ANOVA did not show significant results (Table VII).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This baseline survey has concluded that the people of Hong Kong, both males and females, are gender stereotypic and few of them are counter-

Table VII. Analysis of Variance for Feminine Stereotype Index

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Model	725127.547[a]	5	145025.509	14050.877	.000
Media use	128.932	1	128.932	12.492	.000
Exposure to TV	34.139	1	34.139	3.308	.069
Types of newspaper	167.286	1	167.286	16.208	.000
Types of TV programs	11.702	1	11.702	1.134	.287
Error	9165.453	888	10.321		
Total	734293.000	893			

[a]R squared = .988 (adjusted R squared = .987).

stereotypic, as reflected in the public's response to the male and female stereotype index, and that people are not very aware of various media stereotypes. The public also claimed that they are not very satisfied with the current television performance toward gender and sex. The explanation may be that Hong Kong Chinese have the deep-seated notion of stereotype that has been traditionally inherited from their family, education system, and society, even though Hong Kong society is a cultural mix of Western values and traditional Chinese values. Thus, they are not conscious of television's negative stereotype of gender. However, given that Hong Kong Chinese are somewhat blended with the free, open, and liberal thoughts of the West, Hong Kong people can be seen as more outspoken and critical. In a sense, they are encouraged to express their dissatisfaction over various traditional Chinese axioms toward gender, despite the fact that they may not be able to specify the exact inadequacy of the grand masculine narrative that permeates the society as a whole.

Whereas conventional studies have focused on the impact of television exposure on perception related to gender in terms of time spent viewing, this study examined the functional use of the media as well as the informal entertainment culture of television that had long been ignored in media effect studies (e.g., Zillmann & Bryant, 1994; Modleski, 1986). Results of this baseline survey showed that measures of amount of viewing may not be valid or sufficient indicators of television effects, as television content and viewers' preferences for that content can vary considerably. It also showed that heavy viewers who watched entirely different kinds of programs may, as a result, hold two quite disparate sets of beliefs (Gunter, 1992). Alternately, the habits associated with media use seem to have more explanatory power. The results, however, are not conclusive but suggestive of future research directions.

In general, the functional use of the media for entertainment rather than for information, as well as the exposure to entertaining programs on television, have reinforced people's gender stereotype. This is not to argue that serious media channels may not convey gender stereotypic notions, but that fictional and entertaining television dramas can also serve as a source for creating real life gendered occupations. The gendered reality, although it has long been demonstrated that children have acquired separate schemata for factual and fictional television (Gunter, 1992), is such that effects may not be measurable in terms of short-term influence presented to subjects in experimental settings. Rather, the gender stereotypic notion, which may only be gauged in natural settings, has diffused into or unconsciously been absorbed by audience who are exposed to television daily. The stereotype therefore is not something influenced by external factors, but has grown from the daily media experience that is a "way of life" for

the audience. Further research may look into the process by which television, and specifically entertainment television, have produced the publics' stereotypic notions. In addition to the large-scale survey method, there is a need for a combined effort that includes content analysis, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic studies of patterns of family media use.

Traditional sex-role stereotypes and patterns, particularly those reinforced by media, are constantly being challenged by the new feminist movement (Zoonen, 1994). The media portrayal toward gender in Hong Kong still presents evidence of the powerful social pressures to mold both females and males to some standardized sex role. This shows that in Hong Kong, the social effort to push the feminist agenda forward is very much required to achieve gains in gender equality.

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