



A CRITICAL STUDY OF KONG GIRLS PHENOMENON IN HONGKONG SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The term, Kong Girls is new in Hong Kong in the past ten years. The purpose of this research is to suggest reasons behind the Kong Girls phenomenon and to explore whether this will continue to be a factor for Hong Kong men marrying Mainland women.

Methodology: Seven interviews with typical Hong Kong Kong Girls were conducted within a similar period of time in 2015. One non-Kong-Girl was also interviewed as a control.

Main Findings: findings of this research indicate that the Kong Girls phenomenon may be a social problem in the long run and Hong Kong men have to continue to find their wives outside Hong Kong if traditional thinking is not to be changed. If Hong Kong women continue to be Kong Girls, both genders may not be able to find their partner locally at their home city.

Implications: social studies, psychology, gender issues

Novelty/Originality of this study: This article helps explain why Hong Kong women prefer to marry non-Hong Kong men or choose to remain single. This is first of its kind study.

Keywords: *Kong Girls, social psychology, Princess Syndrome, women liberation*

INTRODUCTION

“Kong Girls” is a popular term which originates from the Encyclopaedia of Virtual Communities in Hong Kong in 2005 to describe unpopular Hong Kong women who are narcissistic (the “Princess Syndrome”) and who worship money. It is a derogative term. Other characteristics of a Kong Girl include big-ego, money-lover, vanity, shopaholic, without self-cultivation and exploitative of men. A Kong Girl can be married, single (never married) or divorced.

Women who carry the characteristics of Kong Girls exist all over the world. But this term has become specific in Hong Kong because the impact of Kong Girls is becoming more obvious in the past decade.

There is not much research on Kong Girls and this paper serves as a preliminary review on the topic for future study and research. There is no literature review on this topic at the time this article was written.

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire of 11 questions (Appendix 1) was given to 45 Hong Kong women to reflect whether they were typical Kong Girls. Responses were used to classify the participants: those who answered positively to any 7 questions (for Question 11, options a, c and d were taken as positive) were considered as Kong Girls. Of the 41 returned questionnaires, nine reflected that they were Kong Girls but only seven agreed to be interviewed. One non-Kong-Girl among the rest of the 32 was also invited for an interview as a control. This paper focuses on how Kong Girls think about love and marriage, and not the other aspects of Kong Girls thinking. So the questionnaire was designed only for this purpose.

A qualitative approach was adopted in this research because in-depth analysis could be done on the basis of real life conversations. Open-ended questions related to their background and current living circumstances and their opinions on men were laid out during the interviews. Interviews with seven Kong Girls were conducted within the similar period of time and vivid descriptions by these interviewees were recorded by tape. The scripts were word-processed and given to the interviewees for confirmation. The information gained from the interviews was kept as authentic as possible.

PARTICIPANTS

This paper uses a qualitative approach to study seven Kong Girls in Hong Kong. Each of them was interviewed individually sometime in June 2015. A girl who does not carry the characteristics of a Kong Girl is also interviewed at the same period of time for comparison. The interviews took place either in my office or at their home. The venue was quiet

when the interview was conducted. Each interview lasted for about an hour. No leading questions were asked. All dialogues in the interviews were recorded. The names used in this paper (if any) are not real. Each interviewee began with an introduction of their current job and family background. Then focus switched to their relationships with men and how they perceived men.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Of the seven Kong Girls, one was married and six were single. Three of them held a junior position at work while the other four held a degree or above and a management-level position in their companies or institutions. Five of them were financially independent. Four lived alone. Four said they were pampered by at least one their parents and had very good relationship with either of their parents. All of them assumed their boyfriend or husband to be financially better off than themselves. At the same time, all of them expected love and romance in the relationship, initiated by their man. All of them think it is important for their man to celebrate their birthday. Five of them said they would have positive feelings towards a man once they knew he was financially well-off. Three out of the six single women currently have a boyfriend but only one was satisfied with her boyfriend. Three said they had yelled at or scolded their boyfriend once every month, two once every two months, two every four months. Five of the six single women hoped to get married sometime in their life. Only one of them had some pressure of getting married from one of her parents. The married interviewee was quite satisfied with her husband because he was used to her requests and did not mind doing her favours sometimes. All of them were not willing to change themselves in order to keep a relationship with a man who was not financially well off. Six of them were willing to change “a bit” of themselves if the man was financially well off.

The non-Kong-Girl, an assistant manager in a professional firm, also had a good relationship with her parents but she said it would be fairer if both the man and the women were of equal position in a relationship. Both could learn how to live harmoniously with the opposite sex and learn some positive sides from him/her. She didn’t think the man had to be financially better off than herself or should he always bear more responsibility in the relationship. Both should give what they could. She had a boyfriend now and she and her boyfriend never yelled at each other. She was satisfied with her boyfriend though he earned less than she did.

REASONS BEHIND THE KONG GIRLS PHENOMENON

Women’s Liberation in Hong Kong

Women’s social status in Hong Kong has been rising since the 1980s. With Liza Wong’s popular image as a career woman Lok Lam in the TV series “A House is not a Home” (1977, viewing rate 95%), Hong Kong women were inspired to become career women themselves. In addition, senior Unofficial Member of the [Legislative Council](#) and [Executive Council](#) of Hong Kong, Lydia Selina Dunn, Baroness Dunn, [DBE, JP](#) (from 1985–1995), and [Chief Secretary](#) in both the [British colonial government of Hong Kong](#) and the [Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government](#), Anson Chan Fang On-sang, [GCMG, CBE, GBM, JP](#) (from 1993–2001), who were the first females to carry such positions, were female political icons in Hong Kong in the 80s and the 90s. According to Tongshiwang, in 1981, there were only 5% senior female officials in the government, but by 2009, this figure had risen to 31.4%. Hong Kong ranked 19 in the world for women’s rights and benefits as stated in the Human Development Report by the United Nations (2007-8), the second in Asia ahead of Japan and Korea and China but slightly after Singapore.

Various Systems Contributing to the Kong Girls Phenomenon

Even though the boy-girl ratio in secondary schools in Hong Kong is almost equal, female students achieve better results than boys in their academic studies (more girls perform better in language-related subjects like Chinese and English which are the core subjects to be considered in the admission to the universities in Hong Kong). So more girls are admitted to universities. According to the [Women and Men in Hong Kong - Key Statistics \(2015\) compiled by the Census and Statistics Department of Hong Kong SAR](#), in 2014, the total number of students enrolled in programmes funded by University Grants Committee was 52,628 (54%) for female and 44,955 (46%) for male, in which undergraduate was 44,237 for female and 36,677 for male. With a bachelor’s degree, women began to find jobs easily and they became well-off. They began to look down upon men who may not be able to earn more than the women. Possibly as a result, men found it hard to bear the circumstance and they looked for wives in China. The number of Hong Kong males marrying Mainland females was 18,645 in 2014 while Hong Kong females marrying Mainland males were 7,658. The number of women (age from 15 and above) who never got married rose 31% to over 700,000 from 1996 to 2006. Besides, the Women’s Commission was established in 2001 which monitors women’s rights and benefits in Hong Kong. But there is none of such kind for men.

Social Factors related to Kong Girls

Many women in Hong Kong were well-pampered by their parents and other adults from birth. In Hong Kong, the growth of the „Princess syndrome“ is widely recognized during these years. The flip side is the expectation that they will be continuously pampered by princes-to-be when they grow up. They became more demanding and wanted men to pay for their meals, take their handbags, buy them gifts, etc. If men do not do so, that is taken to mean they do not love her. Men feel lots of pressure and yet they were taught to be “gentlemen” and not to argue with women. Their role in this script is to



make women happy, or they lose out on sex and affection. This further boosted the morale of women. On the other hand, women choose men of “better” quality, and hence men fight against each other to get women. So women were treated as queens. Hong Kong has become a city where women have more relationship bargaining power than men.

CONCLUSION

It is predicted that women will continue to academically perform slightly better than men, and the official political bias will still be pro women. Women would not want to give up what they have achieved now. Therefore it is presumed that the legend of Kong Girls will live on.

The only way to help ease the conflict between men and women in Hong Kong is education. It is high time for parents not to pamper their daughters and it is advisable for them to train up their daughters as responsible and thoughtful individuals. It is suggested that these parents can attend some courses related to child development.

The current situation for men in Hong Kong is that most of them would like to partner with women who are character wise and/or financially “weaker” than men, but many women in Hong Kong are “too capable” and have strong character. On the other hand, women in general want to find men who are financially “stronger” than women (Kong Girls are the “extreme” of these women), but many of them are themselves financially better off than men. This expectation for the opposite gender is a total mismatch. As a result, both genders may not be able to find their partner locally at their home city. With the working opportunities in China, men look for women in the Mainland and women either marrying a non-Hong Kong man or stay single. In 2011 the number of persons living alone was 209,027 for females and 195,061 for males, a rise in 101.1% for females and 12.8% for males respectively, as compared to the number in 1996. During 1986 to 2014, the number of never married persons aged 15 and above increased by 61.7% for women and 14.3% for men respectively. Hong Kong is a place where east meets west. Hong Kong people carry the values of both the east and the west. While women have higher opportunities to study in the universities and hence making more money after graduation, their minds are still dominated by traditional Chinese ideas like “women are the weaker sex” and “the husband should be financially more capable than the wife”. As a result, they fall into a deadlock and will not live happily if they do not change their mindset. It is only when women accept financially “weaker” men and men accept financially “stronger” women can both sexes find partners in Hong Kong.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

The research was completed by one person and therefore manpower was very limited in this study. More subjects could be interviewed should more assistants were available.

It is hoped that more studies of similar topics can be done in the soon future and as a result, the Hong Kong government will have more background knowledge on the marital statistics of Hong Kong.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Eight Interviewees.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire questions are as follows:

1. Your boyfriend should call you every day and try to see you as much as possible during the week.
2. Your boyfriend should be on time whenever meeting you but you can be 15-30 minutes late.
3. Your boyfriend should see you home or walk you home every time when you two part.
4. 4. Your boyfriend should pay for most of the meals or all meals when he is with you.

5. Your boyfriend should carry your handbag for you.
6. Your boyfriend should always celebrate your birthday with you.
7. Your boyfriend should earn more than you do or should be richer than you.
8. You don't like your boyfriend to praise another woman for being beautiful and capable.
9. You don't want to continue seeing a man once you know he is financially quite poor.
10. You care about how others look at you and your boyfriend.
11. What would you do if your boyfriend accidentally drops your handbag into the water?
 - a. scold him at once
 - b. gently ask him to be careful next time
 - c. ironically say he does not care about your stuff
 - d. hit him

Background of Kong Girls' interviewed

Marital Status being Single	86%
Level of education being degree holder or above and working at the management-level	57%
Being financially independent	71%
Pampered by at least one their parents	57%

Percentage of Kong Girls' Perception on Men

Assumed their boyfriend or husband to be financially better off than themselves	100%
Expected love and romance in the relationship, initiated by their man	100%
Expected their man to celebrate their birthday	100%
Positive feelings towards a man once they knew he was financially well-off	71%
Hoped to get married sometime in their life	86%
Willingness to change themselves in order to keep a relationship with a man who was not financially well off	0%
Willingness to change "a bit" of themselves if the man was financially well off	86%
Had yelled at or scolded their boyfriend:	
once every month	43%
once every two months	28%
once every four months	28%