

**Level of Androgyny, Media Exposure and
Students' Evaluation of Gender Stereotypic Advertisements
in Hong Kong**

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**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy
in
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Abstract of thesis entitled:

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Submitted by: LEUNG Hoi Man

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While studies regarding audience's perception of gender stereotypes in advertisements have been common and rigorous in Western cultures, such issue yields only little attention in the academia in Hong Kong. As a Chinese context with a mixture of traditional Chinese values and influences from Western world in both social and political sectors, Hong Kong still finds domination of conventional gender portrayals in advertising.

The concepts of psychological androgyny and media cultivation are introduced to the study to examine their effects on Hong Kong secondary school students' awareness of and attitudes towards male and female stereotypes in advertisements. Androgyny represents a state where an individual reports both high masculinity and femininity. Cultivation effect is presumed to be intensified when audience heavily consume media contents.

A specially designed self-administered questionnaire was completed by 1,036 secondary school students who were sampled randomly from grammar schools, pre-vocational institutes and international colleges. Results show that both level of androgyny and media exposure are not significantly related to students' awareness and attitudes. Instead, demographic variables, such as age and biological gender, do indicate strong and significant association with

youth's evaluation of gendered messages in advertisements. Arguments for the unproductive hypothesis model and effects of life style and socioeconomic status on awareness and attitudes are also discussed.

論文撮要

論文題目：

「兩性度、媒體使用與香港中學生對廣告性別定形的評價」

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有關觀眾對大眾傳媒裡性別定形的評價的研究在西方社會已很普遍及盛行，然而這個題目在香港的學術界暫未受到關注。香港，作為一個既保存有傳統中國思想，亦受西方文化於社會及政治上影響的中國人社會，舊有的性別定形在大眾傳媒裡仍然普遍。

此項研究引入「兩性度」及「傳媒使用量」這兩個概念，為調查其對於香港中學生對廣告裡男女性別定形的敏感度及評價。兩性度意指一人同時擁有男性化及女性化性格特徵的程度。而當受眾大量接收由傳媒發放的訊息，相信媒體的教化作用會因而強化。

經隨機抽樣，一千零三十六位從文法中學、職業先修學校以及國際學校被選中的中學生填妥一份特別設計的自填式問卷。結果顯示以上提及的「兩性度」及「傳媒使用量」均與學生對廣告性別定形的評價無關，唯年齡及性別這類人口資料最能有效推測學生對這些性別刻劃的態度。文中亦有關於研究結果的解說及「生活模式」與「家庭背景」對廣告性別刻劃的敏感度及評價方面的影響。

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I. Introduction

Under cultivation theory and common belief of the general public, higher exposure to the major mass media, which convey consistent but possibly distorted social reality, would lead to audience's tendency to perceive the society as it is portrayed in the media and, hence, adopt sets of attitude and value that are promoted in these media messages. In Hong Kong, it is commonly perceived that biased and exaggerated media information relating to severe crime and violence (Guo et al., 1999), gender-role portrayals (Kwan, 1999), and age stereotypes (Tam, 1996) exists in local media content, including news coverage, advertisements and commercials. Furnham and Mak's study in 1999 reported a significant gender stereotyping phenomenon in television commercials in Hong Kong regarding male and female's mode of presentation, credibility basis, social roles and age. However, while individuals and groups criticize such misleading messages channeled through major media (including television and newspapers), studies done in Western societies suggested that general audience are not totally passive and vulnerable to gender-stereotyped content in the media. With respect to their psychological orientation and predisposition, audience has their own ways of interpretation regarding stereotypes and biases in the media. (Durkin, 1985)

With the aids of a tested and refined assessment tool to measure audience's psychological gender-role orientation, a number of studies showed evidence that individuals' level of masculinity and femininity were associated with their attitudes towards gender-stereotyped advertisements in a strong and significant pattern. (Jaffe, 1991; Leigh et al., 1987)

This study attempts to investigate whether amount of media exposure or gender-role orientation or both come into effect when Hong Kong secondary school students view the general situation of gender stereotyping in advertisements. Through a self-administered survey, students' media consumption amount and gender-role orientation are obtained to test for possible correlation with their attitudes towards gendered advertisements. In addition, concepts of socioeconomic status and life style are hypothesized to contribute to students' evaluation of such symbolic gender biases. In the current study, socioeconomic status is measured by family financial power and parents' academic qualification which are believed to influence a young individual's values and perceptions of social issues, specifically the representation of the two sexes in the media. The life style construct comprises students' response to a number of items relating to their daily

activities, interests and opinions to public issues. By categorizing students according to several distinctive psychological orientations of life, different patterns of gendered-advertisement-evaluation are anticipated.

In this study, Hong Kong secondary school students' evaluation on gender stereotypic advertisement content is examined. In fact, in the sphere of advertising, gender equality has never been achieved despite that female is now representing an ever largest work force in worldwide labor markets and institutional effort has been proactive on promoting equal opportunity between sexes in many countries. A number of researchers have pointed out that in advertisements and commercials, women have increasingly been depicted to take an inferior or subordinate role to men, such as sex objects and ignorant housewives (Ferguson et al., 1990; Furnham et al., 1999; and Soley et al., 1986). According to Shannon (1996), while women in the United States and United Kingdom feel positively about their own progress and achievements, they feel the opposite about the way many advertisements are talking to them. Sut Jhally had also made this statement in his work to indicate the vital role that gender issues play in the advertising business: "In modern advertising, gender is probably the social resource that is used most by advertisers" (Jhally, 1987,

p. 135).

It is meaningful to study the target group of secondary school students in Hong Kong for a couple of reasons. Firstly, this group of population receives less scholastic attention than the popular college female cluster in gender studies in the field of mass media. In fact, these secondary school students are undergoing developmental changes both physically and psychologically. Indicative comparisons may be yielded among age-subgroups to show the developmental process in gender identity formation. Moreover, most of the target respondents are local-born Chinese, who are brought up in a Chinese context blended with Western influences from colonial history, international open market policy and cultural exchange through mass media. In such mixture of Oriental and Western life styles, different patterns of gender-role orientation effect on gendered media content evaluation could be possible.

II. Literature Review

A. The concept of gender-role orientation

Early studies indicated that human personalities could be categorized into two dimensions, namely "instrumentality" and "expressiveness", or "agency" and "communess" (Bakan, 1966; Parsons and Bales, 1955). "Instrumentality", or "agency", refers to traits like leadership, independence, decisiveness, aggressiveness, and so on; while "expressiveness", or "communess", refers to passiveness, dependence, family-orientation, nurturing characters, etc. In early studies, men were shown to possess stronger "instrumentality" (I) than women do, while women possess greater "expressiveness" (E) compared to their counterparts.

"Bem Sex Role Inventory" (BSRI), a questionnaire-type measurement invented by Bem in 1974, measures a global dimension, which has been interchangeably known as masculinity-femininity, sex-role or gender-role identification, gender-role orientation, and gender schematization. It consists of two scales, including: traits that are considered more socially desirable or

typical for men and traits considered more socially desirable or typical for women. In the questionnaire, there are items describing both instrumental and expressive personal traits, which have been tested to be socially accepted as masculine and feminine respectively. Respondents, by filling out the questionnaire, reveal their own perceived positions on these two scales. Through the use of BSRI, gender-role orientation, which indicates respondents' self-reported masculinity and femininity standing, is revealed.

While earlier researchers tried to add instrumental and expressive attributes together to yield a single bipolar Masculinity / Femininity score, in order to explicate the concept of gender-role orientation and its relationships with other sets of attributes in human (Terman and Miles, 1936; Strong, 1936), Bem intended to demonstrate I and E as independent traits in the BSRI. In other words, she tried to treat "instrumental" and "expressive" traits as parameters measuring "masculinity" and "femininity" separately. Although empirical evidence appeared to support the notion that presence of one set of sex-role attributes (instrumentality or expressiveness) meant the relative absence of the other (Bem, 1974; Marusic and Bratko, 1998), past experience shows that Bem's innovation makes a lot of sense. Both researchers and

test-users were actually bothered by the bipolar sex-role scales since they found difficulties in interpreting mid-range scores from which neither feminine nor masculine orientation could be concluded. In addition, quite a number of studies carried out in the West reported that respondents scoring high on both independent masculinity and femininity scales are not uncommon (Bem, 1981a; Heilbrun, 1996). Here, the concept of "androgyny", which represents the presence of masculinity and femininity in one individual, becomes crucial to studies formulating respondents' gender-role orientation. (This idea is to be discussed in the next section.) Also, the indirect implication made in earlier studies that biological variance of male's and female's may contribute to the behavioral and attitudinal differences between genders was accused by contemporary theorists of being inaccurate. These theorists suggest that such differences are caused by gender-roles imposed by societal and cultural forces on individuals. This means that gender differences are socially and culturally constructed rather than "inborn" or "natural". They also advocate that human beings are in fact "taught" or "socialized" by cultural and social forces to be men or women. Therefore, gender-role orientation, instead of biological gender, is to be considered the factor accounting for behavioral and attitudinal differences between genders.

While Bem suggests that knowing a person's self-rating on particular gender attributes, such as the BSRI score, help predict his or her standing on other attributes. Studies of different disciplines have successfully demonstrated the predictive power of gender-role orientation across age groups, genders and geographical locations.

When speak of gender-role orientation, it is important not to confound it with biological gender. Studies were conducted to clarify the misleading relationship between biological gender and emotions. An example is Karniol's study (Karniol et. al., 1998), which aims at assessing the relative contribution of gender and gender-role orientation to empathy and its development, 111 8th to 11th grade students from an Israeli urban center were surveyed. They include 42 boys and 69 girls. While among emotions, empathy, in particular, is thought to be stereotypically associated with being feminine, the study shows that students' score on femininity does correlate with empathy in a strong and significant way. Regardless the biological gender of the respondent, a higher femininity score is related to a higher level of empathy. Although from empirical data, boys are found to have generally lower empathy scores than

girls do, when the relative contributions of gender versus gender-role orientation were examined by co-varying gender-role orientation, the main effect of gender becomes not significant at all. Therefore, it is concluded that gender-role orientation, rather than gender per se, determines adolescents' level of empathy.

B. The concept of androgyny

In this study, I also try to show level of awareness and attitudes towards gendered advertising messages among gender-typed persons (those who incline to adopt a particular traditional gender-role orientation, i.e. masculine or feminine) and relatively more androgynous persons (who possess both masculine and feminine personality traits). The concept of androgyny is an old one. However, since Bem suggested the BSRI in early 1970s, which fostered new conceptualizations of masculinity, femininity and androgyny, as well as an innovative instrument facilitating relevant researches, which is the BSRI, psychological androgyny has been undergoing rigorous scholaristic discussion. According to Block (1973), androgyny is a state where a successful balancing of agency and communion is achieved. It is a process

that involves coping with the demands of each personality dimension. Bem, who is among those who pioneered the separation of masculinity and femininity as independent concepts, argued that the androgynous person is one who possesses comparable levels of both masculinity and femininity traits and is much less sensitive to those definitions of socially desirable male and female behaviors. Thus, he or she is freed from the need to conform to them. Bem's basic hypothesis is that gender-typed persons tend to "partition the world into two classes"- "male" and "female"- according to the cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. They evaluate themselves and the world around them using these terms. On the contrary, non-sex-typed persons are not as sensitive to the gender connotations of personality characteristics and do not use such connotations to shape their self-concepts and behaviors.

Although the history of psychological androgyny studies is lengthy, there are not many scholastic works addressing the possible association between such concept and audience's perception about mass media content. Nevertheless, in a study conducted by Hogg and Garrow (2001) which attempts to show the influence of gender-role orientation on consumption of advertising messages, different patterns of advertisement perception were

observed among gender-typed, androgynous and undifferentiated informants. Self-reported gender-role orientation of 25 college students in United Kingdom was collected through the use of a BSRI questionnaire. These informants were then categorized into groups of "masculine" (those score significantly higher on masculinity traits than femininity traits), "feminine" (those score significantly higher on femininity traits than masculinity traits), "androgynous" (those score high on both sets of gender trait) and "undifferentiated" (those score low on both sets of gender trait). All informants were shown two television commercial clips of automobile featuring "gendered" characters and no central character at all respectively. The four groups of informants participated in focus group discussion sessions separately in response to the advertising stimuli. Results indicate that, firstly, gender-role orientation among 25 informants had nothing to do with their biological sexes. Moreover, notable conclusions were reported, which indicated significant differences in the use of advertising messages among informants belonging to different gender-role orientation groups: (1) "Masculine" and "feminine" informants (both are considered as gender-typed) should share more or less the same reference information on their elaboration of message cues when they had same level of personal interests on the message subject matter. (2) Androgynous

informants were found to be responsive to gender-related stimuli. They tended to draw information from both knowledge structures (masculinity and femininity) more flexibly than other groups in response to different message cues. (3) Undifferentiated informants showed less confidence in making gender relevant judgments than others.

C. Related studies on gender-role orientation and the perception of “gendered” advertisements

The relationship between gender-role orientation and people's responsiveness of and attitudes towards stereotyped gender depictions in the media, or advertisements in particular, has been investigated in a number of studies around the world (Jaffe, 1991; Kwan, 1999; Leigh et al., 1987). Different groups of respondents were examined in different studies, from specifically children to general public. It appears that results diversify from places to places. In Western societies, where the concept of gender-role orientation has been under vigorous explorations for a few decades, this orientation is found to correlate significantly with audience's evaluations of gender stereotypes in advertisements. However, in Hong Kong, which is a

Chinese context, the concept of gender-role orientation seems to be less addressed and explored in view of media stereotypic contents.

In a study conducted by Jaffe (1991) in the United States, 200 adult women were surveyed on their gender-role orientation and their responses of advertisements of different female depictions. Bem Sex Role Inventory was used to assess these women's gender-role orientation, while two advertisements, which depicted a career woman and a nurturing, family-oriented woman, were used as stimuli, to generate responses among these female respondents. Results indicate that if a woman possesses high masculinity, the modern portrayal of a career woman yields more positive responses than the traditional portrayal. On the other hand, when masculinity is low, the traditional family woman portrayal yields more positive responses. However, respondents' femininity score was found not related to their attitudes towards both female depictions in any manner. This response pattern observed among these adult women in Jaffe's study reveals some worth-noting relationships among masculinity, femininity and advertisement gender stereotype evaluation.

While gender-role orientation refers to the self-rated standing on instrumental and expressive traits that are regarded as masculine and feminine respectively, this self-image of the audience is believed to be influencing the reception of messages in the media. In his study of children's viewing of gendered messages on television in England, Durkin (1985) reported a result showing that even children were in fact active viewers. They bring with them their own orientation and values to their viewing, and this predisposition "will influence substantially what they extract from it (television viewing)" (Durkin, 1985, pp. 72-73). Thus, we know that the same advertisement would produce different attitudes and opinions among people who have different value systems and gender evaluations in mind.

In the study carried out by Leigh, Rethans and Whitney (1987), 87 voluntary female respondents were assessed by a gender role orientation measure that divided them into traditional and modern groups. They were then shown three advertisements in the form of storyboards for a nationally branded frozen food entrée in the United States, among which two of them were tested to be "very modern" and "very traditional" in terms of the spokesperson's career orientation, attitude towards sexual equality and

household life style. Respondents' attitudes towards these advertisement stimuli were evaluated with a multi-item semantic differential scale. Results indicate that different attitudes towards these advertisements measured in the traditional and modern groups are due to their different pre-existed gender-role orientations. The traditional group was found to hold more favorable attitudes towards the "very traditional" advertisement than the modern group, and vice versa. This correlation between respondents' gender-role orientation and their attitudes towards advertisements of different gender role depictions is found to be strong and significant among these volunteer adult females.

In Hong Kong, similar studies were done in the form of surveys. Kwan (1999) conducted a survey in Hong Kong on general public about their awareness of gender-stereotyped advertisements, their gender-role orientation and their purchasing intention. However, results indicate that the public generally has minimal awareness of these gendered advertisements and that, gender-role orientation plays an insignificant role in attitude formation of the advertised products, as well as the company being promoted. In spite of such result, which is opposite to those reported in the West, a number of drawbacks in the design of the study are to be noted. Beside the fact that

Kwan's study did not directly look into the relationship between the degree of awareness and gender-role orientation, only a total of three semantic differential items were used to assess respondents' gender-role orientation. Additionally, the convenient sampling procedure adopted (i.e. to recruit respondents at the Mass Transit Railway stations) could have introduced biases and insufficiency to the survey results. Therefore, I doubt the resulted insignificance of gender-role orientation as a predictor of attitudes in the study.

D. Evaluation of "gendered" advertisements from a cultivation perspective and related studies

Cultivation analysis addresses macroscopic questions about the role of mass media in the society. Developed by George Gerbner, the cultivation theory hypothesizes that the more time a viewer spends on watching television, the more likely he or she holds a specific sets of conception about social reality (including images, values, assumptions and even behaviors), which are close to the consistent portrayals in the medium. This concept is known as "mainstreaming". Such impact of mass media messages on viewers' perception about reality is even intensified when what viewers see on television is what they experience in life. Such effect is named "resonance".

Cultivation analysts believe that television watching has long-term effects, which are small, gradual, cumulative, indirect but significant. They advocate that such effects of media consumption pattern are on the attitudes of viewers, rather than their behaviors.

In the past few decades, cultivation analysis has been conducted and replicated extensively not only on the topic of television violence, which Gerbner and his colleagues initiated (Gerbner et al., 1976), but also on other issues, such as gender role stereotypes (Signorielli, 1989; Garst, et al., 1997), politics (Gerbner et al., 1982; Morgan et al., 1991) and environmental concerns (Mikami et al., 1995; Shanahan, 1993). The followings are a couple of cultivation analyses conducted in a Hong Kong context with regard to cultivation effects on audience's perception of elderly and gender stereotypes.

The relationship between television exposure, newspaper and magazine reading and audience's perception about aged people in the Hong Kong society was studied in a quantitative survey conducted by Tam (1996). By observation, Tam reported the prevalence of distorted portrayals about elderly and their relationship with family and the society. It was believed that in

television programs, instead of the upheld convention of filial responsibilities in Chinese culture, scenes like young couples refusing to live with their aged parents were often screened. Elderly was usually shown in a weak and dependent role, which was an under-presentation of the group profile. In printed media, including newspapers and magazines, a relatively more coverage on elderly's "sad" and depressing stories had also reinforced the misconception and negative stereotypes of aged people.

Through the use of a structured questionnaire, exposure to major mass media and perceptions about elderly in reality was measured from about 100 college students aged from 19 to 22. A significant cultivation effect was found on respondents' attitudes towards aged people. Regression analysis showed that students who watch more television tend to agree to the statement "elderly do not contribute to society" (-0.20, $p < 0.01$) and disagree with "it is the family's responsibility to live with and support the aged" (0.18, $p < 0.01$). However, it is worth to note that high exposure to newspapers or magazines did not result in such cultivation effect in the study.

A study conducted by Fung and Ma in 1999 (Fung et. al, 2000) aims at

exploring the relationships among stereotypic perceptions about gender relations, media use and awareness of gender stereotypes in the media. They argue, based upon social learning and cultivation approaches, that television watching contributes to the audience's, and in particular children's, stereotyped beliefs about gender relations and their insensitivity of gender stereotypic messages in the media. However, television exposure was found to have no significant correlation with awareness of gender stereotypes in the media. Among the 2,020 interviewees, instead of the postulated phenomenon: higher television exposure leads to more accented gender stereotyped values and lower awareness of such stereotypes due to social learning and cultivation, there was no evidence suggesting that time spent on television watching is related to a respondent's gender stereotypic perceptions and awareness of these stereotypes in the media.

Despite the results shown in Fung and Ma's (2000) study, I still introduce the concept of media usage to the current study because target population in the current study is youth in secondary schools, who are among the heaviest consumers of media contents. Their media usage patterns may differ from that of the general public, which was studied in Fung and Ma's (2000) study. These

youngsters are believed to rely relatively more on those handy mass media while less on other sources of information since they generally have less exposure to different social settings and experience in life. Thus, a cultivation effect is more likely. Also, their level of exposure is measured by time spent on not only television watching but also newspaper reading. These two mass media are thought to be most common and easily assessable by most people in Hong Kong.

The cultivation theory has been criticized for several reasons since it was introduced in the 1970s. Newcomb (1978) expressed his critiques from what he called a "humanistic" point of view where he stressed that variation in viewers' definition of "television violence" and their interpretation should be taken into account to portrait a more personal and first-hand interaction between texts and the audience. Nevertheless, there is nothing in Newcomb's qualitative approach that contradicts the basic idea of cultivation analysis. To say that there are many interpretations of violence in the media does not invalidate Gerbner's observation of potential influence on audience from those consistencies in the media texts. Oversimplification is another critique the cultivation theory received. Cultivation analysts are criticized of ignoring the

importance of the social dynamics of television use. Interacting factors such as viewers' general knowledge, gender and socioeconomic background are believed to contribute to ways that viewers interpret television texts. To cultivation theorists, such possible spuriousness of cultivation effect is viewed as a specification of cultivation patterns across subgroups (Shanahan et al., 1999).

E. The concepts of life style and socioeconomic status and their interaction with gender-role orientation

Since the 1960s, life style studies have been very popular among marketing researchers, who tried to investigate how consumers' daily activities and attitudes were related to their purchasing behaviors, as well as their responses toward advertising campaigns. It is found that life style data provide rich and descriptive details of consumers' psychological profiles, which in turn influence their purchase decisions and trend adoptions, such as organic food (Williams and Hammitt, 2000), energy consumption (Weber and Perrels, 2000) and new media technologies (Leung, 1998). Before the use of life style research, researchers rely greatly on demographic or socioeconomic data to

classify respondents into groups or segments. However, marketing scholars found that individuals in the same demographic group varied in terms of variables like activities, interests, opinions and personal traits, which would affect their evaluation of products, packaging, advertising and public relations efforts. Therefore, they gradually adopted the concept of life style, which placed respondents on psychological, rather than demographic dimensions (Wells, 1975), in both academic studies and practical campaigns. With the introduction of different measures of life style, for example, Activities, Interest and Opinions Research (AIO), Personality Inventory and measures of attitudes toward product categories and brands, researchers are now able to draw a more "humanized" portrait of individual respondents.

However, there is no single, standard definition of life style across these many studies. Some researchers define it as the human needs, values, activities and interests that are to be closely associated with consumer behaviors (Plummer, 1971; Segnit et. al, 1973; Wells et. al, 1971). From a more social scientific perspective, others consider life style as the orientation of an individual towards shaping his or her life (Camstra, 1996). While many marketing scholars have explicated the concept of life style differently, Lazer

and Andreasen presented classical definitions of life style in a more comprehensive way. According to Lazer (1963), life style is a system concept, which refers to the distinctive or characteristic mode of living in its aggregate and broadest sense. It is concerned with those unique characteristics or qualities that describe the style of life of particular cultures or groups of people, and distinguish them from others. It gives form to the patterns that are developed and emerged from the dynamics of living in a society. Having accepted this macro approach in understanding life style, it is logical for Lazer to regard that such forces, as culture, values, resources, symbols, license and sanctions, are factors contributing to the whole notion of life style. As for Andreasen (1967), "Lifestyle is a social science concept connoting the totality of behaviors which comprise the characteristic approach to life of a particular individual or group".

Cafferata, Horn and Wells' (1997) study on life styles and gender role changes in the United States is one of the examples of social scientific life style studies. In the study, AIO life style data that was obtained from around 3,200 respondents of both sexes across the country was compared to those of the past 20 years'. Data indicating respondents' activities, interests and opinions

showed that in work place and at home, there were significant changes in some of the gender role responses, while others had not changed very much.

In the work place, the proportion of female physicians doubled between 1970 and 1991. There was also a dramatic increase in the number of female lawyers and accountants. Fewer and fewer women show agreement with the idea that "a woman's place is in the home". They even gradually fill in positions of the previously male dominant industries. While there were increasing college-educated women in the work force, it was predicted that women would more often become someone's boss. However, there was still income disparity between men and women, even though neither male nor female respondents showed much agreement to the item: "I would be uncomfortable if (I/ my wife) earned more than (my husband/ I did)".

At home, although a majority of husbands said they often help out housework, lifestyle data indicated that men seldom vacuum or do the laundry. The tasks they did usually were "small repairs" or "handling the garbage", which were more "mannish". Husbands and wives were found to share housework at home pretty much as what they did decades ago. The

researchers arrived at a conclusion that gender-roles between men and women were under a trend of convergence in a world where divergence still existed.

Despite the fact that life style concept helps construct a holistic profile of respondents, few studies have been conducted to explore the possible correlation between gender-role orientation and life style.

Regarding the relationship between life style and gender-role orientation, some researchers explicated the linkage as a causal relationship, whereas gender schema is acquired by children through their daily-life activities. In a study by Weisner and his colleagues (1994), family life style is found to be correlated with children's gender stereotyping. A total of 156 Euro-American non-conventional families of working to upper class were compared with 51 control sample subjects of two-parent, married couples on their gender egalitarian values, family life styles and children's gender stereotyping. Results show that children in non-conventional families did indeed have significantly higher non gender-typed responses on the Sex Role Learning Index questionnaire than children in conventional families. Also, children in

non-conventional families were more likely to show less stereotyping of masculine objects. While life style is defined in an aggregate sense in the current study as the unique ingredients or qualities which describe the mode of living, like activities, interests and opinions, it is obvious that lifestyle, including gender schemas that learned by children during their upbringing, would influence the younger generation's self evaluation on gender-related issues. My view of secondary school students' gender-role acquisition is based on the hypothesis that life style elements, as known as activities, interests and opinions, are among the powerful influences on these young people's gender-role orientation. Yet, the life style of these students may also directly influence their awareness and perceptions of gender-biased messages in advertisements.

Socioeconomic status is another variable in the current study. As measured by a family's income level, parents' type of occupation, education level and alike, socioeconomic status indicates a family's financial as well as social standing. As children move through childhood and into adolescence, they are exposed to many factors, which influence their attitudes and behaviors regarding gender roles. These attitudes and behaviors are generally

learned first in the home and are then reinforced by the child's peers, school experience, and media consumption. Apparently, the strongest influence on gender role development seems to occur within the family setting, with parents passing on, both overtly and covertly, their own beliefs about gender. In this study, it is postulated that socioeconomic status, as an indicator of family background, would constitute the gender-role orientation of youngsters and their perceptions about gendered messages in advertisements.

As Seongryeol (1996) puts it, "the position of a family in the socioeconomic hierarchy, and change in that position are hypothesized to have not only direct but also indirect influences on adolescents, especially through parental values and attitudes." Socioeconomic status is presumed to affect family dynamics, including daily activities and attitudes shared. In Seongryeol's study, which examines the relationship between socioeconomic change and adolescent future orientation, he found that mothers' employment status and the presence of a father in the household can moderate the effects of socioeconomic status and of its change on adolescents' values and attitudes. Given the closely related family socioeconomic status and the younger generation's orientation, I argue that socioeconomic status would

directly influence youngsters' awareness and perceptions of "gendered" advertisements. At the same time, it may also produce an indirect influence on it through the level of androgyny in the young person.

III. Hypotheses

Base upon the above discussion, which suggests the correlation among gender-role orientation and level of androgyny, media exposure, socioeconomic status and life style, the study attempts to further examine the relationships between these factors with nowadays youngsters' awareness of and their attitudes towards "gendered" advertisements in media. The following hypotheses are made¹:

Hypothesis 1:

As suggested by previous studies, better-educated people tend to be less gender-typed and more androgynous. These people are also found to be less influenced by gender-stereotyped advertisements (Ford et al., 1991). If the parents are well educated, which may result in higher family income and more socially desirable occupations, the younger generation is then more likely to have adopted the egalitarian gender values that cause more conscious reading of "gendered" advertisements, as well as the adverse attitudes towards them.

¹ Appendix 1- A hypothesis model of the current study

It is postulated that socioeconomic status would have both direct and indirect influences on youngsters' awareness and perceptions of gendered advertisements. An indirect causal relation would be seen through the intermediate factor of level of androgyny.

- 1.1 The higher the level of socioeconomic status, the higher the student's awareness of "gendered" messages in advertisements, and vice versa.
- 1.2 The higher the level of socioeconomic status, the more unfavorable the student's attitudes towards "gendered" advertisements, and vice versa.
- 1.3 The higher the level of socioeconomic status, the higher the student's score on both masculinity and femininity traits, i.e., the more androgynous he or she is, and vice versa.

Hypothesis 2:

In this study, I try to hypothesize that students who are less gender-typed, i.e., those who report high scores on both masculinity and femininity scales, would tend to notice the gender stereotyped messages in advertisements better than their counterparts who adhere themselves more towards traditional gender

roles (masculine or feminine). Also, this group of respondents should be more opposed to traditional gender roles where girls must be feminine while boys be masculine. These propositions are based on the evidence that people who align themselves to a particular gender stereotype tend to have adopted the dominant gender schema of unequal statuses and portraits of male and female (Bem, 1974). This may contribute to the acceptance of or less adverse attitudes towards gendered advertisements and, in turn, hinder their awareness of these messages. On the other hand, an androgynous person not only enjoys more flexible behavioral standards, but is also freed from the influence of traditional gender roles on their attitudes. Therefore, it is hypothesized that androgynous students are relatively more sensitive and adverse to the stereotypic portrayals of the two genders in advertisements.

The level of androgyny is believed to contribute to youngsters' awareness of and attitudes towards "gendered" advertisements in the following patterns:

- 2.1 The more gender-typed the student is, either being masculine or feminine, the lower his or her awareness of the gender stereotyped messages in advertisements, and vice versa.

2.2 The more gender-typed the student is, the more favorable his or her attitudes towards gender stereotyped messages in advertisements, and vice versa.

Hypothesis 3:

A traditional life style refers to one that characterized by home-orientation and less fashion or trend consciousness, while a modern life style refers to the active social life and trend consciousness of students. It is hypothesized that a respondent with a more traditional life style would tend to be more gender-typed. It is based on the fact that a traditional life style represents a narrower horizon and more conservative thinking than a modern one does. Moreover, there may also be an indirect effect of life style on respondents' awareness and attitudes through the moderation of level of androgyny, whereas people with a modern life style are less likely to align themselves to a particular traditional gender stereotype. Hence, they should be more conscious about and opposed to these stereotypes in the media.

3.1 A student with a traditional life style would be relatively more gender-typed than those with a modern life style.

3.2 A student with a traditional life style would have relatively lower awareness of "gendered" advertisements than those with a modern life style.

3.3 A student with a modern life style would be relatively more opposed to "gendered" advertisements than those with a traditional life style.

Hypothesis 4:

It is hypothesized that the amount of content students consume would have significant impact on how they decode and perceive the gendered messages presented in the media. Hypotheses are made with reference to the cultivation theory, where it is assumed that heavy users of the media tend to adopt and internalize the gender roles portrayed in mass media. Hence, these heavy television viewers and newspaper readers would hold more favorable attitudes towards the gender stereotypic portrayals in advertisements than the light users do. Conventionally, cultivation analysts believe that media's cultivation effects in social stereotyping are likely under conditions when (1) media consumption is frequent, and (2) images and values represented in the media are clear and consistent. In Hong Kong, gender-role stereotypes have been prevalent in many mass media. Reported

by Furnham and Mak in 1999, gender stereotypes in television commercials, still, are not only accused in social role representations, but also severe in male and female's mode of presentation, their credibility level and age distribution.

In the current study, I am interested in looking into the possible predicting power of these students' media exposure on students' awareness and perceptions of gender stereotypes in advertisements. Media exposure is measured by the amount of time a respondent is exposed to television programs and newspapers.

4.1 The higher the student's level of media exposure, the more favorable his or her attitudes towards gender stereotypes in advertisements, and vice versa.

IV. Methodology

A. Questionnaire Design

A rigorous review of the literature on both gender orientation research and life style related research were completed before the development of the questionnaire in the present study. The questionnaire contains four parts². The first part is a modified BSRI questionnaire, which has been tested for validity and reliability in a Chinese context (Fung and Ma, 2000). There are 17 items to measure respondents' self-rated gender-role orientation. They include: (1) willing to take risks; (2) has leadership abilities; (3) strong personality; (4) defends own beliefs; (5) independent; (6) willing to improve; (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; (17) conscientious. The first eight items belong to masculinity traits and the subsequent eight items belongs to femininity traits. The last one is a neutral trait that acts as a control measure.

² Appendix 2: Sample Questionnaire

The second part consists of semantic differential scales that survey respondents' awareness of and attitudes on gender-biased messages in Hong Kong advertisements. These items aim at measuring respondents' awareness of different types of gendered message in advertisements, like "women being dependent on men", "home being the place for women", "men being most of the professionals and breadwinners", and "women being young, pretty and slim". Also, some of the statements deal with respondents' possible attitudes towards these many advertisements. They include scales measuring respondents' positive and negative opinions on gender-stereotyped advertising messages, their degree of dissatisfaction towards these messages, their perceived "realness" of the gender portrayals in these advertisements, their acceptance of stereotyped portrayal of a sexy woman and a career husband, etc.

The third part is an AIO questionnaire, which assesses several major life style variables of the respondents. Statements in this part are from different sources: some are from classic life style studies (Wells and Tigert, 1971), where items are established for comparisons across cultures and studies. They include items evaluating self-confidence, home orientation, width of

horizons and fashion consciousness. Some are statements that are already validity- and reliability-tested for particular studies concerning a Chinese context (Tai and Tam, 1996, 1997). They include items concerning political and social interests, environmental consciousness and feminist attitudes. Some of the items among the above categories are specifically designed for the current study in Hong Kong context. They are: "I would rather stay home watching TV than going to Rave Party", "I think there should be at least one family day during a week", "I am interested in trying new things" and "I have the habit of reading newspapers or watching news programs everyday". There are also three "homemade" categories of statements: social activities, contentment and media content preference, which aim at measuring students' sociability, satisfaction with present state, and preference between informative and entertainment-oriented media contents.

Three criteria are used in the design of this AIO questionnaire:

1. Relevance to secondary school students' life;
2. relevance to life and culture in Hong Kong;
3. construct validity and reliability of items.

Such an arrangement aims at getting a more precise assessment of life styles of the young generation in a Hong Kong context.

Finally, the fourth part of the questionnaire is a socioeconomic status and demographics measurement device. Questions include education level of parents, household income level, types of housing, age and sex. Also, two questions about media exposure are put under this last part of the questionnaire. "Time spent on television watching per day" and "newspaper reading habit" are chosen as dimensions to measure media exposure since television and newspapers are the most easily accessible and most readily available type of media at home among secondary school students.

B. Sample Design

1. Target Population
 - The target population of this study is secondary school students, between Form one and Form seven, in Hong Kong.
 - In the academic year of 1999-2000, there are 453,465 full-time secondary school students in Hong Kong.

2. Sampling Objectives
 - The objective of the survey is to obtain data from students of different grades at school, rather than of different years of age, in order to facilitate a more meaningful comparison of their life styles and attitudes.

3. Types of Schools in Hong Kong
 - Among the 485 secondary schools:
 - 431 of them are grammar schools that provide subjects in the nominal curriculum determined by the Education Department.
 - Others include 33 pre-vocational, technical or practical training schools, which provide vocational, technical or other practical subjects in addition to some of the regular curricula.
 - Moreover, there are 21 international colleges that do not necessarily follow the standard curriculum designed by the Education Department.
 - Since international school students are from various overseas countries and follow different curricula, the current study will not include these international school students in the survey sample to ensure meaningful comparisons and analyses of Hong Kong secondary school students.

4. Procedures

- A random sampling method is used to draw, among grammar and prevocational and technical secondary schools, a total of 26 institutions in Hong Kong.
- Then, another random sampling procedure follows to pick one high-form or low-form class from each school drawn, in order to create a sample of 26 classes of students in total.
- Students were informed about the survey and asked to conduct it before a normal class began.
- It was either the author or a teacher in the respective school who announced the guidelines for this self-administered questionnaire in front of selected classes before each student was advised to complete the questionnaire.

5. Sample Size

- A sample of 1,063 students is drawn from all secondary schools in Hong Kong. Among them, a total of 1036 students, comprising of 570 female, 450 male and 16 respondents who did not specify their gender, are successfully surveyed. Response rate reaches 97.5%.
- Age of this target group of student respondents ranges from 11 to 21.
- These 26 secondary schools consist of 24 grammar schools and two prevocational and technical schools. The ratio between these two types of secondary schools in the current survey matches with that of Hong Kong's as a whole.

C. Variable Construction

In order to systematically tap information through the use of questionnaire and to construct comparable and meaningful variables for further analysis, items under each part of the questionnaire are combined accordingly to form distinctive variables.

1. Socioeconomic status

Socioeconomic status, referring to both financial and social standing of a family, is measured in the current study by several items. They include parents' educational levels (ranging from not having any formal schooling to graduate level); monthly household income (ranging from less than HK\$5,000 to over HK\$50,000) and type of housing (temporary housing, public housing, government home-ownership estates, private housing rental or self-owned private housing, in ascending order of both financial costs and social standing). An overall socioeconomic status variable is produced by simply adding the above items together, then splitting the distribution into three groups, representing low, medium and high socioeconomic status, where 22.3%, 49% and 28.7% of sample is accounted for respectively.

2. Age

In the current sample, students' age ranges from 11 to 21. According to the distribution, they are divided into three age groups: 11-14, 15-16 and 17-21. Respectively 28.8%, 46.1% and 25.1% of the sample are represented.

3. Life Style

To construct a life style variable for the analysis, three steps were taken as following:

Firstly, a factor analysis was conducted of the 33 life style items to identify significant factors that explain students' different life styles. Eight factors were found. Together, they account for 54.5% of variance of the life style concept. These eight factors represent different life style aspects, including political and social interests, fashion consciousness, contentment, self-confidence, environmental consciousness, feminist attitude, width of horizons and home orientation.

Secondly, a factor score of each of these eight life style factors was derived by adding up item scores under each factor.

Finally, a cluster analysis was conducted with the eight life style factors to

divide student respondents into three significant distinct life style groups:

- Traditional home-birds (These respondents were found to be relatively more aware of social and political issues, and more home-oriented than others. They account for 30.6% of the sample.)
- Modern joy pursuers (These respondents were found to be more fashion conscious, more confident, and happier with their present statuses. They account for 52.8% of the sample.)
- Apathetic youth (These respondents were those who have least awareness of the society, least confidence and a narrow worldview. They account for only 16.6% of the sample.)

4. Media Exposure

Two questions about media exposure are put in the fourth part of the questionnaire. They are "hours of television watching per day" (answers ranging from less than an hour to over six hours) and "newspaper reading habit" (answers ranging from do not read at all to read more than a paper a day).

The "television viewing" variable is derived with 22.7% of respondents reported low exposure to television (i.e. about one hour or less per day); 46.9%

reported medium exposure (i.e. about two to three hours per day); and 30.4% reported high exposure (i.e. about four hours per day or more).

The "newspaper reading" variable is obtained with 16.4% of respondents reported low exposure to newspapers (i.e. never or very rare reading a newspaper); 43.1% reported a medium exposure (i.e. sometimes reading a newspaper); and 40.5% reported a high exposure (i.e. reading a newspaper often, daily and even reading more than one newspapers a day).

5. Level of androgyny

Item scores of the eight masculine traits are added together while item scores of the eight feminine traits are also summed up. Respondents are then divided into high-low groups according to their total masculinity score and total femininity score. A two-by-two typology is derived to distinguish three types of respondents with different degrees of masculinity and femininity:

- Gender-typed persons (These respondents either score high on masculinity while low on femininity, or low on masculinity while high on femininity. They comprise 38.3% of the sample.)
- Androgynous persons (These respondents have a high degree of both masculinity and femininity. They comprise 43.4% of the sample.)

- Undifferentiated persons (These respondents report low scores on both sets of gender traits. Only 18.2% of respondents belong to this type.)

6. Awareness of stereotypes in advertisements

From the 12 awareness items in the second part of the questionnaire, three items that measure awareness of female stereotypes and another three that measure awareness of male stereotypes are chosen respectively. These are items scoring highest inter-correlation with other items in the section:

- Women rely on men.
- Women are indecisive.
- Women care much about appearance.
- Men protect women.
- Men are decisive.
- Men are heads of family.

Scores of the three items that measure female stereotype awareness are then added to form a variable namely "awareness of female stereotype in advertisements". On the other hand, the sum of those three items measuring male stereotype awareness is named "awareness of male stereotypes in advertisements". Adding these two new variables together will create the "total

awareness" variable.

Respondents are divided into low/ medium/ high segments along these three variables: "awareness of female stereotypes in advertisements"– low (24.4%), medium (39.8%), high (35.8%); "awareness of male stereotypes in advertisements"– low (10.3%), medium (27.7%), high (62.0%); "total awareness"– low (15.7%); medium (41.0%); high (43.3%).

7. Attitude towards gender stereotypes in advertisements

Two attitudes in reversed scales are subtracted from the sum of four other attitude items to form the "attitude towards gender stereotypes in advertisements" variable. The two reversed scale items are:

- I think sexy images of female in advertisements are acceptable.
- I think the image of male head of family is very reasonable.

The four other items are:

- Generally, I see, in advertisements, many depictions that are unfair to women.
- Generally, I see, in advertisements, many depictions that are unfair to men.
- I feel offended by the unequal gender portraits in advertisements.

- I think there is the need for legislation to regulate unequal gender depictions in advertisements.

Hence, a positive score suggests an anti-stereotypical attitude while a negative score points to a favorable attitude towards gender stereotypes in advertisements. Sample is categorized into three groups regarding their attitudes towards advertisements: in favor of gender stereotypes (35.2%), neutral to gender stereotypes (45.5%) and opposed to gender stereotypes (19.3%).

V. Results

A. Hypothesis Testing

Figure 1: Results model

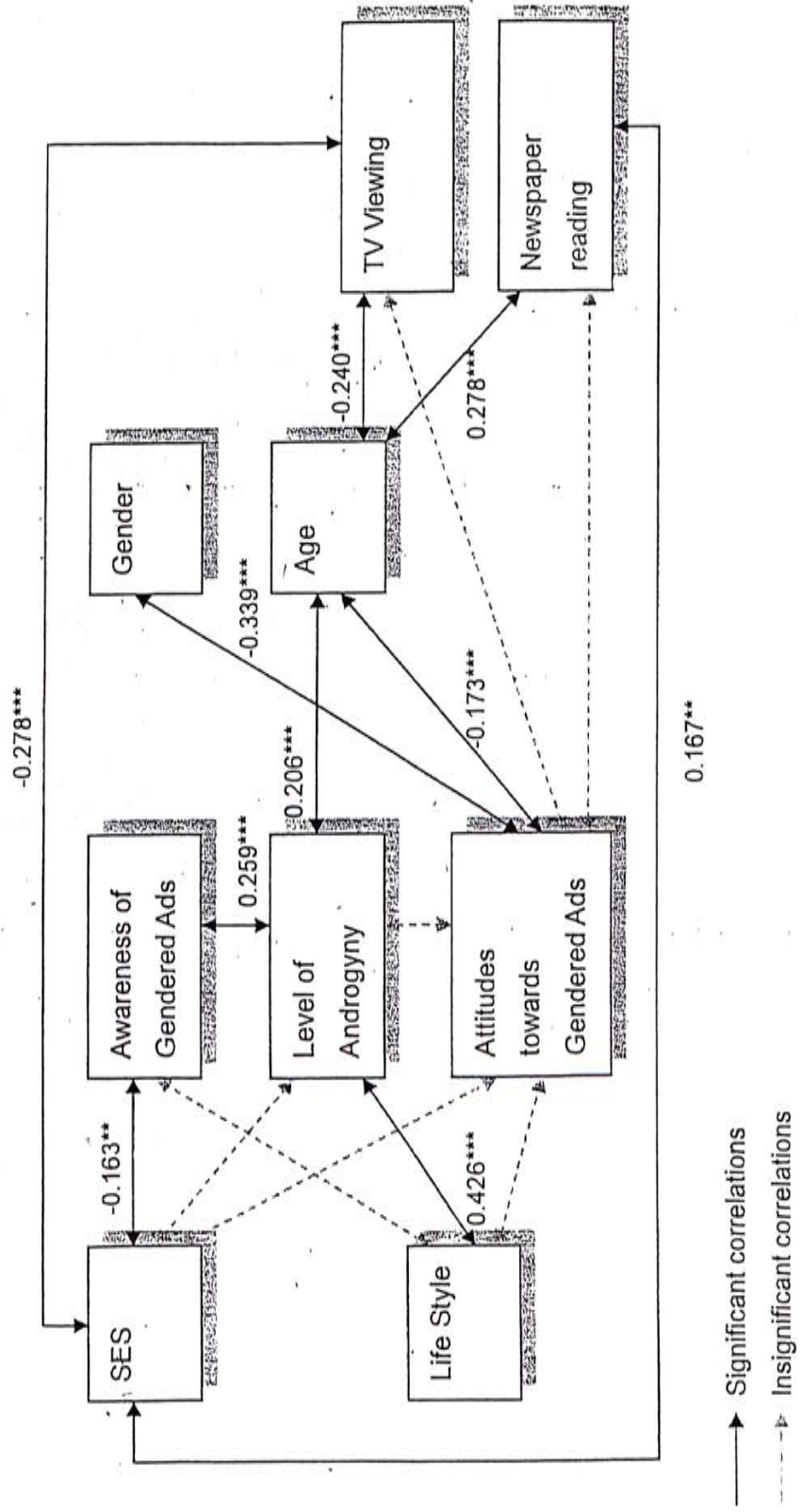


Figure one summarized the overall results of the current study. Only few of the hypotheses were supported. Among the independent variables introduced to the hypothesis model, "level of androgyny" is found to correlate with student's awareness of gendered messages in advertisements. "Life style" is also associated with "level of androgyny" as hypothesized. However, "socioeconomic status" and "media exposure" are not related to both students' awareness as well as attitudes in any significant manner.

Hypothesis 1:

All of the three sub-hypotheses regarding socioeconomic status are not supported. A high level of socioeconomic status neither associates with an opposed attitude towards gendered advertisements (0.026, $p=0.631$), nor a higher level of androgyny in respondents (0.022, $p=0.677$). A reverse correlation is even found between socioeconomic status and awareness level. Students who have a higher socioeconomic status are those who have lower awareness of the stereotypic content (-0.163, $p=0.003$). This may due to the fact that these youngsters spend less time watching television than others who have a lower socioeconomic status do (-0.224, $p=0.000$).

Hypothesis 2:

A sub hypothesis regarding level of androgyny is supported. As postulated, level of androgyny is found to have a very significant and positive relationship with students' awareness of gendered advertisements (0.259, $p=0.000$). However, such self-reported gender schema is not related to students' attitudes towards these stereotypes (0.052, $p=0.270$). Therefore, a respondent who reports a more androgynous gender-role orientation is not necessarily more opposed to the gendered messages in media as expected.

As shown in other related studies, biological gender is found not to associate with students' reported gender-role orientation (-0.007, $p=0.902$).

Hypothesis 3:

The life style concept is an effective predictor of students' "level of androgyny". It is shown that students who adopt a more traditional life style tend to have a more gender-typed orientation (0.426, $p=0.000$). Such relationship is moderately strong and significant. However, the life style concept fails to predict respondents' awareness of gender stereotypes in advertisements (0.132, $p=0.014$) and their associated attitudes (0.048, $p=0.379$).

Hypothesis 4:

The empirical data from secondary school students does not support the hypothesis regarding their media exposure. Both "television viewing" and "newspaper reading" are unable to predict students' attitudes towards the symbolic gender role representation in advertisements (-0.053, $p=0.244$ and 0.051, $p=0.270$ respectively).

Students' exposure to television programs and newspapers are also cross-tabulated with their perceptions of gender-roles in daily lives (items included in the AIO life style assessment tool) to investigate possible cultivation effect that shapes students' perception of gender role reality. However, there is no sign of any association of both television viewing and newspaper reading with students' views on "women's place is at home" (TV: 0.047, $p=0.310$; newspaper: -0.084, $p=0.069$); "women should have their own career" (TV: 0.014, $p=0.779$; newspaper: 0.130, $p=0.012$); and "women and men should be treated the same at school, workplace and in society as a whole" (TV: -0.075, $p=0.155$; newspaper: 0.096, $p=0.075$).

Level of androgyny fails to predict

As seen from the above results, significant findings indicating predictive power of gender-role orientation and the concept of androgyny are absent from this study. Several reasons are believed to account for the phenomenon:

Firstly, most studies of gender-role orientation and its effects on audience's interpretation and evaluation of advertising messages were conducted in the form of experiments, while the current study is a survey aiming at the overall advertisement gender portrayals in Hong Kong. Since respondents were not exposed to any direct comparison or illustration of different gender role depictions in advertisements when conducting the self-administered questionnaire, frame of reference brought to the administration of the questionnaire might vary from one respondent to another due to a number of factors, such as recency (where respondents tend to rate the overall advertising content with reference of only advertisements they encountered most recently) and personal preference of advertisements of only particular product categories. While the frame of reference is not controlled as done in other studies, relationships between gender-role orientation and attitudes towards gendered messages could be contaminated. Therefore, in order to

exercise more control on a survey, future research using self-administered questionnaire to collect views on advertising content should specify either a reasonable time frame for reference, for example, yesterday, or a particular product category for easy comprehension and recall.

Moreover, it is speculated that the target age group also contributed to the inability of gender-role schema to predict respondents' perceptions. While some studies reported meaningful implications of gender-role orientation and level of androgyny on advertising positioning and interpretation (Jaffe, 1991, and Hogg et al., 2001) among college students, in the current study, such psychological gender orientation of Hong Kong secondary school students fails to indicate any effect on students' perceptions about gendered messages in the local advertising content. Instead of formulating their opinions to a gender-related issue with respect to their own psychological gender perspective, youngsters' perception about gendered advertisements may be influenced by other societal forces, such as traditional teachings and family education. In Chinese culture, there has been a traditional teaching of avoiding short-changes. Since an early age, such teaching may be stressed in the family over and over again. Hence, it is speculated that before a more

stable gender perspective is developed and the youngster could master their sets of knowledge about both genders more proficiently gradually by age, secondary school students tend to give the "social answer" to attitudinal questions about gender stereotypes. Looking at the phenomenon from this angle, it is then not surprising that the more "vulnerable" groups, i.e. younger youth and female, are found to express more critical opinions towards gender stereotypes in advertisements. These findings are to be discussed in more details in later chapters.

Media exposure fails to predict

In the current study, both television viewing and newspaper reading not only show no sign of influence on students' attitudes towards gender biases in advertisements, but also are unable to predict students' perception about gender roles in reality. It is considered that such findings may imply the "activeness" of the young audience in their consumption of media content. Instead of passively receiving and internalizing television messages, and giving the "television answer" to questions on social reality, these young viewers get to formulate their own perception of the gender relationship and attitudes towards media biases. Students' sources of information regarding

the issue may be wider than presumed. Although it is shown that they did not draw much reference from their psychological gender perspective, they may turn to more "literate" and "legitimized" sources for a solution, such as gender equality teaching in schools and family education of avoiding short-changes.

The questionnaire administration setting in the current study, where students were informed about the survey and asked to complete the questionnaire before a normal class began, may add to students' tendency of giving "classroom answers" on the social issue of gender stereotyping. Thus, researchers may consider preparing a survey setting outside classroom for future studies of similar topics to avoid such intervening effect.

B. Further Findings

Despite the above results yield from the hypothesis model, notable correlations of biological gender with attitudes (-0.339 , $p=0.000$) and age with attitudes (-0.173 , $p=0.000$) are revealed. Also, varied patterns of female stereotypes awareness (outlook stereotypes vs. social role stereotypes) are observed. These associations and patterns will be discussed in details with

illustration of mean comparisons in this section. Mean comparisons and their significance tests are exhibited to indicate significant sub-group differences on attitudes and awareness.

Gender effect on attitudes

A very significant and moderately strong correlation (-0.339, $p=0.000$) between students' biological gender and their attitudes towards gendered advertising messages is revealed. Such relationship is found to be remarkably strong especially in the modern joy advocate life style group (-0.448, $p=0.000$). On the other hand, among sex-typed students and androgynous students, such gender effect on attitudes is also observed. In both groups, such effect is very significant and moderately strong (sex-typed: -0.389, $p=0.000$; androgynous: -0.398, $p=0.000$). Given the robust and significant relationship between life style concept and level of androgyny (0.426, $p=0.000$), these sex-typed and androgynous respondents are in fact those modern joy pursuers.

Comparisons of mean scores of individual attitude items indicate interesting patterns:

(i) In general, more respondents consider ad contents are unfair to women than to men.

Table 1: Mean comparison of opinions on unfair advertisement contents of women and men

	Ad contents are unfair to women	Ad contents are unfair to men
Mean	2.99	2.63
N	993	993
S.D.	.830	.750

Significance: $t = 0.000$

(ii) Female students have a relatively higher degree of dissatisfaction to gender stereotypes in advertisements than their male counterparts.

Table 2: Mean comparison of dissatisfaction degree of gender stereotypes in advertisements among female and male respondents

		Legal restriction of unfair ad contents is needed
Female	Mean	3.01
	N	559
	S.D.	.851
Male	Mean	2.91
	N	432
	S.D.	.920
Significance (t)		0.000

(iii) Female students show less tolerance of gender-stereotyped portraits in advertisements than male students do.

Table 3: Mean comparison of tolerance level of gendered advertisements among female and male respondents

		Sexy female figures in ad is acceptable	A man being head of family in ad is reasonable
Female	Mean	3.14	3.13
	N	555	560
	S.D.	.869	.882
Male	Mean	3.58	3.39
	N	427	432
	S.D.	.899	.900
Significance (t)		0.000	0.000

Age effect on attitudes and level of androgyny

From the empirical data, a mild but very significant negative relationship between age and attitude is found ($-0.173, p=0.000$). It suggests that students at a lower age tend to be more opposed to gender stereotypic portraits in advertisements than their senior counterparts do.

It is also revealed in the sample data that students at an older age tend to be more androgynous than younger ones. A quite significant but mild relationship between the concepts of level of androgyny and age ($0.206, p=0.000$) suggests that the higher the age of a respondent, the higher both masculinity and femininity scores he or she reports. Mean comparison of masculinity scores and femininity scores detail the situation (Table 4).

Table 4: Mean comparison of masculinity and femininity scores among age groups

		Femininity score	Masculinity score
11-14	Mean	26.47	25.39
	N	283	280
	S.D.	4.56	4.83
15-16	Mean	27.38	26.55
	N	452	451
	S.D.	4.49	4.26
17-21	Mean	27.89	26.86
	N	250	249
	S.D.	3.63	3.88
Significance (t)		0.001	0.000

A closer look on awareness of female and male stereotypes

It is found that respondents are generally more aware of male stereotypes than female stereotypes in advertisements (Table 5). However, different patterns are observed when female stereotypes are broken down into specific aspects, namely "outlook stereotypes" and "social role stereotypes". Respondents reported lower awareness level of female's social role stereotypes while a higher awareness level of women's outlook stereotype (Table 6).

Table 5: Mean comparison of male stereotype awareness and female stereotype awareness

	Awareness of male stereotypes in ads	Awareness of female stereotypes in ads
Mean	2.52	2.11
N	983	993
S.D.	.67	.77

Significance: $t = 0.000$

Table 6: Mean comparison of awareness of female's outlook stereotypes and social role stereotypes

	<i>Items on outlook stereotypes</i>		<i>Items on social role stereotypes</i>		
	Women care much about their appearance	Women are young, slim and pretty	Women's place is at home	Women rely on men	Women are indecisive
Mean	4.13	3.98	2.95	2.91	2.71
N	995	998	999	999	997
S.D.	.915	.947	.935	.957	.921

Significance: $t = 0.000$ (comparison between average mean of outlook stereotype awareness and average mean of social role stereotype awareness)

C. Analysis

"Gender" and "age" as effective predictor of gender attitudes

Unlike phenomena revealed in researches done in Western societies, not one of the hypothesized relationships between students' attitudes and "socioeconomic status", "level of androgyny", "life style", as well as "media exposure", is supported in this study. On the other hand, "biological gender" is, yet, found to be a remarkable predictor of attitudes towards gender stereotypes in advertisements ($-0.339, p=0.000$), where female respondents have more unfavorable opinions towards such stereotypes than male respondents do. Unexpectedly, "age" also appears to associate with attitudes

(-0.173, $p=0.000$) in a way that senior students tend to find gendered portraits more acceptable than junior students do.

Although "level of androgyny" fails to indicate how students perceive stereotypic portraits, the author is not convinced that female are born to be more opposed to unfair gendered messages. Instead, such phenomenon is seen as some hints to the understanding of ways youngsters in Hong Kong interpret gendered messages and their possible adoption of a prevalent or dominant opinion in the culture.

If we look at the relationships between students' attitudes and gender, as well as, age, it is not difficult to notice that youngsters gradually find themselves more androgynous along adolescence age (0.206, $p=0.000$). However, although they start to find in themselves more diversified personal traits, or to develop various characteristics since they have more chance to meet different people in different settings (e.g.: family, schools, peer groups, media, etc) which results in higher awareness of gendered advertisements (0.259, $p=0.000$), they do not come to viewing the issue of gender stigma or gender labels more critically. Yet, they begin to pick up the male-dominant

social values, which permeate in the culture and well reflected in family education, mass media, school curriculum or even public policies. Hence, in the current study, senior students are generally found to express less dissatisfaction with unfair gendered messages in mass media.

On the other hand, it appears that the young generation is not totally taking a patriarchic society for granted. Among the sampled respondents, female students of all age groups showed a relatively more critical opinion to the unfair gender stereotyped figures in advertisements than male respondents. While male students are less concerned about gender issues, the ladies showed deeper dissatisfaction with unfair advertising contents and less tolerance of both female and male stereotyped figures. This could be due to the fact discussed earlier that in the local culture, more "vulnerable" groups like female and younger students are more often advised of the socially desirable "virtue" of "avoiding short-changes". Thus, they tend to be more against with any unfair portraits in the media than their counterparts do.

Higher awareness of female outlook stereotypes than their social role stereotypes

As also seen in Fung and Ma's study (2000), the data showed that students' awareness of male stereotypes in the advertisements is stronger than their awareness of female stereotypes. The author believes that lower awareness of female stereotypes is not because such mediated stereotyping is less serious. In fact, according to Furnham and Mak's content-analysis study published in 1999, in Hong Kong, women were consistently shown in dependent roles (55.4%) more often than men (19.3%). Also, female central figures were more likely to appear visually in television commercials than male central figures did. While 75.4% of female central figures were depicted visually, as much as 67.1% of male central figures only acted as voice-overs. In reality, such stereotypic female image is common not only in advertisements, but also in the local culture. For example, after the introduction of Sex Discrimination Ordinance in 1995, unlawful recruitment advertisements which deliberately hire women for jobs of supporting roles (e.g.: secretariats) while men for more dangerous jobs (e.g.: security guards) still appear on every day's newspapers. With such biased gender roles and extensive patriarchic narrative embedded in the culture, these distorted female portraits in advertisements are less visible to general audience, especially youngsters who are not encouraged to explore and discuss the issue critically.

However, the young audience is found to be able to spot some of the female stereotypes better than others when these portrayals are categorized into "outlook stereotypes" and "social role stereotypes". Among the respondents, distorted female appearance is easier to notice than biased female social roles in advertisements. There is 25.8% of respondents who agree that in advertisements, women's place is often or very often at home while 26.4% regards the "women rely on men" portrayal often or very often. However, there is as much as 79.1% and 71.5% of respondents who agree that the "women care much about their appearance" and "women are young, slim and pretty" depictions often or very often appear on mass media respectively. Such awareness pattern is not surprising if knowing that these biased female gender roles are a part of everyday life in the Hong Kong society. This bit of the culture makes the media representation of these stereotypes invisible.

Although female stereotypes are generally less likely to be spotted by the sampled students than male stereotypes, there are still older students who score high on female stereotype awareness. These relatively more sensitive

respondents from the 17-21 age group are those who express more unfavorable attitudes towards gender bias in advertisements. Within this age group, awareness of female stereotypes and students' attitudes correlate in a significant and moderately strong fashion (0.320, $p=0.000$).

Androgynous modern joy pursuers

Although "life style" and "level of androgyny" are unable to predict students' evaluation of gendered advertisements as hypothesized, these two concepts correlate strongly and very significantly (0.426, $p=0.000$).

Three quite distinct groups of students are identified according to their different life styles. Those modern joy pursuers represent the largest life style group (52.6%). Compared to the traditional home-birds (30.6%) and the few frustrated youth (16.8%), these students are more confident with themselves, more concerned about latest fashion and happier with their present status. They may have developed more egalitarian personal characters because they are exposed to a larger variety of people and social settings since they are more outgoing youngsters who enjoy being a team player of even activities outside of regular school work.

Being more adventurous and willing to explore the world, modern joy pursuers are more sensitive to unfair gender messages in mass media although not necessarily more resistant against these advertising messages. Compared to respondents who are more sex-typed or indifferent, these androgynous students should be able to spot more of biased gender stereotypes in the media since they tend not to take every prevalent unequal gender values for granted.

Ineffectiveness of "socioeconomic status" to predict perception of gendered advertisements

The concept of socioeconomic status fails to predict students' awareness level, attitudes and their level of androgyny. Better off families with parents of more education and live in more recognized housing do not tend to have a more androgynous child with stronger sensitivity to gender stereotypes and opposed opinions to them as hypothesized. Such findings could imply two possible situations. On the one hand, it is possible that higher financial and social statuses and more education of the parents do not result in a more egalitarian gender schema and, hence, such family influence on the

youngsters is totally absent in the household. On the other hand, the practice of family education regarding gender issues in local households may not be as common and well accepted as in Western families. Therefore, the young generation might receive inadequate guidance from the parents in establishing their gender values and perceiving gender stereotypes in the society. As a result of both cases, students may seek from other sources, possibly school curriculum, peer interaction or simply everyday observation, for a set of socially acceptable gender-specific values and practices.

VI. Conclusion and Discussion

Compared to studies conducted in Western countries, which focus on female adults, the current study on both female and male secondary school students in Hong Kong yield a totally different picture of linkages between masculinity-femininity and responses to gender stereotypic advertising messages. While women in the West, who demonstrated a relatively stronger masculine orientation than others, were significantly more discontented with traditional female stereotypes in advertisements (Jaffe, 1991), the "level of androgyny" concept is not effective by any means in predicting Hong Kong students' responses to media gender stereotypes. It is only a mild indicator of students' overall awareness of such gendered portraits. These findings are suggestive and rewarding in the sense that in a Chinese context like Hong Kong, which is blended with some Western ideas, as well as social and political influences from the West, attitude formation towards dominant gender roles and gender-specific media content among youngsters is subject to a different set of factors and stimuli from those in Western cultures, where gender studies have been more rigorous.

Having no significant cultivation effect observed in both the current study and the study conducted by Fung and associate (2000) on gender perception and stereotypes, it is believed that in Hong Kong, audience at different age groups are more "active" in their consumption of gendered media content, where instead of drawing only reference from televised images and portrayals, they make use of information from other aspects to interpret the reality. Future media studies on gender stereotypes could focus on discovering the frame of reference used by different age groups in interpreting the gender reality in Hong Kong. Such studies could be carried out in the form of more humanistic qualitative method in which the complex schema of gender reality is easier to portrait through dynamic focus group discussion or in-depth personal interviews. It is believed that qualitative data is useful in supplementing the inadequacy of unidirectional quantitative surveys.

In spite of the insignificance of the androgyny construct, basic demographic variables, such as age and biological gender, are shown to be better predictors of respondents' orientation and attitudes. This indicates that there are some cultural or societal forces that alienate female from male, and younger from older, in perceiving the same cultural product of mediated

gender depictions. The author agrees that there is a need for further research on exploring the interaction between school institutes with students of different genders and life styles. Also, examination of ways in which the public bodies position these youngsters and make them conform to the sets of regulations and norms shall be indicative on the notion of how the young generation learns to perceive their own gender and their counterparts at the societal level. These institute-student relationships should contribute to our knowledge of youngsters' gender attitudes and beliefs formation.

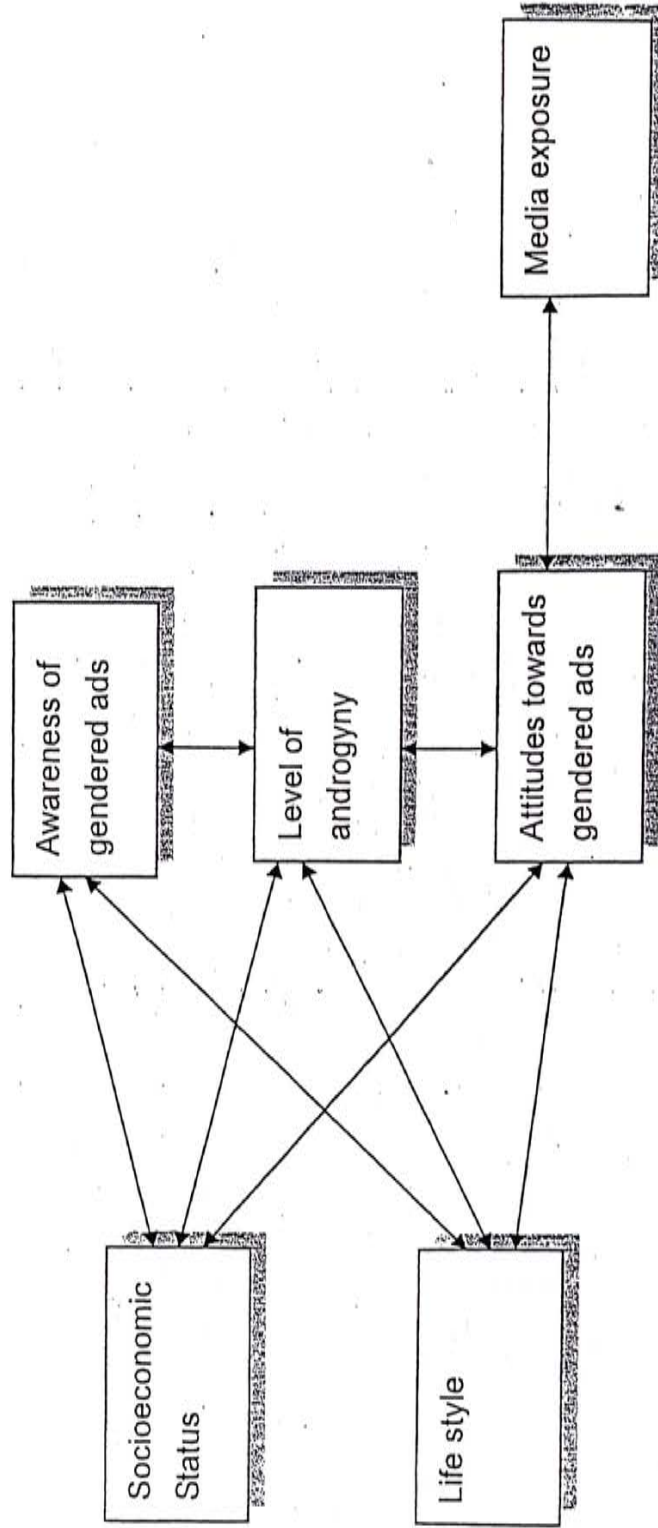
Despite the result that no association is found between gender-role orientation and respondents' attitudes towards gendered advertisements, there is no sign of linkage between attitudes, as well as awareness level, and the life style concept. As an aggregate construct of respondents' behavioral and psychological profile, the life style concept does not give a clue on students' gender stereotype evaluation as expected. Given that these quantified measurements regarding respondents' personal orientation and activities do not show evidence of hypothesized relationships with attitudinal traits, future studies in the form of in-depth personal accounts about Hong Kong youth's behaviors, opinions and their media experience are suggested to

obtain a more detailed profile of youngsters daily norms and practices, their orientation and values, as well as media experiences and encounters.

In the current study, socioeconomic status concept fails to predict androgyny level, awareness and attitudes in any fashion. However, a different representation of such concept might yield different results. While parents' education level, their financial status and type of housing may not represent exactly the family influence in a students' attitude formation process, the author suggests that an examination of the actual daily interaction within a family regarding the gender-role notion in the form of in-depth qualitative accounts would produce a better description of parental and family influences. This closer look at the household dynamics and family relationships between parents and children may generate a clearer picture of different forms and styles of family communication or education and the ways in which these communication patterns help pass parents' gender beliefs to the young generation.

VII. Appendices

A. Hypothesis Model



B. Sample Questionnaire

《香港青少年廣告解讀》

多謝您抽空參與這個問卷調查。這次調查對象為新一代青少年人，旨在收集青少年對於性別取向、生活模式及廣告解讀三方面的意見。大家作答時，請盡量圈取最適合的答案。所得資料將絕對保密，只供學術研究用途。

I. 性別取向

1. 你認為自己是否擁有以下特質？

	完全沒有	沒有	一般	有	完全有
a. 喜冒險	1	2	3	4	5
b. 有領袖才能	1	2	3	4	5
c. 個性強	1	2	3	4	5
d. 堅持己見	1	2	3	4	5
e. 獨立	1	2	3	4	5
f. 有上進心	1	2	3	4	5
g. 盡責	1	2	3	4	5
h. 喜歡小孩子	1	2	3	4	5
i. 害羞	1	2	3	4	5
j. 留意他人的需要	1	2	3	4	5
k. 溫柔	1	2	3	4	5
l. 有同情心	1	2	3	4	5
m. 親切	1	2	3	4	5
n. 仁慈	1	2	3	4	5
o. 了解他人	1	2	3	4	5
p. 有衝勁	1	2	3	4	5
q. 有支配性	1	2	3	4	5

II. 廣告解讀

1. 你認為在香港廣告中有否出現以下現象？

	完全沒有	很少出現	偶爾	頻常出現	經常出現
a. 家庭被形容為女人的地方。	1	2	3	4	5
b. 女性要依賴男性。	1	2	3	4	5
c. 女性缺乏作重要決定的能力。	1	2	3	4	5
d. 女性極為注意外表及裝扮。	1	2	3	4	5
e. 女性有情緒化的表現。	1	2	3	4	5
f. 女性被描劃為年輕、纖瘦及美麗。	1	2	3	4	5

	完全沒有	很少出現	偶爾	頗常出現	經常出現
g. 男性較專注於事業多於家庭。	1	2	3	4	5
h. 男性保護女性。	1	2	3	4	5
i. 男性有能力作重要決定。	1	2	3	4	5
j. 男性為家庭支柱。	1	2	3	4	5
k. 男性有冒險精神。	1	2	3	4	5
l. 專業人士多數為男性。	1	2	3	4	5

2. 你同意以下的句子嗎？

	很不同意	不同意	一般	同意	很同意
a. 整體上，我認為廣告裡有很多對女性不公平的描述。	1	2	3	4	5
b. 整體上，我認為廣告裡有很多對男性不公平的描述。	1	2	3	4	5
c. 我對廣告中男女不平等的描述感到不滿。	1	2	3	4	5
d. 我認為應立例管制性別不平等的廣告內容。	1	2	3	4	5
e. 整體上，我認為廣告中的男、女形象能反映現實。	1	2	3	4	5
f. 當廣告中出現一個纖瘦、年輕及多愁善感的人， 我認為這可能是個女性。	1	2	3	4	5
g. 當廣告中出現一個中年專業人仕，我認為這可能是 個男性。	1	2	3	4	5
h. 我認為廣告中女性的性感尤物形象是可以接受的。	1	2	3	4	5
i. 我認為廣告中男性作為家庭支柱的形象是非常合理的。	1	2	3	4	5

III. 生活模式

3. 你同意以下的句子嗎？

	很不同意	不同意	一般	同意	很同意
1. 我通常擁有最少一件今季最 In (流行) 的時裝。	1	2	3	4	5
2. 如有需要，我寧選著流行時裝而放棄舒適衣著。	1	2	3	4	5
3. 穿戴「有型」的衣飾是我生活中重要的一部份。	1	2	3	4	5
4. 我會選擇在家看電視而不去 Rave Party (狂野派對)。	1	2	3	4	5
5. 我是一個「住家」型的人。	1	2	3	4	5
6. 我認為一星期應最少有一天是家庭日。	1	2	3	4	5
7. 我認為自己比其他人更有自信心。	1	2	3	4	5
8. 我比其他同齡的人更獨立。	1	2	3	4	5
9. 我認為自己有很多強項。	1	2	3	4	5
10. 我喜歡被別人視為領袖。	1	2	3	4	5
11. 我有計劃將來到外國體驗異地生活。	1	2	3	4	5
12. 我會努力實現環遊世界的夢想。	1	2	3	4	5
13. 我對任何新事物皆有興趣。	1	2	3	4	5

	很不同意	不同意	一般	同意	很同意
14. 我經常密切留意最近的政局變化。	1	2	3	4	5
15. 我有興趣閱讀有關政治及經濟的新聞。	1	2	3	4	5
16. 我每天都會閱讀報章新聞或收看電視新聞。	1	2	3	4	5
17. 我願意付較高的價錢購買較環保的貨品。	1	2	3	4	5
18. 我有購買環保的貨品。	1	2	3	4	5
19. 我支持環保運動。	1	2	3	4	5
20. 除了應付功課，我還參與校內或校外的課外活動。	1	2	3	4	5
21. 我喜歡群體習作多於獨自工作。	1	2	3	4	5
22. 課餘的時候，我會與朋友見面、逛街、看戲。	1	2	3	4	5
23. 我對自己的學業表現感到滿意。	1	2	3	4	5
24. 我滿意現在的家庭狀況。	1	2	3	4	5
25. 我對生活抱有積極向前的態度。	1	2	3	4	5
26. 女人是屬於家裡的。	1	2	3	4	5
27. 女性應與男性一樣，有自己的事業。	1	2	3	4	5
28. 男和女在學校裡、工作及社會上，都應有同樣待遇。	1	2	3	4	5
29. 我與老師的關係融洽。	1	2	3	4	5
30. 我與同學的相處和諧。	1	2	3	4	5
31. 我認為上學是為了滿足家長或老師的要求。	1	2	3	4	5
32. 我比較喜歡看資訊節目（如新聞報導）多於娛樂節目（如電視劇集）。	1	2	3	4	5
33. 我較愛看報章娛樂版多於新聞版。	1	2	3	4	5

IV. 個人資料

- 性別： (1) 女 (2) 男
- 年齡： _____ 歲
- 年級： (1) F.1 (2) F.2 (3) F.3 (4) F.4 (5) F.5 (6) F.6 (7) F.7
- 父親學歷：

11 無正式教育	(6) 預科畢業 (F.6-F.7)
12 小學	(7) 專上學院 (非學位)
13 初中 (F.1-F.3)	(8) 大學 (學位課程)
14 高中 (F.4-F.5)	(9) 研究院 (碩士或博士課程)
15 工業學院	(10) 不知道

5. 母親學歷：
- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 11 無正式教育 | (6) 預科畢業 (F. 6-F. 7) |
| 12 小學 | (7) 專上學院 (非學位) |
| 13 初中 (F. 1-F. 3) | (8) 大學 (學位課程) |
| 14 高中 (F. 4-F. 5) | (9) 研究院 (碩士或博士課程) |
| 15 工業學院 | (10) 不知道 |
6. 我在班上的成績約為：
- | | |
|-------|--------|
| 11 優異 | (5) 中下 |
| 12 良好 | (6) 頗差 |
| 13 中上 | (7) 很差 |
| 14 普通 | |
7. 在香港居住年期：
- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 11 少於一年 | (5) 十年至十二年十一個月 |
| 12 一年至三年十一個月 | (6) 十三年或以上 |
| 13 四年至六年十一個月 | (7) 出生至今 |
| 14 七年至九年十一個月 | |
8. 家庭每月平均總收入 (HK\$)：
- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 11 少於\$5,000 | (5) \$20,000- \$29,999 |
| 12 \$5,000- \$9,999 | (6) \$30,000- \$39,999 |
| 13 \$10,000- \$14,999 | (7) \$40,000- \$49,999 |
| 14 \$15,000- \$19,999 | (8) \$50,000 或以上 |
9. 住屋類型：
- | | |
|---------|--------------------|
| 11 臨時房屋 | (4) 租住私人樓宇 |
| 12 公共屋 | (5) 自置私人物業 |
| 13 居屋屋苑 | (6) 其他 (請註明) _____ |
10. 每天收看电视的時間：
- | | |
|----------|------------|
| 11 少於一小時 | (5) 大約四小時 |
| 12 大約一小時 | (6) 大約五小時 |
| 13 大約二小時 | (7) 六小時或以上 |
| 14 大約三小時 | |
11. 讀報習慣：
- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 11 從不閱讀報紙 | (4) 經常讀報，會花一些時間 |
| 12 很少讀報，不大花時間 | (5) 每天讀一份報紙，會花頗多時間 |
| 13 間中讀報，只花少量時間 | (6) 每天讀多於一份報紙 |

-- 完 多謝合作 --

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