

## **THE MAKING OF THE KONG GIRL (港女) AND THE HETEROSEXUAL MARKETPLACE**

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**ABSTRACT:** A penchant for luxury brand-named goods, insistence on a boyfriend who carries her bag, and any opportunity to look cute and be the center of attention have all been described as characteristic of a 'Kong girl' since the mid-2000s. In this paper, we analyze the publically created figure of the 'Kong Girl' by examining the role of stereotypes in constructing and contesting gender ideologies. At once a critique of (hetero-) normative femininity and 'modern' notions of gender equality, the Kong Girl stereotype defies established models of gender identity and demonstrates the consequences of selectively constructing one's femininity. Taking a view of stereotype formation as a process over time, we show how participants using new media actively shape ideologies of gender that are expressed in the form of anxieties in the heterosexual marketplace.

Our analysis is presented in two parts. First, we explore the discourse trajectory by which the 'Kong girl' stereotype is formed in the media and new media: television and radio programs, discussion forums, blogs, Facebook pages, and print publications. We focus on interactions, their metapragmatic processes and significance (Silverstein 1993, Worthan and Locher 1996, Agha 2009) in public online forums that center on a 2005 incident that is later cited as a prime example of what a Kong Girl is. Next, we propose that the heated controversy reflects the socioeconomic shifts in the heterosexual marketplace that are exerting pressure on both men and women in Hong Kong society today, and that this tension is manifest in the discourse processes taking place in the media.