

The Evolving Relationship Between the Genders

An overview with reference to Hong Kong

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Overview of the presentation

- What do we mean by “evolving” relationship? Nature, culture, and gender
- Chinese culture and gender relations
- Major changes since the 20th century affecting gender relations
- Snapshot of men and women in contemporary Hong Kong
- Comments on the changing relationship

Evolution, nature and culture

- Essentialist versus constructionist views on gender
- Evolution as natural selection, adaptation and progress
- Culture as part of the “natural” environment

Chinese Culture and Gender Relations

- Confucianism and social order
- Clear division of labour between the genders
- A general patriarchal social system with a sub-system of strict hierarchical relationship amongst women in the family
- Female virtues and value revolve around social reproduction

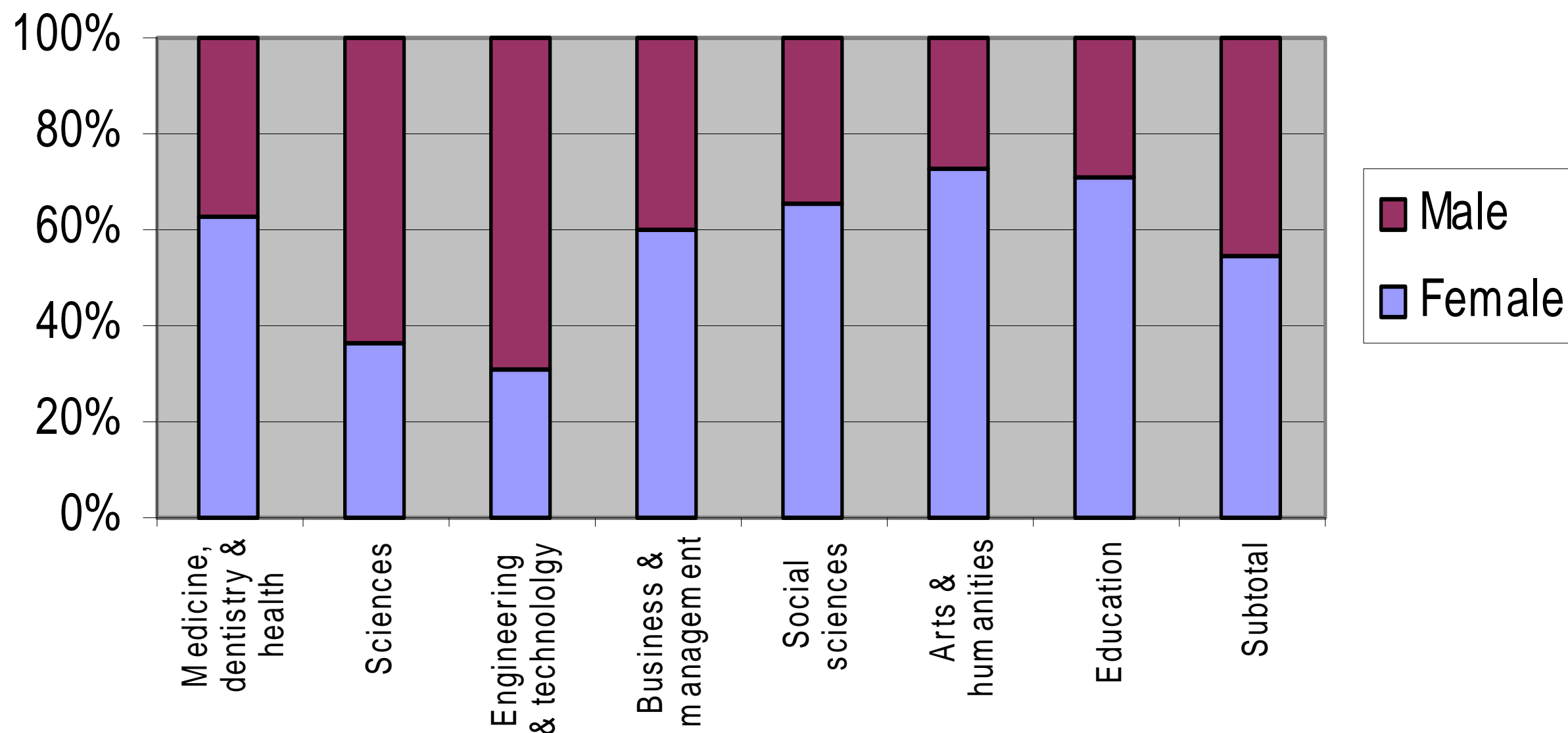
Major changes since the 20th century affecting gender relations

- Catherine Hakim's "Preference Theory"
- equal opportunities revolution
- Contraceptive revolution
- Jobs more suited to women and jobs for "secondary earners" in the labour market
- the increasing importance of attitudes, values, and personal preference lifestyle choices in modern liberal societies

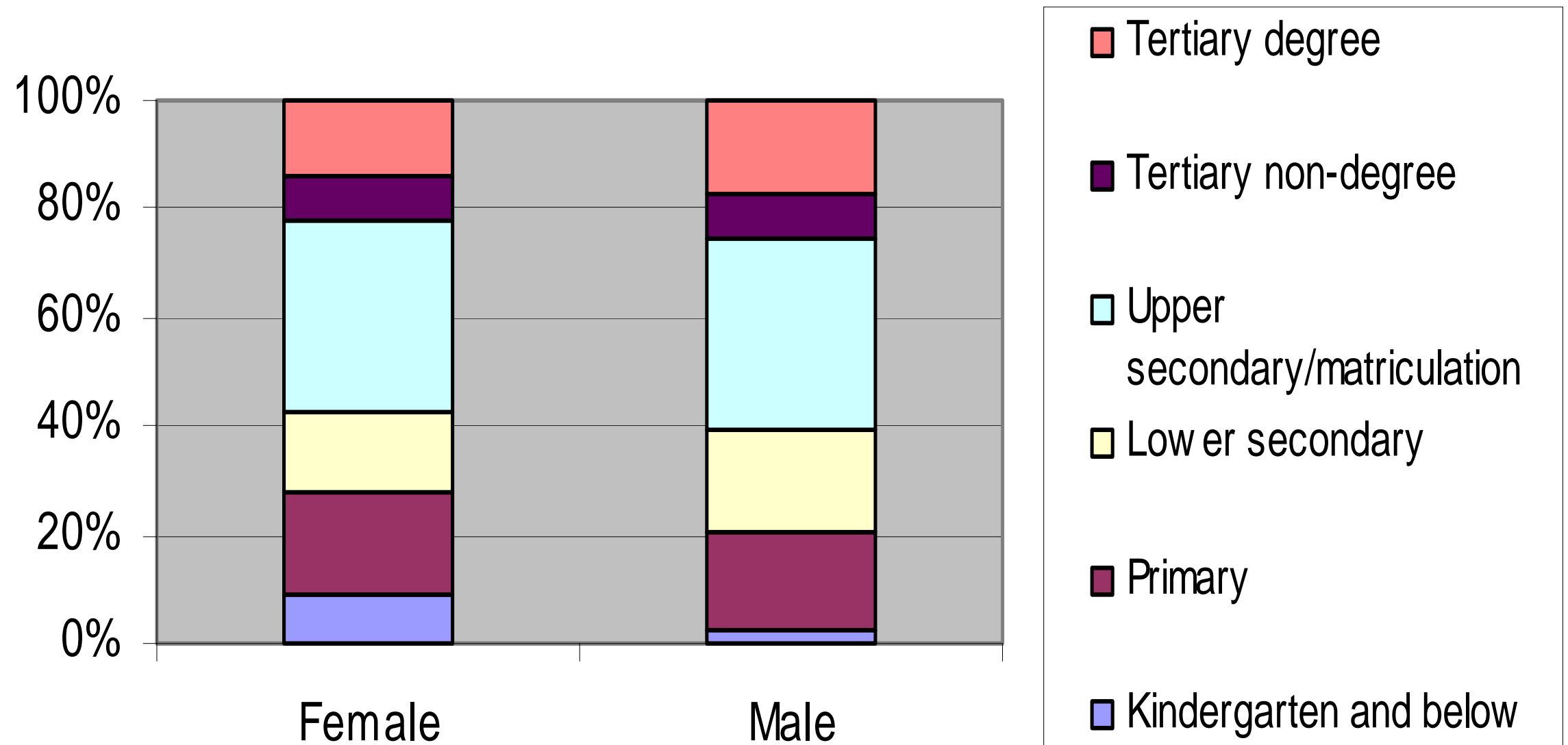
Snapshot of men and women in contemporary Hong Kong

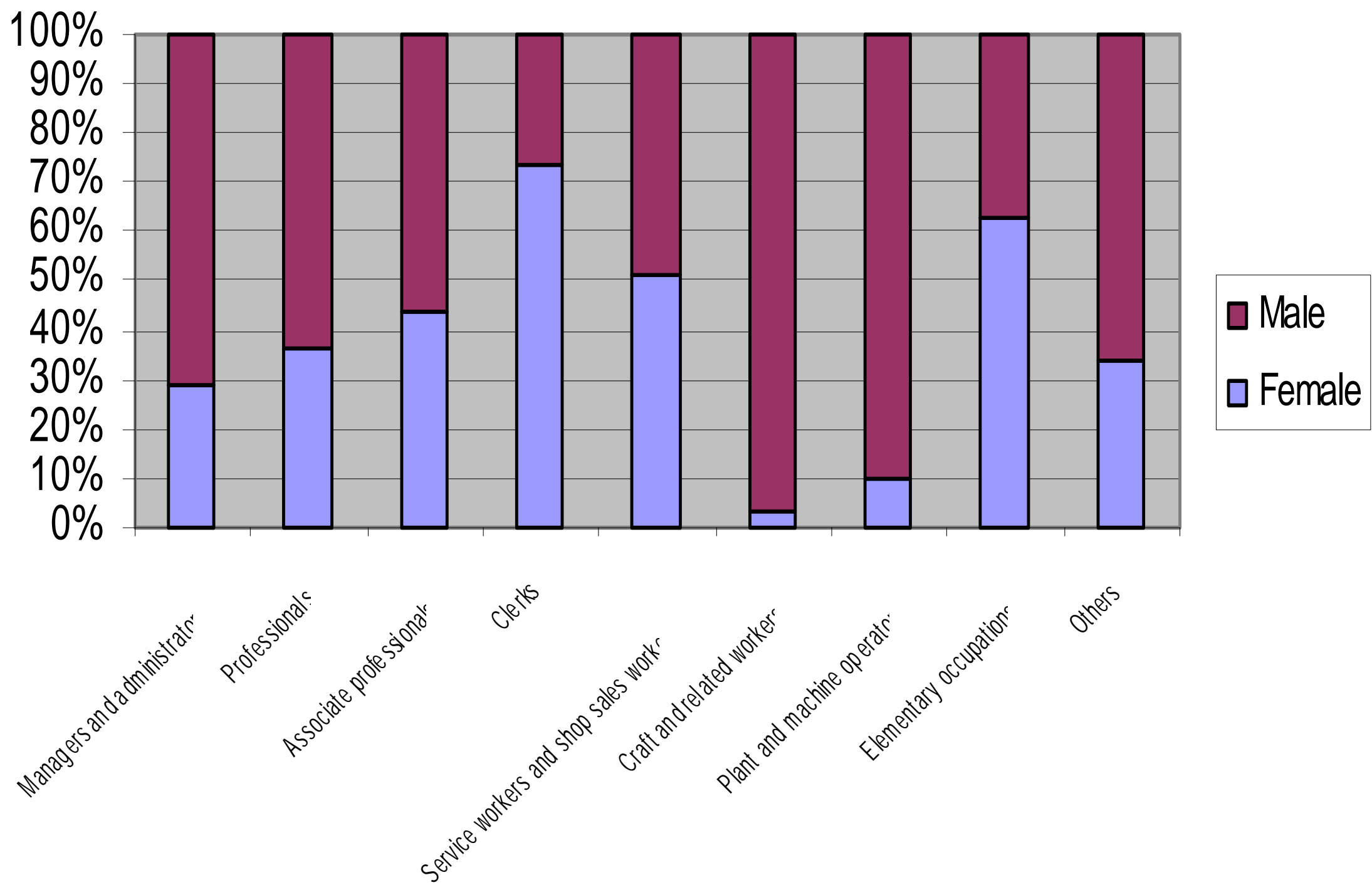
- Some relevant figures:
 - Fertility rate
 - Educational attainment
 - Occupational attainment
 - Family formation and dissolution
 - Changing values and new gender “types”

Students in UGC funded programmes by programme category and sex, 2006/07



Population aged 15+ by sex and educational attainment, 2006





More couples are getting divorced, people are getting married later, and having fewer children later

- Divorce decrees in 2006 were 17,424
- Median age of first marriage rose from 23.8 and 27.0 for men and women in 1981, to 28.2 and 31.2 respectively in 2006
- Median age of first childbirth was 25.1 in 1981, in 2006 is 29.2

Snapshot of men and women in contemporary Hong Kong

- New “breeds” of men and women
- Kong girl (*gangnu*) and Kong guy (*gangnan*)
- Dual-earner families: “riceless housewife” (wufan chufu) and surrogate housewives (foreign domestic helpers)

Comments on the changing relationship

- Increasing heterogenous masculinities and femininities
- Cultural lag or chaos? Progress or degeneration?
- Societal reactions
- Evolution as adaptation, evolution as progress

The End

Thank you!