

**Title:** Social construction of gender inequality in the housing system in Hong Kong

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**Abstract:**

Gender inequality in the housing system is never an issue of concern in Hong Kong. The invisibility of the problem arises not because it does not exist, but because it is being neglected or underplayed. Even if there are some obvious cases of women with serious housing problems, such as homeless lone mothers, this is usually attributed to individual mishaps, or even worse, the women are blamed for failing to maintain a happy family. This thesis aims to challenge the traditional conceptualization of the problem. It is argued that women's housing problems are not 'individual' problems but are socially constructed in the patriarchal system coupled with the laissez-faire capitalist system in Hong Kong. The housing system, like other systems such as education, employment and social welfare, has a significant part to play in reinforcing gender inequality. This male domination is so far-reaching that it exists not only in the structural level but permeates throughout all social practices and interactions. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate how this inequality is constructed in women's housing experience, in addition to revealing its existence in the housing system. It is only through revealing the absurdity of the existing 'anti-women' housing system that there is any hope of developing a 'non-sexist' housing policy. Two groups of women – lone mothers and women living in new towns – are chosen as the targets of the study. Lone mothers are chosen because their housing problems are obviously severe. It is demonstrated how such severe problems can be trivialised in traditional conceptualizations. Housing inequality does not only affect 'vulnerable' groups such as lone mothers, but also affects ordinary women in 'ordinary' families. That is why women in new towns are chosen as the second target group to demonstrate the wide existence of gender-based housing inequalities. This research is mainly based on in-depth case studies of lone mothers and women in new towns. The evidence are supplemented with secondary data analysis of related social surveys and documentation of relevant government policies and statistics.