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Desperate housewives: An analysis of the characterisations of female gamblers portrayed in gambling movies in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This article examines portrayals of female gamblers in recent Hong Kong movies. The authors report that the depiction of female gamblers is very different from that of male gamblers in the movies made in the same period. Whereas the male gamblers are pitching a lonely and desperate battle against the evil opponent, the female gamblers portrayed in the movies are housewives or small-time players who gamble only for their personal gain. A general negative overtone in portrayals of female gamblers was interpreted as a reflection of the traditional view that discourages women from gambling. The shift of gambling themes in the Hong Kong movies has been identified to reflect the most salient concerns among Hong Kong residents. Such changes are attributed to particular social and cultural changes in the community.

Keywords: cultural influence on gambling, female gamblers portrayed in Hong Kong movies, sex differences in gambling behaviour, media and gambling

Desperate housewives: An analysis of the characterisations of female gamblers portrayed in gambling movies in Hong Kong

Gambling is often regarded as an integral part of Chinese or East Asian culture. It is generally viewed as an acceptable form of social interaction and entertainment (e.g., Price, 1972). This assertion is often accompanied by anecdotal evidence such as the popularity and the central role of traditional “gambling” games such as mahjong in social activities among Chinese or the observation of a large numbers of casino clients with “Chinese” appearance. Although it is true that gambling is popular pastime and entertainment choice for many Chinese, it is not always regarded in a positive light. For example, Moore and Ohtsuka (2001) report that Asian-Australian young people hold more negative views on gambling than Anglo-Australians. Yet a small number of Asian-Australian young people participate more frequently in gambling than young people from an Anglo or European background (Moore & Ohtsuka, 2001).

With the opening of the casino market in Macau to international casino operators, the introduction of gaming in Singapore, and the rapid development of the gaming market in the Pacific Rim region, access to gambling has steadily increased. Therefore, it is commercial gambling rather than culturally contextualised gambling such as mahjong games at home that has attracted more attention from the general public. With regard to the recent redevelopment of the Macau casino market, Ozorio and Fong (2004) report high levels of bet-to-income ratio among Chinese casino gamblers (i.e., high levels of risk taking) and this in turn implies a quest for instant rewards either for quick profits or satisfying strong sensations and excitement via high levels of risk taking.

Some researchers argue that the observed patterns of Chinese gambling is a reflection of their cultural views (e.g., Papineau, 2005). Papineau asserts that the traditional beliefs in luck and fate as the basis of one's destiny predispose the Chinese to gambling. According to Papineau, the concept of *ming* explains why two people born in similar circumstances with equal abilities and work ethics will not necessarily achieve the same level of success in life. Chinese attribute success to a good *ming* and failure to a bad one. *Ming* therefore is equivalent to a concept of fate that governs the outcomes of the events over which people have no control (Papineau, 2005).

This culture-specific view alone does not explain persistence of gambling participation. If it is a fate, why do they go back to confirm a bad *ming* again and again after gambling losses? Obviously, the Chinese notion of *ming* is not static and antithetic to the Calvinistic predetermination of success or failure and the unknowability of future outcomes. The notion of luck in Chinese culture is thus associated with the ebb and wanes of luck to be exploited.

Although it is likely that some culture-specific reasons could be found to explain key aspects of Chinese gambling behaviour, it is also important to investigate whether the Chinese use universal schemas as well as culture-specific ones to explain gambling outcomes. Ohtsuka and Duong-Ohtsuka (2000) reported that Vietnamese-Australian gamblers held both universal and culture-specific schemas to explain luck and winning in gambling. More specifically, they demonstrated that the universal attribution patterns with which they explained gambling success (winning) were associated with positive

internal qualities such as intelligence and skills whereas failure (losses) was attributed to external factors such as distraction or bad luck.

However, cultural differences in risk taking behaviour sometimes appear as a subtle interaction between cultural specific factors and universal factors. The evidence in support of such a view comes from financial risk-taking research. In general, people are risk-averse when they expect positive outcomes (e.g., financial gains) preferring the certainty of a small gain to the uncertainty of a larger gain. In contrast, people are more likely to resort to risk-taking when the negative outcome is expected by preferring the uncertainty of a larger loss to the certainty of a fixed loss (Kahneman, 2003). However, Chinese risk-taking decision shows the overall effect of the asset level as a monotonic function of risk taking without the framing effect (Chiu, 2003).

Further research may be necessary to investigate whether decision-making is influenced by the Chinese conceptualisation of luck. This traditional concept of luck interacts with other contemporary factors such as access to gambling and orientation towards consumerism to form gambling attitudes and behaviour. In a recent qualitative research of Thai young people in Australia, an ethnic group with significant Chinese cultural influence, the extent of sophistication in the conceptualisation of luck in the context of spirituality was identified as one of the protective factors (Tanasornnarong, Jackson, & Thomas, 2004).

Finally, cultural factors, especially in a traditional non-Western society where gender roles are clearly defined, may need to be carefully examined. In such societies, gender differences in attitudes and behaviour may be more pronounced compared to

Western societies where the equality between men and women has been taken for granted. For example, gender differences are reported in gambling game preference (e.g. Schull, 2002), motivation for gambling (Burger, Dahlgren, & MacDonald, 2006; Ohtsuka, Bruton, DeLuca, & Borg, 1997; Trevorrow & Moore, 1998), gambling history (Grant & Kim, 2002), risk-taking and at-risk status (Clarke, Abbott, Tse, Townsend, Kingi, & Manaia, 2006; Harris, Jenkins, & Glaser, 2006) and help-seeking regarding problem gambling (Schull & Woolcock, 2005). Despite a trend for narrowing of gender differences in gambling behaviour in Western countries (e.g., Ohtsuka et al., 1997), women's gambling may be motivated and regarded differently from men's gambling.

According to gambling research literature, the gender differences in gambling game preference is a reflection of the gender differences in the function of gambling plays. Namely, men are motivated by thrill seeking while women prefer dissociation gambling in order to counter dysphoric moods such as depression and anxiety or loneliness (Schull, 2002). Further, Hong and Chiu (1988) speculate that even the illusion of control beliefs that Chinese gamblers develop may have different functional roles for male and female gamblers.

One ingenious way to understand one's culture is by studying contemporary movies in that community. In an extensive study of movies, Dement in his book, *Going for Broke* (Dement, 1999), does an excellent analysis of movies. He concludes that movies with gambling themes have irresponsibly happy endings. And in some cases such a view reflects the specific cultural perspectives on gambling. On a similar vein of thought, Turner, Fritz and Zangeneh (2007) have found eight overlapping themes in

gambling-related movies: (1) pathological gambling, (2) the magical skill of the professional gambler, (3) miraculous wins as happy endings, (4) gamblers are suckers, (5) gamblers cheat, (6) gambling is run by organized crime, (7) the casino heist, and (8) gambling as a symbolic backdrop to the story. The authors suggest that the portrayal of gambling in movies involves a number of distortions of the reality of gambling. Although Turner et al. (2007) note that most films focus on male action gamblers, specific cultural characteristics that may contribute to gambling were not explored.

More recently, Chan and Ohtsuka (2007) have analysed the cultural meanings of male heroes in Chinese movies made in Hong Kong. The researchers found that cultural and societal changes can have significant influence on the portrayal of male heroes. In the 1950's and 1960's, the prototype of the male cultural hero was an honest, responsible and family duty-bound person, who saw gambling as a moral degenerative behaviour. Thus, movies with gambling themes often depicted gamblers as morally irresponsible persons, who stole and lied for money. Such negative traits are not evident in movies made in the late 1970's, where the gamblers are often funny, amicable and socially appropriate characters. In the late 1980's and 1990's, films with themes and genres in gambling have reported tremendous success in the box office. Two prototype films, namely, *God of Gamblers* (賭神) and *God of Gamblers II* (賭俠) are ranked in the top 20 of the all-time box office income for movies in Hong Kong (Movie Warrior Blockbuster, 2008). Ko Chun (portrayed by Chow Yun Fat), the protagonist in the movies, is an intelligent, confident, and powerful figure that possesses the supernatural power to win. This type of protagonists, however, disappears from most of the movies with the gambling theme after

Hong Kong's sovereignty returned to China in 1997. In a number of contemporary movies in late 1990s, the protagonist is often construed as a cunning, manipulative and deceitful person, who uses every means to cheat at the gambling table. Such a personality style fits Turner et al.'s classification (2007) of cheating gamblers. Chan and Ohtsuka (2007) postulate that such a depiction mirrors much of the dreams and fantasies of many Hong Kong and Macau residents. That is, instant wealth rather than social responsibility or righteousness matters most as a measure of personal achievement in life.

The study of Chan and Ohtsuka (2007) investigates only male heroes in movies with a gambling theme. However, a separate analysis focused on female gamblers portrayed in the Hong Kong movie is needed considering the gender differences reported in gambling research as well as the attitudes, values, and stigma associated with women's gambling. The findings might not be applicable to female gamblers, as women gamblers might perceive gambling differently than men. For example, drawing on ethnographic observations and interviews with female gamblers in Las Vegas, Schull (2002) finds that women employ gambling as a means of escape from the stress of work and home. This might stem from the unresolved tensions and anxieties of everyday life in society. To date, there have been no analytical studies of female gamblers portrayed in the movies.

Thus, the present study would focus on:

- a. A systematic analysis of the typology of female gamblers depicted in movies with gambling themes
- b. An analysis of the contemporary social and cultural aspects behind the depiction of female gamblers in movies.

It is hypothesised that (a) female gamblers depicted in Hong Kong movies are substantially different in terms of characterisation compared to male gamblers portrayed in movies in the same period, and that (b) a typology of popular female gamblers mainly reflects the contemporary history and the current issues of Hong Kong/Macau SAR during a given period.

Method

Material

Here are eleven movies with gambling themes that were analysed:

| English Title | Chinese Title | Release Year |
|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| ● It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World I | (富貴逼人) | 1987 |
| ● It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World II | (富貴再逼人) | 1988 |
| ● It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World III | (富貴再三逼人) | 1989 |
| ● It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World Too | (富貴黃金屋) | 1992 |
| ● Kung Fu Mahjong I | (雀聖) | 2005 |
| ● Kung Fu Mahjong 2 | (雀聖 2 自摸天后) | 2005 |
| ● Kung Fu Mahjong 3: Final Duel | (雀聖 3 自摸三百番) | 2007 |
| ● God of gamblers | (賭神) | 1989 |
| ● God of gamblers II | (賭俠) | 1990 |
| ● All for the Winner | (賭聖) | 1990 |
| ● The Top Bet | (賭霸) | 1991 |

The present study critically examines eleven movies with gambling themes produced in Hong Kong between 1987 and 2007. Among the movies made in this period, only three series depict women as the protagonists (*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World I*, *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World II*, *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World III* and *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World Too* (1987-1992), *The Top Bet* (1991) and *Kung Fu Mahjong 2* (2005)). Other five movies (*Kung Fu Mahjong* (2005), *Kung Fu Mahjong 3: Final Duel* (2007), *God of Gamblers* (1989), *God of Gamblers II* (1990) and *All for the Winner* (1990) portray males as the protagonists and are analysed for comparison purposes.

Procedure

The second author, a native born Hong Kong resident and Cantonese speaker, critically watched all the movies repeatedly. Through discussions with a group of Hong Kong movie enthusiasts, the author developed dimensions of just-world view and selfish/selfless goals. To ensure the validity of analytical framework, he consulted independent naïve evaluators who showed impartial attitudes towards gambling and the characters in these movie series: (a) A locally acclaimed movie producer who has directed more than fifty movies and programs on contemporary issues and topics, and (b) a movie enthusiast, who watches almost all gambling movies made in Hong Kong.

At the beginning of each consultation, the author informed raters about the purposes and direction of the study. Then, the raters assessed the content and the story plot, the characteristics of the gamblers, the theme and the genre, and the outcome of the movie. They made their assessment and presented their opinions on the movies on these dimensions. The inter-rater reliability was obtained as an index of inter-rater consensus

by comparing their ratings on the opinions on the movies. For example raters judged if the protagonists in the movies were motivated by selfish or selfless gains or if the portrayed characters had low socio economic status. The inter-rater reliability measure is the total number of agreements divided by the number of ratings.

Results

Content analysis revealed the findings as follows:

- a. Female gamblers are presented in a negative overtone in the movies,
- b. The female gamblers are usually housewives (*The Mad, Mad, Mad World series and Kung Fu Mahjong 2*) and non-educated persons (as in *The Top Bet*, where she worked as a fishmonger). All have a low socio-economic status.
- c. Only three female gamblers are presented as the protagonists in the movies sampled.

The synopsis of the plot and their roles in the movies are given here (In the description, the names of the protagonists in the movie are used):

(1) Mrs Bill (*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World series*): Lydia Shum portrays Mrs. Bill, a chubby, nagging yet lovable housewife who lives with her husband and three daughters in a housing estate in Hong Kong. She plays mahjong and buys lottery tickets dreaming to get rich quick. Her interests focus on family matters and her children. A big lottery win, however, starts a chain of calamities such as the abduction of youngest daughter and the default of the bank. A sequel of this popular slapstick comedy (*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World II*) portrays the Bui family's emigration and another lottery win in Canada. This unexpected event again turns the Bui family's world upside down.

(2) Fanny or the Queen of Gambling (*The Top Bet*): Carol Cheng portrays Fanny, the “Queen of Gambling,” in a sequel of the gambling movie “All for the winner.” When the “Gambling Saint” (the protagonist of the previous movie) unexpectedly takes off for globe-trotting without fulfilling his contract to enter gambling tournaments, his uncle is pursued by Triad gangs for breach of the contract. Luckily, he finds the fishmonger Fanny, who purports to be the “Queen of Gambling,” a foul mouthed street-smart “sharper” (one who cheats in gambling) who resorts to any dubious means to win at gambling table. Poorly educated and brought up as a fishmonger, Fanny is far from honest or righteous. Her relentless quest for monetary gain at all cost, however, turns out to be partly motivated by her need to support her wheel-chair bound brother’s medical bills.

(3) Fanny (*Kung Fu Mahjong 2*): Cherry Ying portrays Fanny (unrelated to the protagonist of the movie, “The Top Bet”, a common name in Hong Kong), a charming, young housewife who is a highly skilled mahjong player. Her husband, Johnny, frowns on Fanny’s obsession with mahjong. One day, Johnny’s path crosses with the evil gambler Demon and he falls in love with Demon’s voluptuous temptress sister, Curvy. After Johnny leaves her, Fanny is finally free to play mahjong all day long to kill her time but she loses her extraordinary mahjong-playing skills. Luckily, she is joined by a motley crew of saviours, Mahjong Master *Three Tiles*, Auntie Fei who happens to be the Master *Three Tiles*’ student (in the previous movie in the series, *Kung Fu Mahjong*), and a young attractive female mahjong disciple “*First Love*.” With help of mahjong sisters, and Master

Three Tiles, Fanny regains her mahjong playing skills. At the climatic showdown, Fanny challenges Curvy, gambler Demon, and Johnny at the mahjong table for the game of her life in which the winner takes all – including Johnny, her husband's love.

In contrast to the male gamblers portrayed in the Hong Kong movies, female gamblers are portrayed differently in many aspects. However, it could be argued that the characterisation of female gamblers in Hong Kong movies is one-dimensional and often stereotypical. Table 1 shows the list of attributes in characterisations of male and female gamblers. The inter-rater reliability is 90% on the findings (a) and (b). The agreement on the major themes and meanings of the movies are computed to be 90%.

Insert Table 1 about here

Discussion

Culture is an expression of group norms. It reflects the underlying values and attitudes of the people. A movie, as an important aspect of popular culture, serves as an endoscope to understand the collective psychology as well as the fantasies and anxieties of the people. As Turner et al. (2007) point out, the portrayal of gambling in the movies also includes many distortions of the reality of gambling. Some of these distortions are no doubt the result of dramatisation and a range of artistic repertoire available to movies as a visual art form. For example, only in the movies, bullets from small firearms always cause car explosions or a visual field through a binocular is not circular. However, the

“distorted” reality of gambling portrayed in the movies is also a reflection of how reality is interpreted through the subjective lenses of the moviemaker and viewers. Popular movies appeal to the audiences as they capture viewers’ imagination and confirm their subjective worldviews. In that sense, the analysis of the characterisation and the content of popular media such as movies is a useful means of research.

In the movies sampled, the female characters are often presented with a negative overtone. Whereas male gamblers in the *God of Gamblers* series are portrayed as confident, self-assured and intelligent, female gamblers often have a socially less prominent profile. None of the three female characters has a professional career or aspiration. All are either housewives or small-time swindlers who gamble for personal gains. Negative characterisation of female gamblers in the Hong Kong movies may reflect negative social attitudes towards contemporary women who gamble in Hong Kong. Risk-taking and excitement associated with gambling is contrary to the traditional Chinese female virtues such as decency, self-control, caring and moral righteousness. Although the theme of the movies is contemporary, the traditional Chinese cultural perspective has been used in the characterisation of female gamblers. Simply, the underlying message is that good women should not gamble.

Secondly, the female characters in the movies provide a picture of transformation of the female roles in Hong Kong. Mrs. Bill portrayed by the late Lydia Shum, in the *Mad, Mad, Mad World* series (1987-1992) represents much of the typical traits of housewives in that era in Hong Kong. She is a chubby, nagging, yet loving mother, whose main concerns are the welfare of her children. Her main interest in life is to take good care of

the family. They plan on emigration as most families wanted in the early 1990's prior to the return of Chinese sovereignty on Hong Kong. They succeed to immigrating to Canada when Mr. Bill is transferred to an overseas branch only for them to become disillusioned with their new host country. Their story provides a vignette that captures much of the fantasies of the people of Hong Kong in the 1990's and pokes fun at the pre-handover exodus of emigrants from Hong Kong. In the more recent movie, Cherry Ying in *Kung Fu Mahjong 2* (2005) plays a contemporary housewife, who is attractive and slim without children (an ideal family structure for young married women in Hong Kong). There is no mention of emigration out of Hong Kong. Instead, she is quite content with her role as a housewife. Her daily routines include afternoon games of mahjong with her friends for pocket money, one of the most popular pastimes for young married women in Hong Kong.

Gambling research reveals that female gamblers are more predominantly escape gamblers whereas the male counterparts who are action gamblers (e.g., Boughton, 2003; Thomas & Moore, 2003). Previous analysis of gambling portrayal in films reveals the emphasis in depicting male action gamblers (Turner et al., 2007). The realistic depiction of female escape gamblers in the movie is perhaps difficult due to the absence of overt action. The climatic showdown in the movie, "The Top Bet," could be interpreted as a metaphor or a symbolic rendition of Fanny's inner turmoil rather than the realistic depiction of mahjong tournament.

All the female gamblers in the sampled movies are portrayed as poorly educated with little career development. They do not have career aspirations or notable

achievement compared to male gamblers portrayed in the movies. For example, Mrs. Bill (Lydia Shum) in the “*It’s a mad, mad, mad world*” series is a full-time housewife who enjoys gossips, mahjong, and lotteries. The manner in which she is depicted suggests that she probably has no more than high school education. Fanny (Carol Cheng), the fishmonger also known as the “Queen of Gambling” (in the movie, *The Top Bet*) talks and acts as a typical person with little education. Fanny (Cherrie Ying) in the movie, *Kung Fu Mahjong II*, is portrayed as a bored housewife who plays mahjong behind her husband’s back when he is at work. She has no career aspiration or interest other than playing mahjong. However, the demographic profile and preferred gambling game types of portrayed female movie characters are not entirely fictitious. In fact, demographics of treatment-seeking female problem gamblers in Hong Kong are similar: female gamblers play mahjong and casino games are older, more likely to be married, and less-educated compared to the male treatment-seeking problem gamblers (Tang, Wu, & Tang, 2007).

Lastly, the global, international perspectives and the social righteousness of the *God of Gamblers* (played by Chow Yun Fat) and other male gamblers depicted in the Hong Kong movies have been absent. Protagonists in movies with gambling themes often exhibit selfish orientation. For example, selfish goals are self-serving motives for winning money such as accumulation of wealth for their materialistic gratification and enjoyment. Secondary selfish goals may include achieving an honourable position in the community or gaining the favour of others through acquired wealth. In this regard, the majority of gambling movies surveyed, except for the *God of Gamblers* (1989) and *God of Gamblers II* (1991), portray protagonists focusing on their own personal benefit and

gain. In contrast, some gambling movies portray characters with selfless goals for social justice or punishing evil in the community. For these characters, gambling success is the means to an end. An example of such character is Ko Chun in *God of Gamblers* (1989) who donates 95% of gambling winnings to the poor.

In place of these traits, heroines in Hong Kong movies with gambling themes gamble for their own financial gain. They do not donate their earnings to the poor, as *the God of Gamblers* does. Nor do they ever discuss capturing and punishing the evil forces in the community. Instead, they gamble mainly for personal gain. For example, in the *Mad, Mad, Mad World Series*, Mrs. Bill buys big houses and travel overseas with the lottery winning. One might argue that some female gamblers portrayed in the movie gamble for the benefits of others for example, Fanny in *The Top Bet* (1991). Fanny who purports to be the “Queen of Gambling” cheats at the gambling table, but this turns out to pay for her brother’s hospital bills. Although her motive may be altruistic (and this revelation makes her more likeable character), she is nonetheless portrayed as a gambler who uses dubious means to achieve the end at any cost. As a scene in *Kung Fu Mah-jong 2* relates, female gamblers often play mahjong in the afternoon when their husbands are at work. They have to get home before dinnertime in a mad rush so that their husbands won’t discover their gambling habits, which they are eager to conceal, as gambling is not a respectable pursuit for Chinese women. Thus, recent Hong Kong movies with gambling themes project a prejudicial attitude towards women who participate in gambling. In other words, while the male heroes in gambling movies are striving to be all gods or saints of gamblers, pitching a lonely and desperate fight for moral and social

causes; the female counterparts in gambling movies are truly desperate housewives whose daily gambling sessions are an only means of breaking the monotony pervading their otherwise unremarkable existence.

It could be argued that some of these less than flattering portrayals of female gamblers are due to a cultural bias against women inherent in Asian culture. Although concern for perpetuating stereotypes is justified, poking fun at women, the socially disadvantaged, and the Mainlander are ubiquitous comic devices in the popular Hong Kong movies. Nonetheless, we argue that the portrayal of female gamblers in the Hong Kong movies, artistic imagination and distortion aside, does capture elements of truth.

Further, the portrayal of female gambling in the post 1990's Hong Kong movies is in part a metaphor or a parody of the contemporary Hong Kong lifestyle in the early 21st century. Since the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, unprecedented levels of material wealth have been achieved by a focus on personal gains and by distancing ourselves from issues of a substantive nature. Perhaps, desperate housewives in the Hong Kong movies are crying for the answer to the question – “Is that all there is?”

Appendix

Movies reviewed

Heung, J. (Producer), Wong, J. (Director). (1989). *God of Gamblers* [Motion Picture].

Hong Kong: Win's Movie Production and I/E Company.

Heung, J. (Producer), Wong J. (Director). (1990). *God of Gamblers II*. [Motion Picture].

Hong Kong: Win's Movie Production and I/E Company.

Ko, C. (Producer), Sung, F. (Director) (1992). *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World Too*.

[Motion Picture]. Hong Kong: Regal Films Co., Ltd., and Mandarin Films Production Ltd.

Kong, Y.Y. (Producer), Wong, J. (Director). (2005). *Kung Fu Mahjong 2*. [Motion

Picture]. Hong Kong: Mega-Vision Production Ltd.

Kuk, L. (Producer), Ko C. (Director). (1987). *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World*. [Motion

Picture]. Hong Kong: D & B Films Co., Ltd.

Kuk, L. (Producer), Yu, R. (Director). (1988). *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World II*. [Motion

Picture]. Hong Kong: D & B Films Co., Ltd.

Ng, S. Y. (Producer), Lau, J. & Yuen, C. (Directors). (1990). *All for the Winner*.

[Motion Picture]. Hong Kong. Hong Kong: Mei Ah Entertainment Company.

Shin, G. Y. (Producer and Director). (1989). *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World III*. [Motion

Picture]. Hong Kong: D & B Films Co., Ltd.

Wong, J. (Producer), Lam, B. (Director). (2007). *Kung Fu Mahjong 3: Final Duel*.

[Motion Picture]. Hong Kong: Mega-Vision Production Ltd.

Wong, J. (Producer), Wong, J., & Chung, S. H. (Directors). (2005). *Kung Fu Mahjong*.

[Motion Picture]. Hong Kong: China Star Entertainment Company.

Yuen, K. & Lau, J. (Producers), Yuen, K. & Lau, J. (Directors). (1991) *The Top Bet*. [Motion Picture]. Hong Kong: Bo Ho Films Co., Ltd.

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Table 1

A comparison of the portrayals of male and female gamblers in the Hong Kong movies

| | Male Gambler | Female Gambler |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Protagonist | Ko Chun (portrayed by Chow Yun Fat) God of gamblers (1989) | Fanny (portrayed by Cherry Ying) Kung Fu Mahjong 2 (2005) |
| Personality | Brave, daring, confident, righteous, professional gambler | Moody, beautiful, housewife, escape gambler |
| Villain | A noted gangster who kills and cheats for personal gains | A voluptuous woman who takes away the husband |
| Nature of conflicts | Extremely violent scenes with guns and bombs | Revenge on the cheating husband. Basically non-violent |
| World view | Global and international. Millions of dollars involved | Local community based. Focuses on love and hatred in the family |
| Outcome | Winning everything: fame, money, honor, respect and the love of woman. | Winning the husband back |
| Nature of justice | Social justice and social good: To punish the evil of the world and donate 95% of all winnings to charity | Personal grudges: To win back the husband |
| Games | Card games in grand casino. International perspective. | Mahjong, mostly in the neighborhood |