

Guilty Contagions and Innocent Victims:
Adult Sex Workers in Canadian Press Coverage of Thailand's Sex Tourism Industry

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ABSTRACT**Guilty Contagions and Innocent Victims:
Adult Sex Workers in Canadian Press Coverage of Sex Tourism in Thailand**

Heather Peters

Using a pro-sex workers' rights perspective, this thesis analyzes how and what mainstream, English-language Canadian newspapers contribute to the public, common sense knowledge of the adult, female sex workers in Thailand's sex tourism industry. It also considers the positions, actions, or policies with regard to the industry and its workers that this knowledge promotes or justifies. Through an analysis of newspaper articles about sex tourism published in three major newspapers between 1985 and 2005, I argue that the predominant discourses surrounding these sex workers are structured around ideas of guilt and innocence in ways that silence these women and negate the need to consider their concerns and demands with regard to the industry. Specifically, I demonstrate how the varying ascriptions of guilt or innocence in these newspaper articles intertwine with preexisting discourses and stereotypes so as to limit the portrayals of these women, positioning them as guilty contagions in need of control or, occasionally, childlike and therefore innocent victims in need of rescue. As these portrayals could easily help justify actions and policies that ignore sex workers' voices, I conclude with suggested changes to coverage of sex tourism that might aid the development of a common sense in which these women's demands are at the centre of any debate around the industry.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Beginnings

Whenever I see my friend Paul, we invariably reminisce about the week we spent on the Thai island of Koh Pu in November, 2003. Unlikely to come up, however, are the occasional conversations we had about the tourist-oriented sex trade in Thailand. Although we knew sex tourism was thriving, the absence of its obvious forms on Koh Pu allowed greater reflection on what to have for lunch than on the industry. Nonetheless, I was struck by the frequent clucks of pity among fellow travelers for the Thai women involved when the industry was discussed. Such pity was discernable when questions were occasionally raised about the nature of the relationship between Thai women seen with Western men at other beach resorts I visited, or when stories were told of the sex shows at Bangkok's go-go bars. An undergraduate introduction to postcolonial theory left me wary of dismissing either the agency of the women working in the industry or the room for exploitation that inequalities between these women and their customers create. After returning to Canada, my cultural studies background prompted an interest in how the Canadian media may have contributed to my awareness of the sex tourism industry and its workers before arriving in Thailand.

My subsequent research crystallized these concerns and interests, leading to and influencing my examination of Thai sex tourism in the Canadian press. Specifically, this thesis addresses two, intertwined questions: how and what do mainstream, English-language, Canadian newspapers contribute to the public, common sense knowledge of adult, female sex workers in the Thai sex tourism industry? What positions, actions, or

policies with regard to the industry and its workers does this knowledge promote or justify? My initial suspicions that press coverage may put forth an image of Thai sex workers as helpless, even hapless victims gave way to a more complicated picture. As the following chapters detail, the predominant discourses surrounding adult, Thai sex workers in the Canadian press are structured around ideas of guilt and innocence in ways that silence these women and negate the need to consider their concerns and demands with regard to the industry. More precisely, the varying ascriptions of guilt or innocence in these articles intertwine with other discourses in ways that highly circumscribe the portrayals of these women, positioning them as naturally diseased women in need of control or, very rarely, childlike and therefore innocent victims in need of rescue. As such, the Canadian press creates public knowledge of these women that could easily help justify actions and policies – either internationally or within Thailand – that ignore sex workers’ increasingly vocal concerns.

Before elaborating the influences upon and concepts guiding this thesis, it bears foregrounding that I understand “sex tourism” broadly as the range of ways that travelers, regardless of their original motivation to travel, partake in various facets of a sex industry in the country being visited. I specify this conception in light of several authors’ concern that the label “sex tourism” has come to connote solely the phenomenon of men taking chartered flights to developing countries, with itineraries of sex establishments to visit (Armin Gunther “Sex Tourism” 74; Martin Oppermann “Introduction” 2 – 11; Chris Ryan and C. Michael Hall Sex Tourism 37). My awareness of both this debate around definitions of sex tourism and the many, varied activities comprising the foreign-oriented sex trade in Thailand inform my broad conception of the term. It is also worth explicating

that in line with both the United Nations and current laws governing the Thai sex trade, I work with the idea that “adult” encompasses those over the age of 18 (UNICEF Convention 2; Lesley Ann Jeffrey Sex and Borders 113). However, I recognize this age is somewhat arbitrary and train a slightly more critical eye on notions of childhood later in this thesis. Finally, focusing on women is not to deny that minors, men and transgendered people also work in the Thai sex tourism industry. This choice was primarily practical, to narrow the possible topics and issues to a reasonable amount for my Master’s thesis.

Research Problematic and Chapter Outlines

More central to my research questions and analysis than the definition of sex tourism are debates surrounding sex work in general, and with specific regard to the foreign-oriented sex trade in Thailand. Chapter two, “Sex Work and Sex Tourism” expands upon both of these debates, elaborating my position in relation to them. In addition, this chapter provides background on the development of the Thai sex tourism industry that is crucial for the analysis that follows. Also significant for my thesis and raised briefly in chapter two are feminist analyses of the interplay between racism, sexism and colonialism, both historically and in contemporary media representations. Chapters three and four include more explicit references to analyses of longstanding stereotypes of both “Asian”ⁱ women and of sex workers in general and specifically from the Third World. Various versions and combinations of these stereotypes appear in the corpus under analysis in these two chapters, shaping the common sense knowledge of adult, Thai sex workers put forth therein.

Chapter three, “Guilty Contagions,” analyses a spate of articles between 1988 and 1993 that are laden with implications of sex workers’ guilt in the spread of HIV/AIDS and an attendant, if implicit, need to control these infectious women. I detail how these articles pull on existing associations between prostitution and disease and discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS to position Thai sex workers’ role in the epidemic as one of culpability. While traces of stereotypes of “Asian” women lead to some ambivalence in whether these women are portrayed as active or passive contributors to this spread, the exclusion of their responses to the epidemic deftly consigns these women to the status of guilty contagions who must be controlled. Chapter four, “Innocent Victims,” considers how by the mid-1990s, articles had turned to a more sustained focus on innocent children victimized in the industry and in desperate need of “our” intervention. This focus overwhelmingly shapes coverage in the 1990s, as well as briefer invocations of child sex tourism at the end of that decade and beyond. The potency of images of abused children shrinks to almost nothing the space for adult sex workers in public discourse, confirming their status in the common sense knowledge created by the Canadian press as generally “not innocent”. Women thus shift from being condemned to being virtually absent within the Canadian press’ discourses surrounding sex tourism in Thailand – unless, crucially, they can be reduced to children and thereby made innocent and worthy of attention.

While chapter two provides much of the background and context for this analysis, I wish to underscore that in some ways, my analysis of these patterns parallels Jo Doezema’s critique of the distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution in debates about sex trafficking. Doezema argues that while the distinction has had some strategic value for sex workers, it has also resurrected familiar dichotomies of good girls

and bad, Madonna and whore, and innocent and guilty (“Forced to Choose” 42). That is, although sex workers have argued with increasing success for recognition of their ability to choose sex work and their need for human rights protection, the focus of policy makers and media coverage has often then simply moved to those “forced” into the trade – its innocent victims (40-2). Meanwhile, “voluntary” sex workers are ignored amidst implications that their choice – their transgression of the boundary of good girls – renders them deserving of whatever abuses they may encounter (47). In fact, Doezema briefly suggests that a focus on child sex tourism in Western media is one means through which the preoccupation with innocent victims is perpetuated (44). And as I argue, there is only space for adult sex workers in such articles if they can be conflated with children and thus made innocent. Meanwhile, the appearance of adult sex workers in articles concerned with the spread of HIV/AIDS is another means (outside of debates around trafficking) of relegating these women to the space of guilt, perpetuating the longstanding stigmatization and discrediting of sex workers.

The conclusion to this thesis considers how three articles from later years of the timeframe studied exhibit some significant exceptions to these overarching discourses. However, the fact that these articles also remain somewhat consistent with patterns seen in chapters three and four leads to wider reflections on the tenacity of these discourses and associated, stereotypical ideas around sex workers and “Asian” women. I also reflect more broadly on the constraints in which these stories are produced, while still suggesting ways in which coverage of sex tourism could be altered so as to encourage the development of discourses that validate sex workers’ concerns and demands.

The conclusion thus brings my discussion back to another important influence on this thesis that is less foregrounded in the analysis of chapters three and four: academic literature surrounding the news media as a key site for the creation and reproduction of public, common sense knowledge; knowledge that contributes to the (apparent) legitimacy of certain positions and actions over others. Indeed, many authors argue that the news media play an important role in shaping individuals' understandings of the world, especially when exposing people to events, issues and groups of people with which they have no direct contact (Stuart Allan News 77; Todd Gitlin "News" 11-12; Stuart Hall et al. Policing 56-7; Michael Schudson Sociology 13; Teun A. van Dijk Racism 7). My inquiry into the Canadian press is fueled and informed by these general arguments, while three concepts are particularly integral to my analysis of the kinds of understandings about adult, Thai sex workers created in press coverage of sex tourism: discourse, hegemony and stereotypes.

Several analysts incorporate a notion of discourse into their discussion of news media and its societal role (i.e., Erikson et al. Representing 3-4; van Dijk 7). Frances Henry and Carol Tator's definition and discussion of discourse are particularly useful, as they draw heavily on the work of Michel Foucault while applying the concept specifically to the mainstream news. The authors define discourse as "a way of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic or practice: a cluster or formation of ideas, images, and practices that provide ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity, or institutional site in society" (Discourses 26). Henry and Tator also emphasize Foucault's argument that it matters not whether a "discourse is true or false" but "whether it is effective in practice. When it is

effective – organizing and regulating relations of power – it is called a ‘regime of truth’” (Foucault qtd. in Henry and Tator 24; see also Foucault “Two Lectures”). The idea that discourses have a certain effectiveness informs Henry and Tator’s explicit concurrence with Teun A. van Dijk “that the media have the power to establish the boundaries of public discourse; and that within these boundaries priorities are set and public agendas are established and perpetuated” (235; see also van Dijk 7-8). In short, Henry and Tator emphasize that the news media, including newspapers, are an important contributor to the discourses that are dominant in society at any given time (26-7). However, Henry and Tator argue that there is never one single discourse in the media, but rather several which may either support or conflict with each other. As they underline, “public discourse is a terrain of struggle” (235).

Struggle is also integral to the idea of hegemony, which is frequently invoked when considering the nature of news discourses’ effects and which dovetails with many analyses that do not explicitly employ the idea. Briefly, Antonio Gramsci conceived of hegemony as the “‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (qtd. in Allan 78). This consent is linked to the creation and maintenance of “common sense” which naturalizes the dominant order of society, and the associated “dominant norms, values and beliefs” (Allan 78; see also Gitlin 15). The news media are regularly singled out as a source for the construction, circulation and maintenance of this common sense (Allan 79-80; Gitlin 15; Henry and Tator 39; Jiwani “The Great” 50-1). Certainly, the idea that the common sense in the news media’s discourses helps to naturalize configurations of power drives my analysis of the Canadian press and concern with the

potential implications of common sense knowledge of Thai sex workers produced therein.

However, hegemony is always prone to challenges such that it has been deemed a “process” in which members of the dominant group must always work to absorb opposition within the bounds of their hegemony (Allan 79-80; Ransome “The Concept” 132-7). The idea of hegemony thus allows one to attend to the struggle in public discourse that Henry and Tator highlight, and to accommodate another point frequently raised in discussions of the role and effects of the news. Many authors emphasize that far from constituting a passive, homogenous mass, different consumers of the news may interpret it in different ways – including ways that reject any naturalization of hegemonic common sense and attendant, unequal relations of power (see esp. Allan 97; Ericson et al. 18-19; Henry and Tator 35). Because hegemony entails a notion of contestation and process, it allows one to acknowledge that such resistance will always exist and also to consider how the common sense in the news media may shift over time.

On the other hand, van Dijk’s study of Dutch newspaper readers suggests that at least some news readers’ opinions are influenced by news coverage. Van Dijk found that the information recalled and opinions expressed concerning “ethnic affairs” largely coincided with how the newspaper that an individual read reported the issue (244). Van Dijk thus argues that while “the diversity of the media does lead to a diversity of opinions (...) these remain within the boundaries of a very clearly organized ideological framework” which fails to fundamentally challenge the prevailing social order (243). For instance, consistent with the news coverage, van Dijk’s interviewees never discussed “immigration policies (...) against a background of neocolonialism” (243). These

findings give added weight to van Dijk and Henry and Tator's arguments that it takes a great deal more energy for news readers to actively resist the interpretations structured into news stories than to accept them – particularly for readers who consider themselves part of the social group being implicitly or explicitly contrasted against an “other” (van Dijk esp. 2-4, 51-2; Henry and Tator 35-6). As such, van Dijk's study reaffirms the importance of considering how news discourses can perpetuate common sense and associated relations of power.

My analysis thus stands alongside those that contend that the discourses of the news media demand attention given their power to create and maintain common sense ideas which in turn can help to naturalize and sustain unequal relations of power. In the course of analyzing what kind of knowledge is created in press coverage of sex tourism – and as has already been the case in this introduction – I frequently suggest that various stereotypes are being invoked and strengthened. Stuart Hall's concise definition articulates my understanding of the concept: “(s)tereotyping reduces people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by Nature” (Representation 257). Hall emphasizes stereotypes' role in the maintenance of society's symbolic boundaries, including those between the “‘normal’ and the ‘deviant’ (...), what ‘belongs’ and what does not or is ‘Other’” (Hall 258). Related to this creation and maintenance of boundaries is that stereotypes tend to arise out of “*gross inequalities of power*” in which the power is “usually directed against the subordinated or excluded group” (258 emphasis original).

Moreover, Hall suggests that the power of stereotyping is both “*hegemonic and discursive*” (263 emphasis original). That is, stereotypes help to produce (highly

circumscribed) knowledge which can, in turn, legitimate the dominance of those doing the stereotyping (259 – 63). As Richard Dyer asserts, the use of stereotypes to cast groups outside the bounds of “normalcy” helps make the views and values of dominant groups seem “natural’ and ‘inevitable’”, thus helping “establish their hegemony” (qtd. in Hall 259; see also Dyer “Stereotyping” 29). Hall adds that the ambivalence of some stereotypes also aids this process. In Hall’s example, black men have been stereotyped as both childish and as “hyper-masculine” and possessing of an “ungovernable and excessive sexual nature”; both stereotypes perpetuate and naturalize negative assessments of black men that have long been used in justifying their subordination (263). This thesis will similarly suggest that despite some ambivalence in the well-documented stereotypes of “Asian” women which appear in my corpus, these stereotypes all serve only to obscure the need to respect adult sex workers’ concerns.

Although I have found none which comparably employ ideas about discourse, hegemony and stereotypes, similarities between previous authors’ considerations of media coverage of sex tourism and my analysis suggest that the discourses discussed in this thesis are not unique to my corpus. For instance, the fact that the articles I analyze focus predominantly on sex tourism in relation to either HIV/AIDS or child sex tourism bolsters Ryan Bishop and Lillian S. Robinson’s argument that as of the late-1990s, the American media primarily covered the industry in relation to these two topics (Night Market 51-9). A comparison can also be made with Jan Jindy Pettman’s passing suggestion in her 1997 article, “Body Politics: International Sex Tourism”, that the “media literature” ignores how Thai women involved in the sex tourism industry might understand themselves and their work (100). Throughout the chapters that follow, I note

several other, more specific ways in which my corpus confirms existing analyses of media coverage of sex tourism. However, none of these authors have considered how either sex tourism in general, or the industry's adult sex workers in particular, are portrayed in the Canadian press. Nor is the methodology for selecting or analyzing certain media pieces ever discussed, perhaps since such analyses are often tangential to a main focus on other elements of the industry. As news media representations are the central topic of this thesis, it is crucial to outline the process of their selection and methodology used for their analysis.

Methodology

The Globe and Mail and National Post were chosen for analysis because of their status as national dailies, their relatively-large circulations, and attendant capacity to reach a wide readership. The Toronto Star was included both because of its high circulation and because, like the Globe, it had been published far longer than the Post (founded in 1998), allowing attention to consistencies and shifts in the coverage over a lengthier timeframe. Articles from the Star and Post were found using key terms such as “sex tourism,” “prostitution,” and “prostitutes”, with “Thailand” in the electronic database “Canadian Newsstand”. The Star was searched from 1985 – 2005 and the Post from 1998 – 2005, inclusive. The Globe and Mail was first searched for all dates using the same key terms in the database “The Globe and Mail: Canada’s Heritage from 1844”, with follow-up searches performed in “Canadian Newsstand” from 1985 – 2005, inclusive. Articles from all sections of the newspapers were kept for analysis provided that some mention was made of foreigners engaging in the foreign-oriented sex trade in

Thailand. These searches yielded a total of 83 articles, with 46 in the national and international news sections, four in business news, and seven editorials or opinion pieces. 12 travel articles were found, 11 stories appeared in Focus, Life, or Religion sections and three articles were drawn from the newspapers' Arts/Entertainment sections.

This introduction's emphasis on the *news* media may raise questions about the inclusion of articles from non-news sections. Admittedly, this decision was initially fueled by a desire to cast as wide a net as possible; to consider all potential contributions of the press to public knowledge of adult, Thai sex workers. However, Allan's contention that more analyses ought to consider how sections of newspapers aside from the news are embedded in the reproduction and maintenance of hegemonic common sense gave added impetus for including such articles (86). Similarly, while focusing on the press is one means of narrowing my corpus to a manageable amount, there is further justification for this focus. Writing in the American context, Michael Schudson points out that much television news relies on newspapers for its content (Sociology of News 7). Robert A. Hackett et al. also suggest that in Canada, "newspapers remain 'at the base of the information pyramid, providing much of the in-depth information that is then compressed and marketed by the electronic information purveyors'" (Doug Underwood qtd. in Hackett et al. Missing News 50). The patterns found in the press may have important implications for the entire news media system.

My analysis of these articles draws primarily on Norman Fairclough's sense of critical discourse analysis as a method that seeks to "link social and cultural practices to properties of texts" through analyzing both texts themselves and the "social and cultural practices which frame" such texts ("Political" 144). Indeed, chapter two's discussion of

the sex tourism industry's historical development and more recent struggles of sex workers within the industry assists my consideration of both the content and what is absent from articles in my corpus. My close textual analysis also draws on van Dijk's work concerning how specific words and more general "semantic structures" contribute to a text's meaning ("Opinions" pp.33, 36-8; see also Racism and the Press). Fairclough's third component of critical discourse analysis, the "discourse practices of text production, distribution and consumption," is not the main focus of this thesis (144). Nonetheless, I do occasionally raise the potential influence of certain traditions and tendencies in the production of the news and return to these considerations in the concluding chapter.

Conclusion

I do not deign to suggest that I have uncovered the sole way that readers may interpret these articles. One limit of this thesis is precisely that I leave uninvestigated what kinds of knowledge or opinions of women working in the Thai sex tourism industry are held by newspaper readers or any other portion of the public. While this would constitute an interesting study, for now, I do think that the discourses I have identified and analyzed indicate how the "preferred readings" structured into these articles push aside sex workers who complicate images of diseased women culpable in the spread of HIV/AIDS, or innocent, childlike victims of the industry (Fairclough Media Discourse 122). In turn, these images pose obstacles to inserting into public, common sense knowledge a more nuanced image of Thai sex workers as women actively negotiating their circumstances and struggling for changes in the sex tourism industry – and whose identities and lives do not begin and end with the fact of working in this industry. After

all, as Lesley Ann Jeffrey cautions, “we must assume that there is nothing essential about [sex workers] at all” (Sex and Borders xi). Among chapter two’s many purposes is to underscore this point while considering the various ways that Thai sex workers have attempted to secure better working conditions on micro and wider levels. Following Teun A. van Dijk, I would like to position my subsequent analysis of Canadian press portrayals of adult, Thai sex workers as in solidarity with these women’s more direct actions and efforts towards change in the sex tourism industry (News Analysis 291-2).

Chapter Two

Sex Work and Sex Tourism: Debates and Development

“We are seen as empty pages that the anti-prostitution lobbyists and other misled bleeding hearts can write upon. They do not respect us as adult women with full histories, lives, skills, plans and dreams of our own. They think we are stupid, ignorant and pity us and judge us as powerless. We are not recognized as working women and the family providers who support five to eight other adults.”
(EMPOWER Chiang Mai “R & R”)

Introduction

This powerful statement from the Thai sex workers’ organization EMPOWER (Education Means Protection of Women Engaged in Recreation) highlights a central contention of this chapter: Thai sex workers are indeed workers, whose voices and demands deserve to be heard and respected. EMPOWER’s statement also gestures to an inherent difficulty in this chapter and throughout my thesis. As a Canadian whose experience of Thailand is limited to the seven weeks of travel and volunteering between 2003 and 2004 that I alluded to in the previous chapter, and whose subsequent research and writing is all located in Canada, I run the risk of misinterpreting the limited “evidence” of the experiences and demands of Thai women working in the country’s sex tourism industry that are available to me. Certainly, I am writing from a privileged position within the inequalities that continue to make many forms of travel to Thailand an enticingly affordable option for residents of the “developed” world. As such, it cannot be emphasized enough that I do not seek in this chapter or anywhere else in this thesis to speak for Thai sex workersⁱⁱ.

However, the analysis of the press in chapters three and four involves a critique of the absences upon which the portrayal of sex tourism and its adult, female workers

relies. This chapter aims to provide a context against which these critiques can be understood. I therefore first outline debates surrounding sex work in general, before considering the historical and contemporary structural factors, such as economic and political conditions and policies, which have shaped and continue to influence the foreign-oriented Thai sex industry. I also touch upon considerations of how racism and sexism increase the demand side of the industry, and how poverty in certain regions of Thailand has encouraged many women to work in the trade despite its often exploitative conditions. After noting the disagreements surrounding the relative influence of Buddhism on the trade and the difficulty estimating its size, the discussion turns to a more explicit consideration of Thai sex workers' negotiations within the industry's constraints, including the work of EMPOWER. Beyond providing context, therefore, this discussion underscores the difficulty and importance of considering how structural factors can limit exertions of agency, without thereby invalidating this very agency. Viewing sex work as work aids the attempt to strike this balance.

An Ongoing Debate: Sex Work and "The Third World Woman"

Sex work has produced a polarized and on-going debate among feminists, which can be only briefly outlined here. My use of "sex work" and "sex worker" gestures towards my position, since some feminists reject these terms' suggestion that prostitution be considered a legitimate form of work that some can and do rationally choose (see, i.e., Coalition Against Trafficking in Women "An Introduction"). For instance, Kathleen Barry is well-known for her position that all prostitution should be considered forced, and that all those in the trade should be seen as victims of the societal forces that so limit

women's opportunities as to render the possibility of true consent to prostitution impossible (Barry Female; Kamala Kempadoo "Introduction" 11-12; Gail Pheterson "Not Repeating" 18-20). Similarly disdainful of arguments that prostitution be seen as work, Sheila Jeffreys advocates using "prostitution tourism" instead of sex tourism in order to emphasize the "harm involved to prostituted local people and communities" ("Sex Tourism" 224).

In contrast, those who use "sex work" and "sex workers" (as well as some who use "prostitution" and "prostitute") argue for the need to recognize and respect women's ability to make rational choices, even when faced with limited options (i.e., Priscilla Alexander "Prostitution"; Kempadoo; Doezema). Such arguments hardly deny the existence of inequalities and exploitation in the sex industry, including the sex tourism industry in Thailand. In fact, those advocating this position often also argue in favor of legal reforms, frequently decriminalization, in recognition of how laws criminalizing sex workers and/or their work can make it more difficult for them to demand protection against human rights infringements, or even to leave the trade if they so desire (i.e., Melissa Ditmore "Trafficking" 112-13; Jeffrey 88-94). These arguments thus recognize problems of exploitation, while suggesting that they frequently stem from or are enabled by the legal apparatus surrounding the sex trade.

Within this broader debate, concern has been raised for how sex workers from the "Third World" are particularly likely to be figured as without agency or the ability to articulate their needs and desires (i.e., Doezema 42). Such concerns often echo Chandra Talpade Mohanty's argument that some Western feminists construct the "Third World Woman" as a monolithic, victimized, even child-like category ("Under" 333-35). In fact,

Kempadoo explicitly invokes Mohanty when critiquing Barry's position that women in the developing world are most vulnerable to being coerced into the sex industry and thus in greatest need of assistance (Kempadoo 11). Kempadoo suggests that this view and the reactions and projects that it inspires both perpetuate the stereotypes that Mohanty critiques, and ignore the various understandings of sexuality and sex work that sex workers in different countries have themselves expressed (12). Somewhat similarly, Doezema's discussion of the downfalls of the distinguishing between those forced into the sex trade and those who have chosen it includes the suggestion that this distinction has too often merely perpetuated the idea that all "Asian sex workers (are) passive and exploited victims" (42). Doezema suggests that such images of Asian sex workers are continuously relied upon by campaigns to help those forced into the trade – the "innocent victims" who both require and are worthy of help or rescue (42-3). Meanwhile, the human rights violations and demands of those who chose sex work in Asian countries and elsewhere remain ignored, allowing ideas that sex work is inherently immoral and the associated stigmatization of sex workers to continue unabated (43, 47).

The Development of Sex Tourism in Thailand: Laws, Policies, Stereotypes

While Kempadoo highlights the importance of respecting sex workers' understandings and demands in a general way, research into the sex tourism industry in Thailand continues to underscore the imperative of so doing. For while the development of this trade relied and continues to rely on structural inequalities, ignoring sex workers responses to and negotiations within this industry risks reinscribing the stereotypes Mohanty, Kempadoo and Doezema outline. In order to discuss indications of how sex

workers maneuver within the Thai sex tourism trade, however, it is important to have an understanding of how this trade developed and continues to operate in manners posing serious obstacles to this maneuvering.

A large, organized and foreign-oriented sex trade in Thailand began developing in 1964, when the American Air Force established its first bases in Northeastern Thailand to take advantage of Thailand's proximity to Vietnam (Jeffrey 29, 154). Thailand was viewed by the U.S. as an important bastion against communism in the region, and cooperation with the U.S. during the Vietnam War was guaranteed in large part through huge amounts of aid to the Thai military, for "national development" and for the infrastructure required for the American military (Jeffrey 32-35; see also Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit A History 140-49). Cynthia Enloe and Jeffrey both suggest that the availability of sexual services near such bases has long been considered intrinsic to maintaining soldiers' willingness to leave home and risk their lives (Jeffrey 37; Enloe Bananas 81-2, Maneuvers 69-70). Thai women in communities surrounding these bases did indeed sell sexual services to American servicemen, while the American military and local Thai authorities accommodated, if not tacitly encouraged these transactions (Enloe Maneuvers 69-70).

Further groundwork for today's sex tourism in Thailand was laid with a 1967 treaty between Thailand and the US which allowed American servicemen on "Rest and Recreation leave" (R&R) from Vietnam to enter Thailand (Truong 161; Jeffrey 39). The huge influx of American servicemen on R&R contributed to the rapid growth of establishments such as bars and massage parlours with women selling sexual services to these men, particularly in Bangkok and the nearby coastal town of Pattaya where many

American ships anchored (Truong 161-63; Enloe Maneuvers 72). This growth was also aided by both the 1960 Prostitution Suppression Act and the 1966 Service Establishments Act. Although “providing women for prostitution and living off the income of prostitution” (Phongpaichit et al. Guns 210) had been illegal in Thailand since 1928, the 1960 Act rendered sex workers vulnerable to arrest, fines, and “rehabilitation” at state-run facilities (Jeffrey 26-7, 39; Truong 155-56). However, the 1966 Act sanctioned the hiring of women to provide “special services” in places like bars and massage parlours (Truong 155-6; see also Jeffrey 39). This Act therefore provided tacit protection for such establishments and their customers, as “special services” was a “known euphemism for prostitutes’ services” (Truong 155-6). These establishments also offered women a degree of protection from the effects of the 1960 law, encouraging many to work in them (Truong 155-6).

Truong outlines in some detail how policies favorable to foreign capital investment coupled with the 1966 Act to further encourage an explosion of hotel construction and of establishments employing “special services girls” (161-63; see also Baker and Phongpaichit 149). The interest of the Thai state and business community and international investors to attract an international market for this infrastructure after the Vietnam War thus contributed to the transition from the R&R to an international tourist market (Truong 161-67). Truong also indicates several ways in which the sex and tourism industries slowly became more intertwined, including hotel and tour operators’ realization of the profitability of explicitly or implicitly accommodating sex tourists (167-72). The continued viability of such foreign-oriented establishments was further ensured

after the war as the Thai government poured resources into developing an international tourism industry (Bishop and Robinsonⁱⁱⁱ 98-100; Truong 161-67).

The devotion of these resources in part reflects official discourses positioning tourism as a “panacea for Third World ills” (Bishop and Robinson 60). That is, several Western countries and international institutions have pressured the “Third World” since the late 1950s, frequently under the rhetoric of economic and social development, to provide the infrastructure for tourists from the “developed” world (Truong 116-23; see also Jeffrey 39-41). With specific regard to Thailand, a World Bank study of the country’s international tourism potential completed in 1975 highly recommended that the Thai government invest heavily in promoting and developing tourism (Truong 162-63). The Thai government took up this recommendation, developing policies and laws geared towards fostering the industry (163). These strategies thus also continued to enable the growth of a market for the R&R infrastructure (167).

Several authors add that this growth was further encouraged through the incorporation of sexualized images of Thai women into tourist advertising – whether in explicit sex tour ads or more subtle, official ad campaigns (Bishop and Robinson 73-82, 88-90; Jeffrey 40; Truong 179-80). Truong argues that such images help entice Western men to travel to Thailand to enjoy a sex industry replete with exotic, hypersexualized women, without “questioning the legitimacy of sex tourism” (180). Such images draw upon and sustain the long history in the West of positioning racialized women as “naturally” more sensual and unrestrained with regard to sex (Bishop & Robinson 112-50; see also Jiwani “The Eurasian” 184). Enloe points out that such ideas were also operative among Americans stationed in Northeastern Thailand, as is brutally

encapsulated in the acronym “LBFM” (“Little Brown Fucking Machines”) that was sometimes applied to the women working around the bases (Enloe Maneuvers 69). As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that while some of the Thai women working around such bases considered themselves a “hired wife” rather than a “prostitute” few Americans brought these women home after the war (Jeffrey 37). More recently, while some tourists report falling in love with Thai women they hired (i.e., Erik Cohen “Lovelorn”), others post stories about their exploits in Thailand to Internet sites such as the “World Sex Guide;” stories which often serve to sustain and spread racist and sexist ideas about Thai sex workers (Bishop and Robinson 141– 44).

Whatever the beliefs or motivations of tourists who avail themselves of the foreign-oriented sex trade, the industry continues to contribute (an unknown sum) to the huge amount of income that tourism brings into Thailand (Jeffrey 78; Baker and Phongpaichit 204). However, the Thai government has long objected to the image of the nation as a sex tourism destination, despite a degree of official complicity in the trade (Jeffrey 98-100). In particular, Jeffrey argues that a series of high-profile stories in the international media in the early 1990s which focused on sex tourism in Thailand, particularly the abuse of minors in the industry, contributed to the perception among Thai elite that the country had an international image problem (98-117). Jeffrey thus links this coverage to heightened efforts among the Thai elite to address the industry, culminating in the passage of new legislation in 1996 (98-103, 118).

The 1996 Act introduced punishment of parents selling children into the sex trade and customers of under-aged sex workers, and provided stricter penalties for procurers of children (Jeffrey 136-41; Thomas M. Steinfatt Working at the Bar 17^{iv}). However,

several Thai activists “refused to support either the bill or the consultation process” as their demands that legal penalties against sex workers be lifted were ignored (Jeffrey 124). Since the Act retained the criminality of adult sex workers, women in the trade remain prone to arrest and fines, as well as extortions of protection money from the police who, alongside the Thai military, are frequently noted for their involvement in the local and tourist-focused sex trades (Bishop and Robinson 100-2; Jeffrey 80; Steinfatt 66, 161; Truong 183-84). Additionally, sex workers have long been and remain subject to fines by many establishment owners for everything from being late to not selling enough drinks, and wages paid by establishments can be irregular or minimal (EMPOWER “Invisible”; Jeffrey 79; Steinfatt 150; Truong 187, 156). Shifts are regularly 12-14 hours long and workers often have only one day off a month, with further fines levied if women take more time (EMPOWER “Pick a Law”). Sex workers also often encounter extreme difficulties accessing adequate, affordable health care (EMPOWER “Staying Healthy”).

Creating a Workforce: Considering Poverty and Downplaying Buddhism

Despite these legal penalties and exploitative policies, many women began and continue to work in this sex industry. The systematic underdevelopment and concomitant poverty in rural Thailand, particularly in the North and Northeast, are considered major reasons that the majority of women in the foreign-oriented trade and many in the local-oriented sex trade are from these regions (Bishop and Robinson 99, 96; Jeffrey 29-30; Steinfatt 53, 349-51; Truong 195). Phongpaichit elaborates that since the late 1950s, Thai economic policies were “designed not to channel too much social investment into the countryside, not doing anything that would raise the expectations or the bargaining power

of the farmers, not allowing the rural interests to develop any real political torque” (From Peasant 72). While the government’s national development plan for the years 1981-86 saw money allocated for basic services in the poorest villages – 60% of which were in the Northeast – these schemes did little to “stem the trend to growing inequality” between villages and urban areas (Baker and Phongpaichit 234). Instead, the “gap in incomes and opportunities between city and country” steadily increased and remains wide (Phongpaichit 74; see also Baker and Phongpaichit 159, 234). The earning potential in both the local and foreign-oriented sex trades is thus far greater than many other available forms of work (Phongpaichit 74; see also Steinfatt 153-55).

Phongpaichit argues that these economic pressures do far more to explain the availability of labour for both sectors of the sex trade in Thailand than any “eternal characteristics of Thai culture” (75). Indeed, while suggestions have been made regarding the influence of Thai Buddhism on the growth of both the country’s local and tourist-focused sex trades, the religion’s influence has more consistently been downplayed. For instance, Truong argues that while there is no explicit mention of prostitution in Buddhist teachings, the Thai interpretation devaluated women, contributing to prostitution and polygamy in Thai society (137, 194-6). Conversely, Jeffrey notes several scholars who argue that too much “blame has been laid at the door of Buddhism,” obscuring other relations of power structuring the sex trade and oversimplifying the variations of Buddhism practiced in Thailand (xviii -xix). Jeffrey thus suggests that to rely on Buddhism’s explanatory power in relation to the Thai sex trade is to adopt an “imperializing gaze” (xvii). Chris Lyttleton also points out that the notion that Buddhism devalues women has been questioned, further complicating any attempt to foreground the

religion's influence on the growth of the Thai sex trades (Endangered 160). Lyttleton does suggest that the ability to use money earned in the sex trade to support one's family and donate to temples is viewed by many women as a way to "gain merit" and thereby improve one's karma (160-61). Nonetheless, Lyttleton cautions against assuming that these generalized trends apply equally in all cases or adequately explain motivations for sex work, reminding one to be wary of assuming a direct link between Buddhism and the Thai sex industries (161).

(The Impossibility of) Measuring the Trade

More readily-agreed upon than the influence of Buddhism is that it is impossible to know how many individuals sell sexual services in Thailand, given the variety of venues in which such sales occur and the illegality of the trade (Boonchalaksi and Guest "Prostitution" 138-45; Lyttleton 152-3; Phongpaichit et al. 197; Steinfatt 18). That said, there is some consistency in the range of estimates that are considered most reasonable. Phongpaichit et al. note that Boonchalaksi and Guest suggested in 1994 that the best estimate of the number of individuals working in the sex trade at any given time during the year was 150,000 – 200,000, with between 200,000 – 300,000 working in the trade for some period each year (Phongpaichit et al.198). The latter figure represents approximately 2.2-3.3% of Thai females between the ages of 15 and 29; the demographic group that Phongpaichit et al. suggest comprises the majority of Thai sex workers (197-8). Phongpaichit et al. themselves work with an estimate of 200,000 sex workers, recognizing that some "researchers and NGOs consider it too conservative" (201). Steinfatt is more assertive in emphasizing the accuracy of a 1992 study which estimated

that 120,000 – 150,000 individuals worked in the sex trade in Thailand at any given time during a year and suggests that this figure likely remained accurate throughout the 1990s (22). However, Steinfatt rounds this estimate up to 183,600 – 229,500 women “who engaged in sex work in Thailand for at least a brief period of time over the course of a year,” thus producing an estimate similar to that tentatively accepted by other researchers (143).

Similar caution is advocated when estimating the number of minors working in the sex trade. Steinfatt indicates that his estimate that between 27,500 and 35,000 individuals under 18 work in the Thai sex trade “at some time during the course of the year” is close to estimates of the Thai government, the National Commission of Women’s Affairs of Thailand, and other Thai researchers (109-110). Steinfatt adds that in contrast with concerns about huge numbers of prepubescent children in the Thai sex trade, almost all of the 15.4% of underage bar workers in his study were either 16 or 17 (109-12). Although they neither distinguish between the number working at a given time and the total throughout the year, nor suggest the distribution of ages, Phongpaichit et al. also suggest that the best estimates of the numbers of minors in the trade fall between 25,000 and 35,000 of the total sex workers in the country (200).

While all of these numbers are only estimates and none provide a sense of how many work mostly or even occasionally in foreign-oriented establishments, they will provide a useful touchstone when considering the coverage of the industry in the Canadian press. Even more useful, however, is a consideration of how many of the women in the foreign and local-oriented sex trades have responded to and maneuvered within the constraints outlined above.

Negotiating and Responding to the Industry's Constraints

There is some variation in the degree to which authors focus upon how sex workers negotiate within these structures. However, two key points were previewed in the foregoing discussion. First, in contrast with the stereotype of passive Asian women tricked or otherwise forced into the trade, many women working in the sex industry choose sex work as a means of improving their economic situation (Bishop and Robinson 14, 106-7; Jeffrey 19, 153; Phongpaichit et al. 208-09; Steinfatt 341; Truong 181, 201). Phongpaichit's 1982 study was among the first to emphasize this point (Phongpaichit From Peasant 24-5). Although her study focuses on women who migrated to Bangkok to work in Thai-oriented massage parlours, subsequent authors have demonstrated the relevance of this point to the tourist-oriented trade. For instance, Steinfatt frequently compares the results of his interviews with over 700 workers in Bangkok's tourist bars with those that Phongpaichit conducted (Steinfatt 24). Among the similarities with Phongpaichit's study that Steinfatt outlines is the fact that many women in both types of establishment turned to sex work in order to improve their economic conditions (54). While this choice is recognized as one made out of a highly-limited range of options available for young women to earn money that would help secure a better future or otherwise attain their goals, the importance of recognizing and respecting women's ability to make this choice is frequently emphasized (Phongpaichit 24; Jeffrey 86; Steinfatt 160; Truong 181).

Closely related to these acknowledgements that many choose sex work is the observation that many women working in the sex tourism industry view themselves as

“breadwinners” and use much of their incomes to support their families (Truong 181; see also Bishop and Robinson 105-07; Jeffrey 85-6; Steinfatt 160). While they caution against relying on Thai culture to explain the country’s sex trades, Phongpaichit and Lyttleton suggest that this support continues “an established tradition of women as important income earners within the family” (Lyttleton 160; Phongpaichit 68, 75). Authors often acknowledge that this income hardly makes up for inadequate investment in the rural economy, or in the education that would increase the options available to women who would prefer other work (Bishop and Robinson 106; Jeffrey 75; Phongpaichit 74-5; Steinfatt 160, 350; Truong 181). However, the contribution of this money to the material circumstances of many families – through building sturdier homes, for example – is commonly accepted.

Emphasizing that many can and do choose sex work, often to support their families, does not deny that some enter the sex trade under coercion. For instance, there is evidence that some families in the North exchange daughters between 12 and 13 years old who have completed the mandatory primary schooling for an “advance” on their labour in a brothel or massage parlour (Phongpaichit 70; Lyttleton 155-6). Phongpaichit et al. add that while the number of Thai children or adolescents in such situations appears to be decreasing, illegal migrants of all ages may still face forms of restraint in the sex trade, especially given their precarious legal status (209). Yet Steinfatt’s findings alongside more general acknowledgements that many choose sex work – not to mention the statement from EMPOWER which opened this chapter – provide important counterpoints to suggestions that all Thai sex workers are forced into the trade and require rescue from it.

In addition to these general points, there are indications of various other ways that sex workers negotiate the industry's constraints. For example, Jeffrey notes that women have long resisted their "rehabilitation" by running away from the state-run institutions (26, 70, 91). Jeffrey also describes a protest launched outside a Bangkok hotel in 1981 by approximately 100 masseuses, "to argue for their right to refuse clients" (79). Jeffrey adds that some sex workers resist unfair working conditions "in their own ways", such as accepting "money under the table, coming to work late, using toilets reserved for customers, etc." (80). Moreover, Steinfatt's study of bar workers in foreign-oriented bars indicates myriad ways that women in this major sector of the foreign-oriented industry actively maneuver within it. For instance, Steinfatt's discussion of the "ritualized" interactions of sex workers with potential clients in the bar suggests that the women manipulate the customers and exercise a great deal of choice over which customers they will leave the bar with, regardless of how the customers perceive the situation (164-65). Likewise, Steinfatt's discussion of condom-use indicates the strategies women employ to convince reluctant men to use condoms are regularly successful (247).

Steinfatt acknowledges that the possibility of customers being violent towards sex workers when outside the bar was a concern among some workers (74). However, Steinfatt also notes that most felt that they would have the "complete support of the bar – waiters, other workers, the manager (...) to find and punish the perpetrator" (74). While the illegality of their work makes going to the police difficult, Steinfatt's observations suggest that these unjust legal conditions are not necessarily or only as totalizing as they may seem (74). Furthermore, Steinfatt indicates that the majority of the women interviewed saw bar work as "easy" or "natural" and often had support from the bar

management with regard to their right to choose customers and whether to participate in live sex shows (69; see also 179, 45). The observation that management may respect sex workers' choices suggests that while these bars may fine workers and otherwise perpetuate unfair working conditions, they do not always and only prevent sex workers from exercising their agency.

Of course, concern has been expressed for the challenges facing larger-scale, organized action among sex workers, especially given the criminal status of their work. For instance, Truong notes that an attempt to unionize in the 1980s was easily thwarted when employers simply fired all sex workers who joined the union (188-89). On the other hand, EMPOWER has been focusing on improving sex workers' conditions since 1985, when the organization evolved out of a group of volunteers offering English lessons to women working in Bangkok's tourist-oriented bars (EMPOWER "Leadership;" Jeffrey 120-21). Soon after its founding, EMPOWER began publishing a newsletter and, in 1987, worked with sex workers to produce and perform the "Patpong Musical" which included both reflections upon sex workers' experiences and health education (Bishop and Robinson 239-40; Steinfatt 224). Currently "led by sex workers," EMPOWER has expanded to encompass nine different centres in four Thai provinces (EMPOWER "Leadership;" "Campus"). The organization has reached 30,000 sex workers with its educational efforts, which include both English and Thai literacy classes, as well as facilitating the attainment of a high school certificate (EMPOWER "NFE;" "Language").

EMPOWER's many other activities include health and safety workshops, public demonstrations and art projects to raise awareness about sex workers' conditions and demands, and participation in international AIDS conferences (EMPOWER "Staying

Healthy;” “Social Action;” “Sexy Topics”). The most recent EMPOWER office opened in Patong beach on the island of Phuket following the 2004 tsunami, to provide assistance and resources to the many sex workers whose lives were affected by the disaster (EMPOWER “Campus”; Tangwisutijit “Empowering”). Furthermore, the Can-Do Bar opened in Chiang Mai in September 2006 and is collectively owned and operated by sex workers (EMPOWER “Can-Do”). The bar runs in accordance with Thai health and safety standards with guaranteed wages, time off, and without the punitive fine system found in most other bars (EMPOWER “Can-Do”).

The organization’s growth and multiple initiatives challenge both the idea that Thai sex workers are passive victims of the sex industries’ structural constraints and that an organized response to the industry’s unjust conditions is impossible. EMPOWER’s lobbying for legal reforms further contests these notions, although the limited success to date underscores the challenges any marginalized group faces when attempting to effect legal change. For instance, the 1966 Service Establishments Act was amended in 2003, but still required staff of bars and other such establishments to be “fingerprinted and have their history recorded on a police charge sheet” (EMPOWER “Pick a Law”). The work of EMPOWER and other activists prompted the Thai National Human Rights Commission to acknowledge in July 2006 that this provision constitutes an “abuse of the human right to privacy, protection of reputation and equal treatment under the law” (EMPOWER “Pick”). However, the Act “has yet to be amended” to reflect the Commission’s finding (EMPOWER “Pick”). The 2003 amendment also made no mention of “worker safety or working conditions,” such that sex workers and other employees in bars and other entertainment establishments remained subject to owners’ fine systems and other abuses

(EMPOWER “Invisible”). EMPOWER therefore also petitioned the Thai government to recognize sex workers and other bar employees as workers so that their rights would be protected under labour laws (Phanayanggoor “Petition”).

As mentioned, the Act has yet to be changed to reflect EMPOWER’s demands. However, 2003 also saw EMPOWER invited to the Thai government’s conference to debate the legal status of the sex industry, allowing the group to voice its vehement opposition to a proposal to register sex workers. As EMPOWER pointed out, such a system would further stigmatize sex workers and infringe on their rights (Treerutkuarkul “Feminists”). The group continued to push for legalization of aspects of the trade surrounding the sale of sexual services in order to provide sex workers with access to the same protections and rights as other workers (EMPOWER “Pick”; Charoenpo “Prostitution”). However, EMPOWER also argues for the sexual aspects of sex workers’ work to be “decriminalized, similar to other sexual acts between consenting adults” (“Pick”).

An article in the Bangkok Post suggests that the year following this conference saw the Thai National Economic and Social Development Board recommend legalizing the sex trade by 2007 (Hutasingh “Gambling, Sex Trade”). Yet nothing on EMPOWER’s website or any other source I have found indicates if this recommendation remains under consideration, or if moves have been made to implement it. Nor is it clear if this recommendation heeded EMPOWER’s demands that no legalization scheme involve registering sex workers and that the actual sale of sexual services be decriminalized. Instead, the group continues to highlight the unjust laws surrounding sex work and the exploitative fine systems of many establishments (i.e., EMPOWER “Invisible Women”).

At the very least, however, it does appear that the need to consider the views of EMPOWER and its allies when debating the trade has become recognized; an important step in the struggle to recognize sex workers' rights. The increasing validation of the group's work is also suggested by the fact that in 2005, the National Human Rights council of Thailand awarded its first human rights award for "defending the rights of women" to Pornpit Puckmai, a sex worker affiliated with EMPOWER (Stella "A Human Rights"; EMPOWER "Best"). Puckmai herself reflected on this significance when accepting the award, stating: "I thought that our fight would take 150 years or more, but now I'm not so sure we will have to wait that long (...). This is recognition for all sex workers that we have rights and that we are more than capable of defending our rights." (EMPOWER "Best").

Conclusion

Puckmai's statement, along with EMPOWER's work, other indications of sex workers' negotiations of their circumstances, and their frequent role in supporting their families, render completely untenable any generalizations about Thai sex workers as passive victims. This is not to advocate ignoring how the industry has developed in manners that have posed serious challenges to sex workers' ability to exert their agency and to alter the industry's legal framework. The foregoing discussion clearly demonstrates that this framework has allowed exploitative policies to continue largely unchecked. Nonetheless, disregarding sex workers' various responses to these conditions risks reaffirming such stereotypes about Thai sex workers; stereotypes which only help

justify the kind of “rescue and rehabilitation” efforts that EMPOWER slams for ignoring sex workers’ rights and stated desires (EMPOWER “R & R”).

Unfortunately, chapters three and four demonstrate ways in which variations and traces of these stereotypes, as well as those which suggest “Asian” women are “naturally” hypersexual, resurface in the Canadian coverage of sex tourism in Thailand. These stereotypes work in tandem with other discourses invoked in this coverage to facilitate imputations of guilt and innocence, all of which works to negate the need to respect sex workers’ concerns and demands. The striking absence of the historical context outlined in this chapter from the great majority of my corpus further naturalizes the portrayal of the industry and its workers, strengthening as common sense knowledge a highly circumscribed view of the industry’s adult sex workers.

Chapter Three

Guilty Contagions: Thai Sex Workers as Sources of HIV/AIDS

Introduction

In 1988, a travel article in the Star claimed that Western men hiring Thai sex workers on the island Koh Samui faced a growing risk of “going home with a deadly souvenir” (Glendal “Island” F14). Thus began a five-year period when Thailand’s sex tourism industry and its adult, female sex workers were primarily covered in relation to the spread of HIV/AIDS. This focus is most prominent between 1988 and 1991, with nine of the 15 articles in my corpus during these years focused on the industry with regard to HIV/AIDS. An additional article published in each of 1992 and 1993 yield the 11 articles that are the primary focus of this chapter. I focus at length on such a small portion of my corpus because these articles constitute the most extended period in which the emphasis is largely on adult sex workers in lieu of children. However, the last section of this chapter will also demonstrate how the common sense knowledge of adult sex workers created in this period persists in articles long after 1993. Specifically, several elements in these 11 articles establish and insert into public, common sense knowledge an image of adult, Thai sex workers as either active agents or passive “pools of contagion” (Jenness Making 13), culpable in the spread of HIV infections in Thailand and, potentially, among foreign tourists.

Various combinations of presuppositions, statistics, and vivid descriptions combine with the virtual exclusion of sex workers’ own voices and responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic to naturalize the depiction of these women as inevitably diseased

and in need of control. This portrayal is further bolstered through a lack of historical context surrounding sex tourism, and relative silence on the role of Western tourists. However, since a selective representation of how the Thai government and others in Thailand reacted to the epidemic also helps to naturalize these articles' portrayal of sex workers, it is pertinent to provide some background on HIV/AIDS in Thailand before launching into the analysis. I then turn to the 11 articles between 1988 and 1993, interweaving my discussion with reflections on how preexisting discourses and stereotypes are drawn upon to solidify the common sense nature of the image of sex workers as guilty contagions – regardless of whether they are portrayed as playing an active or more passive role in spreading the disease. After considering how other factors in these articles further strengthen this image, I briefly indicate how stories scattered throughout later years of my corpus perpetuate this notion of Thai sex workers as naturally diseased, responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS and thus in need of control.

Background on HIV/AIDS in Thailand

The first documented HIV infection in Thailand was in 1984, with few reported cases and only sporadic testing until the end of the decade, when high rates of infection among intravenous drugs users were identified (Anupong Chitwarakorn “HIV/AIDS” 141; Steinfatt 187). In 1989, a “high prevalence of HIV infection” was found in female sex workers in brothels in the Northern province of Chiang Mai, with upwards of 44% of women testing positive for the virus (Chitwarakorn 141). These tests were among the first administered regularly to “specific subpopulation groups” (143). 1989 also marked the beginning of a trial 100% condom use policy in Ratchaburi province. The policy was “a

collaborative effort among local authorities, public health officers, sex establishment owners, and sex workers to ensure that clients could not purchase sexual services without condom use in the province” (UNAIDS “Evaluation” 2). Owners of establishments where sexual services were offered were occasionally threatened with police action and closure if they failed to insist that all clients use condoms (UNAIDS 16). Condoms were distributed for free to these sites, while sex workers were provided with and frequently required by venue owners to get regular tests for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (UNAIDS 3, 11-12; Lyttleton Endangered 194).

A marked decrease in STIs among sex workers and their clients in Ratchaburi saw the policy quickly implemented in surrounding provinces (UNAIDS 2-3). Meanwhile, government testing results combined with studies on infection rates and projections of their growth that respected population and family-planning activist, Dr. Mechai Veravaidya, provided to the government helped convince officials of the need for an organized, national response to the epidemic (Jeffrey 110). Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun spearheaded this response, appointing Mechai^v to a newly-formed national AIDS Committee which guided the development of programs – including a nation-wide 100% condom use policy (Lyttleton 83-4; UNAIDS 3). This policy and large-scale public education efforts such as regular public service announcements (PSAs) on radio and television are credited with slowing the rate of new HIV infections among female sex workers and their clients (Lyttleton 46, 83; UNAIDS 4, 25; Wiwat Rojanapithayakorn “The 100” 77). The “political and financial commitment” to support HIV/AIDS prevention, education and eventually treatment has largely continued through subsequent administrations (Chitwarakorn 153). The Thai case is thus heralded as an example of a

highly effective response to the epidemic, with the 100% condom use policy considered an exemplar of the harm-reduction approach – one which has been expanded to other countries (Chitwarakorn 152; Rojanapithayakorn 77, 81-2).

However, the Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) argues that the 100% condom use policy often violates sex workers' rights, in part through the frequent imposition of mandatory testing – a practice which, though illegal, is practiced in some establishments in Thailand (NSWP “The 100%”; Lyttleton 85). The NSWP also points out that the policy was developed and is frequently implemented without the consultation of sex workers or their organizations (“The 100%”). EMPOWER's own negative response to the policy confirms this lack of consultation and echoes many of NSWP's other complaints (EMPOWER “100%”). EMPOWER further emphasizes that while the policy improved access to condoms, it ignored all other concerns such as the lack of “labor or rights protection” facing Thai sex workers (“100%”). As EMPOWER succinctly states, “(c)ondoms without power are just a balloon” (“Sexy Topics”).

Notably, EMPOWER had begun its own response to the epidemic as early as 1987, as the musical that EMPOWER organized with Patpong-based sex workers that year included HIV/AIDS education (Bishop and Robinson 239-40; Steinfatt 224). Despite these efforts, Lyttleton argues that sex workers were vilified in the first public education campaigns within Thailand. According to Lyttleton, these campaigns positioned sex workers as the “dangerous Other” and imputed guilt to female sex workers through creating a sense that “women do the transmitting, men suffer the consequences” (52). These PSAs thus suggested that sex workers themselves were the “culpable *cause*” of HIV infections (Watney qtd. in Lyttleton 53 emphasis original). As

the following sections demonstrate, similar attributions of guilt to Thai sex workers riddle Canadian press stories discussing sex tourism in relation to HIV/AIDS.

Sex Workers as Guilty Contagions: 1988 -1993

There are four main ways that adult sex workers' status as guilty contagions – whether active or passive – is established in articles discussing HIV/AIDS in relation to Thai sex tourism between 1988 and 1993: presuppositions, descriptions, statistics, and the almost total exclusion of sex workers' voices. While reflecting upon existing discourses and stereotypes surrounding sex work and “Asian” women further illuminates the first two elements, all four interlock to naturalize and strengthen this pernicious portrayal of Thai sex workers. This portrayal only helps to justify efforts to control these women rather than to respect their own efforts and demands with regard to HIV/AIDS or any other facet of their work.

Norman Fairclough and Teun A. van Dijk point out that the presuppositions of a media text attribute certain knowledge or beliefs to an audience, thereby avoiding the need to elucidate, much less interrogate, such knowledge (Fairclough *Media* 176; van Dijk *Racism* 181-83). A presupposition that helps create causal links between sex workers and a spreading HIV/AIDS epidemic in Thailand is that sex workers carry and are spreading the virus within Thailand and to tourists simply because they are sex workers. This circular premise is present in several of the earliest articles discussing both sex tourism and HIV/AIDS. For instance, such an assumption informs the article quoted in the introduction. This 1988 travel article briefly mentions the large number of Western men with Thai women in Koh Samui, before suggesting that “(a)s many of the women

are prostitutes down from Bangkok on a working holiday, the risks of going home with a deadly souvenir increase by the day” (Glendal F14). Using the word “as” attributes these risks directly and solely to the women’s occupation, naturalizing ideas about sex workers as conduits of disease by assuming that this “fact” is self-evident to all readers; part of their common sense knowledge. The following year, a much longer and more detailed article explicitly links sex workers with HIV when it quotes the Thai secretary of public health’s assertion that “female prostitutes are the highest risk category for catching and spreading the AIDS virus and the most difficult to deal with” (Erlich “Thriving” B6). Although perhaps less of an implicit presupposition, reporting this assertion lays the blame at sex worker’s doorstep and potentially validates any measures public health workers take to control these women. Sex workers are even more strongly linked with the spread of the virus when the same official is quoted asserting that “in the drug community, AIDS will one day find a dead end, but among prostitutes, never” (Erlich “Thriving” B6). This fatalistic statement reinforces the link between sex workers and the unstoppable spread of disease, yet only makes sense if one presumes that sex workers are naturally pools of contagion.

A business article from the end of 1989 concerning the development of the island of Phuket as a major tourist destination similarly mentions the fear of AIDS, stating that while the infection rates appear to be low, Thai “government officials are growing increasingly worried that the actual threat may be substantial with a population of more than 500,000 prostitutes” (Fagan “Cheap” B23). Once again, the suggestion is that *because* there are sex workers in Thailand, there is a great risk of infection for tourists and locals. It thus seems logical, even commonsensical, for an official from the Tourist

Authority of Thailand (TAT) to state: if you don't go out with prostitutes, then you have no fear" (Fagan "Cheap" B23). This statement seals the problem as one of "prostitutes", solidifying ideas about their diseased status while also blaming their very existence for the feared, imminent spread of the virus.

Articles over the next three years also exhibit various degrees of this presupposition that HIV is spreading because there are sex workers, and that sex workers have HIV because they are sex workers. This insistence on the connection between the spread of HIV/AIDS and the mere existence of sex workers is hardly a spontaneous development. Rather, it links these articles with the extremely longstanding stigmatization of sex workers as diseased. This link between prostitution and contamination is apparent even in Thomas Aquinas's suggestion in medieval England that prostitution was like "the sewer in a palace" which, if removed, would fill the palace with "pollution" (Nicholas Orme "The Reformation" 37). Although the feared "pollution" was primarily the sodomy, seduction and rape that prostitution was believed to prevent, the image of sex workers as a repository for society's ills is clear. Also oft-noted in this regard are the mid-19th century Contagious Diseases Acts in Britain and its colonies. Introduced amidst concern about the rate of venereal disease among military men, especially syphilis, the Acts decreed that in certain garrison and port towns any woman identified by police officers as a "common prostitute" had to submit to "fortnightly internal examination" (Judith Walkowitz Prostitution 1-2). Those found to be infected with a venereal disease were interned in specialized wings of hospital wards (1-2). Male clients were never subjected to similar examinations, since in both Britain and

the colonies the sex worker was deemed the “conduit of infection to respectable society;” the “principal source of contagion” (Walkovitz 4; Philippa Levine Prostitution 1)^{vi}.

Furthermore, Levine demonstrates how racist stereotypes about colonized peoples’ sexuality were harnessed to give added justification to the colonial Acts (181)^{vii}. These laws were deemed necessary not only to protect British men from disease – since prostitution was considered a “necessary service for colonials” (179) – but also to help control “sexual disorder among colonized peoples” (2). Likewise, Frank Proschan argues that French colonizers’ view that all Vietnamese women were prostitutes was such that France’s policies in Vietnam eliminated even the “nominal concern” accorded to French sex workers’ health under regulations of France’s sex trade (“Syphilis” 616, 614). Like its British counterparts, French policies in Vietnam focused on protecting colonial men from contagious women and thus protecting the French “race” from the degeneration associated with syphilis (616).

While these colonial regulations suggest a heightened fear of contagion attached to women positioned not only as prostitutes, but also as racialized Others, Thailand’s own Venereal Disease Control Act of 1909 also identified sex workers as contagious agents in need of control. This Act instituted a system of licensed brothels to both facilitate the collection of taxes and to control disease (Jeffrey 11-12). In a clear historical precedent to the 100% condom use policy, women seeking work in brothels required a license which was renewed every three months following an examination proving they were “free of venereal disease and willing to engage in prostitution” (Jeffrey 12). Jeffrey contends that despite this provision to prevent women being held in brothels against their will, the “overall thrust of the legislation was to protect the male citizen-soldier from possible

contamination by prostitute women; the act provided only minimal protections for women, while subjecting them to medical examination and control” (12). This licensing system remained in place until the 1950s, when the Thai government ceased granting new licenses to brothels as the country moved toward criminalizing the sex trade (Jeffrey 20-4).

Even this brief indication of the widespread, historical positioning of sex workers not only as “bad girls,” but as diseased ones in need of control, helps illuminate the ease with which articles in my corpus use sex workers to explain the spread of HIV/AIDS in Thailand. Moreover, while the number of articles found to do so may be relatively small, they are decidedly not evidence of a few journalists’ idiosyncratic take on the epidemic. Paula A. Treichler and Valerie Jenness suggest that while not exclusive, ample blame was allotted to American sex workers in discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS in the United States (Jenness *Making* 13, 87-90; Treichler “AIDS” 45). More generally, Richard Gwyn draws on Susan Sontag to argue that a “dominant metaphor” surrounding people with HIV/AIDS “has been one of ‘AIDS is deviance’” (Gwyn “‘Killer Bugs’” 245). Gwyn notes that this metaphor contrasts sharply with “the discourses surrounding ‘victims’” of other diseases (245). This preoccupation with deviance attributes “implicit culpability” to these deviant Others and helps justify harsh measures against them in order to contain the disease (Gwyn 335, 337). The enduring discourses surrounding sex workers as sources of disease thus readily combine with ideas of AIDS as deviance to impugn Thai sex workers for spreading the disease. These women’s culpability is suggested to be part of sound, common sense knowledge that denies the need to question the legitimacy of this attribution – much less to acknowledge sex workers’ own HIV/AIDS prevention and

education work or to consider any of their concerns with regard to the sex tourism industry.

However, just as Levine and Proschan found that racist stereotypes differently inflected laws in British and French colonies, so are longstanding stereotypes of “Asian” women present in some articles during this period. These stereotypes are clearest in certain descriptions of these women which, unlike the latent implications of presuppositions, create a vivid image of sex workers as far more active agents of contagion. Specifically, two stories in the Star within the first three years of articles discussing sex tourism with regard to HIV/AIDS include descriptions that are vastly “overcomplete” (van Dijk Racism 185). Such descriptions include details that are immaterial to the actual story at hand, but which may seem relevant on the basis of prejudice or stereotypes (185-6). In turn, overcomplete descriptions may call up and reinforce such ideas among readers (185-6). In these two articles, overcomplete descriptions of sex workers pull upon these existing stereotypes in ways that heighten the sense of these women’s deviant behaviour and thus culpability in the spread of the virus. I dwell on these two articles because they are among the few within the entire corpus in which adult, Thai sex workers are given such detailed, sustained attention.

The first of these articles is the same 1989 news story that quoted Thai public health officials concerning the link between sex workers and the spread of HIV. The article describes how massage parlours feature women “demurely poised like fully-clothed mermaids” awaiting clients (Erlich “Thriving” B6). The author then asserts that Bangkok also houses “notorious nightclubs and bars where bikini-clad, topless, and nude go-go girls flaunt their charms and dance like there is no tomorrow. For the young

women and girls who have already contracted the virus, that may soon be true. But they continue to coax patrons to seedy back rooms containing a mattress or a bar stool, or to a nearby hotel” (B6). Similar descriptions appear in another Star news article from 1990. Readers again learn that in Bangkok’s massage parlours, “well-dressed, bare-foot girls and women coyly sit on carpeted ledges like attractive life-sized dolls in a huge, well-lit display case”; and that Bangkok also features “notorious nightclubs and bars” where “bikini-clad, topless, and nude girls flaunt themselves, some dancing under the influence of amphetamines, paint thinner or heroin” (Erich “AIDS” H2). This article also asserts that the sex workers “act out the wildest fantasies in crude, barroom performances” (H2).

These descriptions exhibit traces of stereotypes touched upon in chapter two when discussing how Thai sex workers are regularly positioned as either hypersexual or helpless. Like the association between sex workers with disease, these stereotypes have a long history which extends to contemporary representations. In an echo of Proschan’s assessment of French colonizer’s view of Vietnamese women, Yasmin Jiwani suggests that “Asian” women were often represented in European colonial discourse as “exotic, erotic, and dangerous” and thus as a potential threat to the colonizing male subject that required control (“The Eurasian” 184). Meanwhile, some “Western feminists” created “more sympathetic, though highly patronizing” representations of Asian women as suffering under “cultural backwardness” of their societies and requiring “rescue” (185). Jiwani suggests that contemporary representations of “Asian” women retain this ambivalence by consistently portraying these women as either “‘China dolls/geisha girls or lotus blossoms’” who are “‘exotic, subservient, compliant, industrious, eager to please,’” or “the ‘inherently scheming, untrustworthy, and back-stabbing’ dragon lady”

(186). These stereotypes have also been identified by others studying American advertising and entertainment (Yen Le Espiritu Asian 93-4; Minjeong Kim and Angie Y. Chung “Consuming” 74-5).

These two articles invoke these stereotypes when alternately portraying sex workers as “life-sized dolls” and as irresistibly exotic women who, despite their potentially HIV-positive state, will pose, dance and “flaunt themselves” to lure men into their clutches – and thus to their deaths. Indeed, despite comparing them to dolls and repeatedly calling them “girls,” these articles cannot be deemed to simply conflate these sex workers with helpless, passive victims in need of rescue. With so much emphasis on their actions, the suggestion is that while some of the sex workers may appear harmless, youthful and even subservient, they pose an imminent threat to Western tourists. This causal link is especially strong in the first article, as it opens with the story of an American tourist receiving an HIV-positive result from a Thai clinic. The second article’s suggestion that some are also drug users further marks these women as deviant and strengthens the article’s morally-disdainful tone. Clearly, both articles primarily invite readers to view these women as dangerously erotic “dragon ladies” guilty both of their own inevitable demise and that of their clients. By dredging up this familiar cultural script surrounding “Asian” women and combining it with existing ideas about sex workers as sources of disease, these articles suggest that sex workers are callously spearheading the epidemic in Thailand and spreading it to Western tourists. The familiarity of these ideas eases the insertion of this suggestion into public, common sense knowledge.

Also notable in each of these articles and others during this period is the use of statistics on the number of sex workers in Thailand and the percentages of those who are HIV-positive. For instance, readers learn within the lead paragraph of the first article discussed above that there are an “estimated 250,000 prostitutes” in Thailand (Erlich “Thriving” B6). The rest of the article is peppered with Thai officials’ projections of the virus’ growth. Similarly, the second article with overcomplete descriptions suggests that of the “250,000” prostitutes in the country, “4000 already have the disease” (Erlich “AIDS” H2). This article also paraphrases Mechai’s warning that “3 million victims will be infected by 1992” (H2). Such statistics thus combine with the lurid descriptions in these articles to strengthen impressions of a disease that is dangerously out of control and spreading rapidly – thanks in no small part to Thai sex workers.

Statistics are also frequently present in articles lacking vivid descriptions of sex workers. A liberal use of statistics is clear in the above-mentioned 1989 article that linked “the more than 500,000 prostitutes” to the spread of HIV in Thailand (Fagan “Cheap” B23). Articles in 1992 and 1993 somewhat more modestly suggest the number of sex workers in the country is, respectively, 250,000 or 200,000 (Erlich “Thailand” F3; Erlich “AIDS” F2). Both the Globe and the Star also report on Thai surveys suggesting that high percentages of sex workers in Northern brothels were infected. As the Globe states in 1990, “72% of low-priced prostitutes are AIDS carriers in the Northern city of Chiang Mai” (Johnson “Bangkok” A10). The Star similarly suggests in 1990 that “among the lower-priced prostitutes in the northern part of Thailand, 72% are infected; 42% of all prostitutes are infected” (Jensen-Stevenson “Condom Man” C1). This article also

asserts that the “figures are even more staggering when one learns that last year’s surveys showed no prostitutes were infected” (C1).

Emphasizing the exponential size of this problem and its rapid growth at once locates the origin of the disease in Thailand and particularly its sex workers, while reminding readers – and potential sex tourists – that it could spread to them^{viii}. Such statistics strengthen and may ease the acceptance of the idea that, if not already diseased, all Thai sex workers will eventually become infected. As Stuart Hall et al. argue, statistics:

have an ideological function: they appear to *ground* free floating and controversial impressions in the hard, incontrovertible soil of numbers. Both the media and the public have enormous respect for ‘the facts’ – *hard fact*. And there is no fact so ‘hard’ as a number – unless it is the percentage difference between two numbers (Policing 9 emphasis original).

This observation is particularly relevant with regard to both statistics on the total number of women in Thailand’s sex trade and the percentage of sex workers infected. As mentioned in chapter two, it is extremely difficult to determine with any accuracy the number of sex workers in the Thai sex industry. Yet this does not prevent stories in this period from reporting numbers ranging from 200,000 to over half a million, typically without any source or hesitation. Likewise, the percentages of HIV-positive sex workers are only vaguely attributed to Thai surveys and there is a wide difference between these figures and those found by the Thai government’s 1989 testing. While these tests found that approximately 44% of female sex workers in Northern brothels were HIV-positive, nowhere have I found a suggestion that this percentage was deemed accurate across all sex workers in Thailand, much less that over 70% of Northern sex workers were HIV-positive. I point this out not to promote a blind faith in statistics. Nor do I wish to gloss

over how such testing of “specific subpopulation groups” risks continuing the stigmatization of sex workers as diseased women who ought to be monitored. I would emphasize, however, that the statistics in these stories serve less to give readers a realistic sense of even the available data on HIV/AIDS in Thailand than to further strengthen as common sense the notion that sex workers are a high-risk, naturally-diseased group threatening the rest of the country – and its foreign tourists. With such alarmingly high numbers infected, who would argue with the need to somehow control this (also large) segment of the population?

The portrayal of sex workers as at least pools, if not active agents of contagion guilty for the spread of HIV/AIDS is further bolstered by the overwhelming exclusion of their voices from these articles. There is but one exception to the absence of adult sex workers’ voices and response to the epidemic. In 1990, the Globe carried a news article about a “condom carnival” held by Mechai in the Patpong district of Bangkok to provide “light-hearted” HIV/AIDS prevention education, alongside the distribution of condoms to bar workers (Johnson “Bangkok” A10). EMPOWER is mentioned in this article as a “vigilant bar girls organization” (A10). In fact, EMPOWER’s “edict that all customers must use condoms” is credited with helping to keep “AIDS at a controllable level in Patpong” (A10). In contrast with the frequent attributions of guilt to sex workers, it is a sex workers’ organization that is here attributed with helping contain the disease. Furthermore, a sex worker and representative of EMPOWER is quoted concerning the group’s efforts, making this article one of only three in my corpus and the sole among those discussing HIV/AIDS to mention EMPOWER. It is also one of the few that quotes

an adult sex worker concerning something other than a wretched experience in the industry.

While this article reminds us that the news is not completely impervious to views and voices that may challenge dominant discourses, other aspects of this article prevent it from radically breaking with the predominant contours of coverage in this period. First, the mention of EMPOWER is structurally down-played, appearing in the last third of the article. Established traditions of print journalism see the information deemed most important foregrounded, such that readers can expect the crux of a story to appear in its lead paragraphs – and may recall the information from headlines and leads most readily (van Dijk Racism 51, 92). Accordingly, even those who read the entire article may be more likely to recall the descriptions of the carnival and the suggestion that Thailand is the “first Asian country” where AIDS “threatens to explode into a national epidemic” than suggestions that sex workers are, in fact, helping contain the virus (Johnson A10).

Furthermore, the EMPOWER representative is countered with quotes from another bar worker concerning the possibility that some of her colleagues may be infected with HIV, but do not seek testing for fear of being unable to work if the result is positive. This quote may reaffirm a sense that irresponsible sex workers are spreading the virus, even if the fear of losing their livelihood elicits some sympathy for their situation. The same sex worker is then quoted concerning her solution to testing positive for the virus: “I’d just kill myself” (A10). On the one hand, this quote gives voice to the fear some women working in bars at this time likely faced. On the other, it undermines the work of EMPOWER in helping women protect themselves, while still maintaining a sense of inevitability that these women will contract the disease – and spread it to others.

This section of the article thus fits into a pattern John Nyuget Erni identified in American media coverage of HIV/AIDS in Asia, particularly Thailand during the 1990s. Erni found that “stories of female prostitutes are told to suggest their ignorance and helplessness when it comes to protecting themselves and their foreign customers” (“Of Desire” 75). This image, hearkening as it does to the stereotypical passivity and helplessness of “Asian” sex workers, is not as common in the articles in my corpus which discuss HIV/AIDS in relation to adult sex workers. However, its use in this article alongside the acknowledgement of EMPOWER undercuts story’s more exceptional elements and the associated challenge to the common sense idea of sex workers as guilty contagions: some sex workers might be organized around condom use, but others (however helpless and sympathetic) remain at fault for the spread of the disease.

Sharing the Blame, Saving the Country: The Thai Government and Mechai, 1988 – 1993

In addition to this persistent indictment of adult sex workers, these 11 articles demonstrate a tension between suggestions that Thailand cannot control the epidemic and that perhaps it can. This tension is clear in the oscillating portrayal of the Thai government and the laudatory attention given Mechai. Discussing these factors raises issues around the representation of the developing world in mainstream, Western news media, while further indicating how these articles sustain the idea that adult sex workers are largely to blame for the epidemic in Thailand and the associated risk to tourists.

In fact, although sex workers are portrayed as a main source of HIV/AIDS, they are not always the sole actors blamed for rising infection rates. In five of these articles, the Thai government is criticized for failing to stem the epidemic. For instance, the first

article to use overcomplete descriptions of sex workers suggests that the government has “avoided publicizing the appalling AIDS figures concerning prostitutes for fear of damaging the booming tourist industry” (Erlich “Thriving” B6). More implicit criticism appears in a 1993 article that pivots around the government’s banning of the Longman Dictionary – which publishes “popular meaning of words” – for defining Bangkok as a city with “a lot of prostitutes” (Erlich “Thailand” F3). The article relates this ban to the government’s fear that, especially with increasing rates of HIV infection, publicity of the sex trade “will tarnish the image of Thailand and cause international tourism and investment to collapse” (F3). The article also asserts that the government “chafes when foreigners criticize (Thailand) about its estimated 200,000 prostitutes who *illegally* offer themselves in nightclubs, bars, massage parlours, brothels, restaurants and parks” (F3 emphasis added). With varying degrees of explicitness, both stories suggest that the Thai government has failed to control the sex trade and its criminal, infectious women. However, even the condom carnival story, with its slightly more ambivalent take on sex workers’ role in spreading HIV, asserts that the government “has been slow to acknowledge the disease, in a country where tourism is the biggest foreign-exchange earner” (Johnson “Bangkok” A10).

These and similar statements in the other two articles which criticize the government reinforce stereotypical ideas of ineffectual, perhaps corrupt Third World governments whose unwillingness or inability to address the sex trade and/or the epidemic has allowed HIV/AIDS to spiral out of control (Thussu “Media” 54). All five articles which position the Thai government as partially to blame for the extent of the epidemic in Thailand thus dovetail with another of Erni’s observations. Erni argues that

media coverage of AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s generally highlighted the “denial of Third World governments,” such that the “Third World is seen simultaneously as the culprit or the origin of (AIDS) as well as its victim” (68). Of course, negative portrayals of the Third World in Western news media neither began nor ended with the AIDS epidemic. Many analysts suggest that developing nations have long been and continue to be covered in a highly negative, oversimplified fashion which often excludes important contextualizing information (see Daya Kishan Thussu “Media Plenty” 53-5; Yasmin Jiwani “Gendering” 268; Annabelle Sreberny and Chris Patterson “Introduction” 4-6). With this plethora of negative representations of the developing world, assertions about the Thai government’s (non)reaction to the epidemic may remain unquestioned or seem commonsensical – despite the fact that “by the early 1990s, the Thai government had in place one of the largest intervention programs in terms of per capita budget allocation and levels of political support” (Lyttleton 69).

However, the Thai government is neither as thoroughly silenced nor as vociferously condemned as Thai sex workers. Whereas only one article quotes sex workers and partially complicates the portrayal of their culpability in the spread of HIV/AIDS, there is more variation in the portrayal of the Thai government. Unlike sex workers, government officials regularly appear as sources in these articles, such as the public health officials quoted concerning the numbers of infected sex workers and the supposed difficulty of dealing with them. This regularity follows the journalistic tradition of favouring official sources, as they are considered more authoritative and reliable than those from other spheres (see, i.e., Ericson et al. 181-82; Hall et al. 58-9). In fact, the government is also given the opportunity to defend itself in an article from 1990 which

notes the government's opposition to suggestions that it is "hiding the true extent of AIDS sufferers" (Erlich "AIDS" H2). Likewise, several officials are quoted concerning their objections to the Longman Dictionary (Erlich "Thailand" F3).

Moreover, two articles do briefly acknowledge Thailand's efforts to address HIV/AIDS. But even before these articles were published, the portrayal of Mechai inserted into the discourse a sense that some within Thailand were trying to address the epidemic. Indeed, government officials are not the only Thai source frequently used, as Mechai is quoted in six of the first ten articles discussing sex tourism and HIV/AIDS. First quoted in a 1989 article as a "population-planning activist" who simply attests to the "in-grained" nature of the sex trade and the involvement of corrupt police, Mechai is quickly, if briefly, positioned as Thailand's best hope of halting the epidemic (Fagan "Cheap" B23). For instance, the 1990 article covering his "condom carnival" tags Mechai as a "crusader" whose organization is running a "high-profile campaign to stop AIDS before it consumes the country's booming sex industry" (Johnson A10). This article also highlights Mechai's skepticism of the government's statistics on HIV infections, strengthening impressions of a government in denial while reassuring readers that at least some Thais are combating this threatening virus. Thus, while EMPOWER's efforts are mentioned, Mechai is foregrounded as the courageous hero who will save sex workers from themselves – and, implicitly, save others from these contagious women. The 1990 Star article which highlighted the percentages of sex workers' infected with HIV also lauds Mechai's efforts, going so far as to call his organization a "shadow government" (Jensen-Stevenson "Condom Man" C1). With sex workers' efforts completely absented

from this article, Mechai even more readily becomes the potential savior of these women and the country as a whole.

I do not want to diminish Mechai's role in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Thailand, both through his initial activism and then in the government. Nonetheless, the coverage of Mechai's campaigning did little to challenge the common sense nature of ideas that adult sex workers are a main source of the virus in Thailand who need to be controlled. Furthermore, this idea persists in articles in 1991 and 1992 which acknowledge the government's efforts to clamp down on the problem and which quote Mechai from his position as a government official ("Thailand's" A5; Erlich "AIDS Running" F2). This persistence is particularly clear in the 1991 article, which focuses on the Anand administration's declaration of "war" on Thailand's "sex industry and the spread of the deadly AIDS virus" ("Thailand's" A5). Mechai and other officials are quoted throughout concerning the determination to both stem the "flocks" of sex tourists and reduce the local sex industry (A5). Yet while this article highlights the actions of the Thai government, it maintains the unquestioned link between the sex industry and the spread of AIDS – crackdown on the former and you contain the latter. The article thereby reaffirms sex workers as a principal source of this "deadly" disease, leaving their guilt unquestioned while demonstrating the government's ability to move from guilty complicity to an active role in fighting the epidemic.

Despite this article and a brief acknowledgement of Thailand's attempts to address the epidemic in 1992, however, the full extent of subsequent programs to combat HIV/AIDS in Thailand and the commendations of them are never covered. And as suggested above, criticism of the government's failure to reign in the linked problems of

the epidemic and the sex trade reappears in a 1993 article. With not even the official Thai efforts meriting much coverage, it is perhaps unsurprising that the efforts of sex workers, let alone their complaints about government policies, are virtually absent from articles in this period and throughout subsequent years of the corpus. Following Daya Thussu's argument, one could suggest that the scant space available for international news in the Western media, coupled with news values such as novelty, negativity and simplicity, virtually eliminate the possibility of ongoing attention to processes – in this case, the process of slowing HIV infection rates in Thailand and potential problems with the policies set up to do so (Thussu "Media" 53-5, "Development" 329). Whatever the reasons for this dearth of attention, the idea that adult sex workers are culpable in the spread of disease is left completely unchallenged, remaining part of common sense knowledge about these women; knowledge that negates the need to do anything besides monitor or otherwise control sex workers.

It bears emphasizing that the criticisms of the Thai government, highlighting of Mechai's work and even limited acknowledgement of the government's attempts to combat the epidemic all imply that it is the Thai government's responsibility to protect Thai citizens and foreign tourists – at least in part through controlling sex workers, since they are so regularly portrayed as the source of infection. I stress this point because of the marked difference between this implicit suggestion and the emphasis on the required intervention of the West in articles discussed in the following chapter. Perhaps this contrast is symptomatic of the desire to distance "ourselves" from the perceived source of contagion and contamination? If it originates there, particularly in deviant sex workers, surely it is "their" problem to deal with. The complete exclusion of the history of the sex

tourism industry and a relative absence of comment on Western tourists in these articles help to further naturalize this implicit equation, as well as the attributions of guilt to sex workers for spreading the disease.

Not Guilty by Way of (Relative) Omission – History and Tourists

The voices and responses of sex workers are not the only conspicuous absence in these articles. Not a single article in this spate of coverage linking sex workers to a risk of HIV infection includes contextual information on the growth of the sex tourism industry in Thailand. Again, this absence is consistent with well-documented patterns. As suggested above, several authors have demonstrated that such context is habitually absent from the mainstream news media in general, particularly in stories concerning the Third World. Moreover, both Erni and Bishop and Robinson similarly found that American media coverage of Thai sex tourism in relation to HIV/AIDS excluded any sense of how the industry developed (Erni 72; Bishop and Robinson 51-9). In my corpus, rather than even gesturing to this context, almost half of these 11 articles refer to the industry as “notorious,” “infamous,” or otherwise describe it in a manner that invites readers to accept this industry as an established fact (i.e., Erlich “Thriving” B6; “Thailand’s” A5; Glendal “Island” F14). Such assertions act as presuppositions, as readers are presumed to understand what this “infamous” industry entails, while preventing a consideration of the industry as anything more than a phenomenon unique to Thailand. In line with previous arguments concerning the exclusion of historical context, the absence of information surrounding the growth of the Thai sex tourism industry helps to naturalize the industry, in part by leaving unexamined the West’s part in securing its often-inequitable

configurations (Thussu “Media” 53-4). The failure of these articles to even hint at the role of the Vietnam War and subsequent development policies contributes to a sense that the industry simply exists. This sense helps position the spreading epidemic in this naturally-occurring industry, with its naturally-contaminated women, as an issue that Thailand alone must solve.

The naturalization of the industry works in tandem with the relative lack of comment on tourists themselves in these articles. For instance, the 1989 article which opens with an American in Bangkok receiving an HIV-positive test result may elicit some judgment of the man for engaging in risky behaviour by partaking of the sex tourism industry. Nevertheless, unlike the overcomplete descriptions of sex workers that follow, the man’s behaviour is not explicitly scrutinized. The same article quotes a male customer on the paranoia of AIDS overtaking Patpong while “cuddling” a sex worker on his lap (Erlich “Thriving” B6). Including this observation on the man’s participation in the sex industry may invite a negative judgment of his actions. However, the man is also positioned as aware of the attendant dangers and indicates how this has changed his and other tourists’ behaviour; a sharp contrast with the article’s portrayal of sex workers. A couple of articles also suggest that tourists support Mechai’s efforts to galvanize a response to the epidemic in Thailand, further solidifying the sense that in contrast with reckless, diseased sex workers, tourists are well aware of the risks (i.e. Johnson A10; Erlich “AIDS” F2). In such articles, it is clearly the sex workers who must not be controlled and curtailed, not their clients.

There are some exceptions to this tendency to gloss over tourists. Sex tours are derided by Mechai as “sperm tours” in 1989, and plainly targeted as an unwanted

contributor to the linked problems of AIDS and prostitution in the 1991 article about the Thai government's dedication to fighting the epidemic (Fagan B23; "Thailand's" A5). Nonetheless, tourists are far less likely than Thai sex workers to be indicted for spreading the epidemic. This disparity reinforces van Dijk's contention that the press tends towards "positive self-presentation" and "negative other-presentation"; Western men are inscrutable, or perhaps even the innocent victims of these dangerous, contagious Thai sex workers (Racism 177). This is not an argument in favour of more sensational descriptions of tourists and their behaviour in order to shift blame to them. The point is simply that in these years of coverage, this tendency is another means through which the problem is reduced to one originating with Thai sex workers – perhaps compounded by the Thai government, and located in an industry that has always existed.

Still Guilty: "Pushing" Men to Children

While these 11 articles most clearly insert into public, common sense knowledge the idea that sex workers are guilty contagions, this notion is not limited to these articles and does not disappear after 1993. Instead, this "knowledge" of adult sex workers also appears in some articles focused on the exploitation of children in Thailand's sex tourism industry in both this period and beyond. As such, while the following chapter considers the large number of articles focused on this exploitation in detail, it is worth considering how some implicitly blame adult sex workers for contributing to children's victimization. Specifically, six articles suggest that a fear of contracting HIV is driving up the numbers of children in Thailand's local and foreign-oriented sex trades. In fact, as early as 1990, an article discussing the exploitation of minors in Thailand's sex trades bluntly asserts

that a “fear of AIDS makes customers demand ever younger girls” (Kelly H3). Four articles in 1996 and one in 1999 make comparable, almost off-handed remarks about how this fear “is pushing men to think of younger and younger girls”, or that men are choosing to buy sex with minors as they “seek protection from AIDS” (Freeman “Laws” A7; McArthur “Crackdown” D1). An article published in 2000 – the last to mention HIV/AIDS – similarly states that “because of the AIDS epidemic, gangs that control the prostitution racket are seeking out increasingly younger girls” (“Man” A13).

Although attributing the belief to both local and foreign customers, such assertions rely heavily upon the assumption that adult sex workers are, or are extremely likely to be HIV-positive^{ix}. These articles therefore contribute to naturalizing ideas about sex workers as either pools or agents of contagion, who are still culpable in the spread of disease. The fact that these five articles are spread from 1990 to 2000 indicates that this common sense “knowledge” of Thai sex workers as inevitably diseased was kept alive in public discourse long after the most explicitly condemning descriptions of them had ceased. Moreover, claiming that their diseased state has increased children’s risk of abuse arguably intensifies the attribution of guilt to these women, since children are, by definition, innocent.

Conclusion

While these loaded assertions demonstrate the tenacity of the idea that sex workers are sources of disease, the emphasis on these women’s guilt is most persistent and clearest in the 11 articles discussed in this chapter. The presuppositions, overcomplete descriptions and inflated statistics that characterize these articles decidedly

position adult sex workers as pools or active agents of contagion in need of control. With only one, highly-circumscribed acknowledgement of sex workers' responses to the epidemic, very little in this period of coverage challenges this portrayal of these women. Instead, these articles readily invoke existing discourses and stereotypes around sex workers and "Asian" women to solidify as part of common sense the idea that Thai sex workers are the principal conduit for the spread of HIV/AIDS in Thailand and to its tourists. Meanwhile, the lack of historical context and comparative silence on tourists' own behaviour allows the condemning focus to remain on sex workers, while strengthening the implications that Thailand must somehow control these deviant, dangerous women. Lacking a true engagement with their concerns or acknowledgement of their HIV/AIDS prevention work, the rightfulness of any programs targeting sex workers as sources of infection remains unchallenged. Clearly, this image of adult, Thai sex workers hardly encourages attending to these women's concerns and demands.

The significance of this small spate of articles focused on adult sex workers, if only through a lack of emphasis on their age, will be even clearer as the following chapter considers how the vast majority of my corpus focuses on the exploitation of children in the Thai sex tourism industry. As shown, the idea that sex workers are naturally diseased does reappear in some such articles, continuing and perhaps heightening these women's status as guilty contagions. Only extremely rarely are adult sex workers otherwise mentioned in these articles and hardly in a fashion encouraging a serious consideration of their concerns. The following chapter thus discusses both the striking absence and occasional, circumscribed inclusion of adult, Thai sex workers in

articles about child sex tourism, considering the implications of these articles for the public, common sense knowledge of these women.

Chapter Four

Innocent Victims: Child Sex Tourism and the Erasure of Adult Sex Workers

Introduction

Between 1986 and 2005, 62 articles – nearly 75% of my corpus – focus upon, mention, or somehow invoke the abuse of children in the Thai sex tourism industry, putting forth an evocative image of innocent victims in need of rescuing. While only six of these articles (as discussed in chapter three) actually position adult sex workers as culpable in this victimization, the absence of women from the overwhelming majority of these articles confirms that within the public, common sense knowledge put forth in the Canadian press, these women are at the very least “not innocent”. That is, not readily aligned with the innocence that accrues to children, adult sex workers are excluded from these articles’ discourse of innocent victims deserving and in need of help. Although two of these articles suggest these women may also be deserving of aid, this suggestion comes only when adult sex workers are conflated with children and thereby made innocent. Ultimately, whether impugned for contributing to children’s exploitation, conflated with them, or simply excluded, adult sex workers are decidedly silenced in these articles, negating the need to consider either their experiences of exploitation or demands for change in the industry.

This chapter should not be read as an apologia for the abuse of children in the sex tourism industry or any other site. Yet my desire to foreground this stance points to the very power of this discourse of innocent victims – as Heather Montgomery suggests, child prostitution is “too disturbing to do anything other than condemn it” (*Modern* 1).

However, this discourse's power relies on many exclusions, including that of adult sex workers. As such, the bulk of this chapter analyzes these 62 articles, highlighting how they create a discourse that renders the exclusion of adult sex workers seemingly natural and obvious. While 11 articles mention or focus on child sex tourism between 1986 and the end of the concentrated focus on sex tourism in relation to HIV/AIDS in 1993, stories about the issue are most frequent in the mid-1990s. This focus peaks in 1996, when 17 of the year's 18 articles include some discussion of child sex tourism. Throughout, similar devices that marked adult sex workers as guilty contagions emphasize these children's innocence: descriptions of the horrors they face and an ample use of statistics. While the portrayal of the Thai government is also similarly shifting, these articles differ from those discussed previously in their indictment of Thai parents and Western tourists for contributing to this exploitation and in the focus on how "we" can and must save these innocent children. Although there are occasional mentions of historical and contemporary factors shaping the industry, both these limited acknowledgements and the more consistent exclusion of such factors bolsters and naturalizes as common sense these articles' portrayal of child sex tourism and the associated erasure of adult sex workers.

My discussion of these articles includes a consideration of parallels between my corpus and previous analyses of media coverage of child sex tourism in the 1990s. I also consider the importance of the ideal of childhood innocence and briefly touch upon analyses of the conflation of women and children historically and in contemporary media representations. However, because the increase of articles in the 1990s relates a great deal to the work of the international NGO End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT), I begin with a brief overview of the group's activities and impact on laws surrounding

child sex tourism. The subsequent analysis also notes how the idea that Thailand is particularly popular for tourists seeking to sexually exploit minors persists through the later years of my corpus. This persistence, as well as those few occasions where women are conflated with children, continues the exclusion of adult sex workers' voices from a great deal of the public discourse and associated common sense knowledge surrounding sex tourism in Thailand.

Background on ECPAT and Child Sex Tourism Laws

In 1991, members of the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism concerned about evidence of Western men traveling to Asian countries to sexually exploit children formed ECPAT to address the phenomenon^x (Montgomery 31). ECPAT focused its earliest efforts on promoting both “legal” and “policing” interventions from the local to international levels and “publicizing current events, conditions, and topics” regarding child sex tourism (Eliza Noh “Amazing” 443). Although the group initially concentrated on child sex tourism involving children under 16 in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand, this mandate was soon altered to refer to “anyone under eighteen” (Montgomery 31). As the 1996 change of their name to “End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes” suggests, ECPAT also broadened its mandate to address the commercial sexual exploitation of minors beyond sex tourism and in countries outside Asia (ECPAT “The History”). The group has grown from 17 branches in 1996 to “73 groups in 67 countries” today (ECPAT “The History”). However, since ECPAT had the greatest impact on

policies and media coverage during the 1990s and in relation to child sex tourism, this period of the group's activism is most emphasized here.

ECPAT and affiliated NGOs' lobbying efforts are considered central to the fact that between the organization's founding in 1991 and 1998, 20 countries passed laws allowing for the prosecution of "the sexual crimes of (a country's) nationals or residents when perpetrated against children in other countries" (Muntarhorn qtd. in Julia O'Connell Davidson "Child" 35). In Canada, Bill C-27 was introduced in 1996 and became law in May of 1997, allowing sentences of up to "fourteen years' imprisonment" if the accused is found guilty (Canada "Bill C-27"; see also Canada "Child Sex"). 1996 also saw 122 countries, including Canada, send delegations to ECPAT's World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, where a declaration and an Agenda of Action to combat this exploitation were adopted (ECPAT "Six"). The number of signatories increased to 161 at ECPAT's 2001 Congress in Japan, which reviewed progress and renewed commitments made in 1996 (ECPAT "Programmes"). Bill C-27 was also amended in 2001 with Bill C-15A, which passed in 2002. Bill C-15A removed a provision from the previous Bill that required the consent of the country where the offence occurred before Canadian officials could launch a prosecution (Canada "Bill C-15A"; Canada "Child Sex").

It is also possible that ECPAT's initial campaigning impacted the 1996 Thai legislation's particular focus on punishing those procuring minors or allowing them to work in the sex trade, clients of minors, and families thought to have sold children into the trade. As mentioned in chapter two, Jeffrey argues that a series of high-profile pieces in the international media characterizing Thailand as a hotbed of child prostitution

intensified the Thai government's focus on developing measures to keep minors out of the country's sex industry (98-123). O'Connell Davidson and Montgomery explicitly link this increase in media coverage of child sex tourism during the 1990s to ECPAT's work (O'Connell Davidson 33; Montgomery 21-44). Thus, while Thai activists were already attempting to draw attention to the conditions of children in Thailand's sex trades, ECPAT's success in attracting media attention to the issue heightens the likelihood that ECPAT's campaigns influenced this legislation, as well as that passed in other countries (Montgomery 30). The following analysis of articles concerned with child sex tourism indicates a similar increase in coverage during ECPAT's campaigning in the 1990s. I also consider how the issue was occasionally raised before, and particularly how it remained a part of public, common sense knowledge well after this decade, persistently erasing and silencing adult sex workers.

Establishing Innocence

Although these articles use some of the same devices which conveyed the idea that adult sex workers are guilty contagions, here the emphasis is decidedly on the horrors facing innocent children. Specifically, these articles often make generalized assertions meant to indicate a typical child's experience or describe one child's experience in detail, and use statistics to emphasize the extent of such exploitation. Discussing these elements indicates the importance and power of preexisting discourses surrounding childhood innocence in articles during and after the 1990s.

At a minimum, these articles all include some indication of the fact that children are being exploited in Thailand's sex trades. In many, this fact is communicated through

a few points which impress upon readers the children's innocence and the gravity of the abuse. For instance, a 1990 article quotes a Thai girl who was "just 12 years old" when sold to a "teahouse" where she was forced to service men (Kelly "Breaking" H3). A 1991 article, the first to mention ECPAT, leads with a list of abuses occurring in several countries, many of which are from Thailand. Readers learn that "(i)n Thailand, teenage female prostitutes service an average of 17 men a night and receive the equivalent of 80 cents (U.S.) for each customer", and that a Bangkok group has discovered children being "abducted or sold into prostitution to meet the increasing demand of Western tourists" ("Campaign" K12). Other articles simply assert that children are being abused by tourists and may also mention the local trade, or align the child sex trade in all its aspects with slavery – whether in Thailand alone or in Thailand and other countries (i.e., Axworthy "Canada" A17; "Sex, Slavery" A16).

Arguably, even these relatively brief indications of the abuse of children put forth a powerful image of innocent victims in need of assistance. However, a few articles include more detailed descriptions that occasionally border on being overcomplete. Although the added details in these stories may not call up prejudices against these children, they serve only to emphasize their utterly desperate situation. Such descriptions are more common in the mid-1990s and thus at the height of ECPAT's initial campaigning. For instance, a 1994 news article in the Star opens with the story of a girl who escaped from the brothel she was sold into at age 16, and who now "waits for (AIDS) to kill her" at a shelter in Bangkok (Erlich "Bangkok" E5). The accompanying description of the girl's "soft, fragile voice and (...) bloodshot brown eyes" is not crucial to the story, but does emphasize her innocence and hopelessness (E5). An article from

1996 similarly tells the story of a girl from the Akha hill tribe in Thailand who was forced into a brothel where she contracted HIV (Casey “Prostitution” A11). The girl’s query, “What is the government?” when asked whether she would like to say something to the Thai government, is only essential insofar as it underscores her helplessness and heartbreaking naïveté (A11). Quite apart from the guilt ascribed to adult sex workers, these children’s HIV-positive state underscores the severity of abuse they have encountered.

It would certainly seem callous to suggest that these children are anything but exploited victims who are deserving of some form of help. Yet without denying that some tourists abuse minors, there are several issues that can be raised with regard to these dramatic tales and even the briefer references to “typical” cases. Discussions of the discourse surrounding childhood innocence and Heather Montgomery’s analysis of British media coverage of child sex tourism during the 1990s are both extremely relevant here. First of all, it is important to recognize that the view of children as inherently innocent is a historical construction that is not without potentially problematic implications. This view of children has been extremely influential in Western cultures since Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s 1762 Emile, which put forth a highly “sentimentalized model of childhood” that pivots on this assumed innocence (Cat Nilan “Hapless Innocence” 251; see also Diana Gittins The Child 23, 150-52). Central to this model is children’s assumed need for protection, as their innocence is characterized by vulnerability and a lack of knowledge and agency, rendering children dependent upon adults to provide for their “best interests” (Ann Oakley “Women and Children” 16; see also Nilan 252, 255; Henry A. Giroux “Public”194).

Children who appear either to lack or to have lost their innocence have thus long been a source of anxiety, as they contradict deeply-rooted ideas about what constitutes a natural, healthy childhood (Nilan 254-55; Gittins 10). However, Gittins argues that the insistence upon universal characteristics of all children poses obstacles to considering differences between specific children's material realities, let alone reasons for these differences (11-12). Patricia Holland makes a similar point in her analysis of images of children used by aid organizations. Holland argues that since at least the 1970s, images of starving or otherwise vulnerable children in Third World countries have been used to appeal to these dearly held ideals of childhood innocence, yet regularly obscure the whole context leading to the children's suffering (What is a Child? 150-51). As such, these images readily reinforce ideas about the inferiority of developing countries, while "assuring us that we have the power to help;" the "First World" is positioned as the benevolent parent who can protect these children (150).

Montgomery ties these issues to media coverage of child sex tourism, as she found that stories similar to those I discuss above proliferated in the British media during ECPAT's initial campaigning. In Montgomery's assessment, the success of ECPAT and affiliated NGOs in gaining media attention and official responses to their campaigns relates precisely to the powerful contrast between the stories of abuse and the idealized image of an innocent, work-free childhood that pervades Western society (55-7, 26-8). However, echoing the arguments of Gittins and Holland, Montgomery suggests that this view of childhood elides not only the contribution children are relied upon for in many rural Thai households, but also the fact that there exists no welfare state to help the poorest families (59-64, 157). By no means does Montgomery thereby suggest that child

prostitution is justifiable, but she does seek to draw attention to a picture far more complicated than that painted by ECPAT and the media (see esp.1-19). That is, Montgomery argues that journalists in Britain, influenced by the NGO discourse, focused only on “HIV-positive children, rescued from brothels, who can be recognized as the ‘real thing’” (21). In turn, this circumscribed coverage “causes a hierarchy of child prostitutes. The more innocent, unknowing, and pathetically victimized the better” (28). Montgomery suggests that such stories tap into our beliefs about childhood, inciting moral outrage and a desire to act, but prevent a consideration of the dilemmas facing children like those she studied – children who were being sexually exploited by foreigners but continued to live with and provide a key means of support for their families (esp. 76-82). In other words, children who challenge the discourse surrounding universal childhood innocence.

Returning to my corpus, one can see how many of the articles which discuss child sex tourism – especially those with particularly heart-wrenching stories – also contribute to such a hierarchy. Not only are children who complicate this picture excluded, but so too are the women who work in the sex tourism industry. Notably, O’Connell Davidson does briefly mention that ECPAT’s campaigns, associated media coverage and policy responses ignore the exploitation of men and women selling sexual services to tourists, a fact that Bishop and Robinson also point out in passing (O’Connell Davidson 43; Bishop and Robinson p.53). Clearly, adult sex workers’ own experiences of exploitation, let alone strategies and demands to avoid and minimize it, would overly complicate these articles’ portrayal of exploited and stolen innocence and the associated appeal to ideals of childhood. Moreover, as discussed at length in chapter three, adult sex workers’ supposed

status as disease-carriers is occasionally positioned as a reason that men seek out minors, rendering these women culpable for children's abuse. Yet even when not thus indicted, adult sex workers are evidently not innocent enough to provoke even similarly simplified concern as that expressed for children – at least not according to the common sense invoked and put forth in these articles.

These articles do not simply assert with greater or lesser degrees of detail that children are being abused. 35 articles cite statistics on the number of children sold, kidnapped, or forced out of desperation to enter the commercial sex trade, such that the apparent scope of the issue emphasizes its severity. These articles therefore further parallel the British coverage that Montgomery discusses, as she suggests that ECPAT and affiliated NGOs' use of statistics to add "immediacy and urgency" to their campaigns filtered into the British media – despite the fact that these statistics rarely have a strong "basis in fact or research" (38). In particular, Montgomery asserts the media regularly reported that one million Asian children are annually forced into the sex trade, ignoring that the Norwegian report in which this estimate was first made failed to clearly indicate how the number was reached (38). This report in fact provided the impetus for one of the first articles to mention child sex tourism in my corpus, a brief 1989 news item in the Star which highlights the Norwegian study's estimate that "a million" children are "forced into the sex market every year" (Reuters "Norway" A18). This figure then reappears in 11 other articles between 1990 and 1998, sometimes specified to represent the number of "new children (in the industry) each year," other times suggesting that the "majority (are) in Asian countries" (Canadian Press "Canada" A20; McAteer "Children" J15). Interestingly, this statistic is never again attributed to this first Norwegian report, instead

becoming attributed to ECPAT or appearing without a source. Nowhere is this number's accuracy questioned.

Since articles included for analysis all mention Thailand, the country is figured in each of these articles as one, and frequently a key, contributor to this million (i.e., Erlich "Bangkok" E5). Furthermore, three articles between 1990 and 1992 cite the equally-problematic figure of 800,000 children in Thailand's sex trade alone, situating the country as having a uniquely large problem (i.e., Smucker "Children" A12). As such, my corpus also supports Steinfatt's contention that several Western media outlets reported this number, even after it was discovered to have originated in an "erroneous and unsupportable guess" by an employee of the Children's Rights Protection Centre in Bangkok (109). Articles in the later 1990s continue to emphasize the size of Thailand's local and foreign-oriented sex trades, including another citation of the 800,000 estimate and suggestions that 300,000 or 200,000 Thai children are in the sex trade (Casey "Prostitution" A10; Branswell "Sex Trade" A12; "Sex Tourism" D1). While articles are more sporadic after the late 1990s and tend to focus in less detail on Thailand, statistics on the estimated number of children abused in the country or region do occasionally appear. An article focused on a specific Thai case in 2000, for example, suggests that "hundreds of thousands" of children are victimized by tourists in "South East Asia" ("Man Gets" A13).

Recalling the discussion in chapter two, it is impossible to know the exact numbers of minors involved in Thailand's local and foreign-oriented sex trades. However, several authors suggest that the best estimates hover between 20,000 and 35,000, many of whom may be older teens rather than prepubescent children (see also

Steinfatt 104-5; Montgomery 28, 36-7). I am not suggesting that any number of minors in the sex trade is acceptable, but do wish to underscore the inflated nature of the figures that gained prominence in these articles. For as argued in chapter three, statistics are one means through which press stories' representation of issues gain a certain authority. These numbers thus continue to push adult sex workers aside; neither their experiences of exploitation nor attempts to ameliorate their conditions have a place in this discourse around the huge number of innocent victims. Moreover, following Montgomery's argument, these statistics combined with the stories of abuse may serve more to incite moral indignation and a desire for immediate interventions than to prompt consideration to the various factors that contribute to the availability of minors in the sex trades (23, 28).

Searching for History; Indicting the Thai Government, Thai Parents, & Western Tourists

It would be difficult for the actual content alone of these articles to stimulate such considerations, given the conspicuous absence of political-economic and historical contexts from the bulk of stories concerned with child sex tourism. These absences are in line with both traditions of news coverage mentioned in chapter three, and Montgomery and O'Connell Davidson's contentions that, during the 1990s, media coverage of child sex tourism obscured the political economy which encourages or forces children to enter the sex trade (O'Connell Davidson 43-4; Montgomery 3, 76). Although they do not discuss ECPAT's work, Bishop and Robinson similarly point out that the American media's increased attention to child sex tourism in Thailand in the 1990s, as with coverage of sex tourism and HIV/AIDS, left aside structural and historical contexts (59).

Likewise, Chitraporn Vanaspong suggests that the Western media's focus on tales of abused children deflects attention from sex tourism's long history and political economic factors contributing to the industry's maintenance ("A Portrait" 140, 155).

While there are four exceptions to this dearth of historical information surrounding the industry in my corpus, they are highly limited. The first is a lengthy Star article from 1990 which is also among those suggesting that the fear of HIV is causing men to seek out young girls (Kelly "Breaking" H3). The article states that the "West has had a huge impact on the Asian flesh trade" (H3). The author then specifies that "prostitution exploded" in both Thailand and the Philippines when American soldiers went to these countries for R&R during the Vietnam War, after which foreign tourists began visiting establishments created for soldiers (H3). However, this information comes in the final third of the story, downplaying its importance in relation to the primary focus on efforts to halt child sex tourism and trafficking. The three other exceptions occur within a seven-part series that the Globe published during ECPAT's 1996 Congress and even more briefly gesture to the role of Vietnam. The first in the series states that "men on the move", often those "in uniform," help create the demand that has led to the abuse of children, specifically noting that "the presence of U.S. troops helped create the famous bar scenes of Bangkok" (Knox "Sex Trade" A7). Another article in the series suggests that the "presence of US troops during the Vietnam War accelerated the growth of the sex industry," while the final example merely asserts that an expansion of the Thai sex industry occurred "not coincidentally during the Vietnam War" (Casey "Prostitution Feeds" A10; Casey "Prostitution Weakens" A11).

Although these statements may help to somewhat demystify the existence of a large, foreign-oriented sex trade, their brevity leaves far more of this history obscured than revealed. Indeed, the cursory nature of these references gives the impression that the growth in the sex trade was a natural or inevitable by-product of U.S. troops rather than the result of high-level agreements and the subsequent, concerted push to increase tourism to Thailand. With the predominant focus on present-day, innocent victims of this industry, the fact that adults were and remain the majority of its workforce and continue to struggle against its often exploitative working conditions, is lost. In other words, both the historical development of the industry and its adult workers are excluded from the public, common sense knowledge being produced about the sex tourism industry in these articles.

Even such passing gestures to this history, and certainly the more typical absence of attention to historical context and ongoing structural inequalities from these articles, help to naturalize the ascriptions of guilt to the groups blamed more frequently than adult sex workers for contributing to the exploitation of Thai children. Specifically, the Thai government, Thai parents, and Western tourists are most regularly positioned as responsible for this exploitation, both during and after the 1990s. In fact, the Thai government receives a similarly vacillating portrayal in articles focused on child sex tourism as in articles concerned with the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, the indignant criticism of the government persists longer in articles about child sex tourism. Eleven articles between 1989 and 1998 suggest that the government's inability or unwillingness to address tourists' sexual abuse of children is allowing the expansion of such abuse in the country. For instance, the brief 1989 article concerning the Norwegian study simply

and blatantly suggests that governments in “countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Sri Lanka have been unwilling to clamp down on sex tours from Japan, Western Europe or the United States for financial reasons” (Reuters A18). Likewise, a 1995 article asserts that despite long knowing that there was a “sophisticated triangle of child prostitution in Thailand, the Philippines and Sri Lanka” all three governments, “fearing a loss of much-needed tourism revenues, did nothing” (Girard “Sex Tourists” F10). Lumping Thailand with other countries and suggesting these nations are the worst offenders draws upon and reinforces as common sense the notion that Third World countries are both indistinguishable and inherently corrupt. These articles thus combine with the stories of children’s exploitation to bolster Vanaspong’s suggestion that for the international media “to make a good story about prostitution in Thailand, the worse the situation is the better, the younger the child is the better, and the more irresponsible the government is the better” (143). Furthermore, the criticisms of the government never broaden to a consideration of how laws surrounding the sex trade in Thailand have contributed to exploitative working conditions for women in foreign-oriented establishments. With both adult sex workers and the development of the sex tourism industry excluded from the discourse around child sex tourism, there is neither room nor need for such considerations. The seemingly obvious, common sense nature of this exclusion underscores how effectively these articles silence adult sex workers’ voices and demands.

However, in keeping with patterns found in chapter three, the Thai government is given some authority through regular quoting and paraphrasing of officials. Moreover, by the late 1990s, the Thai government is most consistently mentioned in relation to its

effective “crackdown” on the child sex tourism trade. As early as 1996, an article in the Globe suggests that “Thailand and the Philippines” are “clamping down,” forcing child sex tourists to other countries (Freeman “Laws” A7). Similarly, a 1998 article on Columbia as a newer destination for child sex tourists relates this growth in part to the “crack down in Asia,” while a story from 1999 asserts that “stricter enforcement in Thailand and the Philippines appears to be pushing” the child sex trade to “Vietnam and Cambodia” (Diebel “Canadian” 1; McArthur “Crackdown” D1). Finally, all three papers published articles about Costa Rica in 2000, suggesting that child sex tourism is worsening there due to “crackdowns” in “Thailand and the Philippines” (Jimenez “Tourist” A13; Kovalski “The Dark” 1; Williams “Officials” A10).

On the one hand, these articles provide a counterpoint to the negative portrayals of the Thai government. On the other, the suggestions that the government’s crackdown has pushed child sex tourists to other South East Asian nations, Columbia, or Costa Rica sustain Thailand’s position as a benchmark for measuring a country’s child sex tourism industry. That is, continual acknowledgments of Thailand’s efforts to cease the flow of child sex tourists are one way the country remains figured in public, common sense knowledge as a prime locale for such tourists after the more intense coverage of Thailand’s industry during the mid-1990s. Moreover, the shift in the portrayal of the Thai government is hardly accompanied by a sudden interest in adult sex workers. Instead, the more detailed focus simply turns to another country’s children, suggesting an ongoing preoccupation with innocent victims, while the existence, exploitation, and voices of those less easily connected with this image remain ignored.

The concentrated coverage of Thailand in the 1990s also occasions the most frequent mentions of Thai parents' supposed role in child sex tourism. 13 articles in the early-to-mid-1990s suggest the availability of minors for sex tourists relates in part to families selling their children into the trade. The fact that such sales are also covered in 1986 and 2001, however, suggests a recurring interest in this phenomenon has also helped to insert into public discourse the idea that Thailand is a popular site for tourists to abuse children both before and after the 1990s. These 15 articles render my corpus consistent with another point in Vanaspong's analysis, as she argues that the Western media focuses on "young children and only slightly older virgins, sold by desperately poor parents to the brothel keepers of Bangkok and Pattaya" (140). Some stories in my corpus simply assert that these sales occur, such as one 1990 Globe article whose subtitle states that in Thailand, "thousands of boys and girls are sold into prostitution to cater to the demands of Western pedophiles" (Smucker "Children" A12). However, several articles are far more condemning of the families involved. Assertions that parents are motivated by "greed" and a desire for material goods appear in several pieces, including that published in 2001 (Perrin "In Bangkok" A17; McNaulty "Selling" D3). The moral depravity and backwardness of these families is heightened in two articles with suggestions that there is a "tradition" or a "cottage industry" around selling daughters into the trade (Casey "Prostitution Feeds" A10; Perrin A17). By aligning these "sales" with local traditions and culture, these articles impart to readers a sense that such villages and families have become essentially corrupt and immoral – so much so that they routinely sell their children's innocence. These articles thereby add to public discourse a sense that a perverted Thai culture is to blame for these children's abuse^{xi}.

This sense is secured by the fact that these articles almost never include any mention of the factors which contribute to such agreements, or any hesitation with regard to their frequency – let alone the fact that, as mentioned in chapter two, these “sales” seem to be decreasing. If mentioned at all, the poverty of these families is typically acknowledged but left abstracted from historical and contemporary policies. For instance, the 2001 article simply suggests that one particular village is “easy picking” for “brothel agents” since it is in the “depths of poverty” (Perrin A17). Admittedly, one article in the Globe’s seven-part series which gestured to the history of the industry also suggests that there are “(g)lobal economic trends” widening income gaps in areas where “child prostitution is rampant” (Knox “Sex Trade” A6). The article adds that “structural ills such as globalization and poverty” contribute to the problem, including sales of Thai daughters (Knox A7). The 1986 article similarly suggests that the falling export price for rice is causing Thai farmers to change “their product mix” to include daughters (Walkom “Thai” B14). This being said, neither of these articles truly interrogates these factors or invites readers to do so. These changes or conditions are left as phenomena that merely exist or occur, not as results of national and international policies that merit consideration or could be changed. Crucially, the trope of parents selling off their daughters also obscures the idea of women choosing to enter the foreign-oriented sex trade, whether influenced by a sense of familial duty or for other reasons. While children sold into the trade by their own parents perhaps assume a prime place in the hierarchy of child prostitutes deserving of attention and assistance, this hierarchy continues to exclude women’s varying experiences and concerns from the common sense knowledge produced in these articles.

Even more enduring and frequent than the portrayal of families heartlessly selling their children is the image of Western men exploiting them. Quite unlike the lack of comment upon tourists in articles analyzed in chapter three, Western tourists are consistently indicted in stories about child sex tourism. While tourists are arguably implied as guilty actors in all such stories, 25 articles between 1990 and 2005 include more explicitly negative descriptions of them. Again, the most frequent and clearest examples appear in the early-to-mid-1990s. The first such article ranges from describing these tourists as “pedophiles” to “deviants” whose “pervert bars have quadrupled” in Bangkok to keep pace with demand (Smucker A12). In 1991, the first article to mention ECPAT suggests that “well-organized pedophile organizations (...) have regular groups of sex tourists visiting Asian countries” (“Campaign” K12). “Pedophile” reappears in nine more articles, strengthening this image of pathological men traveling to defile innocent children (i.e., McAteer “Children” J15; Erlich “Bangkok” E5).

In the first half of the 1990s, this image combines with the negative portrayal of the Thai government to confirm O’Connell Davidson’s suggestion that ECPAT successfully portrayed the issue to the media and policymakers alike as “involving sexual deviants (‘pedophiles’ and ‘child molesters’) taking advantage of either weak or inadequate child protection laws or poor law enforcement in Third World countries” (33). Further, O’Connell Davidson contends that while there are some documented instances of sex tours organized for pedophiles, far more men may simply be “regular” tourists who take advantage of a locale’s sex industry and inadvertently hire a person under 18 (32-4, 42). O’Connell Davidson’s position that such nuanced considerations are absent from the media coverage in the 1990s bears out in my corpus in that decade and long afterwards.

Of course, a few articles do slightly nuance the portrayal of those who exploit children. The first feature in the Globe's seven-part series in 1996 actually quotes O'Connell Davidson suggesting that many tourists do not think about the age of those they hire for sex (Knox A6). Another article in 1996 covers a presentation at ECPAT's Congress which suggested that merely positioning pedophiles as monsters will do little to prevent them from abusing children in their own countries or overseas (Knox "Focus" A11). Nevertheless, these exceptions do little to disrupt the overarching focus on pathological Westerners abusing innocent children. An article published in the Star the same week in 1996 that dissenting views appeared in the Globe reiterates that "sex tours to countries such as Sri Lanka and Thailand represent a major segment of the child sex trade," strengthening the image of men traveling with the sole intent to victimize innocent children (Canadian Press "Canada" A20). As late as 2005, a Globe news article explicitly invokes the image of "pedophiles" gathering in Thailand, suggesting these men may be preying upon both Western and Thai children affected by the tsunami of December, 2004 (Mattias "Swedish" A7).

The degree to which this image remained firmly within public, common sense knowledge after the 1990s is further evident in seven articles which either mention attacks on someone's character through implications that they are a child sex tourist, or which use such travel to emphasize someone's depravity. For instance, in 2003, book reviewers for both the Star and Globe establish a protagonist's detestable nature with reference to the character's hiring of Thai teenagers for sex while on holiday (Basilieres "Bound" D12; Foran "Bomb-astic"). In 2001, an article in the Post and two in the Globe covering a provincial by-election in Toronto all note how the NDP took issue with the

fact that the Liberal candidate, Bob Hunter, wrote a novel in which the protagonist has “sex with teenaged prostitutes in Thailand” – and quote Hunter’s indignant denials that the novel was in any way autobiographical (Benzie “Liberal” A15; Mackie “Book” A15; Mackie “NDP” A17). Similar outrage is expressed in a 2003 article in the Post covering several Laval University political science faculty members’ protest over “thinly veiled” attacks on the department in a fellow Professor’s novel (Hamilton “Professor’s” A1). Among the concerns is the perceived attempt to defame the “one political science professor who travels regularly in Asia” by depicting a character using “the services of child prostitutes while travelling to Thailand” (A1).

This use of subtle or blatant accusations of child sex tourism in Thailand to establish or imply someone’s immorality, and the related need to distance oneself from such accusations, suggests that the image of pedophiles traveling to Thailand remains a potent, accessible part of common sense. This is not to deny that such men travel, or that others take advantage of minors without considering their age or circumstances. However, one can easily extend Montgomery and O’Connell Davidson’s arguments to suggest that even these passing invocations of child sex tourism, as well as the more explicit indicting of pedophiles in articles during the 1990s, put forth a sensational image disconnected from structural inequalities on a global and more local scale that help sustain the sex tourism industry. As Montgomery suggests, child sex tourism becomes a “unique evil, unrelated to economic forces and linked instead to degeneracy and wickedness” (3). In the same vein, focusing on pedophiles ignores how adult sex workers may encounter unfair or even abusive conditions at the hands of foreign clients, much less the unjust policies of many foreign-oriented establishments. Men who abuse those

who are not so clearly reconcilable with ideas of innocence thus remain unscathed. This focus further negates the need to consider women's strategies for avoiding or limiting such exploitation, as adults in the trade are persistently left aside in favour of innocent, sympathetic children in need of rescue from these evil men.

Saving the Children

Far from just putting forth this image of exploited children who need assistance and protection, a majority of these articles indicate just how these children could or are being helped. In contrast with how articles focused on sex tourism and AIDS insinuated that Thailand alone must manage the epidemic, but clearly in line with ECPAT's campaigning, Canada and other Western countries are positioned as central to this help. 35 articles between 1991 and 2001 either suggest the need for countries sending sex tourists to pass or better enforce laws punishing child sex tourists, or highlight such laws in action. The first hints of this position appear as soon as articles begin to cover ECPAT, in Star articles from 1991 and 1992 that covered, respectively, the work of a Canadian Church group affiliated with ECPAT and an upcoming Church conference also associated with the group ("Campaign" K12; McAteer J15). In fact, the 1992 article suggests that the Canadian ECPAT group had already "met with government officials" to discuss new legislation (McAteer J15).

While only two stories over the ensuing five years suggest that such laws should be developed or have been at work in other Western countries, articles promoting a legalistic response proliferate in 1996 in relation to both the newly designed Canadian legislation and ECPAT's Congress. Of the year's 17 articles about child sex tourism, 14

include some discussion of the legal measures being designed or implemented in Canada and other countries attending the Congress. Within this 14, four particularly emphasize Canada's newly-introduced Bill C-27, including an opinion piece written by then-minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, and then-minister for International Cooperation, Pierre Pettigrew (Axworthy "Canada" A17). The other three focused on Canada's new Bill also give ample space for Axworthy's pronouncements, as do several more articles throughout 1996. This privileged access to the media – access that government officials routinely enjoy – helps cast Canada's legislation in an extremely positive light. Two articles which announce the planned Bill are particularly notable in this regard, as both assert that the law will allow for "much stiffer sentence than might be the case where the crime occurred" (Sallot "Canada Targets" A5; Ferguson "Asia Favours" A9). The Star article adds that "Canada is being applauded by several South East Asian countries," including Thailand, for this "tough legislation" (Ferguson A9).

These articles demonstrate the pattern of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation mentioned in chapter three. Canada is positioned as a superior nation able to save the innocent children of nations whose weak laws and governments have failed them – governments who now graciously welcome Canada's assistance. Holland's analysis of how images of children used in appeals for aid position the West as the saviour of children in developing countries is also relevant to this insistence on the need for Canadian legislation – although here, individual donors are replaced with the Canadian justice system at large. But as O'Connell Davidson and Montgomery point out, the near-exclusive focus on legal action in both media and policy responses to ECPAT's campaigns oversimplifies the issue of child sex tourism (Montgomery 154; O'Connell

Davidson 42-3). Indeed, even after the negative portrayal of Thailand's government wanes, the emphasis placed on these laws relies upon and perpetuates the simplistic portrayal of evil men exploiting innocent children. In Montgomery's words, "(t)rying and condemning individual men has a neatness to it which is appealing: it unites Western NGOs with their Thai counterparts, and it makes a symbolic gesture that this is also the West's responsibility" (169). Certainly, given the focus on pathological Western men, such laws readily appear as a commonsensical solution to the problem. However, not only have very few cases been prosecuted – only three individuals have been charged in Canada since 2000 and one convicted – but such actions leave factors contributing to the availability of minors in the trade unaddressed (O'Connell Davidson 35; Roz Prober "Canada's"; "RCMP Announce"). Focusing on punishing these men also deftly elides the fact that women working in the sex tourism industry may both experience exploitation and have their own ideas about how to ameliorate the industry – perhaps even including, but not limited to, decreasing the abuse of minors.

Although some articles in my corpus do criticize or complicate this response to child sex tourism, these exceptions yet again fall short of suggesting an entirely different approach aimed at alleviating structural inequalities upon which the trade rests – much less introducing adult sex workers' voices into the debate. For instance, the first of the Globe's seven-part series in 1996 argues that the proposed Canadian legislation might allow a conviction based on "flimsy evidence" collected by "unreliable investigators abroad" (Knox "Sex Trade" A7). While this article strips away the fanfare surrounding the legislation, it does so only by invoking stereotypical images of Third World countries as inherently "unreliable." Two articles in 1999 are slightly more critical of the actual

Canadian legislation, pointing out that no prosecutions had been launched against Canadian child sex tourists (McArthur “Crackdown” D1; “Worth” 1). However, these articles either suggest that these laws “must be enforced” or that there are ongoing investigations. Both articles thus extend into the late-1990s the sense that such laws are the appropriate means of addressing the abuse of innocents.

Furthermore, the potential of these laws is highlighted the following year when the Post and the Globe cover a French court’s conviction of a French man for the rape of a 12-year-old Thai girl (“Man Gets” A13; “Sex Tourist” A23). In turn, a Post editorial published in early 2001 uses this conviction to highlight the ongoing lack of prosecutions in Canada and to criticize Bill C-27 (“Sex Tourism” A15). The editorial suggests that because French legislation was recently successful, it should be studied “as an example of how to help end the sexual exploitation of children” (A15). As with other articles, this editorial hardly suggests a radical rethinking of the issue of child sex tourism grounded in addressing structural inequalities within Thailand or internationally. Neither is it suggested that it would be fruitful to widen the debate to consider the experiences or demands of adult sex workers. As always, these women remain quite apart from the focus on how “we” can and must save innocent children; a focus that this article perpetuates after the heightened coverage of the 1990s has dissipated.

Childish Women

The need to consider adult sex workers’ voices is further negated in two of these articles that do mention women, only to conflate them with children and thereby suggest that they similarly need to be protected and rescued. The first example appears in the

1990 article that opens with the story of a girl sold to a teahouse and also gestures to the history of the industry. Early in the article, the author states that “700,000 women and children are working as prostitutes” in Thailand (Kelly “Breaking” H3). In the context of an article primarily about the sexual exploitation of minors, this assertion suggests that the experiences and needs of these two groups are essentially the same. Aligned with children in this way, women are suggested to be equally innocent, but become prone to the associated impulse to “save” those in the sex tourism industry. After all, the discourse surrounding children’s innocence entails ideas about their lack of agency and subsequent dependency. Furthermore, lumping women and children together connects this story (and the article discussed below) to a long history of diffusing or denying women’s power through suggesting they are akin to children. For instance, several authors note that a view of women as childlike was part of the rhetoric used in several Western societies to rationalize denying women the right to own property or vote (Gittins 5; Nilan 275; Oakley 14). More recently, analyses of representations of women as varied as Princess Diana and Rosie O’Donnell indicate how aligning women with children or childlike behaviour continues to serve as a means of diffusing and containing a woman’s potential threat to societal norms and boundaries (Jenny Hockey and Allison James “Finding” 304; Helene A. Shugart “On Misfits” 54, 65, 72).

In the specific case of this article, the collapsing of boundaries between women and children also dredges up and relies upon the persistent, common sense nature of stereotypes of both “Asian” women and Third World sex workers as passive victims, while extending the submissive “china doll” stereotype to its asexual extreme. This conflation may also be eased by portrayals of Thailand as an “infantile place inhabited by

child-like people” that Montgomery suggests have influenced Western conceptions of the country and its citizens since the seventeenth century (142). At a minimum, this kind of slippage discourages a consideration of the fact that women might have varying reasons for and experiences of sex work, let alone demands and concerns that ought to be respected.

Strikingly, however, this article is also one that suggests men are opting for children out of a fear of contracting AIDS from adult sex workers, rendering the article rather ambivalent in its portrayal of these women. Nonetheless, neither the suggestion that these women are to blame for children’s abuse nor that they are to be considered one and the same as innocent children validates adult sex workers’ demands. Here, as throughout my corpus, a more nuanced portrayal of sex workers as capable women negotiating their circumstances is excluded in favour of familiar stereotypes. As always, these stereotypes decidedly exclude adult sex workers’ voices and struggles to improve their working conditions from the public, common sense knowledge put forth in this article.

The other article is less ambiguous in its suggestion that one need not and in fact should not distinguish adult sex workers from children in Thailand’s sex tourism trade, and more clearly calls up and reinforces as common sense stereotypes of Third World sex workers’ passive victim status and “Asian” women’s passive, even childlike “nature”. This 2003 Post news story expresses concern that an Outdoor Life Network documentary series about red light districts received the Canadian Film and Video Tax Credit (Blackwell “Show” A5). The article decries the use of taxpayers’ money for recently-aired episodes on Bangkok and Pattaya since, as the lead emphasizes, “Thailand is a

country beset by a huge adult and child prostitution problem” (A5). Not only does this assertion reproduce the sense that Thailand cannot control this problem, but it again lumps adults and children involved into one category. Furthermore, the article paraphrases a representative of a Canadian NGO combating “child prostitution and pornography” who suggests that while it is unclear if any sex workers seen in the documentary are minors, “children are an integral part of the whole industry which has been estimated to employ anywhere from 200,000 to 2 million prostitutes in Thailand” (A5). This statement is similar to what van Dijk calls “apparent admissions,” which facilitate the insertion of a debatable proposition by first acknowledging that it is not always true (Racism 188). Here, the admission of uncertainty is undercut by stressing that children are central to the industry, encouraging readers to accept the likelihood that many of the sex workers filmed were underage – and thus innocent victims who need rescuing.

The article follows this apparent admission with the representative’s claim that “(m)any adult prostitutes were forced into the business as children” (Blackwell A5). By suggesting that many women are merely older versions of the children forced into the trade, the article further seals off the need to consider different reasons women may turn to work in the foreign-oriented sex trade and any of their demands for change within it. Lastly, the article suggests that traffickers are “preying (...) on impoverished girls and women of Northern Thailand” to supply the foreign-oriented trade with workers (A5). Here again, women and children are combined into one, ahistorical, impoverished mass who are all implicitly in need of interventions to save them from this industry. Although this article may create concern for the conditions of both women and children in the

trade, it does so only by suggesting that these groups are best viewed as coterminous – equally innocent and therefore equally sympathetic and requiring assistance. Once again, the need to respect adult sex workers' voices and strategies is obscured.

Conclusion

With its emphasis on the centrality of children to sex tourism in Thailand, this article is among those that maintain the idea that Thailand has a particular problem with child sex tourism well beyond the intensity of coverage in the 1990s. Clearly, although the coverage of child sex tourism in Thailand has decreased since that decade, the explosion of articles featuring descriptions of children's exploitation combined with inflated but unquestioned statistics successfully inserted into public, common sense knowledge the image of innocent Thai children – children sometimes sold by their parents and ignored by their government – being abused by pathological tourists. The persistent absence of historical and contemporary structural issues naturalized the portrayal of those who are deemed guilty for this abuse and the related focus on the need for legal punishment of the tourists involved. Being less easily aligned with the innocence so strongly associated with children, the sheer existence of adult sex workers, let alone their experiences of exploitation or efforts to ameliorate their conditions, is persistently excluded from this discourse. These considerations are further pushed aside in the two articles that conflate women with children in need of rescue and the six that suggest women themselves, as carriers of disease, are partially to blame for children's abuse.

When adult Thai sex workers are included at all, therefore, the Canadian press seems only to produce knowledge that either reduces these women to children who need

rescuing, or positions them as naturally diseased and in need of control. The conclusion to this thesis reflects further on the strength of these patterns in relation to three articles published near the end of the period studied that were spurred neither by child sex tourism nor the spread of HIV/AIDS. Yet while these articles provide some exceptions to these patterns, I will also consider why it remains unclear that these exceptional elements truly signal a shift towards creating more nuanced common sense knowledge of adult, Thai sex workers that legitimizes their demands for change in the industry.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: Challenges to Change

Introduction

The title of this concluding chapter alludes to my doubt about whether, in the near future, portrayals of adult, Thai sex workers will truly shift towards encouraging public, common sense knowledge of these women not reliant on the tired stereotypes and discourses seen throughout this thesis. These doubts are fueled in part by three articles published in later years of my corpus that, while deviating in some ways, fail to completely shed the patterns discussed throughout the previous two chapters. Analyzing how these seemingly-exceptional articles still exhibit similarities with the rest of my corpus provides an opportunity to reflect more broadly on the ongoing process that is the construction of common sense knowledge about adult sex workers in Thailand's sex tourism industry. I then consider how the structures of news media's production may pose additional challenges to creating coverage that could help destabilize the common sense nature of the categories of innocent and guilty, and associated, stereotype-laden discourses currently governing the public knowledge about these women put forth in the Canadian press.

However, there is a second meaning of this title which points to my other aim in this conclusion. In turning from a discussion of these potential obstacles to change to suggesting ways that coverage of the Thai sex tourism industry and its adult, female workers could be improved, I launch my own "challenge to change" these discourses. For despite my doubts about the immanence of a drastic, consistent shift in portrayals of Thai

sex workers, simply throwing up my hands in despair risks falling into a complicit silence. At a minimum, making these suggestions underscores that the representations analyzed in this thesis are neither necessary nor inevitable. And as I emphasize at the end of this conclusion, there are important reasons to continue to critique, object to, and suggest alternatives to any portrayals of Thai sex workers that render commonsensical the negation or ignoring of these women's concerns and demands.

Exceptions and Consistencies

The first of the three, somewhat exceptional articles to be discussed is an opinion piece from the Post that was published in 1998. In fact, this piece exhibits less deviation from the stereotypes seen throughout my corpus than the other two articles. What is particularly remarkable about this piece, however, is that these stereotypes crop up despite the article's central criticism of sensational media coverage of a massage parlour raid in Toronto that resulted in the arrest of 53 Thai, Malay, Vietnamese and Korean women (Lamothe "Vice Arrests" A17; see also Toronto Network Trafficking 60^{xii}). The author suggests that coverage was consistent with the tendency for sex workers to be "cast into roles", including those of "disease-carrier" and "victim" – in other words, key images analyzed in this thesis (Lamothe A17). Yet this criticism is followed swiftly by the suggestion that in one area of Bangkok with foreign-oriented establishments, Nana Plaza, "the prostitutes become child-like" when "off-duty" (Lamothe A17). The author's recounting of the naïve questions about Canada that these women crowded around him to ask heightens this explicit suggestion that adult sex workers are just like children – and

therefore sympathetic, innocent and perhaps victims in need of protection and help after all.

Qualifying that they are childlike when off-duty could leave room for a conception of these women as untrustworthy “dragon ladies” when they are working. Conversely, the implication may be that the sex workers lose their childlike glee when on-duty and passively endure their trade. At the very least, I am not convinced that the author succeeds in replacing these images – ones that he critiques – with one of these workers as capable adults. My uncertainty persists despite the author’s suggestion that some of the women he met when in Thailand are working to support families (Lamothe A17). This suggestion is undercut with the assertion that these women’s off-duty and thus perhaps “true” nature is like that of children, invoking more familiar, stereotypical images of Thai sex workers. Conceivably, the strength of ideas about “Asian” women’s passivity and submissiveness and even Thai people’s childishness is such that these conflicting comments did not seem problematic to the author or any editors who may have seen the column. Whatever the reason, this article’s depiction of Thai sex workers does not profoundly challenge suggestions that at least some of these women, being akin to innocent children, may need saving from this industry rather than respect for their concerns.

The other two articles more clearly challenge the kinds of common sense ideas about adult sex workers seen in the majority of articles analyzed. The Post and the Globe both published stories in 2003 discussing the Thai government’s large conference to debate the legal status of the country’s local and foreign-oriented sex trades. Each article notes that some sex workers were invited to this conference and includes some indication

of their concerns. In the Post article, this involves a quote from an EMPOWER representative about the desire to emphasize to other conference participants that sex workers “are human beings and deserve education, social welfare, and basic human rights” (Goodspeed “Thailand” A13). The article also quotes a sex worker who suggests that legalization may improve working conditions and provide women with recourse if abused (A13). Other sex workers are then paraphrased concerning a fear that legalization would result in registration systems that could “stigmatize them (...) and leave them vulnerable to blackmail” (A13). The article thus includes voices of sex workers and their organization, and indicates something of the complexity of the debate surrounding sex work’s legal status. As such, the piece avoids suggesting that all sex workers have the same concerns, while suggesting that these concerns deserve to be part of the debate around the industry.

The Globe article on the conference strays even further from the typical exclusion of sex workers’ voices through quoting and paraphrasing Ping Pong, a sex worker who has “worked as a health co-ordinator” for EMPOWER for six years (Tenove ““Guess”” F3). Moreover, Ping Pong positions Canadian tourists squarely as contributors to exploitation in the sex tourism trade, complicating any idea that only a few pedophiles do so:

Canadian men are well-known for wanting to take women on trips. You think this is very nice of them? No! They want someone to sleep with at night, and all day they want you to be a tour guide and a translator. So you have to work three jobs for the price of one! (F3).

The article also paraphrases Ping Pong’s contention that for some, including herself, “prostitution is not a job of last resort,” but rather a choice based upon a consideration of the other available options (F3). The article indicates that Ping Pong decided sex work

would best enable her to support her children, and notes her opinion that some form of regulation involving checks for “health and safety” would improve the trade (F3). This article therefore features an extremely strong woman who flouts the common sense notion that some sex workers are childlike and in need of rescue. Nor is Ping Pong positioned as either an agent or a pool of contagion in need of control. In contrast with these stereotypes, Ping Pong clearly articulates her awareness of both injustices in the trade and what might help to improve them. Furthermore, mentioning that she chose sex work in order to support her children gives readers a sense of an entire life aside from sex work that is almost unique among the articles studied.

These two articles insert into public discourse images of sex workers and an awareness of EMPOWER that are sorely lacking across the majority of my corpus. To a greater extent than the editorial published in 1998, it might be tempting to suggest that these articles herald a shift in the portrayal of Thai sex workers away from attributions of guilt or innocence wedded to racist and sexist stereotypes, towards greater inclusion of their voices and concerns. Unfortunately, other aspects of these articles add to my misgivings about whether we have (or will any time soon) rid ourselves of the kinds of discourses seen in the majority of articles studied. First of all, like the article discussed in chapter three which mentioned EMPOWER’s response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the voices and views of sex workers are structurally downplayed in both pieces. Each article raises the concerns of sex workers only in the final third, signaling to readers that these factors are mere background; not what the stories are really about. Instead, the Globe article foregrounds the suggestion that the conference arose in part because of the decision of an upscale massage parlour owner, Chuwit Kamolvisit, to cease paying huge

bribes to Bangkok police and to hold a series of public press conferences naming those accepting bribes and officials who patronize his establishments (Tenove F3). Moreover, the article opens with a description of one of Chuwit's opulent massage parlours, including the irrelevant detail that the dresses of some women working in the parlour "hint at the lingerie underneath" (F3). Although this description is less sensational than those in articles concerning HIV/AIDS, it is problematic nonetheless in its suggestion that the alluringly-sexual nature of these women is of paramount importance to understanding the Thai sex trade – as opposed to its historical development, ongoing structural issues, or sex workers' efforts to improve their working conditions. In lieu of foregrounding such issues, readers get a glimpse of the depressingly familiar "Asian" woman whose exotic and erotic appearance may, even without a suggestion that she is diseased, render her dangerously irresistible to her Western clientele.

However, in keeping with the ambivalence of stereotypes of "Asian" women, this story moves swiftly within the lead paragraphs from describing these workers first as "women", and then as "girls" (Tenove F3). Akin to the article mentioned in chapter four, this use of "girls" suggests that Thai sex workers are childlike, if not always actual children. Although this slippage may undercut the implication that these women are dangerously alluring, the implicit suggestion, however unintentional, is that they are without the ability to make their own choices and demands – at least not ones that need to be heeded. Also before turning to Ping Pong, the article stresses that unlike workers in upper-class establishments such as Chuwit's some are "coaxed or forced" from Burma and Cambodia into Thailand and then held in brothels (Tenove F3). Further, readers learn that many of these women "start out as minors" (F3). On the one hand, the article may be

merely demonstrating the range of conditions and ages of people in various segments of Thailand's sex trades. Yet putting these assertions before the consideration of Ping Pong's experience may further bolster a sense that this trade is most characterized by minors forced into brothels, whether for Thai or foreign customers. Like articles discussed in chapter four, this piece emphasizes those who can easily be considered innocent victims in need of rescue, rather than the need to fully engage with EMPOWER's concerns and the perspective of Ping Pong and others who may have chosen sex work.

Finally, Ping Pong's assertions are immediately undercut with those of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, who assert that any form of legalization of the sex trade will lead to an increase in trafficking. While this "prohibitionist position" is then contested, a more traditionally-legitimized source is used to do so: an academic who has spent "25 years researching the trade" (Tenove F3). This is not to discredit the academic's assertion that simply outlawing sex work does nothing to alleviate the poverty that pushes some women to choose the sex trade for want of other options (F3). However, the use of his voice in lieu of Ping Pong or another representative of EMPOWER reestablishes and confirms the press's hierarchy of "authorized knowers" as one in which institutional and officials sources, not sex workers, are considered the most trustworthy and desirable (Ericson et al. 5). While Ping Pong may be given space to articulate her perspective, readers who even reach the point in the piece where she is quoted are not invited to consider her views and concerns as any more central or significant to the debate than others.

The shorter Post article does not foreground Chuwit to the same degree and refrains from anything approaching overcomplete descriptions of sex workers. In fact, this article hints at the history of the sex tourism trade, noting within its lead paragraph that “(s)ince the days of the Vietnam War, when tens of thousands of U.S. combat troops flocked to the country for brief periods of ‘rest and recreation,’ Thailand has reigned unchallenged as the Sin Capital of Asia” (Goodspeed A13). Of course, as before, this uncomplicated assertion does very little to interrogate this history. Instead, the rise in a foreign-oriented sex trade remains an apparently natural result of these troops. More notably, when reviewing the debate of the conference the article suggests that “(f)eminists argue legalization will do nothing to improve the rights of female sex trade workers and will only entrench the industry” (A13). The article thereby glosses over the ongoing debate among feminists themselves concerning the sex trade. Most crucially, the Post also fails to completely validate sex workers’ voices. Beyond appearing late in the article, the position of EMPOWER is countered with that of a Thai academic who asserts that “legalization will do nothing”, thereby again undercutting sex workers an institutional source more traditionally considered authoritative (A13). While this article avoids invoking stereotypical ideas about Thai sex workers, it also avoids clearly positioning these women’s demands and concerns as a central part of debates around the industry.

Containing and Constraining Change

These articles are somewhat reminiscent of how the occasional exceptions to or complications in the patterns discussed in chapters three and four fell short of

fundamentally challenging the predominant discourses being drawn upon and produced. Certainly, these three articles remind one that the construction of common sense and the associated, prevailing hegemony is an ongoing, contested process. For while there are some significant differences between these articles and the majority that I have analyzed, these differences are surrounded and undercut by more familiar elements. In other words, the challenges to common sense notions about adult sex workers in the Thai sex tourism industry that appear in these three articles are contained and somewhat neutralized by the stereotypes invoked in the 1998 editorial; the Globe article's slippage between dubbing the workers women and girls and foregrounding of those more "innocent" than adults who select sex work; the erasure of the debates amongst feminists and sex workers in the Post; the use of institutional, "authoritative" sources in lieu of or to counter sex workers in both the Globe and the Post; and the placement of sex workers' concerns in the latter sections of these two articles. As such, I am entirely uncertain that these articles would encourage questions about the rightfulness of programs or policies regarding the sex tourism industry, either within Thailand or internationally, that fail to respect adult sex workers' desires and demands.

This is not to suggest that the journalists and editors involved consciously sought to ensure that these articles did not depart too drastically from existing discourses. The opinion piece suggests how even an attempt to actively criticize such portrayals of Thai sex workers can still, however inadvertently, invoke and thereby strengthen pernicious stereotypes that dull the attempted critique. It would seem that the strength of these discourses and stereotypes – the very common sense nature of the "regime of truth" surrounding Thai sex workers – makes it difficult for those who are part of a society in

which they operate and circulate to simply or easily dispense with them. In turn, the stereotypes characterizing this regime of truth (whether invoked through various combinations of presuppositions, statistics, descriptions, and conspicuous absences, or in any other way) easily and persistently keep adult, Thai sex workers outside the bounds of “normalcy.” As such, the need to respect these women’s capability to assess, negotiate within, and make legitimate demands for changes to their situation is obscured.

In addition to the sheer tenacity of the stereotype-laden discourses I have analyzed, certain facets of the production of news media may pose further barriers to creating coverage of the sex tourism industry that could help to alter the common sense knowledge of its adult, female sex workers. Among these factors are the preference for official and/or institutional sources, as well as the influence of news values such as novelty, negativity, and the need for simplification that have been raised earlier in this thesis. It is worth also briefly taking note of broader factors, as structures of ownership have long been criticized for creating conditions hostile to a truly wide array of views and perspectives in the news media – particularly those from the developing world and any which may challenge the existing social order (Allan 8; Robert A. Hackett et al. The Missing 58; Henry & Tator 7; Thussu International 43-52; van Dijk 6).

Internationally, there has been and continues to be a radically unequal flow of information whereby a handful of companies based in the “West”, especially the United States and United Kingdom, own a huge number of media outlets worldwide, including major newspapers and news agencies (Thussu “Media Plenty” 50; Thussu International 120)^{xiii}. Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Terhi Rantanen’s research suggests that, as was the case with the prominent news wires in the 1980s, today’s major news agencies (Reuters,

Agence-France Press, and Associated Press) provide a great deal of the news published throughout the world (“News Agencies” 31). Thussu adds that the profit-motive of such corporations has led to an increase in “soft” or entertaining news that travels easily between markets, reducing space for international news – let alone that which truly interrogates or challenges current relations of power (“Media” 52). To Thussu, this politico-economic framework is one contributor to the narrow and simplistic coverage of the developing world that analysts have long bemoaned and continue to analyze (53-5; see also Sreberny and Paterson 4-5). This framework may well have restricted and may continue to shrink the space for coverage of sex tourism that is not readily simplified in relation to existing discourses, or somehow relatable to Western audiences – whether due to the perceived threat of contagion, or the need for “our” intervention.

In addition to being situated in and reliant on this unequal exchange of information, Canada has hardly escaped scrutiny with regard to how the concentration of ownership may decrease the diversity of views put forth in the media, including in Canadian newspapers. Concerns about the impacts of this concentration were raised as early as 1981, and continue today (Ericson et al. 44; Hackett et al. 49 – 61). Currently, most major Canadian dailies are owned by CanWest Global (11 titles, including The National Post; CTVglobemedia (The Globe and Mail); TorStar (The Toronto Star and numerous other Ontario papers); and Quebecor (eight major tabloid newspapers; nine smaller dailies in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta) (CTVglobemedia “CTVglobemedia”; CanWest Global “Newspapers”; Quebecor “One of Canada’s”; TorStar “Newspapers”)^{xiv}.

Henry and Tator support contentions that the “profoundly conservative ideologies” of these few “corporate elite” who control the vast majority of Canada’s

newspapers “are strongly influencing newspaper discourse” (52). The fact that more explicit concerns about such influence have been raised about previous and current owners of the Globe and the Post than the Star may reflect the fact that until 1998, the Star was Canada’s “largest independent (non-chain) daily newspaper” (Hackett et al. 51)^{xv}. However, Hackett et al. note that the Star is not entirely immune to its owners’ priorities, as evidenced in downsizing of staff similar to that observed at many newspapers (79-80). While such downsizing aids the search for higher profits, it often adversely impacts a newspaper’s ability to adequately cover multiple sides of an issue (79-82). Further, Hackett et al. found that many journalists across different publications and outlets indicated a degree of self-censorship in their reporting, for fear of reprisals if they offend ownership or advertisers (85-88). Corporate ownership within Canada may thus diminish the resources available for, and create an environment unfavorable to the productions of news discourses that truly challenge common sense ideas. These ideas then naturalize the prevailing hegemony, thereby helping to sustain the current social order – one in which adult sex workers in the Thai sex tourism trade are not recognized as capable women, easing the exclusion of their concerns from debates about appropriate responses to the industry.

Towards a New Discourse

It is neither my view nor my argument that these aspects of news media production can act as a *Deus ex machina* floated in at the end to adequately explain the problematic representations that I have analyzed throughout this thesis. However, these factors do add to my reservations about the immanence of a change in coverage of sex

tourism in the mainstream Canadian press towards producing public, common sense knowledge that would help place these women's varying demands and experiences at the centre of any debate about or policy regarding the industry. But as suggested in the introduction to this chapter and this thesis, my doubts about the immanence of such a shift do not diminish my belief that analyzing, critiquing, and making recommendation about changes to this coverage provides a means of showing solidarity with Thai sex workers' more direct actions. I would also reiterate that, if nothing else, refusing to accept these limited, stereotyped portrayals as unavoidable and unchangeable combines with such analyses and critiques to further challenge these portrayals.

On the one hand, there is the possibility that EMPOWER's increasing prominence within Thailand – as evidenced by their inclusion at the government's conference in 2003 and the human rights award given to a sex worker in 2005 – will render it increasingly difficult even for news wire stories to ignore what EMPOWER has to say about issues raised with regard to the sex tourism industry. With much of their website translated into English, time constraints and/or language barriers need not prevent acknowledging EMPOWER's work or the group's perspective on many issues in articles about the industry. On the other hand, as seen in the above analysis, it is insufficient to assume that the mere inclusion of EMPOWER's position will break down categories of guilt and innocence and associated stereotypes of "Asian" women and sex workers from the developing world. Simply adding an EMPOWER representative and/or other sex workers' concerns to the end of an article, particularly if the story already invokes stereotypical ideas, does not necessarily encourage a drastic rethinking of common sense ideas about these women.

More effective in this regard might be stories stemming from EMPOWER's work, or otherwise foregrounding the group's efforts and its take on the sex tourism industry. Doing so would not necessitate ignoring other perspectives on the industry, or abandoning the issue of child sex tourism. However, structuring some stories around EMPOWER or at least foregrounding the organization would signal to readers that the views and concerns of the group and its members (i.e., sex workers themselves) are centrally important for understanding the sex tourism industry. Further, such stories would likely provide more opportunities for inserting into public discourse images of these women negotiating their circumstances and demanding and working towards changes in the industry. In turn, these images would complicate and begin to break down ideas that adult sex workers are either passive, childlike victims or dangerous and diseased. In the same vein, overcomplete descriptions of sex workers' appearances or demeanor that reduce adult sex workers to these images must be conscientiously avoided, lest even articles focused on EMPOWER's work dredge up and strengthen such stereotypes.

Although I firmly believe that press coverage of sex tourism should avoid casting all Thai sex workers as helpless victims, I do think that it is important to give some indication of how laws surrounding the industry make it difficult for sex workers to demand protection against abuses and leave unchecked the exploitative policies of many bars and establishments catering to tourists. Of course, it may be difficult to avoid at least acknowledging these unjust aspects of the industry in an article concerned with EMPOWER's work. These aspects of the sex tourism industry would certainly be best discussed in tandem with EMPOWER's ongoing efforts to change them in order to

prevent the suggestion that Thai sex workers are merely or only the passive victims of these laws and policies. Somewhat similarly, it would be useful for articles to include a more critical accounting of the historical development of the industry. While it may be difficult to truly interrogate this development in anything but a lengthy feature, even gesturing to the series of policies, treaties, and laws that fostered the sex tourism industry in Thailand could encourage awareness that the industry is hardly “natural” to Thailand or the hypersexual “nature” of its female citizens. Denaturalizing the industry’s existence could then combine with acknowledgements of its continued, oft-exploitative working conditions to strengthen the sense that these conditions can and should be changed. Ideally, this sense would be accompanied with a growing appreciation of the need to support sex workers’ own efforts to effect such changes.

Final Thoughts

In all likelihood, there are other ways that coverage of sex tourism could begin to dismantle common sense knowledge of these women that negates the need to respect their concerns and demands. Crucially, more nuanced portrayals of these women in the mainstream press and other media could help to replace this common sense with one in which abuses of all sex workers’ human rights – whether at the hands of an establishment’s policies, the legal framework of the industry, or individual customers – are condemned. That is, a common sense in which such condemnation is not dependent on either their age or means of entry into the sex trade rendering the sex worker “innocent”. Similarly, improvements in these portrayals could begin to encourage broader support for sex workers’ protests against policies and programs that unfairly target these

women as sources of disease, while ignoring (or even adding to) the systemic abuses of their human rights. In short, altering the kinds of public, common sense knowledge of adult, Thai sex workers put forth by the corpus I have analyzed could work alongside sex workers' ongoing efforts to have their demands and concerns heard and respected in any and all discussions surrounding the industry – internationally and within Thailand. While fundamentally changing the narrow, stereotyped portrayals seen in my corpus is likely to take a great deal of time and may never be fully effected in the mainstream press, the need to encourage a greater appreciation of both these women's ability to articulate their needs and desires – and of the need for changes in the industry towards better working conditions for these women – makes continuing to argue for changing such portrayals an important task.

Notes

ⁱ My use of quotation marks around Asian is intended as a recognition of how discussions around these stereotypes acknowledge that the category “Asian” is “problematic” (Jiwani “The Eurasian” 182), given the wide differences between and within the many cultures and societies that the term purports to describe (see also Minjeong Kim and Angie Y. Chung “Consuming” 80-1; Yen Le Espiritu *Asian* 93). One can understand the use of “Asian” in these analyses not as suggestive of a monolithic reality, but as an acknowledgement of how dominant representations themselves construct such a monolith, combining many different traditions in order to capitalize on and reproduce ideas about “Asia” and “Asian” peoples (ibid). Or, in the case of my corpus, relying upon and activating these existing ideas while depicting women from a specific country.

ⁱⁱ This assertion is informed by the arguments of Chandra Mohanty, Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema that are outlined in the first section of this chapter, as well as similar assertions by other authors who write about sex tourism and sex workers in Thailand (i.e. Bishop and Robinson 14; Jeffrey xxv). Foregrounding this statement and reflecting on my position also stems from my awareness of Gayatri Spivak’s arguments that one’s position must be made as clear as possible and remain subject to inspection when discussing “Others,” as it is far too easy to simply reinforce structures of domination in such discussions (see, i.e., Spivak “Can the Subaltern Speak” 275; “Culture” 343-45; Beverley Best “Representing” 487).

ⁱⁱⁱ Bishop and Robinson’s analysis of the development and marketing of Thailand’s sex tourism industry, discussion of some sex tourists’ attitudes towards Thai sex workers, and attention to media coverage of the industry in the United States have been helpful in my research – whether in corroborating other authors’ work or providing unique information. However, there are aspects about the authors’ work, especially their representation of Thai sex workers, which demand critique. For instance, despite claiming early in the text that they seek not to speak *for* Thai sex workers (14), the authors later make sweeping claims about the nature of Thai sex workers’ sexuality (229-30, 239-40). Based on very few sources in which Thai sex workers speak about the sexual aspects of their work, Bishop and Robinson assert that “sex work is alienated labour”, not only in terms of the “value of” women’s labour being “appropriated,” but also in an “emotive sense,” since sex workers experience “isolation and revulsion” in lieu of more “authentic feelings” around the sexual elements of their work (247). It is quite possible that many sex workers find that their work leads to an alienation of their sexuality in addition to their labour. However, it is not apparent how such assertions avoid either speaking for these women, or essentializing the reality of all Thai sex workers in manners that work more to mask these women’s agency than to consider their struggles. This and other instances where the authors make broad, almost voyeuristic claims about Thai sex workers (i.e., 7-8) render me reluctant to cite this text without critical comment.

^{iv} There is much about Steinfatt’s long-term, large study of women working in Bangkok’s tourist-oriented bars that has been useful, particularly in giving me a sense of how a large number of sex workers in these bars view their work. As with Bishop and Robinson’s text, however, I have problems with aspects of this book. There is a sense throughout *Working at the Bar* that because he has followed certain traditions with regard to rigour and “scientific” methods, Steinfatt can present an authoritative account of bar work – despite his acknowledgement that his study is limited to the bar workers that were interviewed (29). Indeed, although Steinfatt states that it is important to recognize and validate sex workers’ concerns in policy debates, he also strongly asserts the validity of and need for other perspectives (6). Nevertheless, Steinfatt’s interviewees may well have shaped their responses according to a sense of the interviewers’ interests, influencing the perspective provided in this study to a greater degree than Steinfatt acknowledges. Further, I question Steinfatt’s decision to attempt to confirm sex workers’ answers concerning condom use with their clients, by either visually inspecting the room (if the interaction occurred onsite and sometimes when it occurred outside of the bar) or asking the person cleaning the room if they saw a used condom wrapper or condom (237-38). While it might be easy to suggest that such a practice is necessary to have accurate data, I feel strongly that it reinforces a certain mistrust of sex workers and indicates a lack of respect for their privacy. As such, it is with some trepidation and a desire to include these concerns that I draw upon Steinfatt’s work.

^v Following Bishop and Robinson, I use the Thai convention of referring to people by their given name when I am discussing specific Thai actors such as Mechai (see Bishop and Robinson viii). With Thai academics or other Thais writing in English, such as Pasuk Phongpaichit, I use the English-language convention of referring to them by their family name. Doing so also eases finding the respective reference in the Works Cited.

^{vi} Within Britain, these laws spurred a lengthy and ultimately successful repeal campaign that was particularly notable for the involvement of middle class feminists led by Josephine Butler and her Ladies' National Association (Walkowitz 2, 93-9). According to Walkowitz, these women saw the laws as a "blatant example of class and sex discrimination" that denied women their rights and degraded them through forced examinations (2, see also 108-10). But as Jo Doezema argues, these activists were "ambivalent in their attitudes to prostitutes" ("Forced" 37). On the one hand, they felt they had common "interests with prostitutes" as the laws "threatened the civil liberties of all women" (37). On the other, prostitutes were seen "as victims of male vice, who needed to be rescued" (37). Walkowitz concurs that repealers "were limited by their own class bias and adherence to separate-sphere ideology that stressed women's purity, moral supremacy, and domestic virtue. Thus they became indignant when confronted with an unrepentant prostitute who refused to be reformed and rescued" (7). Clearly, it has long been difficult to comprehend sex workers in more nuanced ways than as victims or naturally diseased women requiring control.

^{vii} The Contagious Diseases Acts were revoked in 1886 in Britain. The colonial Acts generally stayed in place longer, despite ample protest of them both within Britain and among the colonized populations (Levine 92-119).

^{viii} Susan Sontag observes that such a simultaneous desire to demonstrate that AIDS is a disease of "Them", while also remaining aware that it could infect "Us", was common in the discourse surrounding AIDS at least until the mid-1980s (AIDS and its Metaphors 64).

^{ix} Steinfatt cautions against uncritically accepting simplified tales of a widespread "spiral effect" wherein younger and younger girls are procured for customers fearful of contracting HIV (105). In his study of Bangkok's bar workers, Steinfatt found little evidence of such an effect, nor were extremely young girls found by researchers sent to Pattaya to investigate the possibility. While it is of course still possible that some do actively seek girls in order to feel "safe", Steinfatt's findings encourage one to view these broad assertions with a degree of skepticism. However, considering the lack of hesitation in reporting highly contested statistics and the persistent absence of historical context throughout these articles, it is perhaps unsurprising that these articles fail to hedge these assertions in the slightest.

^x Several other initiatives and declarations relating to children's rights came out either prior to or around the same time that ECPAT was founded and began campaigning. For instance, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989, coming into force in 1990. 1990 also saw the "largest gathering of world leaders in history assembled at the United Nations to attend the World Summit for Children," training further attention on children's rights (UNICEF "World Summit"). The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) declared 1990 the Year of the Girl Child, then nominated 1991-2000 the Decade of the Girl Child, in order to focus particular attention and efforts towards the barriers to equality specific to female children in the Association's member countries (SAARC "Designated Years"). Both the Declaration and Platform for Action that emanated from The Fourth World Conference on Women, held by the UN in Beijing in 1995, included sections specific to the rights of the girl child (UN "Beijing Declaration", "Platform for Action"). All of these initiatives (and likely others) would have resulted from years of work on behalf of NGOs, government departments, and other groups concerned about the welfare of children, heightening attention to children's rights and undoubtedly contributing to the ease with which ECPAT was able to rapidly garner support for their particular cause.

^{xi} My attunement to these articles' suggestion that selling daughters has become part of local traditions draws on Uma Narayan's discussion of "death by culture" (*Dislocating* 84). With reference to discourses surrounding violence against women, Narayan suggests that "cultural explanations" are more readily called upon to explain "violence against Third-World women" than "forms of violence that affect mainstream Western women" (84). Narayan argues that this reliance on cultural explanations is partly because forms of violence experienced by "Third-World Women" that are most "Different', 'Alien,' and 'Other'" more readily "cross-borders" into Western contexts (100). Yet because important contextualizing information is left out, these forms of violence are reduced to cultural explanations that easily draw upon stereotypes and ideas of difference; ideas about "Third World backwardness" (104, see also 100-105). When the violence is fatal, these women appear to have suffered death by culture. In these articles, with little contextualizing information surrounding the assertions about this new "tradition" of selling daughters and with an awareness that those in the industry may be at risk of HIV infection, these children certainly seem at risk of death by culture. At the very least, the suggestion is that their innocence is forever lost, or, killed, by this "tradition".

^{xii} The Toronto Network Against Trafficking in Women, Multicultural History Society of Ontario and Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic prepared a report for Status of Women Canada that criticized the raid and subsequent treatment of women mentioned in this editorial, as well as another mass arrest of Thai and Malay women in Toronto in 1997. The report points out that the women were mistreated and denied fundamental rights by Canadian authorities.

^{xiii} Concerns about such control were raised by some countries and scholars at UNESCO in the 1970s and early 1980s, in what became known as the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates (Thussu *International* 64, 43-7; Marwan Kraidy *Hybridity* 24-5). Central to this debate were demands for a redistribution of access to communication technologies, and support for those in developing countries to create and disseminate their own self-representations and points of view (Thussu 46-7). Nonetheless, ownership of media outlets and telecommunications infrastructure has been increasingly privatized and concentrated in Western-based companies since the idea of a NWICO failed to gain consensus support (Thussu 49 – 52, 82-6, 119-20).

^{xiv} These companies typically have interests in other news media as well, with CanWest Global and CTVglobemedia particularly dominant in the provision of commercial television news through their respective Global and CTV Television networks (CTVglobemedia; CanWest Global "Global TV"; Jiwani 51).

^{xv} Example criticisms of the influence of past and present owners of the *Globe and Post* include Hackett et al. (61-3); Robert Hackett and Scott Uzelman ("Tracing" esp. 331); Henry and Tator (7, 95-6, 205).

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