

## Conceiving a New Sexual Morality: Factory women's sexuality and HIV risk in Northern Thailand

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本稿は、エイズ症例件数と HIV 感染者数がきわめて高い北タイのラムプーン県に位置する北部工業団地で働く農村の女性たちが、農村社会におけるセクシュアリティの規範とは異なる、新たなセクシュアリティのモラルを獲得していく過程を考察するものである。それにより、彼女たちの HIV 感染リスクがなぜ高まっているかということも論じる。

北タイの農村においては、女性の処女性を重んじ、男性の放縦性を容認する男女間の性のダブルスタンダードと、女性を「貞節な女性」と「性的に放逸な女性」に二分する女性内部の性のダブルスタンダードが若い女性たちの性行動を規制している。農村を離れ、工業団地で賃金労働者となり経済的に自立した女性たちは、異性関係においても、より自由であろうとする。その関係は、排他的愛情という新たな性のモラルで肯定化される。つまり、その性関係が互いの忠実な愛に基づく排他的で独占的なものならば、倫理的に間違ったことではないという。たとえば、伝統的規範を揺るがすような同棲関係も、結婚を前提とした互いの忠誠心に基づくものであると彼女たちは主張する。

また、排他的で独占的な性関係を築くことは HIV 感染を防ぐ効果的な手段だと女性たちは考えている。彼女たちは排他的愛情というセクシュアリティのモラルを相手の男性にも期待し、安全な性関係を保とうとするからである。しかし、工業団地の男性はその特権である性の放逸性を捨てたわけではなく、性の対象を感染リスクの高い性産業労働者からよりリスクの低い女性工場労働者に移しただけであり、必ずしも忠実な愛情を女性たちに寄せているわけではない。排他的で独占的な性関係にあるという女性たちの幻想は、恋人に対する信頼感を抱かせ、彼女たちにコンドームによる予防を実践しにくくさせている。逆説的に言えば、彼女たちの感染リスクは、その幻想的關係において確実な予防対策をとれないことにある。

### キーワード key words

セクシュアル・モラルティ sexual morality, HIV/AIDS

女性工場労働者 factory women, 北タイ Northern Thailand

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## I Introduction

This paper aims to explore changing sexual morality among young rural women in northern Thailand and their vulnerability to HIV infection as a result of a massive migration of these women to the Northern Regional Industrial Estate (NRIE) in Lamphun City, where prevalence of HIV infection is among the highest in Thailand. This sub-urban industrial city, located thirty kilometers south of Chiang Mai, the northern center of business and commerce, is one of the rapidly expanded areas of transnational flexible production in Thailand<sup>1)</sup>.

Shifting their gender identity from being sexually modest rural women to being independent and modern, an increasing number of factory women are engaging in pre-marital sexual intercourse with their boyfriends<sup>2)</sup>. This behavior is a violation of sexual morality in northern villages where “proper” women are expected to keep their virginity before marriage. Factory women, however, insist that women’s goodness should not be

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<sup>1)</sup> The establishment of NRIE was a part of Thai government’s de-centralization plan. The estate was sited close to Chiang Mai City, a northern center of commerce and business, and to Chiang Mai international airport. In 1999, approximately 62 factories were operated, half of them were Japanese electronics assembly factories, sustaining labor force of 29,494. Most of them were migrants from nearby northern provinces. As in the case of industrialization in Bangkok, the establishment of this estate caused a mass movement of rural youth. Dormitories, restaurants, small shops, and entertainment places were set up, creating a distinctive sub-urban community.

<sup>2)</sup> By “modern,” I mean young women’s participation in urban consumer culture and social relations, often on the model of western youth culture. Having cash wages and living in the area close to the urban center of Chiang Mai, young factory women have various opportunities to participate in city lives. They go to a large complex of departments and consume cosmetics, sexy dresses, and other luxury items. They also enjoy going out to shopping centers or nearby resorts with young factory men. The close association of men and women is often modeled on sexual behavior of urban youth in popular media. The emergence of these new identities is a factory women’s experience of modernity.

judged by their status of virginity. For them, their feelings of exclusive and genuine affection towards their partners are more important than maintaining their status of virginity. The idea of exclusive and genuine affection is a feminine value in Thailand. Thai women are expected to constrain their sexual behavior within a clear conjugal bond and devote themselves to their husband. Such expectations of women contrast with men's privilege to practice promiscuous sexual behavior. By highlighting the feminine value in their heterosexual relationships, therefore, those women who practice premarital sex are able to defend themselves as being chaste women.

Such heterosexual relationships based on exclusive and genuine affection are only imaginary, however, since many young men in NRIE still practice casual sex with multiple partners. There remains a gap between women's desire to create an exclusive and genuine sexual relationship and the persistence of male philandering. The risk of HIV infection for these women increases in this context where incongruity between factory women's ideal sexual relation and the actual situation manifests. In this imaginary heterosexual relationship, factory women do not ask their partners to use condoms. In Thailand, condoms have been used almost exclusively in the commercial sex context. By suggesting condom use, therefore, these women would damage their relationships, and more importantly, ruin their ideal of exclusive and genuine affection.

In the following discussion, I will elaborate on the situation in which factory women are caught between a new sexual morality and the persistent power of sexual double standards. Then I will examine these women's vulnerability to infection within this particular situation. This analysis is based on a total of thirteen months fieldwork conducted from June 1997 to December 1999 in NRIE in Lamphun City. During this period, I conducted ninety-six interviews with young factory women, twenty-eight interviews

with young factory men, participant observation in dormitories and factories, and a survey about knowledge, attitudes, and preventative practices of HIV/AIDS with 1,000 female factory workers. Among the ninety-six factory women, sixty-two were single. Here, I mainly refer to the findings from interviews with young single women and participant observation in dormitories<sup>3)</sup>.

The ages of the sixty-two unmarried factory women I interviewed ranged from 17 to 33, with an average age of 23.3. The majority of the women had finished secondary education. Most of them worked for electronics and machinery companies, the two major types of industries in NRIE, occupying 58% of all factories (NRIE office 1998). Nearly all of the women came from northern provinces, and a few from the northeast and central regions<sup>4)</sup>. While they had various reasons to work, economic necessity, such as to support their family, was the main one. The economic situation throughout Thailand has been aggravated since 1997, when the long lasting economic boom came to end following the collapse of the baht. The economic crash caused many rural young women to migrate in order to locate employment.

The majority of the ninety-six women I interviewed had no intention to work in NRIE permanently, though. Most of them planned to go back to their hometowns when they had relieved their families' financial problems and saved some amount of money for their future. It is true that many women also come to work to NRIE with an expectation of having urban romance and autonomy. Yet, precisely because desires to improve their

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<sup>3)</sup> While sexual morality is a key to analyze HIV risk situation for both single and married women, the situation is slightly different. Single women are more susceptible to changing social relation due to migration. I will elaborate more on the vulnerability to HIV infection of married factory women in other papers.

<sup>4)</sup> According to statistics by the Lamphun Provincial Labour and Social Welfare Office, about 70% of workers in NRIE are of northern origin.

family's economic situation motivates many women to migrate to NRIE, many women working in the NRIE still keep a value of being dutiful and respectable daughters. This paper discusses factory women's conflicting desires to be modern and independent women and to remain dutiful and respectable daughters, and how they are reconstructing new sexual morality within this tension. The next two sections contrast the traditional gender beliefs in northern rural communities with the factory women's new sexual morality.

## II Gender and sexuality in northern villages

Inter- and intra-gender sexual double standards are dominant themes in Thai gender ideology. Under the inter-gender double standard, men are expected to actively pursue sex, whereas women are expected to be sexually conservative. Sexual experience in any relational context is positive for men, as sex is believed to strengthen masculinity. Sexual activity is negative for women except for reproductive purposes, as it is believed to corrupt and damage women's body. Under the intra-gender double standard, women are categorized into two groups: "chaste women" and "promiscuous women". Chaste women are those who keep themselves away from any sexual activities and maintain their virginity until marriage. Those women are called "good women". Promiscuous women are those who are the object of male philandering, and are considered "bad women". The inter- and intra-gender sexual double standards are the basis on which Thai people construct their gender expectations.

In northern rural villages, where the sexual double standards are active, parents expect their daughters to be sexually conservative and chaste. A traditional northern belief holds that sexual misconduct, such as premarital

sexual intercourse, is a serious offense against ancestral spirits. In the event of such conduct, a member of the woman's family would fall ill. The man must apologize for it by paying a heavy fine to her family, and in most cases the couple are forced to marry. In traditional small communities in the north, this functions as a mechanism to control young women's chastity.

### III Migration and changing sexual morality

Wage employment and working a geographical distance from home offers factory women a chance both to exercise autonomy over their lives and to experiment sexually. As a result, more and more young women in the estate accept premarital sexual intercourse and cohabitation as a common practice.

Migrating from villages to the estate, young women seem to escape from traditional sexual double standards, but they are subject to two conflicting images of women within the estate. One is the image of independent women who achieve economic autonomy and enhance their physical beauty and modernness. Such women can also participate in the sexual adventure with men without having to obtain parental consent. The other is the image of sexually loose women. Traditionally women's geographical mobility and physical beauty implies their greater access to sexual activities. Villagers in northern communities often speculate that young migrant women are more likely to participate in sexual activities with their boyfriends or give sexual services for a fee. The new mobility of rural young women to the estate as waged workers arouses villagers' suspicion about their sexual experiences.

Throughout Thailand, in northern rural communities as well as in urban centers, values of Western popular culture have been adopted by young women. As a result, sexual attractiveness, geographical mobility and the

sophisticated use of modern commodities have become the parameters by which feminine beauty is judged. As Mary Mills states, various entertainment media from TV to advertisements have introduced this new image of modern feminine beauty, which is not defined primarily with reference to standards of maiden modesty and sexual constraint, but instead by active participation in urban consumer culture (1999:105). By consuming modern cosmetics and sexy dresses and enjoying greater freedom to roam around shopping malls, nightclubs, discotheques, women in the city act on this new standard of feminine beauty.

These images of sexually attractive and independent women in the media become a model for factory women who wish to acquire a status of modernity. Nevertheless, these aspects of modern womanhood fundamentally contradict the value of femininity in northern rural villages. These women's geographical mobility, sexual attractiveness, modern beauty, and active sexuality are all regarded as a threat to the traditional femininity of northern young women. Increasingly therefore, factory women's newly acquired autonomy and sexual freedom are equated with sexual looseness.

For instance, living apart from their family means more than just physical movement for women as it offers them a chance to gain greater knowledge and new experiences. It also suggests that young women have an opportunity to engage in pre- and extra-marital sexual relations. In Thai society, the word "travelling", (*bpai tee-oh*), has the sexual connotation of visiting prostitutes, and it is considered a male habit. Accumulation of sexual experience of any kind is a valued aspect of masculinity. On the contrary young women's spatial movement poses a great challenge to the traditional expectations of female sexual behavior. While northern Thai women are not strictly confined to the house, they are expected to stay close to their family as good and respectful daughters before marriage and

to become a mother-nurturer after marriage. Therefore, villagers and parents worry that their daughters' sexual propriety and moral safety will be threatened by their new experiences in the cities.

While factory women's new sexual autonomy arouses a concern among villagers, their bodies have become targets of men's sexual philandering. In NRIE, factory women are often referred as "*saw nikhom*", which literally means "women in the estate". "*Saw nikhom*" also has a negative sexual connotation of looseness, with other derogatory terms, such as "*kai long*" (the lost chickens). In the estate, more and more factory men come to engage in sexual intercourse with women in the factories, since they are afraid of visiting commercial sex workers. A negative image of these women as readily available for casual sexual encounters has been cast over these women, and they have become objects of male sexual desire without their intention.

It is true that an increasing number of women in NRIE are in intimate sexual relationships with male workers, yet it does not mean that they are freed from cultural expectation to be good and polite women. Being the first generation to migrate to the NRIE as factory workers, they are surrounded by conflicting images and expectations of young women. On one hand, there is a strong expectation of village daughters by parents to be dutiful and respectful women who guard themselves against sexual advancement. On the other hand, the image of modern, independent, sexual attractive and mobile women is celebrated in the popular media. The flip side of the image of modern, independent women is that of "*saw nikhom*", (women who do sex for free/for fun) or sex workers, who are tempting and actively seeking sexual satisfaction. Under these circumstances, factory women try to conform to the value of good women, even though they are actively engaging in pre-marital sexual intercourse with men. One way to



resist the negative image of sexual looseness, then, is to construct a new sexual morality and to attach a positive meaning to pre-marital sexual intercourse. Such women's desire to reformulate the meaning of female sexual morality is the subject of the next section.

#### IV Factory women's sexual morality

In order to account for a particular notion of sexual morality that is becoming visible in factory women's relationships with men, I employ the term "exclusive attachment". Dominant elements constituting this notion are the ideas of mutual fidelity and romantic love. For factory women, mutual fidelity means emotional commitment to each other and mutual trust. The idea of romantic love encompasses a range of emotions and actions from intense sexual passion to genuine affection. Factory women have a belief that sexual relationships must be exclusive and bonded by deep affection.

The morality of exclusive attachment differs significantly from the sexual morality based on gender double standards because it expects men's sincerity and fidelity, not only women's. Factory women's desire for exclusive attachment expresses their anxiety about men's sexual philandering and the possibility of HIV transmission from them. Living in the area where HIV/AIDS cases have been skyrocketing, factory women are calling for their partners to assume greater responsibility. The morality of exclusive attachment is also distinctive from the prevailing sexual morality since it elaborates the notion of romantic love. Among their parent's generation, young women did not show their affection for men explicitly since they were taught to keep these feelings inside. Among the present generation, romantic love ideology has become salient among factory women who are engaged

in intimate sexual relationships. This shift is due to media presentations of romantic love relationships. Many youth have adopted the idealized view of romantic love present in popular mass media. In TV programs, movies, and women's magazines, young women and men engage freely in sexual intercourse. By showing sexual activities among young couples who fall in love with each other, the media conveys the message that sexual intercourse in loving relationships is no longer a taboo. As a result, factory women develop curiosity and desire to pursue intimate sexual relationships.

Asked about their practice of pre-marital sex and cohabitation, factory women explained this value of exclusive attachment. This focus shows their desire to be acknowledged as "good women" of northern Thailand. This notion of exclusive attachment contains values of devotion and fidelity, the most prominent elements of Thai femininity. It also stands in a direct opposition to erotic love. Thus, exclusive attachment differentiates factory women's sexual relationships from commercial or casual sex. By doing so, they reject villagers' and young men's speculations that all factory women are promiscuous, and hope to maintain a status of respectable northern Thai women.

## V Factory women's practice of premarital sex

In NRIE, an increasing number of factory women have experienced premarital sex. The interview data suggest that many cases of premarital sex happened during the practice of cohabitation. In the estate, young workers from remote provinces stay in dormitories, sharing a room with their friends, relatives or boyfriends. Those who live with their boyfriends seem to have little hesitation to evade cultural expectations of women to be virgin until marriage. An analysis of their attitudes towards cohabitation

revealed that the idea of exclusive attachment gave them confidence to practice it. The research demonstrates this in the following two ways.

First, factory women accept cohabitation if they are going to marry their partners. For them, engagement embodies the ideal of mutual trust and emotional commitment. Commitment is sometimes expressed in their practice of working together for the same goal, such as saving money for their marriage ceremony or buying automobiles, furniture, or other luxury items.

Coupled with the morality of exclusive attachment, the financial situation of many factory women makes cohabitation pragmatically preferable. Those who migrate to NRIE have a particular aim to improve the financial situation of their families in the village and to make a fortune for themselves, which would not be attainable if they stayed in their villages. Some women have a plan to work for three to six years to pay off their parents' debt or to support the education of their younger siblings. Others are saving money with a plan to open a small food shop in their villages when they return. During this special period of being family breadwinners and making money for their futures, many factory women are reluctant to rush into marriage. Additionally, a formal marriage ceremony requires a large sum of money. Thus, cohabiting factory women say that cohabitation is a way to satisfy their desire to stay close to their partners before marriage, and also a practical way to work together for their common goal.

Second, some factory women insist that cohabitation is a crucial period for potential partners to learn about each other. For them, getting to know each other means examining and trying mutual fidelity. Even if they decide to have sexual relationships with their partners and start cohabitation, factory women remain concerned about their partners' faithfulness.

Sometimes, factory women's concern about men's responsibility in their

sexual behavior and the risk of HIV infection is manifested in the tolerance of serial cohabitation by some factory women. Serial cohabitation occurs when factory women live with different partners for a relatively small amount of time, often within one year. Those who witness serial cohabitation of some factory women, e.g. dormitory managers, village headmen, and elder women who live near the dormitories, deplore this behavior, but factory women have their reasons to do it. Factory women accept ending cohabitation if their boyfriends turn out to be quite promiscuous in their sexual behavior. Such women believe cohabitation is a way to observe their partners' sexuality before marriage. A factory woman told me that in such a period of observing their boyfriends' behavior, sexual relationships might begin, but that the concern is whether the last man she cohabits with is the man she decides to marry. It means that once she has found an ideal conjugal partner, she has to have an exclusive love for him. In this case, the value of exclusive attachment serves as a justification to separate from an untrustworthy partner and find a new and better boyfriend. Theoretically the morality of exclusive attachment and the conduct of serial cohabitation are contradictory, yet in actual practice, the latter is considered an acceptable way to find an ideal partner, thus it is actually guided by the former.

Factory women are faced with various risks—men's infidelity, being labeled with the negative image of "bad" women, HIV/AIDS, and so forth. In order to reduce these risks, they are examining their possible partners. If factory women are sure of their boyfriends' fidelity, some of them start cohabitation. They regard cohabitation as a practice to prelude marriage and to work together towards a certain goal. For other factory women, the morality of exclusive attachment does not always orient these women towards stable relations, e.g. marriage. Rather, women continue to

display caution and hesitation regarding marriage. As a consequence, rather than being confined in a conjugal bond, some women remain flexible in their relationships with men.

## VI Factory women's risk of HIV infection

Factory women's risk of HIV infection arises in their pre-marital sexual relations with men in which condoms are rarely used. Despite vigorous condom promotion campaigns in the estate, factory women are still unwilling to ask their partners to use condoms. By delineating the difficulties of asking their partners to use condoms and the consequential exposure to HIV infection, I argue that factory women's vulnerability to the infection is due to the considerable gap between their ideal sexual relationships and the actual situation. As a matter of fact, their sexual relationships are still governed by the persistent power of sexual double standards in this country.

The following three reasons begin to explain why condom use is difficult for factory women. First, a symbolic meaning of condoms as a means to prevent STDs in commercial sexual exchanges makes factory women reluctant to use them. The symbolism of condom use is a historical construction in accordance with Thai government's policy of STD prevention, family planning and AIDS prevention, which is guided by sexual double standards in this country.

In Thailand, where visible intra-gender sexual double standard divide women into "good" and "bad" women, condom promotion was directed towards commercial sex workers even before AIDS became prevalent. Condom use served as a means of STD prevention. The perception of condoms as used only in extramarital sexual relations became apparent

when fertility control and AIDS preventive practices were implemented. In northern Thailand, contraceptive service programs towards non-sex-worker women started around 1970 alongside the government's national population policy (Shevasunt and Hogan 1979:6). Since then, modern contraceptive methods, such as oral pills, injections, and IUDs (intrauterine devices), have been widespread among women. Condom use was not a popular contraceptive device among men and women in conjugal relationships, as they generally believed that wives were responsible for controlling pregnancy. As a result, condoms remained to be almost exclusively used for disease prevention in commercial sex, and many women outside the commercial sex industry did not even have a chance to look at them. An active promotion of condom use for the general public began only after 1987, when the AIDS epidemic became a serious social problem in Thailand. Hundred-percent condom campaigns were launched via TV and radio to prevent the epidemic throughout Thailand<sup>5</sup>). Nevertheless, the promotion of condom-wearing was still guided by the norms of sexual double standards. In the north, where HIV was prevalent among female commercial sex workers, for instance, the early phase of condom campaigns were targeted mainly to them. An ironic consequence of this was the public imagery of condoms as connected to "promiscuity" and "contagion", which discouraged men and women from using them in affinitive or non-commercial sexual relationships.

Second, women's reluctance to use condoms with their boyfriends expresses their protest against being treated as sexually loose women. In the

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<sup>5</sup> Since 1987 Thai government has launched a nationwide AIDS control and prevention project nationwide. Commercial sex workers are among high-risk groups, and obviously many prevention measures have been directed at them. Hundred-percent condom campaigns were intended for all population in this country, but particularly aimed at preventing HIV infection from commercial sex workers to their male clients. Free condoms were distributed at village health posts, provincial health office, and various entertainment spots.

estate, suggesting condom use runs the risk of being labeled as sexually promiscuous women who perform sex for fun. Such negative imagery of condom use among factory women is partly, but significantly, created through a careless and unconsidered condom promotion for factory women in the estate<sup>6)</sup>. Condom promotion for female workers in the estate has been based on assumptions that they have liberal sexuality or cannot control their sexuality properly. Factory women are often assumed to be a geographically mobile population that has migrated from the village to the estate; factory women are further assumed to be freed from parental supervision and unprepared for the youth sexual culture in the estate, which is heavily influenced and stimulated by popular mass media and entertainment. Most of the factory women are also in their reproductive age and are ready for sexual relationships. Coming to work with only a little sexual health education, they are unable to protect their bodies from careless sexual activities. Under this explication, factory women became a “potentially” high-risk group and a number of AIDS seminars and condom demonstrations were implemented.

Until now, AIDS education programs for factory workers have mentioned neither sexual morality nor asymmetrical power relations between women and men. Rather than doing endless debate over these onerous issues, public health educators have blamed factory women’s increased sexual activity on popular mass media, youth culture in urban cities, family and drug problems, and immaturity of factory workers. Believing that it is crucial to empower women to negotiate the use of condoms, then, public health educators and NGO workers have distributed

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<sup>6)</sup> In the NRIE, an international NGO, Lamphun Provincial Public Health Office, and Lamphun Provincial Labour and Social Welfare Office have organized AIDS education programs for factory workers. The main aim of the AIDS education programs is to encourage the workers to use condoms by distributing condoms and demonstrating how to use them.

condoms and demonstrated how to use them. Ignoring unequal power relations between men and women in negotiating safer sex, however, the vigorous condom promotion among factory women resulted in stigmatization of them as being sexual active and risky.

Third, condom use is incompatible with the newly formed sexual morality among factory women. They are creating a new sexual morality based on exclusive attachment, and trying to foster intimate heterosexual relationships grounded in it. Factory women's reliance on this value of exclusive attachment does not make condom use a reasonable option to reduce HIV risk.

Factory women are potentially at a high risk of HIV infection due to their unwillingness to ask for condom use in their sexual relations with young men in NRIE, which is, in reality, far from being free of risk. While factory women are creating a new sexual morality to justify their premartial sexual practice, young men in NRIE still regard sexual experiences with many women as a positive aspect of masculinity and consider factory women readily available sexual partners. In NRIE, young factory women's sexuality is gossiped about by young male students and factory workers contemptuously. It is reported that an increasing number of male factory workers and high-school and college students living near the estate preferred factory women as sex partners because they perceived these women at lower risk of HIV infection than prostitutes<sup>7)</sup>. Moreover, a report by the Communicative Disease Control office in Chiang Mai shows that the rate of condom use by factory men with their girlfriends, most of whom are factory women, is lower than the rate of condom use by factory men with

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<sup>7)</sup> Cash et al. 1995, Ford and Kittisuksathit 1996, PATH report 1998.

<sup>8)</sup> The Communicative Disease Control Office in Chiang Mai, 1999. A report presented in the workshop "Training for Educators and Trainers in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care" in Chiang Mai.



commercial sex workers<sup>8)</sup> .

An incongruity between factory women's ideal sexual relationships and young men's perception of them makes these women particularly vulnerable to HIV infection. For factory women, requesting condom use indicates that they do not necessarily trust their boyfriends. They are afraid that it might lead to the disruption of not only their affective relationships but also of their newly established sexual morality. For factory men, factory women are targets of casual and free sex. Factory women are seen as readily and freely available to satisfy their sexual desire, and more importantly, at lower risk of infection.

## VII Conclusion

Many factory women in NRIE who practice premarital sex still believe in the idea of female sexual passivity and women's devotion to men. The ideals of mutual trust and romantic attachment, which have become prevalent among factory women, are woven into their long-standing gender belief, resulting in a distinctive sexual morality among young unmarried factory women. It can be argued that the new sexual morality is nothing more than a remnant of the male-privileged sexual double standards because an ideology of "good" woman as sexually conservative and passive underlies it. As a consequence, the newly established sexual morality only reinforces gender inequality in Thailand. In this view, factory women are still subject to a coercive gender hierarchy, and their HIV risk is due to its persistence.

From a factory women's point of view, however, their desire for mutual trust and romantic affection in heterosexual relationships could reorient women's and men's practices and values of sexuality and thus transform

sexual double standards in Thai society. They are not advocating sexual liberation if it means liberation of sexual practice or more specifically, freedom to negotiate condom use. For factory women, such active sexuality is a dangerous act in northern Thailand, where AIDS cases are rampant. Rather, factory women want to create an ideal heterosexual relationship with exclusive attachment and romantic love. It remains to be seen if factory women's desire remains an illusion or brings actual change in their gender relationships.

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