Building Dutiful Daughters: Cultural Violence in Thai Prostitution

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**Abstract:** In Thailand the “Problem of Prostitution” has often been approached by politicians, feminists and NGO's seeking to reduce the impact of HIV. While the 100% condom usage campaign, implemented in 1993 has made many strides towards the prevention of such diseases, the underlying constructs of cultural and structural violence against this subgroup of women remain. Gendered inequality has set the stage for epidemics such as HIV to take advantage of an exploited class of women in Thailand. This paper examines and deconstructs the structural creations and cultural validations of violence against prostitutes in Thailand that have placed them at great risk for both HIV contraction and large-scale, international exploitation.

**Introduction**

In 1984 Thailand's first known case of AIDS was found in a man who had had an American lover in New York. From 1988-1989 reported HIV transmission among sex workers in Chiang Mai rose from virtually nonexistent to a 44% infection rate (Beyrer 1998: 16-35). The government maintained that HIV was not a Thai problem, and continued to take measures to keep the virus outside of Thailand but not to deal with the skyrocketing rate among sex workers. In 1991 new Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun abandoned the denial of the previous regime and began an aggressive education and condom availability campaign. He realized that Thailand was in the midst of an epidemic, and previous beliefs about Thai cultural immunity to the virus were inaccurate. Prostitutes in Chiang Mai (Northern Thailand) who in 1988 reported 0% infection, were recorded at 44% infected with HIV by the end of 1989. However, the condom education program did not address the underlying issues of inequality, exploitation and cultural expectations that had led to the epidemic in the first place. This paper will deconstruct those aspects of Thai society in order to shed some light on this and future epidemics (Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Jeffry 2002: 105-110).

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1 1988 also happened to be Thailand's “year of tourism” the goal of which was to create a tourism surge to generate income to Thailand. It would not have been in their best interests to advertise accurate HIV infection rates when so much tourism relied on a healthy prostitution industry so epidemiological data might be inaccurate(Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Odzer 1994).
In 1996 new prostitution laws were passed requiring all sex workers to carry and use condoms, as well as funding massive condom availability (initiated in 1992)(Avert.org 1996, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Jeffry2002: 137-138). Once the campaign took off, new infections shrank to an almost nonexistent rate. As many other countries have faced similar explosions without the same success as Thailand, what conditions were present that could bring about the sudden and drastic changes in culture and sexual practice that were necessary to tackle this virus? In an effort to answer this question this paper examines and deconstructs the structural creations and cultural validations of violence against prostitutes in Thailand that have placed them at great risk for both HIV contraction and large-scale, international exploitation (Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998, Jeffry 2002: 105-110, UNICEF 2006).

Since the epidemiological success of the 1996 prostitution law in greatly diminishing HIV transmission among Thai prostitutes, Thailand has been a model for governments dealing with HIV epidemics (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Jeffry 2002: 137-138, Wheatley 2005). This paper originally set out to determine whether or not the Thai government had actually tackled the underlying issues that led to high levels of HIV vulnerable prostitution. This subject has been discussed in many different ways by many different Western authors, but rarely with a cool head or willingness to consider the validity of a culture outside their own. As Leslie Ann Jeffry points out in her book “Sex and Borders,” (2002) the "problem of prostitution" has been used time and again by many parties to support their own political platforms, much to the detriment of the prostitutes themselves (105-110). Many politicians and feminists tend to speak of all prostitutes as a whole, symbolizing what's wrong with the nation, rather than many different women from many different back grounds who all happen to be practicing a similar profession (Skrobanek et. al. 1997).

The purpose of this paper has therefore expanded beyond an analysis of how politicians, foreigners and feminists have used the "problem of prostitution" for their own purposes. It will also analyze how this usage has, in fact, perpetuated and intensified the structural violence that leads these
women who engage in high-risk sexual behavior\(^2\), to situations in which they have very little control over how safe their bodies are from harms such as HIV. The issues surrounding child prostitution are too vast to fit into the scope of this paper, as are the issues surrounding male prostitution, mail-order bride services and other international trafficking ventures that place Thai women in prostitution outside of Thailand. Nor will HIV be the main focus of this paper. While the epidemic has brought these issues of cultural violence to light, the virus is only one effect of much deeper social issues (Galtung 2004).

The use of language when dealing with the volatile and delicate issues of prostitution and violence is an important aspect to consider. Many writers have fallen back on sweeping statements and assumptions about behavior with little or no regard for the structural, economic, and cultural systems within which violence occurs (Barry 2005, Jeffry 2002). These are important considerations to take if a full appreciation of all factors contributing to the high risk environment of prostitution in Thailand are to be considered. It is very different to call a woman a “whore” than to call her a “sex worker”. To refer to a person who sells sexual activities as a “whore” or even as a “prostitute” carries negative judgmental connotations that immediately distance the speaker from the subject. Words paint the image and direct the sympathies of an audience, and to create these women as anything other than women only serves to reinforce the structural constrictions and cultural stigmas endangering them (Jeffry 2002: xx). One of the main problems in developing non-exploitative policy regarding Thai prostitution is a distancing of the people who make the laws from the people who are affected by these laws. Therefore, a main consideration that was taken in writing this paper is also the importance of vocabulary in establishing and perpetuating structural and cultural violence, as well as its importance in mitigating that damage (Galtung 2004, Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 80-97).

Many feminist authors have claimed that third world prostitution is slavery, due to the absence

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\(^2\) High risk behavior involves frequent unprotected exposure to the bodily fluids of an HIV positive population, or one that may easily become so through contact with another positive population. Specific examples include unprotected sexual intercourse with many partners or one partner who has many, needle sharing in intravenous drug use, or an infected mother breast-feeding her child (Wheatley 2005).
of adequately paying jobs available to women (Altink 1995, Barry 1995 and 2000, Butler 2003). The argument is that the absence of many employment options for these women means that they are incapable of actually choosing prostitution as a profession. While prostitution in third world countries could be argued to be structurally coercive, something of the system of cultural and structural violence behind the institution is lost when broad generalizations are made such as these. Yes, the system does place women, especially poor rural or hill tribe women, in a vulnerable position, however, the cultural validations of this system are as much to blame. Prostitutes are culturally deemed “bad” and therefore lacking any ability to be sympathetic, so laws fining and penalizing them but not their clients or pimps are justified by cultural beliefs of what these women “deserve”. If a change in an exploitative system is to be brought about, changes in the validation of this system need to also occur (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Jeffry 2002: 127-134, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 37-55, Darunee and Pandey 1991).

Daughters with little to no education, rampant illiteracy and constant dependence on money are surrounded on all sides by women who went away to work and came back an economic success (Skrobanek et.al. 1997). They realize that "honest work" will barely keep themselves alive, let alone feed their families and sex work is often the only choice if they want to send remittances home. It is no wonder that so many Western feminists have determined that these women do not have a choice, and so prostitution in these countries is often an be seen as slavery. The argument that feminists such as Kathleen Barry make is that because the only lucrative, widely available option is sex work, sex workers have no choice but to become so and are therefore slaves to bar owners. Some women do find themselves debt bonded to brothels, effectively owned by the management and therefore modern day slaves. Many bar workers, on the other hand, are not indebted to the bar owners and so there is no system of ownership there and it cannot be called slavery. However, to argue that these women are either slaves (victims) or greedy women who just want more money to throw around, only reinforces
the system of cultural and structural violence that creates and validates the system that restricts them to these roles (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Jeffry 2002: 127-134, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 37-55, Darunee and Pandey 1991).

Traditionally, the “dutiful daughter” in what is now Northern Thailand was one who would provide for her parents in their old age. As these communities became more dependent on a centralized, monetary economy, this cultural aspect adapted to a requirement that daughters provide for their families financially. When the prostitution industry became dependent on these girls needing money for their families to fulfill their duties in society, the culture and the system of prostitution strengthened each other. Now, when a daughter brings back a large paycheck, the parents do not ask how it was earned so as to avoid the conflicting moralities of being a “dutiful daughter” and a “virginal wife” (Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 1-5, Darunee and Pandey 1991).

Many Thai prostitutes have more mobility and job security than the average American minimum wage laborer. For example in many cases a woman can move to another bar nearby where she could become employed, and a shot at some large tips, with the right skills (Odzer 1994). This is assuming, however, that the woman in question is lucky enough to be employed at a bar or massage parlor on Patpong, and not indentured and held in a brothel, as is the case with the majority of prostitutes. The alternative is often a low wage position in a factory with unhealthy working conditions where women are locked in at night and unions are easily destroyed. A poor rural woman might also be able to find work as a domestic servant (which is often considered demeaning) pays low wages and there is little personal freedom (Albelda et. al. 2005, Darunee and Pandey 1991, International Labour Organization (ILO) 1998, Jeffry 2002: 95, Skrobanek et. al.: 68-79, Odzer 1994: 183).

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3 Odzer commented that many sex workers on Patpong who spoke English were able to con their clients into giving them large sums of money with stories of woe back home in their villages that may or may not have been based on their or the the lives of other sex workers. A woman without any skills in English, German or Japanese would not have been able to manage this, let alone a negotiation for a condom, and some men do prefer women without the ability to communicate with them (1994).
Only two types of sex workers will be discussed in this paper in depth: brothel workers and Patpong bar girls. Women who have been indentured to a brothel by their families face slavery-like situations that have been reinforced by the fact that their families placed them in their position. They can be as young as 12, have little to no opportunities for personal agency, receive very little medical attention if they are lucky and are sold for some of the cheapest rates, often to local men more than tourists (ILO 1998, Odzer 1994: 121, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 56-67). Bar girls on Patpong face an entirely different set of structural restrictions. Generally, they are older, over 16, and often they have attempted to work as a domestic servant or factory worker (Jeffry 2002, Skrobanek et. al.1997: 56-67). They have a great deal more personal agency than their brothel-bound counterparts and are sometimes even permitted to live outside of the bar. Bar girls often chose the profession for themselves and, in many cases, are free to leave or be fired at any time. Some massage parlors and bars do function on a loan-based system charging exorbitant interest rates (Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 56-67). These are the women targeted by women's NGO's because they can get to the facilities to learn the languages of their (most likely foreign) clients as well as gain the ability to negotiate condom usage (Darunee and Pandey 1991). Once a client has “bought them out” for the night, the woman is responsible for ensuring she gets paid the agreed-upon rate (or higher). There is also the idea that the client now owns the sex worker for the evening, contributing to the exoticism of the trade with the concept of owning another human body because it is “culturally acceptable” (ILO 1998, Odzer 1994, Skrobanek 1997: 56-67).

The cultural constructions of morality that allow for women to be treated in an exploitative manner perpetuate violence against this lower class. Culture is created over time and Thai culture has undergone many shifts in ideology that have led to the current state of exploitation and inequality for rural women. This paper will discuss several eras of thought in Thai development and how they have manifested themselves, as well as how each manifestation has brought about others. Not only has the landscape of Thailand changed over the past century and a half, but the forms of cultural and structural
violence have also adapted to exposure to new cultures and economic systems. This paper has been divided into four different time-lines. Colonialism is the period from the mid 19th century to 1935 and focuses on the impact of Thailand's association with colonial powers during it's monarchical reign. Post-colonialism is from 1935 when Westernized leaders staged a coup and began Westernizing Thailand to 1960 when the US began to utilize Thai soil for military bases and Thai women for military recreation. Americanization began in the 1960's during the Vietnam war when the Thai government found it's best interests in combating “communism”and providing the US with any resources they desired until 1992 when HIV took hold on the country and the government began to act on it. AIDS in Thailand first occurred in 1984 but did not become a major issue in Thai politics and culture until the government began to deal with it in 1992, since then it has defined Thailand on the world stage and strongly influenced the resources available to Thai women (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005).

Violence:

The term “violence' plays an important role in this paper. While there is a multitude of physical violence against sex workers in Thailand, it is not the only kind of violence. In fact, it is more a symptom of the structural and cultural violence against these women. While physical violence can be limited to a specific moment in time or violent gesture, social and cultural violence are ongoing, embedded in the constructions of identity, morality, legal and economic systems that shape a person's entire life (Galtung 2004, Whitehead 2004). Two philosophers will be used in this section. Jose Rabassa (2000) and Franz Fanon (1963) who both wrote about the creation of violent and exploitative systems and how they are justified by cultural violence. Fanon's theories on post-colonial violence especially applies to Thailand as it is the only nation in the region that was not colonized, and yet still exhibits the behaviors of a post-colonial third world nation. The structures in place in Thailand are highly exploitative of Thai citizens for the profit of foreign powers. The government has actively busted unions and fired on protesting students to

Rabassa wrote on the language of violence and the complications that arise when writings about violence are read, and policy formed or altered to adapt to said writings. Writing on violence affects the culture of violence and the creation of morality. These cultural creations validate and assist in the construction of the system. For example, the cultural belief that prostitutes were somehow mentally ill or having a psychological predisposition to laziness and selfishness, enabled the creation of re-education programs that penalized and constricted women placing them at greater risk for exploitation would not have been created. These women were fined and taught to sew, cook, clean and rear children because it was thought that they turned to prostitution because they did not already know how to be “unskilled” or domestic laborers. The women would then be sent back into the world with the same job prospects as before, but with less money and a greater desire to earn it back quickly, and so would return to the sex trade (Jeffry 2002: 69). The cultural creation of what qualifies as violence justifies systematic exploitation, and it is vital to understand how a culture reinforces violent systems before the systems themselves can be effectively altered. In this case, because the culture validated exploitation and penalties for sex workers, these actions were not seen as violent, if the culture were shifted to understanding how these actions contributed to exploitation and direct violence against sex workers, the culture might have deemed these laws violent and therefore unacceptable (Rabassa 2000).

Colonialism (Pre 1935)

Historically many different schools of thought have shaped and built the foundations for the current ideas that have created the economic and cultural conditions examined here. As a way of
maintaining colonialism, Western men under Victorian rule and standards of unequal, restrictive treatment of women deemed that Thailand was in a state of debauchery. Rural women were seen half naked, the king had hundreds of wives and paternalistic polygamy was common with the legal status of minor and slave wives. These aspects of so called "barbarity" with regard to women's bodies were used to make the case for the colonization of Thailand abroad. Colonialists claimed that the country's rich resources and ready access to China's riches would be better managed under Western governance (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 26-81, Jeffry 2002: 1-18).

The colonization of Thailand is a unique demonstration of Fanon's theories on colonization. As England and France closed in around Siam, conquering their enemies of the past, Siam's leaders saw both the potential in Western progress and the need to gain defense from the advancing armies. Westerners were allowed to have businesses in Siam, even though it was well known that colonialists were collecting data on Siamese populations, drawing maps, and sending all this data back home to better navigate the land and use internal politics for invasion⁴. The king took on Western advisors and Western thought became a requirement for Thailand's leaders, making them loyal to the Western countries as having superior governmental systems, rather than Thai traditions. Women's bodies and behavior were watched by colonial powers as examples of the inferiority of the king and stories of polygamy were rampant in the West used as justifications for a potential colonial occupation (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Fanon 1963: 35-106, Jeffry 2002: 1-18, Leonowens 1988).

Not having the means to make war on what could potentially be a very powerful ally, King Mongkut decided the best course of action would be to show the West that Siam was capable of being civilized on its own. He passed decrees on what women could and could not wear to more closely fit

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⁴ The listing and mapping out of resources for purposes of colonization is a long-standing practice providing an invading country with all the data necessary for strategic take-over, as well as allowing for a cost/benefit analysis of the resources it would take to secure the resources that could be gained. Also, cultural observations were made to ease the encouragement of internal conflict and rebellion that would leave a country and its resources vulnerable to Western power (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Fanon 1963, Rabassa 2000).
western standards, requiring that shoulders and upper arms must be covered. This was still the practice as a requirement for polite Thai society in the late 20th century (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Odzer 1994). The King began to dress in a more Western style and hired the governess Anna Leonowens to educate his children in a Western fashion. A massive campaign was undertaken by Western trained Thai scholars and politicians to Westernize and “civilize” Thailand. France, who was whittling away at Thailand's borders was not pleased with the image of a Western style leader that King Chulalongkorn (one of Mrs. Leonownes' students) was cultivating because this would disprove their claims that Siam was an uncivilized country run by a barbaric King in need of European control. They claimed a northern region of Thailand, called Pakam, by placing gunships in Bangkok's bay. This has been referred to by Baker and Phongpaichit as the Pakam incident, and it only served to intensify efforts to Westernize on the parts of Thai leaders (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Jeffry 2002: 1-6, Odzer 1994).

Finally, as a result of Western influence, the King outlawed polygamy and slavery to help combat Siam's image as “barbaric” (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Jeffry 2002: 1-6). However, prostitution was becoming a new trend in the more cosmopolitan areas of Bangkok to appeal to Western visitors. Most of the restrictions placed by the Thai government to combat colonialism were on women's bodies and behavior. Colonialism, though never from a foreign source, was imposed upon poor women in Thailand with the goal of attaining Western acceptance. Women's labor was commented on as “energetic” by foreign visitors and their dress was regulated by the government. Restrictions placed on men mandated the number of legal wives each was allowed to have, and mistresses were almost expected, though never advertised to foreign communities. Leaders became increasingly educated in Western style politics until a new generation of Western educated leaders came to power in 1935 with the aim of turning Thailand into a democracy (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Mies 1986: 72-110, Sittirak 1998: 23-26).
Post-colonialism (1935-1960)

Thailand was never directly occupied by a Western country, but the pressure from an ever-present power bred both a desire to establish the legitimacy of Thailand in a Western context, and to adopt as many forms of power from the West as they could. Still anxious to join the “civilized” (Western) world, Thailand's leaders began to build factories and industry, extending agricultural efforts into the northern rural parts of Thailand, making the rich "notorious locals" even richer while the poor were left landless (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80). These local leaders then later became the main recruiters of daughters to brothels nationally and, sometimes, internationally (Darunee and Pandey 1991, Jeffry 2002: 31). As Thailand's economy became more and more dependent on money more and more families had to supplement their previous subsistence farming and local food trading with jobs to survive. Children (especially daughters) who had been used on the family plot to tend plants and livestock were now needed in the city to get jobs and send money home to support their families (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Mies 1986, Jeffry 2002: 31, Odzer 1994, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 1-19).

In order to receive the funds necessary and the clientèle abroad to become an industrialized nation, Thailand had to advertise its workers as the cheapest and most efficient available. They boasted about being a country without unions. The new military government infiltrated and broke up any unions that did form, claiming they were “communist organizations”. The female population of workers was advertised as “submissive”, “energetic” and “nimble fingered” due to their culture, thus beginning the practice of advertising Thai women as embodiments of a submissive Thai culture (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Jeffry 2002: 50-60, Sittirak 1998: 23-26). Women were not in a position to attain a living wage for themselves, there were no protections for them from the companies they worked for and often workers were locked into small, dirty living quarters at night (fig. 1). These conditions continue today (Jeffry 2002: 34). Women especially have been subject to exploitation in
Thailand, as in many other export based nations. Sons were expected to support their families with a profitable career, but daughters were expected to support their families until marriage through labor on a family plot, then work as a servant in their mother-in-law's home (Odzer 1994: 105-111). If they did not marry or, as was more typically the case, if a woman did not have a subsistence plot, it was her responsibility to support her parents and family financially (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Jeffry 2002: 50-60, Mies 1986: 40-71, Odzer 1994: 105-111, Skrobanek et al. 1997: 1-19).

Despite cultural opinions about men being the breadwinners, daughters and wives were very likely to be earning money to support their families, oftentimes being the sole providers (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-139, Jeffry 2002: 84, Odzer 1994: 105-111, Skrobanek et al 1997). The low value placed on women in Thai society as the laborers in their husband's homes placed them in the ideal position to have their labor exploited (Odzer 1994: 105-111). Not only are wives and minor wives expected to work hard day and night to keep a house clean and everyone fed, sometimes rarely associating with the family itself, let alone her husband, but in the industrial sector they could be paid a pittance barely enough to survive, with little to send as remittances to their families (Jeffry 2002: 84,
Americanization (1960-1992)

While being a Thai tradition for many centuries, mostly as a form of punishment for unfaithful wives, prostitution was not a mainstay of Thai economics until the Vietnam war when US troops were on Rest and Relaxation (R&R) in Thailand and the demand for sex workers sky-rocketed. It has been a long standing arrangement in armies around the world to encourage the development of brothels around bases and R&R locations. This was a strategy to help prevent the spread of venereal disease, since it is assumed (and often the case) that soldiers will purchase sexual services whether the army permits it or not, and STIs pose a great risk to losing many soldiers while in treatment. Often, a military in the area would support the creation of brothels around the base and require all sex workers to be tested for STIs monthly. With the new availability of brothels, common Thai men were able to acquire many women at a lower price than what would have been required for a noble taking on more wives. As the concept of male virility was still common in Thai culture, group trips to the brothel became a common practice among Thai men. The popularity of the industry, therefore, was never solely dependent on a foreign client base (Avert.org 2006, Jeffry 2002: 45, Odzer 1994, Watanabe 1963).

Industrial development truly began at this time as part of US efforts to assist Thailand in the fight against communism. The Thai government began cracking down even harder on supposed “communists”\(^5\). They were financially rewarded by the US. Deforestation occurred on a massive scale for the creation of plantations, bringing poor farmers work, but no land, and an even higher dependence on money for subsistence. In this context, daughters became valuable as workers to be sent abroad (or, more commonly, to a brothel) while the government built more and more schools to fulfill compulsory

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\(^5\) “Communism” was often blamed for protests against governmental policy, unionizing, or holding “radical,” “liberal,” or, in reality, Western democratic beliefs about government and labor policy (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Jeffry 2002: 27-31)
education (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167). Shortly after the Vietnam War, the United States determined that Thailand was stable enough for investment and US companies began receiving preferential contracts to obtain cheap (mostly female) labor in Thailand. Because women were devalued as a work force and instead treated as a “natural resource” to be exploited (mainly working on subsistence, and non-economic production). Women's labor was offered as “unskilled” (as is common in most export based factory settings) and was therefore less expensive. Meanwhile, the poor farmers remained landless while the land became desert due to massive deforestation with little ecological planning, greatly increasing the supply of unskilled labor available to Western companies from Thai citizens dependent on employment with an export-based luxury goods supplier (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, ILO 1998, Jeffry 2002, Mies 1986: 74-110, Odzer 1994: 121, Sittirak 1998).

**AIDS in Thailand (1984-2006)**

There were three different waves of HIV in Thailand once the epidemic began to spread. Each wave came directly on the heels of the last and each led to the next. The first wave was among intravenous drug users (IDUs), especially in the cosmopolitan economic centers of Bangkok and Chiang Mai. These cities were places where tourists seeking sex and drugs would share needles or migrants from other countries would gather with other IDUs in Thailand. The second wave was in the prostitution population which, as stated earlier, spiked from a (possibly artificial) 0% to 44% infected in the year 1989 alone (Beyrer 1998: 16-35). The third wave which occurred the next year impacted the population of clients who were not using condoms when they had sex with the sex workers in whom the epidemic was vastly expanding. Despite the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among certain high risk populations, until 1991, the government maintained a strict policy that HIV was a foreign disease and could be defeated by “good Thai values” (Avert.org 2006, Jeffry 2002: 110).

In 1991 the new Prime Minister was elected as a civilian Prime Minister who realized that
virus was now a danger to elite and middle class Thais, not simply to morally “corrupt” prostitutes. Further, he recognized that previous military responses of rounding sex workers up and fining them would not work (Jeffry 2002: 105-110). With the help of many women's NGOs, and a lot of funding for condoms, the government was able to educate on a mass scale about HIV and prevention. Brothel visits were diminished, and the culture of visiting a brothel in groups even shifted so that men who went to brothels together were also more likely to use a condom (Phanuphak 1998). However, while the program did dramatically reduce the new infection rate in the general population, sex workers are still being infected at a rate of 20% per year, showing that this population has not benefited nearly as much from prevention efforts as the rest of the Thai population. The general population is at an endemic rate of less than 1% annually. The underlying social and cultural conditions have not been addressed (AMFAR 2004, Avert.org 2006, UNAIDS 2005, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun and Aggleton 2001).

Potential Problems

I am writing this as an anthropologist, a feminist and a woman. I find myself in a complicated position, being a middle class, white, American woman writing on the policies of rich Thai men and the opinions of rich Thai women with regards to poor Thai women. To gain the facts with which I am writing this piece, I have read documents written by persons with a world view that contributes to the very culture of violence I am criticizing. While relying for facts on the people whose work I am critiquing, I too find myself as separate and other from any person I am analyzing. I do not have the experiences of the women I am writing about, nor have I found an un-edited account of their own experiences. I am writing this, therefore, from the perspective of an outsider, critiquing the actions, systems and decisions of other outsiders and power structures (Mies 1986: 74-110, Sittirak 1998).

I recently had the experience of watching television with four men in their early twenties. A well known commercial for men's body wash came on which featured a white man and woman kissing
passionately. They began to roll down a hill and at one point pick up a woman of color into their tumbling mess of sexual innuendo who then begins to kiss them both. She is left a little farther down the hill and sinks to the ground covered in dirt but satisfied while the white couple roll into the ocean where a truck full of this body wash has just crashed, filling the water with suds. The white couple walk out clean and happily holding hands.

I attempted to explain to the group of men I was watching this with why I found the commercial to be re-enforcing sexism and racism. It implied that this otherwise normal couple could easily pick up a promiscuous woman of color for their exciting sexual experience and then just leave her satisfied and filthy because she would be as easily pleased as she was acquired. The men agreed that I took these things too seriously and tried to find violence where there was none. I had attempted to explain to them how pervasive these ideas of sex and culture were, to the point where media and culture normalize blatant shows of cultural beliefs that validate racism and sexism. They proved me right by telling me that I was looking too hard. I could have easily deconstructed every commercial that came on the television that night, but would have only wasted my breath. In fairness to my company, if I had been a man I probably would have been treated the same way. But the social acceptability of such blatantly exploitative cultural education reaffirm for me the importance of deconstructing the messages we receive every day about gender, race, culture and what it is to live in a consumerist society that markets its products along with sex and racism.

A certain level of separation is necessary for analysis. Even when analyzing one's own culture a distancing from the personal connection with one's culture is necessary to be able to effectively deconstruct said systems and cultures. However, to make this study entirely academic, to place myself as entirely separate from those about whom I am writing, to criticize freely and maintain no standard of human connection with my subject, will render my efforts as harmful as those I write about. So I find myself walking a thin line between student and woman. I understand, that as a woman, I am impacted
by common beliefs about femininity, sexual objectification, and the expectations of a sexually
dominant male culture. I also understand that as an American woman I am sold the products produced
by third world women, luxury items such as silk flowers that serve no purpose except that of continued
consumerism.

I am interested in this field because it affects me as a woman in the world, and I feel I can do
some good here. The separation of women of one class and ethnicity from those of another is a
significant contribution to the very problem I am examining. If I cannot identify with these women,
how can I effectively advocate for them? I have therefore attempted, in this paper, to make their
situation more understandable to those in academia, if not easier to relate to. Many of the works I will
be discussing here were written by other women who felt the same way. I will attempt to learn from
their mistakes and successes and document both as fairly as is possible. The issue of female economic
exploitation leading to the current situation of prostitution in Thailand is not a gentle subject. Many of
the experiences of these women have been violent, and the treatment of human life is anything but
humane in this situation.

Direct physical violence is used to reinforce structural violence and is justified by culture which
is a less visible form of violence. Systematic violence both creating and created by cultural violence
leaves women in what often seems to be an impossible situation. The role first world women play in
the economic exploitation of third world women is disturbing and brings to my mind ever more the
need for all people to understand the connection between marketing cheap items made by the
impossibly cheap labor of third world women and their consumption by first world women.
Understanding as fully as possible the interconnectedness of international feminism with things like the
sex trade and cultural violence of male privilege that fuel both the supply and demand of Thailand's and
other countries booming sex industries is important if the trade is to be made less dangerous to the
community at large as well as the women who participate in it. Calling these structures and aspects of
culture “violent” is necessary because they are less visible and are therefore easily ignored. By acknowledging their importance in perpetuating direct violence, productive change can be made towards a less at risk or exploitative society (Galtung 2004, Sittirak 2008).

No culture is stationary. Had Thailand not been Westernized I do not believe we would see the same culture that was present in the 17th century. Culture is a fluid thing that adapts to time, place and context. The violence inherently present in culture adapts just as easily, and is often manifested in and by the structures that are created through adaptation. I wish to convey how the culture of sexuality has changed, what influenced the change, and the consequences of that change, mainly for lower class women. In this research, I will attempt to do more good than harm, but if nothing else, I hope to be able to point out the causes of these problems which affect everyone on a global scale. It is my distinct belief that understanding the social structures that lead to epidemics such as HIV in Thailand is the only way to prevent other epidemics that require exploitative situations to spread on a massive scale.

Sex workers are often left voiceless and therefore powerless. There are, however many organizations which seek to amplify and make available the voice of the sex worker so that those in power might be able to help them gain healthier working conditions and so that they might gain more respect in their cultures thusly avoiding many forms of indirect violence. However, because these women are often under-educated by Western standards, because they are ostracized by their communities they are undervalued by those in power. They are not seen as experts on their own positions and it falls to feminists and academics to attempt to speak for them. Often when this happens, their voices are edited to make the point the author was attempting to make, rather than the point the sex worker wanted to get across. No matter how many voices are raised or experiences uncovered, it will all count for naught if they are unheard. Society needs to value the input of those whose lives are affected, rather than only that of those who can remain “objective” through distant, academic observation. I have not been able to provide a voice for these women as I have not had the pleasure of
meeting any of them. I am, however, willing to listen and to provide my own take on their situations to emphasize the importance and validity of their own accounts of their experiences.
Chapter I: Violence

There are three different titles for women who sell sexual services in Thailand currently in use. Each contains the three basic sets of connotation and embody the concepts other terms express which are created by culture and enforced by society. The word "prostitute" is an identity that limits a woman to the role of "harlot," "whore," "gold-digger" or other "bad" or "lazy" women. A "prostitute" is a woman who may be promiscuous, possibly diseased, tricky, lustful, and willing to allow anything to happen to her body for profit. While the term "prostitute" can be seen as benign without context, often it is used as a polite word for the above definitions of the person to whom the title is given. Rarely is a "prostitute" culturally considered a productive member of society, often she is considered a moral danger to her community despite her enormous economic contributions. Only "bad girls" want to be prostitutes and so they are ostracized and punished (Barry 1995 and 2000, Hantrakul 1984, Odzer 1994: 215-218, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 68-79).

Another title for the same job is "sex worker". A sex worker is a woman who carries the honor of being a productive member of society, earning money to support herself, her family and her village. While some shadows of "prostitution" hang around the title of "sex worker," it has many more "good" connotations and expectations that a woman behave in a professional manner, separating her personal life from her profession. A “sex worker” can become a wife later in life fulfilling other social roles. A "prostitute" is a type of person more than a job title. As such, “sex worker” is the title most preferred by Thai women's organizations that work directly with sex workers in an effort to raise confidence, self esteem, and personal agency. It gives them permission to feel pride in their work by attempting to make
their profession more culturally accepted (Darunee and Pandey 1991: 3-12, Jeffry 2002: 118-120, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 80-97).

Finally, the official title for a woman who sells sexual services in Thailand is "masseuse". Because the institution of Thai law punishes "prostitutes" and "sex workers," the "good" women who contribute funds to victims of natural disasters, send money home, or do other "good" deeds is titled a "masseuse" (Odzer 1994: 215-218). While it is generally understood that this term means a woman who sells sex, it does not carry the same erotic connotations of "prostitute" or "sex worker". "Masseuse" is primarily used by the Thai government to give the impression that it limits women to institutionally accepted (or legal) behavior. "Sex Worker" is a term that is mostly used by individuals connected to these women, or the women themselves. It attempts to allow for a personal identity apart from a profession, but in doing so, assigns an identity of self-respect and openness towards "bad" behavior. "Prostitute" is a more heavily used term that assigns a definition of a personality. All these titles contain culturally violent connotations, but the effect of the violence on the individual and the resulting limitations being placed on that person's identity is different for each behavior (Jeffry 2002: 63-64, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 68-79).

Western feminist scholars often speak about these women as either "sex workers" or as "prostitutes". Kathleen Barry, for example, discusses prostitutes all over the world in her book *Stolen Lives* (1995) as either "victims" or "accomplices" of "evil" men. Scholars such as Barry who write on women as "prostitutes" tend to discount their experiences and stories, analyzing their behavior and treating them as "bad" or "foolish" women (Altink 1995, Barry 1995, Jeffry 2002: 105-110). This reinforces the distancing and silencing of women's voices. In Barry's view, a "prostitute" is not a valid source of information about herself. She is not a person to be heard, but a person to regulate. A prostitute has no rights because she cannot insist upon them for herself. When elite women, from Thailand or abroad, separate themselves from these women, they accept and reinforce the cultural
violence that limits them, by uncritically accepting cultural ideas about these women as "bad," "foolish," "naive" "victims". The end result is an audience that perceives these women as objects of a study. They are not real people but the titles and limitations placed on them by the way their stories are told and edited. To edit their voices to make a point rather than to allow sex workers to be heard contributes to cultural violence in ideas about these women and to the structural violence created from these beliefs (Galtung 2004, Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Mummendy and Otten 1995).

Navigating a discussion of violence in an academic setting can be a complicated process between maintaining objectivity and making a thorough observation of the circumstances under which violence is bred. It is sometimes necessary to make a detached analysis of violent behavior if a writer's goal is to keep their personal disgust at some aspects of the topic out of their writing. Violence, however, is an omniscient reality, existing in every life in one form or another, and the validity of a point is often lost in the search for “objectivity”. The term “violence” carries connotations of direct visible harm to the human body and can induce emotional responses even with its mention. It is therefore important to not become wrapped up in a personal, emotional relation to the topic, but instead to maintain a certain level of detachment. To become enraged, involved, or influenced by the subject has been the downfall of many authors whose points have lost their validity by being phrased with anger. Violence is inherent in culture, and a strong influencing factor in the creation of identity and society (Gaultung 2004, Whitehead 2004: 3-25).

I have attempted, in this paper, to maintain enough distance from the topic that I can execute an effective deconstruction of violence in Thai culture, while also attempting to remain realistic about its influence in the lives of Thai prostitutes. For a sex worker who has little personal agency, the practical application of these concepts is a reality. I will attempt to refrain from making judgments on those influenced by this topic, as this has contributed to most of the structural and cultural violence I have observed (Gaultung 2004, Whitehead 2004: 3-25).
Violence for the purposes of this paper will be defined as physical (direct, visible), cultural or structural (indirect, invisible). Physical violence entails the destruction of the body or actions that can be taken on the body (such as striking or mutilation). This kind of violence can serve many more purposes than simply the object of causing pain. Violence is often used in the creation of social and cultural morality or to control the person on whom the action is being inflicted. Often, in the parent/child relationship it is the mother who inflicts physical violence on the child to teach them cultural morality. For example, when my nephew was two, he started hitting his friends. His mother told him that every time he hit one of his friends she would spank him harder. My sister wanted to teach my nephew that it was not acceptable to hurt his friends and to make him understand that hitting hurt. He learned that his actions (whether the act itself or simply being caught) can result in pain. Ideally, the parent who inflicts physical punishment hopes the child learns that their actions are “bad” as defined by the morals of their culture, whether he actually learns the intended morals or not. Finally, he learns to limit his actions to those that he can be executed without detection, those his parents approve of, or to accept pain. Physical violence exercised as a limitation on a person is also designed to create limitations on the thoughts and actions of the individual (Galtung 2004, Mummendy and Otten 1995, Whitehead 2004: 3-25).

A less visible form of violence can also be inflicted through the creation of a thought process by education and cultural definitions of personal identity and consequences for being assigned a certain kind of identity. In other words, direct violence can serve the purpose of creating a sense of morality as defined by culture. This sense of morality can be used, in the case of the “dutiful daughter,” to force her into prostitution to fulfill a moral obligation, as defined by the cultural creation of morality which contributes to cultural violence. Having the identity of “woman” in Thai culture requires the individual to accept her duties and behave according to a specific code of conduct established for her sex. Indeed,

6 To her credit my sister now utilizes time-outs and less physical forms of punishment to teach her children morality, a shift many parents do not make but which has resulted in a drastic change in my nephew’s behavior.
if she has never been taught to behave any differently, and understands that her position of acceptance in her society requires certain behaviors, a woman has very little choice in her actions if she wants to maintain her social status. Because this cultural violence is less visible, it is often ignored, though it creates and justifies visible, direct or physical violence (Galtung 2004, Hantrakul 1984, Sittirak 1998: 74-80).

Instilling a sense of morality in children and members of society is the creation of what they perceive as "good" and "bad". Most societies teach that "killing is bad". But this too can be a form of cultural violence, in that it impacts and limits the thought patterns and justifies direct violence against an individual who acts against those principles accepted within a society. If a culture teaches that "homosexuals are bad and in need of punishment" this moral creation justifies violence. Cultural violence is often the trained restraining of thoughts: "the victim deserved it," "hitting is bad," "prostitution is dirty," "if you are attracted to people of your same gender you are a 'bad' person". Society would not be what it is without these social codes inflicted via thought limitations. If a person does not fit into what is prescribed as "good" they are deemed as "bad," which is so often associated with pain, either physical or the emotional pain of rejection. Culture also creates a code of conduct and set way of treating these “bad” individuals which is executed by structural violence. Limiting a person to specific definitions of "good" and "bad," "dutiful daughter" or "loyal wife," "whore" or “honest worker," justifies the continued structural violence against women who are deemed "good" or “bad" (Galtung 2004, Whitehead 2004: 3-25).

Structural violence (for the purpose of this paper) is the exploitation of a specific group through economics, policy, and institutional education. A structure that contains the violence described above often creates these identities as a way of continuing its existence. A capitalist structure such as Thailand's requires a working class, culturally defined as “poor”, and economically dependent on the structure. It also requires an upper class of consumers who are dependent on the systematic exploitation
of labor to maintain their own elevated position. Structural violence is the creation of limitations and controls by those in power on a specific group of people for the benefit of the group in power. Women in Thailand born into the class of "working poor" often find that there is no way for them to become upper class consumers based on the image of the American Dream (US Power and capitalism) while also being "hard honest workers". Instead they become "prostitutes". When women become "prostitutes" they are culturally defined as "bad" by the standards of those in power (Central Thai and Western cultures). This definition justifies exploitative treatment and legislation that punishes prostitutes but not clients or owners (Jeffry 2002: xx, Hantrakul 1984, Odzer 1994, Sittirak 1998 : 79-113).

The line between direct and indirect violence is blurred because each perpetuates the other. Physical violence is used to reinforce cultural violence which justifies direct violence which is exercised through structural violence. When examining an act of physical violence, a single instance can be defined as violent. Striking a child can easily be defined as a violent action, and, while it may have social and cultural backgrounds, history of physical abuse, and cultural and structurally violent aspects, the action alone can be defined as violent without the presence of these. This is not the case with instances of cultural and structural violence. If, instead of being struck physically, the child is perpetually told that being a woman means being submissive, virginal, and a servant in her own household, and that being a woman is what she should want, this is an instance of cultural violence creating a population of easily exploited people. A lack of education or jobs for women in Thailand enforces these cultural definitions of morality. Cultural violence must be called violence because it created direct violence. Any other association would be more easily ignored and its importance undermined (Galtung 2004, Odzer 1994).

This definition of “womanhood” will shape the character of the child and create the template from which she will make her life choices. If the child is also taught that to be a “good daughter” by
both the standards of her parents and her community, she must support her family, this will also impact her decisions, and she will be hard pressed to find an opportunity to both be a submissive servant and earn enough money to support her family. This is not to say that any child raised under these circumstances would be invariably destined to turn to prostitution or other culturally unacceptable behaviors, but these public opinions and attitudes would play a very strong role in the child's life choices. If the child did grow up to be a sex worker, the constant feeling that she was “wrong”, “dirty”, and destined to be so through no decision of her own but instead through her own birth would make it very difficult for her to have the personal agency and confidence necessary to learn English so that she could insist on condom use with an American client (Hantrakul 1984, ILO 1997, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 37-55).

The act of not being able to use a condom is not, in itself violent. However the cultural creation of a submissive disposition that yields to the whims of a client through culturally constructed identity is violent. This is especially if they have also been taught that a woman must never, even if it is her profession, show sexual knowledge or an ability to insist on any sexual terms (Odzer 1994, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun and Aggleton 2001, Skrobanek et. al. 1997). Morality is a cultural creation that, when created in conflict with structural realities, such as the unavailability of morally acceptable occupations and cultural creations of what it is to be a woman, sex worker, or other member of society create an exploitative and high risk situation for a significant portion of a population. While no individual woman is “destined” to become a prostitute, the fact that the trade thrives and that most of the women who take part in it are of a disadvantaged class, also means that there is a significant portion of society set aside as “morally corrupt”. The perpetuation of prostitution makes a morally pure society impossible as long as the cultural creation of morality does not allow for prostitution. This allows for the moral justification of violent systems, ostracizing, and exploitation of the specific population that finds themselves as sex workers (Galtung 2004, Jeffry 2002; xx, Sittirak 1998 : 79-113,
For years after a woman leaves a bar on Patpong, she is still defined as a prostitute, even by those who do not know her (Odzer 1994). She behaves in a certain way that fits the structural definition of “prostitute”, which entails promiscuity, Westernization and lewdness rather than just the acceptance of money for sexual services. She supposedly becomes more aggressive and is more capable of breaking cultural definitions of what she should and should not be doing. A woman who behaves this way is then limited by cultural violence, defining her as a “prostitute” with all the stigma that title entails, regardless of her reasons for choosing the profession, and is defined as "bad" by her culture. She may be a "dutiful daughter" by sending money home, but society at large considers her to be “irredeemable”, or in need of re-education, due to perceptions and definitions of prostitution (Jeffry 2002, Odzer 1994, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 37-55).

Is the institution of Thai prostitution inherently violent? The basic nature of the act of willingly selling one's sexual services is not violent. The system of cultural formation and regulation of identity is not fluid, once a woman is known to fit the definition of prostitute, she cannot change it without considerable difficulty and relocation. This difficulty of being limited by cultural restrictions to identity is only relevant women who experienced minimal limitations as sex workers and find themselves in the trade voluntarily, which is not the majority of cases (Darunee and Pandey 1991: 3-12, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 37-55). Most sex workers in Thailand have their movements limited by their employers, where they live is often defined, when they go out, how much money they receive, whether they can go to a health clinic or not and who pays when they do, when they must arrive at work or even if they are allowed to leave, is highly defined, prescribed and limited. Many women also do not have a choice about entering the trade in the first place, and very few have the choice to leave (Darunee and Pandey 1991, Jeffry 2002: 50-60, Odzer 1994, Sittirak 1998 : 79-113, Skrobanek et.al. 1997; 37-55).

The industry of prostitution in Thailand (and, indeed, in most places where prostitution takes
place) relies heavily on the appeal of renting a body and the stereotypes, connotations or culture that are associated with that body. Sex tourism is not so much the marketing of bodies as it is the marketing of a culture (Gmelch 2004: 157-170). Thai women are advertised and touted as “demure,” “submissive,” and women who can make a Western man feel like a “real” man as opposed to those “uptight” Western women because their culture created them that way (Jeffry 2002: 22, Odzer 1994). Also encouraged is the idea that a foreigner can do anything he wants with a woman, man or child because it is “culturally acceptable” no matter what the culture actually thinks about it (Jeffry 2002: 3, Odzer 1994, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 1-5). If the act of purchasing the rights to a body and culture did not have an appeal to the client, prostitution would not be the institution it is today. If it were simply a matter of men “needing” sex with many women, prostitution would only be present in a place where there were few women, such as the front lines of a military operation (Jeffry 2002: 18-20, Watanabe 1999). Sex is not difficult to find in Thailand, for a foreigner or a local, as indicated by the multitude of mistresses Thai politicians have kept over the years (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Jeffry 2002: 23-26). It is the appeal of owning (if only for a night) a body, a culture, or a person that sells prostitution both nationally and internationally, and makes the institution inherently violent. When prostitution is the sale of a culture or ideal, the woman is confined to being the “symbol” of whatever it is the client desires. She is not at liberty to be an individual, especially if she cannot communicate with her client (Jeffry 2002: 23-26, Odzer 1994, Sittirak 1998: 79-113).

The development of a Thai woman is prescribed by her culture and the limitations it imposes on her. If a woman is born as an elite in Central Thai culture, she will be educated with a Western education, taught about the values of motherhood and what it is to be "Thai," and expected to uphold the high standards set for elite women in a Westernized culture. She must maintain Thai standards of propriety while adhering to Western ideals of femininity and morality (Jeffry 2002: 63, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 80-97). When she marries or becomes involved in politics (a new development for
Westernized elite women), it is expected even more that she maintain these standards, even while attempting to change the institution that defines women as "housewives" and "mothers". She must distance herself from poor or rural Thai women to maintain her legitimacy. This distance reinforces an inability to empathize with poorer women, placing them closer to the men in power who are exploiting poor women and therefore justifying disrespect and re-education efforts (Jeffry 2002, Mummendy and Otten 1995).

In an effort to end the exploitation of women that occurs in prostitution, many elite women have determined that teaching these (misguided, bad, victim) women the skills they would need to be (good, honest, hard) domestic workers will enable them to choose a different profession. These women, however, have already been limited culturally by their identification as prostitutes. They are also limited by an economic structure that places prostitution as the most lucrative form of employment for an uneducated woman. While domestic or factory labor may be more culturally accepted as "good" or “honest” work, these women have already been "bad" workers and are limited by their own perceptions of themselves, their own financial needs, and the views of their community that they will not be able to change, as prostitutes. By being poor prostitutes, these women are considered illegitimate sources of information on their own lives and several elite women's movements have considered them to be physically or mentally damaged because elite women are so far removed from those they are attempting to help (ILO 1998, Jeffry 2002: 64, Mummendy and Otten 1995, Odzer 1994: 121, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 68-79).

By labeling a woman as "bad," the "good" women of society are free to ostracize her. Mistreatment or exploitation of "bad" (voluntary sex worker) women matters much less than it does if an “innocent (involuntary sex worker) victim” is exploited or treated with physical violence. Many political platforms for example, have been based on an appeal to this facet of violent perceptions. By painting all prostitutes as victims, or as being "good girls" at heart who simply fell into "bad" or even
"evil" hands, efforts to increase women's rights as sex workers have been given attention by the global community. In this line of thinking, however, any woman who is not an "innocent victim," but an actor in her own decision to sell sex becomes a "bad" influence on "good" women and a puppet of "evil" men. There is no ability for these women to be simply women, with needs, desires, and expectations of themselves that are different from what one governmental institution has in mind. These limitations are violent in their nature, because they restrict women to specific roles, contributing to common views of prostitutes that are separate from reality. Limitations are also created by an exploitative structure that is validated by cultural beliefs about prostitutes and is dependent on these women being scapegoats so that they can be more easily controlled and exploited. Unfortunately, one cannot separate direct violence from indirect violence. Because cultural concepts of identity and morality justify direct physical violence against those structurally and culturally deemed inferior, the line between the two types of violence is blurred (Mummendy and Otten 1995, Jeffry 2002: 67).

This separation of the idea of prostitution from the reality of prostitution also creates a constricting structure of violence. When policies are made on the concept of what a woman should be any institution meant to help "good" women only impoverishes and increases social pressures and violence on women who cannot be defined in the narrow term of "innocent victim". The structure contradicts itself, and culture reinforces that structure. Often in Thailand, the leaders have attempted to re-enforce the system through a re-writing of culture that is more favorable to the agenda of the current regime. More often than not, the responsibility to uphold the new cultural norms falls upon women (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Jeffry 2002: 50-55). In the 1950's, rural women were subject to re-education programs with the aim of teaching them to become that regime's idea of a “true Thai woman” or, more accurately, submissive domestic and factory laborers. Elite and rural women are expected to be symbols of femininity, piety and the physical manifestation of their culture. They are limited in behavior and appearance to the prescribed behavior and dress set forward by tradition and
in institutional definitions of femininity (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139).

Three authors who have written on colonial and post-colonial violence can be used for this argument. They are José Rabassa, Johan Galtung and Franz Fanon. José Rabassa wrote on violence and its role in colonization as well as the role of the government in justifying violence against the “natives,” in this case, any exploited group seen as inferior to the Westernized elite (2000). Using his theory, so long as fines, raids, arrests and re-education programs directed at sex workers and not pimps or clients can be justified by the law, it is not legally considered violence. However, if the culture, despite what the structure deems legal, determines that the behavior is immoral, it can then be defined as violence and the structure will have to change to accommodate the culture. A law can be both violent and justifiable, but it is the responsibility of the culture and beliefs created by it to justify the structural violence or act out against it (2000).

Johan Galtung writes on the concepts of direct and indirect violence. He argues that cultural and structural violence are present even in so called times of “peace,” and greatly contribute to peace easily turning to war. He describes indirect violence as perpetuating direct violence and emphasizes the importance of understanding invisible forms of violence to prevent the advent of direct or visible violence. His theories on violence are the main source of theory behind this historical deconstruction of cultural violence (2004).

Franz Fanon presented the idea that in a country with a post-colonial atmosphere, being run by natives who had been educated by colonists was violent in itself (1963). Thailand is run by Western-educated men (and a few Westernized women) who hold the idea that partnership and equality with the West is the ultimate goal of development as opposed to a unique development of Thai culture to approach Thai problems. Western countries were the colonizers, and though Thailand was never

7 Often, however, these changes are small or incomplete. In the case of the 1996 change to the 1992 laws against prostitution, men were finally held accountable through fines or prosecution, however, in practice, the harsher 1992 law is still used against the sex workers themselves, showing that the change in policy was mostly just on paper for sex workers (Jeffry 2002: 91-93).
directly occupied by any Western country, it still exhibits characteristics of Fanonian post-colonialism. The government exploits and segregates its citizens offers unequal trade agreements to Western companies and does not enforce its own labor laws (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 1-25, Jeffry 2002, Skrobanek et. al. 1997). The government freely offered access to all of its own resources to the West, without ever being directly colonized. This has changed somewhat since violent protests by Western educated students, but older Thai traditions have been sacrificed for acceptance by the colonial powers. Prostitution is only one of the freely available resources that are offered to the Westerner, and that has ballooned in consumption by the locals (Fanon 1963: 35-106, Jeffry 2002: 50-60, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 68-79).

Due to Westernization, elite men are limited by Western ideals of faithful family men who love their wives and only want access to one woman's body. Whether this is actually what these men believe is irrelevant. Appearing to be a (Western) culturally appropriate man has become a vital part of post-colonial politics and being able to appeal to Western culture as a “civilized,” “loyal” man is important if international relations are to be maintained in the age of Western feminism (Fanon 1963: 35-106, Jeffry 2002: 105-110). If men are to maintain their position of power in a Westernized culture, they too are limited by cultural violence. Rights they had only a few decades ago have been stripped by their own efforts to become a “first world” (Western) country. Women are still limited to be faithful to one husband and are criticized for breaking this "norm," though lower class women, especially prostitutes, can avoid this, through the expectation that they will have sex with many men. Sex workers, however, are still expected to have only one boyfriend whom they are faithful to, whether he is their Thai boyfriend or rich foreign husband. Sex workers can still break out of the cultural violence inflicted on "honest" or "good" women by being "bad," but they are still subject to a different set of limitations and expectations (Galtung 2004, Jeffry 2002: 63-64, Odzer 1994: 91-104).

Even if a woman does not follow the prescribed method of behavior for prostitutes, it is
assumed that they do, or will, and they are treated in the prescribed manor for prostitutes (Odzer 1994: 91-104). That is to say, it is assumed that they will be promiscuous and greedy and so are treated with mistrust and “punished” whenever possible (Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun and Aggleton 2001). Their money is respected, and they are expected to bring home massive amounts. If a woman finds herself in a position, as so many do, where her labor as a sex worker is not providing enough funds to send home, she will not go home until she has a great deal of money for her family. She will endure conditions that have been deemed inhumane by Western society to fulfill the requirements set on her by society and cultural upbringing. An extra touch of irony is that often the family is striving towards exhibiting the Western ideal of wealth by attempting to acquire a bigger house, electricity, or the ability to throw large-scale feasts and other conspicuous shows of wealth (Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun and Aggleton 2001, Darunee and Pandey 1991: 3-12, Odzer 1994: 105-111, Skrobanek et. al: 68-79).

The cultural violence these women encounter has been internalized, and they teach it to their children, because a society and culture are formed by the limitations and definitions of identity placed on its members. Cultural creations of morality, gender, sexuality and social roles constitute these identities. The individual has very little choice about which roles she will fit into, and is treated by other members of society in accordance to the role she finds herself in. Changing one's role is difficult, and often a person who attempts to change their position, for example from "rural farm girl" to "rich city girl," is defined as "bad," "greedy," "gold-digger," or "ungrateful". Once a person has been defined in a certain way, they can either spend a great deal of energy attempting to change mass beliefs about themselves or they can internalize these definitions, acting as they are "supposed" to act. Ignoring cultural expectations is nearly impossible, and societies are often set up to penalize and ostracize anyone who ignores these violent structures (Galtung 2004, Jeffry 2002: 63-64, Odzer 1994: 91-104, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 68-79).
In the instance of sex workers, their potential for economic freedom is limited by many factors such as debt bondage, social stigma, unequal familial requirements, and a system of culture, education, economics and prostitution policy that severely limit the options of poor women and sex workers. The institution of prostitution in Thailand is a violent institution laden with cultural creations of identity and stigmas as well as structural inequalities and reinforcements of the exploitations of prostitutes. Most women are also exposed to a greater potential for physical violence, powerless against the control of a brother, bar owner or client. Some women can have the experience of being a sex worker without ever having physical or structural violence inflicted upon them, but this is often under extraordinary circumstances and the cultural constructions of identity are still present (Odzer 1994: 91-104, Skrobanek et. Al, 1997: 68-79).

Girls are limited to the role of "dutiful daughter," "dutiful wife," or "bad girl". To fulfill the requirements of being a “dutiful daughter,” a woman must support her family either by cooking, cleaning and tending to her parents or by sending them money. Many "dutiful daughters" have returned home, laden with jewelry and money which they hand out freely (as is culturally expected), building the expected bigger houses for her parents and returning to the brothel or bar as soon as the money runs out (Odzer 1994: 105-111, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 68-79). If a daughter does not have the money, she cannot return home for fear of stigma both from her family and community. Communities are willing to overlook the "disgraceful" profession of a rich daughter, but not entirely that of a poor or sick one. Mothers will still often care for a daughter with HIV, but will not let her illness be known until after her death to avoid stigma and shame (Hantrakul 1984, Odzer 1994: 105-111, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun and Aggleton 2001, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 68-79).

To earn money, a woman must sell her labor or her body. There is no market for her skills as a horticulturist or other traditional skills she may have learned from her mother, and women have far more limits on what jobs they will be hired for or even considered appropriate to apply to than their
male counterparts. Because culture dictates what is and is not considered "women's work" (which is often difficult, requires a greater expenditure of energy and resources for fewer benefits than "men's work") Thai women (and most poor women globally) are constricted to a small market of jobs. While there may be a multitude of factories or homes for a rural woman to work in, there is not much variety in payment or treatment in these places, leaving women only the choice of which factory to work at for a similar wage (ILO 1998, Mies 1986: 80-110, Odzer 1994: 183). An uneducated woman would be less likely apply to be a secretary, just as an educated man would be less likely to apply to be a maid. There are exceptions, of course, but the specifications of work as gendered creates limits in the cultural acceptability of a profession(Mies 1986: 80-110). Because sex work is more financially lucrative than factory or domestic labor, and in some ways, presents more desirability from their perspective, women will be further guided to the prostitution industry for higher wages and the relative independence it may offer (ILO 1998, Jeffry 2002, Odzer 1994: 183, Skrobanek et.al. 1997).

If the violence against these women is to be ended, if they are to find fewer limitations on their identity and behavior so that they can make choices that will expose them to fewer instances of physical violence (as is the concern of many feminist writers) their individual voices must be heard. The very nature of Thai prostitution would have to be changed from the exploitations and commodification of what these women symbolize to respect for the women and their profession (Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Skrobanek et.al. 1997: 68-79). The person behind the title deserves to be acknowledged. When "prostitutes" become "women who engage in sex work" they can be respected by scholars as women, not simply as a subject of objective study but as people in their own right. Their feelings, perceptions and views should be published whole, unaltered and unanalyzed for the shapers of institutions and societies to better understand the effects of their decisions. This study will explore the developments in Thai culture that have shaped the current structures and cultures of violence faced by sex workers and women in a position to become sex workers.
Chapter II: Colonialism

Colonialism in Thailand manifested itself in a unique fashion. For centuries, Siamese kings were colonizing, dominating, and moving nearby tribes and societies. When England and France arrived in the 19th century to colonize Siam's neighbors, imminent colonization of Siam relied on the nation being seen as barbaric and weak, as opposed to the economic powerhouse it had been in the 14th century. This chapter seeks to acknowledge the adaptations made by Siamese culture and society to colonialism and analyze how these adaptations limited and exploited women, and gave birth to an exploitable class of women who were later to be used as prostitutes. This chapter also follows the creation of elite women as objects and symbols and the subsequent shift in the same cultural requirements to poor rural women and sex workers. Also, cultural ideals and social structures from the colonial period shaped and influenced gender relations. This was vital to exploitative prostitution and to economic policy in the 20th century that placed these women at risk for HIV (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 1-25, Jeffry 2002: 1-18, Fanon 1963).

At its height, what is now Thailand was a vibrant commercial center, and a powerful force in Southeastern Asia. In the early 14th century, Thailand was known as Siam; a collection of cities and villages which all paid tribute to the city of Ayutthaya. The city was a major center of trade in Asia, since it was a primary stop on the nautical routes to Chinese ports. Chinese merchants ran most of the commerce while the King collected taxes and wives and ruled as a faceless figure whom no one was allowed to see (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 1-25, Le Poer 1987).

Due to the presence of a diverse set of peoples, from Chinese merchants to French traders, the
Ayutthayan government created a complex taxation system that provided preferences for its more wealthy businesses, and maintained an open stance with regards to religion and the freedom of immigrants to practice their own region. The King had many wives, and a merchant could hope to climb the social ladder by giving the King a daughter in marriage. By having many sons, the King could place them in different bureaucratic positions, helping to solidify his own standing, as well as marrying his daughters to other powerful men as symbols of their bonds (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 1-25, Jeffry 2002: 1-18).

Being a common Thai in this era however, was did not include the system of bride exchange and commercial abundance required of elite or central Thais. To build public works, defend tributaries from other cities and ambitious leaders, the Ayutthayan government used a system of corvée, or drafting. Every non-noble free native-born man was required to serve under corvée for six months out of the year, leaving the women to do most of the agricultural labor and domestic work. Many men were able to avoid corvée, since the system only required native free men to join. Foreign merchants would not have to worry about the system, and could gain some very inexpensive labor by offering shelter from corvée in the form of indentured servitude. Later, this would manifest itself in culturally acceptable indentured servitude of daughters to brothels. Either way, a man would have little choice as to where he ended up, but it would most likely not be at home, where the women were maintaining the family and village (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 1-25, Durrenberger 1996).

To maximize development, Ayutthaya and later Bangkok⁸, would send a corvée army to a tributary region and forcibly relocate entire villages to an area that the crown wished to develop. Rice fields were a common destination, and these people would be considered slaves, and their children would inherit the same status, providing massive amounts of free labor to generations of Kings. Since a

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⁸ Ayutthaya was destroyed in the 15th century by a Burmese attack and the capital had been moved to Bangkok a few decades later with many changes of hands and re-definitions of the constitution of the royal family as well as its duties (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 26-47).
lord had to be able to work all the land he owned, having more families under his command to work that land was a definite advantage. The indentured men would not have to pay a land tax, or leave the land for six months of corvée every year. Rural poor families did not have much choice in where they ended up, and most often the men would be working for one noble man or another, assisting him with gaining more profits while he was left in much the same condition. Between the King's corvée system and indentured servitude, the lives of the poor were never entirely their own (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 1-25, Durrenberger 1996).

The system was unequal and exploitative of labor. Further, it created an expectation that men who went on corvée had a wife to maintain the household and farm adequately by herself so that they would not starve. In the 20th century, wives are also a requirement for successful living as a Thai man. As Odzer pointed out in her book *Patpong Sisters* (1994) homosexuality was not a life style choice for a gay man she interviewed. Though he identified as homosexual, the only sensible option he saw for living his life after he quit working as a sex worker was to find a good wife. Odzer also pointed out that most of the household labor is done by wives, and that this is expected much the way it is expected that a waitress will serve customers. By becoming sex workers, women can contribute to their families without being slaves in their own households to a man who may or may not even be heterosexual9 (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 26-47, Mies 1986: 6-43, Odzer 1994).

As colonialism spread over southeastern Asia, France and Britain claimed control of more and more of Siam's enemies. Siamese kings were glad to see their former enemies defeated but also realized the danger the colonial machine posed to them. Fear of colonialism coupled with a desire for Western

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9 Public homosexuality as a life choice in the 1980's was rare in Thailand, as some feminists who strove to create safe places for women that did not allow men were labeled as "lesbians." Other than that, there has been very little writing on Thai homosexuality as a life choice rather than a profession until recently, though this may be because it is so widely expected that no matter his sexual preference, a man needs a wife to work in his home (Darunee and Pandey 1991, Odzer 1994: 105-111).
progress created a developing and Western dependent economy. In 1874, Siam was forced to define its borders to defend itself from invading troops. In an effort to gain respect among European communities, the King set about Westernizing Siamese habits. Women's dress, especially in elite circles became regulated to be more appropriate for a Western sense of propriety, and elite women began to be presented as symbols of Western advancement as well in their dress (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 26-47, Jeffry 2002: 1-18 Leonowens 1988).

Rural women, on the other hand continued their role as main subsistence laborers. As trade in natural resources rose in importance, so did the employment of men in these fields (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104). The status of women's labor continued to be degraded in social importance to the current classification of “women's work.” Women were undervalued in their labor as it became increasingly less vital to continued resistance against colonial forces. The Siamese government had clearly placed a priority on maintaining autonomy at all costs, thereby effectively diminishing the importance of women's labor. This may have been the result of cultural conditions, as women's labor was not generally publicly recognized among the male leaders it is not considered “real” labor. Because subsistence labor was not productive or usable in the fight against colonization, other forms of labor took precedence to the Siamese leaders while women's labor went by unnoticed. Men were recruited for factory and plantation work and laws or development plans were made around the population of male and female labor. It was not taken into account that the work women were doing was

10 The kings never ceased to be wary that colonialists were mapping Siamese territories, documenting natural resources and also documenting the behavior of people in Bangkok's tributaries, gaining knowledge the kings themselves had not bothered to collect, which had proven advantageous in past colonial efforts (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 26-47, Fanon 1963).

11 This was a main point for many colonists laying claim to Siam. Explorers were reporting back that women went about bare chested, and commented that a country so rich in intellect and natural resources could be much better run by a less barbarous and more English or French country (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Jeffry 2002: 3-6, Leonowens 1988).

12 Which is to say, it is commonly understood to be necessary to have a wife, but she is not considered noble, honorable or even employed in productive labor while she runs an entire household and ensures the continued survival of all members. In short, her worth and labor are taken for granted and undervalued because they are expected and not acknowledged as being important (Mies 1986: 6-43, Odzer 1994: 105-111).
feeding and clothing this labor population, and so was not taken into account when planning development or land distribution. Through their willingness to trade with the encroaching colonial powers, Siam was able to postpone foreign colonialism. This focus outwards, however, left those responsible for the continuation of everyday domestic survival less valued or noticed in the public eye (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 26-47, Jeffry 2002: 1-18, Mies 1986: 6-43, Odzer 1994, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, and Aggleton 2001).

**Overview of the environment and political structure of Siam**

Siam's political structure was based strongly around its financial system. Those with the money to maintain several wives also held the power to endear themselves to powerful lords through financial favors, employable sons, and marriageable daughters. Many of these men (for they were men, elite women were only symbols of status except for the rare queen) were Chinese (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Jeffry 2002: 3-6). Being of Chinese heritage, having Chinese features or lighter skin had became a status symbol. This became so ingrained that in the 20th century, Thai sex workers would often be concerned with how dark their skin was in comparison to other women, and many middle and upper class Thai men would even pay more for a fairer skinned woman (Odzer 1994). This was especially important to sex workers, as being considered exotic, or having a higher monetary value placed on their bodies would make it easier to earn money (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Hantrakul 1984, Odzer 1994, Skrobanek 1997: 12-19).

Darker skinned people were from the kingdom of Lanna in 20th century Northern Thailand and were often forcefully relocated to regions the government wished to develop during the 14th - 19th centuries, thereby associating dark skin or Northern origin with the slave class (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Durrenberger 1996). Echoes of this sentiment can be seen in the 20th century when most prostitutes and other exploited Thai women come from the Northern regions. The culture was much more tribal and severely disconnected from the commercial centers of Ayutthaya and Bangkok. In the
14th century tributary villages were generally forced into tributary status through military control and leaders were placed by the kings of Ayutthaya. In a sense, Ayutthaya “colonized” surrounding regions, in that their main goal was acquisition of resources, manpower, and goods. However, the government generally maintained a lack of interest in the cultures of these people, and so most remained intact. Traditional cultural creations of gender and responsibilities placed on the daughters to support the parents in their old age have continued in the northern regions, which has led to many of the cultural structures that place northeastern women especially at risk of becoming prostitutes (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Beyrer 1998, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (BEAPA) 2006, Durrenberger 1996, Odzer 1994).

Women in Pre-colonial Siam were allowed very different privileges depending on their social status. Elite women were the symbols of power and used to make business arrangements between their fathers and rulers or businessmen. Often they would be only one wife in a house of many, and their children would either work in state affairs (if they were male) or serve as other resources for their fathers as business bonds (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Jeffry 2002: 3-6). Being outfitted with a constantly growing army of noble sons, a King would rarely, if ever, have to look outside his own house for trusted men to send as regents of tributaries. There was little need for public education or allowing working classes privileges beyond those offered by the monasteries as monks. Being an elite woman often involved a little training in palace politics, and it was often hoped that a daughter might become a major wife, gaining influence over her husband in her father’s favor. This was a way in which she could be dutiful to her family and gain honor both in the eyes of her governmental system,

13 By ignoring the languages tributary people spoke, the Siamese government confirmed their disinterest in these populations as members of a society and maintained an interest in them as a work force. It was not generally expected that the outer reaches of Siamese power would be integrated into part of a great Siamese nation, and often these regions had to be reclaimed from Burma and other neighbors as well as the people of the regions themselves. They therefore became a work force pool, not specific groups of people with a valuable culture and status. Throughout the development of Thailand, tribal people, especially in these regions were more claimed as territories than as equal citizens, and seen as resources to be exploited rather than as members of a common Thai society (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, BEAPA 2006).
and in Buddhist karma towards her next birth. Siam, being generally Buddhist, placed men higher on
the karmic scale than women. Often the reason a woman would be told to be honorable and dutiful was
in the hopes of being reborn as a man in her next life (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Hantrakul

By being created as symbols rather than actors, objects to be collected for status, these women
lost their individuality in the memory of history. Very few women are mentioned in history books or
feminist commentaries before the 20th century; they were allowed very little personal agency. They
were expected, however, even in their rising in palace politics and gaining influence with their
powerful husbands, to still be trophies, symbolic of their family's influence over their husbands. Any
scant power they had was granted by men, and their identities were defined by their relations to their

For example; having a more wealthy and powerful father would give a woman a higher position
in a husband's household. A father with a lower status would mean a status as slave wife or mistress in
her patriarch's household. This would affect the types of responsibilities she would have in the palace,
as well as her son's status when he grew up (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Jeffry 2002: 4).
Later this limitation of the status of women would be transferred onto rural hill tribe women. The
tendency did once exist to create elite women as symbols of womanhood and status. Symbolizing
women in this way diminished their worth to that which men placed upon them rather than what they
had earned for themselves. It also paved the way for future generations of “trophy” women with no

Before post-colonial efforts in the 1950's to “civilize” rural women the way elite women had
been symbolized, rural women were of little to no concern to the men in power (Jeffry 2002: 63-64).
As rural men were enlisted in corvée half the year, rural and lower class women became the providers
of their families and centers of their villages. The economic structure of these villages was based
around trade of local goods that were important for survival and not for sale to the political centers. When colonialism and nationalism came to Thailand, these villages were able to hold out surprisingly well. Women were necessary as centers of a household, and it was their duty to care for every member of the family and keep things running and well maintained, especially while the men were away. As mentioned above, daughters inherited this duty, and were then given the responsibility of providing relief to their aging parents in labor and providing sustenance (Baker and Phongpaichit pp.47-104 2005, BEAPA 2006, Jeffry 2002: 1-18, Odzer 1994, Sittirak 1998).

Later, with the introduction of a national economic system, this would translate into the necessity for urban migration and seeking out well-paying jobs (Skrobanek 1997: 1-11). These rural communities, however, were often very different from the urban centers. Urban centers were run by men, mostly foreign or elite, because they could avoid the corvée system. The urban centers of Ayutthaya, then later Bangkok, became centers of new ideas and foreign trade, often incorporating systems of economy and education from other regions into their way of life. Rural areas were left out of these developments, and became areas with their own concepts of development, government, and identity. Villages were run mainly by women subsistence farming and trading in goods with one another, participating in animistic beliefs while the rest of Siam was Buddhist, and cultivating their own traditions of requiring the daughter to support her parents until marriage at which point it became she would tend to her husband's parents (Baker and Phongpaichit pp.47-104 2005, BEAPA 2006, Jeffry 2002: 1-18, Odzer 1994).

Later these rural women would be designated as symbols of what it was to be a “true Thai”\(^\text{14}\) (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005:105-139, Jeffry 2002: 62-69). However, rural hill tribe women were a

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\(^{14}\) When elite or educated women began to gain more Western feminist ideal in the 1950's, the Thai government began to look to the ideal of the “submissive” and “traditional” rural Thai woman (mainly from the hill tribes) as the ancestor of the “true Thai woman” who could be looked to as a model for “Thainess.” In an effort to correct this inaccurate assumption on the part of rural women, re-education programs were begun in the 1950's to teach them how to be “good Thais” (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Jeffry 2002: 63-64, Beyrer 1998: 16-20).
disappointment to the government. They had their own behaviors and traditions that did not fit the purposes of the government in creating a class of meek role models for Thai girls who could be later used as a working class. The actual rural women of pre-colonial Thailand (as opposed to the fictional version created for propaganda) were generally capable and responsible for their families and villages. These duties required individuality of thought and action to create systems for survival. It is ironic that they would later be re-defined by Thai officials seeking to create an image of a united Thailand designed to stifle the Western construction of an educated woman (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Beyrer 1998, Hantrakul 1984, Jeffry 2002: 62-29, Skrobanek 1997: 12-19).

**Colonial Pressure on Thai Culture**

The behavior of Thai women was watched closely by colonialists seeking any deviation from Western standards of propriety to use as justification for colonial take-over. France and England had made it very clear in the preceding decades that their goal was to “pacify,” conquer, and Christianize any Asian country they could gain access to, and that they were very capable of all three. Having advanced firepower and a long practice of colonization behind them, Europeans posed a significant threat to the leaders of Siam (now living in Bangkok) but also showed that they had much to teach the Siamese government about Western-style technology. Many governments had engaged the French and English in war and lost. As her past enemies fell to colonial powers, Siamese rulers took note and acknowledged that compromise and peaceful negotiation of terms would be necessary if they were to have any chance of maintaining power (Asian Studies Center 2006, Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Fanon 1963, Rabassa 2000).

Anna Leonowens was brought to King Mongkut's court in Bangkok in 1862 to teach his children so that the Siamese government might benefit for themselves from the knowledge of their colonial neighbors. She wrote a book entitled *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, later adapted for musical theater as *The King and I*. This account painted a very unflattering picture of a
King who is still thought of as a revolutionary and great man. The general mood in Europe towards foreign nations was that they were filled with barbarians who had not yet developed the higher social and scientific habits of the more “advanced” Europeans (Fanon 1963, Sittirak 1998: 1-11). For those who believed Darwin's theories, it might have been said that Western Europe was more evolved than the rest of the world, and colonialists often portrayed themselves as conquering in the interests of helping these “backwards” people to evolve faster towards the Western ideal. Anna Leonowens contributed to the colonial effort of dehumanizing the “barbaric” Siamese with her portrayal of an arrogant, bumbling King and his meek, highly objectified and indecent harem. In her account she educated them all as to the way the (Euro-centric) world worked and their (inferior) place in it (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Barry 1995, Jeffry 2002: 40-45, Leonowes 1988, Odzer 1994, Sittirak 1998: 1-11).

Popular colonial ideas were based on the pacification of people to gain unlimited access to the natural and human resources present in the land they happened to inhabit. It was often a highly regulated practice that involved convincing everyone at home as well as every native the colonialists encountered that Europeans were superior in culture, technology, and higher up the developmental ladder and so had the right to whatever they wished. This culturally created “right” relied heavily on bringing back reports of how “barbarous” these foreigners were, how backward, underdeveloped and un-Christian the people and their civilizations were. The “natives” had to be seen as less human than those at home for colonialists to be able to resort to the physically and structurally violent tactics required to submit a civilization to foreign rule and exploitation. Accounts such as those of Anna Leonowens appealed to the English sense of propriety and inability to accept the legitimacy of cultural practices and a society's ability to grow and flourish without the guiding hand of Imperial powers (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: , Leonowens 1988, Rabassa 2000: 84-137, Fanon 1963: 35-106).

The irony in the case of Anna Leonowens is that she was employed in Siam by the King, so that
the supposed “barbarians” could “civilize” or “Westernize” themselves (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80). English tutors were considered highly valuable because they would be able to provide the Siamese with the knowledge of their opponents, and create a rebuttal to claims of their inferiority. If colonialism's claim to the masses at home was that the natives were incapable of being civilized without force, then the Siamese government's efforts to incorporate Western culture and knowledge into their own should have been enough to call off any advances on Siam. By making the case, unchallenged, that they were doing the moral thing, English and French conquerors were able to maintain the “right” to impose Western rule in Asian countries. In order to maintain this justification, Asians had to become voiceless, powerless, symbols of barbarism (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Jeffry 2002: 6-18, Leonowens 1988, Rabassa 2000: 31-83).

National Response

Thai leaders knew that Westerners could be both a great threat and a great source of information and power for themselves. However, if they were to maintain their own power and not suffer the same fate as their neighbors, the Thai government would have to argue against the logic behind colonialism that they were “barbarians.” Taking on Western advisors, governesses and tailors, King Mongkut, and later his son, King Chulalongkorn began a massive campaign of “saving face.” The king had to cultivate the image of a Western ruler in order to gain the respect of his opponents. In Mrs. Leonowens's accounts, she taught the palace wives to wear English style dresses and to behave with English manners so that they could be acceptable to British dinner guests, serving as symbols of Siam's cultural advances towards Western ideals. Later, rural Thai women would be trained by elite women for a similar purpose of appearing more civilized to the rest of the Euro-centric world, being forced to learn to be domestic workers rather than sex workers (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Jeffry 2002: 1-18, Leonowens 1988, Lang 1956).

The older tradition of never showing the King's face to commoners had been discarded earlier
with political adaptations to changing times and environments, and now King Mongkut and his sons were photographed in Western dress and with Western objects frequently. Anna Leonowens's accounts of her experiences in Siam and any plays or recreations of them were banned, and efforts were made with the photographed royalty to show that these claims of the uncivilized nature of Siam as they always had were untrue. However, the government was still unconcerned with rural areas, and these places functioned mainly independently, with only major commercial centers having an injection of Western technology, dress, and habit. The most involvement the government had in rural affairs outside of tax collection and the placement of local officials to oversee business and production in these areas was to require the more Western-acceptable dress and hairstyles for women. In this way, the government began to enter into a Fanonian post-colonialism by integrating Western culture as the superior culture (in style) that the old culture must give way to. Female bodies were controlled to prove civilization. Old forms of educating sons and rulers were given up for an almost completely Western education. With the future leaders being educated as Western leaders Siam came under distinctly Western rule, despite the Siamese lineage of it's kings (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Jeffry 2002: 1-18, Odzer 1994, Lang 1956, Fanon 1963: 35-106).

As stated earlier, most Thais did not (and indeed, some have observed that many still do not in the 21st century) feel united with one another15 (Beyrer 1998, Odzer 1994, Durrenberger 1996). Language barriers between central and Northern Thai that were never addressed by the monarchy co-existed with an unequal focus on a centralized economy. By keeping Northern Thais ignorant of

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15 The king also had to develop the image of a united nation of Siam to give legitimacy for his authority over those living in the area defined by Thai borders. As Siam was a heavily cosmopolitan nation, especially in the economic centers, the French and English had begun claiming authority over those whose grandparents had been born in now European territories. These constituted the Chinese merchants and their powerful sons who controlled most of the wealth in Siam. The government responded by defining Thais as all people living within Siamese borders, claiming that they were all from the same culture, language and background, and all united members of Siam. The interpretation of this was meant to be that all Thais felt loyalty and unity to one another, a common brotherhood between Central and Northern Thais that united them the way it did members of European countries. The system and beliefs of Central superiority were, however, perpetuated with continued language barriers and unconcern by the government for those outside of Central Siam (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Durrenberger 1996).
Central Thai or vice versa, Northern Thais were excluded from participating in a discourse with the Central Thai government that was regulating their land and social structure. The united front was only important as a defensive image, which was the new weapon Thai leaders were learning to wield against the advancing powers of colonialism. Northern women in the 20th century were therefore dehumanized and more easily exploited by a central government because they were not considered as “Thai: or equals to Central Thais. By touring European countries as a Western-style ruler, presenting his country as a Westernized civilization and a united people, King Mongkut and later Chulalongkorn were able to postpone direct, physically violent colonization until the best display of exactly how narrowly Thailand missed direct colonization: the Pakam incident (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, Beyrer 1998, Durrenberger 1996, Odzer 1994, Fanon 1996: 35-106).

In 1893 France and England had continued on their way, whittling down Siam's Western-imposed borders through claiming citizens and areas. King Chulalongkorn had been making several diplomatic attempts at slowing the rate at which his kingdom was being absorbed into the surrounding colonies. He had struck many disadvantageous agreements with France and Europe in an attempt to peacefully give them the resources they were after. France, in standard colonial “conquer the world” fashion still wanted a direct route to China, which lay through a Thai province called Pakam. When Thailand refused, attempting to maintain this section of territory and financial asset, the French Navy placed a fully armed battle ship in Bangkok's harbor, aiming the canons directly at the palace. Thus held up, and wishing to continue avoiding direct violence and the colonial take-over that was constantly imminent, the Siamese government relented. Direct colonialism now seemed unavoidably imminent. It was only just prevented by the advent of World War I, which recalled all man-power that had been directed at colonizing Southeast Asia to defending their own countries (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80, BEAPA 2006).

Colonialism had already begun in Thailand however, with all future leaders being educated in
Europe. When they returned, universities in the Western-style were created to educate and create new leaders locally. The most influential of which was Thammasat, originally intended for the education of noble sons and the creation of leaders who could cope with a Western-ruled world. While the future generations of kings and prime ministers were to be of Thai ancestry, their thinking, ruling style, priorities and methods were all heavily Western. Though a European has not sat as head of government in Thailand, the country has been placed in a distinctly post-colonial state of affairs, attempting to find a balance between traditional customs and Western requirements for “civilization”. In no population has this struggle been clearer than in the creation of prostitution (Baker and Phongpaichit pp. 47-80 2005, Jeffry pp. 1-18 2002, Fanon pp 35-106 1963).
Chapter III: Post-Colonialism 1878-1960

With the onset of World War I, Western colonial powers ceased active efforts in Southeast Asia. With the threat of colonization no longer imminent, Thailand was still bound by disadvantageous trade agreements and the knowledge that they could easily be overpowered by Western nations (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 122). The new generation of Thai leaders were being trained in a Western perspective, many of them in Western countries. The ideologies learned by this new class of students were not that of an ancient and respected line of monarchs ruling singlehandedly through a widely spread bloodline. Instead they were taught that these very ideas should be questioned and overturned in favor of Western-style democracy. As the central Thais began interacting more with northern Thais and attempting to create a united culture, differences in moral constructions of “good” and “bad” began to emerge, creating new conflicts. When prostitution was later introduced on a mass scale, the women who engaged in it were caught in the middle of this morality struggle, and did not benefit from it (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Jeffry 2002: 27-34, Skrobanek et. al. 1997).

The People's Party was formed in Paris by several Western-educated Thai men. The two leaders of this revolutionary party were Pridi Phanomyong, a Western idealist who wanted democracy and constitutional rights for Thailand, and Phibun Songkhram, also a Western educated man, with a distinctly military background and group of supporters. Phibun, who also advocated a democracy, mainly focused on gaining and maintaining power, which he did through his military supporters (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005,: 105-139, LePoer 1987). In 1932 the People's Party led a bloodless coup against King Prajadhipok and set into motion the creation of a democratic state with a constitution and
elected leaders. When Phibun was chosen as temporary Prime Minister, foreign (specifically Chinese) businesses and influences were either banned or heavily taxed, and the name “Siam” was officially changed to “Thailand” to indicate that it was a land for true Thais, not foreigners. The creation of a constitution was put off indefinitely and all high level committees and government positions were held by Phibun's military allies. Pridi, though constantly pushing for a democracy represented by the people, was eventually exiled (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139).

The desire to maintain a civilized reputation in Western countries remained however, and dress codes were established, mandating that men and women wear hats and shoes in Western style (LePoer 1987). The coup and new governmental system were exclusively male; women were not educated as leaders or as members of a vocal society. While revolutionary Western ideals were being embraced by the men of this era, women were left without education, and treated simply as members of a mass society on whom new regulations and Western ideals were being inflicted. This gender inequality was due partly to the imposition of Western morality on Thais by leaders who abolished slavery and polygamy (while maintaining mistresses and minor wives of their own). They also created other laws to appeal to a Western audience, such as prohibiting prostitution while participating in the trade. Women were now being employed as sex workers in cosmopolitan areas and beautiful or “exotic” women were becoming more popular through competitions such as the “Miss Siam” contest. Value was placed solely on their bodies as commodities for aesthetic or sexual appreciation. Women in the West were also being objectified in beauty pageants at this time. However, belonging to the dominating culture, they were not being exoticised in the same manner as their Thai counterparts who were being sold along with their culture and more “exotic” phenotype (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 124, Jeffry 2002: 27-31).

The democracy did not last long, however, as the revolution was led by powerful men with foreign ideals and the highly divided populace voiced no unified insistence upon democracy. Military
alliances with Phibun quickly became a power game in which Thailand was ruled by a military dictatorship. Sarit, Phibun's successor, was notorious for choosing wives and mistresses from beauty contest winners, effectively updating a tradition of viewing wives as trophies and symbols of status. By integrating the Western beauty pageant into the newly-Westernized Thai culture, women were not seen as empowered individuals (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139). This also began the commodification of phenotype, with lighter skinned women often ranked higher in pageants and therefore establishing lighter-skinned women as desirable sex symbols, and often the wives of military dictators (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Jeffry 2002: 45-63, Odzer 1994).

(Fig. 2: the windmill club 2007)

It did not take long for this commodification to transfer into the market of phenotype: prostitution. Women are chosen based on a photograph, age and nationality specifications set forth by the client, or placed in display windows for men to choose based on their bodies. Women's bodies were priced and sold. Pageants provided a tidy system of ranking these bodies that the prostitution industry was beginning to provide, as well as providing international advertisement of beautiful women as one of Thailand's “natural resources.” Prostitution is the renting of a body separate from the person and in Thailand, it is also the sale of stereotyped women as “delicate”, “submissive”, or “exotic.” In the photo below, Thai women and their culture are blatantly marketed to Western men with the women in the center symbolizing traditional Thai culture with their dress and the two on the sides sexualizing that
culture (fig.2) (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Jeffry 2002: 45-63, Odzer 1994).

As slavery was abolished at the turn of the century along with polygamy because of the growing sentiment of Westernization and acquiring Western morality, prostitution became the working man's substitute for expensive minor wives or mistresses (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Jeffry 2002: 20). Prostitution was mainly kept to Western influenced venues such as cinemas in more heavily post-colonial areas such as Bangkok (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 98-104). Efforts to integrate the rural areas of Thailand into the central identity were not attempted until the lead-up to the Viet Nam war when the US determined that these areas would be useful for military bases. Until this point, rural villages and cities such as Chiang Mai were largely inaccessible due to dense jungles, few roads, and even fewer inclinations to spend the money necessary to “civilize” them (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104). While the government lacked resources to make these areas more accessible, it was also not in their interest to extend services such as public schools, hospitals or agricultural development to these areas, still feeling a distinct separation in identity from Northern people (Baker and Phongpaichit 200581-104: , Jeffry 2002: 31-34).

**Overview of the environment and political structure of Thailand**

Trade agreements were enacted placing Thailand at a great disadvantage with foreign investors. In a continuing effort to progress in a Western fashion while maintaining a certain level of autonomy, the Siamese government had made several trade agreements that were more beneficial to their Western business partners than to the Thai people. The Pakam incident had sparked more such trade agreements, as the Siamese government realized more and more the danger Western powers posed if they did not agree to their terms. Several loans were given to Siam for railroad and other agricultural development, which the democratic government tried to reduce the interest on without much success. The Viet Nam war provided the opportunity for Thailand to gain some status with the

Thai women were recruited and did most of the work in factories and in the rice industry, having been the main rice farmers in the previous era. Women were touted by visitors as the most industrious members of the country, and the most capable of mass production (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 98-104, Safa 1981). While men were required for the maintenance of crop fields, women's roles as housewives were hidden and underestimated, and they were considered a new pool of reserve labor for seasonal, temporary, underpaid work, since women's status was low enough to warrant exploitative treatment. The housewifization of female labor is not a solely Thai phenomenon. Because many "women's arts" such as sewing, weaving, and childcare are taught within the home from mothers to daughters, it often becomes invisible and therefore the skills are undervalued, often seen as natural rather than taught and practiced (Mies 1986: 46). The reasoning that women naturally possess "nimble fingers" or other such “natural talents” leading to the devaluation of their labor, is a common theme later in the industrialization of Thailand, as mentions of female workforces became rarer and rarer in this era of heavy Westernized development (Jeffry 2002: 18, Mies 1986: 46, Safa 1981, Sittirak 1998: 26-35).

With Westernization and the adoption of Western principles of human rights came the abolition of slavery and the corvée system in Thailand, as well as the abolition of polygamy. Former slaves traveled to undeveloped land and began to develop it into rice paddies and trade-based villages. Having little reliance on money for survival, these people found it easier to ride out economic turbulence than the merchants who were purchasing their excess crops for sale, but remained the poorest population

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16 Housewifization is the making of women's as domestic. Even when women are working in the public sphere, the jobs they are given and are expected to apply for are considered "women's work" and therefore less valuable because it is associated with domestic, unskilled, or skilled but learned in the private sphere (Mies 1986: 46).
However, since these communities were subsistence based, they were often well-fed and did not have to rely on the economy for prosperity. It was only after massive industrialization efforts in rural areas occurred that Thailand's rulers that farmers became dependent on an economy for subsistence (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Sittirak 1998: 23-26).

Chinese men ran nearly all commerce in Thailand; until 1935 when the military government, concerned about Chinese loyalties during WWII, claimed control over these businesses. Even then, however, Chinese men who had claimed loyalty, language and a Thai last name were put in charge of formerly China-loyal Chinese enterprises. Thai men maintained control over Thailand. After abolishing absolutism, the military government maintained the tradition of alliances with Chinese merchants who were now powerful businessmen and entrepreneurs. The Chinese had their own schools\(^\text{18}\), and a great deal of their economic success relied on education, savings, and political ties to gain more economic power. These aspects of prosperity, inherited by sons, were not passed on to daughters -- only the lighter skin tone that, when associated with paternal wealth and power, made them more valuable as sex workers or as objects of beauty and symbols of power. For men who had the funds and opportunity to choose from a range of phenotypes and ages, as is often the case in Patpong establishments, a more expensive woman (priced as such due to cultural ideas of beauty and value) would be a status symbol, much the way some elite men choose to buy an expensive looking car (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Odzer 1994:, US library of Congress 1998).

Daughters were still used to increase a family's standing by having them marry into wealthy and

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17 One of the Oxford educated princes insisted that the agricultural community was impoverished and required government assistance, he was ostracized and the King ignored him. It became a felony punishable by execution to teach economics during the turn of the century when this period of economic transition was underway (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 103-104).

18 Chinese schools were restricted over various points in Thai history due to tensions between communist China and US presence for the control of communism. The schools were never fully shut down however, and are most likely the main cause for the massive Chinese presence in Thai economic power (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 47-80).
powerful Thai families. Though this occurred less often than in the past, the loss of this powerful tradition did make economic success for powerful families more difficult. Sons were sent out for employment and their earnings saved. Thai boys were sent to Westernized schools and abroad to the United States in the 1950's and 1960's to learn to head new businesses and economics. Thammasat University was established to train a new kind of technocrat who could run an economically and politically savvy country. However education in Thailand for the elite relied heavily on Western influence, creating a weakness on the side of Thailand in economic relations with the West (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005:55-69).

Elite women had relatively strong responsibilities within their households, and one queen was named regent while her husband was visiting Europe. However, most elite women were still used as examples of what it was to be truly Thai with beauty contests and they were restricted by codes of conduct for women within the home (Jeffry 2002:63-64). These beauty queens have often been embroiled with scandals of leaders' infidelity over the years, further symbolizing promiscuity with beauty. Political Thai women had to compete with other Thai women for legitimacy in their arguments for fairer treatment of women. They began to use the platform of prostitution reform and re-education to attain these goals (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Jeffry 2002: 63-65).

Often elite women would create re-education programs for prostitutes, placing the burden of serving as examples of Thai culture on rural women. In an attempt to stem the flow to prostitution, elite women advocated programs of arresting prostitutes (generally poor, illiterate, rural women), fining them, and sending them for vocational training. Unfortunately, any job they would be trained for (generally domestic labor or motherhood) would not pay nearly enough to live on. These women, having been fined, criticized, and still with debts and a family to feed, were often forced to return to prostitution, as it was and remains, the most lucrative form of employment available to uneducated
Thai women. Later chapters will discuss the economic structure of prostitution in more detail, but the re-education mindset began to emerge during the 1950's (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Jeffry 2002: 63-65).

It was necessary for elite women to reject any identification with prostitutes or otherwise undervalued rural women in order to maintain any political credence granted by men. Unfortunately, this practice of differentiating identities between groups can lead to alienation and an inability to relate to the other group, in this case, sex workers. Alienation makes justification of re-education programs easier when the purpose is not to change the situation these women are in, but instead to attempt to impose their morals upon them, convincing then that they are “bad.” These programs would simply be punitive measures against sex workers who had been arrested. They would be fined and sent to these programs to learn cooking, cleaning and childcare to that they could be the “good” housewives or domestic servants they were “supposed” to be but also proved ineffective at preventing a return to the sex trade. It seems the main purpose of these programs was to give the impression that something was being done, while scolding prostitutes for being “inferior” (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Jeffry 2002: 26, Mummendy and Otten 1993: 145-167).

Northern Thai culture tended to place more expectation on daughters to tend to parents in their old age than did Central Thais. To earn merit, a daughter could marry a rich or otherwise affluent man and provide for her family this way, or she could stay with her family, bringing her husband to her parent's house, and tend to the crops and house (Jeffry 2002: xvi-xx). Later, with the advent of economy and as more families found themselves on infertile land or that of a state official, the duty of the daughter became to earn money to support her family. In this quest a moderately illiterate daughter often found it difficult to find a job that would even pay her enough to survive on her own, let alone be able to send remittances home. She would then often turn to prostitution as a lucrative business as a bar
girl. Other daughters would have loans taken out against their labor in a brothel, becoming indentured servants. These women have no control over being sex workers in the first place. In many cases, they never earn back the money due to a high interest rate, a family's ability to take out more against them, and hidden costs for cloths, make-up, and medical check-ups for the lucky few. These daughters would do these things though, to fulfill their cultural and moral obligations as “good: daughters, supporting their families, even if the power-holding Thais said they were morally unfit or “bad.” Often these moral judgments would be made translated into legislation providing fines and incarceration for women practicing prostitution. Until 1996 there was little to no punishment of clients or owners of bars and brothels, who often were the ones writing the legislation (Darunee and Pandey 1991, Odzer 1994, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 1-5).

Rural women ran the markets and coordinated most manual agricultural labor until the 1930's. Most sources, however, do not focus on the role of women laborers at this time, and it is difficult to tell who was actually doing the work. Due to the cultural importance placed on boys to raise the family's social status through employment and career advancement while girls were supposed to help the family subsist, boys were often educated and girls were not (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139). Boys were more likely to be sent to schools for longer periods, while girls were either sent to factories to send remittances home, or worked on family plots while boys went to cash crop plantations (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139). Once again, this is not an uncommon theme in the development of women's labor. It contributes to the undervaluation of women's work which in turn leads to their recruitment in factories (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Jeffry 2002: 22-30, Mies 1986: 110-138, Safa 1981).

In the 1920's prostitution began to appear in Bangkok in response to a large population of elite Chinese men, the abolition of slavery and thus, slave wives, and the pre-existing power structure of
men making the political and economic decisions while women worked. Because Thai and Chinese men were behind the economic developments in Thailand, it was expected that women should do the labor that men prescribed. Giving the power over to men is a common trend in world economics, where men are managers and women are workers (Mies 1986: 110-138). This tradition combined with a pre-existing status of men as capable of having many women at one time, many wives, and needing these wives for purposes of political power and social status led to a rise in prostitution as a status symbol. A new work force arose in Bangkok of prostitution, with women working for men who were in control of the Thai economy, providing a service polygamy had been responsible for in the past. While brothels were taxed by the government, most sex workers worked in a more informal street-corner type of setting, generally meeting clients at centers of Westernization, such as movie theaters. They were also more available to rural Thai men who not easily get to a big city to find a sex worker on the street. More established businesses came with brothels such as bars and massage parlors with varying degrees of indentured servitude from slavery in brothels to relative freedom in bars (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Jeffry 2002: 23-26, Odzer 1994, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 37-55).

The development of a military government occurred as a measure to secure the nation from communism and other socialist philosophies after World War II during the 1950's, when China and Viet Nam were undergoing communist revolutions that Western countries were upset about. The US provided significant financial support to military and police leaders who cracked down violently against "communism," which often included left wing parties, labor organizations, "progressive politics," and critics of the dictatorship. Also during this time foreign investments were intensively pursued, especially from the United States. Limiting labor unions allowed more freedom to American

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19 After prostitution was made illegal and US military presence increased demand for prostitution, brothels became more popular as a venue to gain loans against labor, and also being more available to rural Thai men who not easily get to a big city to find a sex worker on the street (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 81-104).
companies in the private sector, which was the focus of development projects created by the World Bank. This development of foreign companies who were in Thailand for cheap labor did not really take off until after the Vietnam war when Thailand had proven itself a steadfast ally of the United States and its interests (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Jeffry 2002: 29-31).

After the Second World War, the United States claimed Thailand as an ally against communism. As the Thai government fought communism with a military dictatorship, the US began to place troops in Thailand as a protectorate. The first air attacks on Vietnam were launched from Thailand and Bangkok was designated the official location for R&R. Using the already present system of prostitution, bars, dance halls, and cinemas, more garish and public brothels were created to draw in and compete for US military money. The US army also continued the military tradition of establishing and regulating brothels around their bases to prevent the spread of STIs and to improve morale\(^{20}\) (Watanabe 1999). A tourist authority was formed in the late 1950's and over time, constructed a lucrative tourism industry, spurred by US soldiers (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Jeffry 2002: 31-34).

**National Response**

Military leaders continued the tradition of “civilizing” Thailand from the previous era with the creation of a uniform educational system. Edicts were passed to instruct women on proper dress and behavior and new public decency acts were used to give the impression that Thailand was, in fact, capable of governing herself. Since the US had claimed Thailand as an ally against communism, they began to fund development projects in the jungles, creating the opportunity for state controlled...
agricultural projects, which displaced people from their old homes and villages onto massive plantations as laborers. Simultaneously most pressure was placed on Thai women to uphold what was deemed to be "true Thainess" while also being advertised as "docile" "nimble fingered" and "submissive" to foreign investors and sex tourists alike (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-139, Jeffry 2002: 63-69, Mies 1986: 46-71).

A popular example of this tendency to place blame and responsibility on women for upholding Thai honor is a series of short stories by Kukrit Pramoj, Many Lives written in 1954. Kukrit was a member of the royal family, and wrote many pieces on morality and Karma and was considered to be an authority on the subject (Pramoj 1999 (1954)). In Many Lives, Kukrit tells the stories of 11 people who all died on a ferry to Bangkok, giving moral lessons in the form of how they lived their lives, and whether they approached their death with anguish and a troubled soul, or with peace and a clear mind towards nirvana. There are only two daughters whose stories are told in this series of moral tales (the other two female characters are involved in stories of morality directed towards women who are mothers rather than daughters). One is a prostitute named Phanni, who, by a common series of events, winds up in a brothel (Pramoj 1999(1954)).

Phanni was sold as a servant to an elite woman in Bangkok so both her and her mother would be able to afford food (Phanni being fed by the mistress and her mother eating on the money she sold her for). She ran from her duties and abusive mistress there to a brothel after attempting to seduce her mistress's son. She was unaware that she had been taken to a brothel, however, until she was trained to like being a prostitute. Phanni was arrested but then managed to use her guile to get out of it by claiming innocence at which point she began financially ruining whatever man she came in contact with for fun and to support the son she eventually had. She is perpetually portrayed as a greedy, selfish creature who seduces and then attempts to bring about the financial ruin of an honorable man who feels responsibility for getting her pregnant. She is en route back to Bangkok to ensure his financial demise.
when the ferry flips and her body is laid out on the shore naked and ogled by local boys the next morning (Pramoj, 1999 (1954): 54-78).

Phanni is given no honor, no credit as a moral person attempting to do her duty to her mother or attempting to have a good life. The only way she knows that what she is doing is wrong is that her mother attempts once to dissuade her, saying that they have both been evil women. The girl is greedy, has very little regard for her family, and cruel. This sends the distinct message that prostitutes are, no matter their circumstances or moral upbringing, immoral, greedy, opportunistic, and generally morally corrupt or “bad,” destined to be used and treated as just a body. She is also the only character whose death is not described by Kukrit, only the moment before the capsize and the next morning when her body is disrespected by those tending to the corpses. Every story featuring a male character focuses on the moment of death for each, contemplating their thoughts and emotions before the accident. In this way, Kukrit says that she is simply a tool of circumstance and robs her of her final defining moment and voice that he gives to all his other characters with how they choose to face their deaths (Pramoj 1999(1954)).

Phanni is not only created as a symbol in that she is given no sympathetic voice, she is also treated as a two-dimensional character with no thought process beyond that of greed and circumstance. Kukrit only describes her actions as the result of her having been poor, abused, or trained by a skilled woman running a brothel. She has no personal agency. Her purpose is to disgust and alienate women from those who share a profession with Phanni, echoing the common sentiment of the time, that prostitutes were physically or mentally unhealthy, and that this was why they were so “immoral” and supposedly enjoyed being “promiscuous” (Jeffry 2002: 63-64). Phanni could never have been a real woman with a voice other women in her position could be sympathetic to. She was written not as a character, but rather as a lesson to “immoral” women (Pramoj 1999 (1954): 54-78).

The other female character on the ferry is an otherwise honorable daughter named Lamom who
is driven to murder her mother after years of emotional abuse. She tends to her mother perpetually, allows herself to be terrorized by her outbursts, and even has an honorable state of mind in dealing with her mother with an air of love and perfect tolerance. She is a "dutiful daughter" who is finally driven to the brink when her mother keeps her from hearing that her prosperous sweetheart wants to marry her until it is too late. After the death of her mother, she feels remorse, but also a new freedom after living with such a tyrant. She is on her way to a relative's house to make a humble beginning to her life with no joy in her heart. Lamom had no other way out of her situation and, up to that point, dealt with her mother in what Kukrit might call a moral fashion doing her duty by being respectful to her mother n matter what. However, her one misstep sent her into a death laden with bad karma, though she had been honorable most of her life. Her death is not narrated, either, but only given a single sentence, wondering if it was merit or karma that led her to her death. There is no description of her final thoughts, or facial expression -- unlike the men in Kukrit's stories (Pramoj 1999 (1954): 125-142).

The male bandit named Loi, by contrast spends his life stealing, lying, killing and doing other things that would surely accumulate the bad karma. When he dies, he is en route to Bangkok to pick up more weapons for a street war he is beginning to wage with a rival bandit. His final thoughts are of how prosperous his life has been, however, and when his body is found, he has an expression of absolute happiness. This is a far cry from the sex worker whose final thoughts and expressions are lost to the reader and whose naked body laid out to be ogled by passing boys with no mention of facial expression. Her thoughts and emotions do not matter to Kukrit, only her body and what is done with it. The bandit who spends his life choosing to cause harm to others is given happiness in his death, because he is more entitled to this than the girl whose life was steered towards prostitution at every turn. Kukrit's moral suggestions are clear: a sex worker chooses her fate, whatever the circumstances. A man who lives in debauchery and violence is more deserving of a happy death and even the full tale of his life and dying thoughts, than a daughter who spent her life in service or a daughter who spent her
life making the most she could of it, even if that made her a sex worker (Pramoj 1999 (1954): 4-25).

The men in the stories have their thoughts generally laid open to the reader. They are more sympathetic characters; even the death and decisions of a thief are treated with more by Kukrit than the prostitute. There is no tolerance for these women in this moral tale, which was written by a noble man to instruct on morality to the public. The message is very clear; that prostitutes are not moral, that women must always walk a fine line and never break to circumstance or they will be destroyed by karma, and that the missteps of men in general are more forgivable and easily absolved. This is also a prime example of conflicting moralities. Because the elite central class of Thais had a more Western, inflexible view of prostitution and what it meant to be a dutiful daughter, it was difficult for them to appreciate the honorable intentions of women who became sex workers out of duty to their families and children. Because it had been so ingrained that sex workers were immoral, greedy, and opportunistic, and that this was the only reason for participating in this, according to their cultural creation of morality, immoral “bad” profession those in power saw fit to punish these women and not to change the structure which lent itself so easily to prostitution (Jeffry 2002: 20, Pramoj 1999 (1954)).

Being especially marked by the imposition of morality by the central Thais on the Northern Thais, this period of post-colonialism was a quality demonstration of Fanon's theories on the topic. While physical violence at this time was never necessary, the Western educated men took their place as leaders, oppressors, and colonizers of their own country (Fanon 1963: 35-106). Women were especially required to humor the whims of these men, filling the roles of trophy wife or prostitute. They were seen as imperfect, preached to about their lack of morality and lower karmic status (Jeffry 2002: 20, Pramoj 1999 (1954)).

While the Western countries continued to impose moral judgment on Thai sexual and marital practices, the belief of a previous era in saving face allowed these moral judgments to manifest themselves in law. In a continued effort to save face, the Central Thais imposed not only their own
culture of morality, but also that of the West, on the Northern tribes, who had different priorities and a
different developmental history. This clash of Western, Central and Northern morality has set the stage
for future programs to outlaw prostitution, re-educate prostitutes to be “good” women, and to be more
accepting programs for the education of sex workers to increase their personal agency.
Americanization manifested in Thailand with the introduction and adoption of American beliefs about culture, economics and women. American ideals were placed above Thai ideals in the interest of maintaining Thailand's rising status in world politics. As a result, these ideals were used to exploit the labor, land and prostitution resources of Thailand. When the US Government began its war on communism they named Thailand as their ally. The previous generations of colonialism and post-colonial attitudes of Western superiority and fear of retribution should Thailand lose the support of the US in the international economy ensured Thai cooperation. To make Thailand a better military environment, the US set about industrializing the small country. Forests were destroyed in northern provinces to eliminate the dangers of the jungles that had prevented such actions in the past, and to create rice and other plantations to boost US access to supplies as well as Thai export income. Villages were moved onto these newly created plantations and became tenants without fertile land for themselves to sustain their families. No longer able to feed themselves from traditional means, families became dependent on a cash economy but were not paid enough to live well. Instead they were the cheap labor of an abundant source. Their daughters became the next generation of an abundant source of sex workers, desperate for money to send to their desertified homes (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Sittirak 1998: 11-30).

Military bases designated Chiang Mai and Pattaya as Rest and Relaxation (R&R) locations (both now resort/sex tourism destinations as a direct result of GI demand). Roads were built to provide easy access for Americans to any location in Thailand, especially Bangkok for R&R with a pre-existing
business in prostitution. As militaries promote regulated brothels to be created near bases, prostitution became a national business over the course of the Viet Nam war (Watanabe 1991). This practice is highly hypocritical as US culture frowns on prostitution and Western culture even required Thailand to outlaw the profession of prostitution while military bases blatantly created and continue to support brothels and bars abroad, keeping the homeland safe from such debauchery. After the soldiers withdrew, Thai economists and those interested in profiting from the loans Thailand had had to take out to become industrialized, recognized how lucrative prostitution could be. In a continuing bid to become an economically secure first world country, Thailand's tourism department blatantly encouraged the growth of prostitution while those in charge of the Thai image abroad steadfastly denied its existence (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005:140-167, Jeffry, 2002: xiv, Odzer 1994 1994: 147-158, Watanabe 1991).

With an increasingly cash dependent populace, new jobs were rapidly becoming necessary for all family members. While standardized education was, in true Western fashion, required for both girls and boys in rural areas, the jobs available to lower class daughters did not require this education. Because daughters had never been required to be educated before, families did not see the necessity of reading, writing, or central Thai and English language proficiency. Jobs available to the “dutiful daughters” sent to the city to send remittances home between 1960 and 1990 were in factory work, domestic labor and prostitution. Even today the job market for women is still scarce, though it has been improving thanks to the efforts of Thai (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005:140-167, ILO 1998, Jeffry, 2002: xiv, Odzer 1994: 147-158, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 20-28).

Thai factory labor is similar to the work often available in other third world areas. The girls are paid minuscule amounts, locked in at night, and the female labor source is sold to foreign businesses as obedient and less likely to strike or form unions (due to language barriers, cultural creations of passive femininity, and governmental union busting). They are advertised as submissive and “nimble fingered”
to draw business investments in the hopes of bettering the national economy. The factories that these women often work to produce luxury goods for export (such as ballpoint pens and silk flowers) rather than goods to assist with the subsistence of their communities (Mies 1986). The women in the 1980's could typically expect to make around 60 Baht a day ($2.50) (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005:140-167, ILO 1998, Jeffry, 2002: xiv, Mies 1986: 110-138, Odzer 1994: 147-158, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 20-28).

Being provided with barely enough to support themselves, daughters often turn to prostitution to earn a family wage. These jobs can pay up to 10,000 Baht if they are fortunate enough to become an independent call girl which is rare; the more common bar work available on Patpong yields 1,500-3,500 Baht a night before taking a client (which is generally required 4 times a month at minimum). Due to the plethora of bars on Patpong, women can afford a little job insecurity, knowing they will most likely be hired elsewhere. However, as there are also many sex workers available on Patpong, unions or demands for fair treatment would be easily undermined with the over abundance of women desperate for wages and willing to work under any conditions (Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 37-55, Odzer 1994: 183). This is the most common way women choose prostitution for themselves. Often these women will find themselves working as bar girls, earning wages, supporting themselves and sending extra money that they manage to scam or obtain through guilt from their clients home. Western men have been noted by Cleo Odzer in her account of Patpong bars, Patpong Sisters, as highly susceptible to sad stories concocted by skillful Thai sex worker who can play on their guilt at having a first world budget in a third world economy (Odzer 1994: 1-22, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 37-55).

Brothels also provide a destination for “dutiful daughters” whose families need money to pay off loans. These girls are generally locked in, in debt for the duration of their careers, and have little to no say in how much a client is charged, whom their clients are and whether or not a condom is used. If they are very fortunate, they are given minimal medical treatment on occasion, for a price that is then
added to the original debt and massive interest rate. The women in both settings are marketed to American and Western men as Thai commodities, exotic, submissive, culturally feminine creatures bred for the purpose of “womanly” sex that men cannot find in Western countries (Jeffry 2002: 34-45, Mies 1986: 110-146, Odzer 1994: 1-22).

**Overview of the environment and political structure of Thailand at the Time**

Further Westernization of the economy occurred with stronger US investment, development strategies, and governmental influence in the 1960's and '70's. The Thai government had begun a campaign against “communism” which often manifested itself as justification for union busting and violent military retaliation to rallies and protests. Thammasat University was the site of many student rebellions against the very government that had created it to educate a new generation of Western oriented leaders in the 1970's and 1980's. The educated elite of Thailand wanted fairer labor laws and less dependence on the World Bank which was requiring the continued development and advertisement of Thailand's sex tourism industry. The military government made an example of these protesters shooting into the crowd and beating the students in 1976 (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167). The end result was such a strong negative public reaction against the government that Pramoj (the leader at the time) had to step down. At the same time the government had made a clear point that unions and protests would not be conducive to continued living or risk losing Western business. The military dictatorship was replaced with a more democratically elected government that still resembled the previous government in policy, especially regarding prostitution and worker's rights (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 168-196, Jeffry 2002: 90-100).

All these “anti-communist” efforts served the dual purpose of attempting to make Thailand a more hospitable environment for the US soldiers seeking optimal locations for their military bases. With the presence of such a world power, the government could legitimate any violence against the Thai people by incorporating it into America's war on communism. This hospitality brought Western
industry to Thailand as well. By showing that the populace and female workforce was well controlled and union-free, the Thai government was able to advertise a workforce for American industries looking to outsource labor to cut production costs. Using various forms of labor arrangements from outsourcing to smaller, unaffiliated sweat shops the main factories with ties to major US industries were able to obtain labor for a rate far below the national minimum wage. Daughters who were sent to these jobs found that they were barely given enough to support themselves, let alone their families (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Beyrer 1998, Jeffry 2002: 65-69, Mies 1986: 110-138, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 37-55).

Thailand is currently a democratic state, run by an elected congress and Prime Minister, and still labor organizations are still broken apart at every opportunity. The World Bank required five year economic plans and required Thailand to make the entertainment industry (which contains massive levels of technically illegal sex tourism) a part of these plans for development\(^{21}\). Development in poorer northwest regions began in the early 1960's to both improve the economic gain from this area as well as create a more hospitable environment for US soldiers and industry. Various aid programs followed the development of schools which followed the waves of loggers in the northwestern forest regions. However, aid was controlled by a single, generally corrupt, individual who handed out financial aid and government resources to those he saw fit. The landless poor remained so, working on cash crop plantations in a newly imposed cash based economy, without the subsistence farming of the previous era. After being heavily logged, with few irrigation or ecological preservation efforts, entire villages that had once been able to live off what they could grow found themselves living in a desertified region with little to no vegetation that was not created and regulated by plantations owned by a single rich

\(^{21}\) The Thai government phased out import substitution industries in the 1970's with increasing US clientèle and now has many loopholes through which western industries can gain cheap labor at very little cost paid to Thailand. Factories have been relocated to attempt a rise in the standard of living in northern regions of Thailand along with educational reforms. The Thai economy is entirely dependent on having an ample supply of exploitable cheap labor for export to wealthier countries, making prosperity on a national scale difficult if not impossible (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Jeffry 2002: 65-69, Mies 1986: 110-138, Safa 1981, Sittirak 1998: 79-113, US Library of Congress 1998).

Thai families require money to subsist in the rural and desert regions. If sons are educated, they can then start up their own businesses or get a more lucrative job than if they were illiterate. Daughters can support the family by either being married into a wealthy family (which is not likely for a poor daughter) or migrating to the cities to find work. The work they find is in mostly private, western owned factories creating luxury items for sale to rich first world women. Often women are locked into these factories at night and expected to be submissive, “nimble fingered” and obedient (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Jeffry 2002: 27-31, Hantrakul 1984, Mies 1986: 110-138, Odzer 1994: 183, Safa 1981, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 56-67).

**Table indicating income ranges of City Jobs open to Women in Bangkok in 1982**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Baht per Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housemaid</td>
<td>150-450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>200-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Worker</td>
<td>200-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory Employee</td>
<td>200-600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Salon</td>
<td>400-600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>600-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>800-1500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Fig. 3: Phongpaichit, 1982: 7-8 taken from Odzer 1994: 183)

Figure 3 shows that the “honorable” professions open to women pay much less than the positions available in prostitution. When it is considered that a call-girl living in Bangkok at around this time paid 500-600 baht for electricity in her apartment alone, not to mention sending money home, it is clear that to be an “honorable” daughter is nearly impossible while also being a “dutiful” daughter (Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 56-67). In order to have a higher quality of life, afford food, clothing, medical
bills and support a family, prostitution is almost required because wages are so exploitative.

The government actively demolishes any labor unions women (or men for that matter) might create, in many cases sending agents into union meetings as spies, then conducting raids on these meetings. The skills they learned at home or from Elite women's attempts at civilizing them makes them ideal for pre-trained factory workers. As the companies often have to do very little training and so many women learned the skills necessary for even semi-skilled labor at a young age, companies can classify their labor as “un-skilled” and therefore place it in a lower pay bracket. The supply of ready-trained, under-educated women desperate for jobs works directly to the women's disadvantage, making it difficult for them to demand higher wages. The women and girls find they cannot make enough to send home and still survive in the cities, and so look for alternative employment. Prostitution in a bar on Patpong road pays 25 times more than any factory, construction, or domestic work an uneducated, or even educated woman can find without connections (ILO 1998, Jeffry 2002: 65-69, Mies 1986: 110-138, Odzer 1994: 183-191, Safa 1981).

Families left to their own devices could either hope to win the favor of the official in charge of distributing aid, or could send their daughters to work in one fashion or another. The girls would then be directly indentured to a brothel for an initial loan which incurred high interest, entrapping her for as long as she was useful to the brothel. Other forms of monetary contribution were attempted by girls migrating to the cities to work in factories or migrating abroad because they had been promised lucrative positions as waitresses. Both routes more often than not resulted in prostitution. Girls seeking international employment would often find themselves forced into prostitution by specific individuals or organizations that would confiscate their passports, tell them they were there illegally, and physically force them into the trade. Daughters who migrated to factory jobs in Thailand were funneled into the prostitution trade not by a specific, individual force of will, but rather due to an economic

22 See chapter III: Post Colonialism

The prostitution industry is a highly developed one in which women rarely come out on top. The little bit they do manage to make is often spent quickly by their families, because there is no sustainable economy in the villages. Loan and debt systems trap women in an ongoing cycle of interest, and the few women who do manage to make money find that they get very little of what they actually earn. Between the cut of the bar owner, the tour guide, the hotel fee, and the all too common client who simply refuses to pay, a woman who cannot negotiate price on her own is left at a severe disadvantage. While some women can make money initially, rarely can they maintain the income for long, and often return home sick, poor, and in debt. However, families need money, so the “dutiful daughters” do what they have to to send what they can home. There have been a few cases of former sex workers establishing businesses in their villages to improve the local economy, but this is rare, and commercial endeavors are often destined to fail in a place where so few have money (Darunee and Pandey 1997, Odzer 1994: 65-111, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 56-67).

In Thai culture, as many other cultures, wealth is equated with power and is often respected. Poor families suddenly finding an influx of funds from sex working daughters rarely save it or invest the money in a business or other ventures that could improve the local economy. Instead, as the individual family's standard of living rises, so do their demands. They begin to require bigger houses, electricity, more expensive food in greater quantities, and more education and support for the remaining children. A daughter who has begun sending large sums of money home also raises her standards and show of wealth through buying things she never could have afforded through a factory job, like jewelry and cars. She cannot go home without having money demanded of her by her family and village, and often ends up supporting both (ILO 1998, Odzer 1994: 65-111, Skrobanek et. al. 1997:...
The lack of an internal economy in these areas increases dependence on working daughters. Many families will begin to indenture daughters to work off the debt they then incur so that a family can maintain their lifestyle (the original reason for sending daughters to work). This is not sustainable, however. When the girls become sick or stop working, their families still require the same or greater income and the burden still lies upon the daughter, making it difficult to remove themselves from the trade once this pattern has begun. Some girls only leave long enough to pay off family debts, then return home to marry a Thai man. However, having money and the ability to support one's self is also important to these women. In general, a Thai marriage is stifling to the wife, and she often finds herself a servant to her husband and his family. Sex work provides women with economic and social independence they would not find in "traditional" paths, making it a somewhat desirable profession (Odzer 1994: 65-111, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 1-5).

As the poor keep trying to get rich in an economy where only the rich can keep getting richer off of poor women, the prostitution industry grows. As it grows, it gets riskier. Services that once were rare and cost more (such as sex with a 12 year old or sex shows that involve objects and a strong vagina) become more common, they are commodified and cost decreases. Women have to take higher risks (such as charging more for sex without a condom or not paying for a gynecological exam) to maintain their spending habits and remittances. While some women can learn English and hoodwink a rich foreigner into emptying his bank account for her and her village, the majority of illiterate poor women in brothels do not have this opportunity. The economic structure places labor on the backs of poor women, who remain poor. Few economic opportunities and little education leave women in high risk sex work for long periods of time, with little to no alternative (Odzer 1994: 65-111, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 1-5).

International Pressure and Ideas
Having turned to the world bank for funds to import business for Thai labor, Thailand was required to adhere to the plans offered by the World Bank. The World Bank saw Thailand's sex industry as a lucrative pursuit and, like Thai labor, it was advertised by tourism agencies and fliers handed out on airlines as being provided by 'nimble fingered, docile, obedient women.' Airlines and travel agencies began offering indiscreet packages to Thailand after the Viet Nam war. Some accounts have described smiling, naked Thai women on the front of a post card with the name of a bar on the back. Others have provided explanations of how Thai women (who are all available) will make a Western man feel more like a man than the “uptight” Western women (Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Hantrakul 1984, Odzer 1994: 23-40).

Capitalism began to play a greater role in the prostitution industry and as American veterans decided to stay in Thailand they set up go-go bars in Bangkok, contributing greatly to the shape of prostitution in Thailand (Jeffry 2002: 105-110). Women's bodies are advertised, rather than the quality of their services. Many massage parlors operate by placing women behind glass while customers choose them like lobsters in a tank at a restaurant (fig. 4). Thai women are advertised as an exotic luxury commodity, not only their bodies but their cultures. Clients travel to Thailand in pursuit of a docile, submissive promiscuous woman of color to fulfill their sexual fantasies of manliness and debauchery (Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Odzer 1994: 23-40).

Elite feminist circles from around the world have felt a duty to comment and attempt to change the fate of abused Thai prostitutes. Unfortunately, most of this has been in the form of raising awareness about all the victims of trafficking and the various evils of the entire process (Barry 1995, 2000, Altink 1995). While these arguments do a great deal to raise anger and initiative to act on a highly exploitative system, it neglects the viewpoint of Thai women and girls who willingly enter the prostitution profession and encounter much more hidden and legal forms of exploitation (Altink 1995, Barry 2000 and 1995, Jeffry 2002).
Women who consciously make the decision to work in a bar on Patpong would not identify themselves as victims or slaves. They are doing what they can to fulfill their duty to their families and villages. They are not sold or even physically restrained or abused. Many western feminists responded to tales of the treatment of prostitutes with rage and emotion filled arguments. Their revulsion did not do any favors for the women they wrote about, instead they polarized and sensationalized the topic. With the publicity of extreme cases of exploitation and abuse of these women, those who faced less visible forms of violence and exploitation became lost in the stereotypes of "innocent" prostitutes tricked and coerced into the trade, and "cooperative" sex workers who tricked and lured other women into the clutches of "evil," powerful men. Simplifying the experiences of women to these two stereotypes places sex workers who were willing to enter their profession in the uncomfortable position of being the “bad guy.” Their actual stories and complex cultural creations of identity become lost in
the role they are expected to play and effective measures cannot be taken to tend to the real issues of post-colonial structural violence that places them at the bottom of the economic and educational food chains as well as conflicting cultural definitions of morality (Altink 1995, Barry 2000 and 1995, Jeffry 2002).

Kathleen Barry is one such feminist. Initially the Friends of Women Foundation, led by prominent Thai feminist Sukanya Hantrakul, was involved with her as a resource for those seeking to better the treatment of sex workers. However, her arguments were volatile, sensationalist, and polarizing. In her "study" entitled: Female Sexual Slavery (2000), she does not differentiate between sex workers from different cultural backgrounds or even different geographies. Barry immediately starts off with a graphic collage of violent sexual exploitation that is clearly mean to nauseate the reader. She judges the women in her anecdotes by her own morality and understandings of psychology. Making overarching generalizations, Barry insists that “prostitution is secret sex [...] secrecy gives it power (1995: 38).” She fails to account for the public way in which prostitution is dealt in Thailand, though in the same book she discusses prostitution in Thailand (Barry 1995 and 2000).

Barry makes the argument that women cannot participate in prostitution without compartmentalizing themselves, and their lives. She explains every theory from a strictly Western point of view, rarely taking into account local cultural aspects of prostitution perception. Occasionally she alludes to Buddhism, though mostly to blame it for why women might feel guilty for being coerced and forced into the trade. Her generalizations are harmful. Over-simplifying the deeper social issues at hand for the sake of making a dynamic point may get her attention on the international stage, but it only inhibits the process of making realistic, effective changes to a highly exploitative system, and alienates her subjects. The role each character plays in her accounts is clearly divided between "innocent victims", “foolish” or “malicious” women who lure the “innocent victims” into the clutches of men, and the "evil" overlord of a prostitution ring. The problem with these generalizations is that the women
who choose to be sex workers, or who manage to gain some compensation from the trade automatically become categorized as conspirators with the men and the women's agency is denied (Barry 1995 and 2000, Jeffry 2002: 84-95).

Sentiments such as those of Barry, which are common among Western feminists who over simplify the women they are attempting to assist. The women become symbols, roles fit into a story, not individuals, each with her own history, culture and reasoning. When these beliefs are publicized and become a part of the universal belief about women who engage in prostitution, the women themselves are not given a voice and the real problems they face are lost. Certainly there are some women who are indentured by their families into the trade, there are women who are trafficked and forced into a position of helplessness and exploitation, and there are many other circumstances in which women can find themselves, however unwittingly, forced into the trade with little ability to alter their fate. However, even more commonly, women are given a choice between low-income, highly exploitative, unhealthy employment for a foreign firm looking for cheap, submissive labor and slightly higher income, highly exploitative, and unhealthy employment by bar owners looking for cheap, submissive prostitutes. Many Western feminists would argue that because there is so little choice it cannot be called a choice at all. Thai women have said that it is better to have HIV than to starve. It might not be much of a choice, but these women have faced public criticism and national exploitation by choosing their path. They are alienated by such simplistic statements as “there is no choice” (Barry 1990: 7, Odzer 1994: 215-218).

Labeling all women in prostitution as either "innocent victims" or "collaborators with men," alienates the women themselves. They are human beings, not symbols of oppression. There are women who choose to continue in the trade of prostitution because it is their career. The stance taken in this paper is that prostitution is exploitative by nature, and often the exploitation is a significant part of the appeal to clients, especially with regard to sex tourism which exoticises and commodifies not only the
women but their culture. However, though the profession is exploitative, the women who participate in it have valid experiences require both a voice and an audience for their profession to become healthier and for Thailand to allow more “moral” opportunities for “dutiful daughters” to do their duty. By focusing so adamantly on the great injustices and atrocities committed against these women with such sensationalist language as feminists such as Barry use, the attention is drawn away from the cultural justifications and structural creations of a situation that allows and justifies these very atrocities. Instead the focus is placed on children forced to service 15 men a day and women trafficked against their knowledge or will to a bar in Japan where they are beaten daily (Jeffry 2002: 84-95).

Work by Leslie Ann Jeffry has been used heavily in this paper. Her book *Sex and Borders* has struck a good balance between rational, academic objectivity and a clear desire to raise awareness of the cultural and structural systems set against sex workers in Thailand. While she does provide a critique of actions made by both elite Thai and elite Western women, she too fails to provide a voice for the sex workers she calls voiceless (2002). Cleo Odzer, on the other hand, has gone through extensive field research in the bars of Patpong and Pattaya. She visited the women's homes and attempted to tell their stories for them. Odzer, though her book *Patpong Sisters* is written in the style of a novel, preserved at least some of the stories of her subjects, seeing them as people, and did not judge their decisions in her writing (1994). While Odzer's efforts are admirable, due to illiteracy and cultural stigmas, an un-edited, non-judgmental volume of the stories and voices of Thai sex workers is still lacking. Her work is relatively non-judgmental, but she is still a western woman re-telling what she observed and will naturally observe through her mental filter of Western morality. As long as their voices are not heard, sex workers cannot demand the respect of their government and country (Jeffry 2002: xx).

**National Response**

Elite Thai women began to gain political power and attempted to make legislative changes that
would protect women. Elite women often had difficulty balancing their own social status and a desire to help their fellow women. Many of these programs can be seen as contributing more to stigmas and exploitation than assisting women's economic and social standing. The entire premise of these programs was based on the belief that these women were somehow biologically inferior and required “fixing.” Programs included rehabilitation, that often left Thai women poorer than at first, and education that would hopefully prevent hill tribe girls from being "greedy gold-diggers" through prostitution (Jeffry 2002: 84-95)

Many elite women and Western educated Feminists, however, began to influence “women's issues” in Thai politics. While male politicians generally avoided the topic of prostitution except by condemning the practice in passing, Thai women began acting in the government to change the systematic exploitation of these women. In 1960 the Prostitution Prohibition Act was passed as a form of regulating the emerging prostitution industry. It prohibited the

\[
\text{indiscriminate acceptance of sexual intercourse or acceptance of any other act or the performance of any act for the satisfaction of the sexual desire of another for hire whether the acceptor of the act and the performer of the act are of the same or different sexes (Jeffry 2002: 26).}
\]

The language of the law clearly emphasizes the sexual act as the defining force in prostitution, rather than the exchange of money. According to this law, a prostitute is simply a slut who gets a little money for her trouble. The penalties for breaking this law mainly rested on the shoulders of the sex worker in the form of fines, rehabilitation, or imprisonment. Clients, brothel and bar owners faced no penalties for the promotion of or participation in prostitution under this law. Many elite Thai feminists fought this law and were finally able to overthrow it in 1992 when Thailand obtained a government willing to consider prostitution and HIV issues seriously (Jeffry 2002: 26-27).

Elite men, however, were often unconcerned with the “woman's issue” of prostitution. By taking it on and advocating for more equal treatment of the most exploited class of Thai women, elite
women inadvertently associated the topic with their own gender. As a result of this association and the traditionally low value placed on the input of elite women in political matters, arguments for fairer laws often fell on deaf ears. Politicians had other reasons to excuse the recruiters of village girls and brothel owners as well as the clients of sex workers. Often, the owners were allies of politicians, if not the politicians themselves. The prostitution industry can be very lucrative to those in control of it. By continuing the punishment of sex workers, bureaucrats could give them impression that they were cracking down on prostitution while reinforcing the incentives for abused women to not go to the police (Jeffry 2002: 25-29).

As we shall see in the next chapter, by refusing to protect, educate or accept sex workers as the large source of labor they represented in Thailand, the government was unable to prevent the AIDS epidemic that followed a booming sex industry from the United States and other Western countries. Idolizing American ideals of mass consumerism and expensive life-styles as well as the cash they brought changed the landscape of Thai economics, morals and treatment of one another. By being forced off their traditional lands, entire villages were made vulnerable to profit seeking officials. Forced into a monetary society, traditional values had to adapt, which resulted in the exploitation of “dutiful daughters.” In order to continue to survive in an increasingly Americanized society, families and daughters had to forgo Western morals. The American way of life is not universally adaptive for all cultures or regions of the world. When HIV came to Thailand, the responsibility for curbing the epidemic relied almost solely on the shoulders of Thais embracing the welfare of Thailand, not on the West finding and sharing a cure (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 105-167, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Jeffry 2002: 63-84, Skrobanek et. al. 1997, 20-28).
Chapter V: AIDS in Thailand

By the time HIV reached Asia (first appearing in Thailand), it had already acquired almost a decade's worth of stigma, as well as being generally associated with stigmas against American homosexuals who were the initial population infected. It had become a white gay man's disease, occasionally affecting intravenous drug users (IDU)- who, in many people's minds, “deserved” to be sick anyways. There was the occasional hemophiliac “victim” who was infected with the “tainted” blood of a gay man or drug user, but the “general” populace was “safe.” While Haiti and African countries had been hit hard with the virus, resulting in Haitians requiring a clean blood test to enter the United States, other populations were thought to have no risk of contracting HIV. This resulted in further assumptions that the virus was a “poor foreigner's disease” and that those who had money, were heterosexual, and did not inject drugs would be immune. As with many diseases, AIDS was always the “outcast's” problem, and it most severely affected those at the bottom of the social power structure. State lines were considered adequate barriers to the virus, and as with many diseases, “good family values” were considered the best defense against the disease. In the year 2004, UNAIDS estimated that 5.2 million men, 2 million women, and 168,000 children were infected with HIV in Asia, demonstrating the devastating nature of wishful or unfounded assumptions by these affected countries about disease and culture (MAP 2004, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Wheatley 2005).

For Thailand in particular this concept of values conquering disease posed a great social dilemma. Because of governmental instability and the official denial of the magnitude and treatment of sex workers and prostitution, “good Thai values” were touted as the reason the virus had not hit
Thailand (Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Odzer 1994: 188). Despite the massive Western tourist population visiting Thai brothels, condoms were barely available. HIV was still considered a “Western” virus and not communicable to Thais because of their “values”. Cultural and structural pressures placed Thai prostitutes at a great disadvantage to the whims of their pimps and clients. A lack of scientific information on STIs and pregnancy prevention left many women infected with a variety of STIs and having had many abortions\(^{23}\). The sex tourism industry was built on these women lacking personal agency. Not only were they physically and culturally restricted, but they were also ignorant about their bodies, health, personal rights, risks, and ways of protecting themselves (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun 2001, Jeffry 2002: xiv-xvi).

“Good Thai values” that supposedly created immunity to HIV consisted of loyalty to parents, family (for women, but not for men as much), king, country and home. “Good Thai women” had been deemed to be quiet, polite, almost virginal housewives who were strictly monogamous. Husbands, children and parents were to always come before personal gain, and it was often said by many elite women who defined what it was to be “good Thai women” that prostitutes were simply greedy or lustful and required reform. Social pressures and stigmas piled up on the heads of sex workers and combined with prostitution's technically illegal status. The hypocrisy of this status is often pointed out by allegations that many high-ranking political figures own or have shares in brothels and bars, as well as the police force taking bribes and making a profit off of the prostitution business,. Unable to unionize or otherwise better their situation, these women were considered filthy by the government, elite women, their villages, pimps - and finally, by themselves (Darunee and Pandey 1991, Hantrakul 1984, Jeffry 2002: 18-20, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun 2001, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 68-79).

\(^{23}\) Many abortions were performed without anesthesia, because the nurse felt the procedure should be painful to teach the “bad” girls a lesson (Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun 2001)
profession employing many family-oriented women attempting to do their duty, as “good Thai daughters” who provided financially for their parents. This widely-advertised declaration contributed to cultural beliefs that anyone who did contract the virus was not a “good Thai,” and must therefore be “bad” or “deserving” of AIDS. Cultural beliefs as to the moral character of AIDS patients lead directly both to structural and cultural instances of violence. The low availability of public hospitals for the poorer Thais with AIDS treatment facilities was an instance of structural violence, leaving those without funds to fend for themselves, while providing expensive, often anonymous care to the rich and powerful who contracted the same “filthy” virus. In this context cultural violence emerged in the form of stigmas, fear, and general disgust towards anyone with HIV, or thought to be at risk of contracting it, which often would extend to an infected individual's entire family (Galtung 2004, Hantrakul 1984, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun 2001, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 6-19).

The government demanded that no press coverage of HIV occur in Thailand, so as to prevent damage to the tourism industry. The very real threat to thousands of Thai women from unprotected sex, especially with tourists from countries heavily affected by AIDS, was not considered - or ignored. These actions and decisions showed that these women were culturally considered disposable resources for financial gain. Many women's organizations petitioned for more egalitarian laws with regards to prostitution, requesting fewer penalties to sex workers and more accountability for the owners of establishments and their patrons. Any advancements in the law were repeatedly held back by changes in administration and the turbulent political arena of the 1980's and early 1990's. Over this period the country was changing as more and more common Thais gained access to Western political philosophy and began to demand a democracy in practice rather than simply on paper. The Prime Minister's office changed hands often, and unpopular political decisions were responded to with riots and protests, making action politically difficult for any Prime Minister. The threat of AIDS was, to many politicians, the least of their worries, when maintaining political office was such a great difficulty. It almost
became necessary to deny that AIDS was a threat to Thailand in order to maintain authority and control. If a politician had gone against his compatriots' testimonies of Thai immunity to the disease, he would not only raise concerns among the public that he could do little to assuage on his own, but he would also risk losing his position (Baker and Phongpaichit, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Hantrakul 1984, Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Odzer 1994: 187-190, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 6-11).

Violence in the form of politics accounts for a great deal of the negligence shown by Thai authorities towards this disease, as does the desire to remain in power. Human beings, with a desire to live and be safe, will often convince themselves that they are not at risk for contracting HIV. It is in a leader's best interests to encourage this feeling, as a population that does not feel safe will often blame the leader. In a politically volatile environment, this can put a leader at risk of losing more than simply their position. The end result is a falling back on old cultural beliefs. Only homosexuals, prostitutes and IDUs had been found to be infected in large numbers in Western countries. These were people undervalued by society and culture as a whole. They were stigmatized and generally lacked the means to contest any claims against their worth as human beings. Sex workers have so often been held at the bottom of a society, despite the “necessity” of the profession or as being “charity girls”\(^\text{24}\), these women rarely have power over their own circumstances or profession (Butler 2003, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Hantrakul 1984, Skrobanek et. al. 1997, Wheatley 2005).

Thai politicians found themselves in a situation where they could sacrifice a certain level of political authority to protect those at the bottom of society's structure, or they could protect themselves. Thailand's politicians generally chose the latter. Action was only taken against the onslaught of HIV once it became clear that the virus was a risk to the “general population,” or those who were generally considered to be of value. The “general population” consisted of the “innocent victims” of less valued

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\(^{24}\) This term was mainly used for sex workers in 19\(^{th}\) century England as a reference to the service they were providing for society, helping to quench the lust of men. I use it here as many Thai politicians have justified the presence of the trade in similar ways, claiming the necessity of sex workers due to men's insatiable sexual appetites (Butler 2003).
members of society who could not be considered “good Thais” such as prostitutes, philandering husbands and IDUs. The citizens who were valued enough to incite political action were those with some small level of power and influence in the way society is run and culture structured; middle and upper class men with the money to visit prostitutes, and the wives of these men (Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, UNAIDS 2005).

Also, there is an element to Thai culture that has nothing to do with politics. Many in the West have called it a “fear of losing face” or being found inadequate (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Odzer 1994). When a people have made such great claims about themselves as being immune to a disease due to their own superior culture, being told that they are quite wrong and implying that they were inaccurate or had lied would result in “losing face.” In many ways, Thailand had to “lose face” in order to take action against HIV. Media censorship and a refusal to accept the presence of risk were efforts to maintain an image that Thailand has fought hard to create among the Western countries as being equals or superior due to their rich culture. Because the King was able to adapt culturally in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Thailand was spared the plague of direct colonial rule. Unfortunately, HIV cannot be thwarted with simply appearing to be culturally superior. To defend Thailand from the plague of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the government would have to admit that prostitution was widespread (and that many of the sexual services foreigners had been saying were available in Thailand actually were). This resulted in massive epidemiological success lowering the new infection rate to below 1\% in the general population, and the strides made in the effort to prevent the further spread of the virus are commendable (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Odzer 1994: 187-190, UNAIDS 2006).

Once contracted, re-exposure to HIV can be a further detriment to the host. Like most viruses, HIV adapts and mutates to suit its environment and form of transmission more easily, as well as to resist its destruction. Multiple strains of the virus now exist that each have a specific way in which they tend to be spread more easily. Each strain is also treated with a different combination of drugs. Having
more than one strain in a body not only makes the viruses more difficult to treat, but also provides the opportunity for more mutations that can be come stronger and more resistant. If someone contracts the virus and does not know it (as symptoms of AIDS can take up to a decade to manifest, by which time many sex workers would no longer be in business) they can re-infect themselves multiple times and play host to many different strains, also passing those along to condom-less clients. A-type strains, for example, tend to be more commonly spread through anal or homosexual intercourse in some areas than B or C-type strains. This means that the virus depends heavily on the activities of its host to spread (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Oelrichs and Crowe 2003, Wheatley 2005).

Activities such as homosexual or heterosexual intercourse have complex cultural beliefs and rituals surrounding them, such as beliefs about condom use, propriety, or what is considered polite or acceptable. If a client is willing to pay more for heterosexual sex without a condom, the sex worker is more likely to participate in sexual intercourse without a condom, either of her own volition or the requirements of her manager or pimp. Some sex workers do not speak the same language as their clients and therefore cannot negotiate condom use. In addition, many believe that condoms will give them HIV, or are simply ignorant of the presence, use of, or necessity for condoms. The virus requires these cultural and social constructs to spread, as each reduces condom use and therefore increases its own likelihood of infecting a new body (Darunee and Pandey 1991, Hantrakul 1984, Odzer 1994: 187-190, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 37-55, Wheatley 2005).

The most prevalent strain of HIV in Thailand is CRF01_AE, which is a more transmissible form of the virus than non-C types, such as B, which first made its appearance in Thailand IDU populations. CRF01_AE circulated mainly among sex workers, but now is a universal strain, and is found among IDUs, businessmen, military conscripts, students and new wives. It is certainly not a virus

25 This may also be due to the risk behaviors in A-type bearing populations being mainly unprotected homosexual intercourse as opposed to being IDUs as well (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Oelrichs and Crowe 2003)
confined to the poor, foreign or “immoral”. HIV requires a certain percentage of a population to be infected in order to maintain itself in that population. What this means is that HIV probably first made its way to Thailand through intravenous drug users who acquired the virus in another country with the B type circulating among drug using populations. Users then purchased sex with sex workers, or sex workers engaged in needle sharing and other high risk behaviors with infected drug users on a high enough scale to infect a significant population of them with the B strain of the virus. However, sex workers were infected with the CRF01_AE strain of the virus on a larger scale before the B strain reached the required population percentage to spread and maintain itself, and is therefore the more dominant strain in Thailand. It happens to be a more resilient strain of the virus that is believed to spread with greater ease than the B strain in humans, as well as more commonly being spread through heterosexual relations. The cause may also be cultural. Because of the high volume of sex work with international clients present in Thailand, the sex worker population may have been exposed to the strain by many clients from a country with CRF01_AE, and since sex work is more prevalent in Thailand than intravenous drug use, the sex workers then passed it on to drug users via needle sharing, and their own drug use (Oelrichs and Crowe 2003, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001).

The percent of the population infected with HIV is rising in other Asian countries, and studies have found that poverty is a significant factor in HIV infections. Using rates for the entire country can be misleading though. Thailand's prevalence is 1.8% and lowering, but the area of Chiang Mai has had the general life expectancy of its inhabitants greatly affected by the epidemic. Much like sex worker populations, these infected people are not the majority of the national population, and so the significance of their situation shrinks when they are pooled with more privileged populations or those with greater condom knowledge and availability. Financially disadvantaged northerners are still becoming infected at alarming rates, but because they are not considered "good" or "innocent" victims by those in power, this population is not considered to be a part of the general population, which gives
them less priority to those in power (Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001, UNAIDS 2005).

The HIV epidemic in Thailand is often described in three waves to differentiate between the populations affected and, the actions taken by the government\(^{26}\). The first wave was from 1988 to 1989 and spread through populations of IDUs, mostly in Bangkok where a high number of Western tourists found entertainment that was not often acceptable at home. The prevalence of the virus jumped from a reported 0% to 40% in this year among IDU populations. These numbers may be highly inaccurate for many reasons. Most people at risk for HIV, especially in an information sparse region like Thailand at this time, would not be aware of their risk if they were even aware of the virus. Had they been aware of their risk, the virus, and had access to a medical facility, the laws demanding reporting of personal information to the authorities, combined with massive social stigma, would have also been a deterrent from voluntary testing. The health authorities were, in many cases, not entirely discreet, and had someone voluntarily been screened for the virus, they could expect to be ostracized or risk arrest or loosing their jobs if it was thought they were a sex worker. The Thai government also does not have a care program for persons with AIDS (PWA) and relies heavily on “community based care” which means that the women of the family are often the only care available for those with HIV, creating a dearth of care should these women refuse due to stigma or social pressures (Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Hantrakul 1984, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, and Aggleton, Skrobanek et al).

The second wave occurred in 1989 when it was discovered that HIV had spread to sex worker populations. In the northern city of Chiang Mai, 44% of the population of sex workers had contracted the virus in a year, and given low condom use, the disadvantaged status of most of these women, and their own likelihood of exposure to either IDUs as clients or being IDUs themselves, being spread was

\(^{26}\) It is also sometimes described in four waves, with the first being a few scattered incidents of homosexual Thai men who had either had a long time western boyfriend, or often visited male sex workers who engaged in homosexual relations with Western men (Beyrer 1998: 16-35).
imminent (Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35). With the high volume of Thai men visiting sex workers, and sex tourism exposing many sex workers to both foreigners and Thai men bearing the virus, the skyrocketing percentage of women infected with the virus showed a presence of high risk behaviors and a culturally vulnerable populations (Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35).

The third wave of the epidemic occurred directly after the second in 1990. Northern men especially (though the practice is certainly not limited to them) were culturally encouraged to visit brothels, making it an almost universal occurrence among Thai men, married and unmarried. Due to low condom education and publicity, many husbands and boyfriends contracted the virus and infected their wives, girlfriends and the fetuses they produced. 1.4% of the adult Thai male population was diagnosed with HIV by 2005. Because so many sex workers had been infected and so many Thai men visited sex workers, the epidemic suddenly broke into the “general population” and “innocent victims” were emerging. By 2005, 1/3 of all new infections with HIV were the regular female partners of men who visited brothels, which shows that even after intensive action and safer sex practices in general have become more normal since the campaign in 1996, high risk still exists among this relatively powerless “innocent” population. Figure 5 shows the infection rate of the virus in Thailand among sex workers, IDUs and spouses from 1985-2002. (Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001, UNAIDS 2006).
Given the above mentioned obstacles, most individuals diagnosed with HIV would not have been diagnosed until they were in the advanced stages of AIDS, when they would have required hospitalization. Given a 6 month to a year incubation period before the virus can even be detected in the blood and a decade or more of seemingly benign infection before the opportunistic infections, sickly appearance and other images associated with AIDS patients manifest, these IDUs could have been infected for 5 years or more before learning their status. This is all assuming that they had access to a hospital where the staff knew about the virus and how it manifests itself which was not very likely. Also, clean needles were difficult to come by and could often lead to arrest if an IDU was found with drug paraphernalia. A culture had also been built up, as in many IDU circles, of needle sharing as common practice with cultural connotations of acceptance in the group\textsuperscript{27} (MAP 2004, Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Darunee and Pandey 1991, UNAIDS 2005, Wheatley 2005).

\textsuperscript{27} Most individuals who use intravenous drugs do not inject themselves the first time, and are often taught how by other IDUs, with the needles of these other IDUs. It is also considered to be polite or to bring a community closer together and an act of trust to share a needle, and in a situation where few needles are available, the culture of needle sharing often goes hand in hand with the necessity, though there are also instances of having a needle hidden in a bathroom for public use to avoid being caught with paraphernalia (Darunee and Pandey 1991, Wheatly).
Injection drug use is generally agreed to be the most effective form of HIV transmission. When a person injects a drug into their blood stream, they will often draw a little of their own blood out first to ensure that they have punctured the vein properly\(^{28}\). When a needle is used many times in a group of injectors without sterilizing the needle between injection, each user is directly depositing a small amount of each other user’s blood into his or her own blood stream. For a virus that depends entirely on its host sharing blood, semen, breast milk and cervical secretions with another potential host in order to spread, this is an ideal practice\(^{29}\) (MAP 2004, Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Darunee and Pandey 1991, UNAIDS 2005, Wheatley 2005).

Non-injection drugs also create problems for sex workers. They increase libido and thusly the number of partners a woman can have in a night. Often, due to violent, involuntary, self-destructive, or self-devaluing nature of prostitution in Thailand (as in many countries), sex workers will use amphetamines or other “uppers” to help dull sensation and escape emotionally from their situation. Because these drugs lower sensitivity, the woman is less likely to feel vaginal tearing, which greatly increases her risk of semen to blood transmission. If the vaginal wall is intact and there are no lesions, warts or other openings between the blood stream and the vaginal wall, HIV will be much less likely to work its way into the body. Once the virus finds a small tear, lesion, wart or other manifestation of many common STIs, it has a direct route into the body, skyrocketing risk of infection with the presence of another STI. Also, when the body is busy fighting off STIs and other bacterial and viral infections, it has a more difficult time reacting to HIV, and can increase both the ability of the virus to spread and the rate at which it progresses towards AIDS (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, MAP 2004, Odzer 1994, Skrobanek et. al. 1997, Wheatley 2005).

The Thai government responded to an outbreak in IDU populations with a $180,000 AIDS

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\(^{28}\) This practice is known as “flagging” (Wheatley 2005)

\(^{29}\) Drug use has also been found to lower the likelihood of condom use, and drug users are more likely to share needles in general. Thailand does report more regular condom use among IDUs than other countries, however, which can largely be credited towards the 100% condom use campaign (Beyrer 1998:16-35, Wheatley 2005).
prevention budget which focused mainly on screening foreign visitors and sentinel populations (or high risk populations that are usually impacted before the general population), such as sex workers and military conscripts, and assuring the Thai people that AIDS was a foreign disease, and there was no proof that it could spread from Thai to Thai. This assurance contributed to the concept that those with HIV were not entirely Thai because not only did they engage in un-Thai behavior such as drug use or prostitution, but a foreign disease was now inextricably a part of their otherwise Thai bodies. Since it was not a Thai disease, there was no assistance for Thais who had contracted it, and they were left to the mercy of their families. Meanwhile, by insisting that the virus was not a Thai problem, the Thai government was not obligated to help protect Thai citizens with condom availability or education campaigns. The press continued to be censored, and people reacted almost violently to claims that Thailand was at risk of a massive HIV epidemic (Avert.org 2006, Odzer 1994, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001, UNAIDS 2005).

**Second Wave**

The vacationing environment in Thai tourism was ripe for both drug use and purchasing sex while on vacation. The lack of prevention or education efforts and adequate testing facilities as well as a dearth of availability of health care to most sex workers in brothels created the opportunity for the spread of untreated STIs. Most sex workers lacked access to condoms or else lacked the ability to demand their use. Cultural expectations that women have little knowledge about sex and condom use combined with a structure that placed all legal repercussions on sex workers. These women were also left to fend for themselves with health care and so went untreated for many STIs and untested for HIV. Cultural beliefs and expectations that women be sexually ignorant and virginal contribute greatly to the continued spread of HIV. It is difficult to determine how the virus would fare without them. Having the high volume of sexual partners, especially unprotected sexual partners sex workers have, both increases their risk of contracting STIs and increases their risk of exposure to and contracting HIV. Culturally
“moral” married Thai women on the other hand generally have only one risk factor: a husband who has sex with other people. It is difficult for Thai women to find information on safe sex due to these expectations that they be ignorant and virginal. Therefore, should they find themselves in a high risk situation (either by profession or marriage) they are ill-equipped to protect themselves (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Jeffry 2002: 105-110, MAP 2004, Odzer 1994: 187-190, Skrobanek et. al. 1997, UNAIDS 2005).

There is a distinct difference between the personal agency available to brothel sex workers and bar girls. In an average brothel, the women have very little control over whether they chose to be there in the first place. Often when women and girls find themselves in a brothel, it is to work off a loan their families took out against them. Women in these situations tend to have very little ability to move about, receive little to no medical attention, and are often retained under a complicated system of debt bondage that they will never pay off. They do not get to choose their clients or negotiate condom use or price. Often clients are told that the girls have regular check-ups or are STI free with no medical examinations to back up these claims. It is highly suspect, therefore, that what goes on in these settings can really be called “prostitution” as the profession generally implies a choice on the part of the sex worker. These situations are more akin to sexual slavery, and to be associated with sex work confounds the issues voluntary sex workers face (Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 56-67).

Since many clients will pay more for sex without a condom, many sex workers in bar settings would oblige in their own negotiations, if their managers or pimps did not arrange it before hand. Many foreign men prefer sex workers who do not speak their language, and this is greatly disadvantageous to the majority of bar girls, as being able to negotiate for one's self price, location and condom use are valuable skills. Being able to re-negotiate the terms of a transaction would allow these women some personal agency and control over their own health. This is also assuming that these women know about how to tend to their sexual health, care for STIs, the existence of HIV or the proper use of or even the
existence of condoms which many do not (Odzer 1994, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 56-67)

The end result of these cultural and structural systems of violence resulted in sex workers bearing the brunt of this second wave, with very little government assistance or medical attention. These women also bore the full weight of stigmas surrounding the disease as well as the profession when they had to return home, empty handed, in need of care, and being a drain on the resources they were expected to provide. All accountability for the disease and their having contracted it was placed solely on the shoulders of the sex workers (MAP 2004, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Odzer 1994, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001, Skrobanek et. al. 1997, UNAIDS 2005).

IDU's were found to be more likely to use sex workers in Thailand. The northern villages where HIV first broke out among prostitution populations were also used as the locations for first introducing trafficked women into the sex trade. In most cases, this would involve a series of multiple rapes, telling the women that they were now ruined because they were no longer virgins, and assailing them with both physical and psychological abuse. The act of physical violence increased the likelihood of tearing along the vaginal wall which would increase the ease with which the virus could pass from semen to blood. The situation also decreased the likelihood of condom use, especially as girls were sold as "virgins" many times over. From these villages, clients were infected and passed the virus on to other sex workers, as well as IDU sex workers sharing needles. Given the psychological barrage many of these women had been under, many attempted to adapt or to cope via drug use. Very few were able to maintain a sense of self worth or personal agency that would have allowed them to maintain some control over their situations, and had they been able to return home, they would have feared rejection for having been “ruined” or “bad.”(MAP 2004, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Jeffry 2002, Skrobanek et. al. 1997).

The Thai government gave a slight increase in funds towards prevention campaigns, though it
was highly inadequate. Politicians still held little concern over high rates in high risk populations, though they maintained less denial that the disease would be prevented by living like a “true Thai” with “good family values”. Even at the time of writing this thesis, when a woman is diagnosed with HIV she is often asked where she has been so promiscuous, as the virus has been so connected with prostitution. Patients are offered no care, counseling or information by the hospital. In some locations, hospitals have simply stopped screening for HIV during prenatal care because there is nothing they can offer patients until the most final stages of AIDS. The government began a campaign to provide ARVs to the rural poor, but due to the price of these drugs but had to shut down the program in 1997s.

Even when the drugs were available, however, few Thais would visit hospitals to receive them, fearing stigmatization from the community, shame on their family and judgment from medical staff. In an environment so devoid of care, accurate information and confidentiality, the epidemic picked up even more stigmatization, and became thoroughly tied with prostitution and shame. This stigma contributed greatly to cultural violence in the form of disgrace to those who contracted the virus As such they did not receive medical care, nor did it matter if they contracted HIV from a client or from their sole partner; a husband who visited brothels ( Galtung 2004, Avert.org 2006, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Hantrakul 1984, Phanuphak 1998, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 68-79)

3rd wave

Many men are introduced to sex at the age of 14 (especially in the northern regions around Chiang Mai) by visiting a brothel with an older male relative. Northern women make up 1/3 of the

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30 ARVs are anti-retroviral therapies. Patients are often given “cocktails” of multiple drugs to hinder the progress of HIV, sometimes indefinitely. They are highly expensive however, and long-term treatment often carries its own health risks (Wheatley 2005).

31 The Asian Financial Crisis is a term used for the sharp devaluing of Thai, Indian, Korean and other currency that occurred in 1997. This was the result of uncontrolled rapid growth and investment issues that were not responded to in an effective and timely fashion. There have been many efforts to restore the economies effected by the crisis, and progress continues at time of writing (Fischer 1998).
population of native Thai sex workers (trafficked women became more common in the 1990's and their numbers continue to grow). Due to daughterly duties, poverty and a lack of education, skills or an adequate job market these women are more prone to sex work. It is also expected that a man will sleep with many women, often being called a “butterfly” flying from flower to flower. Such sexual behavior is almost considered a right, having been a favorite past-time that implied affluence and a high social status to be able to maintain many wives. Prostitution made this privilege available to the common man, especially with the high emphasis placed on female virginity before marriage and loyalty towards her husband. For men to be able to have many partners while “respectable” women have only one, prostitution was almost necessary. The government's relaxed attitude towards the disease, with heavy censoring of HIV statistics to protect the tourism industry also contributed greatly to ignorance of risk and a lack of condom use (Avert.org 2006, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Odzer 1994).

Many husbands and boyfriends were infected, who then infected their wives, girlfriends and children. This is the population that often receives a large scale response or concern on the part of a government or community. There is a sense that prostitutes and IDUs, even philandering husbands, to an extent, “deserve” what they get because they are "bad" or do not embrace “good Thai values.” When "innocent" women and children become infected, HIV becomes a "real" problem for the general population, though most men use prostitution and almost half of the sex workers in certain areas and settings are infected, the concern is over the "innocent" and more powerful women ( MAP 2004, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Hantrakul 1984, Jeffry 2002: 105-110, Skrobanek et. al. 1997, Wheatley 2005)

The Thai government was willing to respond to the epidemic in 1992 with a massive HIV/AIDS 100% condom use campaign. The program reduced visits to sex workers by 50% in five years, increased condom use in both commercial and casual sexual settings, and decreased both STI's and
HIV infection rates. After massive protests, violent outbreaks of military rule and the insistence on the part of the Thai people, a new Prime Minister, Anand Panyarachun was appointed in 1991. He moved the AIDS department to the Prime Minister's office to increase political leverage and granted the program $44mil in 1993 as well as a skilled staff of personnel to run it. The AIDS prevention campaign involved hourly broadcasts on every radio and TV station and in school HIV education. Massive distribution and information campaigns on both condom use and how clients, pimps and sex workers could protect themselves were also made possible by nurses who visited brothels in outreach programs (Avert.org 2006, Baker and Phongpaichit, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001).

The tourism board initially protested the publicity HIV began to receive in Thailand due to this campaign, claiming it would damage one of Thailand's most lucrative industries. Once tourist visits bounced back after the safe sex campaign, however, objections subsided. The new administration also eliminated mandatory reporting of AIDS patients' personal information, which reduced reluctance to be tested, though similar deterrents remain such as indiscreet hospital staff and neighbors who can easily guess why someone would be visiting the hospital as often as an AIDS patient would need to. Many people are still not voluntarily tested for fear of stigma which rises along with incomplete knowledge of HIV. The Thai government had increased the HIV prevention budget to 80 million dollars by 1996. By 1999 short course AZT was being used to prevent mother to child transmission in most hospitals\(^{32}\). The Asian financial crisis in the late 1990's reduced the AIDS budget drastically, however, and also reduced its priority for political action, so no further developments have been made (AMFAR 2004, Avert.org 2006, Phanuphak 1998, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001, UNAIDS 2005).

The financial plan for 2002-2006 included a goal to reduce AIDS prevalence to 1%, provide

\(^{32}\) AZT is a common antiretroviral treatment that, while not curing a patient, can slow the progress of the virus and prevent transmission. Short course AZT is often given to pregnant HIV positive women early in the pregnancy, and just before giving birth. This has been shown to greatly reduce the chance of the baby being infected with the virus, especially if it is also fed with formula, as breast milk can also carry the virus (Wheatley 2005).
care and support to 80% of AIDS patients (though it did not specify which 80%). Local administration and community organizations were relied upon heavily to carry out these plans. The Thai government made it a goal to help individuals and community organizations realize the role they played in HIV prevention and treatment. Health and social services were also established for the care and education of persons with HIV, though these facilities have not been as effective as they could be at education and care. The known infection rate (that is the percent being newly infected every year) of sex workers dropped down to 20% in 2002 from 50% in 1991. Brothel based prostitution had a 90% condom usage rate, but this may decline soon due to lack of funding and public attention (AMFAR 2004, UNAIDS 2005, Avert.org 2006)

**Current Programs and Funding**

There are many organizations and programs active in Thailand towards efforts to reduce the exploitative nature of prostitution, increase awareness, provide safety for abused women, and also to provide legal assistance. Organizations for women often have to focus on international trafficking to maintain government support, because, as many local officials whom they rely on for funds and assistance are also involved in local prostitution recruitment. Organizations that are available to women are Empower, The National Council of Women of Thailand, The Girl Guides Association of Thailand, Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women, Friends of Women, Foundation for Women and others (Avert.org 2006, MAP 2004, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Hantrakul 1984, Skrobanek et al. 1997: 68-79)

The National Council of Women of Thailand was founded by elite women to encourage “Thainess” in women (eg. How to be “homemakers” and “good partners” for their elite husbands). Their goals are to protect the image of Thai women which has been "damaged" by sex tourism, and to teach those less fortunate and educated about how to be a “good” Thai woman. The National Counsel is mainly morality based, and, according to a study on social issues in southeast Asia, has not been as
effective as organizations based more on education, rights and understanding (Darunee and Pandey 1991).

Other organizations include Empower, which is known for education, outreach programs to sex workers to teach them English, allowing them to negotiate condom use, and education of their rights, options, risks and was of protecting themselves. The Girl Guides Association of Thailand emphasized helping Thai girls develop a sense of personal agency by learning how to be useful to their community, and have been helpful in medical crises, providing invaluable assistance to doctors and hospitals. The Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women seeks to provide facilities that are safe to women and children, and a place for them to learn skills that may come in handy, as well as to recover from abuse or dangerous situations. Friends of Women and the Foundation for Women both seek to help women understand their legal rights, though the Foundation for Women is seen as more radical, providing a more open discourse on the importance of understanding gender discrimination. All these organizations have provided massive levels of assistance to sex workers in regaining their lives and health. They have done a great deal of work towards increasing awareness of gender equality issues, and placing rights for disadvantaged women, especially sex workers, in the political arena Darunee and Pandey 1991, Skrobanek et. al. 1997: 68-79).

These organizations sprang from a combination of recognized need from the HIV epidemic, and western feminist ideals being introduced to Thai students gaining a Western education. Many Thai women's organizations have involved themselves initially with Western feminists, only to later break away from them for being seen as “too radical” (Jeffry 2002: 63). Politics in Thailand are still very much run by men, however, Thai women are also claiming “women's issues” and taking them to the political arena. Since prostitution has also been one of these “issues,” it has not had as much political clout as “men's” issues. Organizations such as Empower and Foundation for Women are changing this perception, slowly at times, but changing it none-the-less. There is still a long ways to go before labor
laws, gender and class equality can occur, which would greatly increase the options available to currently disadvantaged Thai women. With more publicity and awareness of sex workers as people with jobs rather than as symbols defined by their culture, women's movements will continue to have more effect on both the causes and results of the HIV epidemic (Darunee and Pandey 1991, Skrobanek et. al. 1997, Jeffry, 2002).

Funding and support for these NGO's which, was vital to the original epidemic decline, has been cut or not maintained as a result of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. However, most NGO's in Thailand rely on outside funding and creating their own publicity and programs, separate from the government, and so have not suffered as greatly as they otherwise might have. This trend does show that there are other issues the government is prioritizing, and loss of attention on the continued cultural and structural violence against disadvantaged women may undo most of the good the massive condom use campaign did manage to achieve (Darunee and Pandey 1991, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001, UNAIDS 2005).

Thailand has become a staple in prostitution literature. Studies often cite Thailand as a model for HIV prevention and intervention because it has had some very real success in an epidemiological sense with greatly lowering the spread of the virus to the “general” population. However, the data also suggests that sex workers are still being infected at a high rate, and it is now the clients who are protecting themselves from the virus, not the sex workers. This shows that while Thailand has been able to gain more control over the virus, it has done almost nothing for the most at risk and exploited members of its society. If HIV was able to take advantage of this exploitative and violent situation, another virus will as well. In a sense, Thailand has treated the opportunistic infection, and not the root cause of the epidemic. Because the epidemiological spread of the disease has been so controlled, researchers often ignore the more unpleasant side effects, such as stigma, continued disempowerment of women, and especially the furthering of violence against sex workers. Now, there is scientific
evidence to back up claims that these women are “dirty,” “bad,” or “diseased” with very few social advances made for the women as people, not just as constructs of the role they fulfill in society (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Darunee and Pandey 1991, Odzer 1994, Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun, Aggleton 2001, Skrobanek et. al. 1997, UNAIDS 2005).
Conclusion

I have chosen to focus on Thailand because I believe it contains a greatest potential for hope and for advancing human rights. While there continues to be dismal and highly exploitative conditions of human degradation, there is a spark of hope for change. This spark of humanity, help, perseverance and resilience could never have come from a symbol, be it an evil dictator, a dirty prostitute, a poor victim of child slavery or even the most well meaning western feminist. Those making changes in Thailand, creating a healthy, powerful, and empowering system are each individuals. While they might have come from a group we as academics like to fit people to, they are most certainly their own people who have respect for those they work with. The greatest potential for healthy, equalizing, change comes not from domination or post-colonial violence, but from respect, observations, and ingenuity.

Thailand has a long history of creating women as symbols of status, or as objects to embody wealth or agreements. When Thai culture met 19th century British culture with a military imperative to conform, the restrictions on all classes of women were increased. Elite women were given a voice as a result of Westernization. They were educated in the same fashion Western feminists had been, but the status of being symbols was passed down the economic line to the poorer women of Thailand. By fulfilling the requirements of being “good” by the standards of their own community, a Northern woman would often fulfill the standards of being “bad” by the Westernized Central Thai community, due to a system that does not allow for females to support their families (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Hantrakul 1984, Jeffry 2002, Odzer 1994).

The creation of an uneducated working class of women created and perpetuated an opportune
environment for exploitative forms of employment such as prostitution. The combination of pressure from the World Bank and a lack of identification with the women whose honor would be sacrificed to the industry on the part of legislators reinforced an industry based on exploitation and cultural commodification. Systems of exploitation and a prostitution industry based on the commodification of culture and phenotype created a class at high risk of disease. The continued cultural violence of moralizing about the women diagnosed with HIV and the structural violence of unequal, punitive laws against sex workers served to create an ideal environment for un-checked spread of HIV (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Galtung 2004, Hantrakul 1984, Jeffry 2002, Odzer 1994, Whitehead 2004).

Creating this class of women who were at high risk for economic exploitation and an opportunistic disease not only devastated that population of women, it also put at risk the entire community to the virus. Cultural creations of a meek, virginal gender as well as a lack of information on health resources for these women demolished any chance of early detection and prevention. Not simply these cultural creations that placed women at risk. The structural consequences for participating in one of the only lucrative trades available to uneducated women also prevented them from being tested or learning about how to take care of themselves. Pressure to maintain a healthy tourism department at the cost of the health of Thailand's citizens also contributed to the epidemic. Because so many members of Thai society come in indirect or direct contact with this trade, it is not difficult to see how the virus spread so quickly. With the large number of Thais who were taking part in the exploitation of this class of women, everyone was placed at risk (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005: 140-167, Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Hantrakul 1984, Jeffry 2002, Odzer 1994).

While rigorous prevention efforts such as those employed by Thailand can contain and control specific incidents of disease, having a structure based on exploitation and inequality will continue to leave a population vulnerable to other diseases. Sex workers are still being infected at an alarming rate
(20% in some areas), showing that, while this virus has been dealt with, the underlying social issues have not (Singhanetra-Renard, Chongsatitmun and Aggleton 2001). HIV does discriminate. In an environment where everyone is aware of their risk, is tested regularly with no possible ramifications by the structure, availability of safe sex supplies and an ability on the part of all individuals involved to regulate their own sexual experiences, HIV risk drops. In a population of under-paid, penalized and culturally created meek women, also expecting them to be aware of their own sexual health (which can be seen as unfeminine) and to insist on a condom when they are allowed no power in their work relations (especially in brothels and bar women who do not speak their clients' languages) is unrealistic at best. If the underlying structural and cultural violences have not been addressed adequately, it can be reasonably assumed that the same situation will continue to occur with the only variable being what virus or other plague enters the community through their exploited class (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Galtung 2004, Hantrakul 1984, Jeffry 2002, Odzer 1994, Whitehead 2004).

The best solution is to allow sex workers an un-edited voice through a non-judgmental forum in the form of books and other media produced by sex workers for the rest of the world. They have been used for political and social agendas as well as cheap, exoticised sex since the industry began. To continue exploiting these women for political purposes will only perpetuate their circumstances. Allowing them to communicate with legislators and Thai communities will enable these parties to create effective reforms that address the issues sex workers actually face. In the past, these reforms have been based off of speculation and moral judgments placed on these women. To continue to judge them will only serve to perpetuate the cycle of violence against them and future generations (Beyrer 1998: 16-35, Hantrakul 1984, Jeffry 2002, Odzer 1994).

I have attempted to remain a neutral party in this analysis, though I must admit my own bias towards those individuals who value the voices of sex workers. Though there are many organizations which strive to make those voices audible, a lack of available audience leaves their words difficult to
find. I have therefore settled for critiquing and shedding light on these women's situations and attempting to vouch for the validity of their own input on their experiences. They find themselves in filthy, unequal, demoralizing, physically violent situations every day and their government is not concerned with them. They are shunned by a culture they support through their labor and stare hypocrisy in the face on a daily basis, all to support their families. To do this must take an admirable level of nobility and personal strength and anyone who displays this deserves respect. The situations each sex worker finds herself in are unique, but not the causes. Women the world over are subject to sexism, exploitation and cultural violence. Recognizing that Thai prostitutes face different yet similar perceptions of gender and sex to myself and other Western women is vital if their voices are to be given the credit necessary for positive change.
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