

July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Vol 1/2010



## GENDER & SEXUALITY REVIEW

*A Newsletter from Gender, Sexuality and Health Resources Center*

# Transitional gender identities in a changing Vietnamese society

## Letter from the Editor

The sharing of information contributes to improving research and intervention programmes and helps to inform policies related to society and health. Helping to enable the sharing of information is one of the key goals that the Center for Creative Initiative in Health and Population (CCIHP) is pursuing. To facilitate this CCIHP has undertaken a survey to evaluate the needs of people requiring access to information. This survey identified two main obstacles that prevent researchers, staffs and students from accessing information. These are that they do not know where they can find

information and when found it is difficult to filter and select appropriate information. This survey shows a need for well organized resources and as such CCIHP has established a Resource Center to support readers in accessing information in the areas of gender, sexuality and health. The Newsletter "Gender & Sexuality Review" informs people about the resource center and it will be produced quarterly in English and Vietnamese with the following sections:

- **Book review:** books and manuals will be reviewed

- **Updates:** Brief introduction of new articles published in international or national peer-reviewed journals.
- **Events:** Information about international and national upcoming conferences, workshops, and training courses.
- **Resources Center:** Introduction of books and activities of this center.
- **Readers view points:** Your opinions, feedbacks and views about the topics/books/articles are welcomed.

The first electronic edition of Newsletter was developed with the title "Transitional Gender Identities in a Changing Vietnamese Society". In this Newsletter, we will focus upon the changes in Vietnam that have taken place in the 20 years after Doi Moi. Although having gained great achievements in economic and social development, Vietnam society seems to have difficulty getting over the word "transition". Gender norms, specifically those related to women's sexuality is one site that shows clearly the fluidity and shifts in Vietnamese society around this area. Books and articles introduced in this newsletter shows the contradictions, debates and conflicts between new and traditional values in sexual and gender discourses in Vietnam. For example the history of these terms has been analyzed in book covering the socialist and market reform periods written by Ashley Pettus. Hopefully, the information in this newsletter will help you find such information. We also expect to receive your comments, feedbacks and reviews from you to make the newsletter more useful.

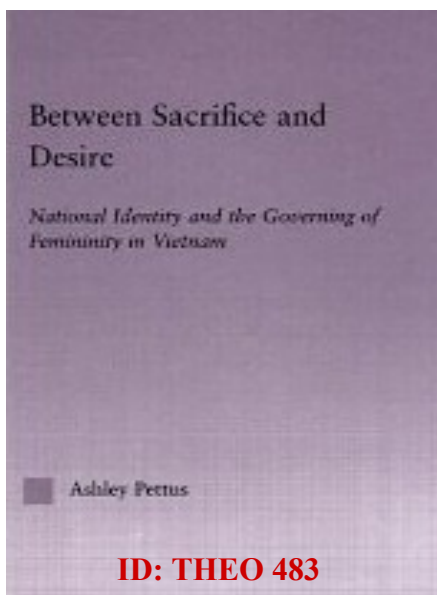
## Content

<b>Letter from the Editor</b>	1
<b>Book Review</b>	
Between Sacrifice and Desire: National Identity and the Governing of Femininity in Vietnam	2-3
Training materials for gender integration in population and reproductive health programs	4
<b>Updates</b>	5-6
<b>Events</b>	6
<b>Resource Center</b>	7-8

# BOOK REVIEW

## Between Sacrifice and Desire: National Identity and the Governing of Femininity in Vietnam

Ashley Pettus



This title explores the role of women in the politics of national identity in Vietnam. Drawing on diverse primary resources--including state news media, government contests, and extensive interviews--the author examines the intimate connection between notions of Vietnamese femininity and the cultural quandaries of modernity in post-colonial Vietnam. The book

covers Vietnam context from the 1950s through the 1990s and examines women's central place--as both symbols and disciplined subjects--in Vietnam's socialist modernization and ongoing capitalist transition. With multi-dimensional discussions, the book provides an insight into Vietnamese society in transition and explains gender status quo 20 years after Doi Moi.

This book is organized in two parts with total of 5 chapters.

Chapter 1 examines the central place of women in the cultural and ideological politics of socialist nation-building. The discussion pays particular attention to the emergence, in the early 1970s, of a post-revolutionary generation of urban women, whose attitudes, behaviors and aspirations challenged the official codes of socialist womanhood.

Chapter 2, "Building civility through happy families", reveals when the modern nuclear household displaced the collective as the primary unit of production in the late - 1980s, the state increased its reliance on women's domestic "talents" and identities both as a key to the nation's economic progress and as a cultural buffer against the incursion of Western capitalist values.

In chapter 3, the author considers how the contradictory forces shaping contemporary Vietnamese media have intensified the journalistic reliance on femininity as a language for addressing the cultural anxieties, social conflicts and material yearnings associated with capitalist transition.

Chapter 4 explores women's responses to the governmental messages of state culture and popular media within a "workers" neighborhood on the periphery of central Hanoi. The discussion contrasts the discursive practices of an older generation of Resistance veterans with those of a younger, socialist-schooled generation of women who had to adapt to the market economy at the time that they were starting families. Caught between the socialist promises of "gender equality" and the patriarchal demands of the household, this

'transition' age group struggled to represent themselves through the constraining language of Vietnamese femininity.

In chapter 5, the author examines the national constraints on feminine identity in the context of Hanoi's struggling merchant community. While market selling has traditionally been considered "women's work" (an extension of feminine domestic talent), it has taken on extra-domestic significance within the new capitalist economy, potentially threatening the patriarchal order of the post-socialist family. In differentiating themselves from the tabloid images of greed-driven women, female market sellers sought to reclaim the space of Vietnamese femininity by portraying themselves as self-sacrificing mothers and wives and as victims of unjust governmental and economic forces.

Around the world, women seek to balance between the pressures of earning a living and raising a family while maintaining a sense of self and personal fulfillment. This task does not come easily to many, and the same holds true for women in Vietnam. In Vietnam there is the added pressure of conforming to a state-propelled idealized version of femininity that is constraining, often contradictory, and unrealistic. As Ashley Pettus explains, the modern Vietnamese state, through popular media and government policy, has monitored women's behavior over the past fifty years by propagating images of domesticity, hard work, chastity, motherhood, and sacrifice as models for women to follow.

The book traces the government policies that have encouraged women to pursue certain paths of life that contribute to Vietnamese society—in their view—in a positive manner. Thus, in the 1950s through the 1970s, codes of conduct were dictated by socialist ideals of progressive women. Women were encouraged to wear simple dress, act modestly, and work in state-run factories. Education was not an ideal, as an overly educated woman was seen as bourgeois. Under the renovation period, or Doi Moi, which forms the bulk of the book, women were faced with more contradictory messages. Modernity was encouraged in the form of technological progress or intellectual enlightenment, but traditional Vietnamese social values such as tending to the ancestors and caring for elderly in-laws were and are still the norm. In the current era of globalization, the contradictory and ambiguous nature of morality is even more problematic in a society that is in constant flux. One of the many questions that Pettus's book asks, one indeed that the Vietnamese government surely asks, is whether the socialist political imaginary is at all compatible with global capitalism (p. 81).

***Review of Nora A. Taylor about this book***

**The Journal of Asian Studies (2005), 64:256-257 Cambridge University Press**

The strengths of this book lie precisely in the anecdotes and personal narratives that Pettus shares with the reader. While the government seems to be stuck in promoting stereotypes, it is far more interesting to move beyond the categories of “housewife,” “state worker,” or “union member” and enter a world where women have character and voices. Only then does one begin to understand that there is a wide variety of women in Vietnam and, like women around the world, their lives are a dictated by unusual circumstances and hard choices that they have had to make order to survive and thrive in a modern world. Pettus also shares with readers the content of short stories and articles about women that appear in the press. Her literacy in Vietnamese and her “insider's view” of Hanoi give her an authority and expert that is unmatched. Her book will prove to be valuable not only to Vietnam specialists but also to students of gender - gender in Asia and Southeast Asian society. The book says as much about Vietnamese politics as it does about women. This said, there are few unresolved questions that may need further exploration. For one, the book claims to be about Vietnamese women, but it is really about Hanoi women; it would be interesting to compare Hanoi women with women in other parts of the country, especially Saigon where the marketplace is even more developed.

The book does not claim to be a comprehensive overview of women in Vietnam, but does offer a somewhat limited view of women's lives, as it focuses primarily women's responses to government propaganda. There are still many stories Vietnamese women to tell, but certainly Pettus's research and insight is an excellent contribution to both Vietnamese studies and gender studies; in bridging the two, she offers a unique perspective on contemporary Vietnam.

## Training materials for gender integration in population and reproductive health programs

*General population - family planning, and the United Nations Population Fund*



Gender integration in population/reproductive health (P/RH) programs is a tool to achieve gender equality. This book is aimed to guide the national and provincial trainers the approach and training skills. Its main content includes: basic knowledge about gender, gender equality, population, reproductive health and gender

mainstreaming in P/RH programs. The book is compiled by General population-family planning with financial and technical support of the United Nations Population Fund. The experienced experts from CCIHP take part in compiling and piloting this material in Phu Tho and Ben Tre province before conducting it nationwide.

This document describes the process of implementation of gender integration training program in P/RH for 5 days with 17 main units plus other parts relating to Greeting and Introduction, Lesson learned after the training. Lessons are guided using positive teaching methods - to encourage two-way discussion and the active participation of the trainees. In each lesson, the guiding contents for teachers are arranged as followings:

**Time:** The total estimated time to conduct one unit according to methods suggested in the document

**Objective:** The knowledge, attitudes and skills that students can receive after learning each unit.

**Overview:** Summary of main activities, duration, methods, materials and support facilities

**Preparation:** List of documents and facilities that teachers need to prepare for teaching.

**Progress:** Detail instructions on implementing each activity, including how to guide, to give the discussing questions, the main content, main points, and how to perform activities

**Images/slides:** The main content that trainer will present.

**Exercises:** The content of the exercises can be copied to deliver for trainees

**References:** References can be copied and delivered to trainees before or after each unit

Section 1 is “Gender and gender equality” that includes 6 units with basic contents of definitions of gender and gender equality, the construction process of gender roles and characteristics, analysis of inequality in accessing and controlling various resources of two genders and interaction of these with gender inequality, and impact of power on issues of P/RH as well as the meaning, strategy and process to achieve gender equality.

Section 2 is “Population and Reproductive Health” including 4 units that present basic definitions of population and reproductive health, contents of reproductive health and priorities in reproductive health care in Vietnam, important policies and commitments of Vietnam in P/RH, approaching methods based on rights into these policies and programs, implementing reproductive health programs by that provoking rights and reduction of gender inequality.

Section 3 is “integration of gender in P/RH policies and programs” including 7 units including gender integration in P/RH policies and programs, gender analysis- concepts for implementing of gender integration in these programs/policies, and three types of important information in gender analysis, some contents of gender integration are necessary to include in every step of project cycle, intervention, supervision, evaluation and development of policy and programs in P/RH.

*Culture, Health & Sexuality, June 2008; 10(Supplement): S151–S161*  
*Monograph series of Gender, Sexuality & Sexual health, Vol.16/2009*

## **Femininity and sexual agency among young unmarried women in Hanoi - Trang Quach**

In contemporary Vietnam, young, unmarried, educated women are struggling to negotiate the contradictory expectations of femininity. Qualitative research conducted in Hanoi with 13 unmarried, educated women, aged from 25 to 34 years, explored women's sexual agency in a context of changing discourses on sexuality and gender roles. Interviews were conducted several times with each woman to enable in-depth understanding of sexual experiences and meanings. Either implicitly or explicitly, women in the research were found to resist the power of public discourses on femininity and sexuality. Notions of femininity can be interpreted as a temporary means for women to gain control over sexual relationships. It is crucial to acknowledge the

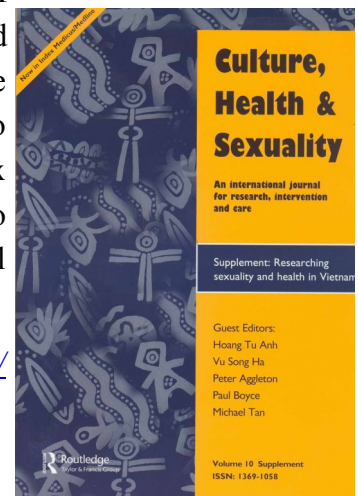
sexual agency of unmarried, educated women and its diverse forms in order to understand complex sexual behaviors and to promote their sexual rights and health.

[www.informaworld.com/index/792733585.pdf](http://www.informaworld.com/index/792733585.pdf)

[www.cihp.org.vn/](http://www.cihp.org.vn/)

[Desktop.aspx/An-Pham/AnPham-ChuyenSan/](http://Desktop.aspx/An-Pham/AnPham-ChuyenSan/)

[Nu tinh va su the hien chu the trong doi song tinh duc cua nu tri thuc tre Ha Noi](#)



*Culture, Health & Sexuality, September–October 2006; 8(5): 383–394*

## **Constructions of gender in Vietnam: In pursuit of the ‘Three Criteria’**

*Sidney Ruth Schuler, Hoang Tu Anh, Vu Song Ha, Tran Hung Minh, Bui Thi Thanh Mai, Pham Vu Thien*

Vietnam has advanced far beyond most other developing countries and, indeed, surpasses many developed countries in adopting a legal framework based on gender equality, and in creating institutions and programs to support women's advancement. Inegalitarian gender norms have also persisted, however. The Vietnam Women's Union promotes women's educational, political and economic advancement but simultaneously exhorts women to pay attention to their Confucian role of maintaining

family hierarchy and harmony. This paper presents findings from qualitative research examining gender relations at the grassroots level in central Vietnam. It argues that the Vietnam Women's Union could support women more effectively by promoting greater diversity in gender norms and by initiating a public discussion to address the pressures women face in trying to achieve ideals that are often experienced as contradictory and unattainable.

[www.informaworld.com/index/755207857.pdf](http://www.informaworld.com/index/755207857.pdf)

*Culture, Health & Sexuality, Volume 12, Issue S1 August 2010, Pages S5 — S18*

## **‘These days virginity is just feeling’: heterosexuality and change in young urban Vietnamese men** *Philip Martin*

The paper suggests that young men are increasingly ambivalent about notions of 'gendered morality' in general and the significance of female virginity in

particular, because of popular ideas around women's changing sexual behaviors since the economic liberalization of Vietnam in the late 1980s.

However, while such ambivalence might at first suggest a shift toward improved gender and sexual equality, findings reveal that some young urban Vietnamese men construct and reinforce explicitly 'masculinist' gender ideologies by watching heterosexual pornography in groups with male friends or by visiting female sex workers for the purpose of watching their friends have sex. In a time of rapid change around discourses on women, some young men seek to build a stable community and relationships with each other by controlling the terms and practice by which women's bodies are used and consumed.

[www.informaworld.com/index/920761919.pdf](http://www.informaworld.com/index/920761919.pdf)

## OTHERS

Vu Hong Phong. **Male sexual health concerns in Muong Khen, Vietnam.** Culture, Health & Sexuality, June 2008; 10(Supplement): S139–S150

[www.informaworld.com/index/792737704.pdf](http://www.informaworld.com/index/792737704.pdf)

[www.cihp.vn/Desktop.aspx/An-Pham/AnPham-ChuyenSan/Lo\\_ngai\\_tinh\\_duc\\_nam\\_gioi\\_So7-2005/-Pham/AnPham](http://www.cihp.vn/Desktop.aspx/An-Pham/AnPham-ChuyenSan/Lo_ngai_tinh_duc_nam_gioi_So7-2005/-Pham/AnPham)

John Knodel et al. **Gender roles in the family.** Asian Population Studies, Volume 1, Issue 1, March 2005, pages 69 - 92

[www.informaworld.com/index/714592821.pdf](http://www.informaworld.com/index/714592821.pdf)

Paula-Frances Kelly. **Chapter 5: What is known about gender, the constructs of sexuality and dictates of behavior in Vietnam as a Confucian and socialist society and their impact on the risk of HIV/AIDS epidemic.** Sexual Cultures in East Asia, Volume 1, Part 2, November 2003, pages 98 - 126

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a732656236~frm=titlelink>

Nguyen, HN. **Sex, love and gender norms: sexual life and experience of a group of young people in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.** *Sexual Health* Volume 4, Issue 1, February 2007, pages 63-69.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17382041>

***The 2<sup>nd</sup> international conference on Public Health among Greater Mekong Sub-Regional countries***

August 30-31, 2010, Hue city, Vietnam

Hue College of Medicine and Pharmacy

Email: [huephfaculty@vnn.vn](mailto:huephfaculty@vnn.vn)

***The 26th National Conference of Sexology***

September 3-5, Chennai, India

The Council of Sex Education and Parenthood International (CSEPI)

Website: [www.sexconindia.com](http://www.sexconindia.com)

***The 3rd Vietnam Nation-Wide Institute on Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Health (VNIGSS 3)***

September 21-30, 2010, Ha Noi, Vietnam

The Centre for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP)

Website: [www.cihp.vn](http://www.cihp.vn)

***The Australasian Sexual Health Conference***

October 18 - 20, 2010, Sydney, Australia

The Royal Australian College of Physicians

Website: [www.sexualhealthconference.com.au/default.asp?active\\_page\\_id=1](http://www.sexualhealthconference.com.au/default.asp?active_page_id=1)

***The symposium of “Negotiating sexualities in moving spaces”***

October 28-29, 2010, Ha Noi, Vietnam

Institute for Social Development Studies and Consultation of Investment in Health Promotion

Website: [www.isds.org.vn](http://www.isds.org.vn) or [www.cihp.vn](http://www.cihp.vn)

***International Conference on “Changing Ways of Life of Ethnicities in the Mekong Region”***

November 11 –12, 2010, Thailand

Mekong Sub-region Social Research Center

Website: [www.la.ubu.ac.th/Ethnicconference2010/](http://www.la.ubu.ac.th/Ethnicconference2010/)

***The 42<sup>nd</sup> APACPH conference***

November 24-27, 2010, Nusa Dua Bali, Indonesia

University of Indonesia

Website: [www.apacph2010.org](http://www.apacph2010.org)

***The 4<sup>th</sup> national scientific conference on HIV/AIDS***

November, 28-30, 2010, Ha Noi, Vietnam

Vietnam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control

Website: <http://vaac.gov.vn>

# RESOURCES CENTER

## Library of the Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population

**Address: No. 2, Alley 49/41,  
Huynh Thuc Khang, Ha Noi.**

**Working time: 8h00 to 11h30,  
13h30 to 17h00 (Except for  
Saturday, Sunday and Holiday)**



**CCIHP Library**

**There are about 2,700 text materials and 200 audiovisual materials in CCIHP's library.**

### Objectives:

- Serve the research and reference needs of people working in the field of public health, health management, sociology and anthropology.
- Update the publications, training materials, reference and research materials in the field of public health, health management, sociology, and anthropology.
- Enable the exchange of scientific research reports, workshop materials, training manuals which are published by CCIHP and other organizations.

### Some typical topics:

Gender	Sex work
Gender-based violence	Disability
Sexuality	Rights
Reproductive health	Law
Sexual health and HIV/AIDS	Psychology
	Anthropology
	Research methodologies

### How to search:

You can search books and materials through online library or come to CCIHP for guidance.

To search through online library, please follow this guideline:

- Register and login into the website: <http://www.cihp.vn>.
- Click to Library, then click to Search in the left menu. Searching Box will be appeared.
- Type the keyword which you want to search into the searching box. The list of suitable materials will be appeared.
- Click to View to get more information about the material and get the ID of the materials
- Go to CCIHP's library to read the materials

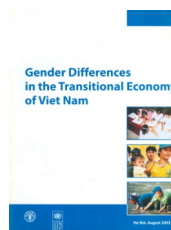
### Rules of the Library:

- CCIHP's library is open for public. Readers must bring ID card in order to use the library
- Only full-time CCIHP's staffs can borrow materials over nights.
- Readers can request CCIHP librarian to photocopy portions of material they need for education and research purposes, though not wholes publications. The price is 300VND per page.

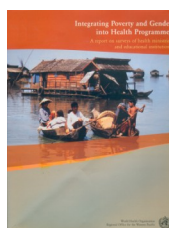
The same topic materials from CCIHP's Library



**Lisa Drummond and Helle Rydstrom (Edited).** 2004. Gender practices in contemporary Viet nam.  
**ID: THEO 345**



**FAO and UNDP.** 2002. Gender differences in the transition economy of Vietnam



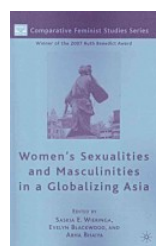
**WHO.** 2005. Integrating poverty and gender into health programmes.  
**ID: REP 578**



**Consultation of Investment in Health Promotion and Vietnam Women Union.** 2008. A glossary of terms on gender and gender equality.  
**ID: CIHP 113**

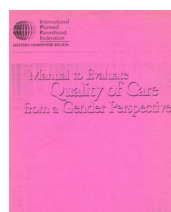


**SEA Consortium on Gender Sexuality and Health.** 2005. A glossary of terms on gender and sexuality  
**ID: THEO 334**




**Saskia E. Wieringa, Evelyn Blackwood, Abha Bhaiya.** 2007. Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in a globalizing Asia.  
**ID: THEO 501**

**[ www.cihp.vn ]**



**IPPF.** 2000. Manual to evaluate quality of care from a gender perspective.  
**ID: REF 174**



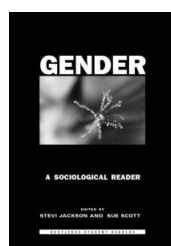
**CCIHP**

Centre for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population

No.2, Alley 49/41 Huynh Thuc Khang  
Ha Noi, Vietnam

Tel: (84 - 4) 3577 0261  
Fax: (84 - 4) 3577 02610  
E-mail: [gshnewsletter@ccihp.org](mailto:gshnewsletter@ccihp.org)

**Building a healthy future for all**



**Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott.** 2002. Gender: A sociological reader.  
**ID: THEO 310**

**Editor Board:** Hoang Tu Anh  
Quach Thi Thu Trang  
Nguyen Thi Vinh  
Dinh Thi Nhung  
Dinh Thi Phuong Nga