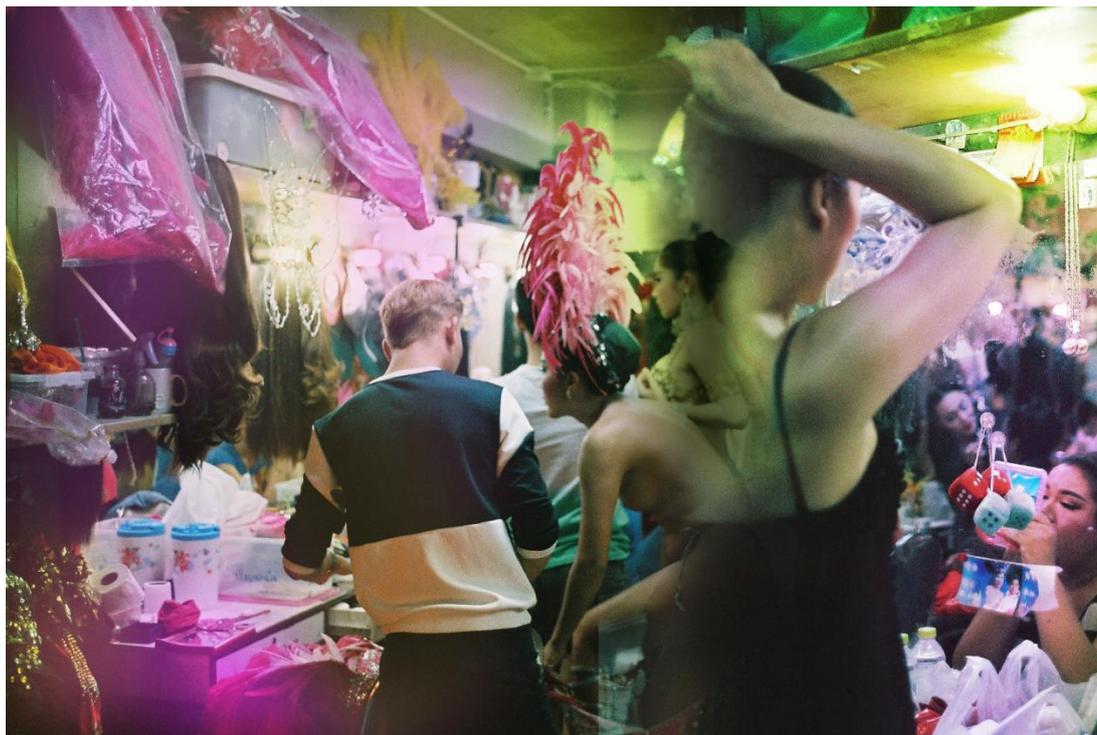


Street and State Discrimination: Thai Transgender Women in Europe

Discriminatie op straat en door de staat: Thaise transgender vrouwen in Europa
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)



Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit Utrecht
op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof.dr. G.J. van der Zwaan,
ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties
in het openbaar te verdedigen
op woensdag 25 april 2018 des middags te 12.45 uur

door

Jutathorn Pravattiyagul
geboren op 25 april 1988
te Bangkok, Thailand

Promotoren:

Prof. dr. D. Siegel

Prof. dr. F. Sack

The degree is awarded as part of a Joint Doctorate with Utrecht University and University of Hamburg.

The thesis was accomplished with the financial support from the European Union's education audiovisual and cultural executive agency's Erasmus Mundus Scheme.

Declaration

I declare that the research embodied in the thesis is my own work and has not previously been submitted for a degree at any other universities.

I declare that I have not used commercial doctoral advisory services or any sources or aids other than those listed in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

The large number of Thai transgender women (Kathoeys) in Thailand and their visible roles in society often lead casual visitors to believe that Thailand is open and accepting of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) culture. Hence, it is common to hear Thailand described as gender tolerant and culturally sensitive. However, transgender women themselves beg to differ. They explain that the accumulated injustices of the Thai state on transgender rights – such as same sex marriage, social welfare, change of gender on identification card and structural employment discrimination - are the main push factor for Thai transgender women migration to Europe. This research presents state and street discrimination in Thailand and Europe. It also presents the visions of Europe that are commonly held by transgender women, visions that motivate some of them to migrate, and argues that these fantasies are romanticizing productions of western colonial influence. In Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and The UK, where the governments support equal rights of transgender people, Kathoeys find that they are allowed to legally marry, revel in professional progress, access social welfare and receive transgender legal protections. However compared to Thailand, Kathoeys experience more violent discrimination and transprejudice on street (social) level in Europe.

This research studies the phenomenon of Thai transgender women migration to Europe and their perception before migrating and reality of living in Europe. It compares the levels of discrimination in Thailand and Europe and presents empirical data regarding street discrimination towards Kathoeys in Europe, despite state protection. The gap between European legal protections and the negative attitudes toward Kathoeys that continues to exist on the street demonstrates the power of universal and essentialist binary opposition: as hetero-normativity and cis-gender bodies are constructed to comprise normalcy and natural, Kathoeys and their transgendered bodies equate with deviancy and the unnatural. The Kathoeys discourse of social acceptance through hetero-beauty myth is also theorized in an effort to understand Kathoeys' otherness, oppressed identity and inferiority issues in the Western world, which is influenced by hetero-normativity and post-colonial legacy. The study also investigates transgender prostitution industry in Europe and Thai transgender women's narratives on European lives.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die große Anzahl von thailändischen transgender Frauen (Kathoeys) in Thailand und ihre sichtbaren Rollen in der Gesellschaft verleitet gelegentliche Besucher anzunehmen, dass Thailand sich offen und akzeptierend gegenüber der LGBT (zum englischen Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Kultur verhält. Daher ist es üblich, dass Thailand als Gender-tolerant und kulturell einfülsam beschrieben wird. Transgender Frauen widersprechen diesem allerdings. Sie berichten, dass die zusammengenommenen Ungerechtigkeiten des thailändischen Staates entgegen Transgenderrechten – wie zum Beispiel, die gleichgeschlechtliche Ehe, Sozialhilfe, die rechtliche Anerkennung einer Geschlechtsumwandlung auf dem Ausweis und strukturelle Beschäftigungsdiskriminierung – als die wichtigsten Push-Faktoren wirken um Transgender Frauen dazu bewegen nach Europa zu ziehen. Diese Forschung präsentiert Diskriminierung sowohl auf staatlicher Ebene, als auch im alltäglichen Leben auf der Straße. Zudem werden die Vorstellungen dargestellt die transgender Frauen häufig angeben von Europa zu haben, was manche wiederum inspiriert auszuwandern, und diese Fantasien werden hier als romantisierende Produktionen des westlichen Kolonialeinflusses ermittelt. In Dänemark, den Niederlanden, Belgien und in Großbritannien, wo die Regierungen die Gleichberechtigung von transgender Menschen unterstützen, ist es Kathoeys erlaubt rechtmäßig zu heiraten, beruflichen Aufstieg zu erleben, auf Sozialhilfe zuzugreifen und Rechtsschutz für transgender Menschen zu erhalten. Im Vergleich zu Thailand erleben Kathoeys im Alltags-/Sozialleben in Europa allerdings gewaltorientiertere Diskriminierung und Vorurteile gegen transgender Frauen.

Diese Forschung untersucht das Phänomen der thailändischen transgender Frauen, die nach Europa auswandern, ihre Vorstellung vor der Migration und die Realität des Lebens in Europa. Dabei wird Diskriminierung in Thailand und Europa verglichen und die Alltagsdiskriminierung gegenüber Kathoeys die auf Europas Straßen trotz staatlichem Schutz stattfindet wird empirisch dargelegt. Die Kluft zwischen dem europäischen Rechtsschutz und den negativen Haltungen gegenüber Kathoeys, die auf der Straße weiterhin bestehen, ist bezeichnend für die Macht von universellen und essentialistischen Binär-Opposition: während Heteronormativität und Cisgender Körper so konstruiert werden, dass sie Normalität und Natürlichkeit beinhalten, so werden Kathoeys und ihre transgender Körper Devianz und Unnatürlichen

gleichgestellt. Der Kathoey-Diskurs der gesellschaftlichen Akzeptanz durch einen Hetero-Schönheits-Mythos wird ebenfalls theoretisiert, in dem Bestreben die 'Otherness' von Kathoey, ihre unterdrückte Identität und Minderwertigkeitsgefühl in der westlichen Welt zu verstehen, die wiederum durch Heteronormativität und ein postkoloniales Vermächtnis beeinflusst werden. Zudem untersucht diese Studie die Prostitutionsindustrie in Europa und die Narrative von Thai transgender Frauen zu ihrem europäischen Leben.

SUMMARY (in English)

This research provides rare information on street and state discrimination against Thai transgender women (Kathoeys) in Europe, and also explores the trend of Kathoey transnational migration, including Kathoey fantasies about Europe, their racialized sexual desire toward European men, their perception and reality of having Western spouses, and their post-colonial queer identity, which is the new dimension of Kathoey research. It compares the social and legal levels of discrimination toward Thai transgender women in Thailand and Europe, as well as theorizes the discourse of social acceptance through the hetero-aesthetic myth by social and media institutions which creates the reproduction loop of trans-phobia and social discrimination. Furthermore, this research also examines Kathoey narratives on European lives and the transgender sex work industry in Europe and Thailand.

Kathoey identity is perceived as a deviancy and as disordered behaviour in Thai mainstream society under the production of crypto/post-colonialism which has created the current Thai nationalism and most of western civilization. To explore Kathoey's lives, I use qualitative analysis along with critical ethnography by using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion, participant observation, and data triangulation. The main areas of data collection are Thailand and four European countries: the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Belgium. The main specific areas for data collection, both in Europe and in Thailand, are Thai restaurants and bars, Thai temples, transgender nightclubs and parties, transgender sex parties, and red light districts, as well as places my respondents negotiate their daily lives, such as their apartments, salons, local bars, and so on.

With the discussion of its empirical data, this thesis demonstrates the harm of essentialist identity politics and outlines that it should be deconstructed because essentialist identity-politics exacerbate discrimination. It also illustrates how these politics double or triple stigmatize minorities of minorities such as people with nonconforming gender, lesbian Kathoey, Kathoey sex workers, Kathoey immigrants in Europe, people who identify as 'queer', and more. I further show the connection between colonial influence and the construction of gender, and western influence on gender binary and sexuality in Thailand.

This research also thoroughly explores both social and legal issues toward Kathoey in Thailand. It illustrates this argument by presenting participants' own reports of their issues regarding Thai state discrimination, such as on personal documentation and legal status issues, structural employment issues, marriage and family rights, hate crimes, and structural issues in the Thai education system and academic institutions. Besides the legal and policy discrimination, my research also demonstrates diverse levels of social exclusion and trans-prejudices against Kathoey in Thailand on a daily basis in areas such as employment discrimination, bullying and mockery, and limits on freedom of movement. It also outlines Thai media reproduction of the transgenderism stigma and its negative effect on Kathoey, as well as explaining how Kathoey's performativity is influenced by Thai media. Furthermore, I demonstrate and analyze my research findings regarding the large

phenomenon of Kathoey migration to Europe, including factors that motivate Kathoeyes to move to Europe, as well as revealing narratives of illegal migration to Europe.

This thesis argues that essentialism hinders equality and strengthens discrimination by building boxes, such as hetero-normativity, or hierarchies which are based on skin color, that alienate ‘others,’ and marginalize people who do not fit into these boxes. Kathoey respondents in both Europe and Thailand generally feel that there is no legal discrimination against Kathoeyes in the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, and believe that, with the support of European institutions that ensure liberal gender equality, they can fulfill their dreams of a better and more equal life. Conversely, the empirical data showed that Kathoeyes’ pre-migration confidence in non-discrimination, their romanticization of Europe, and their contentment with progressive European transgender legal protection is not warranted. All of my Kathoey respondents who live in Europe have reported various stories about the forms of European street discrimination they have experienced. From data analysis, Europe-based Kathoeyes face five main categories of street or social discrimination: verbal abuse, physical abuse and violence on the street, school bullying, discrimination during job applications, and racism and social exclusion. This further illustrates my argument about double-stigma and how Kathoey’s sexuality legitimizes racism and social exclusion in Europe.

The thesis also discusses Kathoey sex work in Europe. It offers rich information on their lifestyles and opinions, the victimization myth regarding Kathoey sex work, Kathoey agency and autonomy in sex work, the processes by which they enter transnational sex work industry (from Thailand to Europe), visions from and about men who buy sex from Kathoey sex workers including their sexuality, the dynamics of Thai transgender prostitute smuggling agencies, transgender social networks, life behind the red light districts’ windows, and the effects of social consumerism, post-colonial effects on Kathoey sex work and Western customerism through sex tourism. Most of my respondents support the legalization of prostitution. They are satisfied with their vocations in Europe and claim the benefits of their work include both receiving sexual pleasure from clients and enabling them to live their lives as ‘beautiful females’. Their male clients abundantly express desire for them, which increases their self-esteem. In short, sex work supports participants in a wide range of ways, including their ability to solidify their sense of Kathoey identity. And, contrary to mainstream understanding, most sex worker respondents participate in sex work not for only economic reasons, but also for sexual fulfillment, particularly with European and other Caucasian male clients. This is especially true of those who work legally in red light districts in Amsterdam and Belgium, who explain their ‘active’ role in sex work. Sex worker participants mostly actively choose customers who they believe can satisfy their own sexual desires, based on those customers’ appearances. As such, sex work brings them not only satisfying money, but also increases their self-esteem, self-worth and identity formation.

The ‘Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks’ section analyses the empirical data about Kathoey identity and discrimination within the frame of selected theories. In this last chapter, Fanon’s concepts of Black Skin and White Mask are engaged to analyze

Europe-based Kathoeyes' dehumanization and oppression. The term 'Queer Bodies' describes the fluidity of Kathoey identities, and 'Unconvincing Beautiful Masks' reflects the influences of essentialist identity within Euro-centric societies. Based on the stigma and trans-phobic reactions they experience on the street in Europe, I conclude that the Kathoey feminine aesthetic discourse cannot convince European societies that they are 'normal'. I further discuss my theory on Kathoeyes' 'Discourse of acceptance through beauty myth' which constructs discrimination loop.

Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

Dit onderzoek toont nieuwe inzichten over discriminatie op straat en door de staat ten opzichte van Thaise transgender vrouwen (Kathoeys) in Europa, en diens transnationale migratie. Hierbij wordt gekeken naar hun fantasieën en ideeën over Europa, geradicaliseerde seksuele wensen ten opzichte van Europese mannen, de perceptie en de realiteit van het hebben van Westerse echtgenoten, en de postkoloniale *queer* identiteit. Dit laatste betreft een nieuwe invalshoek in het onderzoek naar Kathoeys. Er wordt een vergelijking gemaakt van de sociale en juridische niveaus van discriminatie ten opzichte van Thaise transgender vrouwen in Thailand en in Europa. Daarnaast worden theorieën gepresenteerd voor het verklaren van het discours van acceptatie door de schoonheidsmythe waardoor discriminatie kan ontstaan. Tevens worden in dit onderzoek de ideeën en verhalen van Kathoeys over het leven in Europa en over transgender sekswerk in Europa en Thailand uiteengezet.

In de reguliere Thaise samenleving wordt de identiteit van Kathoeys als afwijkend gezien door de productie van crypto/postkolonialisme wat mede het hedendaagse Thais nationalisme en westerse civilisatie heeft gecreëerd. Om de levens van de Kathoeys te onderzoeken is in dit onderzoek een kwalitatieve analyse en een kritische etnografie uitgevoerd. Hierbij is gebruik gemaakt van semigestructureerde interviews, focusgroep discussies, participerende observatie en datatriangulatie. De belangrijkste regio's voor het verkrijgen van data zijn Thailand en vier Europese landen: het Verenigd Koninkrijk, Nederland, Denemarken en België. De belangrijkste locaties van onderzoek in zowel Thailand als Europa betreffen Thaise restaurants, cafés, transgender nachtclubs, transgender seksfeesten, prostitutiezones en overige locaties verkregen via respondenten, zoals thuislocaties, salons, lokale cafés, etc.

Op basis van de empirische data toont dit onderzoek de schade die essentialistische identiteitspolitiek kan aanrichten en laat zien dat deconstructie noodzakelijk is omdat essentialistische identiteitspolitiek discriminatie verergert. Het illustreert ook hoe dit minderheden dubbel of drievoudig stigmatiseert, zoals mensen met niet-conforme sekse, lesbische Kathoeys, Kathoey-sekswerkers, Kathoey-immigranten in Europa, of mensen die zich als 'queer' identificeren. Vervolgens wordt een verband gelegd tussen de koloniale invloed en de constructie van gender, en de westerse invloed op een gender-binaire visie en seksualiteit in Thailand.

In dit onderzoek worden zowel sociale als juridische kwesties met betrekking tot Kathoeys in Thailand grondig onderzocht. Dit wordt geïllustreerd aan de hand van ervaringen van respondenten met betrekking tot discriminatie door de Thaise staat, zoals persoonlijke documentatie en juridische statuskwesties, werkgelegenheidskwesties, huwelijks- en familierechten, haatmisdrijven en structurele problemen in het Thaise onderwijssysteem en academisch onderwijsinstellingen. Naast de wettelijke en beleidsdiscriminatie rapporteren respondenten dagelijks verschillende vormen van sociale uitsluiting en vooroordelen over transgenders in Thailand, zoals discriminatie op het werk, pesterijen, spot en beperkingen van bewegingsvrijheid. Dit onderzoek toont ook het stigma van het

transgenderisme in de Thaise media en het negatieve effect ervan op Kathoey's, en laat zien hoe de *performativity* van Kathoey's wordt beïnvloed door de Thaise media. Tevens worden onderzoeksresultaten met betrekking tot het fenomeen van Kathoey-migratie naar Europa, inclusief motiverende factoren, gedemonstreerd en geanalyseerd.

Dit proefschrift betoogt dat essentialisme gelijkheid belemmert en discriminatie versterkt door toedoen van hetero-normatieve kaders, of hiërarchische ideeën gebaseerd op huidskleur, die anderen 'vervreemden', en mensen marginaliseren die niet binnen deze kaders passen. De respondenten in zowel Europa als Thailand vinden in het algemeen dat Kathoey's in Nederland, België, Denemarken en het Verenigd Koninkrijk niet wettelijk worden gediscrimineerd en menen dat ze, met de steun van Europese instellingen die voor liberale gendergelijkheid zorgen, hun dromen kunnen waarmaken van een beter en meer gelijkwaardig leven. Omgekeerd tonen de empirische gegevens dat Kathoey's voordat zij naar Europa migreren, veelal hadden verwacht dat zij in Europa niet te maken zouden krijgen met discriminatie, de situatie in Europa romantiseerden, en ideeën hadden over progressieve wettelijke bescherming voor transgenders in Europa. In werkelijkheid bleken echter alle Kathoey-respondenten die in Europa wonen ervaringen te hebben met discriminatie op straat. Op basis van de data zijn vijf hoofdcategorieën van straat- of sociale discriminatie gevonden waar Kathoey's in Europa mee worden geconfronteerd: verbaal geweld, fysiek geweld en geweld op straat, pesten op school, discriminatie tijdens sollicitaties, en racisme en sociale uitsluiting. Dit illustreert tevens het besproken dubbele stigma en toont aan hoe seksualiteit van Kathoey's racisme en sociale uitsluiting in Europa legitimeert.

Dit proefschrift gaat ook nader in op het sekswerk van Kathoey in Europa. Het biedt rijke informatie over hun levensstijlen en opvattingen, de slachtoffermythe betreffende Kathoey-sekswerk, agency en autonomie in het sekswerk, de processen waarmee ze de transnationale sekswerkindustrie binnengaan (van Thailand tot Europa), en visies van en over mannelijke klanten van Kathoey sekswerkers. Dit betreft onder andere hun seksualiteit, de dynamiek van Thaise transgender prostitutiesmokkelbureaus, transgender sociale netwerken, het leven achter de ramen in de prostitutiezones, en de effecten van sociaal consumentisme, postkoloniale effecten op Kathoey sekswerk en westerse klanten door middel van sekstoerisme. Het merendeel van de respondenten ondersteunt de legalisering van prostitutie. Ze zijn tevreden met hun mogelijkheden in Europa en claimen dat de voordelen van hun werk zijn dat ze zowel seksueel genot van klanten ontvangen en zij tevens in staat worden gesteld hun leven te leiden als 'mooie vrouwen'. Mannelijke klanten tonen veelvuldig hun verlangens ten opzichte van de Kathoey's, waardoor het zelfrespect toeneemt. Sekswerk ondersteunt respondenten zodoende op verschillende manieren, waaronder het versterken van de Kathoey-identiteit. In tegenstelling tot de gangbare perceptie blijkt dat respondenten niet alleen om economische redenen, maar vaak ook voor seksuele bevrediging deelnemen aan sekswerk, met name in het geval van Europese en andere blanke mannelijke klanten. Dit geldt vooral voor degenen die legaal werken in prostitutiezones in Amsterdam en België, en een 'actieve' rol in sekswerk hebben. De sekswerkers kiezen meestal actief klanten die hun eigen seksuele verlangens kunnen bevredigen, gebaseerd op de uiterlijke kenmerken van de

klanten. Als zodanig levert sekswerk niet alleen geld op, maar wordt daarnaast ook het zelfbeeld, de eigenwaarde en identiteitsvorming van de Kathoeys versterkt.

De 'Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks' sectie analyseert de empirische gegevens over de Kathoey identiteit en discriminatie aan de hand van geselecteerde theorieën. In dit laatste hoofdstuk worden Fanon's concepten van Black Skin en White Mask toegepast om de ontmenselijking en onderdrukking van Kathoeys in Europa te analyseren. De term 'Queer Bodies' is gebruikt om de fluïde Kathoey-identiteit te beschrijven, en 'Unconvincing Beautiful Masks' weerspiegelt de invloeden van de essentialistische identiteit binnen Eurocentrische samenlevingen. Op basis van stigma en de trans-fobische reacties die ze op straat in Europa ervaren, wordt geconcludeerd dat de vrouwelijke esthetiek van Kathoeys de Europese samenlevingen niet kan overtuigen dat ze 'normaal' zijn. Tenslotte wordt de theorie over het discours van acceptatie van Kathoeys door de schoonheidsmythe besproken, waarin het ontstaan van discriminatie wordt geanalyseerd.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes to my thesis supervisors, Prof. Fritz Sack and Prof. Dina Siegel for the plentiful support, wisdom and motivation they kindly offered throughout the thesis process.

Besides my supervisors, I would like to thank David Stuligross, Phil Marinier, and Narut Supawantanakul for sharing both knowledge and moral support, which helped me to complete this thesis. Furthermore, this research could only have been accomplished with the trust, kind corporation and generosity given by all my beautiful participants, as well as my key informants – Fang, Jetsada and Doy – to whom I am indebted for their immense assistance to this project. I would also like to thank Gaudy and Jonas Bergholm for all the love and courage they have given to me, without them I would not have completed this thesis.

Lastly, I am deeply thankful to my family, friends and colleagues for their encouragement and positive energy, especially my beloved parents, to whom I dedicate this thesis.

ขอบคุณพี่อาร์ท พี่แอร์รี่ พ่อ แม่สำหรับความรักและกำลังใจที่มีให้กันเสมอ ไม่ว่าจะป็นช่วงเวลาทุกข์หรือสุข

ที่ขาดไม่ได้ ขอขอบคุณกะเทย คนข้ามเพศ และผู้ที่ไม่อยู่ในกล่องเพศทุกคน ที่มีส่วนร่วมกับวิจัยฉบับนี้

To Amorn and Arsira Pravattiyagul

เพื่อ พ่ออมร แม่อาศิระ ประวิติยากร ผู้เป็นที่รัก

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER ONE Introduction | 18 |
| 1.1. What is a Kathoey? | 20 |
| 1.2. Kathoey in Thailand | 24 |
| 1.3. Trans-prejudice in Thailand | 30 |
| 1.4. Research Objectives and Questions..... | 33 |
| 1.5. Research Outline | 35 |
| CHAPTER TWO Methodology..... | 37 |
| 2.1. Epistemological Basis | 37 |
| 2.2. Research Design | 41 |
| 2.3. Selection of Focus Group | 45 |
| 2.4. Critical Reflection of Doing Research on Kathoey | 46 |
| 2.5. Participant Recruitment and Access to the Field..... | 51 |
| 2.6. Data Collection and Research Methods..... | 54 |
| 2.7. Ethical Consideration | 58 |
| 2.8. Narratives from Fieldwork | 59 |
| CHAPTER THREE Theoretical Frameworks..... | 67 |
| 3.1. A Deconstruction of Essentialist Identity Politics | 69 |
| 3.2 Essentialism and the Inferiors..... | 84 |
| 3.3. Identity Politics for Non-discriminatory Society | 91 |
| CHAPTER FOUR Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Thailand..... | 95 |
| 4.1. Hetero-normativity in Thailand | 96 |
| 4.1.1. 21st Century Developments’ | 104 |
| 4.2. Kathoey State Discrimination in Thailand..... | 106 |
| 4.2.1. Personal Documentations and legal Status Issue | 107 |
| 4.2.2. Structural Employment Issues | 108 |
| 4.2.3. Marriage and Family Issues | 112 |
| 4.2.4 Hate-motived but not Hate Crime | 114 |
| 4.2.5. Structural Issues in the Thai Education System and Academic Institutions | 116 |
| 4.3. Kathoey Street Discrimination in Thailand | 125 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 4.3.1. Employment Discrimination | 126 |
| 4.3.2. Bullying and Mockery..... | 130 |
| 4.3.3. Limits on Freedom of Movement: ‘Kathoeys not Welcome Here’ ... | 135 |
| 4.3.4. Thai Media and Kathoeys Image | 137 |
| CHAPTER FIVE Kathoeys Migration to Europe..... | 143 |
| 5.1. Cross-cultural Relationships and Migration..... | 144 |
| 5.2. Kathoeys Motivations to Migrate to Europe..... | 148 |
| 5.3. Illegal Immigration: Marriage Fraud, Identity Fraud and Fake Passports..... | 161 |
| 5.4. Cross-cultural Relationships with European Men: Gender, Sexuality, and Migration | 162 |
| 5.5. Expectations before and after Migration..... | 166 |
| CHAPTER SIX Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoeys in Europe | 169 |
| 6.1 Transgender State Protection in the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and the United Kingdom | 170 |
| 6.2 Kathoeys Street Discrimination in Europe..... | 173 |
| 6.2.1 Verbal Abuse | 175 |
| 6.2.2 Physical Abuse and Violence on Street..... | 179 |
| 6.2.3 Bullying at School..... | 182 |
| 6.2.4 Discriminatory Hiring Practices..... | 185 |
| 6.2.5 Racism and Social Exclusion..... | 187 |
| CHAPTER SEVEN Kathoeys Sex Work in Europe | 191 |
| 7.1. Behind Prostitution and Sex: Knowledge and Power? | 194 |
| 7.2. Transgender Prostitution | 203 |
| 7.3. Men Who Buy Sex from Transgender Sex Workers..... | 205 |
| 7.4. Thai Transgender Prostitution in Europe..... | 212 |
| 7.5. Prostitution as a Reflection of Social Consumerism | 219 |
| 7.6. Prostitution: Sexual Desire and Rationalism..... | 220 |
| 7.7. Jinda’s Story | 222 |
| 7.8. Nok’s Story | 227 |
| 7.9. The lives of Jenny/John | 230 |
| CHAPTER EIGHT Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks | 236 |
| 8.1. The Queer Bodies..... | 238 |
| 8.2. Unconvincing Beautiful Masks..... | 244 |
| 8.3. Discourse of Acceptance through the Beauty Myth..... | 250 |
| CHAPTER NINE Conclusion..... | 260 |
| 9.1. Final Discussion | 273 |

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| References | 277 |
| Appendix | 293 |

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As Thailand maintains its reputation and image as a transgender paradise, incidences of discrimination and harassment rarely attract Thai media attention and are very unlikely to make it to the front pages of Thai newspapers. On the contrary, it is common for Thai media to use the offensive sexual terminology in reference to transgender people, and they are mostly reported in the context of deviance and violent crime. Thailand does not have concrete hate crime laws regarding sexuality, and as hate-based violence often comes as a form of bullying and mockery, and it is heavily reproduced by the Thai media, advertisement, movies, TV series, TV shows and in every segment of the entertainment industry.

Thailand has a unique focus on transgender communities. These communities have a social presence and historical depth that differentiate them from queer cultural groups in other societies (Jackson, 2011). Gender identity variance – which is an individual's identification as belonging to a gender different from the one assigned at birth – performs as trans-historical aspect and cross-cultural human diversity; individuals with gender variant identity have been visible in several cultures across several historical periods (Winter, 2011). Frequently, such people were misguidedly categorized as 'hermaphrodites,' even if their physiologies were obviously male or female. In recent decades, such individuals have come to be known as people with gender variant, transgender, transsexual and, in colloquial contexts, 'trans-people' (Winter, 2011). The most common Thai word for English term of trans-people is *Kathoey* (Morris, 1994; Jackson, 2004). Nonetheless, the target participants of this research are Thai trans-women as known as Kathoey or 'ladyboys.' The category 'transgender women' includes male-to-female (MTF) transgender people who have a female gender identity, including transvestites, cross-dressers, androgynous and polygendered individuals. This study focuses on such people who migrated from Thailand to Europe, as well as those who are now in Thailand but want to migrate to live in Europe.

Compared with neighboring countries like Malaysia and Singapore, where homosexual actions are illegal, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) visibility in Thailand public spaces is often mistakenly perceived as reflecting Thai

social acceptance and openness towards sexual minorities. Kathoey have long been a subject of attraction and curiosity by both locals and westerners (Sinnott, 2004). International homosexual visitors often interpret the involvement of LGBTQ people in local communities as indicative of Thai tolerance and acceptance of Kathoey as well as homosexuality, and that all of these identities have an exceptionally respected place in Thai culture. It is true that Thai Theravada Buddhism, one of the world's largest Buddhist societies, encourages a non-judgmental mind with regard to sexual diversity. Also, it is commonly believed that heterosexual people can become transgender people in their next lives. Hence, Thai Buddhism does not impose religious sanctions on the basis of gender (Jackson, 1998). However, the notion of karma in Buddhism teaches that aspects of one's present life are karmic consequences of actions done in previous lives and being transgender is a consequence of transgressions in past lives (Totman, 2003). This also embraces transgender sexual identities, which are often interpreted as the result of sexual misdemeanors from past lives (Jackson, 1998). This belief is especially prominent among trans-women in Thailand themselves. Winter (2006a) points out that Thai trans-women who participated in his research focused on their own attitudes towards and origins of transgenderism as an idea. Some believe their own transgender identity is a karmic result, and that a karmic origin of their gender identity was evident from the troubles they have experienced as a direct result of people recognizing them as transgender individuals. Trans-women believing so play a role in the perpetuation of discrimination and other unfortunate and painful experiences that are a part of daily life for members of Thai transgender communities.

In many societies nowadays, transgender people are stigmatized and face prejudice in the form of negative attitudes and beliefs that strengthen the stigma and reinforce oppressive behavior and discrimination, collectively known as 'trans-phobia' (Winter, 2011). Chotiwan (2014) notes that the Thai media shapes the biased images of transgender by stereotyping and prejudicing such people as freaks, jokers, violent people, or people with mental sickness, which usually leads to hate or fear crimes and further stigmatization, and Mark King et al. (2009) suggest that the more proper term should be 'trans-prejudice'. Trans-women are more often seen as deviant than variant in the Thai normative social context (Costa and Matzner, 2007).

1.1. What is a Kathoey?

The term Kathoey can perhaps be translated as ‘trans-woman’ in English, yet I resist the temptation to apply understandings or appearances of trans-women in Western countries as I seek to comprehend, convey, and analyze what it means to be Kathoey. An endeavor to interpret the Kathoey identity from a Western viewpoint risks generating misunderstanding, because certain characteristics of this identity are beyond the experience of western trans-women and therefore might be inappropriately under-emphasized or disregarded completely. With an international reputation as a ‘gay paradise’ (Jackson, 2011), Thailand is recognized for being open to both local and foreign gays and to trans-people, all of whose identities are acknowledged as having been a part of Thai cultures for decades. Kathoey (กะเทย), a Thai sexual identity label, denotes people who cannot fit to either male or female classifications. Initially, it was understood as a synonym for hermaphroditism. Subsequently, a Kathoey came to be perceived as a person whose sexual ambiguity is acknowledged by Thai people as a ‘third sex’ (เพศที่สาม), which intervenes between male and female (Morris, 1994; Jackson, 2004). Kathoey signifies a distinct axis of sex that does not abolish the binary between male and female. In contemporary Thai society, Kathoey includes both transsexuality and transgenderism (Morris, 1994) and occasionally also male homosexuality (Jackson, 1999).

Nonetheless, in contemporary Thai culture, people who themselves identify with one of these groups use one (or more) of three terms to describe ‘woman in a man’s body’ or ‘man with a woman’s heart’: i) Kathoey (กะเทย), ii) ‘second-type women’ (สาวประเภทสอง) and iii) ‘transsexual women’ (ผู้หญิงข้ามเพศ). In general, Thai society conflates these three into a single one: Kathoey. As a result, some precision and accuracy is lost. These three self-defined terms clarify diverse behaviors and identities, and reflect the diverse social contexts and social conditions in which subsets of the Kathoey community find themselves. Drawing heavily on Duangwiset (2014b), I understand the first group to be ‘woman in a man’s body.’ Members of this group are comfortable with the Kathoey label, which describes people who are men with ‘defections’ or men who exhibit ‘non-masculine’ behavior. Kathoey is a twisted image, because it includes elements of both masculinity and femininity, without quite being either. Their male bodies are intact, including muscles, leg hair,

testicles, penises, Adam's apples, low voice, beards, rough skin and so on. Yet they have learned and choose to use the expression and attitude of women; a feminine and seductive way of walking, wearing make-up, styling their hair in feminine ways, wearing womens' clothes, and so on. The mixed-gender attribution of Kathoey is developed to be seen as humorous and deviant from the norm. In Thai traditional agriculture society, Thai women-in-men's-bodies work intensively in the rice field. Rural lifestyle and labor work maintains their masculine bodies. The nature of their job does not enable them to take care of skin or to sustain a feminine figure. Some have kids with women and accept a role as head of the family.

Recently, urban working-class Kathoey have chosen a similar living pattern. Some present themselves very publically and visibly as Kathoey boxers, Kathoey labor workers, and so on. Living and financial conditions limit the options available to agricultural and working class Kathoey, as they neither have the time nor the resources to create or maintain 'feminine beauty' as they understand this phrase. Kathoey do not dress as women on a daily basis, although many have long hair. Working class Kathoey cross-dress only on special occasions, such as temple fairs (งานวัด) or Mo-lum (งานหมอลำ), a Northeastern style singing concert (See Pornthep, 2013).

Social and economic conditions explain why working class Kathoey are often mocked as 'Kathoey-kwai' (Kwai in Thai means 'buffalo.' In the Thai context, this insult combines low-class status with desperate stupidity). Some of Thai working class transgender women do not care to label themselves as Kathoey since, regardless of gender, their efforts are concentrated on making a living. This life pattern is more important than constructing their femininity. Working class Kathoey see their own femininity as a 'hybrid' with masculinity, not something that denies their masculinity. However, Thai society in general labels all kinds of male-to-female transgender women as Kathoey, regardless of social class and status.

Members of the second group define themselves as 'second-type women' (สาวประเภทสอง). The ambiguous sexual and gender character concerns some Kathoey because it reproduces social abuse. Educated, middle-class Kathoey, and other Kathoey who are not employed as physical laborers, have tried to adapt their

physical form to match their understanding of the feminine ideal. Some take hormones, shave or laser off their body hair, or have a nose job, breast implants or other forms of plastic surgery. Knowledge of such techniques on how to create ‘beautiful’ bodies has been transferred from senior Kathoey for generations, and younger generations have sought out mentors who can help them to transform their male bodies into a more feminine appearance and, ideally, render their masculinity invisible (Duangwises, 2014b).

Thai transgender women without the desire to endure life in a masculine body – and with the resources to reshape their body into a more pleasing form – refuse to define themselves as members of the broader Kathoey community. Instead, they label themselves *sao-pra-phet-song* (สาวประเภทสอง) or in English translation: second-type women. This definition gives them the feeling that they are closer than other Kathoey to their feminine ideal. Even though they are not biological women, they have desire on women body construction. However, transforming one’s body requires great economic sacrifice. Clearly, Kathoey with advanced economic status are more likely to be successful in body transformation. Female hormones and plastic surgeries are expensive. Kathoey who can afford these kinds of body transformations feel that their femininity has been enhanced as a result. Kathoey who pursue the goal of being second-type women continuously construct their femininity and distance themselves from masculinity. In this sense, masculinity – which they perceive to be deviant and valueless – no longer coexists with femininity. Second-type women live as women, dress as women, do ‘women’s work,’ socialize with women, and also exclude themselves from those Kathoey who still look like men. Members of this community separate themselves from ‘mixed-gender’ Kathoey not only by physical appearance, but also by the social, class and economic differences that make appearance change possible. The combination enables them to create their own sub-culture in, for example, beauty businesses and fashion and beauty queen contests.

The third group is women in men’s body’ who describe themselves as ‘trans-women’ or *phu-ying-kham-phet* (ผู้หญิงข้ามเพศ). They have undergone a transsexual operation that has constructed a new, or to use the Western term, transsexual body. This third group’s ‘new bodies’ can lead Kathoey and ‘second-type women’ to feel that they are not different from biological women. Medical technology supports Thai

transsexual women's interest in learning how to form a physical and mental feminine identity. The limitations facing Kathoey and 'second-type women' are especially inhibiting to some Thai transgender women's desires to be themselves as they understand it. Phu-ying-kham-phet has replaced the first two categories and formed the basis of a psychological identity that enables these women to live in a way that more closely reflects their desire to live as women.

In 2006, a group of phu-ying-kham-phet assembled to demand legal recognition for transsexual women in Thailand. They insisted on the right to replace the 'Mr.' title on national identification cards with titles such as Ms. or Mrs. This campaign provoked public debates in Thailand, with the majority of Thais criticizing the campaign because there is a big population of transgender women in Thailand. Many Thais were worried that transgender women using female-oriented titles could cause social disruptions, such as 'man swindling,' marriage, adoption, inheritance issues, and so on. Even some Kathoey and 'second-type women' do not support this movement. However, phu-ying-kham-phet believe they are 'women' trapped in the 'wrong bodies' (male bodies). So, members of this group insist on their femininity by transforming their bodies in a way that accords with their 'inborn' feminine mentality, and insist that the government acknowledge their femininity officially, on their national ID cards and other official records. The leader of this political stance is Yollada Suanyos (Nok Yollada) who founded the Transsexual Association of Thailand in 2009. The phu-ying-kham-phet identity is based on the belief that women who are born with men's bodies have a sexual disorder called 'sex-reversal.' The appropriate treatment for this medical disorder is a surgical sex change operation, after which phu-ying-kham-phet can live as complete women. Kathoey groups who support this position believe that their desire to represent themselves as 'feminine' is not satisfied by cross-dressing. They understand 'femininity' as an inborn essentialism. In other words, self-defined phu-ying-kham-phet individuals perceive themselves as neither Kathoey nor 'second-type women.' Their sex change operation is not a construction of femininity, but a cure for a medical condition: sex-reversal disorder.

These sometimes incompatible beliefs mirror the plural meanings of Kathoey femininity, and diverse definitions are mirrored by diverse constructions of Kathoey identity. From a Western perspective, all of these self-defined terms describe

‘transgender women.’ Similarly, Thai mainstream society tends not to make fine distinctions and describes members of all three groups simply as ‘Kathoey’. To be sure, although the social and perceptual differences are very real, the social distance between all kinds of transgender women and mainstream Thai society is much greater than the social distance between the three transgender groups I have just discussed. Therefore, I emphasize that I refer to all participants in this research as Kathoey, as this is the term that Thai mainstream society uses.

1.2. Kathoey in Thailand

Before returning directly to Kathoey in Thailand, I will first elucidate on the global meaning of ‘hermaphroditism’ and ‘transgenderism’ as understood in the anthropological literature. Hermaphroditism, which describes individuals who carry both male and female genitalia, has existed throughout history and across cultures. Such individuals have appeared in mythology and sacred texts. The Hindu god Shiva’s Ardhanarishvara posture has both male and female features and, in Hinduism, Shiva is believed to bring fertility to mankind. Greek mythology has Hermaphroditus, who is both male and female. In ancient Japanese culture, the god Inari, who represents seedlings and fruitfulness, is sometimes represented as male and other times as female. The Sumerian goddess Inanna also has the body of both female and male. The idea of sex change also appears in several mythologies. In the Americas, the ancient Aztecs also had a god who could transform into a woman. These global mythologies reflect fluidity and compatibility of femininity and masculinity (Duangwises, 2014b).

Anthropologists see blendings of male/female gender as cultural productions (Ramet, 1996; Herdt, 1987). A sex that could play both male and female gender roles relates to the social order and cultural construction. Historically, anthropologists have learned that, transgender individuals usually gain respect because they are responsible for special duties, such as being shamans who connect with spirits, gods, and deceased family members, local doctors, fortunetellers, and leaders of spiritual ceremonies. Such roles have been filled by transgender individuals in the northern part of Thailand, Myanmar, India and many other places (Duangwises, 2012). Ethnic societies accord distinctive status to gender-mixed people with a range of titles. For example, in Dominican society, children with ambiguous sex organs are

called Guevedoche, which describes a person entering puberty. Eastern highlands of Papua New Guineans label children with transgender traits ‘Kwolu-aatmwol.’ Kenya’s Pokot tribe calls these children Sererr, meaning people without sex because of their ambiguous sexual organs. Many ethnic American tribes give special status to hermaphrodites because it is believed that they were selected from gods and contain two spirits (male/female). So god blessed them to conduct spiritual and religious rituals. The Navajo tribe named these people Nadle. Mixed-gender people of the Bugis tribe on Indonesian’s Java Island are called Bissu. Bissu are not classified as male or female, but rather have their own specific roles, including craftsmen, poets, performers, doctors, psychics, shamans and so on. Plus, these people wear both male and female clothes to signify their special social status. The Bimin-Kuskusmin tribe on Papua New Guinea Island records that humans emerged from Gowpnuuk, a lizard god. Gowpnuuk is a male/female mix-spirit (Duangwismes, 2014).

Thai society has traditionally valued and accepted Kathoey who are ‘as beautiful as women’ to a greater extent than Kathoey whose physical appearance is more ambiguous. Indeed, Kathoey from the latter group are often the objects of ridicule. During the reign of King Rama V (r. 1869–1910), after becoming exposed Western ideology about sex, Thai people began to regard transgender people and their mixed-gender identity as ‘deviants’ or ‘clowns,’ and also began to reconstruct and reorganize heterosexuality norms (see more information on Kathoey status before westernization period in *chapter four*). As a part of King Rama V’s efforts to reshape Thai understandings of gender to something more consistent with western heteronormative expectations, he imposed strict controls on female bodies – hairstyles, costumes, behaviors and expressions – in order to distinguish women from men. Fifty years later, western-derived heteronormativity also profoundly influenced Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram. The field marshal was (in)famous for his nation-building work during the 1946–48 Thai Cultural Restoration, which focused on ‘civilizing Thailand’ by following the Western standards. Civil hetero-gender reorganization was one of the tools applied by the Thai state to modernize the Thai nation. Phibunsongkhram’s pursuit of nationalism included authoritative policies and regulations intended to control femininity and masculinity, which were enveloped under the famous slogan: *Men are defenders of the nation. And women are flowers of the nation* (Pramoj Na Ayutthaya, 2003).



Figure 1.1: Thai poster from the Phibunsongkhram era, showing “uncivilized” clothing that was prohibited in public (left) and appropriate western-inspired clothing (right)

In Phibunsongkhram era, the government controlled citizens’ bodies through their moral code of the nation and national spirit uplift policies, such as encouraging Thai men to do sports to show their ‘manhood’ or to go to male beauty pageants and Thai women to join female beauty contests. Moreover, the state campaigned for everyone to wear ‘proper attire,’ which it claimed would help Thais to build a ‘national culture’ or ‘Thainess.’ This social organization included forming gender-specific pronouns and other sexualized words: Thai men should refer to themselves *pom* (ผม) and end their sentences with the masculine final particle *krub* (ครับ). Thai women were required to call themselves *chan* (ฉัน) and end their sentences with the feminine final particle *ka* (ค่ะ) (Chotiwan, 2014). Today, the modern Thai state firmly distinguishes between male and female, and acknowledges no civil place for transgender people; it does not recognize their bodies as either male or female, nor does it recognize any other gender option. Accordingly, Kathoey have become ‘deviants’ or ‘clowns’; their bodies are ‘disordered’ and their self-identity is a challenge to the national image of the ideal Thai citizen. The Royal Decree on Cultural Art and Performance, 1942, demanded that all Thai traditional dramatic

performers must be ‘real men’ and ‘real women.’ People with male genitalia were prohibited from performing female roles and people with female genitalia were no longer allowed to perform male roles. Kittimahacharoen (2013) indicates that after the Thai sexual and gender modernization/organization from the Phibunsongkhram period, Thai musical folk drama performance (*âin*) had to adjust from having only male performers (for all gender roles) to hiring female performers to play the female roles. As a result, transgender people lost their jobs and were often unemployed. Their exclusion from social spaces became more and more intense, and the situation continues to endure. Furthermore, Kathoey exclusion from the many cultural spaces that involve Thai culture and ‘Thainess’ is especially intense. Dredge (2012) hypothesizes that in the early 20th century, as civil liberties (another Western import) became more established, Kathoey identity expression became more visible in public space. In response, national anxieties began to appear. Criticism of homosexuality and transgenderism was raised in the Thai media and governmental units, because effeminate males were perceived as destroyers of national identity. For this reason, Kathoey have been prevented from participating in practices related to Thai tradition and culture. In other words, Thai society allows Kathoey to be part of some ‘contemporary Thai culture’ but never lets them be part of ‘traditional culture.’ For instance, Kathoey are prohibited from sitting on vehicles during the flower festival or *Yi Peng*, the northern Thai festival in Chiang Mai province. A gay pride parade in Chiang Mai was violently interrupted by residents of Northern Thailand because the opponents reflected how it ruins the graceful Thai culture, or when Thai Kathoey students formed a cover dance band called ‘Wonder Gay’ and their internet videos went viral, some of Thailand’s self-appointed morality police panicked about how these videos clips are inappropriate, shameful and present a ‘false image’ about Thailand to foreigners (Dredge, 2012). Another phenomenon that reflects how Thai society limits the social space for Kathoey, especially when it comes to the image of Thai culture and Thainess, is moral panic about feminine/gay Buddhist monks in Thailand. On social media and national public debates, Thai people heavily criticize them for damaging Buddhism and has campaigned for changes in the process by which Thai men are selected for ordination into monkhood.

While global society accepts the accuracy and usefulness of scientific knowledge, studies of homosexuality and trans-sexuality behavior in the 1950s and

1960s were dominated by work based on medicine and biology. Kathoey were divided into two categories; true hermaphrodites (people who have both ovaries and testicles) and false hermaphrodites (people with testicles and Y chromosomes, but no ovaries). The scientific explanation also applied western biological ‘facts’ to explicate how being Kathoey is ‘abnormal,’ or how it was a psychological issue. These ‘scholarly’ conclusions exacerbated transgender social stigma and transphobia (Duangwises, 2011).

Many countries in Southeast Asia have severe punishments for homosexuality and trans-sexuality. In Malaysia, for example, those found guilty of having a same-sex sexual activity can face twenty years in prison with or without fine and whippings as punishment and transgender people face arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. Similarly, the government of Singapore perceives gays and lesbians as people who disgrace the Singaporean norm and punishes male person found guilty of same-sex sexual activity crime with up to two years prison. Under Myanmar law, homosexuals shall be fined and also imprisoned for up to ten years (ILGA, 2016). And even in the Global North, where countries celebrate legal protection and social acceptance of transgenderism and sexual diversity, lots of transgender people are abused and the hate crime towards transgender people are high, as is the suicide rate among transgender people (FRA, 2014). In Thailand, where the local queer communities are among the largest in the world (Jackson, 2011), there is no legal punishment for Kathoey or homosexuals, and physical abuse, murder and violence against Kathoey are not as high as in some Western societies (see TvT Research Project, 2016; TGEU, 2012; ILGA, 2012; interview with Thai TGA, 2015). But Thai society nonetheless compromises the liberties of members of these communities by commonly describing Kathoey as clowns or comedians, which is another kind of violence (Chotiwan, 2014). The Thai media is complicit in this social construction. Kathoey often appear in Thai advertisements, TV shows, soap operas, movies and TV series. In advertisements, Kathoey are depicted as ridiculous, fun, man-crazy, psychotic, goofballs and generally creepy. Nonetheless, these seem to be effective marketing devices. Somehow, an emphasis on gender ambiguity and mental weakness sells products in Thailand (Chotiwan, 2014).

However, Thai media presents Kathoey not only as comedians, but also portrays a supportive image as beauty queens who are ‘as beautiful as women.’ The

nationally renowned Miss Tiffany's universe beauty contest for Kathoey is an obvious example. The beautiful and very feminine contestants in Kathoey pageants become the beauty standard to which the general population of Kathoey aspires. Beauty myth becomes ideology. Kathoey adorn or transform their bodies to boost their self-value. Even though their hyper-feminine bodies are not 'real,' for them their 'beauty' makes them superior to 'real women.' Nowadays, many teenage Kathoey modify their faces and bodies through cosmetic surgery industry in the hope that, by so doing, they will be more secure in their own (often intersectional) identity to express themselves as they are (Duangwises, 2014b). In 2008, the media reported on a growing number of young Kathoey who cut their own testicles in order to discontinue the production of male hormones production. As reported, this self-surgery also eliminated their sexual feelings (Chotiwan, 2014). And yet, Kathoey self-reconstruction that enhances their beauty and similarity to real women does pertain to their sexuality. The feminine Kathoey beauty offers a sense of superiority and improved self-esteem, in comparison with Kathoey who have not embraced the hyper-feminine model. Their feminine beauty attracts men and allows them to take a dominant position in their relationships; it gives them self-value and pride. Though, it brings incongruity in how they define the identity of transgender women. As described in the previous section, the three self-defined terms – Kathoey, 'second-type women' and 'trans-women' – concern the level of femininity. The various definitions and sub-categories of Thai transgender women's identity are not often used in mainstream society and the boundaries of each sub-category are not fixed. But their existence demonstrates how Kathoey identities are non-homogeneous and they should not be stereotyped. Even within Kathoey groups, individuals whose beauty is more feminine are generally more highly valued, and beyond transgender communities, Kathoey who look 'beautiful like real women' are more socially admired and accepted than Kathoey with mixed male-female features. But the route to achieving 'real women beauty' demands both money and fortitude. Thus, economics and consumer dynamics enter any meaningful analysis of Kathoey identity (Chotiwan, 2014).

1.3. Trans-prejudice in Thailand

Discrimination is exacerbated by trans-prejudice, which delegitimizes the principle that trans-women have the right to an equal quality of life, compared with other people in their societies. Discrimination behavior also excludes trans-women from social and economic opportunities, leading them to the margins of the society. In other words, Kathoey are socially excluded, which Beall and Piron (2005, p.9) define as ‘a process and a state that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and from asserting their rights. It derives from exclusionary relationships based on power.’ This definition supports Estivill’s (2003, p.131) suggestion that ‘social exclusion is an accumulation of confluent processes with successive ruptures arising from the heart of economy, politics and society; gradually distances and places persons, groups, communities and territories in positions of inferiority in relation to center powers, resources and prevailing values.’

Transgender people around the world live in trans-prejudiced societies and encounter domestic violence, discrimination in education, in public spaces, in the workplace, in searches for housing, in places for religious rituals and in the provision of health services. All of this excludes them from the societies they wish to be a part of, and leads to their social and economic marginalization. In Thailand, transgender community has become enormous; Winter’s (2002) research indicates that as many as one in every thousand Thais who are assigned male gender at birth later become trans-women. And Thai society is well known for being more accepting and tolerant of trans-women; evidence presented by Winter (2002) and Jackson (2002) suggests that ethnic cultural traditions provide gender-diverse Thais a meaningful social space.

On the other hand, scholars, service providers and social activists have documented ‘limitations’ of Thai acceptance of trans-people. In Cameron’s (2006: 6) words,

Those who break or defy social mores in Thailand are not directly challenged but rather they are ignored and rejected from society. Social alienation in Thailand is often a very subtle, but an extremely painful and debilitating, force for those who experience it. The visibility in society of transgender

people does not mean acceptance. Along with many men who are open about having sex with men, they are highly stigmatized and socially sanctioned members of Thai society.

Even though Thai society seems to be more tolerant and acceptant of transgenderism compared to other societies worldwide, trans-women in Thailand still experience trans-prejudice on both state (legal) and street (social) levels. Evidence of prejudice against trans-women in Thailand is reported, for instance, in the Winter et al. (2009) research on people's attitudes and beliefs towards trans-people in Thailand. Their survey found that half of Thai respondents who are young, highly educated, and urbanized find trans-people 'somewhat unnatural' and almost half say it would be 'unacceptable' for their sons to become transgender. Around a third of the participants indicated that they would 'not accept' a situation where their sons have trans-women as girlfriends. More than a quarter believe the government should not allow trans-women to marry men. One in six indicate that they could not accept being taught by a trans-woman lecturer, and one in eight inform that trans-people should not be permitted to work with children, as they would be bad role models (Winter et al., 2009). Earlier research similarly indicated that a number of trans-women from Thailand view themselves as socially excluded and treated negatively by the society. Trans-women find sexual discretion much more difficult to be approved than gays and lesbians in Thai society as gender diversity is focused on how the individual is and presents one's self. Trans-women risk being excluded by presenting themselves as they are: adopting an appearance and behavior that contrast with what is expected by people of the sex they were assigned at birth. The Thai social condition pushes them towards social and economic margins (Winter, 2011).

A number of governments and administrative departments have failed to protect trans-people from discrimination and in some cases, governments and their agents are active offenders. Government oppression includes legal punishments that are sometimes levied on transgender people for crimes such as cross-dressing in Malaysia (Jackson, 2011), but oppression extends beyond this in ways that reinforce the social proclivity to discriminate against Kathoey. By contrast with other Asian countries, Thai trans-women carry male national health cards, male passports and male identity cards (Costa and Matzner, 2007). This directly opens the door to discrimination on. As Winter (2011, p.257) asserts, the Thai identity card

facilitates activities at the interface with business (e.g. opening bank account), bureaucracy (e.g. registering for an educational course or medical care), and law enforcement (e.g. when asked for identification by a police officer). Whenever Khon-kham-phet (trans-people) need to show their identity cards, their status as trans-people is communicated: They are ‘outed.’

Furthermore, at the age of twenty, all Thais whose national identification card recognizes them as men are likely to be called for military service if they have not undergone officer training at secondary school. When called up, they are subjected to a physical examination in full public view (Jenkins et al., 2005). However, trans-women who have surgically enhanced breasts or have undergone sex changes are discharged from military duties. Until recently, Thai trans-women’s military documents were issued specifying that the individual suffered from ‘a disease causing permanent psychological damage.’ It is normal for employers to request that job applicants present their discharge documents, so a permanent record that presents trans-women ‘permanently psychologically damaged’ undermines efforts at gaining employment. As a result of recent efforts by Thai LGBT groups, discharge documents no longer carry the humiliating phrase (Winter, 2011). Nonetheless, as a result of discrimination, a career corresponding with their abilities and education is often difficult to pursue. Sometimes, discrimination is both blatant and official. For example, the Thai Department of Education has attempted to ban trans-women from training as teachers (Jackson, 2002). Winter (2006b) notes from his research that, economic sectors with the highest Kathoey participation rates were cabaret for tourists, beauty salons, and work in the sex industry or in bars.

Beyond privacy problems from trans-prejudice and discrimination, further issues arise with trans-women’s birth certificates, which specify an individual’s legal status as male or female. In many countries, trans-people who have undergone sex-reassignment surgery are able to change their legal status. This is important for their fundamental human rights, as it enables heterosexual marriage as well as affording the right to adopt. Unfortunately, Thailand denies all these rights to trans-women, who are required to carry a document that identifies them as male and to present themselves as legally male. Today, in 2017, the Thai government still supports laws that support trans-prejudice and that stigmatize and oppress trans-people; the

situation upsurges hate and fear crime and diminishes basic human rights in Thailand.

During Thailand's economic growth from the 1980s and early 1990s, favorable economic conditions inadvertently supported Thailand's development of entertainment services for gay men and affirmed the country's global reputation as a queer paradise (Matzner, 2002). Western cultural influence and marketing capitalism's globalization created opportunities for people from collective communities and the countryside to discover their sexuality in urban areas, furthermore initiating global queering which Altman (1996) described as the internationalization of modern homosexual identities in Asia and other non-Western countries, resulting in the rapid increase of queer business, space and organization. Kathoey now have more contact with European tourists, who not only acknowledge but support their lifestyle, which further develops romantic Kathoey visions of what life must be like in Europe.

1.4. Research Objectives and Questions

Transgender women around the world now experience trans-prejudice and discrimination on systemic, institutional and interpersonal levels. For Thai Kathoey, trans-prejudice ranges from Thai state discrimination, including legal rights and governmental policies, to street discrimination that affects their daily lives, safety, mental health and employment prospects. This socio-political reality has led many Kathoey to imagine alternatives, and surely plays into their romanticization of opportunities for transgender people in Europe and, following from that, their decision to migrate to Europe. They have used a variety of strategies to get to Europe, including finding European partners, accepting low-skill labor work, and performing transgender sex work. In order to investigate the phenomenon, the main research questions to be addressed in this dissertation include 1) What constitutes the discrimination Kathoey's experience in Thailand versus in Europe? 2) What motivates Kathoey's to migrate to Europe? And, 3) Are there any discrepancies between expectations of life in Europe?

This research is conducted on an exploratory level as there are very few earlier studies to refer to. I respond to Geertz's (1973) still-relevant call for 'thick

description' as a prerequisite for analysis, and then seek to interpret the rich data I have gathered in order to understand more profoundly the meaning structure of Kathoey culture and life. The study aims to explore transnational migration trends as related to Kathoey, including their racialized sexual desire for European men, their perception and reality of having Western spouses, their life experiences difference in Thailand as compared with in Europe, and the world view that shapes their understanding of their experiences. In brief, many Kathoey migrants in Europe present an epistemological perspective that reflects an understanding of politics that is largely based on essentialist and post-colonial constructions of queer identity politics. I compare the social and legal levels of discrimination against Thai transgender women in Thailand and Europe as well as theorize on the discourse of social acceptance through the hetero-aesthetic myth, as communicated by social and media institutions, which creates a reproduction loop centered on trans-phobia and social discrimination. Starting with narratives gathered directly from members of this group, my research also presents and analyzes rich and new ethnographic details on the life experiences of Kathoey's European lives and Kathoey sex work industry in Europe.

This work is the product of three years of qualitative research on Thai male-to-female transgender in Thailand, the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium. Sixty of my respondents were Kathoeyes, including 21 Kathoey sex workers and five of their male clients, who have allowed me to learn about their lives. My research took me into their social and work environments, including red light districts, transgender sex parties, Thai bars and restaurants, night clubs, brothels and the internet. This research fills several voids in transgender studies, migration studies, prostitution research in general, and transgender prostitution research in particular. It does so through the very specific lens of the Thai Kathoey experience, as understood by Kathoey themselves as well as by those who interact with them. The data collected form the foundation of analyses regarding Thai transgender sex work in Europe, customers of transgender sex workers, and the Kathoey discourse regarding using 'beauty' and 'hyper-femininity' in pursuit of social acceptance.

1.5. Research Outline

In spite of the large number of Thai male-to-female transgender women who have migrated to Europe, there are very few studies concerning this phenomenon. Previous work on Thai transgender women were mostly focused on the origins of transgenderism, human rights, inequality of state policy towards LGBTQ, violence, victimization, sexually transmitted diseases and social disdain. Therefore, the focus on a comparison of Kathoey's migration and discrimination experience in Thailand and Europe is in a new dimension which has not been thoroughly researched before. This interdisciplinary study explores state (governmental) and street (social) discrimination towards Kathoey's living in Thailand and Europe. Further, it demonstrates how hetero-normativity and gender binaries are reproduced under social and media institutions by Thai transgender women population and how these construct a periphery of transgender social stigma and discrimination reproduction; along with how the discourse of social acceptance too supports Thai transgender women to participate in transnational sex work industry in Europe and their transnational migration from Thailand to Europe. My study yields an anthropological understanding of these causes and thus refutes the notion, common in studies of prostitution, that the entire story is one of vile human degradation and violence against sex workers.

This thesis consists of nine chapters; it begins with chapter 1) *Introduction* which presents background knowledge about Kathoey's identity and situation, as well as research scope. 2) *Methodology* outlines deeper details about research methods, participants and processes. 3) *Theoretical Framework* discusses theories from post-colonialism, post-modernism, post-structuralism and gender studies to unfold the phenomena of discrimination against Kathoey's in Europe and its effects. 4) *Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Thailand* assesses injustice of Thai state on gender policies and social trans-prejudices which force large populations of Thai transgender women to migrate to Europe - where they romanticize as the world of equality and opportunity. Later, chapter 5) *Kathoey Migration to Europe* explores the phenomenon of Thai transgender women transnational migration, their racialized sexual desire toward European men, and their perception and reality of having Western spouses. The chapter demonstrates and analyzes my research findings regarding the large phenomenon of Kathoey

migration to Europe, including factors that motivate Kathoeyes to move to Europe, their expectations before migration and their reality after migration to Europe. Chapter 6) *Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Europe* shows that Kathoey's expectations before and after migration contrast markedly. Because in Europe - where legal gender policies, support their transgender rights and equality, some of them unexpectedly experience more social discrimination in such areas as job applications, physical abuse on the street, verbal abuse, bullying at school, and racism than in Thailand. Furthermore, I show that those who exhibit behaviors of racism, sexism and many kinds of social and legal discrimination against Kathoeyes justify these behaviors on the basis of their perception of Kathoey sexuality. Chapter 7) *Thai Transgender Sex Work in Europe* investigates Kathoey sex workers' narratives on European lives and transgender prostitution industry in Europe. Kathoey sex workers revealed their life stories, experiences, and information on transnational sex work industry. This knowledge can fill several information gaps in prostitution research, and can also challenge many myths regarding transgender prostitution. Chapter 8) *Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks* analyses empirical data within the theoretical framework. It also theorizes discourse of social acceptance through the hetero-aesthetic myth by social and media institution which creates the reproduction loop of homophobia and social discrimination. The thesis ends with chapter 9) *Conclusion* which sums up the social and legal levels of discrimination toward Kathoey in Thailand and Europe, as well as discusses the causes and consequences of it.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Geopolitical reality in Thailand pushes Thai Kathoey, that is, Thai male-to-female transgender women, to migrate to Europe. My main research questions are: 1) *What constitutes the discrimination Kathoey experience in Thailand versus in Europe?* 2) *What motivates Kathoey to migrate to Europe?* And, 3) *Are there any discrepancies between expectations of life in Europe?* In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology used to address these questions, including *Epistemological Basis, Research Design, Selection of Focus Group, Critical Reflection of Doing Research on Kathoey, Participant Recruitment and Access to the Field, Data Collection and Research Methods, Ethical Consideration and Narratives from Fieldwork*. All of these are illustrated with case studies from my own fieldwork in Thailand, UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark.

Most Kathoey recognize themselves as feminine or, at least, as something other than men. Some identified themselves as women or a subset of women, and describe themselves as *Kathoey*. Thai trans-women mostly play a female role in their relationships (Winter, 2006b). My research explores the environment in which Kathoey live, notably but not exclusively their experiences with gender discrimination and some of their careers as sex workers. A critical theory paradigm, the anchor of the study, was optimized by use of ethnography, participant observation, focus group discussion and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

2.1. Epistemological Basis

Guided by an ontology that emerges from the historical, critical theory sees life as a ‘virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values crystallized over time’ (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p.168). The term critical denotes ‘the detecting and unmasking of beliefs and practices that limit human freedom, justice and democracy’ (Usher, 1996, p.22). Critical theory is self-consciously and unabashedly normative. Conclusions that follow from research that uses this paradigm are typically unsympathetic toward the structural and historical circumstances of oppression their research has revealed, and search for conversion of those circumstances (Glesne, 2011). Critical theorists attempt to disclose and

criticize duplicitous ideologies and the connected mechanisms, compositions and processes that give them power (Prasad 2005).

To study Kathoeyes' transnational experiences with discrimination and their negotiation of gender identity and social position, the epistemological basis for the methods used in this research is 'standpoint theory'. Standpoint epistemologies privilege the values, experiences, interests and cultural ideologies of customarily socially excluded or oppressed groups, such as people of color, homosexuals, gays, lesbians, women, formerly colonized populations (Glesne, 2011) and transgender people. Standpoint researchers criticize and revise dominant groups' accounts, revealing how the standard narrative had been Eurocentric, sexist, masculinist, racist, hetero-normativist and so on (Schwandt, 2007). As it allies with critical theory research, I have adopted 'feminist standpoint theory' as the epistemological basis for this research. Feminist standpoint theorists believe that, due to the manifold identities individuals have, the oppression and exploitation experienced by women are variable (Maguire, 1996). Critical feminist researchers concentrate on inequality, justice and power. They aim to uncover and comprehend forces that render oppression a rooted and enduring characteristic of society (Maguire, 1996). Primarily, they focus on the conversion of asymmetrical power relations as related to women. Thus, it does not mean that the concentration is utterly on gender, because 'gender oppression is not experienced or structured in isolation from other oppressions' (Maguire, 1996, p.108). On top of that, transgender women's identities are intersectional (see McCall, 2005). Kathoeyes who live in Europe find themselves at the intersection of a range of potentially oppressive social categories, including sexuality, class, culture, sexual orientation, race, religion and other identities. How they identify and are identified with these categories plays an important role in this analysis.

Feminist research aims to motivate change and equality in society; the theory is political and politics is not unbiased. It involves sympathy, resistance, struggle and interaction with people (Pattraporn, 2012). The possibility that women who are dissimilar in many ways can nonetheless be motivated by a common and collective women's group consciousness is necessarily created by politics, which enables 'women in their different class, race, sexual and cultural locations to identify, value, and engage in the kind of research that could enable them to see how to end their culturally-distinctive forms of sexist oppression' (Harding, 2004, p.30). Feminist

standpoint theorists argue that, contrary to modern, scientific fundamentalism, power, theory and epistemology are interrelated and can be used to discover relations amongst knowledge and power in ways that directly link knowledge and reality. Furthermore, standpoint theory explains that women talk about their stories which base on forms of power (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). In addition to taking women's experiences as fundamental to knowledge of political relations between male and female, standpoint theorists also seek an understanding of the interrelation of knowledge and gender about female's experience and realities of gender (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Furthermore, standpoint theory assesses that political struggles, oppression and some types of social locations improve the growth of knowledge, as opposed to the dominant understanding that local 'situatedness and politics' can obstruct scientific analysis (Harding, 2004).

Standpoint theory's features make it suitable method and theory for my study, as it underlines the lives and perceptions of Kathoey immigrants in Europe experiencing social and juridical discrimination both in Thailand and Europe. I investigated the lives of Kathoeyes, the social values of their sub-culture, the complexity of their trans- identity, their perceptions on transnational relationships and the way they negotiate political power. Even though there might be some resemblance to other ethnic groups living as immigrants in Europe, the Thai trans-women sub-cultural group is unique due to its identity. Specifically, both in Thailand and Europe, forms of prejudice against this group have motivated culturally distinct practices in daily life, community activities, perceptions on discrimination, and so on. These distinctions affect how members of this group handle or perceive things, and distinguish them from other immigrant groups, which I discuss in great detail throughout this thesis.

Considering research subjects as actor and agent is essential, as this subject involves both groups and individuals. Individuals have the capability to act upon and comprehend social conditions, and their understanding of the world is complex and rooted from personal social and political experiences (Pattraporn, 2012). As Pattraporn argues, it is important that researchers as well must closely interact with their research subjects as researchers cannot study people's lives by observing them from distance. Conversational engagement between scholars and participants is important for this study regarding the respondents' identities, trans-sexuality, gender

roles, life experience, careers and aspects of their transnational and doubly or even triple-stigmatized experiences. The reflection of the critical theorist's position in the field is important (Patraporn, 2012), but insufficient: since participants of this study are Kathoeyes in Europe who experienced discrimination, it is crucial to glean insight and guidance from queer methodology as well. Jin Haritaworn, who continuously works on discrimination against non-white queer people, has discussed: '[t]he call for positionality urges us to reflect on where we stand, to define our speaking positions and how they relate to others, especially those whom we claim to speak for' (Haritaworn, 2008). He continues:

...an empirical project which takes seriously the question of positionality can enable us to directly 'touch/interact/connect' with our subject, in ways which are less exploitative, less objectifying and more politically relevant.

Even though standpoint theory is appropriate for the conducted study of Kathoeyes in Europe, it is not without its critics. Scholars such as Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) have claimed that the issue of difference can be one of the downsides of this theory, because it disregards the root of the issue: individual power and choice. In this view, any group-based analysis would be flawed, because 'women are not a unified category but are divided by, for example, real relations of racialized power, heterosexism, globalization or ablebodiedism' (Patraporn, 2012, p.23). Feminist theory recognizes various women's material conditions of existence; however, Western ethnocentrism and the social separations of a particular society to some extent formed the theory (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Feminist researchers always have been criticized for their potentials to generalize or essentialize women (Patraporn, 2012). Accordingly, seeing the Kathoey participants as a group might risk approaching essentialism, which is inclined to homogenize experiences and power relations among trans-women. Still, to harmonize the construction of standpoints with the power of individual agency, Collins (1997), defended the group as a unit of analysis:

... the notion of a standpoint refers to historically shared, group-based experiences. Groups have a degree of permanence over time such that group realities transcend individual experiences'. In addition, 'It is common location within hierarchical power relations that creates groups, not the result

of collective decision making of the individuals within the groups (pp. 375–6).

In other words, the influence of social divisions – for instance, sexuality, age, class, gender, ethnicity and race – was emphasized by Collins because they oppress and construct inequity to some social groups. Collins clarifies that a group's social and political knowledge is the unit of analysis. Such knowledge is valuable, powerful, and influential, even though individual group members deduces differently and have their own individual experiences (Collins, 1997).

Therefore, I approach Thai transgender women in Europe and Thailand as a group that shares a cultural ideology and faces oppression in the forms of social and political transprejudices and employment issues. Further, the group, which includes trans-women in Thailand as well as in Europe, retains and reinforces perceptions on migration, in ways I elucidate in the introduction and *chapter five*. Nevertheless, following Pattaporn (2012), the analysis of individual agency is also included. Group-based analysis invites us to investigate how the lives of individuals are influenced by social structure, and that social and power structures that are informally posed on them, influence the way individuals lead their lives.

2.2. Research Design

I applied ethnographic tools throughout this research. As Nontapatamadul (2003) describes, ethnography is a collection of techniques that focus a scholar's observation of behaviors, practices or lifestyles of social or cultural groups. By thoroughly depicting demeanors, beliefs, cognition, attitudes, values, traditions, practices, rituals, cultures and so on, which result from behaviors of people in social groups, ethnography is influential in qualitative research; it usually questions what the culture of the studied population is (Geertz, 1973). Ethnographers perform their work via anthropological participant observation, which gives precedence to what the scholar experiences in the field. Ethnographic observers immerse themselves in the culture that is the center of their study. The concept of culture is the core of ethnography. Culture is a behavioral pattern and numerous sets of beliefs. It is also the premise applied to indicate ethnographic knowledge acquisition as humans gather

as a group within a period of time, always related to at least one set of culture (Nontapatamadul, 2003).

The chosen method for data collection is known as ‘critical ethnography’ because the method itself concentrates on the oppressed and marginalized people in society, a broad category that includes the transgender immigrants and sex workers whose experiences and cultural contexts I wish to understand. The method also focuses on the ways power, privilege, prestige and authority are used to oppress social and cultural groups (Creswell, 2007) such as the one that is my unit of analysis. Coinciding with standpoint theory, critical ethnography aims to engage in a discourse on ‘positionality’, which ‘is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures surrounds our subjects’ (Madison 2005, p.7). In addition to the critical ethnography method, I engaged more directly with members of the group I sought to understand, using tools such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation.

Respondents for this study are Thai Kathoeyes, some of whom migrated to Europe and others who continue to live in Thailand. As stated, I have conducted a qualitative analysis along with critical ethnography by using semi-structured interviews and started with snowball methodology which will be explained further. The main areas of data collection were Thailand and four European countries: the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium. Throughout my work, I use the word ‘Europe’ as a shorthand that for the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium – and not other European countries. However, as this research is conducted on an exploratory level, there are limitations of data and the data from the four countries cannot stand for all Kathoeyes and their experiences in all Europe.

The main specific areas for data collection, both in Europe and in Thailand, were Thai restaurants, bars and temples. The importance of temples should be explained: Kathoeyes retain their association with and affinity for strict Thai Buddhist society, and they gather in temples and participate in Buddhist activities all year long. Only one of the respondents is Muslim, the rest are all Buddhists. In addition, I collected data in transgender night clubs and parties, transgender sex parties, red light districts as well as places my respondents negotiated their daily lives, such as

their apartments, salons, bars and so on. In Thailand only, the university was also a fieldwork location because I did not have access to conduct data in European universities. Later, in the *Narratives from Fieldwork* section of this chapter, I narrate more information about methodological challenges of data collection in each country.

I started doing this study by determining the overall issues of the phenomenon I am interested in. In this case, I first reflected on the general problems of Thai transgenderism in Thailand, which include social discrimination and legal recognition towards transgender people. Oppression affects their subsistence on every level, as outlined in the *Introduction*. Media and news analysis, as well as a review of the relevant literature, nurtured my understanding of Thai transprejudices as production of unequal social and policy issues. Next, I specified the population of this study. I chose to research on Kathoey living in Europe as I believe they offer remarkable perspective on different strata: transgender discrimination in Thailand, which leads to transnational migration and transnational sex work, the non-white queer identity experiences in Europe and European discrimination experiences. After determining the overall research subjects, I systematically considered research composition – including specific research practices and clarified ideological principles – as well as the logistical process and timeline of the study.

However, after only a few weeks in the field, I realized that too much detailed research planning can be counterproductive, for a number of reasons. I entered fieldwork with my personal ideology – a feminist perspective – and then learnt that such an approach might inadvertently manipulate some research participants. For example, my set of questions to ask during the in-depth interviews included some that focused on respondents' victimization, experiences of discrimination, social stigma, trauma, and so on. Results from my pilot interviews demonstrated that the way I phrased the questions swayed the answers I received. Somehow, my stance during pilot interviews did not give them the comfort to speak their truth. I quickly realized that I would need to revise my approach to research if I was to gain meaningful access to the people I interviewed. As Nontapatamadul (2003) discusses, one cannot stipulate what is too much or too little, or what constitutes moderate research planning; researchers should apply their vocational discretion.

Nontapatamadul's wisdom helped me to develop a more flexible approach to the field, which turned out to be successful.

In developing research framework, I outlined main concepts based on what I already knew about LGBTQ issues in Thailand, career opportunities for Kathoeyes, their migration trend to the global north, transgender sex work industry, their perception/trend of having Western partners, their romanticization of Europe, and so on. Then, I scrutinized and rethought these main concepts to sharpen my ideas before reviewing the literature. Prior to fieldwork, I reviewed the literatures relevant to transgenderism in both Thai and Western contexts, and including focus on trans-identity, LGBTQ identity politics, ethnographic descriptions of Kathoeyes, personal narratives, statistical research on Kathoeyes, transgender victimization, social disdain, as well as analysis of how these issues are presented in Thai and global news media, transgender trends and movements on social media, socio-governmental policies, and so on. My personal experience, understandings and expectations shape my interpretation of everything I read. At this stage, I was accustomed with research background and history of research issues. I had determined the direction of this study, which is on state and street discrimination towards Kathoeyes in Europe and Thailand, and I comprehended the prominent and weak points of the previous work in the same field. Finally, I developed the conceptual framework for this study.

After the first literature review period, I determined which resources would be essential for this study, including research timeline, access to target groups, research methods, workplaces and personal moral support. Based on the literature review, personal observation, and professional and personal connections, I selected Thailand, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark as my research locations. In the first three, I had key informants who could assist in connecting me with respondents. Initially, I did not have any connection in the Netherlands and Denmark, but I spent some time developing my own connections there, as I will discuss further in *Narratives from fieldwork*.

2.3. Selection of Focus Group

The target respondents of this research are Thai trans-women as known as Kathoey or ladyboys (a common term in Thailand), which includes all people who were born with male genitalia but identify as females, including transvestites, cross-dressing people, androgynous and polygender individuals, who either live in Thailand or have migrated from Thailand to Europe (the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium). Even though, I have explained about the three sub-groups of Thai trans-women, I refer all my respondents in this thesis to Kathoey because it is what Thai society in general term them.

Since there are no official statistics or other public records on the Thai transgender population, neither in Thailand nor in Europe, I sought to interview and observe as many participants as possible, with a goal of engaging with the broadest possible cross-section of this population. For inclusive analysis, I therefore interviewed Kathoeyes from different social strata, including sex workers, cabaret show girls, restaurant workers, business owners, royal family members, university students, public and private section officers, housewives, madams, teacher, artist, scholars, transgenderism activists and transgender sex work clients. I also expected that it would be difficult to identify Kathoeyes in Europe who would be willing to participate the research. I chose Thailand as a research locale because it is important to observe the root of the phenomenon and to study Kathoeyes' experiences and opinions about European lives, in order to compare their expectations before and after migrating to Europe. I also interviewed Thai Kathoeyes who claim never to have experienced discrimination in either Thailand or Europe. From an initial pool of 60 Kathoey research participants; 23 were interviewed in Thailand, 11 were interviewed in London, 14 in the Netherlands, six in Belgium and six in Denmark. 21 of the 60 participants were transgender sex workers (part-time and full-time). I also interviewed one female academic, one male academic and five male customers of Kathoey sex worker. The fieldwork proceeded intensively over the course of two years, from December 2013 to February 2016. My respondents from diverse backgrounds, occupations, education or social statuses were interviewed with similar questions. *Appendix C* provides information regarding the respondents and the interviews, including participant pseudonym, age, country of residence, place of interview and length of interview. I have clarified why I cannot provide more

detailed information of participants in 2.7 *Ethical Considerations*. Appendix D presents participant observation locations and periods.

2.4. Critical Reflection of Doing Research on Kathoey

As ‘an awareness of the self in the situation of action and of the role of the self in constructing that situation’ (Bloor and Wood, 2006, p.145), the issue of reflexivity has been raised by feminist and poststructuralist scholars who address the authority of textual representations (Bloor and Wood, 2006). Generally, reflexivity comprises critical reflection on how all aspects of the research process – setting, research participants, researcher and procedures – affect one another (Glesne, 2011). It is also about the study of personal and theoretical commitment of individuals in an effort to comprehend how they serve as means to generate certain data, to act in certain ways, and to cultivate certain interpretations (Schwandt, 1997). Researchers deliberate reflexivity by examining their own subjectivity, biases, and value perceptions, and how these affect the suitability of their research method and methodology. As well as, how they affect researchers’ concerns about collected data, analysis, and constructed representations (Madison, 2005). Because of postmodern thought’s contention, researchers tend to reflect on their research in order to make their work more accurate, legitimate or valid. Reflexivity is not a remedy and nobody can discern oneself well enough to fully assess one’s own effects on the research process. Nonetheless reflexivity is an expedient method for situating oneself and one’s work more honestly (Glesne, 2011).

I agree with Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002) that any research of ‘an other’, is as well a research of ‘a self’. In the paradigm of positivist, ‘objectivity is a goal and subjectivity, an undesired state of affairs’ (Glesne, 2011, p.151). In this context, the subjectivity is associated with bias and perceived as something to be governed in order to diminish its effect in the study. But more recently, post-structural and many other scholars have argued that the objective/subjective binary opposition can no longer be regarded as expedient. Nobody can avoid having the subjective, so objectivity is perceived as neither possible nor even desirable. Moreover, feminists have indicated for a long time that women are commonly demarcated as subjective against the more objective ‘man of reason’ (Glesne, 2011). Subjectivity was recognized as something negative by researchers in the

interpretivist paradigm in the 1980s and early 1990s. Subjectivity was accepted by these scholars as a fundamental part of interpretivist research, from determining the topic of research to analysis frame selection. Besides bias, subjectivity was also seen as the personal selves formed historically (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Olesen 2000; Peshkin 1988; Wolcott 1995). For them, subjectivity, in the context of bias, should be examined in order to make a study more reliable. Moreover, in the context of personal history and passions, subjectivity could actually make a study more robust. Qualitative researchers cannot escape themselves, nor should they (Glesne, 2011). During this research, I have gone through several emotional states that were associated with particular research circumstances. I have reflected upon my research project and the several subjective lenses it produced. Peshkin (1988) suggests that, in order to trace one's subjective self, one should identify points on a map of oneself. But nobody can recall all of their emotions and positions, so these points do not constitute complete maps. The same viewpoints will appear in different studies, but in addition, new viewpoints will also appear. And in all probability, two people doing the same study would not have the same personal reactions. By using Peshkin's work, I identify my subjective lenses during research as my 'personal lens', 'justice lens' and 'caring lens' and reflect upon the emotional reactions generated by this Kathoey's discrimination study.

First, the most related to me is my *personal lens*. Growing up with a transgender woman cousin provided me with first-hand insights into the difficulties of transition, social exclusion and stigmatization. Witnessing this hardship triggered my lifelong interest in the experience and condition of being transgender. I have focused my research on how transgender issues are mishandled by government, how structural and cultural abuse can prevent transgender individuals from fully enjoying their legal rights, and how transgender individuals perceive their escape to better lives in the Western world. This enables me to view this topic through my second lens - the *justice lens*. Third, I look at this research through my *caring lens*. My political agenda is to promote equality to transgender people in our society. I have a strong interest in ensuring that transgender people are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. I also wish that everyone in the society understands and accepts trans-visibility and the non-binary nature of sexuality and gender, and that everyone

acknowledges the social and legal stigma and other hardships experienced by transgender people because they are transgender.

To address my *personal lens*, I must go back to my childhood experience. My father has eight siblings and my mother has six. They both came from working-class families, especially my father's family, who are Chinese immigrants in Chonburi – a province which is a 1.5 hour drive from Bangkok. Consistent with the Thai extended family culture, my parents have hosted many relatives at our house in Bangkok. Most of them are my aunts from my mother's side and my parents' nieces and nephews who came from rural areas to Bangkok in search of better opportunities in education or career. Therefore, I have always shared our house with many relatives. When I was few months old, my mother invited my cousin, a son of my father's Chinese brother, for an extended visit. This cousin was born as a boy but later lived as a woman; she was a Kathoey. I thought of her as my sister, but she was not well-accepted by her father because of her gender and hyper-femininity. She moved into our house when she was in high school to further her study. Basically, she helped to raise me from toddler to juvenile age. When she was in high school, she had to dress and act like a boy because everyone must wear the 'correct' uniform and hairstyle to go to Thai schools. She was a top student in high school and university, but it was not easy for a trans-identified woman to find a job that could give her a career path in Thailand. She had to have her hair short and try to live like a man in order to have a more stable and easier life; many people thought she was a gay guy. But everyone in the family noticed that she had been very feminine since her early years in life, and we knew she identified herself as a woman. As I grew up, I learned and witnessed her transition, social exclusion and the daily wounding verbal abuse that came across as Thai jokes. Later in life, like many Kathoeyes, she migrated to the United States to have a 'better life'. This experience with social inequality remains embedded as a part of me in terms of how I see society. With this perspective, I recheck and balance myself while conducting research so that my subjectivity is not biased, but rather a beneficial personal history and passions. The basis of my personal interest in transgenderism developed from my relationship with my sister and many Kathoey friends I have had throughout my life, along with, my observations of the policy and social discrimination they experience, which leads some of them to migrate to the Western world. Though, I also perceive that personal lens is related to *justice lens*.

As I have always been considerate to underprivileged and oppressed people. While seeing how Thai juridical system and social structures mishandle transgender people, I cultivate my thoughts on the injustice exists. I personally believe that everyone should be able to identify their sex and gender regardless of medical, legal and social manipulation, and one should liberally live according to it as they wish to. It is regardless of their sexualities or other identities, all human beings deserve equal treatment on both street and state levels. Not simply tolerance, but genuine social respect and acceptance play key roles in making equality meaningful. Lastly, I see my *caring lens* as linked to both personal lens and justice lens. Having spent years with transgender individuals, I realize how much is left to do when it comes to supporting transgender people on various stages. I value transgender women and they are not more or less special than cis gender people. They deserve to be treated with equal dignity.

I kept tracking my own subjective selves and then questioning their roots. I was aware not only for my own perceptions, but also how those perceptions might manipulate me to ask or to not ask certain questions, and how they might lead me to conclude or to not conclude certain interpretations within research setting interfaces. Post-structural scholars and others declare that subjectivity is not resident in a ‘lens’ that one can put on and take off. We all live with the intricate and fluctuating intersections of identity classifications such as gender, race, class, wellness, age, nationality, sexual orientation, and more (Glesne, 2011). In this research situation, I believe that my identity, as a Thai woman migrant who speaks native Thai language and understands Thai socio-cultural background, is significant and helpful in approaching and studying participants in Europe. I was successful in gaining trust; I asked my respondents why they were willing to be interviewed and why they participated so openly and genuinely. Here are some of their answers:

I let you follow me to my work and introduce you to other Kathoey in town ‘cause I see that you are a Thai girl living in Holland, just like us. I wanna help Thai students. If you were farang (white-skinned people), I wouldn’t let you study me. - Yai, Amsterdam

There was a Thai guy who interviewed me for his research. I was so embarrassed when he asked this (similar) question. I didn’t tell him a lot. Was

super shameful (laugh). [...] Well, of course I can tell you, sis... – Molly, Denmark, asserted when she was explaining about her transsexual sex work.

Months ago, a British TV show contacted me for an interview and filming. I turned them down because I was scared that they might depict Thai ladyboys as something strange. You know how TV shows here present Kathoey right? There are lots of documentaries about *Mia-Chao* (Thai rented wives) and Kathoey living aboard. I don't like when we are exoticized or overly dramatized. These media make us look like people to feel sorry for. [...] I welcome you 'cause you seem like a girl with good intentions and it's easy that we can speak Thai to each other – Mote, London

When it comes to emotion and work, I found that noting and reflecting upon my emotional reactions and how they associate with who I am, my experiences and history is significant. I monitored these subjective feelings but I did not try to control them. When researchers trace their emotions, they learn more about their own principles, values, attitudes, needs and interests. They also learn that their history and experiences are fundamental to their actions and interpretation of stories they can articulate. These are strengths. Subjectivity also equips researchers with perceptions and insights that shape their practices, from choosing the topic clear through to the focuses they make in their writing (Glesne, 2011). This topic has been included in my discussion of reflexivity, in the way that it accentuates on questioning, tracing, partaking approach in which researchers form and are formed by the research process. As Guba and Lincoln (2008, p.278) argue, 'reflexivity forces us to come to terms not only with our choice of research problem and with those whom we engage in the research process, but with our selves and with the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in the research setting'. They also urge each scholar to engage in self-interrogation, concerning the extent to which research determinations are shaped and performed around the binaries, paradoxes and incongruities upon which our own lives are constructed.

My research topic is sensitive. It relates to gender, sexuality and personal trauma. I have reflected on my positionality and standpoint in the field, including a consideration of my own roles and how these will affect the research. This is a methodological requirement of standpoint theory: reflexivity is needed when

considering socially constructed knowing self of researchers (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). The awareness that researchers make their own choices on what they study, interpret what they experience from the field and write their researches by their own personal biographies and hide in scientific and disciplinary settings in ethnographies can be described as a 'reflexive turn' (O'Reilly, 2009). Plus, reflexive ethnography is also a 'turning back' on researchers' selves as Madison (2005, p. 7) stated: 'when we turn back, we are accountable for own research paradigms, our own positions of authority, and our own moral responsibility relative to presentation and interpretation.'

With sensitivity to my three subjective lenses, my position as a researcher, as a Thai immigrant, and as a woman, I agree with Oakley (1981) that there can be 'no intimacy without reciprocity' (p. 49) when 'women are interviewing women'. I gained the trust of the participants and their insightful information because the semi-structured interview practices between me and participants were conducted with rapport, empathy, reciprocity, and non-hierarchical relations. My trace of subjective selves facilitated the interactions with the purpose to discover unbiased implications of knowledge and interpretation in this research. Moreover, I retain strong friendships with some of my informants, who have told me that their experience of working with me helped them to feel empowered to raise their formerly silent voices.

2.5. Participant Recruitment and Access to the Field

To conduct this study, I start out by contacting a transgender NGO named *The Foundation of Transgender Alliance for Human Rights*, aka *Thai-TGA*, in Bangkok, Thailand. The foundation aims to support all-round life quality of Thai Kathoey, collects, and produces knowledge about transgenderism in Thailand; it also reinforces potentiality of Kathoey and promotes understanding about Kathoey identity and rights in Thai society. Finally, the organization arranges cooperative activities between other development civil society organizations in Thailand, as part of its effort to improve social attitudes regarding sexual diversity. One of the founders is Jetsada Taesombat, who came to be one of my main three key informants. Jetsada is a famous transgender activist who taught me much about Thai transgenderism and the judicial system, social discrimination, pragmatic complexities and policy issues. She also connected me to many well-known Thai

LGBTQ activists from the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, Sisters for Transgenders in Pattaya, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA, Asia), as well as linked me with Thai queer (transgender) scholars. Besides sharing her contacts in Thailand, Jetsada introduced me to her Thai transgender associates who live in London.

My second key informant is Fang, a Kathoey living in Ghent. I knew Fang personally through an old friend from Thailand. My friend met Fang in Lille, France. Later, Fang moved from Lille to Ghent to work in a Thai restaurant and settle there with her best friend, who is also a Thai Kathoey. Fang assisted in connecting me to Thai transgender sex workers in the Netherlands and Belgium; she also secreted me into a private transgender sex party in the Netherlands, telling the party owner that I was part of her cabaret showgirl team. Fang helped arrange meetings with many Thai Kathoeyes in their ethnographic contexts – apartments, daily lives and parties – in order to witness their social lives and observe their genuine cultural ideologies, behaviors and practices, and to profoundly understand their truths.

My third key informant is Doy Suriyothai, a founder of *Thai TGA* and a director of *Sisters for Transgenders Foundation in Pattaya*, which is a community health center for transgender women in Pattaya, a Thai city where sex tourism has grown considerably in recent decades. Doy was a substantial contact with Kathoey sex workers in Thailand and Europe, as well as a key informant about transnational Kathoey sex work.

I often benefitted from the snowballing recruitment technique to identify and engage respondents throughout this research. Many participants introduced me their Kathoey friends and acquaintances, or advised me about where or how I might approach Kathoey in Europe. This confidence and assistance was crucial, because access to this close-knit demographic in Europe, including sex workers, undocumented migrants, or older kathoeyes, can otherwise be very difficult. Heckathorn (1997) describes the technique in more general terms. Snowballing is a process that involves inviting current research respondents to suggest other people they know who might be eligible to participate in the study. Accordingly, the snowballing technique was very suitable for this study of Thai trans-women in

Europe and Thailand, understanding themselves as oppressed minorities in society, their first inclination regarding outsiders is to be suspicious. Snowballing alone was not sufficient, however, because I wished to get data from diverse Kathoey social groups, classes, education levels, economic statuses and settings, occupations, and intersectional identities. To collect the more inclusive data, I repeatedly went to fieldwork settings such as Thai bars, restaurants and temples in Europe to approach potential research participants. I will elaborate this process in greater detail below, in *Narratives from Fieldwork*.

Moreover, my previous research on Thai women migrants in Scandinavian countries provided insights regarding the environment of Thai trans-women in Sweden and Denmark. During fieldwork for that project, I developed many connections that facilitated my access to the current group of target participants. During my previous ethnographic research, I learned that many Kathoey migrants continue to visit Thai temples in Europe, where they participate in religious ceremonies and Thai holiday celebrations, as well as associate with Thai people in the area. I recognized Thai temples in Europe as bedrocks of Thai migrant communities. At two temples, Watpa in Copenhagen and Wat Sanghabaramee in Eslöv, I cultivated knowledge of the Thai transgenders community and lifestyle abroad and I recruited several participants for the current research project.

It was less complex to recruit respondents through key informants because two of my key informants are renowned Thai NGO workers and the third is a decent and trustworthy Kathoey who has lived in Europe for a long time and has wide connections. As a result of these introductions, my respondents felt that they could trust me enough to engage with this research. When I recruited respondents without the assistance of key informants, I first approached them personally and offered detailed information about myself, the research project and purpose, and the ethics of this study. I then explained the interview process and sought to understand the extent to which they were willing to participate. Initially, some were skeptical about my motivations, but they were reassured after months of gentle trust-building initiatives: I went to meet them several times in their daily life settings, such as in Thai bars and Thai restaurants, and made friends with owners of these establishments. Eventually, they came to trust me enough to participate in this study. In all, only seven individuals declined a role in the study because some said they did not want to reveal

their identity or background and some did not want to talk about their sex work. Many of the participants emphasized their interest in trans-visibility, understanding, and social and legal equality – and their hope that this research could serve these interests.

2.6. Data Collection and Research Methods

After the research planning process, I continued to collect data primarily by considering the kinds of information that could inform my research questions, and how such data could be embodied. I adopt ‘semi-structured interview’, ‘focus group discussion’, and ‘participant observation’ as the methods for this study. There are two sets of research question which is provided in the *Appendix*. *Appendix A* was used as a question guideline for respondents in Thailand and *Appendix B* was used as a question guideline for respondents in Europe.

Interviewing is a conversation with direction and focus. Its purpose is to understand the interviewees in a more nuanced way than is possible through distant observation alone. Researchers can gain information that enables them to analyze how each interviewee’s perspectives and sense of importance varies from that of other interviewees. Also, qualitative interviews create a dynamic relationship between researcher and research participant and the quality, quantity and data categories that emerge are the result of their interaction. In other words, the relationship between researcher and participants powerfully influences the features of the data collected, as well as the analysis of that data. The quality of data and main points to be collected are subject to the researcher’s fundamental knowledge, interviewing skill and sensitivity (Nontapatamadul, 2003). During the interview process, I realized that the interviews themselves affected the phenomena I wished to understand. Some participants were energized by the interviews, and felt motivated to stand up for their rights on individual and social levels. For example, after they answered about discrimination experiences, some of them tended to rethink and tell me later about how they would like to resist more actively when they are treated in negative ways. Furthermore, I realize about the dynamics of working with participants from varied backgrounds and identities. This realization leads to the development of interview direction on conceptual and operational levels. For example, I approached each interview as the opportunity to establish a relationship

between equal humans regardless of gender, education level or social background. Respondents were not the objects in an experiment, but rather respected and significant research informants. I am also very well aware of codes of conduct to keep participants' privacy by informing them before the interviews or observations that all of their given information and identities will be anonymous. Therefore, besides Jetsada, Ronnapoom and Doy Suriyothai, all of the names I write in this research are pseudonyms. Before conducting every interview, I clearly informed participants about myself, the project's structure as related to their involvement, and the purpose of this study, and gave my personal name cards in case they will have further questions regarding this interview or research. I also clearly informed each respondent that they had the right to stop participating at any time and for any reason. I was given verbal consent to conduct this research and permission to voice record all interviews.

As mentioned above, this study uses three research methods. Firstly, I will discuss the *semi-structured interview*. O'Reilly (2009) describes this method as a mixture of unstructured and structured interview. To narrow this down, an 'unstructured interview' is more conversational and the interviewer has less control over the subjects that will be discussed. On the other hand, 'structured interviews' are comprised of prepared and fixed questions, asked in the same order every time. Between these extremes, semi-structured interviews are based on prepared but open-ended questions that seek to elicit respondents' detailed information while at the same time being open to the respondent's interpretation and interests. The characteristic of semi-structured interviews is that the interviewees have a list of questions related to the study, but the researcher has the freedom to decide which questions to ask, and in which order. Each subsequent question is based on the researcher's interpretation of previous responses (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The advantage of the semi-structured interview is its ability to give a clear image of respondents' perspective since they feel more relaxed (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The semi-structured interview was effective for my research, as it stimulated participants to 'speak their truth'; it gave them the sense that they were equal partners in a conversation, rather than simply a source of information.

Our conversations were guided by a prepared collection of questions based on the following themes: general questions; being Kathoey; discrimination towards

Kathoeys in Thailand; opinion about Europe and being Kathoey in Europe; transgender women and feminine beauty; Kathoey and sex work; Kathoey migration to Europe; and, discrimination toward Kathoey in Europe. Question guideline is provided in *Appendix A-B*. Before each interview, I clarified in person or sent participants my research objectives and question guideline, so they would feel more comfortable and perceive the correct idea of the research and interview. Moreover, all interviews were conducted in Thai language. My Thai heritage is a distinct advantage in forming an implicit, deep-seated connection much faster than it would be for a non-Thai researcher; however, an emotional detachment is invaluable in conducting solid and impartial research. In other words, when some respondents sought personal or other advice, I felt compelled to do no more than refer them to organizations that focus on the kind of sustained assistance they sought. I offered a degree of empathy, but decided in advance that direct, potentially personal involvement from the researcher would be detrimental to the research, as a whole.

While most of the interviews were done individually, *focus group discussions* were also adopted as one of a technique for this study. I conducted two semi-structured focus group discussions in Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University in Nakhon Pathom province, which is one-hour drive west of my base in Bangkok. With the support of the academic staff, I was able to recruit trans-students and do this work inside the university building. Each group was comprised of 2-3 participants, and the purpose of the discussions was to delve into Kathoey university students' collective senses, practices, problems, outlooks and experiences based on trans-sexuality in the Thai educational and social systems. I acted as a moderator and encouraged participants to interact and exchange opinions with one another.

For this study, semi-structured interviews effectively complemented my work as a participant observer. The semi-structured interview often built trust with the participants. As a result, many of respondents invited me to hang out and observe some intimate details of their lifestyle after or during the interview. On some occasions, participants found it more convenient to be interviewed during the time of participant observation period, and I was able to accommodate this preference. The ensemble of semi-structured interview and participant observation methods enabled me to gather more profound research data and to apprehend the core of Kathoey discrimination and migration phenomenon.

The next method for this study was *participant observation*. This method can be used to study, first-hand, people's experience in everyday life. O'Reilly (2009) pointed out that participant observation delves into things that people might avoid discussing or simply forget during an interview. According to O'Reilly (2009), participant observation is the principal method used by ethnographers. Researchers try to blend themselves into the environment they wish to understand without disturbing that environment. To research Kathoey sexualities, experiences and lifestyles, the participant observation method must be regarded as compulsory. Participant observation allowed me to interpret and perceive the world from the research subjects' perspectives and experiences. This method offered access to further information that other methods cannot provide. During participant observation periods, I learned about Kathoey power negotiation of gender identity and social position, how they benefit and apply their sexualities to survive as 'deviant' immigrants in Europe, how their voices can be active or inactive, social reaction toward Kathoey's existence, how they respond to social discrimination and displays of trans-phobia on the streets, the performances of their fluid genders and sexual orientations, and much more.

I conducted my participant observation at Thai temple in Denmark, sex parties in the Netherlands, red light districts in Thailand and the Netherlands, and Thai bars and restaurants in Thailand, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark. Thai temples, bars and restaurants in Europe are places Thai people living in Europe unite for communal activities, especially at Thai temples for religious practices such as meditation, giving merit to the monks, learning Buddhist teaching, and so on. I also observed those participants who allowed me to participate in their daily activities at places they go frequently, such as night clubs, bars, sex parties, salons, shopping malls, their workplaces and their residential areas. On important occasions, for instance Buddhist All Saints' Day, Thai New Year, Buddhist Lent Retreat and Buddhist Sabbath Day, hundreds of Thais living in Europe united at the temples and joined the events, traditional performances, festivals and religious ceremonies. During my participant observation, I conducted informal interviews with Kathoey's there.

Furthermore, to synthesize and analyze research data, data triangulation was applied to assess a study's reliability and validity. Data triangulation is a "method of

cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data” (O’Donoghue and Punch, 2003, p. 78). Data triangulation involves time, space, and persons; I conducted interviews and engaged in participant observation at all hours of the day and night for the course of two years, and traveled to five countries (Thailand, The UK, The Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark). The participants are diverse in age range, social class, occupation, education and so on. And the research result remains certain and accurate.

Secondary data was also used for my research analysis, notably as a foundation for comparison of and triangulation with data I collected via semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and participant observation. For the methodological triangulation, my own research data from semi-structured interviews and participant observation was analyzed partly within the context of materials from academic texts, reports, media analysis and social phenomenon. Triangulation helped me to crosscheck information, as well as to interpret and produce the valid analysis from data collection. This study includes multiple theories, participants, empirical materials, and methods, in order to reduce the biases and issues from single-theory or single-method studies.

2.7. Ethical Consideration

As a researcher, I have guaranteed to the respondents that I will not reveal their names. I have also informed them that I am aware of safety concerns relating both to respondents and to myself, and I have assured them that their private information will be kept secret. In particular, I indicated that I will not do anything that could lead to action taken based on criminal activities, if any, discovered in this study. I fully support the position taken by Madison (2005), who states that, should there be any opposition of interest, researchers must be responsible and give priority to research participants. And, participant safety, dignity and privacy must be protected by researchers (Madison 2005). Since my participants share immensely sensitive information, including their trauma, illegal acts, undocumented immigrant status, sex work, unfaithful practices in their partnership and more, I accordingly cannot provide more information than each participant’s pseudonym, age, country of residence, place of interview and length of interview in *Appendix C: Participants and interviews information*.

As stated previously, clarification of objectives, question guidelines and procedure of my research were presented to all participants before interviewing. Verbal agreement about their right to keep their identity anonymous or not will be made before interviews and if they allow me to record the interviews, which most of them did – only four declined. In addition, I remain aware of the limitations caused by the difference in gender, age, class and education between respondents and researcher.

2.8. Narratives from Fieldwork

London

As romanticized on the global media, London is the dream destiny of many Kathoeyes. Initially, I gained access to respondents in London through my key informant, Jetsada – the co-founder of Thai TGA and a transgender activist in Thailand. Jetsada recommended that I contact her friend, who knew two Kathoeyes who work in Thai restaurants in London. Interviews were arranged and, afterwards, these two women introduced me to more Thai Kathoeyes, who allowed me to do participant observation research in their environments. In addition to our in-depth interviews, I spent many nights with them in night clubs (Madam Jojo and G.A.Y., both in Soho) that are known to appeal to all genders. I also spent time with these respondents and their cultural sub-group in a Thai restaurant, near London China town. The restaurant was owned by a Thai Kathoey who married a British man and has lived in the UK for more than 10 years. This restaurant had been famous as a gathering place for Kathoeyes in London, and as an organizer of an annual drag queen contest. However, the owner sold the restaurant and moved back to Thailand with her British husband in 2016.

During my fieldwork in London, my Kathoey respondents introduced me to a madam (of a house of sex work) for Kathoeyes. We first communicated about my research and her participation via facebook messenger. Later, we talked on the phone and I explained that the project is on street and state discrimination against Kathoey living in Europe. Madam Yee agreed to meet me and invited me to lunch in a Korean restaurant in London's Chinatown. She was elegant, and enjoyed her fancy clothes and accessories. Madam Yee was a stunning and charismatic trans-woman in her

mid-thirties. After a general ice-breaking chat over lunch, we agreed to move to a nearby café for a semi-structured, in-depth interview. I figured that it could make her feel uncomfortable or I could intrude her privacy if I mention or ask about transgender sex work so I did not mention it in the beginning. Like other respondents, Madam Yee started to tell me her life stories, transition, background, relationship problems, visa complications and so on. She told me that she can afford to live her fancy life in London because she is an educated Kathoey who graduated from Thailand's top university. She added that she had a successful career in Thailand and earned a lot of money, but she wanted to earn more and to see the world. So she moved to London to study English language and worked part-time as a 'Thai masseuse'. During her enjoyable and liberal time in London, she developed lots of connections and friendships. She intended to find a partner who could support her to get a British residential visa, and eventually met an Iranian-British man who helped to make this dream a reality. Then she started her own 'online advertising' company in London which was already a financial success. We continued the interview for an hour but were repeatedly distracted by telephone calls she received. I did not disturb her and I humbly let her receive all the phone calls because it seemed like she was very focused and worried about them. I did not seek to pry, but the conversations intrigued me. First she spoke Thai to someone and yelled at them for not taking care of customers, and then she told the Thai person on the telephone line to prepare his/her room because the customer is on his way to the person's apartment. Then she hung up the phone, and dialed to someone else. This time, in English, she said that 'my girl is ready and she is waiting for you'. Then she hung up the phone and we continued the interview again. Within 5 minutes, she received another call and she told the caller an address in London. She hung up and called someone and said, in Thai, 'another customer is coming, his name is Mike. I will text you his number'. Madam Yee again hung up and continued to talk to me, she continued to receive and send lots of text messages and calls with the similar contexts of conversations. I did not say anything until at some point; she looked at me and said 'sorry, I have lots of work to do.' So I asked her if she wants to terminate the interview but she said she needs 15 minutes to deal with the business and will get back to me. She went to have phone calls outside the café, when she came back she said 'alright, I think you have heard I run some business, right? I saw we have many facebook mutual friends so I assumed already they told you what I

do'. Afterwards, she explained to me briefly about her online transgender sex work business and told me that her job is to communicate with clients who found the website and want to know which apartments to go to meet transgender escorts. Then, Madam Yee said she had to leave for another appointment in town and asked me not to reveal her real identity on my research. I asked her why she told me some information on her career, she said with a smile on her face 'I saw you have Putsra (my other participant) as friend on facebook. I asked Putsra about you before and she said you are okay to talk to'.

My London fieldwork was fruitful, yielding considerable data regarding Kathoey migration and lifestyles in the Western world. In addition to my main research, I was able to learn about London's human smuggling industry. And on top of the information provided by Madam Yee on Kathoey sex work, I was introduced to a Kathoey escort in London through Doy Suriyothai, a director of Sisters for Transgenders in Pattaya and my key informant. Her story is narrated in the *Chapter Seven: Thai Transgender Sex Work in Europe*.

Belgium

I was based in Amsterdam for my PhD coursework when I conducted data in Belgium. The fieldwork was rather convenient to me because Ghent was not so far away so I travelled back and forth between Amsterdam – Ghent for many times. Fang, my key informant in Belgium, was very generous and cooperative in this research. She introduced me to her Thai Kathoey 'gang' in Belgium and her Kathoey connections in France and Germany. (I met them because they came to visit Fang in Ghent while I was there.) Fang had lived in Europe for more than 10 years and was well known among the Kathoey community in Lille and Ghent.

The fieldwork in Belgium was interesting because Ghent has a smaller transgender/queer scene than other, larger European cities. I spent lots of time with Fang and her Kathoey friends. They invited me to different gatherings: house parties, dinners, shopping days, days out in Bruges and nights out in local clubs and bars. One day, Fang invited me to go to her Kathoey friend's apartment for dinner. I have observed how they use transgender dating site, which is a common form of entertainment for them. I found out that the community of Belgian and Dutch Asian

transgender admirer group of men and women; however, remains more secretive in real life than in the virtual world.

The Netherlands

With no advance connections to research target groups in the Netherlands, I primarily accessed Kathoeyes in Amsterdam through Thai restaurants and bars. It started at a take-away restaurant in Amsterdam, where I intentionally went at least three times a week to observe social life. As a regular customer, I developed a good relationship with the restaurant owner – *Pa-Ploy*. Pa-Ploy knew I was trying to recruit participants, so she suggested that I talk with some of her other regular customers. In this way, I met a Kathoey who used to be a sex worker in Amsterdam's red light district. She then introduced me to a few current transgender sex workers in the same district. One of them let me observe her 'office' for an extended period of time. I also have observed a traditional Thai northeastern (Isaan) style bar in red light district, which is a famous place for Thai women and trans-women to gather for night life and also to meet Western partners.

Fieldwork in the Netherlands and Belgium altogether was completed in about fourteen months. The occupations of my participants in the Netherlands ranged from restaurant owners, restaurants staff or university student (who grew up in Amsterdam and moved to the Netherlands because her mother is married to a Dutch man) to sex workers or housewives. Their detailed information is shown on the *Appendix C*.

One of the most vivid memories during my fieldwork period is when Fang, my key informant in Belgium, along with Jenny and Lyla, her Kathoey friends, brought me to a transgender sex party at Parenclub Mystique, a swinger club in the Netherlands. The swinger club has 'tranny night' party every month. The journey started in Ghent, where I had been living for three weeks while collecting data from Fang and Jenny. They told me that their friend Lyla, a Kathoey living in Antwerp, had been hired to be a lip-sync and dancing artist during Parenclub Mystique's tranny night. Fang herself was once a showgirl, on Samui Island in Thailand, before she moved to France and finally Belgium. When Fang explained her history and demonstrated her excitement, the party organizer agreed to hire Fang as well. Fang asked if I was interested to see the 'tranny sex party', I immediately agreed to tag along and observe my participants. Fang, I, and her friend Jenny took a train from

Ghent to Antwerp to meet Lyla. At Lyla's apartment in Antwerp, I helped them arrange their striking costumes, shiny wigs, glittering wooden coops, gigantic artificial flowers. I also was chief make-up assistant. As Lyla drove all of us to the club, the three of them were cheerful, singing and dancing with Thai 80s music along the way. After a while, we arrived the party venue, a villa located far from the city and surrounded by green. Only members were allowed to enter, so I faced a challenge at the door. I gained entry when Fang told the party organizer that I was part of the showgirl team, and they needed me to go in to help them.

The villa is two floors, furnished with a dining room, swimming pool, dance floors, lobby area, drink bar, DJ station, fantasy dark rooms for group sex, a sauna room, shower rooms, a Jacuzzi bathtub, dressing rooms and private dark rooms. From there, I gained opportunity to observe my participants' world more profoundly, including sexual identities, sexual behaviors, their post-colonial cultural ideology in the context of their racialized sexual desires, and the method/practice they used or performed to negotiate power relations in different environments. I informally interviewed the party organizer and revealed to her directly that I was there as part of my research on Kathoeyes in Europe. The party organizer was content to talk to me and, at the end of the interview, she underlined;

‘We set this tranny night every month because many trannies in the Netherlands have no place to free themselves. We give them space to be who they are, to dress up like how they like....and they can find tranny friends. Some people come here because they want to have tranny-girl community.’

Thailand

To understand the whole phenomenon of discrimination and migration of Thai trans-women in Europe, I determined that research in Thailand would provide a crucial and broader perspective of the issue. I also expected that as a Bangkok native, Thailand would be the easiest site for collection of research data. My fieldwork in Thailand included Bangkok, Pattaya, Nakhon Pathom and Chomphon.

In Bangkok, I interviewed Thai queer academics and SOGIE and LGBTQI activists to understand the core legal and socio-political problems for Kathoey situation in Thailand. I also interviewed Kathoeyes who worked as, for example, an

illustrator, a fashion stylist, a business owner, social activists, governmental officer, university students, an office administrator and social elites (one transvestite respondent is a member of the Thai royal family with ‘Mom Luang’ (M.L.) status. M.L. in English translation is great-great-grandchild of a king) and so on. All of my informants in Bangkok are from middle to upper class. Thus, to comprehend position of Kathoey in Thailand from many socio-economic backgrounds and to understand their thoughts on various topics such as ‘perception on living in Europe’, ‘European men’, ‘the myth of beauty’, and ‘what it is to be Kathoey’, I have also travelled to Chumphon, Pattaya and Nakhon Pathom to interview and observe Kathoeyes from backgrounds including sex workers and entertainers, as well as local Kathoeyes in urban and rural areas of Thailand.

In Pattaya city, with the help of Doy Suriyothai, I interviewed transgender staff from the Sisters Pattaya organization, as well as current and former sex workers. I observed Pattaya Kathoey communities and lifestyles, and how they form the strong and cooperative sisterhood and motherhood relations. I also observed the Pattaya red light district, which was booming before the Thai military coup took place and began to implement a strict policy to diminish prostitution in Pattaya in 2016.

I have also interviewed some Kathoeyes who have lived in Europe for more than 10 years and have returned back to Thailand as a reverse migration. Some of them went to Europe to do sex work and, once they earned enough money, they moved back to Thailand. Others moved back home after failed marriages with European men. Their insights are different from Kathoey in Thailand who had never been to Europe and still nurtured dreams and positive expectations of living in Europe. Moreover, I interviewed and observed performers and staff of the Alcazar Cabaret Pattaya. For many Thai Kathoeyes, being showgirls at famous cabaret and theater like Alcazar is a life goal. I was allowed to enter backstage of their grand architectural theatre to observe participants’ work, feminine practice and attitudes, all of which communicate their sexuality. Many of these performers dreamed of becoming showgirls in Europe, including some with European life experience. They also exposed their experiences of discrimination within entertainment business and on a broader societal level.

In Chumphon – the province in the southern part of Thailand. I interviewed and observed Kathoey in rural areas. Chumphon Kathoey mostly work in the small-scale, local cosmetic industry, such as beauty salons or wedding related businesses. Participants in Chumphon shared their dreams of having a Western spouse and explained how such a life partner could offer them better living standard. I have noticed that many rural Kathoey have lower political correctness and awareness about social discrimination when compared with Kathoey communities in Bangkok and Pattaya.

In Nakhon Pathom province, I only collected data from Kathoey university students during focus group discussions. I could not see the whole picture of Kathoey community in this region, but the remarkable experiences of Kathoey university students and how Thai structural and practical education system mishandles transgender people is noteworthy. Many trans-students were forced to act and dress up according to the prevailing hetero-norm. One of my participants was a university staff member who had been treated unethically by her colleagues. More information on this will be provided in *Chapter Four: Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Thailand*.

Fieldwork in Thailand was efficient and smooth because the country has a big population of Kathoey, so it was not too challenging to recruit participants. And despite Thai social and legal inequality, many Kathoey feel confident to speak their voices, and engage in social activism, and participate in research aimed at fostering a broader understanding of their community.

Copenhagen, Denmark

The two main research locations in Denmark are a Thai restaurant and bar in Copenhagen, and a Thai temple called Watpa Copenhagen. On the restaurant's first floor, there is a dive bar with dance poles, quite reminiscent of bars in the sex tourism areas of Pattaya and Bangkok. I spent several Friday and Saturday nights observing the place and talked to many Kathoey who regularly go there on the weekends. The place is always packed with Thai women and Thai Kathoey, I rarely saw Thai or Asian men there as clients. The bar has a few Western female clients some nights, but they usually stay for less than an hour. Most of the male customers are Danish or other Western men. I learned that many Kathoey go to this bar to have

fun nights out, to find Danish partners and to find sex service customers. I recruited few respondents from this bar and observed their way of life and the Kathoey community in Denmark.

At Watpa temple in Copenhagen, I spent altogether nine weekends observing and participating in activities such as practice the dharma as part of Buddhist ritual. The monks and community there allowed me to stay overnight to practice dharma at the temple. From my observation, the temple functions as a community shelter, center and psychological treatment area for Thai people living in Denmark and the southern part of Sweden. The temple organizes several Thai and Buddhist events throughout the year and there are always many visitors to these events, especially the annual Thai Festival. As a result of my participant observation at Watpa temple, I have developed my thought on Kathoey's subculture abroad. Thai Kathoey in Denmark have collective norms and fashions. They gather as groups to hang out, to do activities together and to acknowledge and reinforce Kathoey hierarchy: older Kathoey is described as *khun-mae* (in English: mama) and younger Kathoey as *look-sao* (in English: daughter). Seniority and social hierarchy between Thai Kathoey communities in Denmark is now somewhat more visible to me.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Frameworks

Discrimination is defined by UNESCO as “the selection for unfavourable treatment of an individual or individuals on the basis of: gender, race, colour or ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social class, age (subject to the usual conventions on retirement), marital status or family responsibilities, or as a result of any conditions or requirements that do not accord with the principles of fairness and natural justice.”¹ And The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 1, specified that discrimination has “the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”²

Even though, LGBTQ communities worldwide celebrate their success in achieving greater equal rights in the past decades, transgendered and gender non-conforming people still experience discrimination in different patterns (Nadal; 2013; Hill and Willoughby, 2005). Previous studies show that, compared to cisgender people, transgenders have lower quality of life in terms of physical and psychological health (UNDP and USAID, 2014; Nadal, 2013; Winter, 2011), and they experience discrimination on interpersonal levels (e.g. street discrimination and harassment by colleagues, acquaintances, or strangers), institutional levels (e.g. discriminatory employment policies), and systematic levels (e.g. poverty, unemployment rate of transgendered people, discrimination in housing or homelessness) (Nadal et al., 2014). Discrimination toward Kathoey is often termed as ‘trans-phobia’ or as Hill and Willoughby (2005) outline, “an emotional disgust toward individuals who do not conform to society’s gender expectation” (p.533). Trans-phobia also frequently leads to hate-crimes.

Scholars proposed that through discrimination and prejudices, social identity, social stigma, and labels occur in different forms. Goffman (1963), the predominant sociologist theorizes stigma as a distinct space between virtual social identity and

¹ Source from <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/discrimination/>

² See <http://www.hrcr.org/docs/CERD/cerd3.html>

actual social identity, and describes stigma as “the process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity” (p.95). He further categorizes stigma as a complex social process divided into three main types; mental illness, undesired differentness or physical deformity, or involvement in particular religion, race, belief and so on (Goffman, 1963). Discrimination also associates with differentiation and labelling through the norm of ‘us’ and ‘otherness.’ Becker (1963), the symbolic interactionist originated labelling theory to elucidate the behaviours of people who act differently from the social norms and illustrated how the labels give individuals self-concept, or as Matsueda (1992) describes, the reflected appraisal. Sociologists also perceive social deviancy as a social learning processes, and the ‘deviant label’ is believed to lead individuals of lower social statuses to engage in deviant activities or behaviours. For instance, the previous studies include concentrations on drug abuse, sexual behaviour, violent crimes, organized crime, suicide, alcoholism, and homosexuality (see Akers et al., 1979; Bernberg et al., 2006; Matsueda, 1992). In psychology, discrimination also interrelates to formation of stereotypes; self-categorization and prejudices (see Cox et al., 2012).

The discriminatory experiences of Kathoeyes are directly related to the concept of social stigma. Drawing on Goffman’s three forms of social stigma, Kathoeyes in Europe fall into all three categories; they are stigmatized as having a mental illness, their crafted bodies/ sexual organs and sex are perceived as undesired differentness and physical deformity, and their non-white race and behaviour or occupations are also seen as deviant. Therefore, Kathoeyes in Europe are discriminated against and are multiple-stigmatized by the Western world because they are perceived as mentally, sexually, socially and racially deviant. However, Kathoeyes’ experiences, complex-identities, and crypto-colonized selves are much more multifaceted and nuanced than the discrimination theories alone can illuminate. Thus, in this theoretical chapter, I thoroughly examine Thai transgender women’s discrimination issues. A range of theories are considered, including gender, sexuality and transgender politics. Theoretical framework chapter will also elaborate a mixture of theories from post-colonialism, post-modernism, post-structuralism and gender studies to unfold the phenomena of discrimination against Kathoeyes in Europe and its effects.

3.1. A Deconstruction of Essentialist Identity Politics

It is crucial to examine identity politics while studying discrimination against Kathoey in Europe. The group experiences social and legal discrimination in Europe and Thailand based on their transgender identity. But what really is identity? And what roles do identity politics play in promoting social equality versus creating discrimination?

In recent decades, post-colonial scholars have criticized the discourses of essentialist identity politics, arguing that these have been framed and represented by the West and, as such, serve to uphold colonial operations during European colonial period. Identity politics signifies political activity and established inequality or injustice of certain social groups in the mutual experiences of discrimination. Post-structural and post-modern theory criticizes essentialist visions of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality or other group categories that have fixed characters, because such visions overlook or at least minimize the relevance of variation among members of the group they have constructed. Essentialist discourses have also been reproduced by the anti-colonial struggles regardless of their unreal foundation or the awareness that these identities never really existed (Loomba, 2005). By justifying their inborn-essentialist collective identities, the anti-colonial struggles double-victimized subalterns within identity groups, especially the post-colonial LGBTQ groups. They subjugated different individual subjects into group categories. The post-colonial scholars discussed the practice of essentialist identities in racist societies' discourses that lead to enchainment of individual 'selves' into the 'in-betweenness' of unreal past and desired future (Salisa, 2013). Individual 'selves' should be understood as fluid and hybrid because they are socially and culturally constructed within power relationships in different contexts. The notions of 'self-identities' and 'collective identities' are dialectical, and later create a collective inferiority complex among devalued or minority groups. Thus, to stride the limitations of nostalgic essentialist identity politics, 'self-realized' subjects need to be brought back into political identity movements. In order to do so, profound social justice and reform of power imbalanced in social structure are necessary (Salisa, 2013).

While the idea of class struggle had been prominent until the Cultural Revolution period in the 1960s, this paradigm has since been replaced by paradigms

of globalization, multiculturalism and identity politics. It is undeniable that 'identity' has become one of the most important paradigms in many fields of study. Western movements against racism, feminism and environmentalism in the West have become models of new social movements in the 'third world.' Relatively, indigenous groups, ethnic groups and community rights have grown into the core contexts within the work of global-south scholars. Fraser (2003), like other poststructuralists and post-colonialists, argues that identity politics cannot improve social inequality. Furthermore, identity politics construct nothing but social separatism, intolerance and conformism. She argues in the book, *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements: Contested Identities, Agency and Power*, that identity politics substitute economic justice movements with regressive communitarianism, which leads humankind nowhere. In addition, the concept itself needs to be deconstructed. The pursuit of 'identity politics' has also been criticized as essentialist: it is nostalgic to an imagined but nonexistent past in a way that draws boundaries lines between 'us' and 'the others' with social exclusion. In harmony with Fraser (2003), Brown (1995) considers identity politics to be a means to reproduce wounds from the colonial period. I agree with Brown (1995) that essentialist identity politics emphasizes the contemporary powerless situation of the devalued groups globally as it justifies and empowers social exclusion in different forms – including but not limited to racism, sexism and stigmatization of 'others.' Further, identity politics is a reaction by those who wish to return to an imagined past in which their power was not challenged. This includes the responses of 'gender politics' activism to the rise of expressive Thai transgenderism in practice.

The purpose of identity politics was criticized by several post-colonial scholars, including Edward Said as being pointless. In his classic 1978 work, *Orientalism*, Said employs Foucault's view of a discourse to identify Orientalism and argues that, unless one recognizes Orientalism as a discourse, it is impossible to recognize the systematic discipline that allows European culture to manage 'and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period' (p. 21). In different eras, social structure frames cultures, collective norms, knowledge and power. And this social structure is 'episteme,' which is the body of ideas that govern and justifies knowledge. Episteme constructs discourse. The discourse itself is the explanation of

‘reality’ of those who structurally create or live within it (Foucault, 1988). Before going further on Said’s orientalism and deconstruction of identity-politics, I will first examine theories of post-modernism and post-structuralism to draw a concrete framework line.

Discourse creates meanings of social ‘realities.’ It produces knowledge, identities and so on, to create meaning regarding human beings, sciences, sexual behavior, changes, beliefs or disappearances. In episteme, discourse determines vocables, and it governs meaning and possibility in ‘reality.’ Reality is not empirical, yet it controls perceptions of what is real or unreal. Therefore, discourse is coherent to power and violence, as it constructs ‘regime of reality’ (Chairat, 1999). The notion of discourse analysis was later formed since discourse produced meaning of ‘reality,’ rules and social order. It also included social institution and social practice; accordingly, discourse makes individuals define their own ‘identities’ through the constructed knowledge and norm. To analyze such discourses, one has to examine the processes and details of identity formation, and then constructs the meanings of existences in the society in terms of discourses and discursive practices; to explore its history and hegemony of principles. One also has to discover how the claimed meanings relate to individuals, institutions, locations or situations, and then to examine discourses’ repressions and obstructions. Post-modernist scholars such as Lyotard (1979) originated the discourse of ‘grand-narratives,’ which are the enormous-scale philosophies and theories of the world; including knowledge framed by science, essentialism, history and the possibility of unconditional freedom. Post-modernism can be described as being incredulous toward grand-narratives. Because knowledge is the most imperative commodity in today’s world, those who control knowledge govern the world. So the ‘universal knowledge’ about sciences, sexualities, religions and lives was spread to reach global citizens. Lyotard (1979) also suggested that in post-modernism, theory is incapable of completely explaining or even reflecting so-called ‘reality.’ Academic is claimed to merely be a ‘language-game,’ and the belief that modern ‘systems theory’ can predict the phenomenon is only imaginary. The alleged system theories attempted to enlighten academic matters and technology but they failed to reach ontology. Modernism claims homogeneity between human beings and systems – systems that are identifiable and predictable. Later, as post-modern scholars intervened, systems theory was revealed as decrepit.

The more we acknowledge about societies, the more uncertainties and unpredictability we find; gender and transgenderism in every historical era could be obvious pattern of uncertainty and unpredictability due to its fluidity. Lyotard (1979) explicated the condition of postmodernity as a state of conversion. Old beliefs have lost their legitimacy. The language and semiology utilized to embody universal knowledge and universalizing theory is merely a language-game. Due to the sciences, advancements and technologies since WWII, he provoked modern cultural thought and claimed that humankind has expanded the grand-narratives. Knowledge and systematic theories, which construct the set rules to interrogate phenomena and epistemology, cannot be fully trusted. The attempt to create a rule demolishes knowledge. Knowledge itself has an uncertain character; it is unpredictable, disordered, differentiated and contested. Therefore, theorizing or reasoning knowledge is erroneous and paralogy. He refers to knowledge and rules as narratives. To validate Lyotard's argument, then, universal scientific knowledge such as the circumnavigation of the planet around the sun, biology of sex and chromosome, or knowledge in social science such as minimum wage for workers are legitimized or prescribed from the states and authorities. Especially, the reconstructions of knowledge of new scientific discovery after scientific revolutions of the 19th century, the reconstructions still and continue to acquire. Thus these 'narratives' are 'discourses.' The grand narratives derive from construction of knowledge by estimating ideas and concrete explanation on beings. Grand-narratives were ide-legitimated in the 19th century, as Friedrich Nietzsche claimed everything is nihilism. In postmodernity, the narratives on people's liberation or the absence of social class no longer exist. People in the post-modern era have more transparent communication, especially with the rise of social media in recent decades. The recognition of our aspirations, diversity, differences, and compatibility has emerged. Post-modernism is framed by a profusion of 'micro-narratives.' People realize that fluid social information is not only a commodity that can produce profits, but also a means to control the masses. Hence, 'Grand-narratives' are just methods in which states and authorities choose to articulate to control their masses. Information and knowledge in postmodernity stands for implementation of power. Nevertheless the epistemology of knowledge supports our contention that beings and things are incommensurable. So, as the grand-narratives and language-game has collapsed, how about the discourse of racial and gendered 'essentialist-inborn identity politics'?

‘Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’ (Said, 1978, p.3).

Said (1978) hypothesizes the non-existence of ‘the Orient’ identities. The Orient discourse was constructed by a Eurocentrist search for exoticism and fetishism of the Orients. Eurocentrism creates ‘represented Orientalism identity’ by ignoring the fact that non-Western countries have their own modernity and cultural hybridity within different regions. Identity is a vision that is unable to reflect any reality. Based on Said’s theory, a post-colonialist Loomba (2005) argues that the notion of ‘essentialist-identities’ do not mirror any genuine past, it is instead reproduced by anti-colonial struggles themselves in an attempt to analyze and justify the conflict between imperialists and the colonized as a binary opposition between active and passive actors. I argue that a similar pattern occurs in LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, transgender and Queer) movements. The Western notion of inborn-essentialist collective identity on transgenderism or gender is often reproduced by the LGBTQ groups themselves, to legitimize their so-called ‘natural’ behaviors and sexualities on social and political levels. In order to gain acceptance and equality from the ‘superiors’ – the ‘hetero-normativity’ norm and cisgender people (people who practice their own gender, in relation with the sex they were assigned at birth). Binary opposition analysis on conflict legitimizes identity-politics movements. While in reality, the essentialist-identity politics fail to reflect their ‘decentered subjects’ identities. This failure crucially oppresses diversified individuals to defer to ‘collective identity’ practices (Loomba, 2005). Dissimilar individuals are later pushed into the same box, for instance, Thai transgender women’s collective identity is stereotyped as those who are attracted to masculinity, beautiful, nymphomaniac, violent, deviant or mentally disordered. But in reality, there is no such collective identity.

Identity-politics is the harmonious combination of ‘discourse’ and ‘practices.’ The combination formulates production process of ‘active subject’ (Hall, 2000). By merging this Hall’s (2000) paradigm with post-colonial discourses, we will discover that essentialism and identity-politics’ nostalgic past are the ‘key discourse’ which

produce ‘identity image’ (Salisa, 2013). Meanwhile, the key discourse perceives conflicts within binary opposition means by the set passive and active actors. This process is reproduced by the anti-colonial struggles and post-colonial queers, and it is a continuous ‘practice’ of essentialist identity-politics to legitimize, maintain and replicate the nostalgic identity-politics. The essentialist identity-politics need to be explored and deconstructed, especially on the discourse and practices of unreal identity-politics, because essentialist identity-politics is a product of knowledge and social construction (Salisa, 2013). I will later employ a gender and post-colonial perspective to criticize claims of an inborn-essentialist identity. As well as, explain how this inborn-essentialist identity discourse was constructed and how it is irrelevant to reality in the periods when the essentialist-identity discourse was contextualized. Moreover, this chapter will illustrate how ‘practices’ of essentialist identity-politics can be destructive to individuals’ identities within the name of ‘collective identity.’ Furthermore, the chapter will look at how the practices of those who promote the idea of collective identity psychologically and socially affect Kathoeyes in negative ways. I term this procedure ‘discourse of acceptance through the beauty myth and perfect femininity’, which I further discuss in detail in *chapter eight*.

Orientalism, a product of Euro-centrism, seeks out romanticism, exoticism, fetishism, daunting memories and ‘exotic’ experiences from the Far East. In Said’s view, Orientalism represents the Middle East as, in the beginning of the Modern period; Europe mainly interacted with the Middle East. The term Far East Orientalism was later applied during the Cold War period when the United States was greatly involved with China, Japan, Korea and Southeast Asian Countries. Said (1978) argues that Oriental identity is rooted in a binary opposition between Occidentalism and Orientalism -- in other words, between the colony and the imperial. The Oriental identity helps Westerners with their own identification process in identifying and constructing their ‘civilized’ Western identity. Oriental identity correspondingly contributes to the legitimization of European colonialism. Said’s argument conforms with that of phenomenology philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who critiqued dominant French philosophical trends during the 1960s and 1970s. In *Structuralism*, Ricoeur (1992) proposes his idea about the identity of ‘I.’ The ‘I’ identity is built from the rejection of ‘category,’ by segregating how ‘our group’ is

different from those other categories. Meanwhile, 'otherness' is understood and recognized from category construction and unified definition. If we consider the sources of 'category' that Europeans attempt to thought-manipulate and mirror about people from the East, we will discover a phenomenon about which Said theorized. The gnostic knowledge about the East that is taught in European Universities, or established information in classical novels that construct the 'common sense' of Westerners on Oriental identity, was initiated during pre-modern era. The pre-modern era was when knowledge of the Oriental world was recorded and spread by Western travelers, explorers and Christian merchandisers. After the routes to the East were rediscovered, storytellers often portrayed the Orient as territories of ancient times: it was a place full of 'unique and exotic' stories, a land of hedonists. These described narratives became the 'fantasy' Westerners desire. Whereas within these paradises, the image of Orientals was drawn through religious war experiences between West and East, the biased picture of Orientals or Arabs are painted as 'gullible, devoid of energy and initiative, much given to fulsome flattery, intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals' (Said, 1978, pp. 38-39) or 'their disordered minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately that roads and pavements are made for walking; Orientals are inveterate liars, they are 'lethargic and suspicious,' and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of Anglo-Saxon race' (Said, 1978, pp.38-39). This negative image has become the discourse of the Orientals in constructed Western knowledge.

According to Said (1978), Orientalism is not a mere expressive and representative of immoral 'Western' imperialist approach to govern and control the 'Oriental' world. For Said, Orientalism is not just a political matter that is passively mirrored by institutions, culture or scholarship. Instead, Orientalism is referred to as

a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philosophical texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also the whole series of 'interests' which by such means as scholarly discovery, philosophical reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than express, a certain will or intension to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a

manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, value), power moral (as with ideas about what 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we' do.' (p.12)

Moreover, he points out that during the 18th century, while Western imperial power expanded over the East through colonization, discourse on the exotic Orient was not only famous among travelers and explorers. Even European historians, anthropologists, linguists use the Orientalism discourse as the base principle for 'Oriental Studies.' Said hypothesizes that, in the studies of anthropologists and historians of Oriental Studies, their interest in Eastern culture or history separated from contemporary Eastern societies, which contain 'modern' or contemporary elements, but rather focus on an imagined past, which is where they are more likely to find 'exoticism' or ancient curiosities and scripture. Meanwhile, European linguists concentrate on studying Oriental language structure by comparing actual Eastern texts with model grammars of Western languages. Such scholars also suggested the inferiority of exotic Eastern linguistic structures. These Euro-centric studies emphasize and reproduce discourse on the inferiority of Eastern latency and racial intelligence. In other words, Western knowledge misrepresents the real Eastern epistemology with a nostalgically charming Oriental image. The Oriental inferiority discourse has been reproduced and legitimized over and over by scholarships that claim 'science.' Thus, Oriental identities do not reflect the real Orientalism. On the contrary, it is constructed by Euro-centric vision and prejudice; we can see that Orientalism knowledge ignores mentioning the great Byzantine civilization or the Ottoman period with some agenda, while reproducing the pictures of backwardness and barbarianism (Said, 1978) of the East. Thai identity was constructed and stereotyped by the 'developed' Western world as a gay paradise, an open space towards sexuality, and a territory for sex tourism. In the meanwhile, Thai people are painted as kindhearted, roguish, indolent and Thai women as sexual objects of desire,

gold-diggers, craving for white old men and 'obedient' housewives. These more or less negative and generalized identities are reproduced by Western academy and media. Unfortunately, Thai governments for several decades have also rebooted nationalism on a shallow level by producing a national image of Thailand as a land of smiles, representing the country as a paradise, highlighting the 'beauty' of 'exotic Thai women' as they pursue their economic agenda.

Western/constructed Oriental identity is the focal element that assists the construction of Western identity itself (Said, 1978). For Westerners, if the Orientals are illogical, the Europeans are rationales. If the Orient is uncivilized, lustful and indolent, Europe is civilized, self-controlled and ethically hard-working. If the Orient is immobile, Europe is progressive and developed. And if the Orient is feminine, Europe itself is masculine (Loomba, 2005). The 'self' and Western identities are constructed from Orientalist identity rejection. The constructed superiority of Western identity has become a discourse to legitimize European imperialists in their quest to colonize the 'inferior' Orient, to reconcile the Easterners to colonization by the great Westerners, and to be grateful that the Great Ones acknowledge a 'burden' to bring civilization to Eastern societies. Later, the notion of Oriental identity from Said was developed by many post-colonialism scholars. Loomba (2005) proposes that Orientalist-constructed inferior images influence the perception and mentality of 'otherness' among the colonized. The studies themselves reinforce power relations on the ground between colonized and colonizers. Such as in Africa and India where Westerners studied and categorized ethnic groups by forming identity images for each ethnic groups for instance; the gentle Hindi people, Zulu the fighters, barbarous Turks, new world Cannibal or the rapist black men. This helped systemize and govern the ethnic groups to do appropriate works that suit their essential ethnic capacity, from agriculture, military, mine work or domestic servant. Nonetheless, Loomba acknowledges that these constructed inferior and superior images were not only the products of colonization.

Since Greek and Roman eras, Westerners have opined that 'others' are barbarous and described them as 'outsiders'; Even in the Christian bible, black skin color was represented as evil. Ham, Noah's wicked son, was black. In the middle ages and the pre-modern era, Christian identities were constructed in opposition to

and rejection of Muslim, Jewish and barbarians (Loomba, 2005 cited in Salisa, 2013).

Loomba (2005) remarks that after Westerners pushed an essentialist discourse and the identified ethnic groups in colonial world as ‘savage others,’ such discourses were reenacted and reproduced by anti-colonial groups themselves. She points to Gananath Obeyesekere’s 2005 work on Maori, which dispels the cannibalism myth that appeared in British explorers’ journals. He hypothesized that European belief of cannibalism among the Maori could have been a self-fulfilling prophecy. They believe what they choose to believe without having tangible evidence. Accordingly, this desire to learn about ‘exotic aliens’ pushed British travelers to interview locals everywhere they went, asking if those locals were cannibals. Obeyesekere (2005) suggests that, based on questions received from British travelers, both cannibals and non-cannibals ultimately imagined that British travelers asked such questions because the British themselves must be cannibals. The locals’ defended themselves against powerful, fully-armed travelers by answering that, yes, they were cannibals. Throughout the years that the Maori were colonized by the British, the discourse on cannibalism, an expression of ancient Maori identity, was reproduced by the West. Cannibalism has been resurrected and practiced as a reaction to British colonialism.

The same explanation could be given for Sati, a Hindu ritual where widow Indian women – either by choice or, more likely, as a result of psychological or even physical social pressure – immolate themselves on their husbands’ pyre or kill themselves in another way after their husbands’ death. Mani (1987) studied this misogynistic and dehumanizing ritual and learned that, historically, it had been a local custom practiced by (and demanded of) women in a monarchy caste in and around Kolkata, in eastern India. Only less than 0.1 percent of the Indian population participated in the Sati ritual, but the importance of Sati was magnified during the British colonial period. From its first days in India, British authorities (first those of the British East India Company and, later, representatives of the Crown) actively constructed knowledge about India, which was used as a foundation for resource extraction from and, later, rule over India. In process of creating knowledge, British authorities interviewed Indian scholars (Pandits) or high-caste people who specialized in Hinduism. British authorities asked them if the Sati ritual is recorded

in Hindi scripture or not and, from the responses, learned that even though the scriptures do not demand Sati, they acknowledge existence of the ritual and allow it to be performed on some occasions. Despite this knowledge base, British national documents falsely report that Sati is a ritual in Hinduism. In this case, we can see a Eurocentric vision that unapologetically emphasizes what it considers to be 'exotic' and 'savage' elements of the Orient, as Said (1978) suggests. This practice is significant because it is pursued by those who control the process of knowledge construction. Pandits as a group of upper castes were esteemed as Hindu representatives. It could be concluded that, far beyond Sati, more general understandings of social inequality and the caste system in India were reproduced, legitimized and strengthened as a part of the colonial experience.

While Thai citizens are proud to report that their national sovereignty has not only withstood but indeed overwhelmed efforts at colonization, I argue that such reports misrepresent historical fact. Even though Thailand has never been formally and militarily colonized by the West, Thai people and culture have been 'crypto-colonized' (see Herzfeld, 2002). Next, I will make the connection between colonial influence and the construction of gender.

Feminist post-colonialists such as Mies (1980) and Mani (1987) argue that colonial social construction significantly affected relationships between males and females in colonized areas. As colonization decreased native males' rights in the public sphere, it psychologically stimulated more domestic violence in private. Many men claimed more power within household space, and buttressed what they described as their rightful position above women as a condition that is purely consistent with their new (that is, newly constructed) understanding of ancient culture. Crossing over to India, Mies also presented the Sati custom as a ritual resurrected by native men who had been suppressed by colonial society. Especially after British law prohibited Sati in 1813, the number of ritual human sacrifices significantly increased. In other words, Sati became collective expression towards 'essentialist-identity' that natives performed to protect their own ancient culture and to resist British colonization. In many cases, the Sati ritual was forced on widows by their husbands' families. Indian women involuntarily sacrifice their lives to resist and ridicule colonizer's (British) powerlessness when it came to implementing a policy the British held dear: protecting Indian women's lives from social ills imposed by

great culture and ‘Indian-ness.’ By demanding Sati of widows, those who resisted colonialism aimed to communicate their message: Indian people, not invading aliens, define their own lives, bodies and death (Loomba, 1993). Therefore, it is noteworthy that even though Sati ritual was resurrected as a form of native resistance against imperialists, this form of resistance itself oppressed and dehumanized women, who in many ways have been victims of identity-politics discourse.

Essentialist identity discourse was used to indoctrinate captive populations. It powerfully influenced native understandings of self-recognition and reproduced constructed, essentialist identities. Ultimately, the unreal essentialist identity leads to internal oppression of people within their own communities or nations, in the name of the ‘past.’ A post-structuralist leader of the Subaltern intellectual movement, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests that oppressed and stigmatized essentialist identities are crystallized productions of constructed knowledge that has been elucidated by colonialism, combined with natives’ traditions as interpreted by social elites from former colonial social structures. But essentialist identities were adapted to explain and apply in the society as if it is Indian collective multi-culture. In this, nobody else but social elites from the former colonial structure could gain benefits from such essentialist-identity construction (Spivak, 2010). It is noticeable from Sati custom that in mixing patriarchy and imperialism, women’s voices have been muted between existences of unreal essential-identity/modern social structure, and natives’ cultural tradition/civilization process.

When it comes to essentialist identity politics, sexuality and gender play visible roles as substantial means to construct societies, institutions, cultures and humankind. Sex falls in an area that overlaps biology, expression, emotion, thought, or given value and meanings of bodies and sexual behaviors. Sex is both tangible and intangible. Sexology was a new topic during the 19th century. Before that it was not widely mentioned in academia because sex was perceived as a technique (human intercourse) intended for a single end: human reproduction. Sex understood in any other ways was prohibited by states and presented as sinful by religious leaders (Bland and Doan, 1994). Century-Nineteenth scientists significantly provoked such perceptions of gender and sexuality. In his influential *Psychopathia Sexualis: eine Klinisch-Forensische Studie*, Krafft-Ebing (1886 cited in Duangwises, 2014b) explains the physiology of sex as inborn-essentialism and argues that there are innate,

essential differences between men and women. He illustrates differences between the sexes as natural and biological, such as women being gentle and men strong. Further, Krafft-Ebing suggests that genders of men and women are determined by binary sexes, sexuality is sexual desire, and such a desire is a natural mechanism that ensures the continuation of the human species. In this essentialist construction, humans and animals are born with certain traits as well as hormones that induce social behaviors. These traits are used to explain phenomena such as why there are many more men in science and technology than women, why women are more suited to caretaker and domestic work, and so on.

Social sex theory is from the Modernism school, which reviews sex through 'objectivity' dimension that relates to genital system, reproductive organs, sexual hormones and body mechanisms that cause sexual behavior. These sorts of studies fall are within the rubrics of sexology. Sexologists tried to organize and categorize sexual behavior and sexual feelings. Sex became something to be measured and controlled. And then classification of humans' sexes arose: male, female and hermaphrodite, or sexual feelings such as heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual. The classification constructed a gulf between 'natural sex' and 'unnatural sex.' As a result, sexes that do not fit male and female norms, including opposite expressions of behavior and feeling of sex assigned at birth, have been explained as abnormalities or mental disorders (Duangwises, 2014b). Meanwhile, sociologists, feminists, and gender equality activists have applied scientific knowledge to legitimize non-male/non-female genders by arguing that transgender and homosexuality are natural. For example, Magnus Hirschfeld (translated by Lombardi-Nash, 2000) has used science to prove homosexuality. Clearly, 'scientific' methods, research processes, and argumentation dominate global constructions of both reality and knowledge of sex, as presented by both sexual oppressors and those who glorify sexual pluralism.

We have to reconsider using notions of gender and sexuality to explain humans' sexual experiences because, despite western penetration during colonial and post-colonial periods, different societies have different perceptions and sexual categories. Some societies have not defined sexual feeling or desire. In some, sexual orientations are not counted as identity. Some do not judge gender roles from sex. And some societies define more sexes than just male and female. Using imported concepts of gender and sexuality might cause misunderstandings. Therefore, to

understand human sexuality, the influence of Western scientific knowledge on explanations of sex should be taken into account in other non-western societies. It should be noted that today's western understanding of gender and sexuality was produced in the late 19th century, and it is not a universal reality or essentialism.

In Thai queer studies, several scholars have pointed out the negative influence of Western ideologies on Thai sexual culture and gender. The impact has been more intense in emphasizing male-female gender binary than it has been in segregating homosexuality from heterosexuality. Over the past two centuries, there have been various Western influences on Thailand. However, the country neither closely follows Western norms on sexuality nor introduces laws against homosexuality. For much of the modern period, male homosexuality has been criminalized in the United States and UK. It is therefore important, when mentioning Western influences on Thailand, to underscore that Thai sexual culture and gender resisted Western hetero-normativity. At the same time, however, Thailand has also applied Western binary gender norms (Duangwises and Jackson, 2013). By identifying Asia's historical, cultural and religious complexity, historians and anthropologists such as Saskia Wieringa, Lenore Manderson, Margaret Jolly, Gilbert Gerdt and Peter Jackson exposed how eroticized relationships and cross-cultural experiences of homosexuality have been essentialized when European or Western classifications of gender and sexualities are applied to Asian societies (Reyes and Clarence-Smith, 2012). Many Asian queer scholars have criticized Foucault's (1988) *The History of Sexuality* for what they describe as its Eurocentric and universalizing framework (see Jackson, 1997a). Jackson (1997a) points out cultural limitation of Foucaultian analysis. He finds Foucault's approach unhelpful when it comes to analyzing contemporary Thai perceptions of sexual difference, for example; definite Thai notion of *phet*, which signifies many configurations of sexual differences and genders. Same-sex sexuality and transgenderism history in the Dutch East Indies have been more or less ignored by Foucaultian scholars who study Indonesia's colonial period (Peletz, 2006). Peter Jackson has persuasively argued that Asian systems of gender orientations and sexual identities need to be understood autonomously from Western theories. He also argues the prominence of problematizing Eurocentric understanding of sexuality and cultivating consciousness in specificity of historical Asian systems of sex and gender dissimilarity (Reyes and

Clarence-Smith , 2012). The Thai state imposed intensification of a binary, feminine-masculine construction of gender, linking all of this to the concept of ‘civilization’ (in Thai: *arayatham*) during the Phibunsongkram period in twentieth century’s middle decades (for a detailed analysis of this period, see *Introduction* and *Chapter four*). Western queers studies have moved far from Phibunsongkram’s emphasis on bio-medical aspects of homosexuality, along with projection of the ‘condition’ as being criminally deviant. Paradoxically, Thai queer studies is highly attentive to and critical of gender and sexual minorities’ issues as they were imposed by Phibunsongkram. This imposition constructed an intensified Western gender binary than from same-sex sexuality’s criminalization (Duangwises and Jackson, 2013).

It does not help the Thai transgender population to gain acceptance, neither as normal people in the eyes of society nor as legally equal in the eyes of the law, when Thai transgender women and some groups of Thai trans-activists promote the idea of being transgender as some kind of inborn-essentialism or natural biology. Thai society still does not accept that sexual orientation can diverge from gender identity. Although they are understood as another class of men, Kathoey have been socially constructed as psychological women trapped in male bodies. This condition, in other words, is perceived to be a form of ‘gender deviance.’ Kathoey are still categorized as male due to being born physically male even while they insist their trans-essentialist identity-politics. Heterosexual Thai transgender women (Male-to-female transgenders who are attracted to men) put a strain on a group of Thai lesbian transwomen known as *Kathoey-les* (กะเทยเลส), that is, male-to-female transgender women who are attracted to females. I conducted in-depth interviews with sixty Kathoey, led focus group discussions, and engaged in discourse analysis of Thai conventional and social media. I found that Thai trans-lesbians are marginalized and condemned by trans-heterosexuals for being impediments to ‘LGBTQ equal rights.’ As one respondent explained:

‘Being Kathoey is already hard. People think Kathoey have mental disorder for not living like men. But these Kathoey lesbians make us sound more mental. If they like women, they are not Kathoey. They are just ugly cross-dressing men.’ - Jibby, Bangkok

Broadcasts of a Thai trans-lesbian group led by Piyadhorn Suvarnvasi in 2014 gained widespread attention and sparked controversial debates on Thai conventional and social media. Not only were they regarded negatively by mainstream society, Kathoey-les communities experienced social exclusion by ‘mainstream’ or, so to speak, ‘natural’ and essentialist Kathoey. Heterosexual Kathoey communities double-stigmatize and denounce Kathoey-les as a group of transgender women with mental sickness, or as trans-women who cannot find male partners due to their ‘ugliness.’ They paint an even more negative image of Kathoey-les as posing a threat to ‘normal’ women: for example, trans-lesbians or men who claim to be trans-les might engage in sexual harassment against women in a women’s toilet. The entire Kathoey community would be affected negatively, if such an event were to happen. Currently, there is an ongoing double-homophobia and trans-prejudice against trans-lesbians within Kathoey communities, as they are constructed as ‘unnatural’ and ‘deviant,’ and this construction is perceived to be plausible by those who buy into the transgender essentialist identity-politics approach. While transgenderism is tolerated but not accepted by Thai normative society (Winter, 2011), Thai heterosexual transgender women (male-to-female transgenders who are attracted to men) discriminate against Kathoey-les (lesbian transgender women).

Essentialist identity-politics exacerbate discrimination. On top of that, it also double or triple stigmatize minorities of minorities such as people with nonconforming gender, transgender sex workers, non-white transgender immigrants, people who identify as ‘queer’ (which is a category that includes a range of sexual identities that do not conform with hetero-normative expectations), and more. The case of lesbian Kathoeyes in Thai society is emblematic of this problem. Essentialist identity-politics failed to bring real equality for all and it needs to be deconstructed, a point that I will emphasize later in this chapter.

3.2. Essentialism and the Inferiors

In light of identity-political practice, an evaluation of the relationship between colonialism and essentialism yields a significant contradiction: while Western nations claimed that ‘civilizing’ native people was their sacred duty, at the same time they constructed a static and timeless ‘otherness’ identity. From this contradiction, post-colonialist scholar Homi Bhabha hypothesized that, in practice,

constructing static identities emphasizes the power of the colonizers over the colonized. Such practices trapped colonized victims in an image that presented them as fixed and immutable. In other words, for colonizers, it is not important to construct the reality. But it is important to establish a regime of truth (Bhabha, 1994). The difference between ‘reality’ and ‘regime of truth’ is a keystone to be examined in this chapter. In chapter eight ‘*Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks*’, I will also examine them within the contexts of my work and Fanon’s *Black Skins, White Masks*.

Frantz Fanon, a first-generation post-colonial theorist, established a framework that allows for psychological studies of colonized immigrants. In his seminal book *Black Skin, White Mask*,⁹ Fanon applies Lacanian psychoanalysis to analyze differences between ‘essentialist-identity’ as a regime of truth constructed by the Western world, and ‘uncertain identities’ or the real ‘self’ as understood by colonialism victims themselves. Fanon suggests that ‘regimes of truth’ are founded by linking them with individuals’ ‘natural body’— which in his work is black people. The uncertain identity of immigrants became a reflection of the oppressed people’s ‘souls’ (Fanon, 2008). The contradiction between natural body and soul of colonialism victims has a long-term effect on ‘self’ construction, as well as leaving psychological ‘inferiority issues.’ In this research, I compare Fanon’s work ‘*Black Skin, White Masks*’, which analyses the dehumanization and racism experienced by black French immigrants to Europe, with my interpretation of Thai Kathoey experiences in Europe sixty years later. I found significant common ground between my interviewees and Fanon’s, even though his work was written in 1952. Thailand and its people are very proud of the country’s sovereignty and autonomy from the imperialists, and thus have different historical origins than Fanon’s French immigrants in Europe had. Despite this fundamental distinction, however, I found that the cultural ideology and inferiority complex toward the European world and European people, as expressed by my Kathoey respondents living in Europe, is very similar to those of Fanon’s black French immigrant respondents.

I engage with Fanon’s theory in a comparison form, in order to profoundly comprehend his analysis, as well as to critically evaluate his work. Fanon draws heavily on psychoanalysis; his key method to analyze his research data is through Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Thus, Fanon's interpretation of Lacanian psychoanalysis communicates directly with my work. Lacan's three stages of identity formation was engaged in my work, to understand and analyse my research findings on Kathoey's self-perception, aesthetic myth, how whiteness give them higher position in the society, European men as Kathoey's racialized objects of desire, their 'queer others' status, inadequacy participants feel in the white world, how some Kathoeyes look down on their own race and desire to be white women, or how the whiteness and perfect femininity become the symbol of goodness. Specifically, in an argument structured by Fanon's interpretation of Lacan's three identification processes, I have shown resemblances between my participants and Fanon's. Direct quotes from both sets of interlocutors suggest a common colonized/crypto-colonized mentality, and a common inferiority complex.

Having said all of this, my work is neither a replication of Fanon's, nor is it a direct application of his framework to a new empirical domain. Rather, in *Chapter Eight*, I build on Fanon's Lacan-inspired approach. I extend the analysis from context focused overwhelmingly on racism to one that also explores the sexuality and gender-based violence faced by my respondents in Europe.

As we examine the construction process of oppressed groups' uncertain identities, we find similarities to the expectations of Jacques Lacan's theory on 'identification' of infants' development at the 'mirror stage,' the first of Lacan's three stages of identity formation. The 'mirror stage' describes how infants recognize their selves through 'mirror-imaging,' or through interaction with other people. Then they construct 'self' by imitating an 'ideal-I' image, or through imitation of images of other people they see (Lacan, 2006). For transgender women who are born and grow up in places where society is male-female binary opposition/oriented, the image of hetero-normativity is the mirror image that gives the sense of self-recognition they use in their self-construction. Therefore, a Kathoey's sense of her identity is not different from how cisgender people see themselves; the gender pluralism.

I know since my early years that I was a girl. I liked to play with only other girls because I prefer playing with Barbie dolls and those girly things, unlike other boys; I loved to wear skirts, to put on make-up and dress like a woman.

I have been femininely gentle and sensitive all my life. I never think, feel, behave or act like a man. [...] I'm sure I'm a woman trapped in a wrong body since birth. I was born to be a woman. – Jenny, Belgium

Congruent with my research result, Fanon (2008) finds that, for black people who born and raised in white, Western society, an image of Western civilization becomes the mirror image of their self-recognition and construction of self. So how they perceive themselves is not different from how Western whites see themselves (white selves).

I am a white man; I was born in Europe; all my friends are white. There weren't eight Blacks in the town where I lived. I think in French. French is my religion. I am a European - do you understand? – I'm not a 'Negro,' and to prove it I'm going away as a civil servant to show the real 'Negroes' the difference between them and me. (Fanon, 2008. p.51)

Moreover, the colonial context that projects 'otherness' on Blacks is reproduced on and on through cultural industries including the inducement of fear and hatred among white Westerners towards Blacks. This projection is also rooted in the 'selves' of Black people:

Me, a Negress? Can't you see I'm almost white. I hate niggers. Niggers stink. They're dirty and lazy. Don't ever mention Niggers to me. (Fanon, 2008. p. 32)

Lacan (2006) also discusses a second stage of self-identification: as individuals perceive 'self' through 'mirror-image,' they experience contradiction when they interact with the 'third person.' Third persons provide feedback that is inconsistent with their imagined 'symbolic order', and their essentialist body identity creates limitations in their ability to understand and engage with the order they understand via third person feedback. This limitation obstructs them from reaching their 'imaginary' and they are unable to attain their 'real self-identity.' Thus, their unaccomplished and unfulfilled dreams form their 'object of desire' as how white Western identity became object of desire for black immigrants in Europe in Fanon's study. However some feminist scholars criticize Fanon for being sexist, such as Tracey Denean Sharpley-Whiting who mentioned that his work "dismiss his

relevance to feminism and indict his thoughts as not simply 'sexist' nor masculinist or phallogocentric, a substantially more accurate assessment, but misogynist" (Denean Sharpley-Whiting, 1998, p. 90).

Fanon explained that after immigrant blacks in Europe faced the strong racism that is prevalent in European society, the immigrants discovered the extent to which their black essentialist identity is a Western construction. This construction pushes them into an essentialist interpretation trap that forbids them from engaging with society on the basis of the white identity they believe they have. So, in the second stage of self-identification, an essentialist body identity or essentialist identity develops into a limitation for black people in Europe, and this leads to self-reflection and pressure to reconsider what their identity 'really' is. European racist society imagines a universe that is in binary opposition: black/white, savage/civilized, masculine/feminine and superior/inferior. Furthermore, Fanon argues that the real 'self' of black individuals is trapped between white essentialist body identity and black essentialist body identity. As a result, individuals who are trapped in such essentialist identities transform the 'whiteness' that now understand they can never accomplish into 'object of desire.'

... all these frenzied women of color, frantic for a white man, are waiting. And one of these days they will catch themselves not wanting to look back [to black men], while dreaming of 'a wonderful night, a wonderful lover, a white man' (Fanon, 2008. p.31)

Fanon concludes that a black woman's desire to marry a white man is a response from a psychological mechanism which somehow reflects the need to 'deracialize' their own race into white (Fanon, 2008).

... and when she asks herself whether he is handsome or ugly, she writes: 'All I know is that he had blue eyes, blond hair, a pale complexion and I loved him. (Fanon, 2008. p.25)

From the two stages of self-identification that Fanon analyzed, the 'subject' was trapped between a 'essentialist identity' that is linked to a symbolic order on their bodies and their real self, which has an 'ambiguous identity' that is trapped between a desire to be white and the reality of their black skin. Fanon next discusses

how racist society in Europe has fueled the issue: the racist social norm's practices adhere to a symbolic order that is based on skin color – an essentialist identity.

Fanon (2008) proceeds to elucidate the third stage of self-identification: engagement with racist society in Europe, which focuses on how 'inferiority' and 'superiority' complexes are constructed in relation to individually essentialist body identities. For him, the inferiority complex derives from tensions and conflict between 'essentialist identity' and the real 'souls' of individuals in racist society. Hence, even as an essentialist body identity is used to establish an 'inferiority complex,' such a complex pushes black immigrants toward 'psychic disintegration.' They have only two options: 'turn white, or disappear' (Fanon, 1986 cited in Salisa, 2013, p.80). We can see the desire of Black women to marry white European men. These women imagine that such a marriage will deracialize them and allow for access into the 'white world.' Yet, regardless of how hard these women tried, the society they wish to enter continues to view these women through the essentialist lens society itself has constructed: black skin. As Fanon expressed, for many Western white people, 'niggers' are nothing other than 'niggers' (Fanon, 2008).

In other words, the inferiority complex pushes black immigrants in Europe to try to get into white society to seek for 'acceptance.' However, in the context of power relation between the colonized and imperialist, acceptance creates a 'superiority complex' within the white Europeans. Such a complex is reflected through the mistrust, fear or sympathy white people have regarding non-white people. Drawing on psychiatric models, Fanon (2008) concludes that this phenomenon contributes to a neurotic response by black people. The rude reaction of black people when they are complimented by white people shows a schizophrenia that derives from their inferiority complex. The essentialist identity image of blacks as barbarous, savage and mentally deficient is the product of colonial racist practices. Living in such an environment through all three stages of identity formation can lead to both individual and collective schizophrenia of immigrants whose ambiguous identity is stuck far from the nodes of essentialist binary constructions. Moreover, he criticizes essentialist identity politics as perpetuating the myth of individuals' essentialist bodies and urges, in response, that 'decentered subjects' are brought in as the center of study. In this way, the 'self' of individuals are not deduced from essential identity categories. The perspective of decentered subjects allows for the

debate between ‘essentialist identity’ and ‘autonomy’ to proceed on a morally and ethically neutral battlefield – in other words, between ‘regime of truth’ and an individual’s ‘soul.’ The singularity of identity is vigorously rejected. Because the construction of individual identification is a process, it is always accumulated and multiplied over time (Salisa, 2013).

Building on Fanon’s work, Bhabha (1994) hypothesizes that, in a process where black immigrants see white Westerners as ‘objects of desire’; they ‘mimic’ white identity. In comparison with Fanon’s work, Bhabha argues that immigrants in Europe reject the construction of power-relations between the colonized and imperialists; immigrants reject the idea that whites are superior and people of color are inferior. They demand reformation so that they can be treated as equal to white Westerners and, in the process, to regain their self-esteem.

I support Bhabha’s (1994) hypothesis that, even though the mimicry attempt of the suppressed groups is to create compromise within racist society, so that non-white and gender nonconforming immigrants can find space for a meaningful existence in society, such mimicry in a racist society is a courageous challenge of signifier structures and regimes of truth that have been formed to preserve power structures within society. Mimicry can be seen as an honest response to external efforts at categorization and hierarchy of cultures, races and histories. These categories had been formed by Western nations as a means to classify humans in a way that would legitimize and perpetuate colonial power relations. Thus, a question is raised: if civilization is not a specific inborn trait of white Westerners... does their claim of racial superiority provide a moral foundation for continued oppression, discrimination and governance? This question is significant because ‘mimicry’ challenges the power structure of colonialism and societies that have constructed the idea of white supremacy societies (Salisa, 2013, p.84). Moreover, mimicry not only reflects oppressed people’s rejection towards essentialist identity, which is a regime of truth constructed by the West, but also empowers oppressed people by adjusting their status from ‘object of study’ to ‘active subject’ who can change, apply and resist the Western context as they desire. In other words, mimicry projects an individual’s autonomous ability to determine their own destiny within unequal society (Bhabha, 1994).

The ‘unheard voice’ (Salisa, 2013, p.85) is concealed by practices of essentialist identity politics that were assembled by the Western regime of truth, and reproduced by anti-colonialism themselves. It is the ‘voice’ of the oppressed that rejects Euro-centric essentialist identity categories and also attempts to resist and negotiate colonial power structures. The works of Fanon (2008) and Bhabha (1994) concur that individual identities are not inborn or otherwise essentialist. Rather, individuals construct hybrid and ambiguous identities that are stuck ‘in-between’: the desire of non-white immigrants to be Western whites and limitation of signify structure on individuals’ bodies (Bhabha, 1994). For me, this is not only the incident of race, but also the individuals’ sexuality and gender to fit Western’s hetero-normative society. In harmony with Bhabha and Fanon, I agree that the real danger is in the practice of identity politics that aim to diminish variance within oppressed and subaltern groups and to minimize differences into fixed identity categories.

3.3. Identity Politics for Non-discriminatory Society

... me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow. – Toni Morrison, 1987

Essentialist identity politics obstructs equality and heightens discrimination, which might be based on race, gender, sexuality, disability, or any other socially constructed category. It builds boxes, such as hetero-normativity, or hierarchies, such as the one based on skin color, that alienate ‘others,’ marginalize people who do not fit into these boxes, and later aid in the construction of social myths that have, at best, a weak historical foundation. As we analyze assertions by the neo-leftists, post-modernists and post-structuralists who have been excessively criticizing identity politics as futureless, we observe that these scholars consider the identity concept to be a receptacle. Following Ricoeur (1992), the identity concept tries (and fails) to combine two contradicting elements: 1) ‘sameness identity; idem’ (Ricoeur, 1992 cited in Salisa, 2013, p.86), which is an essentialist identity that emphasizes on unified and durable similarity, including establishment between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ identity and 2) ‘selfhood identity; ipse’ idem’ (Ricoeur, 1992 cited in Salisa, 2013, p.86), a hybrid and ambiguous identity that derives from integration of various experiences and psychological development of individuals. For critics of identity politics, the first type of identity is a social construction and was produced

by Euro-centrism. It overlooks and oppresses an individual's self or, so to speak, the second type of identity. This is the main reason why these critics view identity politics as futureless. Therefore, as Salisa (2013) argues, bringing self identity back into identity politics is the only way to drive identity politics to better tomorrow.

In his classic work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon criticizes scholars influenced by the 'Hegelian dialectic' discourse, because the notion concentrates on dialectic identity as a singularity. It neglects individual's 'self.' Furthermore, such a dialectic detain individuals in an 'absoluteness' – in which he refers to a society where everyone's identities are identical in higher quality. Fanon criticizes Jean-Paul Sartre's Hegelian/existentialist approach to conflict-rejection relationships between essentialist identities of white Westerners and colonized black people. Sartre (1948, cited in Salisa, 2013) presented conflict between a 'thesis' that talks about natural superiority of white Westerners and its 'anti-theses', such as 'anti-racist racism' of the black person who rejects Western civilization in his quest for acknowledgement of black people's natural value, all within the conflicting context between colonialism/anti-colonialism. According to Sartre, this thesis/antithesis dialectic could lead to a 'synthesis', that is, a society without race or identity; ultimately, anti-racist racism will also disappear (Sartre, 1948 cited in Salisa, 2013). But for Fanon, Sartre only illustrated an opposition binary between the oneness of two identity groups. Fanon further explained that Sartre's conflict and discrimination will end only when the society reaches and achieves 'unify absolute of the sameness' state: or when the society without identity rejects the two opposing binary identities. Hence Sartre's work acknowledges neither the real 'selves' of various individuals' nor the possibility of social change being initiated by 'subjects' who have 'self-realization' (Fanon, 2008). Sartre's dialectic explanation of anti-colonialism, could be used to support the argument that analogous movements, at their core, necessarily accept the image of essentialist identity in a Euro-centric perspective. Such a perspective, that denies the 'self' at the individual level, will ultimately lead to an identity politics that emphasizes essentialism within groups and subjugates and reproduces victimization of some subgroups within identity groups. Drawn to its logical conclusion, post-colonial conflicts between imperialist identity versus colonized identity should have disappeared and society should have entered an era of modernity in which everyone is an equal citizen under the nation-state system. But in reality, under the modern

nation-state concept, the essentialist identity oppression towards individuals has not ended, and is even further fueled by normative social legitimation. Examples include Sati rituals in India, global post-colonial queer issues, and much more (Salisa, 2013).

Therefore, to step over limitations of identity as singular and futureless, Fanon (2008) suggests bringing back self-realized individuals who are willing to confront inequality in identity politics, because the self-realized individuals are the keys to succeed achieving their desired social changes. He argues that realization empowers subjects because it enables them to alter their status from objects of study to active subjects who convert their bodies into a form of power that later can be used in a revolution of structural relations. Fanon criticizes Sartre fighting approach as misleading and destined for failure, as Sartre only suggested constructed and intensely reproduced past, to tell individuals how they have been treated. For Fanon, by contrast, the past is something individuals can choose, check and balance, and then criticize and condemn it as much as they want. In other words, identity politics must not be the fetishize-the-past fight by using the past as an origin, method and the end-all in itself. On the contrary, the past should be constructed as a common reference that various individuals can to demonstrate social injustice; by communicating these injustices, such individuals can make other members of the society realize their 'selves' and motivate them to work collectively to solve injustice and discrimination issues (Fanon, 2008 cited in Salisa, 2013).

Contemporary post-colonialist scholars such as Bhabra and Margree (2010) have developed Fanon's notion. They argue that 'desire for the future' is what makes futuristic identity politics different from essentialist identity politics. In particular, they suggest that united identity can become a 'map of meaning' to which self-realized individuals can refer as they communicate with normative society about their stories and wounds from unjust social structures. Furthermore, 'desire for the future,' which is different from a painful past, can become a driver that pushes them to negotiate and receive social cooperation to solve discrimination problems. In this sense, desire-for-future is not an exclusive form of identity politics, but it includes and seeks support from variant groups including, those who are in a superior power as understood through the lens of current essentialist-based social constructs. They point to feminist movements as an example of successful desire-for-future identity politics (Bhabra and Margree, 2010). Bhabra and Margree (2010 cited in Salisa,

2013) also show that feminine identity as understood by feminist movements can be differentiated from essentialist identity politics, which draws a line between us and the other, because the feminist version includes a fight against the patriarchal social structure. Even though feminine identity is linked with the symbolic structure contained within female bodies, and feminism was formed as a retort against unjust social structures, including other identity movements, the feminist movements were established to expel binary opposition of conflict and construct power to female identity. The feminist movements demand an adjustment in gender power-relations in a way that gives as much equality to women and others genders as to men. Such an adjustment requires an attitude adjustment from men and other gender groups who benefit from the existing patriarchal social structure. So, the strategy of the feminist movement is to search for ally such as men and other groups. In other words, it is an 'inclusive politics' where everyone can take charge and play the role in negotiation and reformation. Unfortunately, feminism as not found common cause with transgenderism and, in practice, is sometimes critical of it. Many feminists, including such influential feminist scholars as Sheila Jeffreys and Janice Raymond, not merely exclude but sometimes proactively other transexuality and transgenderism. Some have argued that transgender women are not biological women since they are 'unnatural' because they lack the ability to reproduce. In the process, these feminist scholars reinforce and uphold the sexist binary and transphobia, especially when some (see Jeffreys, 1997a), argue that tran-sexuality and sex transformation surgery can be regard as violation of human rights. I argue that individuals should have the rights to choose their own gender and sex regardless of biological sex at birth and regardless of medical approvals or psychologist opinions. I note that transgender politics are harmonious to feminism and transgender and transsexual people challenge exploitive gender norms. Similar to feminist movements, once requirements of transgender politics are met, a power-relation adjustment whereby men, women, transgenders, gender queers and everyone else will be recognized as equal citizens, and the political relevance of concepts like gender, femininity and masculinity will ultimately diminish.

CHAPTER FOUR

Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Thailand

Thailand has a long history of homosexuality and transgenderism, but citizens' non-heteronormative behaviors and Kathoey demography were never been recorded officially by Thai state because Thai government sectors, Buddhist organizations, and educational institutions have perceived homosexuality and transgenderism as abnormal, immoral, bad image, and conflicting Theravada Buddhism³. In the contemporary era, transgender sub-cultures have become more acceptable in Thailand, but prejudiced social attitudes towards Kathoey continue to predominate. Moreover, until very recently, non-binary genders were not officially recognized in Thai law or public policy (History of Thai LGBTs, 2009 cited in UNDP AND USAID, 2014). Despite the country's reputation as a queer paradise and the enormous number of Kathoey citizens, the Thai parliament passed its first gender equality law only in 2015. Thailand seems to be proceeding in a positive direction, but much remains to be done in order to protect the rights of transgender people.

This chapter offers an overall analysis of the Kathoey experience in Thailand. The first section, *Hetero-normativity in Thailand*, outlines the socio-historical context of Thai sexual binary opposition. Next, *Kathoey State Discrimination in Thailand* assesses Thai legal and public policies regarding transgender people, both as understood by the legal and governmental communities and as experienced by Kathoey. Finally, *Kathoey Street Discrimination in Thailand* documents the forms of social discrimination and trans-prejudices that research participants reported experiencing on daily basis. Qualitative data from 25 interviews conducted in Thailand and 37 Kathoey, interviewed in London, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark, during a twenty-seven-month research tour is used to support arguments made throughout the chapter. More information of each participant is provided in the *appendix*.

³ There are two main schools of Buddhism; Theravada and Mahayana. Theravada Buddhism is widespread in South Asia, and it is stricter on doctrine and monastic discipline.

⁴ Unofficial translation by the Bureau of Technical and International Cooperation Secretariat General

4.1. Hetero-normativity in Thailand

Throughout Thai history, the dominant discourse on sexuality has relied upon and reinforced the idea of binary opposition of anatomically different bodies. The English-language discourse tends to construct biological bodies, which are male and female, and gendered bodies, which are masculine and feminine. The sex-gender distinction is more difficult to communicate in Thai, which does not have separate words for sex and gender. Thais use the words *phet-ying* (female sex) and *phet-chai* (male sex), which can refer to biological sex, gender identity, or both: *phet-ying* means both female and feminine, and *phet-chai* means both male and masculine. The words that improvide ‘*phet-ying/phet-chai*’ are ‘*phu-ying* (women) /*phu-chai* (men)’ or in short term ‘*ying/chai*.’ Therefore, in Thai, the English terms ‘sex’, ‘gendered identity’ and ‘sexuality’ are compressed into a single word, ‘phet’ (Taweedit, 2000). Individuals whose characteristics vary from this linguistic/cognitive system, which acknowledges only a male-female sexual binary, tend to be marginalized. This is the starting point of an explanation of the Kathoey experience in Thailand. Community members observe Kathoey’s divergence from a social norm perspective but, beyond this, their descriptions of what it means to be Kathoey become, at best, ambiguous and uncertain. This cognitive dissonance quickly spirals into claims that Kathoey are dirty or lack a moral compass (Saipan, 2001 cited in Chotiwan, 2014).

Theravada Buddhism is highly respected and influential in the Thai tradition and value system. The studies of contemporary Thai sexuality often examine Buddhist scriptures and practices which denote non-heteronormative behaviors (Jackson and Dejnakarindra, 2006). Jackson, a renowned Thai queer scholar stated that

whether or not Buddhism has been instrumental in influencing the development of the popular Thai notion, a very similar mixing of physical and psychological sex, gender behaviours and sexuality occurs both in the Pali terms *pandaka* and in the Thai term Kathoey. Both terms are parts of conceptual schemes in which people regarded as exhibiting physiological or culturally ascribed features of the opposite sex are categorized together. If Buddhism was not the source of the popular Thai conception of Kathoey then

at the very least it has reinforced a markedly similar pre-existing Thai cultural concept (Jackson, 1997a. cited in UNDP and USAID, 2014, pp.12–13).

During the Ayutthaya era (1351–1767 AD), King Trailok (r. 1448–1488) enacted a regulation that penalized same-sex behavior among royal courtiers. Transgressors were to be lashed 50 times with leather whips, their necks were to be tattooed and they were to be pilloried in the palace area (History of Thai LGBTs, 2009 cited in UNDP and USAID, 2014). This attitude reappeared much later, as the Thai state attempted to emulate its understanding of the West while trying to transform Thai culture and society in a variety of ways, including the construction of ‘modern’ political institutions. Beginning especially with the reign of King Rama V (r. 1868–1910), Western influence had a profound effect on Thai understandings of sexuality in addition to many other local traditions and ways of being that were revised to reflect European standards.

King Rama V issued a royal edict regarding how people must dress when foreign visitors are in town. It also prohibited inappropriate clothing such as men’s pants pulled too high, women being topless or naked children in public places. Those who did not follow the edict had to pay a fine of up to ten Thai baht. King Rama VI’s period (r. 1910–1925) was even more intensively influenced by Western sexuality. During his era, Western sexual morality ideas were explicitly linked to Thai social development, focusing on the family as the institution that should ground and discipline citizens ‘correct’ sexual behavior; sexually deviant behavior was interpreted to be a hindrance to national development (Loos, 1999). In 1913, still with an eye to Western standards, King Rama VI’s surname act was used to construct evidence of patrilineal descent. This institutionalization of patriarchy was followed in 1917 with a law that began to institutionalize a binary construction of gender: the law specified how women should be addressed. In particular, when addressing or referring to women, specific terms should be used, depending on the woman’s social class at birth, current social status and marital status. For instance, *nang-sao* is used for single women just like ‘Miss’ in English, and *nang* by itself describes married women in the same way as ‘Mrs.’ and *Khun-ying* equals ‘Lady’, that is, a woman of the nobility, either by birth or by marriage. In 1920, he enacted a law that specified titles for Thai children as well. *Dek-chai/ Dek-ying* (male-child/female-child) have

been used to describe male and female citizens who are under fifteen years of age ever since.

Thai clothing regulations were also obvious efforts at imposing a western appearance on the Thai public, as a first step toward a deeper imitation of western civilization. King Rama VI ordered female governmental officers to grow their hair long and style it as Western women do, as part of a broader expectation that they present themselves as role models for all Thai women. They also had to start wearing skirts, like proper Western women. In an article published by the newspaper *Dusit Smith*, King Rama VI insisted that ‘Thai women in every region must grow their hair long and wear skirts’ (Chulachakrabongse and Sirirat, 1995, p. 13, quoted in Pramoj na Ayutthaya, 2003.). This edict comported with notions of female status in a ‘civilized’ Thai nation and were intended to raise the status of Thai women to match the status women in developed countries were understood to enjoy, and it had an immediate and dramatic effect on dressing habits. King Rama VI then changed laws relating to nationality and family institutions, by making them similar to Western laws on civil rights and family; such as requiring children to take their father’s surname and nationality, and stipulating the proper forms of address for different categories of women (Loos, 1999). Such legal modifications and social movements accentuated the idea that the Western binary sexual norm applies also to Thais; it naturally intensified Kathoey perceptions of alienation in a country that increasingly was influenced by moral values based on superficial impressions of what constituted appropriate sexual relations in the West (Pramoj na Ayutthaya, 2003).

Following a coup in 1932, Thailand changed from an absolute monarchical state to a constitutional monarchy. At the same time, the notion of a specifically Thai national culture based on a conservative ideology began to spread. This trend, including use of governmental tools to reorganize Thai society in a way that reflects a specific construction of sexuality, continues into the present (Barme, 1993; Winichaikul, 1994). When fascist Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram rose to power in 1938, the rigid construction of Thai sexuality and gender identity as binary became even clearer. Phibunsongkhram announced that the country’s key goal was to become civilized, and that government policies will ensure that Thais are recognized as the equals of people in all other nations. His nation-building policies clearly separated gender roles. Thai men were taught to work hard and take

responsibility for protecting the country from the nation's enemies. As Phibunsongkhram would often say, 'men are defenders of the nation.' At the same time, women were taught to work hard on the domestic front: to be good wives, mothers and cooks, and to dress up beautifully in order to live up to the state's image of women as the 'flowers of the nation.'

The influence of 'modern' western ideas was intensified and became more rigorous during 1938–44 and 1944–48, when the country was led by fascist Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, Thailand established a binary model of gender (gender specific-language, names, clothing, occupations, social and family roles, and lifestyles as I elaborated in *Chapter One* and further discussed directly below) and adapted it to the Thai context (Chotiwan, 2014). Kathoey identity was then converted to identify a class of men who could neither assimilate into heteronormative male gender roles nor be forced into sexual binarism (Morris, 1994).

While Kathoey is defined as another axis of sex besides male and female, this label is not utterly disjointed from Thai hetero/normative traditions and gender roles of the other two 'normal' sexes. Before the Western modernization period, the gender binary norm was not as strong, and Thais' outlooks about sexuality were different; people with a transgender identity were given considerably more social space and special status. Especially during the 16th and 17th centuries, when people were more religious and spiritual guidance played a more important role in directing people how to live their lives, Kathoey masculine-feminine attributes were not considered as deviant as they later became.

Supernatural beliefs such as animism, holy objects and spirits living in nature provided a space for cultural expression by transgender people, who came to play an important role in connecting humans with spirits. In the past, transgender people enjoyed a sacred status because their identity is somewhere in between femininity and masculinity, mundane and spiritual, and object and anima (Chotiwan, 2014).

Kathoey have always been visible in local performance and entertainment scenes such as temple fairs, local funfairs or Kathoey beauty pageant. In these contexts, Kathoey have been and continue to be welcome to express their identity (Duangwises, 2014b). Before Western modernization forces were established in

Thailand, Kathoey had special place in Thai traditional rituals and performance spaces, and the society's attitudes towards them were more neutral (Chotiwan, 2014). However, after the colonization era, transgenderism, homosexuality and 'gender deviant behaviours' were heavily banned and discriminated against by the Thai government, legal institution, and social institutions, as a burden on the country's civilization, modernization, and development (see The Royal Decree on Cultural Art and Performance ban on Kathoey performers in 1942, The Government Public Relations Department letter submitted to all Thai TV channels in 1999 (referred to ministerial regulation no.14 in 1997, and empirical data in this chapter). Thai government and society considered transgender/queer behavior as backwards and wished to progress towards the western ideal of modernity, including rejection of these backward elements (Chotiwan, 2014; Jackson, 2003; Pramoj na Ayutthaya, 2003).

In addition to separating roles by gender, during the westernization period, citizen's names were required to reflect the gender of their sex as assigned at birth. The names deemed appropriate for men tended to be macho names and those reserved for women tended to have gentle and feminine connotations. Those who had gender-neutral names were convinced to change their names according to their sex as recorded at the time of their birth. Governmental officers in particular faced extraordinary pressure to follow to these rules and act as good role models for the citizenry. Phibunsongkhram also attempted to convince Thais to wear pants and skirts instead of the traditional one-piece *Jong-kra-bane* (Silapawattanatham Magazine, 2016).

The Thai Cultural Restoration was intense and affected all Thai lives. Phibunsongkhram's government promoted its propaganda campaign aggressively on radio stations, newspapers and posters (Pramoj na Ayutthaya, 2003). In its effort to establish a modern Thai state, binary ideas of gender identity and sexual orientation were systematically enforced through the police, the military, schools and other public institutions. Older and more flexible conceptions of sexual orientation and gender identity were replaced by more strict and conservative notions through a manipulative process that encourages Thais to imagine that these were modern and proper concepts. All of these initiatives challenge deep-seated Thai understandings of gender identity and sexual orientation, along with the Buddhist teachings that

emphasize evaluation of an individual on the basis of their goodness and somehow control their sexual expressions (UNDP and USAID, 2014).

Sociologists observe that, to the contrary, gender roles have become one of the key attributes used in the constructing ‘good’ or ‘bad’ citizens in Thai society; gender roles provide personal pride and sense of social participation. When negotiating among competing alternatives, Thais are strongly motivated by their expectations about the extent to which one or another choice will enhance their personal sense of virtue. Within this sense of self-importance, Thais have been indoctrinated with the idea that gender roles adopted by an individual offer a shortcut to an understanding of that person’s general moral character (UNDP and USAID, 2014). The endeavor to become modern began under Rama V, which coincided with the rise of middle class movements, including a specific understanding of virtuous hetero-sexuality, in Victorian England (Mosse, 1985). The Thai state’s re-organization of ideas related to sexual orientation and gender identity was done to make Thailand a ‘civilized nation’ and to help imperialist countries understand that Thailand was an ‘advanced’ country that need not be colonized; at one level, the Thai modernization project was part of a national survival strategy (Jackson, 2003)

Over time, Thai people gradually absorb the meanings, beliefs and knowledge of Western sexuality norms. Thai acceptance of the social value and relevance of ‘civilization’ and ‘modernization’ underlies virtually all attempts to thoroughly separate sexes through roles, gender-specific language, expressions, mannerisms and other factors. As gender norms became ever clearer, people who did not adhere to the norms become ever more visible. Responses to such deviations became ever more virulent: deviants were described as ‘uncivilized’ and a ‘burden on society’. This was the beginning of a process in which ‘others’ as well as Kathoey came to be understood and described as ‘freaks’ (Pramoj na Ayutthaya, 2003).

Words communicate feelings and can lead to action, which in this case takes the forms of social oppression and discrimination. After Thailand’s first constitution was promulgated in 1932, homosexual and Kathoey communities were progressively noticeable (or, at least, progressively noticed). Homosexuality started to be covered on Thai news, frequently in a negative way. During this period, intense socio-

economic discrimination left Kathoeyes with few life opportunities other than criminal activity and sex work. And Kathoeyes have been a target for humiliation and exploitation in Thai media (UNDP and USAID, 2014). Homosexuality and transgenderism have been suppressed in Thai society; during WWII, the LGBT image was presented as both immoral and forbidden. Thai society understood non-heteronormative behavior as symptoms of mental disorder (Jackson, 1997b, cited in UNDP and USAID, 2014). Since WWII, many westerners have migrated to Thailand and Thai LGBT groups and activists have expressed their sexual identity openly (History of LGBT, 2009 cited in UNDP and USAID, 2014). In the 1960s, there was an upsurge wave against Kathoey through the media in both Thai and English. However, the expansion of Kathoey in media in the 70s, the emerge of gay magazines and movies in the 80s, gay saunas, the rise of the LGBT entertainment business and increased social awareness as a result of LGBTQ activism and academic debates in the 90s helped to acknowledge and promote a competing understanding of sexuality and gender identity in Thailand (Jackson, 2011). By the 21st century the dissonance between social norms and economic potential had permeated some corners of the government. While not recognizing Kathoey legal status, the Thai Ministry of Tourism began to use its media access to support and promote the vivid night life and openness toward LGBT in Thailand, such as advertising 'Go Thai, Be Free' campaign (see www.gothaibefree.com) to attract LGBT tourists to come to Thailand.

Furthermore, Thai academia has reproduced a sexuality discourse that accentuates Kathoeyes as 'abnormal'. In Thai medical and scientific studies, scholars focus on a biological examination and categorization of Kathoey behavior (see Kamudhamas, 2012). Kathoeyes are classified into two categories; Kathoey-tae (true Kathoey) and Kathoey-tiam (false Kathoey). Kathoey-tae includes individuals who have both male and female organs and hormones and Kathoey-tiam includes people with male sexual organs but predominantly female hormones, or the opposite. Such explanations apply knowledge of Western anatomy and biology, but profoundly lack understanding of Kathoey cultural behavior (Duangwises, 2011 cited in Chotiwan, 2014). This approach is influential because scientific knowledge is widely viewed as more authoritative than historically or culturally based knowledge. From one branch of science to the next, psychologists grasped the biological description as a starting

point in a causal explanation that ends with the conclusion that transgenderism is a psychological disorder (see Jackson, 1997b; Sinnott, 2004). As a result of work in the field of clinical psychology, Kathoeyes came to be ever more stigmatized and socially excluded, because the academic discourse increasingly supported and tacitly encouraged these social responses. For example, a set of twelve Master's theses published between 1989 and 1991 dominated the mainstream pathologizing discourse within Thai academia on same-sex sexuality and Kathoeyes. The subject of the theses was 'sexual behaviors and attitudes of adolescent students' in twelve regional districts in Thailand. These studies, supervised by Clinical Psychology Faculty of Mahidol University, reproduced the discourse regarding what causes same-sex sexuality that had been around for decades. Sinnott (2011) argues that "the framework of these theses was clearly an ideological attempt to 'prove' the applicability of Western sexological model to an analysis of the Thai same-sex sexual practices and transgenderism" (p. 213). These works cited outdated and discarded Western pathologizing theories of homosexualities, and applied them into Thai academic discourse. Jackson (1997b) argues that these studies' sexological discourses deepened the themes of Thai academic since the 1950s, themselves based on sexological publications from the United States during the 1930s to 1940s. Through clinical psychology, these studies concluded that same-sex and Kathoey sexuality was 'caused' by unhealthy family relationships and inappropriate socialization. Many Thai scholars condemned homosexual and Kathoey behavior as immoral and destroying national virtue. They also claimed that homosexuality and trans-sexuality constituted a sexual crime. Homosexuality and Kathoey have become widely debated social issues. Many Thai scholars expressed their panic about homosexuality among Thai children and youths. These scholars expressed their opposition to Thai TV shows and media that broadcast stories and news that supported Kathoeyes and gays, and they claimed that homosexual and Kathoey kids are the products of bad parenting (Chotiwan, 2014).

In short, the discourse that constructed homosexuality as degenerate began when Thai medical science sought to prove that homosexuality and transgenderism stem from hormonal and nervous system abnormalities. Many Thai scholars argued that physical abnormality is the origin of Kathoey 'symptoms'. The scientific paradigm was next appropriated by sociologists who assessed that flawed upbringing

causes homosexuality and transgenderism; some sociologists also branded Kathoey behavior as immoral (see Tassanachaikul, 1997). This set of ideas aimed to indicate paths toward remedy and eventual cure of transgenderism and homosexuality (Duangwises, 2011 cited in Chotiwan 2014). Uncritical political and cultural adaptation of Western cultural concepts during Phibunsongkhram's modernization campaign, and a broader acceptance of Western knowledge as 'superior', clearly shaped the construction of ideas about sex and gender dichotomy in Thailand. Kathoey, whose sexual characteristics and behavior were outside the 'modern' understanding of humans as either male or female thus came to be perceived as abnormal, bizarre and even psychotic (Chotiwan, 2014).

4.1.1. 21st Century Developments'

As many as six in every thousand Thai citizens who were born as male may present later as Kathoey (Winter, 2002 cited in Winter, 2011), which yields a potential Kathoey population of 200,000. Despite this large population, and despite the relatively strong social organization of this population, the Thai government was very slow to formally acknowledge its existence much less afford anything that approximated civil rights. Nonetheless, recent years have seen progress in the direction of Kathoey rights. For example, the government has accepted the World Health Organization's position regarding homosexuality; in 2002, the Thai Ministry of Public Health's Department of Mental Health announced that homosexuality is no longer viewed as a mental disorder or illness (Ojanen, 2009). In 2005, Thai military stopped its prohibition on Kathoey service in the army. Before this modification, Kathoeyes were recorded as incompetent for service on the ground of mental illness and issued a certificate (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2008) that explained their status. Another step toward equal rights took the form of a 2007 amendment to Article 30 of the Constitution:

All persons are equal before the law and shall enjoy equal protection under the law.

Men and women shall enjoy equal rights.

Unjust discrimination against a person **on the grounds of** the difference in origin, race, language, **sex**, age, physical or health condition, personal status,

economic or social standing, religious belief, education, or Constitutional political views, **shall not be permitted**...

– Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2550 (2007), Article 30⁴.

The constitution was accompanied by a statement indicating, (as paraphrased by Kaleidoscope, 2016, p. 1), that ‘discrimination on the grounds of gender, specifically including homosexuals, bisexuals, hermaphrodites, transgender people, and post-operative transsexuals’ are now forbidden.’ In 2011, as reported in the same Kaleidoscope report (p. 2), ‘Thailand joined 85 other UN member states by voting in favor of the first UN resolution that condemned violence and discrimination against LGBTI people.’

The most progressive Thai LGBTQ legal protection and recognition to date was enacted in 2015, while I conducted this research. The Gender Equality Act B.E. 2558 (2015) is the first time that Thai law has asserted that it is legal to be ‘a person who has a sexual expression different from that person's original sex’ (Kaleidoscope, 2016, p.3). Further, it makes discrimination on the basis of gender or sexuality a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment for up to six months (Kaleidoscope, 2016).

In spite of this positive direction, legal protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity are still deficient. Under Thai law, Kathoey continue to have fewer rights and protections than cis-gender people have, and they continue to have limited legal recourse in response to complications and humiliations that are a part of their daily lived experience. There are limits to their right to have official documents which reflects their sexual identity, they face employment issues, and they are subject to a range of challenges regarding issues such as social welfare, education, health and well-being, legal recognition of same-sex union, family law, rights to adoption, rights to go to female prison, and so on. Until 2015, LGBT individuals were not recognized as legal entities and discrimination towards Kathoey was allowed; even under the 2015 law, crimes motivated by a victim’s status as LGBT do not figure into the definition of hate

⁴ Unofficial translation by the Bureau of Technical and International Cooperation Secretariat General of the Administrative Court. Emphasis added. Note that the text suffers from limitations of the Thai language, as discussed above.

crimes and the union of LGBT couples is still illegal. Even though Thailand is famous for being more accepting of LGBT people than any other Asian country, legal recognition and protection is still far from the ideal of Kathoey rights being genuinely equal to those of all other social groups.

Thai legislators mostly come from conservative backgrounds and believe in heterosexual-defined gender roles and family institutions (Leeds, n.d. cited in UNDP and USAID, 2014). Thai state does not recognize LGBT violence reports done by NGOs. The governments never seriously react on sexuality hate crime cases and usually see them as cases relating to sentimental relationship/love conflicts (Liljas, 2014). Until now, Thai CSOs are modifying a gender-neutral civil partnership bill with the Law Reform Commission of Thailand. In the hope that this sort of legislation will be passed, Kathoey also lack fundamental remunerations that other Thai citizens have, for example ‘the rights to make health care decisions for their partners; nor are same-sex couples eligible for employee benefits or health insurance policies, joint financial loans, inheritance, and adoption or other parental rights related to recognized partnerships’ (UNDP and UNSAID, 2014, p.25). Kathoey activists have expressed their concerns about shortcomings in the law as related to Thailand’s transgender population. They further report that, to date, the Gender Equality Act has not been tested: nobody has filed a discrimination suit with reference to rights the Act provides to this community. The government has not acted, either. Governmental prosecutors have not been trained to understand the act, gender equality or LGBT issues more generally. Similar to most Thais, government officers understand gender and sexuality in binary terms. Kathoey activist respondents suggested that this might be a reason for Thai officers’ failure to comprehend the substance of the act. Absent an effective mechanism, the practical value of the Act remains, at best, ambiguous.

4.2. Kathoey State Discrimination in Thailand

The forms that Thai state discrimination towards Kathoey take can be divided into five broad categories. I now turn to an analysis of these forms, drawing heavily on the words of my Kathoey respondents.

4.2.1. Personal Documentations and legal Status Issue

Kathoeys have privacy issues in regard to their possession of male national health cards, male passports and male identity cards, and the lack of officially recognized changes in their sex/gender in Thailand. The inability to change their legal status affects Kathoey lives because, no matter how they identify, their travel documents say they are men, they are treated as men when they are hospitalized, they are incarcerated in the men's section of prisons (and often persecuted by male prisoners there). Many of my respondents shared how their legal status has shaped their life experiences:

For every transaction, Kathoeys have to over-prove our identity. Once, my wallet was stolen. I called the bank to cancel the credit card but they did not do it for me because I'm registered as a man but sounding like a woman (using feminine language). They over-checked my identity way too long. In the end, the thief already spent almost the maximum from my credit card. – Toon, Bangkok

We really hope Thailand will allow Kathoey and transgender men to change their sex on all official records because it links to so many problems. I have undergone sexual reassignment surgery and have lived like a woman all my life, but my passport and ID still say I'm a male person. It was complicated for me to register for medical care, to apply for university, to apply for jobs, because I have male documents. The worst part is when I travel abroad. It is always an annoying process to pass through Thai migration at the departure point and then the arrival migration check abroad. Especially when you go to countries that are not familiar with Kathoeys, sometimes they detain Kathoeys at the airport because they (foreign migration police) do not understand why female persons have male passports. These reasons make me hate traveling abroad. It makes me feel like I am an alien or a criminal. – Weena, Bangkok

Being addressed with the title *Nai* (English translation: Mister) makes me feel like I'm a *tua-talok* (English translation: joker) or freak. I've got no rights, so I've gotta try to get used to it, just have to tolerate, tolerate that people think I'm a freak - Da, Nakhon Pathom

It feels like I'm vilified every time someone sees my passport which says I'm a Mister. This kind of situation always makes me feel down. Many years ago, a migration officer in Greece detained me at the airport because he thought I was suspicious [because her passport says 'male' but she looked like a woman]. He [the migration officer] called his colleagues to come look at me and they seemed entertained by seeing me with a male passport. I'm not sure, but maybe he even detained me so he can show a Kathoey to his colleagues. – Maliwan, Bangkok

My girlfriend [a Kathoey] was jailed in a male prison after doing a petty offense, and she was harassed many times there. It would not have been as bad if she was jailed in female prison. But it's impossible because Kathoeyes still have male identity by law, so there is no exception. – Darat, Pattaya

My old name was very masculine and I felt quite embarrassed to have such macho name. So I went to the district hall to change my name to a feminine one. The government officer told me "No, you can't do that. You still remain as *nai* (English translation: Mister) so you're a man." Then I had to change my name to a more gender neutral one. It is sad. – Pok, Copenhagen

As a legacy of the country's modernization era, Thai law is based on essentialist, hetero-normative beliefs. Kathoey's male denomination and legal status negatively affect their lives on a daily basis. Their male identification documents 'outed' and 'queer-shamed' them. Participants have informed of their difficulties with holding male passports, national ID, and legal statuses. They express how these public declarations of their maleness marginalize and alienate them from the Thai social and legal systems, social welfare structure, judicial administration, justice, and movement rights. Thai laws strictly adhere to inborn essentialism and the concepts of 'natural body' when it comes to their power to controlling and identifying citizens' sexuality, sex and 'selves'.

4.2.2. Structural Employment Issues

Most the data presented below was collected before the new Gender Equality Act was implemented in late 2015, so the conversations presented below may be

only of historical interest. But it is also possible that the images they present are consistent with Kathoey life despite the Gender Equality Act. At the time of writing, the Act has been officially in force for nearly two years, yet as of now, not a single court case has been registered with reference to the Act. Thus, its practical effect remains a subject of active research.

At the time of the interviews, it seemed to be common knowledge that it was virtually impossible for Kathoeyes to work in the governmental sector. Also, discrimination in private sector employment can be interpreted as being state-sponsored because Thai labor unions have not had a concrete legal foundation on which to rest claims of violations of Kathoey employee rights. Moreover, although Section 27 of Thailand's newest Constitution includes the non-discrimination provisions of Article 30 in the 2007 Constitution, it continues:

Members of the armed forces, police force, government officials, other officials of the State, and officers or employees of State organisations shall enjoy the same rights and liberties as those enjoyed by other persons, **except those restricted by law specifically in relation to politics, capacities, disciplines or ethics.**

– Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, enacted on the 6th Day of April B.E. 2560 (2017) section 27⁵.

Regardless of details in the Gender Equality Act, the last paragraph of section 27 of the Constitution – the most dominant law – specifies that the rights of governmental officers may be limited by laws that govern their institutions' discipline⁶ and ethics. This could be problematic for Kathoeyes who work in governmental or public sectors. If regulations regarding uniforms are interpreted as superseding the rights provided the Gender Equality Act they may be required to wear uniforms appropriate to the gender as indicated on their birth certificate. Most of the governmental institutions and universities have their own regulations on

⁵ Translated into English by the Legal Opinion and Translation Section, Foreign Law Division under the legal duty of the Office of the Council of State) Legal Opinion and Translation Section, Foreign Law Division under the legal duty of the Office of the Council of State. Emphasis added.

⁶ The quote presented just above faithfully reproduces an error by the Legal Opinion and Translation Section. The word 'disciplines' ought to be 'discipline'.

uniforms; it specifies how male and female persons must dress. And since Kathoey do not have female legal status, they may be required to follow to male uniform rules. Fears about how Kathoey might respond to such requirements, or a simple interest in avoiding unpleasant conversations, might lead some government employers to disregard Kathoey applicants, even though such disregard is illegal.

One of my respondents is a Thai governmental officer who experienced what I interpret as both employment and institutional discrimination:

I applied for this position at the Ministry and went through the whole application process. I passed the written examination with a good score but, in the interview, the interviewer told me that I won't be accepted if I won't cut my hair short and wear a male uniform to work. I did it. I made a short hairstyle and wore a male uniform. After the gender equality bill was enacted, I told my boss that I wanted to wear a female uniform, grow my hair long and live according to my gender identity. She (the boss) said to me "You are an adult you should know what is appropriate. You work here and you represent the ministry. Don't make things ugly." So I still have to wear a male uniform to work and pretend to be less feminine. Otherwise I'll lose my job. Oh, after that talk, my boss seems to avoid interacting with me, too. – Ratee, Bangkok

Another informant who is a university staff member also reported about institutional discrimination. Baitong works as a university administrator and deals directly with the university dean when arranging academic events. She shared her everyday work experience:

I am very proud and open about my gender. I usually wear female clothes to work but always get warned by my supervisor and the dean. Many times, they called me in to lecture me how I should be careful about my gender expression. They think I will bring bad image to the university and be a bad example to the students. I signed up for one event to teach kids, but the dean would not let me do it because he thinks I will scare off parents and children. When we have big university events or conferences, a part of my job requirement is to take part. But the dean often tells colleagues to come and tell me not to show myself in front of guests. Lecturers often go tell the dean

that I don't wear male clothes to work. Sometimes, I cry. Sometimes, I'm angry with them. But I will stand for what I am. One day the society will be more open. – Baitong, Nakhon Pathom

One of my participants is an elementary school teacher who experiences structural employment discrimination at work:

I teach art for elementary school kids, and my supervisor ordered me to not cross-dress or wear make-up to work. Otherwise, it will be hard for me to continue teaching. They say teachers are the role models for kids; they don't want parents to complain about my sexuality. I restraint my mind already that I will never go so far in my career, I love teaching children but being a Kathoey, it's like the school just refuses to promote me. On school events like mother's day, father's day or the New Year's party, I know that the school board doesn't want me to join or show my face too much. There was a time when a group of students asked me if I'm gay, I said no, I'm a woman. Within a few days, the school principal called me in and had a discussion with me. He said I can be anything I want, but not at school because they think children will imitate my behavior. It feels bad, it feels frustrating, it feels like this is not me. – Weena, Bangkok

In 2017, I had an informal interview with a university professor about Kathoey and governmental or university employment. Dr. Ann is the head of a study program. She replied:

At public Thai universities, [even after the Gender Equality Act has been implemented] it is impossible to have a tenure-track Kathoey lecturer or full-time academic position who comes to work dressed up a woman. Each university has its own council to enforce the regulations. It would be more okay for [Kathoey] to work in the private sector, but not in university or governmental units. Thai authorities are very conservative. I would say there is very small chance for Kathoey to work with the government. – Dr. Ann, Nakhon Pathom

These words illustrate the ineffectiveness of Thailand's Gender Equality Act, and the country's continuing structural discrimination in employment. Participants

concurred that it is very unlikely for both uneducated and highly educated Kathoeyes to get job positions in the public sector, including jobs at public educational institutions. Transgendered people who want to work in Thai public organizations are obliged to act and dress according to their ‘natural sex’ assigned at birth. Information from participants show that Thai authorities have all the power and forces over Kathoeyes lives on every aspect. Structural employment issues exacerbate the motivation of many educated Kathoeyes who cannot find jobs suitable for their competency, to migrate to Europe as I discuss in the *Chapter Five*.

4.2.3. Marriage and Family Issues

The law prohibiting changes on official identity documents raises a number of privacy issues that go beyond one’s legal status as man or woman. Kathoeyes do not have the right to heterosexual marriage (that is, with a man) and are thus denied benefits granted to married couples, including childcare and adoption. Ironically, Kathoeyes are legally allowed to marry a woman, which in a real sense would make them the only Thais who may have a same-sex marriage. But sadly, Thai law has not yet legalized or recognized same-sex marriage or even civil union. As it happens, though, the vast majority of Kathoey –as much as 98 percent – appear to be attracted to men (Winter, 2006b cited in Winter 2011). Any wedding ceremony a Kathoey has with a man will have no legal force. Kathoeyes are deprived of the right to legal marriage and have no opportunities for family life, including adoption of a child. They are not able to enjoy the financial, emotional and legal benefits partnership and marriage.

Many respondents expressed their concerns about Kathoeyes’ unequal opportunity to access the benefit of their partners’ insurance, pension or other practical actions including those that involve banking, health care decisions and social welfare services. Interviewees express similar views on marriage and family issues:

Our families know my partner and I have been living together for fourteen years. My partner’s father passed away and he inherited some land and money. As a partner, I can share none of this by law if he does not take the extra step of transferring some of it to me. And, we can’t own jointly. Either it’s his or it’s mine. Not ours. Some people might think it is not a big deal but

it is. I am his wife by practice but I have no rights in anything because I am a Kathoey wife. [...] How can we say Thailand is the most LGBT friendly country? LGBT people can't even have equal basic human rights even though we pay tax like everyone else. – Maliwan, Bangkok

I don't hope for legalized marriage for Kathoeyes, I just hope we can have a civil partnership law. As things are, my partner cannot benefit from my good fortune. I don't understand why the government can't give us the basic rights. – Matsri, Chumphon

It is very unfair that Kathoeyes can't benefit from practical rights with their partners. We can't make medical decisions for each other, either. I heard that if your partner is in a coma or the ER, the hospital will only contact his parents, because Kathoeyes are officially recognized as men and same-sex marriage is not legalized. I hope it will change soon, though. – Muna, Bangkok

It's annoying we [Jibby and her partner] can't get legal benefit from each other at all. Probably Kathoey is not only *sao-pra-phet-song* (second-type women), but also *manut-pra-phet-song* (second-type human being; lower level human beings). So we can't get the same rights as others. –Jibby, Bangkok

My case is different because I am a *Kathoey-les* (lesbian male-to-female transgender.) Practically, it will be no problem for me to marry a woman because I have male status on the documents. But psychologically, that does not help, it is weird still that you live as a woman, having legal male status and legally marry a woman as if you are a man. – Alice, Bangkok

Of course I feel discriminated for being Kathoey. Why can't we have practical partnership rights like biological women? My husband and I adopted our son, who is actually my husband's nephew, or something like that. My son calls me mom and calls my husband dad. But on paper, he is adopted by my husband alone because I can't be a mom on paper. It is tricky because I have no legal rights to decide anything for my own son or my husband. And let's think further about our family heritage when I am gone or

when my husband passes away. There will be money problems, can you imagine? – Preeraya, Pattaya

These quotes show how Kathoey's basic human rights are limited in Thailand, and it is crucial for my analysis on their romanticized perceptions about European life, the nature of equality provided by European LGBT laws, and their impressions of 'progressive Europe', especially as counterpoised with what they actually experienced after migrating to Europe, all of which will be raised in subsequent chapters.

4.2.4. Hate-motivated but not Hate Crime

Crimes motivated by the gender or sexuality of the victim still cannot be prosecuted or punished as hate crimes in Thailand. My respondents reported in 2015 that many Thai police officers are rather nonchalant about hate crimes committed against Kathoey victims. When Kathoey's report sexual assault, physical abuse, verbal abuse and other discrimination actions toward their transgender identity, Thai authorities often do not take their cases seriously and have even expressed their own trans-prejudices toward the victim. As the participants explained:

I work and support Kathoey's in the area, and many times I have to help and bring Kathoey victims to report problems at police station. Here is one recent example: a Kathoey was beat up on the street by a random drunk tourist. We told the police everything and his questions were "did you steal his money?", "is it jealousy or relationship issue?" and "is he one of your clients?" I was very frustrated by his reaction. That girl was not even a sex worker. And nothing happened from that report. They [the police] did not take any action to investigate, he just wrote down some note and that was all. [...] If it is not on the news, they do not care much about Kathoey hate crime cases. I don't think they have good understanding about Kathoey or even gender equality. – Nuch, NGO in Pattaya

It seems like the Thai police often conduct hate crime themselves! They always arrest Kathoey's walking on tourist streets without any reason or evidence, just because they assume all Kathoey's are sex workers. Once, I went out with my Kathoey gang and we had some street food at about 2 am.

Several police officers came and tried to charge us for doing sex work, I asked them, “where is your evidence?” They said “It is this late. Why are you guys hanging around as group in an area like this. I know what you are doing.” They tried to bring us to police station. We had a big fight, and then one of my friends used her smart phone to VDO record the situation and told them she will post this online to make it viral. So at the end, those police let us go home. This is a hate crime for me. – Darat, Pattaya

When I was a teenager I had a physical fight with a guy neighbor. He always teased me, insulted me, and made fun of my way of speaking or acting because he hated Kathoeyes. One night I yelled at him back because he made fun of the size of my penis (she laughed) and he came to me and said “I’ll slap you until you stop being Kathoey” and boxed me in the ear. My mom took me to the police station and we reported the situation to the police, I remember vividly, the police found the story I told entertaining and asked me “is it true you have a big penis? then why do you act like a girl? it’s such a shame. You should be proud of your thing.” Then the neighbor was fined for like 500 baht [about €12] I guess and that was all. He still made fun of me for months, until I graduated from high school and moved out from home.” – Fang, Belgium

Kathoeyes are verbally abused on an everyday basis in Thailand Sometimes it comes as jokes, sometimes as insults. But most, – okay I can say all – all Kathoeyes won’t do anything about it because nothing will change. Who would go to the police or sue someone who mocks Kathoeyes? Nobody cares about things like that in Thailand. There is no real law to protect hate speech against Kathoeyes or gays, right? – Preeraya, Bangkok

On Songkarn day [the Thai New Year’s Festival, when people go onto the streets and splash water at each other], an acquaintance sexually harassed me. Not because he was attracted to me, but because he knew I’d just had a boob job and he wanted to embarrass me. He touched my breasts and lifted up my top and flashed my breasts to his friends so that they can see and laugh at me – a Kathoey with fake boobs. I was so angry! I saw a traffic cop standing nearby, so I went to accuse this man. The cop just smiled and told me to be

careful. Then he continued his work. I think that if the victim had been a woman, the police would take it very seriously. – Da, Nakhon Pathom

Thai police culture is highly patriarchic. When Kathoey victims of hate-crimes based on gender and sex, the Thai police typically perceive these crimes with their own trans-prejudices. Labeled as criminal offenders or desperate sex workers, the starting point for police is that Kathoey, first and foremost, are a social problem to be solved. Similar to many other trans-phobic and patriarchal societies, many Thai police perceive abuses against Kathoey appropriate, and feel the same way about approaches to ‘fix’ queer behavior. As I discussed earlier, throughout history, Kathoey victims have been denounced as violence-prone, clowns, or mentally sick people. Contemporary Thai TV shows, TV series or movies frequently portray them as freaks and creepy comedians, and it is common to see scenes in which Kathoey victims are physically or verbally abused for the sake of a laugh. For many Thai police, real world harm or harassment experienced by Kathoey victims is seen as an appropriate extension of media presentations. They seem to lack knowledge about sexual and gender based violence and hate-motivated crimes, perhaps because they continue to buy heavily into a binary moral system.

4.2.5. Structural Issues in the Thai Education System and Academic Institutions

LGBT students face many challenges and difficulties in the Thai education system. Students are not required to learn about sexual diversity, and the optional offerings on sexual and reproductive health are insufficient and sometimes even hurtful and harmful. In sex education textbooks that are currently in use nationwide, trans-sexual people are labeled as a ‘gender-lost group’, and homosexuality is described with the words ‘sexual deviancy’, ‘mental disorder’ and ‘abnormal’. See, for example, the Figures 4.1–4.4 below, which are taken from the health education textbook for the seventh grade basic curriculum, 2008:



Figure 4.1: Cover of ‘health education textbook for seventh grade under national basic curriculum 2008’

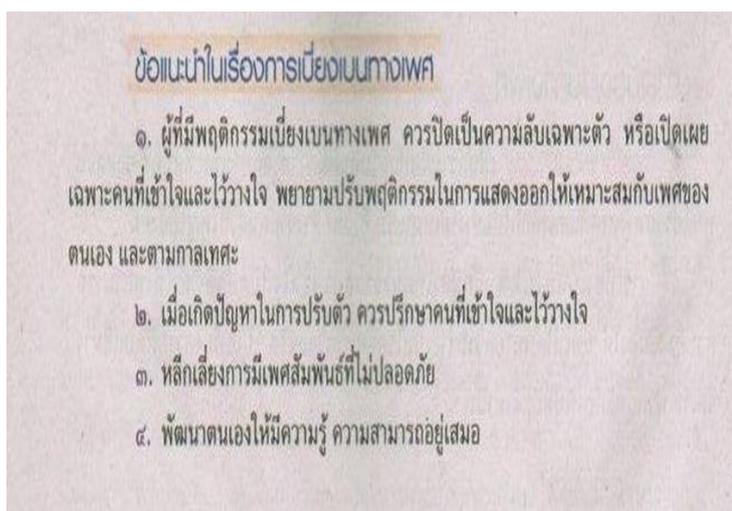


Figure 4.2: Direct translation from the national textbook: ‘Suggestions for sexual deviancy 1) Individual with sexual deviancy behavior should keep it secret. Only reveal to people who are understanding and people you can trust. Try to adjust your expression and behavior according to your sex and situation.’

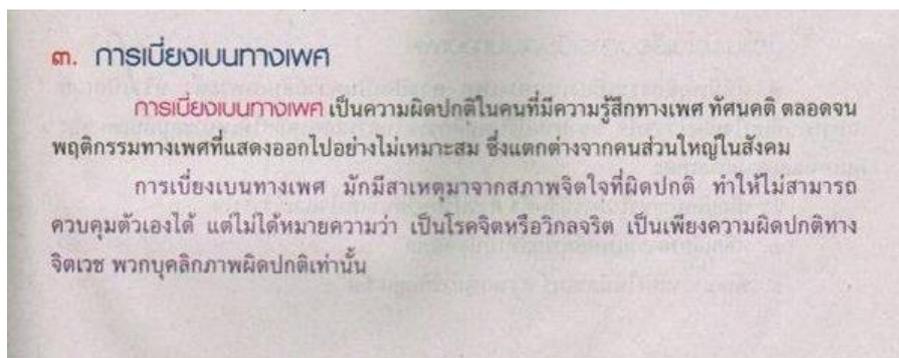
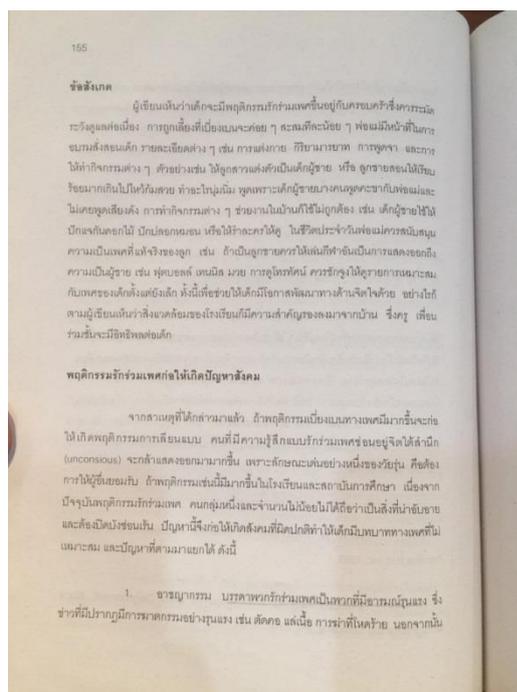


Figure 4.3: Direct translation from the national textbook: “Sexual deviancy” is an abnormality of people who have inappropriate sexual feelings, attitudes and sexual behavior that are different from the majority of the society. Sexual deviancy caused by a psychological abnormality that reduces self-control. But it is not psychotic; it is just a mental disorder or personality disorder.



Figure 4.4: The national textbook uses the Thai term *Gloom-long-phet* (gender lost group) to describe transsexuals. Note also that all Kathoeyes have black tabs to censor their eyes. Direct translation of the underlined text: ‘Inappropriate upbringing might cause children’s abnormal sexual recognition which leads to gender-lost symptoms.’

Thailand’s homophobic curriculum is not limited to lower education textbooks. I found a Thai graduate school Criminology textbook that discusses homosexuality and crime. This book is still in use. See Figures 4.5-4.7.



⁷Figure 4.5: Direct translation, page 155 of a Thai graduate school textbook in Criminology:

Remark: I argue that children will have homosexual behavior or not, it depends on family. Families should continuously be aware about children. The deviant upbringing will gradually accumulate the homosexuality. Parents' roles are to instruct children on clothing, manners and behavior, speech and participation in activities. For example, some parents teach their daughters to dress up like boys, or teach their sons to be feminine and mellow, or teach their sons to speak female words and speak quietly. It is also not correct to teach boys to help with some housework like flower arrangement, embroider pillow cases, or showing them dance drama. On a daily basis, parents should support children to live according to their real sex at birth, such as, boys should be supported to play masculine sports like football, tennis and boxing. When they watch TV shows, parents should persuade children to watch programs that are appropriate to their sexes, in order to support them to have psychological development. However, I think school environment is second priority after parenting. Teachers and classmates influence children.

Homosexuality Causes Social Issues: As discussed, the increase of homosexuality creates behavior imitation. People who have unconscious homosexual behavior will

⁷ Although this textbook was written by a Thai professor, the quality of the Thai language used is very low. I considered translating the text more freely, referring not only to the text but also to my deep understanding of the academic discourse more broadly. Ultimately, I rejected this idea. While there is a risk that, while using a direct translation that corrects only the most obvious and excruciating errors, the author's intent may be misunderstood. These failings, however, are those of the original author. I prefer not to risk adding errors of my own. This caveat applies to the translations for Figures 4.2-4.7.

be more encouraged to express themselves because teenagers need acceptance. Such behavior increases in education institutions. Because nowadays, many people do not think homosexuality is embarrassing or something to hide. Such issues cause deviant society, making children having inappropriate gender role and following social issues such as

1) Crime : homosexuals are people with violence. There appear violent murder cases caused by homosexuals such as head cutting, body cutting, or severe killing. Furthermore, (Crime (Protection: Control) 1st Edition, Nuanchan Tassanachaikul, 1997, p.155)

The quoted passage continues in Figure 4.6.

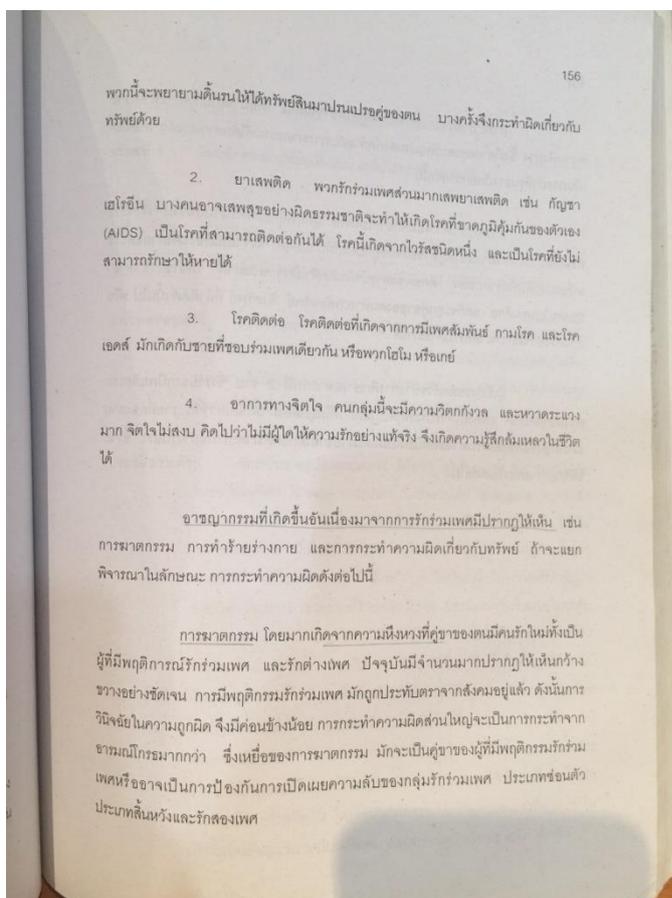


Figure 4.6: Direct translation of page 156 of a Thai graduate school textbook in Criminology (continued from Figure 4.5):

these people struggle to find money to please their partners. Sometimes they commit property transgression as well.

2) Drug: Most of homosexuals use drugs such as marijuana, heroin, some received unnatural happiness making themselves received aids which is a contagious disease. This disease is a virus and still can't be cured.

3) Infectious Disease: Sexually transmitted infections, venereal diseases and aids are usually caused by homosexuals and gays.

4) Psychological Symptoms: These people are very anxious and paranoid. They don't have peace of mind, they think that nobody will give them real love which might lead to a feeling that their life is a failure.

The appeared characteristics of homosexual crimes such as murder, physical abuse and property transgression, can be considered as follows;

In murder, usually it is caused from jealousy when their partners have new lovers, either homosexuals or heterosexuals, which can be seen everywhere nowadays. Homosexuality is naturally stigmatized from the society. Thus, its legitimacy does not need lots of investigation. Most of homosexual transgression often caused by their emotions. The murder victims are mostly the lovers of homosexuals, or those who revealed homosexuals' secrets such as those who are hiding in the closet or bisexuals. (Crime (Protection: Control) 1st Edition, Nuanchan Tassanachaikul, 1997, p.156)

The quoted passage continues in Figure 4.7.

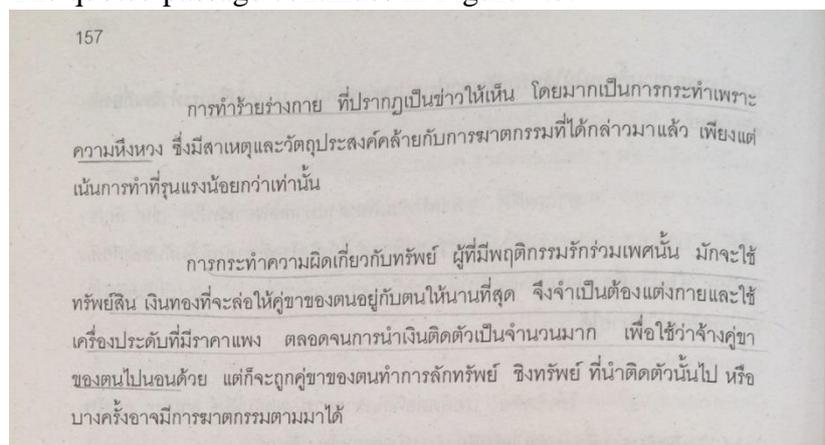


Figure 4.7: Direct translation of page 157 of a Thai graduate school textbook in Criminology (continued from Figure 4.6):

The physical abuse of homosexuals is usually caused from jealousy, similar to murder cases as mentioned, just less violent.

The asset transgression of homosexuals is usually conducted because homosexuals use asset and money to lure their partners to stay with them as long as possible. It is important for them to dress up expensive and carrying lots of money, so they can hire lovers to sleep with them. Those lovers steal their money and asset and sometimes murder is committed. (Crime (Protection: Control) 1st Edition, Nuanchan Tassanachaikul, 1997, p.157)

This book, as shown in figure 4.5-4.7, is extremely underdeveloped, homophobic, trans-phobic and dangerous for the Thai education system. The book's pages 144-145, 153-165 are filled with hate towards people whose gender identities

do not match the author's narrow sense of what is appropriate, and the arguments are supported with outdated sources. It further argues that people with gender diversity are responsible for Thailand's problems with prostitution and AIDS. The book's second edition is published in 2005 and the underdeveloped context remains the same.

Kathoey student uniforms have been a continuous problem in Thailand. Most Thai educational institutions require students to wear a uniform. The rules stipulate that students who are registered legally as men must wear pants, and students registered as women must wear skirts. Accordingly, some Kathoey students have refused to enter educational programs, rather than be forced to wear a uniform meant for males (National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, 2008). In 2009, the University Presidents Council of Thailand issued yet another directive that obliged university students to wear gender-appropriate attire (Nation Multimedia, 2012a cited in UNDP and USAID, 2014). The UNDP and USAID concluded that this directive

poses many barriers for transgender students. Not only does it perpetuate the idea that gender is binary and anything existing outside of these norms should be punished, but individuals dressed opposite to their registered sex are unable to sit for exams or submit coursework for review, effectively denying their basic right to education. This discrimination causes many transgender individuals to drop out of school and suffer from mental trauma and unease. Non-LGBT youth become indoctrinated in this environment of discrimination, while transgender and other LGBT youth undergo experiences that often result in situations of self-discrimination and heightened self-stigma. These negative emotional and mental abuses may traumatize the individual for many years, even an entire lifetime, and can force students to find solace in unhealthy environments and people. (UNDP and USAID (2014), p. 38–39)

เรื่องการแต่งกายเข้าห้องสอบกลางภาคเรียนที่ 2/2557
 การแต่งกายตามข้อบังคับคณะเทคโนโลยีสารสนเทศและการสื่อสาร กำหนดให้นักศึกษาปฏิบัติดังนี้

| | |
|---|--|
| นักศึกษาชาย | นักศึกษาหญิง |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ใส่เสื้อเชิ้ตสีขาว ✓ ยูกเนคไท ✓ สวมกางเกงสแลคทรงสุภาพ สีสันหรือสีน้ำเงินเข้ม ✓ คาดเข็มขัดมหาวิทยาลัย ✓ สวมถุงเท้าสีสุภาพ ✓ รองเท้าหนังสีดำ หรือรองเท้าผ้าใบสีขาวล้วน | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ใส่เสื้อเชิ้ตสีขาว ✓ ผิดกระดุมเสื้อนักเรียนมหาวิทยาลัย และประดับเข็มที่ปกเสื้อ ✓ คาดเข็มขัด ✓ สวมรองเท้าหุ้มส้นสีล้วนไม่มีลวดลาย **สำหรับนักศึกษาหญิงชั้นปีที่ 1 ** ✓ ต้องผูกโบว์ ✓ สวมถุงเท้า และรองเท้าผ้าใบสีขาวล้วน |

ไม่อนุญาตให้นักศึกษาสวมกางเกงขีนสี
 ไม่อนุญาตให้นักศึกษาแต่งกายข้ามเพศ
 ห้ามนักศึกษาเข้าห้องสอบสายเกิน 30 นาที
 ห้ามนักศึกษาออกจากห้องสอบก่อนเวลา 30 นาทีนับตั้งแต่เริ่มทำการสอบ
 ไม่อนุญาตให้นักศึกษาออกจากห้องสอบเพื่อเข้าห้องน้ำในระหว่างสอบ
 ไม่อนุญาตให้ผู้ที่ไม่เกี่ยวข้องในการสอบเข้าไปในห้องสอบ

มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีสารสนเทศและการสื่อสาร เรื่อง การแต่งกายให้นักศึกษาเข้าห้องสอบกลางภาคเรียนที่ 2/2557 วันที่ 28 สิงหาคม 2556

Figure 4.8: A university poster indicates regulations how female students and male students should dress. It also reminds students that cross-gender dressing is not allowed in examination rooms.

Violence does not merely include physical abuses. Dehumanization by objectifying individuals can be done through ones' body and self. If body is a dynamic of the physical, self is a dynamic of thoughts, feelings, prides and identities. Thus, to abuse ones includes physical and self abuse, in which ones have to unwillingly receive the result of actions (Chaiwat, 2008 cited in Chotiwan, 2014). The question of how to respond to the imposition of dress codes at the workplace, school and university, combined with the assignation of gender at birth, has been an ongoing issue for Kathoey. Most Thai schools, universities and public organizations specify how male or female individuals must appear when they work, enter classrooms, enter examination rooms, and attend graduation ceremonies. Century-old norms regarding gender-appropriate attire gives Kathoey tension, and some respondents inform that it damages them psychologically. As the respondents demonstrate:

One lecturer once asked me to leave the classroom because I wore a female uniform. The way classmates looked at me at that moment made me feel so embarrassed and sad. I withdrew from that subject and thought about quitting university entirely because of uniform problems. – Wai, Chumphon

We want to wear female graduation gowns. But we are not allowed to. We have to wear wigs or have a male haircut. Or they will not let us into the graduation ceremony – Peraya, Nakhon Pathom

My Kathoey friend wore a female graduation gown to graduation ceremony and she was invited to leave the room in front of hundreds of other students. She had to change to a male gown so that she could participate. – Joom, Bangkok

When I was a high school boy, I wore boy uniform [knee-length pants]. I was already feminine, wearing shorter pants than other male classmates, and always had my hair longer than other boys [in Thai public schools, hairstyle is regulated]. One teacher chopped off some of my hair to make me look hideous so I would have to shave my head to make everything even, to look like a normal boy. He [the teacher] did that because he wanted me to act like a boy. He also told my parents to buy me new longer school pants. I disliked him so much that I skipped lots of his mathematic classes. And I was good at math. – Saowanee, Amsterdam

I took hormones since I was like 15. My breasts started to grow because of the hormone intake, so I wore bra to school. And I had to wear a male school uniform with a bra every day. It was funny. I had many gay friends, but none were Kathoey like I was, so it was quite hard to be who I wanted to be. My teacher asked me to take off my bra and she said that in front of everyone in the class. Friends laughed, I laughed with them but inside I felt humiliated. I didn't want people to think I'm a weirdo so I tried to see everything that happened in school as a joke. There were good times, but I did not enjoy my school years. I try not to think about it. I even deleted pictures I had from elementary school because I looked so ugly wearing a male uniform, with short hair and lots of makeup [laugh]. – Wanda, Bangkok

The Thai education system is worrisomely problematic not only in its homophobic, trans-phobic, and outdated curricula or the number of unqualified lecturers. Beyond these, the cultural norms in Thai schools, and hierarchical and power-relation systems between teachers/lecturers and students are also exceedingly

moribund. As part of Thai culture, students have less of a voice and are not allowed to have their own negotiation power or agency in schools. Such cultural norms, together with the structural issues in Thai education systems and academic institutions, intensify human rights violations against Kathoey students and their right to live in their own 'queer bodies' and subjectivities. The empirical data shows that unpleasant experiences while students at all educational levels have added trauma and psychological wounds to most Kathoey life experiences, and they carry these psychological wounds wherever they go.

4.3. Kathoey Street Discrimination in Thailand

State-supported rejection of basic human rights, as discussed immediately above, combines with Thai social-cultural heteronormativity to construct an environment that is right for anti-Kathoey discrimination on the streets of Thailand. Kathoey are seen as deviant or abnormal by mainstream Thai society. Frequently, Kathoey are described as *phet-tii-sam* (English translation: the third sex), and perceived as characteristically abnormal because they do not conform to the Thai gender and sexuality norms. That said, Thai society neither overtly persecutes Kathoey nor unambiguously protects them. In general, social attitudes toward Kathoey are somewhat tolerant as long as they remain within some extent of social limitation and are not lavishly visible in public cultural spaces, as discussed in *Chapter One*.

The Thai political environment does not encourage Thai society to pay attention to issues regarding socially marginalized, which extends the distance and misapprehension between society and socially excluded groups. Thai society exhibits neither understanding nor sympathy for Kathoey who experience discrimination in circumstances such as in the health care system, in education, in employment, in dealing with persons of authority, and in being prohibited from entering certain places or establishments. Ojanen (2009) argues that Thai society tolerates LGBT people, but still fails to understand the particular struggles and requirements of this minority group. Among the discussed issues of Thai street discrimination towards Kathoey, I have listed the main Thai social issues toward Kathoey in which my respondents find most troublesome for them, as explained in their own words.

4.3.1. Employment Discrimination

Due to the deficient legal protection and military discharge papers that describes Kathoey as psychologically damaged by a gender identity disorder, it is not surprising that Kathoey with education and abilities often find it extremely hard to get meaningful employment. Fourteen out of 23 of my Kathoey respondents who live in Thailand have jobs. Six are university students and 3 are unemployed. Ten of the 14 employed participants feel that they are over-qualified for their jobs but they are discriminated against working in the industry for which they have been trained because of their transgender identity. Their best option is less than ideal: they will probably accept a future where they travel on a limited career path, such as in the entertainment business (cabaret, showgirl, drag queen) or beauty industry (makeup artists, fashion stylists, beauty salon).

Kathoey employment discrimination can be based on a variety of motives: while some employers reject Kathoey applicants due to their own prejudice, others may reject these applicants because they are worried about how customers, clients or co-workers respond to the presence of a Kathoey employee. Interviews with Kathoey respondents are unable to glean such motives, because employers rarely explain their employment choices (Winter, 2011.) Thailand still fails to enact effective anti-employment discrimination towards transgender people to give them equal opportunity, and the employment discrimination poses real issues for all Kathoey lives (Winter, 2011). In a sense, a part of my research program involves a replication of Winter's work. Our findings overlap, and both the similarities and differences are worthy of note.

While Winter and I both had difficulties in assessing employer motives, I was able to find a few cases of overt discrimination. Indeed, some companies are unsubtle about policies that guarantee rejection of Kathoey job applications, as seen in Figure 4.9;

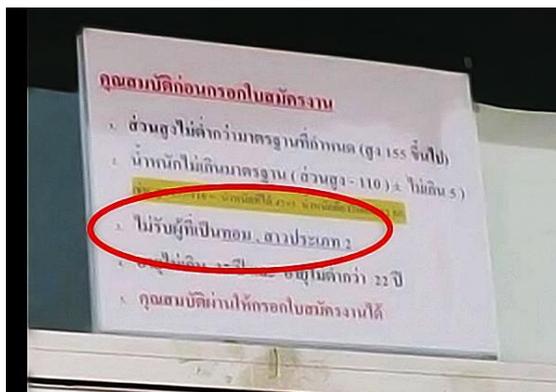


Figure 4.9: Job application sign from an industrial estate in Thailand. Translation to English: ‘Applicants qualification 3) We do not accept tomboys and transgender women.’ (picture from Mthai News, 2016; note that this photo is taken *after* the Gender Equality Act had been implemented.)

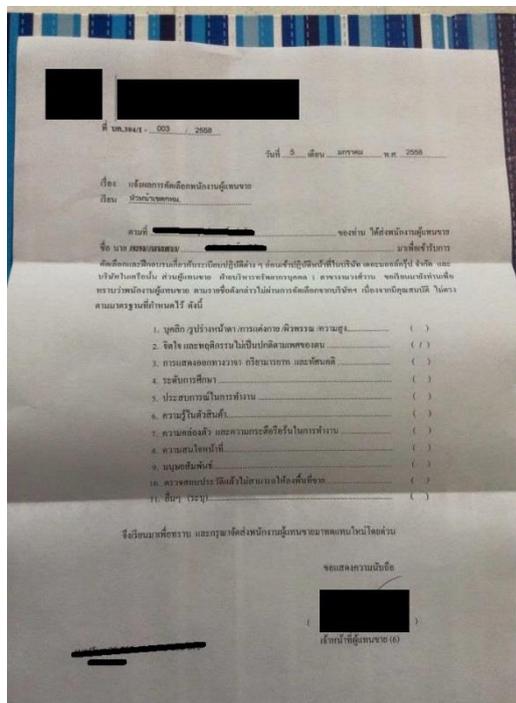


Figure 4.10: A rejection letter dated January 5th, 2015. Translation to English: ‘The applicant does not pass the selection process because the applicant does not have the required qualification’, and a tick in the bracket says ‘Mentality and behavior are not normal according to their sexes’.

Many of my participants both in Europe and Thailand are educated, including some who graduated from one of Thailand’s top five universities, but they cannot find jobs that suit their qualifications. The employment discrimination issue in Thailand supports my participants’ decisions to become sex workers or to try to find a Western spouse and move to Europe (see more analysis and empirical data in

chapter five), where they expect to have more opportunities to work and collect enough money to support their parents and families. As my participants explained:

In my generation, Kathoey can only do jobs like beautician, selling clothes, show girls or prostitutes. Job market did not accept Kathoey, if anyone wanted to get good job, they couldn't reveal they were Kathoey— Yai, Amsterdam

I do sex work because it is so hard for Kathoey in Thailand to find a job that gives you enough money to survive. – Nok, London

I had no other job, no other choice to do but sex work or farm work. I didn't want to do farm work. It's hard for Kathoey to find job. - Titima, Pattaya

I was rejected from private companies for like countless times, so I decided to be a hairstylist until now. When I was younger, Kathoey didn't have as much job opportunities like today. – Muk, Chumphon

If you look back to 20-30 years ago, what else could Kathoey do in Thailand? Most of Kathoey worked as showgirls, make-up artists, and prostitutes. – Jinda, Amsterdam

We [Kathoey] know that we are not allowed or welcomed to do specific jobs like nurse, teacher, doctor or engineer. So we choose to study something that can build our career like tourism, language, cooking, fashion, make-up, something like this. – Da, Nakhon Pathom

We [Kathoey] have to work hard for everything. I had to prove myself so much to my family. To show them that being Kathoey I can be a good person, that I can look after them and be the best offspring they can have. In school, I had to prove myself to friends that I am just like them and I am not crazy or weird. I studied much harder than anyone and I was always a top student. I always have this internal pressure that I need to prove that I was something important, something good, not “just a Kathoey” who people can laugh at or look down at! [...] I passed the entrance examination to law school at Thammasart University and graduated with good grades. And then I applied for many jobs in law firms in Bangkok. I always passed the exams but never

passed any interviews. They never told me why they rejected me, but it is clear to me that it was because I am a Kathoey. Some interviewers asked if I would be willing to wear male clothes to work. I said no. It is sad you get this kind of question from law firms, right? I had an interview at a Ministry too; they asked the same question and also told me if I want to work there I have to have a man's hairstyle and express myself appropriately. I did not get that job, either. My dream to become a judge will never come true. I am depressed from time to time because, no matter how hard I try or how good I am, for some people I will always only be just another Kathoey. – Joom, Bangkok, unemployed

I was accepted to nursing school, but on the interview day the interviewer told me kindly "My dear, I can't accept you to the program even though I see your enthusiasm. But you know if you study here for 4 years, it will be a waste of your time because you will be jobless anyways. They won't let people like you to become a nurse. I do this for your own sake. Please apply for other program." I heard that the Faculty of Education does the same thing because Kathoeyes won't get teacher jobs easily. – Baitong, Nakhon Pathom

Muna, who is currently an international transgender model, also has shared her employment discrimination experience. She described how her investment in cosmetic improvements helped her to get jobs:

I did many kinds of work before; from cleaning lady, sex work, makeup artist, hotel reception, sales representative and now a model. I spent lots of money on cosmetic surgery to make myself look beautiful so that I can get a job. I used to look quite ugly, but after the nose job, boob job, eyelid surgery, chin surgery, botox and loads of workouts, I finally got a good job. I even took a loan from my cousin to do these plastic surgeries. It is very important for Kathoey to look as beautiful as women, or more beautiful than women. Otherwise, you are not going to go far in career life. Before the make-over, the best job I could get was to clean restaurant kitchen or sex work which I did not earn a lot of money. Most of the employers rejected me, some of them said they don't accept gays, lesbians or Kathoeyes because we are emotionally unbalanced and can't work for a long time. – Muna, Bangkok

Besides employment rejection and bias based on their trans identity, some participants are also discriminated and forced by their employers to wear male attire to work.

I work in marketing in private company that was supposed to be less strict about sexuality and clothing. But my boss is an older conservative woman. She told HR to give me a warning about my cross-dressing. The HR told me that it is the company's regulation that employees must wear clothes according to sex assigned at birth. I tried to look up for this regulation, but I could not find anything. HR just made it up. It is their own prejudice against Kathoey. So I have to wear pants to work. No more skirts or dresses nowadays. It makes me feel sad that I cannot just be myself. Imagine if you were forced to wear clothes you dislike every day... – Jibby, Bangkok

When I worked as an administrator for a company in Thailand, I was pressured to wear male clothes to work to keep my job. – Naree, London

The quotations above illustrate Kathoey's susceptibility to employment discrimination in Thailand. The only industries that welcome Kathoey in Thailand are related to hyper-femininity, aesthetic, and physical appearance. Many Kathoey have chosen to participate in sex work because the job market in Thailand does not welcome them. This is very different from a Thai woman's decision to enter the sex work industry. Unlike typical Thai women sex workers, many of my Kathoey sex worker participants are well-educated.

The difficulties Kathoey have in finding good jobs seems to reinforce their penchant for creating romantic visions about spatial-hypergamy, 'better life' with European men, and migration to Europe as their best chance to find occupations that suit their qualifications and education. I further develop this argument in *chapters five and six*.

4.3.2. Bullying and Mockery

Kathoey from rural Thailand who migrate to live in big cities have to adjust themselves and construct new identities because they encounter ideologies that

assign a higher value to and admiration of Kathoey who are ‘as beautiful as women’. The masculine/feminine mixed bodies of Kathoey from rural areas are seen as humorous by city dwellers, who sometimes describe these newcomers as *tua-talok* (English translation: jokers). This is another kind of violence. Compared with many countries, Thailand seems to murder and physically abuse its LGBTQ population less frequently (TvT Research Project, 2016: TGEU, 2012: ILGA, 2012), yet Thai society imposes a different kind of indirect violence on Kathoey. Thai people laugh at people whose gender identity diverges from their understanding of the social norms and sometimes uses stereotypical constructions of Kathoey as a foundation for set comedic sketches. Kathoey tend not to laugh at such presentations (Chalidaporn, 2013 cited in Chotiwan, 2014). All of my respondents, regardless of their social statuses, demonstrated evidence of the stigma that direct or passive-aggressive bullying and mockery has imposed upon them. They recognize their harassers not only as individuals but also as the products of social training from Thailand’s most influential social institutions – family, school, friends and colleagues, and business establishments as both customers and prospective employees – and they experience it on the street on a daily basis. Respondents also report that many Thai people tend to have a special way to show friendliness or affection: purportedly humorous comments on ones’ psychic character or physical appearance. 60 out of 60 Kathoey participants reported experiences of bullying and mockery in Thailand; and it is traumatic for all of them. Although the surfaces of my informants’ stories are similar, each demonstrates a unique kind of pain:

I don’t know about other Kathoey, but I’m personally traumatized from discrimination. I was mocked, cursed, and bullied a lot when I was young. Even my dad didn’t accept me. I have an inferiority complex because of my identity. These experiences made me want to change myself; it made me a negative person who grew up too fast. I’m always harsh to people, and I’m defensive because I always assume people will attack me, because I’m a Kathoey. It takes lots of strength to be a Kathoey. – Sujeera, Bangkok

I wanted to live abroad because I suffered when I lived in Thailand, I was often mocked at. It made me feel sad made me feel like I was odd and ridiculous. Even here in London I still feel unconfident, I’m paranoid that people know I’m not a real woman. – Pip, London

When I was a child, dad hit me in a hope that I would stop being like this –
Toon, Bangkok

I'm a lucky case, my family never abused me like that but I have lots of Kathoey friends who had bad childhood. Lots of Kathoeyes were kicked on the street back then. Some [Kathoey] friends' parents hit them because they were feminine. One of my good friends was hit by her dad and raped by a family member, because she was a Kathoey. Another friend from childhood was lured to collect cows in the field with her relative and the relative forced her to give him oral sex. – Muna, Bangkok

Oh, when I was young, Kathoeyes had to hide their identity because there was social pressure and bullying. I was mocked I was kicked on the street. I tried to ignore it, but it was hurtful – Jessy, Amsterdam

When I was young, my brother bullied and hit me because I acted like a girl. Well, because I was a girl! (laugh) He said I defamed the whole family and his friends looked down on our family because of me. It was a childish thing but it still gets to me. Even now, I don't have a good relationship with my brother. – Gai, Denmark

Oh yes, I was mocked at a lot. Sometimes, I was happy to see I could make people laugh. But sometimes it hurts, but I just didn't show it to anyone. And I know many people laugh at Kathoeyes but they mean no harm. Thai people are like that. –Fang, Belgium

When I was young, men bullied me; they cursed at me, assaulted me. It made me feel unhappy. I was punched and when I fought back they threw rocks on me. I was treated like I was a crazy person. – Baitong, Nakhon Pathom

Back then [when she was younger and lived in Thailand], people mocked me, boys would not be friends with me because they didn't want to be mocked. Girls' parents did not want their children to play with me, either. Besides fighting with hormonal change in my body, I was verbally abused a lot. It's hard to be Kathoey. – Yai, Amsterdam

Kathoey's get mocked every day in Thailand, everywhere you go. But I don't think they really want to insult you, it's just the way Thais are. Thais like to make fun of each other. Once, when I was home for a visit, a taxi driver asked me how much it cost to have a boob job, and then he laughed. I know many Thais do that to show their friendliness, even though it's so inappropriate. Some days it's okay, but other days I got annoyed. If Dutch people did the same thing I would be very pissed because it's not in Dutch culture. – Gege, Amsterdam

I came out as a Kathoey-les (lesbian male-to-female transgender) and my [Facebook] page went viral. I get like thousands of hateful online comments about how ugly, mental, or disgraceful I am. And you know what, I get many threats from hetero-Kathoey's, telling me I am not a Kathoey; I am just one sick man who likes woman but want to cross-dress for fun and I defame the good reputation of the Kathoey community. – Alice, Bangkok

A study conducted by UNESCO, in partnership with Plan International and Mahidol University, 'found that a third of 2000 surveyed LGBT students had been physically harassed, a fourth sexually. Only a minority had previously told anyone about the bullying, even though it had caused many of them to be depressed and 7% to attempt suicide' (Mahidol University, Plan, UNESCO, 2014 cited in UNDP and USAID, 2014, p. 38). The report also indicated that the bullying included verbal abuse, mocking, physical abuse and rape. Most of my respondents report that they experienced school bullying, mostly in the form of verbal bullying and mockery, and some said they were psychologically abused. Although they experienced these events years or even decades ago, many reported that the trauma continues to haunt them. Some explained that they try to handle routine verbal abuse, mockery and bullying with tolerance in accordance with the Buddhist conception of dharma. Moreover, during the past decade, the power of the internet has been harnessed to the cause of keeping Kathoey's in their place. Kathoey's receive countless hateful comments under online news threads or events about transgender people on the Thai social media. My respondents confirmed that this is a modern form of bullying: online comments dehumanize and stigmatize Kathoey's, which affects their mental health and lowers their self-esteem. As my respondents said;

When I was in elementary school, the teacher didn't allow me to play with other girls. She told me to group up with the boys only, and she told the girls not to hang out with me so much because I'm a boy. I remember I cried about it and my mom said the teacher was right. – Baitong, Nakhon Pathom

Before I had a Kathoey friend group in high school, I didn't have so many friends. Girls were scared to be friends with me, boys acted like they were disgusted by me. I remember sometimes I brought food to eat alone in the toilet because I didn't want anyone to see I had nobody to eat lunch with. The boys called me *Kathoey-kwaii* (transgendered buffalo) because I was a fat Kathoey kid. I remember they threw a football on my head, put dirt on my desk drawer, and when there was a group work, nobody wanted to group up with me. Okay, I feel like crying just thinking back about this. – Toon, Bangkok

It was so sad I had to use the male student toilet, it did not feel like myself. – Pip, London

Internet is a new method to humiliate Kathoeyes; you can see how we are made as tua-talok (joker) everywhere online. – Ratee, Bangkok

This evidence demonstrates that, overall, Kathoeyes in Thailand are 'othered' and habitually discriminated against through mockery and bullying. However, most of my participants did not stress the street physical abuse or harassment they experienced. They feel that street discrimination in Thailand is annoying, painful, but not life-threatening. Further, the data shows that Thai society tolerates Kathoeyes to some extent, just as Kathoeyes tolerate street harassment to some extent, but neither side would suggest that Kathoeyes have been truly accepted. Social perceptions about Kathoey otherness reinforce a Kathoey identity that places members of this group both inferior and deviant, compared with members of other social groups.

Buddhist notions about karma and incarnation also explains a big part of Thai tolerance toward LGBTQ people, and, in order to tolerate Kathoey 'deviancy', Thai people choose to joke about transgenderism, instead of being more hateful or life-threateningly violent. It is highly possible, as they explain, that the mockery and

bullying experienced from childhood has contributed to life-long trauma displayed in the form of a variety of mental health and self-esteem issues.

4.3.3. Limits on Freedom of Movement: ‘Kathoeys not Welcome Here’

Many entertainment venues essentially ban Kathoey. Some nightclubs and bars post signs stating ‘No entry for Kathoey’ or ‘No entry for second-type women’ at their main entrances. Business owners respond that they screen all potential customers and often get bouncers to reject Kathoey from entering their clubs or bars because, they claim, they have experienced Kathoey who enter their establishments and then steal money from Thai and international clients, sexually harass male customers, or make disturbingly loud noises that drive other clients away (Manager Online, 2015). Moreover, until recently, some hotels in Pattaya, Chonburi province posted signs that declared, ‘No entry for Kathoey, dogs and durians’ (The Foundation of Transgender Alliance for Human Rights, 2011).



Figure 4.11: Sticker in front of a nightclub in Thailand. The Thai words say ‘Second-type of women’

[Blurred Logo]

[Blurred Text]

Dear : Tenants / Guest,

This is to inform you that the person you want to bring to your room is not a lady and he is a **LADY BOY**

Please answer the following questions :-

- Now we are informing you she is a **LADY BOY**.
Do you still want to bring her to your room ? Yes No
- Have you negotiate the price before he is going to your room ?
How much ? baht.
There are many occasion fighting begin over the price.
- Please be careful of your valuable belonging because **there are cases where the valuables of guest lost after these entertainment people entered the room.**

We are here to protect you, please co-operate with our security guards.

Figure 4.12: A form given to guests in a hotel in Bangkok

Some of my respondents shared their experiences about being banned from entering nightclubs and hotels in Thailand:

I had a night out with my female friends, and the club bouncer told me “you can’t go in”. I asked him why not, and he said, “Because you’re sao-pra-phet-song (Kathoey). Many Kathoeyes come and cause problems so the club owners don’t allow Kathoey anymore.” I was so pissed, they even discriminate me to have fun. Anyone could cause problems. That has nothing to do with sexuality. – Sujeera, Bangkok

Some nightclubs around RCA (Royal City Avenue, Bangkok) screen Kathoeyes. If they feel like you look like a hooker they won’t let you enter their club. I think it’s very ugly because they don’t use the same standard for women and men. They only screen Kathoeyes, which means they assume all Kathoeyes go to clubs to do bad things. – Joom, Bangkok

I kind of accept Kathoey discrimination in Thailand because I understand that we are in a poor country driven by money, so gender inequality issues would not be priority now because we don't even have policies to improve poverty, health care, elderly issues and other blabla issues. But what makes me crazy is some clubs and restaurants do not allow Kathoeyes to enter. It's unacceptable, it saddens me. – Beam, Bangkok

I went to check-in with my farang lover, at a hotel around *Soi-Nana*. The receptionist said “I'm sorry, it's in our policy we can't accept sao-pra-phet-song customers.” I am not sure if they thought I was a hooker or it was because I'm a Kathoey. But it's awful either way! – Wanda, Bangkok

Before it was on the news, DEMO club told me I can' go in because it's only for men and women, because lots of Kathoeyes caused problems for their club. – Jibby, Bangkok

Thailand was so closed about sexuality. People were anti-Kathoeyes and never really accepted us. Like some nightlife establishments that don't allow Kathoey to enter. It made me feel like a failure. I hated that Thais discriminate Kathoeyes, I wanted a new, better, more luxurious life to overcome these prejudices in Thailand. – Fang, Belgium

Limits on Kathoeyes freedom of movement in Thailand illustrates the labels attached to Kathoeyes: violent; wrongdoer; criminal; threats to all ‘normal people,’ both men and women. Business owners in Thailand believe in these stereotypes and labels, and their policies, including banishment, reinforce them. Movement limitations are yet another process through which Kathoeyes are dehumanized and social stigmas against them are reproduced.

4.3.4. Thai Media and Kathoey Image

The Thai media seldom depicts Kathoeyes or other sexual and gender minorities with positive images. As discussed in *chapter one*, the main reason Kathoeyes are seen as comedians in Thai society is that this image is constantly reproduced by the Thai media. The list of Thai movies with stereotypically comedic Kathoey main characters is very long indeed and includes such blockbusters as *The*

Iron Ladies Franchise (2000, 2003 and 2014), Saving Private Tootsie (2002), Haunting Me (2007), Oh My Ghosts! (2009), The Odd Couple (2007) and TV shows like Pasa Plaza (2013), Talk ka Toey (still on air in 2017) or Toey Tiew Thai (still on air in 2017).

In 2013, IKEA released advertisement video called ‘ลืมเอาใบ’ (forget to fake it) that was highly criticized by The Foundation of Transgender Alliance for Human Rights as the ad content is offensive and trans-phobic. The ad starts with mid-age man walking with a beautiful woman (who is a Kathoey) in a department store. When the woman sees the products on sale, she suddenly and rapturously shouts out with her masculine voice ‘Oh wow, sales! SALES!’ The man looks shocked and, once the Kathoey character realizes she ‘forgot to fake it’, she finds her gentle, feminine voice and says ‘I am a bit ill...’ Afterward, the Kathoey character shops enthusiastically and the man anxiously runs away from her (because he just realizes she is a Kathoey).

Besides presenting Kathoeyes as goofballs, peculiar, humorous and yet often creepy, Thai media also portrays Kathoeyes as beauty queens. Beyond these two kinds of representations, Thai TV shows, movies, TV series or news offers few other Kathoey images. As a result, the media misrepresents Kathoey identity and reproduces social stigma toward Kathoey.

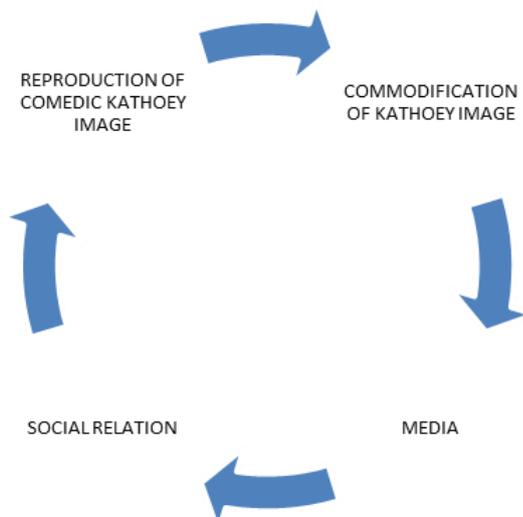


Figure 4.13 : The diagram shows the connection of Thai media and reproduction of Kathoey comedic character

From my personal long-term observation and in-depth interviews; as shown in Figure 4.13, I analyze that Thai media shapes and reproduces Kathoey's way of expressions, self and identity. The media also shapes Thai society's expectation and picture about Kathoey as a group of funny, lively and over-acting people. Many respondents explain to me that they have to live up to the 'funny' Kathoey reputation because it is a way to possess social space and social relation in Thai society. And the constructed comedian performativity later become what the society believes as 'natural identity' or 'inborn character' of Kathoey. In other words, in order to gain social acceptance, Kathoey create their social relations through their comedic and beauty queen characters. They learn about these characters from the media – the institution which at the same time frames and broadcasts their image to society as well. The reproduction of Kathoey comedic characters, generated both by Thai media and by many Kathoey themselves, leads to the commodification of these Kathoey images. The comedic and beauty queen images have proven themselves to be effective marketing tools for the entertainment industry, so the Thai media keeps reproducing them. As my respondents explain:

I try to be cheerful and funny as much as possible because it is important for social acceptance. Thais prefer funny Kathoey, especially if you are not the pretty one you should rather be nice and funny to be socially-acceptable. I think the media plays a big role because look at Kathoey trends over time. Nowadays we speak and act the same way; we imitate the way Kathoey on famous TV series and social media act, dress or speak. Trends change every year, and Kathoey change their way of speaking, acting, or dressing up every year, following the trend on Thai media. It is the same for Kathoey in Europe, we watch a lot of Thai programs, YouTube or Kathoey VDO clips on Facebook and we learn about Kathoey trends from there.' – Fang, Belgium

Kathoey act like Kathoey characters they see on TV, so that they get social acceptance. – Jetsada, NGO in Bangkok

I think Kathoey want to 'fit in' in the community, so we unconsciously act according to the media like being funny, outgoing or beautiful. Thai society

expects us to be funny so we act funny and then it becomes a character. And being funny makes people like you more. – Jane, London

Not all, but many Kathoeyes imitate characters and trends from Kathoeyes internet idols or *lakorn* (soap operas) or things they see on the social media so that they feel they are in trend. – Matsri, Chumphon

Furthermore, LGBTQ people are most of the time reported for deviant and violent crimes they commit, but their harassment experience are rarely reported. Thai media also often use the offensive sexual terminologies to refer to LGBTQ people. As the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission report of 2009 stated, ‘even long-term foreign residents aren’t likely to have heard about, for example, a bisexual woman who was burned alive in 2006, and the rape, murder and burning of a lesbian last year. Both cases were reported only in the Thai dailies. Rarely will they pick up stories on constant harassment and discrimination against kathoeyes, whose life options are severely limited. These “non-issues” are often brushed aside by Thais’ (Likhitpreechakul 2009 quoted in UNDP and USAID, 2014, p.45). Thailand does not have hate crime laws as regarding sexuality, and as that violence repeatedly comes as a form of mockery and bullying, and it is greatly reproduced by the Thai media, advertisement, movies, TV series, TV shows and in every division of the entertainment industry. My participants have expressed their frustrations about how their image and reality is negatively affected by the biased Thai media;

Media is the main social institution; it constructs an individual’s self. It creates the meaning of who is Kathoey. Mainly, people see that Kathoey images on TV and other media just repeatedly represent Kathoeyes in one pattern; such as beauty queens, comedian, entertainer, violent love. And their jobs will only be make-up artists, bitchy character, boy-crazy, sugar mommies for boys, having soft spot for handsome men. This is a social stigma. This creates false social expectation about Kathoeyes and then it gives discrimination towards Kathoeyes who are not fitting the comedic or beauty queen expectation. Media is a capitalism, they do they create everything to sell. – Ronnapoom Samakkeekarom, Lecturer at Thammasat University and an activist at Thai TGA (Thai Transgender Alliances)

[Thai] Media makes people look at Kathoeyes in an awful way. Media always stereotypes Kathoeyes with bad images. Always stigmatizes Kathoeyes as violent people who steal things, people who like to have physical fights, deviant behavior. Just always give us bad images. - Peraya, Nakhon Pathom

Thai media stereotypes Kathoeyes with bad images, always. So people think that Kathoeyes are bad, selling our bodies. – Weena, Bangkok

The society sees us as mentally abnormal and deviant because it receives bad stigma from the media. Just mentioning the word ‘Kathoey’, people imagine bad meaning already – Jibby, Bangkok

[Thai] Media is a part of it making the society judges Kathoey as people who are man-crazy or slutty, making men scared of Kathoeyes. – Darat, Pattaya

[Thai] Media always stereotypes Kathoeyes as slutty, funny, scary, or craving for men. The media just reproduces this image and it makes many Kathoeyes act like Kathoeyes in lakorn or TV. – Lyla, Belgium

This chapter has discussed and illustrated the empirical data of the state and street discrimination towards Kathoey in Thailand, which is still the continuing problem. I have elaborated the context of hetero-normativity in Thailand and its transformation, which was intensely influenced by imitation of western civilization throughout history. After developments in the 21st century, Thailand seems to moving in a more progressive direction regarding LGBT rights. But regardless of the big population of Kathoeyes and gender diversity groups, the Thai state is still deficient in providing equality and legal protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Furthermore, Kathoeyes still struggle with limited legal recourses on their daily basis, as illustrated through participants’ words, on their personal documentations and legal status, structural employment, marriage and family, lack of protection in hate crime and structural issues in the Thai education system and academic institutions. Besides legal discrimination, I have in addition shown that Kathoeyes also experience diverse levels of social exclusion and abuse in Thailand on daily basis such as employment discrimination, bullying and mockery, limits on freedom of movement. Finally, the chapter also discussed the

negative effect upon Kathoeyes from reproduction of the transgenderism stigma through Thai media and how the media influences Kathoeyes' performativity.

If Thai society is to inhabit a space where transgender people and other socially excluded minorities are made to feel as well as have more equal opportunities, then the Thai government must draft more comprehensive and forward-looking policies, and major segments of Thai society will have to cooperate in their implementation and enforcement. The injustice of the Thai state on gender policies and social trans-prejudices has motivated many thousands of Thai transgender women to migrate to Europe – a continent on which, in their pre-journey fantasies, they expected to be greeted with the same opportunities and responsibilities as all others have. The next chapter discusses in detail of Kathoey migration to Europe, as well as, how Thai state resistance and street discrimination constructs structural aspirations for Kathoeyes to find European partners and migrate to Europe.

CHAPTER FIVE

Kathoey Migration to Europe

In recent decades, the combination of capital flows, globalization, international sociopolitical changes, transnationalism, and internet technologies has radicalized the ability of people from the global north and south to contact, interact and encounter each other. Such interactions often lead to transnational relationships and even marriage of people from different cultures and races. Especially since Thailand's economy began its rapid growth spurt during the 1980s and early 1990s, and the global queering period that dates from the same time (see Altman, 1996), Kathoeyes have had more contact with European tourists, who have acknowledged and supported their right to pursue their lifestyle. This acknowledgement fueled Kathoeyes' romanticization of the European world and contributed substantially to the large flow of Kathoey migrants to Europe.

Previous research on Thai migration to the western world concentrated on economic theories that emphasize labor migration, and suggested that economic deprivation, economic disparity and opportunities of migration between two countries are the main factors that push Thai women to migration to work, including sex work, and to marry in Europe (Plambech, 2010; Ruenkaew, 2003). Theoretical concepts of sexuality and gender as practiced in specific social and cultural contexts have been invoked in critiques of economic theories, as well as to directly analyze the social phenomenon of cross-cultural marriage. Suksomboon (2011) argues that ideologies and practices regarding gender and sexuality between global north and global south countries are indispensable elements of an explanation for such marriages; gender and sexuality are parts of mechanisms that can support or might obstruct cross-cultural relationships, marriage, adaptability and prolonged partnerships. She also suggests that gender and sexuality should be critically examined, with the purpose of understanding how and why European governments (in her case study, the Dutch government) intervene in the relationships and lives of cross-cultural partners, as well as how gender and sexuality have been used by the state to protect or prevent residential statuses of Thai women who are partners of Western men.

This chapter seeks to demonstrate and analyze my research findings regarding the large phenomenon of Kathoey migration to Europe, including factors that motivate Kathoeyes to move to Europe, their expectations before migration and their reality during and after migration to Europe – all through participants’ own words. There is no statistical record of the number of Kathoeyes who migrate and live in Europe, due to the Thai government’s policies, Thai transgender women’s official identity remains as male. Therefore, I have collected data about their migration through field observation and in-depth interviews. This chapter is comprised of five sub-topics. *Cross-cultural Relationships and Migration* provides a review of the literature regarding cross-cultural relationships and migration particularly from Thailand to the global north. *Kathoey Motivations to Migrate to Europe* identifies and analyzes the seven main motivations for Kathoey migration to Europe. *Illegal Immigration: Marriage Fraud, Identity Fraud and Fake Passports* relies extensively on Kathoey narratives as it offers an analysis of illegal migration to Europe. *Cross-cultural Relationships with European Men: Gender, Sexuality, and Migration* examines literature that addresses cross-cultural relationships between Thai women and European men and applies some of these secondary insights to the situation of Kathoeyes and their relationships with European men, studied during my fieldwork. Lastly, *Expectations before and after Migration* explicates the clash between reality and expectation that many migrants come to experience.

5.1. Cross-cultural Relationships and Migration

A rich literature addresses many aspects of cross-cultural relationships and marriage, including reasons that push people to migrate from the global south to the global north. The earliest theories concentrated on micro-level economic motives, arguing that marriage results from individual rational choices: individuals calculate that marriage offers more profits and advantages than being single does (Becker, 1991; Gorny and Kepinska, 2004). This work has been criticized because it starts with an assumption that individuals have more freedom to choose than, in fact, they have because these approaches also overlook family members’ participation in decision-making about marriage and migration (Suksomboon, 2011.)

Later economic theories expanded their analysis into the macro-level. These studies suggested that economic demands and migration opportunities were the main

factors that pushed people to have cross-cultural partnerships including marriage (Borjas, 1989; Lee, 1966; Todaro, 1969). These scholars further suggest that poverty and underprivilege in terms of education and financial status, especially for women, intensified the desire to migrate to more developed countries. But at the same time, this work recognizes that transnational migration is expensive, and migration law and legal labor controls in the developed countries are very strict, particularly for low-skilled laborers from the third world. For these political-economic reasons, marriage or partnerships with men from developed countries have become the most promising migration opportunity for women from the third world, even more so because marriage-based visas also grant permission for the migrant to work in the developed countries (Fan and Huang, 1998; Humbeck, 1996). Despite its improvement in relation to the microeconomic theories that preceded it, this work continues to focus too intensively on economic motivations, it continues to offer a one-dimensional or even stereotypical presentation of what constitutes 'women's group experiences' as well as the economic and social status of women.

Further studies have added new insights regarding migration, cross-cultural partnership and marriage in relation to economical and geographical variables. These theories explore how men from developed and rich countries become more attractive to women from the third world, compared with men from marginalized areas or poorer countries (Lavelly, 1991; Li and Lavelly, 1995). Cross-cultural marriage is analyzed within the framework of 'spatial hypergamy'. The anthropological notion of hypergamy, defined as 'the action of marrying a person of a superior caste or class,' becomes part of an explanation of how marriage opens doors of opportunity for women and their families to climb up the social ladder. Lavelly (1991) and Constable (2005a) developed the concept of hypergamy to explain cross-cultural marriage of women from the third world countries; they propose that, in addition to social and financial upsurge, cross-cultural marriage/relationships provide improved geographical mobility. The concept of spatial hypergamy describes third world women for whom cross-cultural marriage and migration contributed to their upward social mobility, and is included in theories that explain this phenomenon. This work criticized prior attempts related to economy and geography as 'masculinistic' (Constable, 2005a; Piper, 2005 cited in King et al., 2006: 411), because they neglected prominent social-contextual variables such as gender, class, ethnicity,

citizenship and more. These variables are defined and interpreted differently in each society, and together they comprise powerful mechanisms that strongly shape and govern cross-cultural marriage/relationship patterns and migration of women from the third world countries (Suksomboon, 2011).

In addition to examining state and street discriminations that Kathoey experienced in Thailand, which will appear below in my discussion of how Thai transprejudice motivates Kathoey to migrate to Europe, I also seek to apply the concept of gender to explain the phenomenon of cross-cultural marriage/partnership with European men. Gender, a much used and often abused concept, has been defined in mutually incompatible ways by scholars from a wide range of disciplines. Gender is a state of sexual mutability that flows through one's contextual existence. Generally, mainstream genders are constructed and disciplined through social categorization of sexual identities (Suksomboon, 2011). Femininity and masculinity are connected to socially constructed female/male gender roles. Moreover, gender is a dynamic sexual state that influences the distribution of power in class systems, ethnicities and other disparities under a range of political, economic, social, cultural and historical conditions; all of which influence organization and access to social power and resources in each period of time (Beasley, 2005). The studies that apply gender notions tend to argue that social roles, women's designated family responsibilities (which differ from men's), social pressures upon women such as motherhood, daughterhood or divorced experiences, all influence decisions of women from poorer countries to consider cross-cultural marriage and migration (Harzig, 2001; Sharpe, 2001). These studies emphasize women's agency and negotiation power; in other words, they illustrate how women might decide to marry and migrate as an act of resistance against sexual oppression, or an escape from social and family control in their homeland (Ortiz, 1996; Pedraza, 1991). Some feminist scholars have argued that women should not be understood as a homogeneous group, and that economic and social disparities among them help to explain the variation in women's migration and cross-cultural marriage experiences (Alicea, 1997; Moore, 1988).

Social research has tended to pay more attention to the connection between gender and sexuality. On a fundamental level, the concept of sexualities encompasses all practices that relate to sexual desires. An individual's sexual desires are not

'natural' in any meaningful sense, but rather a social interpretation; sexual desire is a target of political and social control, and a space of submission and struggle on both the individual and the social level (Saekuay, 2004 cited in Suksomboon, 2011) Furthermore, elements of sexuality are complex. They are comprised of an individual's beliefs, values about sex, feelings, sexual desires, sexual contentment, sexual identities, genders, sexual orientations, sexual binary relations, definitions of sexual relations, and sexual practices (Suksomboon, 2011).

While some scholars have attempted to apply gender theories to enhance their understanding of women's cross-border partnership and migration, only a few studies have investigated the connection between sexuality concerning cross-border partnership and migration. For instance, Constable's (2005b) study of marriage between Chinese and Filipino women and their American husbands describes the courtship process through kinship, matching agencies, or dating websites: Asian-womanhood is presented as gentle, sweet, and sexually arousing, and the victimization of such women, in the forms of poverty and underdevelopment, are presented as constructed stereotypes that affect interactions, expectations and marriage of cross-cultural partners. However, in the Thai context, the literature is limited to discussions of Thai women and Western partners (Chantavanich et al., 2001; Ruenkaew, 1999); other possible gender combinations are ignored. They offer explanations for relationships that began in the context of sex work (which are often presented as underprivileged women from rural Thai areas who do business with Western customers) and developed to involve marriage, partnership and migration to the western world (Lisborg, 2002; Mix, 2002). These mainstream studies overlook cross-border relationships built through the internet and other social networks (such as through family members or friends), the experience of cross-cultural relationships, and gender and sexuality dynamics as related to highly educated or well-off Thai women who are married to western men. Furthermore, with the exception of Suksomboon's (2011) study, most research on Thai women in this regard barely contemplate how cross-cultural partners are constructed and individuals are taught to think and practice sex in certain ways, for example, sexual intercourse, marriage life, or the cultural difference of 'good-women' values. There is a concomitant paucity of research that analyzes disparities in understandings of 'manhood' the two countries and how these shape Thai women's cognition, experience and interpretation, all of

which influence their decision to seek a cross-border partnership (see Suksomboon, 2011). Above all, academic libraries offer virtually nothing specifically on Kathoey cross-cultural partnerships and migration to Europe. Thus, I hope the data from this study will provide new information for further Thai Kathoey migration and cross-cultural relationships studies.

5.2. Kathoey Motivations to Migrate to Europe

Compared with other ethnicities and races in Asia, such as Chinese, Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Indian, Thai migration to Europe is rather a contemporary phenomenon. It was first visible in the 1970s (Ruenkaew, 1999; Chantavanich et al., 2001) and most of the people who migrated were women. These women were mostly uneducated and came from the rural areas in Thailand, especially from the northeast region. Even today, compared with other immigrant ethnic groups, Thai immigrants in Europe are still mostly women, but their points of origin within Thailand are now more widely dispersed. Also, some of these migrants are more highly educated and richer than previous generations, and have met European partners through tourism, the internet, and other social networks. However, even though there are no statistical data on Kathoey population in Europe, it is well known within Thai communities in Europe that many Kathoey have migrated and continue to live in Europe, where they seek ‘better societies’ and opportunities to have ‘normal’ and ‘equal’ lives, and to do transgender sex work to earn much more money.

From my data analysis, I have identified subtle structural and socio-political issues behind Kathoey’s migration decisions. I categorize the structural aspirations of Kathoey migrations to Europe into seven main groups: (i) economic reasons; (ii) state discrimination in Thailand; (iii) employment issues in Thailand; (iv) street discrimination in Thailand; (v) a romanticized vision of life in Europe; (vi) desires for ‘normal’ lives and romantic relationships; and (vii) desires to increase social status in Thailand. In this section, I will elaborate each of these rationales for migration by using my research participants’ words and narratives, which reflect the phenomenon most precisely.

First, economic motivation plays an important role for all research respondents. Many explained that they are from rural areas and working class backgrounds, and many of them saw themselves as underprivileged when they were in Thailand. Life in Thailand was a financial struggle for them and their families, and being Kathoey magnified these struggles, especially when compared to opportunities available to cis-gendered people. They did not earn enough to have decent lives. They came to Europe to work to earn more money (some now receive a monthly salary from their European partners), some of which they send as remittances to support their families in Thailand, who continue to be poor and in need of financial help. As Gai, the informant in Denmark explained:

I come from Isan [a poor region in Thailand] and have only a 6th grade education. My parents were farmers and we did not have enough money. I moved to Pattaya to do sex work. I still remember my first customer. He was a white guy who tipped me 1000 baht [approximately 30 Euro.] Have you ever felt like this? [...] when you are so excited and overwhelmingly glad in your heart that it makes your hands shake? It happened to me when I first touched that 1000 baht for the first time. After that I set an aim in my mind. I will have to find farang partner and move to Europe. – Gai, Denmark

We [her family] did not even have enough money to buy food to eat. I had to come to the UK to work so I can send money to my siblings so that they can go to school – Nee, The UK

I remember I was so poor that sometimes I ate fish sauce with rice. Our roof had some holes and when it rained some nights we [she and her family] were wet [...] The only way to have better lives was to move to richer countries to work or to find farang [White-skinned people] men. – Thida, The Netherlands

For some participants, transnational migration is seen as the best possibility for escaping from poverty in Thailand. Macro-economic theories are able to explain this perception (see Borjas, 1989; Lee, 1966; Todaro, 1969; Fan and Huang, 1998; Humbeck, 1996). For many of my participants, their family's participation and support greatly influences their motivation or migration-decision. In Thai traditional

family culture, especially in the rural areas, adult family members are expected to send money or remittances to financially support parents and siblings.

However, although an economic rationale seems to be a dominant ‘push factor’, the quotes above shows that economics always connects to other motivations. Capitalism’s domination of the global ideological spectrum seems to construct participants’ romantic vision about ‘superiority’ and ‘high culture’ of Europe and European men as well. Kathoeyes who come from underprivileged backgrounds believe that finding ‘rich and superior’ farang partners is the most effective way to achieve their goal of escaping from poverty. Kathoeyes’ economic reason of migration accordingly relates to my analysis in participants’ (v) romanticized vision of life in Europe, and (vii) desires to increase social status in Thailand, but since political-economy reasons make it harder for them to migrate, so cross-cultural relationship or marriage with European men present themselves as the best channel for them to secure a precious visa to a European country.

Second, state discrimination in Thailand, including lack of transgender protection law and other structural issues as examined in *chapter four*, push Kathoey to find ‘better’ lives and opportunities to experience equal human rights. They expect to find such opportunities in Europe. My middle-class Kathoey participants demonstrated a greater awareness of the lack of Thai transgender people legal protection. As several such respondents said:

Money is not a problem for me. I am just so sick of how things work in Thailand. Where do we start? There is no democracy and of course no basic human rights whatsoever, not even free-speech rights here. I still have to carry the god damned male ID card everywhere. I feel so embarrassed when I travel abroad, and I’ve been locked up so many times at the airport migration because I look like this [she pointed at herself] but the documents still say I am a Mr. It feels like I am vilified every time I have to use my ID. I cannot apply for any private insurance company because I am Kathoey. They don’t accept Kathoey. Funny, right? We are not good enough to be insured in Thailand. I really hope I will be lucky enough one day to move to developed country. – Jibby, Bangkok

On my Sor.Dor 43 [the Thai military discharge paper], it is written that I do not have to practice in the military because I am “mentally sick and cannot be treated within 30 days. Having female breasts and is a second-type person.” And I used this paper to apply for jobs in different firms. Did not get any. I had to work as a make-up artist instead, before I moved to London. So nice we don’t have to have problems like this in the UK. – Bell, London

I dream of living in Sweden because their government allows citizens to have equal rights. Their society is so open-minded about sexuality and race. People are allowed to have political opinions, liberty, and legal rights for transgenders. [...] I learned about it from the news. – Sujeera, Kathoey university student in Bangkok

My partner and I have lived together for 18 years, but we have no right to benefit from each other. There is no same-sex marriage or civil partnership in Thailand. So let’s say, if I die tomorrow, by the law he can’t benefit anything from my pension or inheritance. Or let’s say he has a car accident tomorrow, the hospital will have to ask permission from his family for any treatment he will need. I will have no rights to claim anything as a lifetime partner. This is how it is in Thailand [...] Trans-paradise reputation? It is absurd! My sister has Thai takeaway restaurant in Frankfurt, we talk about moving there and working with her after our early-retirements. I’m so fed up with this country, I can’t wait to move. – Preeraya, Bangkok

I’m so jealous of Kathoeyes living in Europe, they get to change their initials [from Mr. to Mrs.] and to have legal rights. I hope I can live there some day. It seems like a much more relaxed life. –Wanda, Nakhon Pathom

Overall, a minority of my Kathoey informants report that state discrimination in Thailand motivates their migration decision-making. This minority tends to be younger, middle-class, well aware that the Thai government has violated legal rights. Compared with respondents who have fewer educational and financial resources, these injustice-motivated respondents are much more involved in Kathoey identity politics. This is unsurprising because poorer Kathoeyes from rural areas are more

focused on surviving; involvement in human rights movements and education is a luxury they cannot afford.

In addition, after the absolute monarchy was abolished in 1932, Thailand has been governed intermittently the military dictators. During these periods, including the current one that began in 2014, the risks associated with political opposition are much greater. As of now, the law known informally as ‘article 44’ remains in force. Article 44 authorises the detention of those suspected of ‘hate-speech toward the government’. It also prohibits any demonstration with more than five protesters gathered in public, in order to ensure ‘national peacekeeping and security’. This makes remaining in Thailand even more uncomfortable for Kathoey who are sensitive to the government’s role in the social challenges they face, and this is also the group that most resents the current government’s (or any dictatorial government’s) denial of their political voice. Nonetheless, even these Kathoey mention additional factors that support their migration decision, most notably the chance to find a man who loves them and the chance to find a better job.

Third, as discussed in *chapter four*, employment issues in Thailand are described by all research participants as one of the most important reasons that push or continue to push them to migrate. The participants narrated their experiences about Kathoey employment discrimination in Thailand, which seem to transcend their widely varying intersectional identities, social classes or education levels. All of them believe that Europe offers better employment opportunities for transgender people, and that they can earn much more money working in Europe than in Thailand. Thus, Europe became their dream destination to live and work; a place where they could earn money and send remittances back home. Many participants reported a life goal of collecting money from working in Europe and then moving back to Thailand once they are wealthy enough to buy a decent house, retire in Thailand and have enough money to provide for their families. Most participants regularly send money home to their family. Working in Europe dramatically improves their and their family’s lives. The following extracts from interviews focus on how employment issues in Thailand push Kathoey to migrate to Europe:

I have a bachelor's degree from Thailand and I do sex work. When I was a teenager, Kathoey could not find any work. I studied economics but could not find a job. And forget about governmental jobs! They'll never accept a Kathoey application. The private sector rejected me, too. The only choices for Kathoey back then were to be make-up artists, stylists, drag queens or selling yourself [sex work]. While I studied, I worked part-time at a bar in Patpong [a sex tourism area in Bangkok] and joined Kathoey cabaret show. I loved it. It was the only place where we could express our Kathoey identity. We really couldn't be open about who we were in public back then. But you earn almost nothing working in Thailand so I found my way to come to Germany and lived with my cousin first. Then a Kathoey friend in Amsterdam invited me to work with her as a chef in a Thai restaurant for five years. Then I started to do sex work here [...] I have worked in the red light district for more than 10 years now I think. – Jessy, a Kathoey sex worker in Amsterdam red light district explained her life journey to Europe

It's so hard to find any job because I'm Kathoey. I want to live in Europe like my aunt, so I can work and collect lots of money to support my parents – Wai, Chumphon

I am 55. I have only a 4th grade education and I did many kinds of work in Thailand when I was a little boy: cleaning fish stalls in the market, carrying vegetables to vendors, housemaid, and other labor. I struggled. I went to see a drag queen cabaret show in Pattaya when I was 17. I was so thrilled! The cabaret show was like a dream life for me. After that I applied for a job at the cabaret show in Pattaya. During my time, nobody accepted Kathoey to work. They wouldn't even be friends with Kathoey. Many of my Kathoey friends in Pattaya told me Scandinavia and Holland were the most open about sexuality. I dreamt about moving to a western country because I listened to so many great stories from Kathoey friends who have been to Europe. I worked with that cabaret for a while, and then one day a German agency contacted our team to have a Kathoey cabaret show tour in Europe. I applied for all documents needed; passport, visa, tickets. The happiest day of my life was when a farang transferred money to my bank account [was hired for the show]. Our ladyboy show toured in Europe from Germany, Switzerland and

Austria for a year. I was 23 then. Everyone from the cabaret separated after the contract ended, some got married to farang and some moved back home.

At that time, you didn't need a visa to go to Germany and you could stay 3 months. After the Berlin Wall had fallen, you needed a visa. When my visa expired, I moved to Thai casino in Germany. There, I was a cleaner and I also offered to buy-sell goods from the casino's customers who lost, to make a living. I was an undocumented migrant hanging around that casino for a while. I had a slight thought about moving back to Thailand, but saw no point why I should; being Kathoey, I see no chance to have a good career in Thailand and I have low education, so there won't be any opportunity left for people like me at home. Nobody would give me other jobs to do and I can't work as a drag queen forever. It will only get worse if I go back.

I had a friend who got married to a Dutch man. So I took a train from Munich to Amsterdam, without a visa. Life was drifting and lost, but I couldn't turn back to Thailand. My friend picked me up in Amsterdam and allowed me to crash on her sofa for a while. In Amsterdam, I worked as a drag queen every weekend. Then finally, I found a Dutch man to guarantee my visa. We dated for three years and broke up. By then I had a working visa. I worked as a janitor at a public high school for a year and a bit. Afterward, I was a factory worker at a storehouse for Japanese products. I went to language school and learned Dutch while I worked there. I then blended myself into the Dutch society. I had been working there for 14 years when I received Dutch citizenship. I am the most proud of myself, that I have come to this point in life, to have my own Thai restaurant in Amsterdam. – Yai, Thai restaurant owner in Amsterdam.

The quotes underscore Thailand's failure to manage its job market, its brain drain challenge and continuing employment discrimination. Before migrating to Europe, all participants (including participants living in Thailand) expected and imagined that European job markets would enable them to fulfill their career dreams, because they would be protected by Europe's progressive employment discrimination laws, and because they imagined that any society that would create

such laws would also be more accepting of transgendered employees at the street level.

Some educated Kathoeyes say that they decided to participate in sex work in Thailand and Europe because discrimination kept them from their preferred employment. Despite their claim, my in-depth data analysis suggests clearly that their choice to work in the prostitution industry is not purely based on employment issues in Thailand or due to Kathoey desperation related finding jobs in other economic sectors. There is a complexity and ambiguity when it comes to analyzing Kathoeyes decisions to migrate to join transnational sex work. I further discuss participant choices, autonomy, Kathoey-identity formation, sexual desire fulfillment, and femininity-validation through sex work in Europe in *chapter seven*.

Fourth, street discrimination in Thailand is another of the reasons why Kathoeyes desire a life in Europe. Kathoey respondents indicate they have experienced verbal abuse regarding their Kathoey identity on daily basis in Thailand. It sometimes comes in the form of ‘Thai jokes’ that most Thai people, including many Kathoey, will not take as ‘serious offense’. Many participants explained how they have adopted a Buddhist culture of tolerance to deal with mockery or bullying in schools, workplaces, public society and even families, as documented in *chapter four*. Moreover, participants asserted that they are unsatisfied with how the Thai media regularly portrays them as jokers or goofballs. These Kathoey images shape the way society or even Kathoey see themselves, and the media manipulates how some Kathoey act to live up the ‘jokers’ stereotype as they try to find space in the society. Moreover, beyond social prejudice and transphobia documented in the last chapter, the hierarchy within the Kathoey sub-culture, including pressures of social/class status, the seniority system, life competitions or beauty hierarchy, also push Kathoey to move to Europe. Frustration over lack of social acceptance in Thailand leads Kathoey to search for opportunities to migrate to countries where they believe they can find less transgender discrimination societies:

I felt so uncomfortable when I lived in Thailand. People looked at me and gossiped. They looked at me like I’m a clown [...] I still feel paranoid when I visit Thailand because it feels like people judge and look down on me all the time when they look at me. I never feel that in Denmark. If you are a

beautiful Kathoey in Europe, then farang can't tell that you're a Kathoey. Even though you have sex with them, they still think you're a real woman. That's why they are less prejudiced, because they can't tell [if she is a Kathoey]. But Thais can. I won't move back to Thailand for sure. Too much social pressure. – Pok, Copenhagen

If you are not a beautiful Kathoey, you will feel more alienated from the Thai society. I feel like I am not valuable here [...] like there is no social space to stand on. I want to migrate to Europe so that I can have more acceptance from society. Also, if I get to live abroad, people in Thailand will look up to me. – Da, Nakhon Pathom

One of the reasons I moved to Belgium was because I was so tired of people's gossip and mistreatment [in Thailand]. People in my village always made fun of me, and I had to smile and laugh with them because I did not want to be overreacting. I was bullied a lot at school too because I was too girly, hated it. I wanted to live abroad because I thought I won't understand the language, so I won't have to hear gossips anymore and there won't be Thais to intervene my personal spaces. But clearly I was wrong [...] lots of Thais live here [laughed]. – Fang, Belgium

Beside their desires to migrate to Europe, which based on their belief that Europe is more liberated and safer for LGBTQ communities when it comes to street discrimination, it is well known within Kathoey subcultures that farang cannot differentiate Kathoey from biological women. They also see migration to Europe as great opportunity to have a new life – in which they are believed to be 'real women' – and with no intention of telling anyone in Europe they are Kathoey.

Participants also reflect on the belief that, if they are 'beautiful' or act 'as feminine as real women,' they will not experience social discrimination after their migration to Europe. This information illustrates my concept of *'Discourse of Acceptance through Beauty Myth'*, which is crucial to my analysis of *'Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks'*.

Fifth, my questions regarding a European dream that might lead some Kathoey to migrate yielded some very interesting insights. Participants clearly

demonstrated the range of ways they held romantic and idealistic notions of European men and life in Europe, and they had many ideas about how they could fulfil their lives and dreams as a result of contact with Europe, and with European men. In their view, European men are the best, and offer the easiest and least expensive path toward successful migration and realizing life goals:

I boosted up much more self-esteem when I dated farang, because people with dark skin and ethnic face like me are considered ugly in Thailand. But farang thought this kind of look [tanned skin and exotic eyes and other features] is attractive. Before I immigrated to Germany, the word “Europe” gave me dreamy imagination. The whole thing about Europe seemed so classy and luxurious. I imagined life in Europe must be perfect; people have nice houses, big cars, [...] wear fashionable clothes, eat fancy food, just like what I saw on TV. I thought, farangs look so beautiful; their blue eyes, white and healthy skin, high noses and tall height. They might make me feel like I’m inferior because I’m short, dark, having flat nose and ugly. After that, I felt that Thai men were so ugly; short and dirty. – Saifan, Amsterdam who later finds out that her romantic images before migration do not match European reality. More of her words regarding expectations and reality of migration are presented in the section on *Expectations before and after Migration*.

I learnt farang culture from Pattaya by communicating with lots of them. Farang accept trans identity much better than Thais because they are so open-minded, free, and accepting of people’s opinions and differences. Life is easier, and life quality is much better than in Thailand. People with low education have better life opportunities in Europe. – Jessy, Amsterdam

When I worked on Samed Island, I got to communicate with lots of tourists. I saw how rich, civilized, intellectual and open-minded farang are. I wanted to be like them. Then I focused on finding a farang lover on the island. And I met my Dutch partner who brought me here. – Sang, Amsterdam

I dreamt about moving to Europe because I met some Thais who spoke fluent English and I thought they were so cool and hi-so [Thai term for high

society.] I wanted to have a fancy life like farang. They have money to go on holiday and to live posh lives. I dreamt about living in Europe, working and having a farang boyfriend. Coming to Europe with a farang partners is the easiest way, and it's legal. In the past, many Kathoey had to pay someone to marry them to get visa, or to live illegally. I would recommend junior Kathoey to just find some farang boyfriends and move here. – Jenny, Belgium

Not only because of their fair mentality, I also like farang because they could give me better life and opportunity. You know, I have lots of family members to take care of. The best way to migrate to Europe is to get a local [European] man to guarantee your spousal visa. – Pok, Copenhagen

Participants' romantic vision of life in Europe as their structural aspiration to migrate, illustrates a legacy of post-colonialism. Farang and Europe, for participants, are seen as high-class and superior, while they perceive themselves – Thais and non-whites – to be lower-class and inferior. I see in this a crypto-colonized ideology as discussed by Bhabha (1994): 'the regime of truth' and 'essentialist-identity' constructed by the western world. In *chapters six* and *eight*, I analyze Kathoey constructions of inferiority and superiority complexes through a three-stage identification process most famously deployed by Jacques Lacan.

Sixth, Kathoey migrated to Europe because they desire 'normal' lives and romantic relationships. Most of the research participants expressed their dreams about romantic relationships with European men and how these have fulfilled or are expected to fulfill their romantic needs. Many currently have happy and long-term relationships with European partners. They explain that European men take better care of Kathoey partners than Thai men; they are taken more seriously in relationships and have more chance to be a part of a 'normal' family, in which they are mothers and wives. They believe that such a life, and such family roles, would be impossible for Kathoey in Thailand, but in Europe, men respond more positively. In their own words:

European men fulfill my happiness about idealized romance; they kiss and hold me on the street. They treat Kathoeyes like real women. They are more

gentle and sweeter than Thai men. Thai men are more conservative because Thai society pressures them; they would never do that with a Kathoey in public. Thai men are never serious with Kathoey, to have a Thai boyfriend, Kathoey have to be sugar mommies. – Kao, London

Compared to Thai men, farang men treat Kathoey lovers much better. They give more love, respect, and warmth, and they don't control as much. They take relationship with Kathoey much more seriously. That's why I want to move in with my boyfriend in France. We met in Khao San Road. – Toon, Bangkok

These quotations reflect participants' romanticization of European men, which is essential to this study's analysis of Kathoey life experiences in Europe. However, class, gender, political economy and hypergamy are important elements to an understanding of Kathoey's romantic relationship with and migration to Europe. I found that a minority of participants prefer Thai men because Thai men share the same values and cultures. Interestingly, participants in this study who acknowledge a preference for Thai or Asian men are all upper-middle class, more educated and come from Bangkok (which is more economically advanced than other regions in Thailand).

Seventh, many Kathoey desire to migrate to Europe because they want to climb the social ladder in Thailand. Because of capitalist expectations and the kinds of social oppression discussed in *chapter our*, that are inherent in Thai culture, they believe that living in Europe and having European partners would raise their and their families' position in Thailand's social class hierarchy. They explain that Thai people idolize people who have European life experience as successful and socially superior to other Thais. As they said:

I thought that if I move to live in Germany, it will enhance my family's reputation among neighbors in the village. And it's true, they [her family] feel more superior than any neighbors because I moved to Germany. Everyone in my village thinks that life in Europe or America is like a dream, they think everyone must be rich and having a good life. – Saifan, Amsterdam

[Having a] pua-farang [white-skinned husband] upgrades the lives of grassroots Kathoey. They give Kathoey higher social status. Kathoey who are with farang seem higher class and more civilized because they have better life stability, they can speak English, have more money and have better jobs in Europe. – Muk, Chumphon

I know an older Kathoey from my junior high school, who lives in France with her farang boyfriend. We [My Kathoey friends and I] are so jealous of her. We stalk her on facebook every day. She lives a dream life, traveling to beautiful places in Europe with her hot hubby all the time, wearing gorgeous expensive clothes. She is our idol. If you ask me how I wish my life to be, I want to be like her, a successful Kathoey who gets to live in the West so that nobody in Thailand can disparage me anymore. – Baitong, Nakhon Pathom

My family and old friends look up to me because I live in the UK. Now they see me as someone with high social status. Not like in the past. – Naree, London

A white-skinned husband is believed – by participants, their families and friends – as a totem that can help to upgrade a Kathoey's social status and, for some, to make them feel civilized. This perception from the deep-rooted issues in Thailand; Thai society is extremely unequal, has high poverty, and remains semi-feudalistic. People from the rural areas are seen as barbarous, stupid, and low-class by the upper classes. There is intense internal discrimination in Thailand; Thais look down on darker-skinned people, who they imagine come from the rural areas. It is also hard for rural Kathoeyes with darker skin to find upper class Thai partners because their dark skin is understood as 'ugly' under Thai beauty myths. However, tanned skin is exoticized within the Western ideal beauty norm; accordingly, Kathoeyes find a suitable 'market' in European world. Similar to Fanon's (2008) participants, my respondents feel that being with a white partner makes them feel 'whiter' – more superior. And for them, whiteness equals 'goodness' and prosperity. Thus, the concept of 'spatial hypergamy' can properly explain Kathoeyes' migration to Europe through cross-cultural relationship and marriage.

5.3. Illegal Immigration: Marriage Fraud, Identity Fraud and Fake Passports

Some of my participants spoke openly about their personal history as illegal immigrants. Some of them came to Europe on a tourist visa, then remained and worked in Thai restaurants, or engaged in sex work and other kinds of so-called ‘black money’ jobs. Some of their Kathoey friends were caught and deported by the European authorities.

Interestingly, many older participants shared similar histories about marriage fraud, identity fraud and fake passports. For example, several participants corroborated each other’s stories about a fake passport agency in Pratunam, Bangkok. Participants from the older generation, who immigrated to Europe in the 1970s – early 1990s engaged in immigration fraud. Many paid local Europeans to marry them, some had purchased fake (female) identity documents, and many held fake passports for many years until they were granted citizenship in a European country. I have selected narratives from participants of the illegal immigration generation:

First, I visited my cousin in Germany many times. She was married to a German and I wanted to live in Europe, like her. So I hired a German woman to marry me. At that time, all my documents said I am male and there was no same-sex marriage in Germany yet. I contacted the fraud marriage agency and we got married in Denmark because it has a reputation for giving visas easily. Afterward, the German government found out that fraud-wife also had a real-husband and they wanted to deport me, so I fled to Amsterdam. That’s where I met Yai. I went back to Thailand and made a new passport. A fake. At that time, there was no computer data for Thai passports and no identity bio-scanning machines. I spelled my name just few letters differently and then I got a new passport with new identity. Then I married Yai, my good friend, so that I could move to Amsterdam. – Jessy, Amsterdam

In the past, there were a few agencies bringing Thai women from Pattaya to do sex work in Europe. These women and some Kathoey came with tourist visas and stayed illegally after the visa expired. Some hired locals to marry them to stay in Europe. These women and Kathoey worked in red light districts in Utrecht, Den Haag and Amsterdam. When I was younger, lots of Thais did sex work in Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Europe because of the economy. The first generation of Kathoey in Europe, especially Germany, was mostly through fake personal documents. Many Kathoey had to go to a fake passport agency located in Pratunam. I heard that this agency was run by someone who worked at the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs and some other partners. Kathoey got a fake passport indicating female identity and these

passports allowed them to later marry European men. Back then, same-sex marriage was not legalized like today. I and my friends got our passports with our female pictures, fake female names and other female details. Back then, online visa system did not exist and finger scanning was not available. It was easy to do identity fraud and we can use these passports and identity forever. And once we got Dutch passports, all the problems were solved. But these days, there is no such thing like this anymore. From what I see, Kathoey in this generation come to Europe with their farang partners or through tourist visa. Then they overstay to work. It is much easier now. – Sunee, the oldest participant, Amsterdam

10ish to 20ish years ago, there was a fake passport business in Pratunam. It was known within Kathoey community through word of mouth. I got my old passport from this office, too. They got other Thai women to request a marriage visa [from a European country] and then gave me the passport with the visa inside. I took the other woman's identity. I paid 100,000ish baht [about 2,500 Euro] that time. You can't do this anymore, everything is digitalized now. – Titima who lived in Cologne and moved back to Pattaya, Thailand

Kathoey migration trends and immigration channels to Europe have changed rapidly during the past 40 years. Nowadays, illegal immigration, marriage and identity fraud, or fake passports are not common strategies for Kathoeyes or other Thais who wish to move to Europe. Finding a European partner is believed to be the most effective and easiest path to a visa, especially for those who have less opportunity to get visas on the basis of work, education, or family reunification.

5.4. Cross-cultural Relationships with European Men: Gender, Sexuality, and Migration

The desire to improve living conditions can serve as an umbrella over the many economic, social, romantic and legal pressures that motivates Kathoeyes to find European partners and to migrate to Europe. However, differences of gender and sexuality ideology, as well as different understandings of pragmatism, are also essential to specific Kathoey constructions of their recognition and experience of cross-cultural relationships, and shape the decisions of many Kathoeyes to be in a relationship with European men and move to live with them in Europe.

European men perceive their Thai wives perceptions through the lens of gendered stereotypes of 'Asian women.' Thai women are generally perceived by

European men as gentle, sweet, submissive and easy to control. Thai gender roles and characteristics are seen as different from western women, who are more liberal and demanding (in the view of some husbands) 'too much' gender equality. Moreover, the European beauty ideology defines tanned skin, feminine and 'exotic' Asian bodies as sexually desirable, which makes Thai women appear as somewhat exciting, exotic and attractive for European men – especially those men who have had failed marriages and relationships with Western women in the past. These men develop the desire to have Thai wives who can fulfill their relationship needs (see Lapanun, 2013; Sunanta, 2009; Tyldum and Tveit, 2008; Suksomboon, 2011). Sometimes, stereotyped images of Thai women and Kathoey are presented by the European media: TV show, news, and a wide range of internet platforms display Thai women and Kathoey as sexually mysterious and exotic, and occasionally as products Western men can purchase. Thai women and Kathoey are often portrayed as victims of poverty and underdevelopment, which has pushed some of them to do sex work and/or to become choices of western men who have 'inferiority' complexes (such as men who are elderly, lowly-educated, physical or mental abnormal) who cannot find partners in their own countries (see Suksomboon, 2011). The rhetoric in the western media shows that experiences of Thai women are perceived (not only in academia, but on a daily life basis) by the western world and western media through colonialism ideologies that distinguish among civilized and uncivilized societies (Saekuay, 2004 cited in Suksomboon, 2011.) Thai women are often presented victims not only of their own societies, but of western men (Tyldum and Tveit, 2008), as well as Kathoey. On the contrary, western women, who by stereotypical definition are 'civilized,' have been portrayed as emancipated and having more liberty in marriage and romantic relationships.

Gender inequality pragmatism exists not only within male-female relationships, but also within Kathoey groups. Kathoey are understood as stereotypically 'Asian women' stereotypes which are seen as traditional society. European men hence expect their Kathoey partners to be somewhat submissive, gentle and interested in playing a caretaker role in the family. By contrast, European women are understood as stereotypical 'western women' who are equal to men or, at least, insist on being treated as if they are equal. The stereotypes of 'Asian women' and 'Western women' can also be seen in the ways European men treat Thai and

western partners differently, their different expectations of spouses of different races, and their tendency to believe that they have more power over Thai partners (Suksomboon, 2011).

Moreover, stereotypes that portray Thai women as victims and sexual objects that European men can purchase via the internet are related to the notion of mail-order brides (Suksomboon, 2011.) This notion overlooks the agency and sentimental dynamics of women from the third world. My research data is in harmony to Suksomboon's (2011) data about Thai women, in a way that Kathoey realize that the media influences some western men to hold negative stereotypes about them but, at the same time, their own imagination and sense of romance lead some Kathoey to construct stereotypical images of the European men. The Kathoey also understand themselves to have started the internet relationship, to be in control of their virtual relationships, to have voices and to be the one who proactively decides when or how they will go beyond the internet and initiate a physical relationship with western men. Differences between gender and sexuality ideologies between Thai and European societies, as well as different senses of pragmatism, could hardly be more dramatic.

The internet gives Kathoey and their European partners a comfortable and safe space in which to learn, interact, negotiate, reproduce and/or redefine gender and sexuality ideologies and practices as applied to them as individuals. Similar to Suksomboon's (2011) result on Thai women research, many European men realize later that the stereotypes are unreal and that Kathoey are not as submissive or as personally and economically dependent as they had believed. Some Kathoey take full advantage of the 'Asian women' gendered stereotypes. Many of my respondents are in healthy relationships with European partners and frequently they explained to me that they are in these relationships because of love. However, they often use the gendered stereotypes as tools to maintain relationships (and residency) in Europe. Even though such practices do not lead to the construction of gender-equal power relations, they do reflect the negotiation and manipulation, as well as Kathoey agency as practiced consciously and unconsciously. In other words, the migration laws of the Netherlands, the UK, Denmark and Belgium stipulate that the partners of these countries' citizens cannot request for the resident permits by themselves alone. By law, Kathoey are dependents of their European partners for the first few years

after migration. With the limitations regarding the social and legal issues towards Kathoeyes in Thailand, Kathoeyes thus have to play a traditional and 'good woman' role in a relationship if this is the role their husbands want them to play; Kathoeyes must extraordinarily take good care of their European partners, in order to retain their husband's fondness for them, to sustain their good relationship and to secure their residency in Europe.

Previous scholars have explored how the ideology of the 'good Thai woman' affects Thai women's decisions live in cross-cultural relationships Europe. This ideology informs Thai women's sexual pragmatism and how they tolerate a patriarchal social structure in Thailand that includes expectations regarding the social stigma of divorce, virginity, sexuality and gender roles (Sunanta, 2009; Lapanun, 2013; Suksomboon, 2011.) Some of these studies also investigated how Thai women migrants have constructed their understanding of transnationalism, that is, how they recognize and integrate with European culture after they immigrated to Europe, and how their mixed identities are interpreted on global and local levels, because European societies are more individualistic and liberated than Thailand's, in terms of sexuality, body politics, relationships and family life. In addition, the cultural notion of manhood affects Thai women's decisions to be in relationships with European men and migrate to Europe (Suksomboon, 2011.) Suksomboon (2011) indicates that the European norm of monogamy and its more equal cultural notion of manhood in Europe both reinforce Thai women's interest in pursuing cross-cultural partnerships with European men.

Data from this analysis of Thai women in cross-cultural relationships in Europe is somewhat different from my research data on Kathoey cross-cultural relationships with European men. Both the stereotypical image and the gender role Kathoeyes are expected to fill are similar to those of the 'good Thai women.' My respondents confirm that they act as 'good Thai wives' in their relationships with European men: they are the main caretaker of housework, cooking and attentively serving their farang partners, and they also see the 'good Thai wife' as expected to use charm in order to win her partner's heart. But Kathoeyes have very different cultural and identity backgrounds from Thai women, even though they see themselves as women as well. They do not share the same ideologies about sexuality, virginity or divorce as Thai women, and they are generally less submissive in cross-

cultural relationships. Many of my participants explain that they have ‘open relationships’ with their European partners because they assert that relationships between Kathoey and European men are no different from farang-Thai wife relationships but more open/liberal sexually. Interestingly, my participants emphasize how relationships with European men ensure and accentuate their Kathoey feminine identity. The ways they are treated by European men enhance Kathoey self-esteem and validate their gender and sexuality as ‘valued women.’ They continue to believe that Thai men cannot fulfill this desire they have, based on Thai men’s very different behavior with Kathoey lovers. Many respondents told me that relationships with European men fulfill their soul, make them happier and make them feel more like they are ‘real women’ who deserve to be loved. Based on extended participant observation and in-depth interviews, I found that only a minority of participants financially dependent upon their European partners. Most Kathoey respondents in Europe have careers and are economically independent of their partners. Participants with a higher education tend to have more deeply held expectations of gender equality in relationships, and also tend to demonstrate much more agency and voice than those with less education. While some participants’ European partners never tell their family or friends that their spouse is Kathoey, others are open about it. Overall, all participants are satisfied with the dynamics of relationships they have with European men and do not regret their migration decision based on the cross-cultural marriage/relationship.

5.5. Expectations before and after Migration

Before migrating to Europe, Kathoey respondents expected that moving to Europe would increase their economic and social status in Thailand, give them a chance to have ‘normal’ lives and romantic relationships, give them more job opportunities and, especially, enable them to escape the forms of street and state discrimination they had experienced in Thailand. They saw Europe as a place of social and legal ‘liberty.’

However, some of these expectations stand in stark contrast with their personal experience of European life. For example, participants indicate that, as expected, they have not experienced state (legal) discrimination in Europe, but they still experience some forms of street violence and employment discrimination, such

as school bullying, physical and verbal abuse on the street, and sexual harassment. Moreover, they continue to be double- or triple-stigmatized for being non-white, sexually-deviant and for some, sex workers. Respondents inform also that Kathoey sexuality legitimizes racism in Europe, in which I will elaborate further in the next chapter. I have chosen an interview excerpt from Saifan, who expresses the clash of her expectation before migration and her actual experience in Europe:

I moved to Germany when I was 12 years old to live with my aunt, who has a farang husband. So I got to grow up in Germany and Holland. It's true that Europe has more legal protection for Kathoeyes but it does not really work. Because I can tell you that I was bullied much more in German school than in Thai school. Thai kids just mocked at me about how feminine I was, many times in a merciful way. But in German and Dutch school, some of classmates were seriously disgusted by how I looked or how I was. Nobody wanted to be friends with me and, several times, I was violently beaten up on the street on the way home. And no teachers in the schools took any action. I lived in small towns before. The reality for Kathoeyes here [in Europe] is rather depressing. I have learned this over the time that I have lived here. It is totally different from what I dreamed of before I moved here. It's not easy. The language, the food, the weather, and when you have problems people here won't get involved to help you. They don't have a collective society like in Thailand. It's an individualistic society here. Also, people here are not chill; you have to be punctual all the time, people are stressed out all the time. In Thailand, you can have much more relaxed and easier life. You can harvest stuff and eat from your own farm or neighborhood. [...] Importantly, I strongly believe that street abuse and social harm towards transgender in Europe is harsher than in Thailand, if they can tell you're a Kathoey. Most of the Kathoey would say there's less social discrimination here because Europeans can't tell who's a Kathoey. But they can easily differentiate me from biological women, and they do. I'm not a beautiful one – Saifan, Amsterdam

Class, gender, political economy and hypergamy have been applied to the study of cross-cultural relationships and migration of Thai women to the western world, as well as, to the reverse migration of their pua-farang (western husband). The

migration aspirations of Kathoey population is dissimilar from Thai women who migrate, as they experience different kinds of pressure, discrimination and social stigma. I have explored localized global processes that influence diverse levels, including individual, family, community, (Thai) nation-state and European political economy. Kathoey struggle daily with structural and legal impediments, and resist social and employment discrimination. Gendered morality, class, ethnicity and romantic visions of the west, all affect their ability to negotiate in their new environment. Their internal struggles in Thailand motivated Kathoeyes to migrate from Thailand to Europe, legally and illegally, and also, help to explain the upsurge of the Kathoeyes/pua-farang phenomenon in the transnational context.

Kathoey experiences of discrimination in Europe, contrasts with the image of Europe they dreamed of before migration, is discussed in detail in the next chapter, *Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoeyes in Europe*.

CHAPTER SIX

Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Europe

Influenced by principles of western modernization in Thailand and social universality that are based on the logic of identity, Kathoeyes have continuously been perceived as socially deviant others. In response, gender and identity politics have been folded into the class/social struggle paradigm that thrived during the 19th and 20th centuries. Transgender identity politics has also become a new social movement within both the global south and the global north. However, identity politics has been criticized for its essentialist character, which constructs us/otherness and social exclusion. As essentialist identity politics is represented by the West to uphold colonial operations during European colonial period. Essentialism was critiqued on its visions of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality or other group categories that have fixed characters, because such visions overlook or at least minimize the relevance of variation among members of the group they have constructed. Essentialist discourses have also been reproduced by the anti-colonial struggles regardless of their unreal foundation or the awareness that these identities never really existed (Loomba, 2005). It was discussed by post-colonial and post-structural scholars (see Salisa, 2013; Said, 1978; Loomba, 2005; Fanon, 2008; Fraser, 2003) that essentialist identity politics cannot improve social inequality. In contrast, it constructs nothing but social separatism, intolerance and conformism (Fraser, 2003).

As essentialist identity politics hinders equality and intensifies discrimination, which might be based on race, gender, sexuality, disability, or any other socially constructed category. It builds boxes, such as hetero-normativity, or hierarchies, such as the one based on skin color, that alienate ‘others,’ marginalize people who do not fit into these boxes. I apply tools drawn from post-colonialism, deconstruction of essentialist identity and post-structuralism, to understand the cause and situation of street and state discrimination toward Kathoeyes in Europe. And to analyze how Kathoeyes’ bodies, gender and identities are socially perceived as deviant in European society, as well as, how ‘inferior-self’ of Europe-based Kathoeyes are developed under crypto-colonialism legacy.

This chapter is comprised of two main sub-topics. The first part: *Transgender State Protection in the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and the United Kingdom*

provides a review of transgender legal protections in these four countries and opinions of participants regarding European transgender legal protection. In contrast to, the EU legal protection, the second part of this chapter: *Kathoey Street Discrimination in Europe* offers an analysis of the social discrimination Kathoey respondents have experienced after migration to Europe, using their own words.

6.1 Transgender State Protection in the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and the United Kingdom

‘Under EU law, the principle of equal treatment constitutes a fundamental value of the European Union which ensures both respect for human dignity and full participation on an equal footing in economic, cultural and social life. Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU Charter) prohibits ‘any discrimination based on any ground such as [...] sexual orientation’’ (FRA, 2014, p.25)

Compared to Thailand, these four countries – the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and the United Kingdom – have tremendously more progressive legal protection and human rights legislation toward LGBT people. In 1989, Denmark was the first country in the world to give legal recognition to same-sex registered partnerships or unions. The Netherlands legalized same-sex partnerships in 1998, statutory cohabitation in Belgium was granted in 2000 and a same-sex civil partnership act was passed in the UK in 2004. In 2001, The Netherlands became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage, followed by Belgium in 2003 and Denmark in 2012, and the legislation was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in 2013. The four countries now legally protect against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in hate crime, employment, social discrimination, housing and so on. Transgender people have the right to legally change their gender and have the right to adopt. The four countries protect transgender people on the ground of basic human rights, including declassification of transgenderism as an illness and the right to change legal gender. Transgender people are protected by laws that prohibit discrimination, hate crime and hate speech. In addition, transgender people have rights to adoption, marriage and other forms of legal union.

Table 6.1 summarizes rights for transgender people in the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and the United Kingdom, compared with Thailand,

| Transgender People Rights | Denmark | The Netherlands | United Kingdom | Belgium | Thailand |
|--|---------|-----------------|----------------|---------|----------|
| Declassification of transgenderism as an illness | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Right to change legal gender | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | X |
| Anti-discrimination law | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | X |
| Rights to adoption | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | X |
| Hate crime and hate speech law | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | X |
| Legalized same-sex marriage | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | X |
| Civil union | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | X |

Table 6.1: Transgender people's rights in the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, the United Kingdom (Source from ILGA, Europe) and Thailand

When it comes to discrimination under European law, gender identity and sexual orientation have progressively been recognized. The states of these four countries have basic transgender protection laws,⁸ whereas Thailand has none.

⁸ The four countries provide overall progressive legislation toward LGBTQ people and transgender people are legally protected on basic human rights basis as illustrated. However, I do not provide further information about more complex legislations, processes, difficulties and differences in each country because it is not in the scope of this study.

Transgender people in Europe are legally protected against discrimination based on their gender as well as related to sex reassignment. However, transgender people in many European countries still face the worrisome risk of discrimination and harassment in their daily lives (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017). Communities of transgender people in Europe are less tolerant of prejudice and less satisfied with misconceptions about transgenderism in Europe. In 2013, FRA or European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights conducted a survey of 93,079 respondents, including 6,771 transgender people, within the 27 EU member states and Croatia. The result shows that transgender people in Europe experience harassment and violence in various extents of life and that transphobia-motivated discrimination continues to occur in such areas as health care, housing, education and employment (FRA, 2014).

Kathoeys' aspirations about Europe's potential, weighed against the shortcomings of the law in Thailand, also motivate them to migrate to Europe, as discussed in *chapter four* and *chapter five*. Europe's institutionalized protections are well understood by Kathoey migrants. Kathoey respondents in both Europe and Thailand overall felt that there is no legal discrimination against Kathoeys in the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and the United Kingdom, and believed that, with the support of European institutions that ensure liberal gender equality, they could fulfill their dreams of a better and more equal life. My participants further explained:

One of the best things about being trans here is that I can get married to my partner. It fulfills my life goals and brings me happiness because I have always dreamed about having family of my own and becoming a mother. We [Pip and her British partner] hope to have kids someday; we can even adopt a child legally in the UK. It's impossible to do that by law in Thailand. Here [in Europe] the human rights laws support everyone to be equal. – Pip, the UK

No. There is no legal discrimination toward Kathoeys here in Europe. It is good in that sense: the European laws protect us and we can change our initials from Mister to Miss. This law makes me feel like I'm not a freak who lives an ambiguous life [live like a woman, but hold legal male status]

anymore and that I deserve the right to live the way I want [to live as a woman]. – Varee, Denmark.

Legal protection for transgender people is very good here. [...] I can't think of any legal discrimination toward Kathoeyes in the Netherlands. I think we have all the basic rights like everyone else [cisgendered people]. At least it is 100% better than in Thailand. – Gege, the Netherlands

Belgium law for LGBT groups is so progressive [...] hmm, I cannot think of anything I would want more. By law, they give all the basic rights that are the same for everyone, don't they? We have the right to change legal gender status, to access welfare, to get married legally, to adopt and [...] they even protect us from discrimination like hate crimes. Have you heard that Thailand has any of these [protections]? It has none. But you know, laws and real life is a different matter. - Fang, Belgium expressed her opinion about sufficient Belgian legal protections for Kathoey before she revealed her experiences about street discrimination in Europe, which contrast with her satisfaction with European LGBTQ legal protection, as I will demonstrate in the second section of this chapter.

Despite their pre-migration confidence in non-discrimination, romanticization of Europe and Kathoeyes' satisfaction on progressive European transgender legal protection, all 37 of my Kathoey respondents who live in Europe have shared stories of the forms of European street discrimination they have experienced. These experiences came as a shock compared with their dreamy expectations regarding European societies.

6.2 Kathoey Street Discrimination in Europe

The power relation between the crypto-colonizers and the crypto-colonized people explains why Kathoeyes romanticize Europe as they do. This can be understood with reference to the phenomenology school. Ricoeur (1992) suggests that our 'self' is constructed from category rejection, that is, through attempts to segregate 'us' from other categories. And, 'others' are understood from category and unit definition. Said (1978) argues that Western-constructed Oriental identity is the

focal element that assists in the construction of Western identity itself. Similarly, I argue that the Thai ‘self’ and Kathoey identities are constructed in part from an engagement with cultural others, in this case, from rejection of western and masculine identity. The constructed superiority of western identity and western modernization in Thailand lent an inferiority complex to Kathoey’s intersectional identities. For my participants and many Thais, Europe and European people are superior to Thais and other non-white races, on many levels. To paraphrase and bend Loomba’s (2005) analysis for present proposes; the data show that my participants have a common belief system that has been powerfully shaped by the legacy of Thailand’s crypto-colonial experience: if Europeans are rational, Thais are illogical. If Europe is civilized, self-controlled and ethically hard-working, Thailand is uncivilized, unethical and indolent. If Europe is progressive and developed, Thailand is immobile. If European men are romantic and understanding, Thai men are stony and unreliable. And, if Europe is masculine, Thailand itself is feminine. For Thailand, the binary system remains deeply embedded in society.

Another crypto-colonial legacy is Thailand’s by-now deeply embedded heterosexual norm. Thai LGBTQ couples identify their relationships in the context of heterosexual norms. Thai media also perpetuates this deep-rooted cultural ideology; it is common to see Thai news and television broadcasts of stories about Thai men marrying Western men. Such Thai men are always referred as ‘brides’ and their Western partners are introduced as ‘grooms.’ Thai mainstream discourse reflects a relic of imperialism in which Europe is presented as superior (as are men) and everywhere else is inferior (as are women) (Jackson, 2007). Thai present is the result of crypto-colonial influence; Thai media and mainstream discourse reproduce heterosexual norm that was introduced in tandem with engagement with the West.

The discourse of essentialist identity politics and hetero-normativity was reproduced through interaction with European perspectives and knowledge. Before the Western modernization period, Thailand’s viewpoints about sexuality were different; people with a transgender identity were given considerably more social space and special status. Essentialism and universalism as a production of colonialism creates Kathoey inferiority complex to cis-gender people and (white) westerners. The inferiority complex reproduces a cultural ideology in which Europeans and Europe are seen as superior. Thus, as empirical data presented in

Chapter Five has shown, most Kathoey research respondents who continue to live in Thailand believe that transgender people who live in Europe have more dignity, freedom, equality and social justice than Kathoeyes living in Thailand. And, before migrating to Europe, respondents who now live in Europe also expected that European societies would have a better space for transgender people, because Europe has more liberalism and progressive legal protection.

They were mistaken. The European reality they encounter clashes with their pre-migration expectations. Kathoeyes in Europe face five broad forms of street discrimination. I now turn to an analysis of these forms, drawing heavily on the words of my Kathoey respondents.

6.2.1 Verbal Abuse

In *section 4.3.2*, I showed that Thai society imposes an indirect kind of daily violence on Kathoeyes by verbal bullying and mockery. Thais often laugh at people whose gender identity diverges from their understanding of social norms, and Thai media and cultural institutions sometimes perpetuate stereotypical constructions of Kathoey as a foundation for set comedic sketches. However, 21 out of 37 Kathoey respondents in Europe indicated that they receive harsher and more violent street verbal abuse than they remember receiving in Thailand. They state that verbal abuse toward Kathoeyes in Thailand was more of a ‘mockery’ but in Europe it is more of a verbal abuse based on hate and transphobia, which they feel is safety- and even life-threatening. Most Kathoeyes living in Europe explain the phenomenon in a similar way:

About one year ago, I was walking in the city and a female chav yelled at my face ‘You’re a man, disgusting. You got a cock.’ I felt upset, I felt sad, it affects me a lot. I don’t want to meet so many people and get out of my comfort zone because I don’t want to be judged like this or mocked at or looked at. That was not the first time. When random people abuse me like this, it’s a mixed feeling; sad and angry. Makes me feel down about myself. British society does not fully accept me even though I have lived here for 18 years. People here accept me on a certain level, on a level that I run my own Thai restaurant business. They judge me from class and money, but I still feel

the way they look down on me. Mockery in Thailand is more like annoying and hurtful but here it's more like scary and hurtful. – Pip, London

When I lived in Lille, if I overly cross-dressed or overly expressed my Kathoey attitude, people on the street yelled and cursed at me. I got discriminated. – Fang, Ghent

Thai society accepts Kathoey more, but it is hard for Kathoey to get a job. And Thailand has outdated legal problem so Kathoey can't be protected. But it is really harder to be Kathoey in Europe, unless you're a beautiful Kathoey. Because people here can't tell! So many Kathoey would say oh yeah Europe has less discrimination for trans, but I think that's because people don't know they are trans. Those who look like an obvious Kathoey [more masculine] in Belgium, wherever you go there will be people look at you, laugh at you, cursing you in the air, calling you 'shemale.' I often experience it, I'm not angry but just makes me feel strange. I guess people [in Belgium] are not used to seeing Kathoey. – Marasri, Ghent

Danish society is open toward gays and lesbians, but not so much for transgender. People act like they are neutral, but they actually find Kathoey weird and they gossip about Kathoey. They can't really accept us; they just don't really talk out loud. But let's wait until when they are drunk... I don't feel comfortable walking on the street alone in Copenhagen, because I did one time and some drunk people scolded at me, they looked at me like they are sickened. The true you is when you're drunk. – Chonticha, Denmark

When I first moved to Europe [in Germany], I pretended to live a gay boy life for few years, because it didn't feel safe to act like trans because I saw a white trans-woman walked on the street and people swore at her. When I became a teenager, I felt so much pressure because I had to pretend to be neat and quiet to survive and be safe. Then I started to feel cramped; it's not free, it's not like how you can live in Thailand. I didn't feel like myself, so one day I decided to dress up like woman. And then I started to get abused. People gossip and stare at me when I walk outside. I think farang don't know much about Kathoey; they think that Kathoey are strange. Now, I still feel

uncomfortable for being a Kathoey every day. I still don't feel like I can really be myself in Europe. I can only be myself when I go to trans night club. Oh, and frequently I see that some people take my picture from their phones. I think they share my pictures on the internet. You know Thai Kathoeyes: if you don't look like a woman, you get more abuse. – Saifan, Amsterdam

Participants have expressed their pressure and trauma from bullying and mockery issues they experience in Thailand which based on their identity and sexuality. Many had claimed that mockery and bullying in Thailand made them suffer and it was one of the motivations for their migration to Europe. Like participants in Thailand, before migration, most Kathoeyes who now live in Europe assumed that they would receive much less verbal abuse on the street. After migration, they learned that verbal abuse toward Kathoeyes in Europe is often more harmful and safety threatening than mockery in Thailand.

Interestingly, some of the participants emphasize that many of their abusers are other immigrants, as Jane, Thida and Kook explained:

I walked with my boyfriend in the city and someone shouted 'homo!' Or sometimes they swear, or shout out disparaging words. No, I don't feel sad. I feel frustrated. And I shout back at them. From my experience, most of the people who do things like this are the damn Turkish, Moroccan or Muslim immigrants [...]. Not real Dutch people. In Europe, the laws accept Kathoey, but the society does not, really. While in Thailand, Thai law does not accept Kathoey but the society accepts us more. – Kook, Amsterdam

European societies seem like they are open toward trans-sexuality, but they are not. Especially those who are religious, conservative or old-fashioned, they will give a strange look when they see cross-dressers. Places that Kathoey will get verbally abused most would be the red light district at night, because drunk people can really abuse you. Or if you go to immigrant areas that have many Chinese or Muslims, you can get abused easily. It's not very safe. Oh and people with Arab blood, they hate Kathoeyes. When they see Kathoeyes they really make obvious disgusted faces. I guess that their religion

teaches them that it's a sin to be transgender. [...] I hate them too. – Thida, Amsterdam

Living in London is not safe for trans. Night time is even scarier to walk alone. I have to walk quickly and be quiet because you can get yelled at any time. I feel scared and I don't like it. I get most abuse and harassment on London busses when I go home late at night. I often get cursed at when I dress up a lot, especially from drunk people. [...] Especially, blacks are the worst. So I think for human rights, equality or mental support group or things like that, Kathoey in the UK has better space. But for me it's easier to live in Thailand, even though there are no rights. Thai people see transgender as an illness, so there is less violence than in Europe. Hmm you gotta choose which one [either living in Thailand or living in Europe] you can tolerate more. - Jane, London

Both interviews and participant observation show that some of the participants have themselves expressed xenophobic and racist attitudes toward fellow immigrants from other non-white ethnics. While Kathoey are socially abused and stigmatized as deviant immigrants, some of them nonetheless discriminate against other immigrants who are non-whites. Most participants viewed themselves as superior to Arabs, Indians, Moroccans and blacks. I argue that some Kathoey and Thai immigrants in Europe construct this superiority complex because, consistent with Fanon's (2008) analysis on 'immigrants' self-construction', 'regime of truth' and inferiority issues, they desire to feel that they are not among the lowest immigrant hierarchy in European society. And making immigrants from other races the minorities among minorities gives them the self-superiority on which their essentialist identity can be formed. The colonial power structure plays a significant role in this process; the unequal post-colonial relation between races, ethnics, classes and gender immensely influences Western understandings of the global south. But as time passed, such knowledge and discourses about it, besides being constructed and reproduced by the colonizers, are also adopted and practiced by the crypto-colonized, in this case 'the queer others' whom in the same time feel inferior to the whites, but desire for higher position in immigrant hierarchy.

Sixteen participants who live in Europe state that they have never experienced verbal abuse and harassment on the street in Europe. Twelve explained that this is because ‘they [people in Europe] don’t know I am Kathoey.’ Thus, the answers from these twelve participants whose appearance is difficult to distinguish from that of biological women cannot be interpreted to the conclusion that Europe is a safer place for street verbal abuse for Kathoeyes. Based on the interview data, I argue that Kathoey participants receive somewhat more harmful verbal abuse on the street than in Thailand. Essentialism and hetero-normativity shapes European understandings about (European universal) ‘normal’ sexuality, and it seems that the power of the ‘normality’ discourse, as embedded in European societies, constructs more violent street verbal abuse toward transgender people in Europe than in Thailand.

6.2.2 Physical Abuse and Violence on Street

To understand hate-motivated violence in which Kathoeyes experience in Europe, the idea of essentialism deconstruction is selected to be briefly discussed. The purpose of deconstruction is to analyze the mechanism of binary-opposition of deep-structure and structuralism school’s concept of culture. Ward (1977), who applied Derrida’s work, argues that to analyze binary oppositions such as nature-culture, life-death, good-bad, light-dark and so on, one can highlight and criticize the binary-opposition of ‘high culture’ and ‘mass culture.’ Mass culture is the ‘revolting other’ of high culture, and the highness rejects the mass. The mass is foreign to the high, but its existence is important because it constructs the special character and superior identity of ‘highness’. Thus, to identify ‘highness’, ‘mass’ has to be denoted. Adjectives that can elucidate the character of high culture, such as ‘active’, offer a comparative reference to mass culture’s character, such as ‘passive’. The deconstruction of text can lead one to meet the text or existence that seems to be unimportant, but essential. Derrida terms the condition he found in the deconstruction ‘the present absences’ or ‘productive silences.’ The deconstruction is rather an interpretation, than seeking reality from the text (Ward, 1977). Hetero-normativity requires the coexistence of both ‘normality’ and ‘deviancy’ to sustain its structure. ‘Normal’ attempts to ‘cure’ the ‘deviance’, but at the same time needs the ‘deviance’ to maintain its existence as ‘normal’, thus, there is no such thing as gender without an opposition.

More than half of the participants living in Europe think that physical abuse on the street toward transgender people is much more violent than in Thailand. They as well believe that there is a higher risk that they will face lethal abuse in Europe because of their transgender identity. Before migrating to Europe, most did not expect that this would be their life reality. As explained in their own words:

I have been through many incidents, including verbal abuse and physical abuse [...] they think I'm abnormal. It's been only two times now that I went to a police station, because I usually fight back to people who physically abuse me on the street. – Fang, Belgium

Physical abuse toward Kathoey in Thailand, I have never seen. It's very unlikely to happen; I never heard that my Kathoey friends experienced anything like that randomly in Thailand. But in Europe you know, when I cross-dress and go out with my friends to clubs, we were just walking and a guy came and kicked me and then he ran away! Sometimes, groups of people come up and abuse a single Kathoey. Hitting, swearing, mocking, all in the open on the street. This has happened to many of my friends, while they were cross-dressed. Once, I called the police to arrest a guy who abused and physically fought with me. – Kook, Amsterdam

When I was a student I went out clubbing and came home at about 3 a.m. A guy ran right up to me. He smacked me with a pipe and then told me 'don't fucking dress like this' and then he spit on me and walked away. – Nee, London

People from different countries live in Amsterdam, and also Dutch who come from rural areas are not as open about sexuality. Immigrants who live here, they physically abuse and loudly swear at Kathoey on the street. But many Kathoey's don't mind this, they just let it go and want to have a simple life. They don't want to make a scene. – Yai, Amsterdam

My Kathoey friend and I went out at night, a drunk man picked on her. He pushed my friend and asked why she had to dress up like a girl. So if you [Kathoey] live in Europe and you look like a woman, there won't be discrimination. But if you don't look like a real woman it can be dangerous to

live here. It's much scarier and violent than in Thailand. People kill each other because of sexuality here. The difference between those Kathoey who say they have never been discriminated is that farang can't tell they aren't biological women. If they can tell, then you get discrimination, wherever you are. – Roong, Amsterdam

Oh, a lot! Particularly, it happens a lot when we go out at night. On the way back from nightclubs, there will be people swearing at you, coming to physically attack you or sometimes Kathoey's insult them in turn to protect themselves and it ends up in big physical fights. Sometimes, we have to call the police to clear up the situation. But most of my Kathoey friends fight these people back. – Jenny, Ghent

Most participants who feel safe living as Kathoey in Europe explain their safety, just as Pok does:

It's safer and better to live here than in Thailand because farang can't tell we are transgender. – Pok, Copenhagen

Compared with empirical data and analysis in *4.3 Kathoey Street Discrimination in Thailand* section, overall, only few of my respondents expressed or informed about their experiences or concerns about hate-motivated physical abuse and violence on the street regarding their gender and sexual identity in Thailand. My research results are consistent with those reported in an article from ILGA (2012), from the Thai TGA (interviewed in 2015), and from the Trans Murder Monitoring Project report (TGEU, 2012). All of these sources present data that indicates lower physical violence, including murder, against transgendered people in Thailand, in comparison with other countries, despite Thailand's voluminous Kathoey population. This research finds that, in Thailand, the street discrimination issues are centered mainly on employment discrimination, bullying and mockery, limits on freedom of movement, and stigmatization from the Thai media (see *chapter four*). Participants have explained that with Thai tolerance culture and the Buddhist way of life, Thai people are less violent toward Kathoey's. Furthermore, lethal abuse and other physical violence is unlikely to happen on the street in Thailand. Participants in Thailand and participants in Europe (before they migrated to Europe) fantasized that,

with European civilization, liberty and progressive LGBTQ laws, they would experience less physical abuse than in Thailand. Some added that they heard from the news that many LGBT people in the western world experience hate-motivated crime, but they assumed it is more in America or Russia than in northern Europe. After migrating to Europe, they understand more about the social system, ‘high’ culture and reality in European societies. Most participants learned that physical abuse and violence on the street is much more harmful and security- and life-threatening than in Thailand. Many participants have explained in the same way Dahlia, a participant in Amsterdam, expressed: European societies for people with transgender identity can be ‘more unsafe and disappointing [than in Thailand].’ Most of the participants said they reported hate-motivated incidences of being victimized by physical abuse and violence to the police in Europe, and that the European authorities take hate crime considerably more seriously than do their counterparts in Thailand. But still, they experience harmful street violence and live in fear, especially participants whose appearance signals that they are Kathoey.

Applying post-structuralism notions, essentialism needs to be deconstructed because perpetrators of hate crimes in Europe are embedded with universal binary-opposition; they perceive hetero-normativity as normality and Kathoey as deviancy. During this process, hetero-normative Europeans’ sense of normality is contingent on ‘the queer others’ (Kathoey) being abnormal/deviant. Violence toward ‘queer others’ is a mechanism through which hateful, self-described ‘normal people,’ try to cure or pressure the deviants.

6.2.3 Bullying at School

Only two respondents went to school in Europe; both were willing to share experiences about school bullying in European educational environments. Mimi’s and Saifan’s stories follow:

I grew up in Phitsanulok province until third grade and then continued school in Amsterdam. My mom married a Dutch man, so I moved to Amsterdam with Mom when I was 10 years old. I lived as a girl since before I moved here.... From my experience, Kathoey children in Thailand have okay lives because they are more accepted. But trans kids in the Netherlands have more difficult lives because there is pretty bad discrimination and school bullying

here, and the way kids here bully me, it does not come out as jokes like what Thai kids do.

Dutch teachers are great; they are supportive, protective and open-minded. But girls in my school didn't play with me at all. I remember they told me they are girls and they don't want to play with a boy like me. They said so even though they knew I expressed myself as a girl. And the boys at school, they bullied me. They locked me in the toilet and were basically annoying. One time, I walked in the cafeteria and someone shouted 'kankerhomo' (stupid gay). But I never really get physically abused at school.

When I was about 14-15 years old, kids at school called me 'shemale' all the time because I started my transition; I grew my hair long and started to wear makeup. I felt embarrassed and mad because of how I was treated at school so I didn't want to go. Then I started to skip school. It's like I grew up alone; Mom worked all the time. I spent lots of time in my bedroom, alone; I listened to music and danced alone. When I was lonely or bored, I watch makeup tutorial clips on the internet. Then I started to hang at Thai restaurant in town. I hanged out with senior Thai Kathoeyes a lot and then I started to do drugs with them because I didn't feel happy. Nobody accepts me anywhere I go, because I am a Kathoey. I felt sad, I felt like I was disgusting. [...] And hmm, I was addicted to amphetamine until I was 19. Then I heard creepy voices in my head. I thought someone was stalking and following me all the time. I got those drugs from a Thai woman who sends drugs to my Kathoey gang.

Okay, so when I was young I had no friend, nobody wanted to hang out with me. It's much harder to be trans in Europe. Society doesn't really accept us. Gays and lesbians are more accepted than trans here. But, as I grow up, I feel that people accept me more and more. You know why? Because they don't know I'm a trans! I take more hormones and take better care of myself. They can't differentiate me from real women, unlike how it was when I was younger. If you don't look like a real woman, I guarantee you will have lots of life problems here [in Europe]. – Mimi, Amsterdam

When I was a student, nobody wanted to be my friend. I was like a freak a weirdo. But things got better at university level. Better doesn't mean okay, though. – Saifan, Amsterdam

Mimi and Saifan have different identities and experiences from other Kathoey participants in Europe: they both moved to Europe when they were children; they grew up within European norms and societies; they were educated in European educational institutions; so they buy more deeply into European cultural ideologies than my other respondents. When asked if they think they feel that they are more Thai or European, they both say they are by far more European. They also consider themselves to be European women; however, they believe it would be hard for European societies to acknowledge them as either Europeans or women, because Europeans recognize them through their 'natural bodies' – being Asian and transgender. And at the same time, they feel like they are inferior to white Europeans. As Mimi and Saifan explained:

Because I grew up here, I can't really connect to Thai culture; the way Thai people think, believe, or Thai humor. The Thai way of being is too hard for me to understand, I think Thai people are too conservative, dramatic, and overacting [...] I think that, like what people say, I am like a banana, I'm white inside and yellow outside. I think in Dutch language, I speak more fluent Dutch than Thai. So yeah, I would say I am Dutch not so much Thai. But I look like this, so Dutch people do not really include me as Dutch [...] Also, I'm a Kathoey too so it's harder for them to think I'm Dutch. – Mimi, Amsterdam

I have farang mindset though. I see myself as more farang than Thai. – Saifan, Amsterdam

I researched Mimi and Saifan through intensive participant observation and in-depth interviews, and discovered that the post-colonialism philosophies of Bhabha (1994) and Fanon (2008) are validated in these cases. Bhabha hypothesized that, in practice, the static and otherness identity images which colonizers portray the colonized, is a soundly practice that emphasizes power relation between the colonizers have over the colonized. Such practices trapped colonized victims in an

image that presented them as fixed and immutable. In other words, for colonizers, it is not important to construct the reality. But it is important to establish a regime of truth (Bhabha, 1994). Fanon (2008) analyzed the differences between ‘essentialist identity’ as a western constructed regime of truth and ‘uncertain identities’ or the real ‘self’ of immigrants in Europe. I agree with Fanon and argue that, while the regime of truth is constructed relating to the ‘natural body’ of Kathoey, their ambiguous identity reflects their oppressed ‘souls’. The conflict between Kathoey’s natural bodies and their oppressed crypto-colonized souls influences their self and identity formation, in a long term, it produces their inferiority complexes to white European and biological women, as well as, making the white European men to become their sexual object of desire through Fanon’s second stage of identification. I further discuss the theoretical analysis of Kathoey in Europe and their identification process through Lacanian mirror-stage in chapter eight: *Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks*.

Through Lacanian mirror stage and ideal-I processes, Kathoey who grew up in European societies use the image of western civilization as a mirror that enables them to realize and construct their ‘selves’. Mimi and Saifan, for example, recognize their identity as female Europeans. Unfortunately, European society does not. The essentialist identity (non-white and deviant sexuality) that westerners have imposed upon them, on the basis of ideological interpretations of their natural bodies, developed into the homophobic (social) cage that imprisons every chapter of their lives including in educational institutions.

6.2.4 Discriminatory Hiring Practices

All participants who live in Europe work in Thai restaurants, local restaurants, or cafés, or they are part-time entertainers (showgirls) or do sex work. None of their jobs requires high or even mid-level skills, even though some are university graduates. However, participants faced challenges beyond being Kathoey that might have affected their ability to get better jobs: language efficiency, vocational skills, race, ethnicity and so on. So, it would be inappropriate to claim, based solely on my data, that Kathoey transgender identity is the only target of discriminatory hiring practices in Europe.

Nonetheless, Mimi and Saifan, who grew up in Europe, have European educations and speak with native fluency, feel that they are discriminated by

employers because they are Kathoeyes. Several others, who do not have the advantages Mimi and Saifan have, concur.

I applied for a part-time job at a supermarket and went through the interview process. They said it won't be a problem and I should be accepted. But then, when the manager saw my ID, which says I'm a male person, I was rejected immediately without any explanation. – Mimi, Amsterdam

I applied for a summer job. The interviewer looked at me and tried to hold his laughter. When I answered his questions, he laughed. I didn't get that job. Back then I just started to take hormones, he probably thought I was weird and probably he never saw a Kathoey before. I wasn't accepted even though it was an easy job for students to get. It didn't need so much ability. I guess he would feel ashamed if customers saw me working there. – Saifan, Amsterdam

My boss at a café still doesn't know I'm a Kathoey. If he knew, he wouldn't have accepted me, I think. Because other places all rejected me when I didn't change my legal status to female. – Mote, London

Most Thai Kathoeyes in Europe work in either Thai restaurants or in the red light district [to do sex work]. People here won't accept Kathoeyes to do other jobs that easily. – Jessy, Amsterdam

All my job applications were rejected. Only Thai people would accept me because they feel sorry for me and because Thais help each other. I think farang are not used to Kathoey so much. – Gai, Denmark

If you don't have a good education, it's hard already to be Asian and find a secure job. On top of that, if you're Kathoey too, it's even harder. When companies or employers reject you, they won't explain why. But I just feel that they didn't accept me because I'm a Kathoey. Even bars and restaurants prefer normal males or females to work for them. So Kathoeyes have to do other jobs nobody wants to do, like factory work, cleaning work, sex work or work for Thai employers. – Ladda, Denmark

The UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark all have laws against discrimination in employment. But still, Europe-based participants feel that they are discriminated in job hiring practices. Before they migrated, and seeking in part to escape the kind of employment discrimination they experienced in Thailand, Kathoeyes thought that they would not face such issues in Europe. And most indeed feel that anti-Kathoey job discrimination is less of an issue in Europe than in Thailand. Even though most of them can only get jobs for which they are highly over-qualified, they are more satisfied with the situation than working as Kathoeyes in Thailand, because they earn a higher salary in Europe.

6.2.5 Racism and Social Exclusion

Kathoey identities in Europe are intersectional. They have different class, cultural, ethnic, and other backgrounds, and also different physical appearances, so it is inappropriate to portray this community as a monolith. Intersectionality shows that multiple identities are intertwined and make experiences of Kathoeyes different from each other, as well as, placing them in different positions within their community.

Because of their intersectional identity, research respondents in Europe feel that they are double-stigmatized by European society: they are non-white and they are sexually deviant. On top of that, respondents who are sex workers feel that they are socially triple-stigmatized: non-white, sexually deviant and socially deviant. Some of them believe their sexuality legitimizes racism and social exclusion:

I have two identities, right? Hua-poak (Kathoey with male hairstyle) and cross-dress. When I look hua-poak, I experience racism sometimes. Not that often. But when I cross-dress, I get insulted more often, more discriminated and more bad racist insults. – Thida, Amsterdam

Normally, some customers in my restaurants laugh at my Dutch accent or look down on me. Especially when I cross-dress or wear thick makeup, I get more racism. Often. – Kook, Amsterdam

I walked in the city in the middle of the day, and a man said to me ‘ewwww fucking Chinese faggot, go home.’ It was painful, both racist and sexist remark. – Putsra, London

Honestly, they don't accept us. We are both Asian and also sao-pa-phet-song (second-type women). I have lived here for a long time and I have zero Danish friends. I only hang out with Thais and other Asian friends. When I go somewhere, like when I go shopping, I feel it they look down on me or find me strange. I don't feel like I was treated well in stores because of how I look. Things like this you can sense from facial and body expression. It's obvious they treat white people better. And being both yellow and Kathoey put me into the lower rank of customers – Varee, Denmark

During the research fieldwork period, I was able to observe and interview a diverse array of Kathoeyes in the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark. Belgium was the only research site where I happened to witness street discrimination. In Ghent, two participants and I were speaking in Thai language on the tram. On the same tram, a group of Belgian teenagers laughed at them and mimicked their hyper-feminine expressions, and a boy lightly pulled one participant's wig for a laugh. Another time, I saw a man on the street in Bruges looking at a participant with a disgusted face. He yelled something. Fang later told me that he had said, 'go home, faggots'.

Kathoey identities in Europe, including race, class, sexuality, gender, age or occupation, are intertwined and associated with multiple forms of social inequality and victimization, and these systems of power cannot be understood in isolation from one another. Identity politics fails to go beyond differences and this causes tension between groups (Crenshaw, 2011) and then it becomes problematic because it tends to shed light on each social category separately. In fact, what shape Kathoeyes' lives are the cross-cutting and mutually-constitutive social divisions. Therefore, interconnection of these identities and other social divisions of Kathoeyes in Europe is crucial. In Thailand, Kathoeyes are socially excluded on the grounds of their sexual and gender identity. But in Europe, not only gender and sexual identity, their non-white race also legitimizes some trans-phobic and racist Europeans to further discriminate and stigmatize them as the 'queer others'. Kathoeyes in Europe experience both racism and sexism as a consequence of their 'essentialist natural body.'

This chapter has discussed and presented empirical data regarding street discrimination towards Kathoey in Europe, despite state protection. The gap between European legal protections and negative attitudes toward Kathoey on the street demonstrates the power of universal and essentialist binary opposition; as hetero-normativity and cis-gender bodies are constructed to comprise normalcy and natural, Kathoey and transgendered bodies equate with deviancy and the unnatural. The chapter also explained, under the analysis of post-structural and post-colonial philosophies, why essentialist identity should be deconstructed.

The participants' perception of Western identity is shaped by their engagement with a Western identity that was constructed, as superior, after the imperialism era. I agree with Loomba that Orientalist-constructed inferior images influence the perception and mentality of Kathoey's own 'otherness' identity. For Kathoey, self-perceived otherness is not only about race and ethnicity, but also their gender and sexuality. I agree with Fanon (2008) and Bhabha (1994) that individual identities are not inborn or otherwise essentialist. I also argue that essentialist identity-politics obstructs social justice. When it comes to Thai transgenderism, such a political starting point reproduces hetero-normativity, gender binary opposition and trans-prejudices, all of which exacerbate discrimination. On top of that, identity-politics also double or triple stigmatize minorities of minorities such as people with nonconforming gender, transgender sex workers, non-white transgender immigrants in Europe, people who identify as 'queer' (which is a category that includes a range of sexual identities that do not conform with hetero-normative expectations), and so on. Essentialist identity-politics failed to bring real equality for all. To the contrary, it worsened discrimination against subalterns and helped to reproduce an imagined past that was formed by powerful social institutions and classes or, in many cases, by Western colonial authorities.

I conclude this chapter with the observation that, despite of sufficient legal protection toward Kathoey, their reality after migration clashes with their romantic expectations about Europe before they migrated. As demonstrated, Kathoey in Europe experience verbal abuse, physical abuse and violence on the street, school bullying, job discrimination, racism and social exclusion. The narratives demonstrate an inconsistency between the perception of Kathoey who live in Thailand about life in Europe and the lived experience of those who have migrated to Europe. Base on

empirical data from *chapter four* and this chapter, I find that Kathoey safety and security are threatened – both in Thailand and in Europe. In addition, most participants in Europe feel that social discrimination in Europe is more harmful and life-threatening than in Thailand, regardless of the higher level of legal acceptance. The main reason many Kathoeyes perceive Europe as a better world to live is that, unlike Thais, many Europeans cannot differentiate Kathoeyes from biological women. Their biological secret helps them to have better and non-discriminatory life in Europe.

In terms of social discrimination, participants in Europe inform that Kathoey job discrimination in Europe is the only point that, on the surface, seems to be better than the situation in Thailand. Working with low-skilled jobs in Europe gives Kathoeyes higher salary than high-skilled jobs in Thailand, so European economic compensation might help to explain why participants believe the job market for Kathoeyes is better in Europe than in Thailand. Despite the more violent street discrimination that Kathoeyes in Europe experience, participants choose to stay due to legal protections toward transgender people, romantic relationships and family life they are more capable to have, better economic conditions, advanced social status in Thailand and expanded social networks. Most of participants in Europe add that they plan to stay in Europe, work and save money, and then return to live their retired lives in Thailand with their families. Many plan to collect enough money to live in Europe in the summer and in Thailand during winter.

The next chapter documents hard-to-access information about Thai transgender sex work, using narratives of both sex workers and their European clients. It offers an analysis of Thai transgender sex work in Europe, victimization myth, men who buy sex from Kathoeyes, and insights of Kathoey sex workers' sexuality, behavior and lifestyle in Europe.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Kathoey Sex Work in Europe

Throughout history, prostitution has been not only a mere trade, but also is a lifestyle that pushes sex workers away from so-called 'normal' society. Sex workers typically experience shunning and social stigma, and they are often viewed as deviants. A broad socio-historical tradition interprets prostitution through three main theoretical perspectives: (i) functionalist, (ii) social interactionist, and (iii) feminist. The social interactionist school and feminist school essentially arose in response to the functionalist method (Chatterjee, 2002), which interprets prostitution as a timeless institution that varies, albeit slightly, depending on social structure and level of development. Scholars in this tradition acknowledge prostitution as an indispensable complement to marriage, theorizing that it offers a release for men, who are assumed to have an inborn urge for diversity and perverse sexual satisfaction. In the general case, prostitute 'women' categorized as deviants. As heterosexual monogamous traditions are interpreted as 'correct' and 'normal', sex workers are often viewed as hypersexual, mentally disordered, and frigid. Until the 1970s, there was a global consensus that prostitutes should be controlled, but not prostitution. Theorists promoted regulatory standards to avoid the social turbulence that followed from such sexual practices: drug problems, sexual transmitted infection (STI), public disorder, and so on (Chatterjee, 2002). Prostitution per se was not a prominent social concern, as long as it did not disrupt public order.

Relying heavily on feminist theories, sociocultural background and economic motivations have been used to explain why Thai women choose to work in the sex industry. Some scholars on Thai prostitution rally to campaign against prostitution in Thailand, arguing that the country should cease to be a 'prostitution paradise', because when placed in the context of hetero-patriarchy and class problems this paradise has a criminal act at its foundation (see Ghosh, 2002). Mainstream prostitution studies and dominant trends in social scientific literature predominantly argue that prostitution causes human rights violations and denounce it as an institution that distributes death and disease (Shih, 1994), the commodification of bodies, brutal institution of sexual inequality (Farley, 2004), the epitome of male domination and exploitation of women irrespective of historical time period (Jeffreys, 1997b), 'rape that's paid for' (Raymond, 1995), an upsurge in drug use

(McKeganey and Bernard, 1992), victimization (Dworkin, 1997), social deviancy (Barry, 1995), and the claim that men who buy sex from prostitutes must be viewed as ‘batterers rather than customers’ (Raphael and Shapiro, 2002). On the contrary, other scholars have pointed out that studies of prostitution are too-often based on flawed theories and methods. These scholars criticize radical feminists’ essentialism and universalism, impracticability of researchers to describe how and where they contact research objects and to include comparison groups, sampling bias and reliance on unrepresentative samples, most notably studies on victimization which rely heavily on street prostitution (Weitzer, 2005). Further, these scholars observe that carefully collected empirical evidence contradicts the myth of customers’ violence against prostitutes and women exploitation (Monto, 2004), the myth of a distinction between ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ prostitution (Weitzer, 2005; Zhang, 2011). Further prostitution studies focus overwhelmingly on female prostitution and overlook transgender prostitution, which is recently becoming an emerging trend within domestic and global sex work industry. Previous studies of prostitution by transgender women mainly focused on violence, victimization, sexually transmitted diseases, and social disdain (Hoffman, 2014). However, my work approaches the subject from a different perspective. I rethink and investigate these understandings with, as a starting point, the idea that sex and prostitution in capitalism/consumerism are mechanisms and products of scientific power- and knowledge-practices, which form orders and regulations of human sexual desires, expressions, and sexuality.

This chapter reviews the studies on ‘prostitutes’, who have been characterized as vicious and immoral by most feminist, psychology, behavioral studies, and sexual deviancy theories. On one hand, prostitution is viewed as a component of a social landscape that includes oppression, violence, and men’s power over women and children (both male and female), and in which prostitutes are victimized and in need of assistance. On the other hand, prostitutes are characterized, socioeconomically, as degraded humans degradation, their bodies and sexual organs are commodified ‘objects’, providers of goods and services that satisfy lust, concupiscence, and sexual desire without love or compassion. Prostitutes are usually stigmatized as bad women, whereas their customers are stigmatized as promiscuous and morally corrupt. These viewpoints present prostitution as dangerous and negative. Along with other scholars’ work on prostitution, I analyze works of dominant Thai queer theorist

Narupon Duangwises through his literature as well as personal interviews I had with him in Bangkok in 2014. This work has influenced my understanding of the cultural hybridity of sexuality in a non-Western context. Western theories on sexuality cannot be applied directly to the reality of queer people in global south; the flaws in many dominant Western sexuality theories that cannot be applied with all groups of studies, for example, Jackson (1997a) finds Foucault's approach unhelpful when it comes to analyzing contemporary Thai perceptions of sexual difference, for example; definite Thai notion of *phet*, which signifies many configurations of sexual differences and genders. As well as, same-sex sexuality and transgenderism history in the Dutch East Indies have been more or less ignored by Foucaultian scholars who study Indonesia's colonial period (Peletz, 2006).

The main focus of my research is on street and state discrimination against Kathoeyes in Thailand and Europe, not on prostitution itself. This research does not yield policy recommendations regarding whether legalizing prostitution should be supported or opposed. But many of my research respondents are Thai transgender sex workers who live in Europe and who revealed their life stories, experiences, and information on transnational sex work industry. This knowledge can fill several information gaps in prostitution research, and can also challenge many myths regarding transgender prostitution.

Various scholars have that conventional popular understandings of prostitution as sometimes superficial and generally constructs sex for sale as dirty. It is imperative to rethink and interrogate these understandings, because sex and prostitution in capitalist consumerism is a mechanism and product of scientific power and knowledge practices that order and regulate the expression of human sexual desire (Duangwises, 2014a). I will share my knowledge of Kathoey sex workers in Europe: their reasons for entering the sex work industry in Thailand and Europe, how transgender prostitution differs from heterosexual prostitution, the processes by which they enter transnational sex work industry (from Thailand to Europe), perceptions from and about men who buy sex from transgender prostitutes, and how aesthetic myths and heteronormativity support Kathoey sex workers who enter the industry in Europe, the dynamics of Thai transgender sex worker smuggling agencies, life in red light districts, and the effects of social media (website and dating applications).

This chapter will begin with general framework about prostitution. *Behind Prostitution and Sex: Knowledge and Power?* assesses how scholars define prostitution as a phenomenon in a multi-disciplinary approach, and how sexuality, power and knowledge are connected to prostitution. Next, I will review the literature, brief though it is, on *Transgender Prostitution*, including theories behind transgender identity construction through sex work, and so on. *Men Who Buy Sex from Transgender Prostitutes* reveals closely-held information on clients of transgender sex workers. Their sexuality, behavior, motives, experience, and opinions are examined. *Thai Transgender Prostitution in Europe* first elaborates the critical literature on sexuality and tourism to discuss Kathoey sex work in Thailand before their migration to Europe. It also provides data analysis of Thai transgender sex workers in Europe: their lives, experiences as sex workers, access to Europe, and sexual transition as transsexuals. The culture of racialized sexual fantasy when ‘East meets West’ is scrutinized as well. Next, *Prostitution as a Reflection of Social Consumerism* and *Prostitution: Sexual Desire and Rationalism* outline a post-structural analysis of transgender sex work. Lastly, in *Jinda’s Story*, *Nok’s Story*, and *The lives of Jenny/John*, mysterious narratives of selected Kathoey sex workers’ lives, dreams, and experiences are revealed.

7.1. Behind Prostitution and Sex: Knowledge and Power?

Sexualities and power are the sociology behind prostitution, additionally there are other realities and theories that address this broad phenomenon. Radical feminist scholars explain prostitution as existing within a social, cultural, and political space in which sexuality is outlawed and sexuality is futureless. Sexuality is a production of individual experience, which itself is attached to social subjectivities, ethics, and knowledge. It does not naturally take place in the society, as it is a form that takes place in the realm of symbolic and fantasy order of different social clusters that structure our society. Cultural arrangements that shape how sexuality is imagined, assembled, and practiced, along with an individual’s personal experiences, yield each person’s own sexual identity. Recent scholars of sexual behavior substitute this kind of sexual essentialism with a more historically informed idea of sex, arguing that sexuality is historically and socially established; it is not biologically constituted (Ghosh, 2002). Modern societies instituted a social

relationship between human reproduction and sexuality in a way that resembles the creation of thinking procedure and social ethics; which provide the generative functions a formation's main place of sexual subject, that inclines to pleasure and desire limitation from its experiences. From this foundation, several sets of hypothesis were proposed. First, our sexual practices exist within a symbolic order that manages our desires and sexual fantasies. And we, as individuals, structure the social order without recognizing that each of our understandings – of sexual preferences, genders, religions, classes, and more – differs of those of other individuals (Foucault, 1986). Various principles can be elucidated. One principle envisions the family through marriage, with a room for allowed sexuality. Another sees that erotic pleasure and experiences exist, symbolically accredited to masculine gender; this principle tolerates a social partition of women. Women consequently are allocated into 'good' versus 'bad', in other words 'mother-wife' versus 'prostitute'. The language itself is normative: marriage versus prostitution, mother-wife versus prostitute is grounded on the unequal matrimonial expression of polygamous masculinity and monogamous femininity. Hence sex work is epitomized as an element of the cultural production of sexuality (Ghosh, 2002). Other scholars resist this approach to defining prostitution, arguing that using the idea of sexuality to analyze prostitution does not seem appropriate. For them, the term 'prostitution' should rather be interpreted more on human morality; as practices done without ethics and morality but with components of greed and money may be dubbed as prostitution. Prostitution historically has been understood as an institution, and female sex work has been researched habitually in several fields of study. This work focuses mainly on street prostitution, brothels, and violence against women. These studies concentrate on morality, public disruption, depravity, and public health concerning sexuality, which leads to the argument on prostitution control. Such approaches rarely address how prostitution is related to society, who gains or benefits from it, the social position of sex workers overall, and the relationship between prostitution and fundamental socio-economic change (Ghosh, 2002).

To the extent that transgender sex work is considered at all, it is imagined to have characteristics that are similar to female sex work, regarding which much data has been collected. As I will show, such an approach is misguided, and the error matters. Transgender sex work is becoming a significant phenomenon and renowned

trend within domestic and transnational sex markets. It differs markedly from female sex work and deserves to be studied in its own right. Before exposing the differences themselves, I will first review what they are different from, that is, I will review primary literature on female sex work and the sociology behind it.

The literature on female sex work spans several disciplines, including history, sexology, criminology, psychology, women's studies, and sociology, each of which concentrates on various specific aspects. Definitions of the phenomenon are fragmented, and validity must be evaluated according to the value grounds and methodologies used. Thus, theories of sex and sex work have been from time to time disputed. Rubin's (1984) article, 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics' criticizes influential feminist theories for how they portray gender and sexuality. Rubin argues that sex is a historical politic; it is not a natural practice but rather a power and knowledge practice that enables society to adjust, control and organize human sexual behavior and sexual desire. Rubin applies Foucault's (1986) idea to exemplify how American and European societies' social movements in the nineteenth century aimed to abolish social depravities. These social depravities included sexual practices that inappropriately crossed imagined social boundaries and therefore demanded censorship, direction, revelation, criticism, and strict control. Individuals' sexual lives became non-private and political, which invited intervention by political power. Rubin (1984) describes the process of turning sex into depravity as moral war. The participants in this war are feminists, specialists, scholars, and social movement activists, while the war's objective is to eradicate vicious sex from the society.

One might wonder: why is sex the criminal in this war? Foucault (1986) raised his doubts about 'sexual repression' which is a kind of social moral conduct that uses scientific knowledge as a tool to re-organize society. However, knowledge is also an implement of power; scientists themselves use socially-bestowed power to guide and command sexual realities. Knowledge and power thus complement each other, without appearing in the law or state's constructed regulations, as both complexly move forward in society. These movements manifest themselves in the form of a 'power' to create 'sexual identity' (Foucault, 1986 in Duangwiset, 2014a). Rubin (1984) cumulates this set of remarks by hypothesizing that the production of

sexual morality is a concealed power within sex that has been incubated since the Victorian era and still exists today.

The obvious illustration of sexual morality is sex work. Historically, sex workers are individuals who provide sexual happiness to those who are not their husbands or wives, with economic exchange. Sex workers could be either men or women, and today one can also recognize people who do not fit comfortably into either category, including male-to-female and female-to-male transgender people. However, in the 19th century, the definition of prostitution was transformed into one that includes a normative focus of morality, or the goodness or badness of individuals. Rubin (1984 cited in Duangwises, 2014a) criticizes the Victorian moral system, which looks at prostitution as both a vile behavior and a demeaning occupation. The system transforms sex service providers into despicable human beings. Victorian culture hierarchized sex by categorizing and merely value heterosexual intercourse between traditionally married male and female. And sex outside marriage was defined as dirty, corrupted, and immoral, especially when it is done with a prostitute. Supporters of this moral system attempted to eliminate sex workers, who by definition were socially deprived (Duangwises, 2014a).

Feminist theory is as well a part of the sexual morality system. Radical feminists are engrossed in women oppression and criticized/condemned prostitution as 'woman subordination'. Sex workers are categorized by them as sexual objects that assuage men's lust. The value of sex workers as women vanishes, or, as feminists termed it, 'degraded'. Numerous radical feminists and conservatives want to abolish prostitution from society because sex work is an indication of patriarchal power (Weitzer, 2005). Particular perception empowers and infiltrates the sexual morality system within the society. Feminists are 'agents' who campaign against the vile and revolting practice of sex in prostitution. But this perception stereotypes prostitution and omits its historical context, which correlates with sex workers' existence. For instance, Barry (1995) elucidates sexual oppression presence in sex work, which roots from patriarchy. Thus, social acceptance of sex work is equivalent to accepting the idea that men have the right to oppress women. Radical feminists' constructed discourses present as licentious 'devils' the men who buy sex, while female prostitutes are portrayed as pathetic 'sexual victims' who are little more than men's lust-slaves. At the same time, sex-positive feminists or leaders of pro-sex

feminist movements claim that women have the right to seek sexual contentment without colliding with the marriage institution. Based on the results of their in-depth empirical studies, pro-sex-work activist-scholars have proposed that sex work should be seen as a legitimate career path that should be chosen on the basis of personal inclination and free will (Siegel, 2011; Andrijasevic, 2007; Oude Breuil, 2008, 2009; Agustin, 2007; Brunovskis and Surtees, 2008; Davies, 2009; Janssen: 2007). Liberal and pro-sex feminists further claim that prostitution is a ‘choice’ through which women can govern their destiny and sexual desire (see Almodovar, 2002; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). And then women should have sovereign rights to their own bodies. Additionally, sexual service does not merely include economical dimension. But there are other positive dimensions involved: female prostitutes can pursue pleasure from their customers in different aspects. Sex is a type of relation and it is unfair to claim sex work as depravity (Duangwiset, 2014a). Even though, most of feminists are abolitionists who oppose to prostitution (see MacKinnon, 1993; Shih, 1994; Farley, 2004; Jeffreys, 1997b; Raymond, 1995; Mckeganey and Bernard, 1992; Dworkin, 1997), some feminists support legalizing sex work.

Pro-sex-work scholar-activists see sex workers not as victims, but as agents who have the right to self-determination; they perceive sex work as a form of labour (Brennan, 2004). As Kempadoo (1998) argues, the term ‘sex worker’ opens the discourse in which prostitution is viewed “not as an identity – a social or a psychological characteristic of women, often indicated by ‘whore’ – but as an income-generating activity” (p.3). In their recent anthropological study, Kulick and Rydström (2015) discuss sex work/ sexual advisors and people with disabilities in the context of state policy and social welfare in ‘progressive countries’ like Denmark and Sweden. They provokingly outline intricate confines between love and sex, work and intimacy, private and public, and sexual contentment and harm. Further, they propose that it is essential to the dignity of disabled adults that these people be provided with access to sexual services, and they also dispute the fundamental social justice issues as presented in existing discussions on disability and sex work.

Most of my research findings regarding Kathoey sex workers overlap with liberal and pro-sex-work feminist conclusions (see Siegel, 2011; Agustin, 2007; Brunovskis and Surtees, 2008; Davies, 2009; Janssen, 2007; Siegel, 2005; Almodovar, 2002; Siegel and Bovenkerk. 2002; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). In

harmony with pro-sex-work scholars, Kathoey sex worker participants explained their agency, free-choice, autonomy, intimacy, and affection with clients, the fulfilment of their sexual desires as they are penetrated by European men, and the feminine identity formation and validation they have gained from participation in sex work. Most of Kathoey respondents support legalization of prostitution. They are content with their life and vocation in Europe and claim their work includes receiving sexual pleasure from clients and their life as a ‘beautiful female’, and the desire for them that is so clearly expressed by male clients, enhances their self-esteem. In their own words (emphasis added):

‘Working in the red light district brings me lots of self-confidence. My customers make me feel **wanted** and **beautiful**’ – Jinda, Amsterdam

‘I meet lots of psycho clients of course. I think my job can be dangerous, but what I love most about my job is it brings easy money and I get to dress up beautifully to get **attention** from men. It feels good to know that I am a **beautiful enough woman** that men would buy me. I would not choose to do another job for now’ - Jay, London

When it comes to pornography and prostitution, there are essential debates from three main schools: (i) Marxist feminism is against every sort of prostitution and all kinds of nudity channels because it is human degradation and commodification⁹. (ii) Liberal feminism supports the right to choose and the ‘choices’ of women, as long as information relevant to these choices is not blocked or censored. It supports liberal access to goods and services, and perceives abortion and prostitution as free will humans deserve (see Almodovar, 2002; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998) (iii) Sex-positive feminism (pro-sex feminism) in some extent overlaps with liberal feminism. Many feminists in the pro-sex school are former prostitutes who insist that merely respecting women’s bodies is not adequate; sex workers need legal protection, that is, pro-active state acknowledgement of women rights to make these choices (see Bright, 1992). This is distinct from the liberal feminist position, which demands only that the government, without itself taking a normative stance, ensure that a market exists through which women’s choices can be satisfied and respected. The debates between Marxist and radical feminists, on the

⁹ See works of Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin

one side, versus liberal and pro-sex feminists on the other, emphasize the inconsistencies and conflicts between a group that perceives sex as a negative thing and relates it to morality (and is therefore against prostitution), and a group that perceives prostitution as liberation (and therefore supports prostitution). Rubin (1984) argues that this particular debate shows how sex is binary and oppositional, which is problematic within rationalism. We cannot judge or separate sex as black or white; sex is not an object in scientific labs, but rather complex of social relationships described and ordered under the knowledge discourse. Therefore, argumentations on if sex work is a moral sin or a liberal right, ignore and overlook well-concealed power-relations. Underneath both waves of feminists' argumentation, sexual discourse is still influential in constructing social standards and morality. Feminists who are against prostitution apply a discourse of women's virginity and men's oppression, while pro-prostitution feminists apply discourses of liberty and self-emancipation.

In regards of prostitutes' sex, contemporary prostitution studies concentrate on sex workers (males, females and children) (Hoang, 2011; Sorajjakool, 2003; Matteo, 2016). Researchers interview and collect data from prostitutes, and expose prostitutes' narratives to reveal what prostitutes experience: household issues, poverty, lack of education, unemployment, as well as their entrance into the sex work industry. Many studies and the media attempt to define reasons that drive individuals to become sex workers, and often explain prostitution as a last-ditch option for desperate people with little or no choice (Manopai boon et al., 2003; Van Blerk, 2008; Bethlehem, 2005). Prostitution is comprehended as a 'low-class work' for the poor and uneducated. Accordingly, economic pressures have been frequently used to explain prostitution. Since sex workers exchange their bodies for money, sex is seen as an object to be exchanged and commodified economically. Sex workers 'sell their bodies', and clients buy sexual pleasure. Relations between sex workers and their clients are materialistic (Monto and Julka, 2009). Satz (1995) also indicates that society recognizes prostitutes' sex as economically driven, but he also recognizes sex not as an object, but rather as an emotion. Sex gives humans satisfaction, pleasure and delight; it also fulfills humans' desires. In Satz' view, prostitution is not simply commerce and sex workers are not merely providers of sexual contentment. However, the underlying problem remains: societies continue to identify sex as the

commodity and sex workers as sex/service sellers. This has the effect of making sex appear to be vicious and repulsive, and ultimately stigmatizes prostitutes. Satz further argues that sex with prostitutes is not depraved and there should not be legal punishment for sex workers. People who provide sexual pleasure to others choose to do for a wide variety of reasons, and social stereotypes that imagine sex workers as having the same considerations or influenced by the same effects are neither empirically accurate nor theoretically useful. Sexual service providers could be anyone regardless of gender. Nonetheless, mainstream society claims, stigmatizes, and explains sex workers away as struggling groups, and further marginalizes it because some are forced by pimps and madams to do sex work.

My research result differs from this mainstream understanding. Most of my informants who are transgender sex workers engage in sex work not for only economic reasons, but also for their own sexual pleasure: they enjoy having sex, especially with European and other Caucasian male clients. This is especially true of those who work legally in red light districts in Amsterdam and Belgium, who explained their 'active' role: most of the time, they choose customers who they believe can satisfy their own sexual desires, based on those customers' appearances. Sex work does not only bring satisfying money but it provides self-esteem as a 'valued women' (their sexuality and self-pride are validated by customers and society). As one respondent elucidated:

Some of the clients are really attractive. I honestly just love having sex with these hot men. If someone is unattractive – too young, too old, or too bad looking – knocks on my window, I politely reject them and they understand the rejection. It is an awesome job for me, good money and I get to dress up so beautifully to get attention from men. It makes me feel good about myself sometimes, because many clients are so sweet and respectful, and they make me feel important. Many clients are lonely men who just need someone to listen to, to comfort, and to hold them. I do that job to give them companionship and love. – Jessy, Amsterdam's red light district

Furthermore, sex workers' bodies are not simply materials/goods in the market. Their bodies are meaningful spaces that give a sense of belonging to individuals; there are emotional bonds and these bodies need to be taken care of. Sex

workers use their bodies to sexually please people, not to 'sell product' but to let others fondle their valuable 'thing' in life (bodies). Understanding prostitutes' bodies as cherished treasures will enable us to see that sex workers' lives are associated with their feelings toward their own bodies and others' bodies. Thus, to 'use' sex workers' bodies is more of a significant value-practice than seeing bodies as lifeless or emotionless products. Sex workers' bodies are not solitary, but they exist together with self and feelings. When prostitutes provide sexual pleasure to customers, they at the same time communicate their selves with other people. Interactions between sex workers and clients are often permeated with feelings; it is not necessarily only interaction between buyer and seller (Duangwises, 2014a). I do not reject the economic cost and benefit exchange in prostitution. But to understand prostitution simply through an economic perspective overlooks emotional meanings associated with the bodies of sex workers and their sharing with customers.

Many mainstream societies see sex work as an indignity and sex with sex workers as immoral; sex happens out of love and trust, sex with strangers is therefore vile and dehumanizing. The logic that supports this idea is arrived at by understanding individuals' sexual identity as being the same thing as their sexual behavior and sexual practices. When society merges sexual practices with self-identity, sex with strangers becomes incorrect. This set of ideas, common within conservative feminist communities, insinuates that women who allow themselves to assuage men's lustful desire demolish feminine value, or in other words, surrender to the patriarchy (Duangwises, 2014a). Conservative feminists believe that prostitution is enslaving women and blocking freedom from them. The discourse created by conservative radical feminists claim that prostitution is oppression by the patriarchy dominates the society (Raymond, 1995; Raphael and Shapiro, 2002).

Satz (1995) criticizes this line of judgement as an essentialism under which the real self exists in sexual practice. Sex, in Satz' view, should not be understood as an origin of self, but instead as body expressions full of various emotions. Prostitutes' sex therefore is not necessarily embittered or gaunt just because it is shared with many strangers. It can instead be considered to be a frontier of the body and a feeling exchange experience between prostitutes and clients. By concluding, prostitution is an expression of male power overlooks how women form relations with men. Female sex is not always passive, it does not have to be submissive, and

women can sexually express themselves in many ways. Concepts of purity such as noble women, virginity, or maternity distort the understanding of women's sexual experiences. Thus, sex workers' sex is evidently not only to support patriarchic power and it is not a reflection of women's sexual victimization. Prostitute sex is instead an open boundary for women, men, and transgender women to express sexual desire. Satz hypothesizes if prostitution is described as immoral and incorrect, this is because sex workers allow/apply conservative feminist notions to themselves. Hence, the power and knowledge about sexuality that dominates society is the problem, not the sex workers themselves. Society should reevaluate the social paradigms, values, beliefs, and sexual standards constructed by conservative feminists to move past the patriarchic power discourse and the economic discourse that presents sex as simply a product and prostitutes as sellers of their bodies. The prostitution myth is a deep-seated social institution and is difficult to throw off. Satz's study questions the validity of the prostitution myth because sex is an 'image' constructed under sexual inequality in which women are subordinated to men economically, professionally, hierarchically and biologically. To comprehend this, it is significant to study and investigate relations between sex workers and their clients. And also to check guided 'power' dominating the construction of the idea of sex work. To study sex work, it is also essential to understand social conceptions (knowledge) of sex, gender, and sexuality. Otherwise, we cannot be free ourselves from the old myths and social claims about sex, gender and sexuality across different cultures and in different countries.

7.2. Transgender Prostitution

Previous studies of transgender women prostitution mainly focused on violence, victimization, sexual transmitted diseases and social disdain (see MacKinnon, 1993; Shih, 1994; Farley, 2004; Jeffreys, 1997b; Raymond, 1995; Mckeganey and Bernard, 1992; Dworkin, 1997). At the same time, Kathoey sex workers are marginalized and stigmatized within sex worker hierarchy because their 'cross' gender identity does not fit in with the social norm. Many studies show that transgender prostitutes are ranked in the lowest status on the prostitution totem, at the same level as male prostitutes, who mainly exist in gay communities, even though transgender sex workers and male sex workers have different identities and different

target groups of customers (Duangwises, 2014a). This double-stigmatizes transgender sex workers. State policies rarely offer transgender prostitutes social welfare or legal protection. Such situations arise from inequality of how prostitutes are grasped through heterosexual norms (Duangwises, 2014a). State policies concentrate on female prostitution and child prostitution more than other groups, regardless of the rising number of transgender sex workers.

Kulick's (1998) renowned work on Brazilian transgender women (*travestis*) cannot be overlooked in a study on transgender prostitution. He describes *travestis* as people assigned as male at birth but having female identity or living as female in Brazil. Beginning in childhood, *travestis* gradually change their bodies and behaviors to become females. They give themselves female names, join transgender groups, to learn how to dress up and wear make-up femininely and speak with female language patterns. Some take or inject female hormones, breast augmentation, facial cosmetic surgery and sex reassignment surgery. Kulick claims that *travestis* participate in the sex work industry to confirm their transgenderism or transsexuality; being sex workers who present themselves in public as transgender attests explicitly to their identity. They do not perceive sex work as a low-class job, but it is a profession that makes them content. They live freely and can choose their own customers on the streets, beaches, hotels, resorts or public toilets. Kulick's study attempts to understand transgender prostitutes' experiences, on the hypothesis that prostitution provides a distinct identity construction to transgender people. The study concentrates more on the identity construction process than on questions about power relations in which transgender prostitutes have to negotiate with people from different groups under complex conditions. Furthermore, transgender women are often holistically stereotyped as being identical to one another. This disregards the array of transgender prostitutes whom describe bodies and sexual desire differently. Leichtentritt and Davidson-Arad (2004) interviewed adolescent transgender prostitutes in Israel, who explained that they choose to do sex work because of families and friends' unacceptance of their transsexuality. They are neglected, live alone, lack protection and opportunity; accordingly they choose to enter sex work industry. Typically, transgender fellows arouse desperate transgender juveniles' interest in prostitution work. Once they are familiar to the sex work life, the pitch goes, juvenile transgender sex workers will be able to earn money by and for

themselves. And prostitution is perceived as easy money, the way to access better life. Unlike other occupations, education and skills are not required. Leichtentritt and Davidson-Arad's work advocates for social support and policy making. They recognize transgender women as unfortunates and underprivileged, and argue that if transgender youths are educated or receive skills development, they will quit prostitution. There is a lack of in-depth transgender sex work research in terms of their identity; therefore I choose to only refer to these dominant two. Both Kulick's and Leichtentritt and Davidson-Arad's conclusions coincide with my own research results, but only to a limited extent. I will compare my findings on transgender prostitution and with those of previous studies in the section on '*Thai transgender prostitution in Europe*'.

7.3. Men Who Buy Sex from Transgender Sex Workers

It is challenging to study sex work clients (in every category: male, female, juvenile and transgender) and they have been neglected in most sex work research (Weitzer, 2005; Di Nicola et al., 2009). Sex buyers are not open to reveal their information or behavior; sexual desire and practice with sex workers are private and secretive, especially if the clients are females, gays or social elites. Transgender sex workers' customers are among the most arduous groups to study, due to their socially 'deviant' sexual orientation and behavior. Thus, an idea about sex buyers' behavior and outlook has been based on myth more than reality.

Previous studies on sex buyers' behavior indicated sex work clients' reasons to pursue sexual pleasure through sex work. The primary reason is to release their sexual desires with persons who match their sexual preferences. Moreover, sex work clients desire to have freedom to choose a sexual relationship outside the social norm. Some customers never met anyone who suit their preferences in the usual ways, thus they approach sex workers to fulfill their inclinations (Weitzer, 2005). Earlier studies concentrated on factors and motivations. Researchers often used quantitative methods to analyze the most common factors or variations. For instance, Monto (2000) investigated why men seek out prostitutes. The research collected data from seven hundred men, and most of the men responded they choose to buy sex from prostitutes because they want to experience excitement and novelty.

I analyze data based on interviews with male respondents who are transgender sex workers' customers and Thai transgender sex workers in Thailand and Europe. Men who buy sex from transgender sex workers are predominantly transgender-women-admirers who cannot be open about their sexuality. My Kathoey respondents inform that many of their customers are married and be in a heterosexual relationship with biological women. Two of my five subjects have female partners who know about and accept their secretive sexual preference and fetishism for transgender women, and allow them to buy sex from transgender sex workers. The majority, however, hide this action/behavior from their female partners, friends and families. Some of these men just want to try sexual experience novelty and the easiest, safest and most exciting method is through transgender sex work. Four of clients are heterosexuals who are more attracted to 'a feminine person with woman's figure and penis'. The Thai customer group prefers transsexual (Male-to-female transgender who are undergone sex reassignment) sex workers who look more feminine than cross-dressers or transgender women with penises (In Thai term: *Kathoey-mee-ngu* (กะเทยมีงู), direct English translation: transgender woman with snake). In Europe, Asian transgender sex workers (especially Thais and Filipinos) are the most popular group among all the races, because they appear to be more feminine: smoother skin, less hair and smaller body structure. Customers explained their 'fetishism' and 'exoticize' Southeast Asian transgender sex workers with the same post-colonial simplification Western men have towards Asian female sex workers: their tanned skin, tiny body and submissive 'service-minded' attitude are exotic and exciting. As my male respondents who are transgender sex work customers explained:

I am not gay. I am not bisexual, either. I would not let men or gay men penetrate inside me. I am attracted to biological women, too, but women with penises are more special. They just turn me on much more. Sometimes I let ladyboys do [penetrate] me; sometimes I give them oral sex, if they want. Well, most of them don't like that because they would feel less like women. I do not like to call them hookers, I'd rather call them escorts. Asians are the most beautiful, the most famous among transgender admirer group. – Matthew, London

My ex-girlfriend was an escort from Thailand. It started with prostitution but we ended up having a relationship for two years. Back then, I asked her to stop working and I supported her financially every month. She looked like a real girl, my family and friends did not know she was a tranny. I am not proud of the fact that she was an escort, and we didn't tell people how we met. [...] I run several kebab stores in this area and make good money. I gave her decent money every month so she did not have to work any more... It was more than enough for her to send money back home in Thailand every month. Her parents are very poor. I was happy to help them build a house and buy a new car. But I caught her going back to work, so we broke up. She said she wanted to work. She enjoyed her job and her freedom. I accept it, you know. For me, trans-women are not different than real women. I would say I am a straight man but there is something about trans-girls that is intriguing: they are more confident, they are free, cheerful, elegant, you know, and much more understanding to men. Much less drama, you know. I prefer one with remaining penis, it is more exciting. Possibly I get this ladyboy fantasy from porn I watched when I was young. [...] I still meet other trans escorts now because I have lots of work to do, I can't go clubbing to find trans partners and it is not easy to find them (transgender women) in the city. Especially not the pretty ones. [...] Of course, I don't tell people about this. Not even my best friends. – Ahmed, United Kingdom

Everyone I know thinks I am straight. I always have had girlfriends but I am attracted to trans girls. It's not easy to find them in real life, and it is not easy to walk with them on the street without people look at you and you can tell they judge you. So I sometimes use transgender dating website to chat and contact trans girls in the area to date or to have sex with. Sometimes, I pay for them too ... just to try. I don't think paying for sex is a bad, especially to trans. Seems like they enjoy having sex with men...a lot. – Phil, Belgium

From the interview data, one of the most interesting points is the sexuality of transgender sex workers' male clients. The male respondents themselves and Kathoey sex worker respondents say that the male clients are straight or

heterosexual. Transgender sex workers' clients often inform them that they see the so called 'ladyboy' as just the same as biological women, but with more arousing organs (penises) and understanding attitudes. Most of them describe themselves as heterosexuals because they are straight men that are attracted to only women, either trans-women or biological female. They are not sexually attracted to people who present themselves to the world as males. It raises a discussion: what does it mean to choose not to describe one-self as gay, bisexual or queer, but to be attracted to transgender women, engaging in the receiving end of sexual penetration. What criteria, then, are used to measure heterosexuality, homosexuality, masculinity and femininity in sexual practices? The sexuality of men who buy sex from transgender sex workers would be interesting to further investigate through the lens of gender studies and anthropology.

Furthermore, the male client respondents inform that hetero-normative society inadvertently pushes male clients to buy sex from transgender sex workers. The discriminating and homophobic society does not legitimate their sexual preference and behavior of having sex and even loving relationships with transgender women. Accordingly, they buy sex from transgender sex workers. But similar to female sex work, some clients just want to live out a sexual fantasy experience, some (a minority) are not sexually attracted to transgender prostitutes.

Sex work between men and Thai transgender sex workers in Thailand and Europe are processed in different locales: red light districts, streets, dating applications, dating/sex partners finding websites, massage parlors, beaches and so on. Southeast Asians transgender sex workers tend to charge more than other races. In Europe, transgender sex workers with penises often charge higher rates than transsexual (undergone sex reassignment surgery) sex workers, male sex workers or even biological female sex workers. For example, Kathoey sex worker participants with remaining penises inform they charge from 250 Euro per hour, which is higher than general female, transsexual and male sex workers rate. The target customers know where to contact and access transgender sex workers: it could be through transgender sex workers' websites, madams, transgender brothels or particular windows and streets in red light districts. The most prevalent forms of sex work, such as female brothels, sex work websites, or red light windows are commonly separated from transgender sex work because of different target clients.

Many men who contact transgender sex workers through the internet (dating websites, chat applications) seek more than sex. They also wish to fulfill their emotional needs; to talk or to meet someone who understands their sexuality and can exchange sexual experiences, to be able to be themselves freely since broader social expectations prohibit such expressions most of the time. Men who buy sex from transgender sex workers do not necessarily perceive Kathoey as just sexual objects, especially if they have prostitute-relations during travelling or holiday trips. Relationships between tourism and transgender prostitution is neither sexual oppression, nor insistence of patriarchal power. But such relationships are a power negotiation in which Western tourists (sex work customers) and Kathoey sex workers pursue own pleasures to satisfy materially and emotionally. Sex between European tourists and Kathoey sex workers is not for only money exchange, but also for emotional exchange purpose. It includes a ‘racialized body’ sexual fantasy from both sides: the ‘exotic’, submissive sweet Asian bodies and the ‘superior’ strong Caucasian bodies. Kathoey sex workers are mostly more proud and content to get Western clients than Thais or Asians. Western clients give some Kathoey sex workers sense of accomplishment (to be close to and to be penetrated by Western men), as much as both sellers and buyers hold postcolonial/crypto-colonial ideologies. It is sometimes described by clients and trans sex workers as ‘friendships’ or bonds, and can develop into love. At the same time, the locals’ bodies are not ‘sexual objects’ or sensual goods, but it is the bodies that locals utilize to impress the white tourists. However, my Kathoey sex worker respondents are the ‘agents’ and have their ‘voice’; the relationships with male customers are not always oppressive, yet often pleasurable. Kathoey sex workers especially in Europe can express their voice, have the power to negotiate and choose their own clients, unless they work with madams who find and select clients for them, which is done mostly through transgender prostitution websites nowadays. As my respondents explain;

I feel good and I feel proud when I get farang customers. They are much more gorgeous than other [race] customers. When I get to score farang customers, it feels like I am pretty and a winner. I mean outside of work in my private life as well. – Molly, Copenhagen

When I worked as a sex worker in Pattaya, I took farang customers to do sightseeing to show them beautiful places in Thailand. I would hang out with

them as friends, take them to the dentist, go shopping with them, and stuff like that. Sometimes, it was not only for sex and money. [...] it was fun. I see many sisters [Kathoey sex workers] and customers who fall in love and continue to have long-term relationships. - Titima, Pattaya

Some customers told me they prefer Thai sex workers because they think our skin color is beautiful, they think our tiny bodies are cute, and they feel that Thais are kind and caring. Thais take care of farang customers very well. You know Thai people are charming for farang in that way. And they think sex with a Kathoey is great. [...] No, I don't feel oppressed. I like to be with most of my farang clients, especially the younger ones; they are handsome and good in bed too. - Jay, London

My result is in harmony with O'Connell (1998) who hypothesizes that the sex work industry in globalized capitalism relates to power-relations and appears between economically fortunate Western world and the poor Third world. Transnational capitalism comes with tourism and prostitution is a reflection of power-relation that Western tourists have more power than the locals. The local sex workers in the third world choose to do sex work formally and informally. But the apparent power-relations are not oppressive, but happen in a negotiable form. Western tourists do not always have more power and the poor locals are not always taken advantage of. Both Western sex tourists and local sex tourists show their own power within the complex conditions.

Kathoey sex worker respondents who work in Amsterdam's red light district narrated actively that some male customers are secretive MtF (Male-to-Female) cross-dressers who pay for transgender sex service to get to know other transgender women and asked Kathoey sex workers to teach them how to dress up femininely. Some male customers have special fetish on some part of bodies such as teeth, feet, hands and so on. Jessy and Jinda, my participants working in Amsterdam red light district also report in the similar way that these male clients entered the red light window to be able to set free their so called social 'deviant' behaviors/fetish such as asking them to urinate on them, to lick their feet, to take photos of their teeth, to smell some part of a their bodies, or some just pay for transgender sex workers to have threesome intercourse with him and his wife, or to watch him and his wife

having sex. Numbers of clients prefer to use drugs with transgender sex workers, but then they have to pay extra and the rate is negotiable. Usually, customers paying more than five-hundred euro can get free drugs such as ecstasy, cocaine, marijuana or amphetamine. Some customers just use the red light district's window room to use drugs because the room's atmosphere gives them sense of surrealism and virtual world.

Base on my research data, minority of the clients are abusive and violent such as bringing gun and weapon inside the windows to threaten or abuse sex workers, or ask them to do extreme activities that Kathoey informants themselves describe as deviant, for instance forcing a Kathoey sex worker to smell their anus, to push shoe's high heel inside their anal, to eat feces or to have threesome intercourse with another close family members. However, surprisingly most of the clients are reported as decent or acceptable. Nine out of twenty-one of the transgender sex worker respondents have never experienced violence from clients during their sex work career in Europe. Most of the participants see their sex work career as positive more than negative, and most of them do not feel victimized by clients. As Jessy concluded;

I am not saying that my job is not dangerous; I have met all kinds of people from saints to devils. Some of them brought a gun into the room to rob me, some put a gun to my head for their entertainment, some put a knife to my throat when they were not satisfied, some acted like a psychotic boss, manipulated and forced me to do things I didn't want to do like slapping or hurting them during sex, or some like to see me frightened by them. There are some violent clients. These customers make me feel like I'm a psychologist who has to heal their deviancy. Some people come to me to cry, asked me to eat their feces, or to do all sorts of weird things you can't imagine [...] It gets to me mentally sometimes; especially when I have to [physically] hurt some clients and when I realize I have higher risk to get a sexual transmitted disease. But most of the time, it is not dangerous at all and I enjoy my work.

– Jessy, Amsterdam's red light district

Next, entitled *Thai Transgender Prostitution in Europe* will illustrate paucity information on transgender prostitution study through Kathoey sex workers' narratives on life background, European sex work career path, opinions, experiences and transnational sex work industry migration and access.

7.4. Thai Transgender Prostitution in Europe

A key struggle facing Kathoeyes is within their own families. In Thai culture, individuals are expected to be respectful to the desires of their parents and to maintain their family's reputation. Many Kathoeyes remained closeted, move away from home, and endure self-stigma because of their fear of bringing shame to their families (Samakkeekarom and Taesombat, 2013). However, Winter (2006b) found that, among the 198 Kathoeyes he studied, relatively very few parents reject their Kathoey children. These parents' acceptance of their Kathoey children derives from the understanding that their child, despite what they might describe as a norm-nonconforming gender identity or sexual orientation, nonetheless takes responsibility for familial duties towards parents, including provision of financial support, not causing troubles for the society or family, taking care of parents, and so on.

Trans-prejudices in Thailand such as the discouragement of rights to work, to be themselves, to marry and have a family, and issues of their privacy and status affect Kathoey lives in negative ways. Their long-term unemployment diminishes their self-reliance and ability to support parents and family financially. It drags down their self-esteem and pushes many Kathoeyes to do sex work or work in 'ladyboy' bars (Winter, 2011). However, Thai socio-cultural trans-prejudice issues alone do not push Kathoeyes to do sex work. Rather, as Winter (2011) concluded,

For some, it offers earnings beyond what is possible elsewhere, funding hormone treatment and surgery, and enabling support for parents and siblings. Work in specialized "ladyboy" bars may also provide a sense of community, especially for those who have migrated to the city. Finally, sex work provides some with the opportunity for nightly reaffirmation of an identity as female, as well as the possibility of meeting farang (foreigners), whom many Thai phu-ying-kham-phet (Kathoey) regard as more accepting toward gender diversity, and who may offer long-term financial support and

take their phu-ying-kham-phet girlfriends with them to their home countries, where marriage and a family may be possibilities. (p. 261)

As presented in *chapter four to chapter six*, my research results are similar to Winter's (2011). Kathoeyes are pushed to do sex work because of job discrimination in Thailand and Europe, and sex work is the easy way to allow many participants to financially support their families. On top of that, finding European partners is also the most effective way to upgrade theirs and their families' economic, security, life fulfillment, and social status. Many Kathoey sex worker participants have also explained to me how the discourse of social acceptance also encourages Kathoeyes to participate in the transnational sex work industry in Europe and facilitates their transnational migration from Thailand to Europe through agencies based in the lurid city of Pattaya, Thailand. They feel that their sex work reaffirms their desired identity as beautiful women. More analysis on sex work and discourse about acceptance through beauty myths is presented in the next chapter: *Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks*.

Historically, Thailand has been renowned for sex tourism and its export of 'thai-wives' internationally. The western media often emphasize the Thai sex industry when it comes to gender in relation to Thailand's economic progress. The Thai sex industry has its own historical background, which has developed and modulated itself according to Thailand's transnational action and modernization projects. The Thai prostitution industry for farang (Westerners) has attracted worldwide media attention. The rapid economic advancement of Thailand from the 1960s until 1997 has increased the effect of capitalist economics systems for Thai life in every dimension – agriculture, craft-making, sexuality, and lifestyle or on Buddhism – the national religion (Wilson, 2004). While many scholars explain sex businesses with economic dimensions and its expansion after 1960s, Wilson (2004) has studied interplay between market exchange and other sorts of exchange related to the sex trade in Thailand. She explains how interacting economies influence gender and sexual identities. She further argues that commercial sex work in Thailand causes principal features of place of sexuality and gender in Thailand's capitalist market economy growth. Sexual relation and sexual practice between sex tourists and local sex service providers is complex. It cannot be clearly identified whether

sex workers advance tourism growth, or if tourism increases numbers of sex workers in Thailand. More profound analysis on these relations needs to be further studied.

Most Kathoey sex workers in Europe began their sex work career path in Thailand or its neighboring countries (especially in Singapore). While in Thailand, many of them met their European partners who brought them to live together in Europe. Numbers of my respondents are currently working in sex tourism area in Europe such as in red light district, Thai bars or nightclubs in Europe, targeting both local and tourist customers. Hence, complex relations between sex work, sexuality and tourism literatures will be examined first before we move forward to the analysis of Kathoey prostitution in Europe.

Dorfman (2011) observes and argues that tourism is a phenomenon of social capitalism. Social capitalism is not merely a mechanism for making tourism business an income source, but also for constructing myths about happiness-seeking between wealthy Westerners and the poorer Third world people from developing and colonized countries. In previous studies of prostitution in capitalism, sex work had been perceived as oppression and exploitation. Additionally, sex workers are perceived to be poor and exploited, while the clients are seen as richer and benefit gainers. Such hierarchical-relation perceptions are based on feminist hypothesis which suggest that social capitalism and tourism are sources of male, patriarchal power: men have the power to command and expend women. Feminists see that Western male tourists dominate over poor third world women. This belief overlays sexual oppression paradigm in which sex workers and prostitution is male violence against women. However, a sexual oppression paradigm cannot explain the phenomenon in which sex work exists together with tourism because numerous sex service providers, including many transgender women, do not define themselves as 'prostitutes'. For instance, Padilla (2007) describes local male workers in Dominican Republic who sell sex to tourists from superpower nations (United States and Europe). These sexual service providers, known as 'Sanky Pankys', define themselves differently from homosexual men – or people the locals call 'Bugarrones'. But both groups play masculine sexual roles (as penetrators) and neither describes themselves as gay men. These men provide sexual service to male, female and gay tourists. As well as, Cabezaz's (2009) study that indicated Dominican and Cuban women who offer sex service to tourists do not term themselves as

prostitutes, but rather 'escorts' who take care of, assist, entertain and accompany tourists. They do not think tourists exploit them. Thus, feminism theory cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of sex and lustful moods as they appear within the tourism industry (Duangwises, 2014a). My research results are similar to Cabezaz's, as many Kathoey sex worker participants do not feel that they are oppressed and exploited by the western customers. They offer sexual pleasure in various forms, such as companionship, friendship, tour guiding, general assistance, partnership, and so on. Tourists treat them in a different manner as well, making them feel special instead of oppressed.

A vivid night life in Thailand where locals meet Western tourists, the motivation and atmosphere influence many Kathoey's decision to participate in sex work. Many Kathoey's who provide sex service to tourists are not prostitutes working in bars or brothels. They work and contact with tourists through activities such as tour guiding, souvenir selling, beach massage, serving/selling food and drinks and other scenarios. Once a relationship with Western tourists is built, they are 'active' to decide if they want to have sexual relations with the tourists. Often, money they receive from tourists in many cases is not from a market-exchange sex purchase but rather is understood as a 'reward' that derives from content feelings Western tourists and local Kathoey have for each other. Agnes' (2008) research illustrated the idea that local women who accept money from tourists reflect the practice as an opportunity to build better lives in different ways. This reciprocate-relation structure is more subtle than economic theories lead one to imagine.

The analysis of power-relations appears frequently in discussions of sexual tourism, Dorfman (2011) argues that the 'self' of local people is constructed via white people's imagination. The bodies of locals become desired sexual attractions and something to be fondled by white people. The brown bodies of people from Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific islands have lustful images and symbolize exotic 'nature' as well as virginity, purity and innocence. This kind of imagination supports Western tourists to value locals as sexual symbols. For instance, during the Vietnam War, American soldiers (GI) invaded and travelled to Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, where they objectified local women and sex workers as sexual symbols. The local women are an erotic fantasy that can fulfill American soldiers' sexual dreams. As well as, in Jamaican and Dominican societies,

the brown skinned male (often youth) on the beach is sexually desired by white Western women and gay men (Duangwises, 2014a).

Sex between the locals and Western tourists is a phenomenon of sexual fantasy in which white people see locals' bodies as racialized lustful bodies. Kempadoo (2004) argues that since the colonialisation period, sexual fantasy has been the power which implements white people's attempt to construct and provide 'otherness' to the locals. Such power has not disappeared, but rather transformed into tourism culture. Inequality symbol is not slavery oppression, but the difference of skin color on sexual bodies between satiated white people and local pleasure servers. The difference of sexual bodies meets satisfaction of both sides; white tourists and locals mutually apply skin color difference to accomplish personal delight. The power that nourishes sexual fantasy in tourism culture is the power that transforms itself into a happiness maker. This practice is different from the belief of feminists and legal institutions that disgrace sex tourism as a cause of human trafficking, exploitation and sexual violence (Kempadoo 2009, cited in Duangwises 2014a). Sex in tourism is regularly either for plain money exchange, meaning sex with those who define themselves as sex workers and see prostitution as an occupation. But sex in tourism is frequently strategic; it is sex that allows local people to access opportunities, resources, friendships, romantic relationships and diverse kinds of happiness (Duangwises, 2014a; Cablesaz, 2009). So, as to satisfy Western tourists' fantasy and hospitality, this particular sex is termed as 'tactical sex' (Cablesaz, 2009). Therefore, the attempt to portray sex tourism as a social and moral issue – as violence and exploitation, or as sexual harassment – itself stigmatizes already socially marginalized people. The stigma discourse in prostitution is often reproduced by conservative academics and politicians who are strict on 'moral' heterosexuality. For them sex is dirty and disordered, the social recognition of sex tourism's ugliness was not caused by unfortunate locals who use sex to improve their lives. But it is from conservative authorities' knowledge-power that value sex under 'tradition' and law (Kempadoo, 2009). The nonconformist or outlaw sex, in this case transgender sex work, is thus, labeled as different levels of social problem.

When mentioning Kathoey sex work, the vibrant Thai city 'Pattaya' cannot be avoided. Pattaya has been known to Western visitors as a famous sex tourism paradise in Thailand. This jubilant beach town is a massive Thai and transnational

sex industry and it attracts more than 3,000 transgender women and Kathoey to work and find better life opportunities here. More than 80 percent of Pattaya's Kathoey population is Thai: most of the remainder are so-called 'ladyboys' from Laos and Cambodia (interview with Sisters Foundation, Pattaya, 16 February, 2015).

Most of the Kathoey sex worker respondents started their prostitution career in Pattaya and then found the route and access to live and work in Europe. They are between nineteen and fifty-three years old and from Thai lower- to middle-class background, including many from the Northeastern (Isan) area, which is the poorest among all regions in Thailand. All respondents said they realized their sexuality and urge to transform to become a woman since their very early years, which varies from two to fourteen years old of age. They realized they only enjoyed 'feminine playing' in their childhood (dolls, cooking, wearing female clothes and more), and started the sexual transition (wearing skirts, female's clothes and make-up) in their teenage years or earlier. Like non-prostitute respondents, they believe that their transgenderism and transsexuality is caused by a combination of biology and karma (in Buddhist belief). Most suffered from a painful childhood, especially those from older generations, including serious rejection from family, friends and society. They traumatically experienced physical and verbal abuse from Thai social institutions: family, school, university, social, employment, everyday life and every kind of personal relationships because their 'bodies, sexualities and genders were believed to be deviant'. A minority of their parents truly accept their 'choice' of living as transgenders.

I find it interesting that about half (eleven) of the sex worker respondents finished high school education and five respondents from this half graduated from university level, including three from top-five universities in Thailand. This is dissimilar from the situation of Thai women prostitutes in Europe, few of whom have more than a basic education (elementary school to junior high school) and most of whom have low efficiency in literacy in either Thai or European languages. The reason is that regardless of education level, transgender people experience huge employment discrimination in Thailand.¹⁰ Two-thirds (fourteen out of twenty-one) of the transgender sex worker respondents worked in Thailand, mostly Pattaya and

¹⁰ More details on employment discrimination are provided in *4.3.1 Employment Discrimination*

some in Phuket, before they migrated to Europe, where they entered the sex work industry and entertainment business as cabaret show girls, dancers, drag queens and waitresses. The remaining seven started in Europe's red light districts, brothels, internet and chat applications with the assistance of family members and other personal connections. All 21 had relationships or at least affairs/flings with European men when they were in Thailand. Thus, they learned about Europeans' world: lifestyle, attitudes, standard and so on. All of them romanticized Europe and European men as precious sexual desires. As one of my respondent explained, 'Farang men are smart, clean, gentle and warm. They look so pretty, just like dolls...blond hairs and blue eyes are such a turn-on'. European men became a life goal, the kind of man who could fulfill all their dreams to have more luxurious life, to be able to escape from negative social and political realities in Thailand. Such a man would enable them to go to Europe and live the dream. Finding such a '*farang* partner' became a life goal, and success meant that life's problems would be solved: no more poverty, no more social stress and sorrow for being trans-women living in Thailand, and the way to have 'better' and 'normal' lives. All of twenty-one of them had this thought before moving to Europe; their perceptions of life in Europe evolved after settled in Europe revealed in *chapter five and chapter six*. For them, to be able to find European or American partners, they had to move to work in Pattaya, Bangkok or Phuket, where Western tourists go during their vacation. Many respondents explained that for Kathoey, going to nightclubs or bars in Thai touristy areas is one of the best methods for finding a Western partner, and lots of them succeeded by doing so.

In most cases (sixteen out of twenty one), their sex work career path in Europe started after their European partners brought them to Europe to live together through spousal or partnership visa, which led many eventually to gain European citizenship. Only one respondent came to Europe through Kathoey smuggling agency (Thailand to the UK); her comprehensive narrative will be presented just below in *Nok's story*. Some gained their visas through fraud marriage with fellow Kathoey (same-sex marriage sometimes), with other Thais already resident in Europe, or with Europeans. Social capital and kinship are very helpful for Kathoey sex workers to settle in Europe. Thai social connections in Europe also assist access the sex work industry throughout Europe. They create their own sub-culture best described as a

‘sisterhood’. Seniority is important within the Kathoey’s sisterhood, they support each other as family members and tend to follow the traditional Thai familial hierarchy. Often the younger Kathoey call the older ones *khun-mae* (English translation: mother). They exchange knowledge of feminine beauty, fashion and body transition, survival strategies in Europe, career advice, give each other personal life morale support, as well as, introducing European men to each other. Thai Kathoey sex workers in Europe always gather together to empower their community and help each other out.

7.5. Prostitution as a Reflection of Social Consumerism

Duangwises (2014a) proposes that the Thai context makes visible a moral contradiction in the prostitution phenomenon, or in the process of how prostitutes use sex to create economic and social opportunities under capitalism and globalization. On one hand, we can see the flame of tourism in which sex is the important mechanism of consumption. On the other hand, we can see state policies formed to limit, control or stop prostitution under some ‘myth’ of women trafficking. Such a contradiction is driven by an ‘invisible power’ that constructs strict regulations for sex and prostitution. Such power expands together with transnational consumerism and neoliberal ideologies, including human rights, and feminism, which spread via the policies of governments and international organizations. This power simultaneously drives both capitalism/consumerism and conservative sexual morality.

Solomon (2005) observes that poor Mexican prostitutes choose sex work because it helps them economically. He interprets them as victims of both Mexican and American policies and social constructions. Many prostitutes who work near the US–Mexican border are stigmatized as sexually immoral outlaw immigrants. Transgender sex workers experience the worst disparagement and prejudice. If they are arrested, the police often subject them to more psychic abuse, sexism and racism. The situation in Thailand is the same; authority applies different standards when it comes to female sex workers and transgender sex workers. Kathoey sex worker are subjected to much more prejudice, stigma and inhumane treatment. Solomon (2005) explains that the situation reflects the power to emphasize prostitutes as disorder; as they are outside of the heterosexual and monogamy norms. The arrest of immigrant

sex workers is a ‘practice’ of power use that is largely approved of by the societies where it happens.

The studies of Andrijasevic (2003), Agnes (2008) and Weitzer (2010) show that foreign immigrants who work as prostitutes for white clients in the United States and Europe are widely viewed as ‘freaks’ without rights who at best are victims of human exploitation and compulsion. The concepts of foreign female trafficking and forced prostitution in developed countries have become myths that reinforce a human rights ideology to be powerful and later used to manipulate national policies in a direction that reinforces both the propriety and power of traditional heterosexual norms. The ‘victimization discourse’ of sex work is difficult to reconstruct. Such a discourse condemns ‘sex’, even though sex is a mere social practice. The realities behind poor lives of sex workers, such as social inequality, education, occupations, and social welfare, are often ignored by some human rights activists, lawyers, and social workers (Duangwises, 2014a). These realities cannot be separated from prostitution; they also carry important implications regarding an individual’s decision to engage sex work and otherwise utilize sex as means to social and economic ends (Sagar 2009). Plus, it is significant to comprehend the disparity in third world consumerism/capitalism from which Western countries have benefited for a long time (Duangwises, 2014a).

7.6. Prostitution: Sexual Desire and Rationalism

Sensuality is invisible, but can be comprehended by body expression; and ‘bodies’ are essential. The question is how human sexual desire was objectified (such as sexual organs)? (Duangwises, 2014a). Foucault’s (1986) perception can yield valuable insights: he criticizes scientific knowledge as a ‘morality’ through which human sexual desire, lust, and sex are judged. He argues that scientific knowledge in the 19th century turns sex into a moral issue by categorizing sexual desire into two forms: the ‘natural’ and ‘correct’ sexual desire (heterosexual), and the unnatural ones (other kinds of sex that diverge from the male-female norm). Additionally, in the correct natural sex, the monogamous reproduction/sex comes to be presented as the most valuable one. The process by which science controls morality is underscored by knowledge of biology and sexual deceases. Both kinds of knowledge reordered and reorganized sexual behavior and sexual desire.

Besides constructing morality to sex, science also forms judgements regarding 'the truth' of human sexual behavior. Biological and medical knowledge has been used to suggest that sexual identity is derived from sexual feeling. It is claimed that a person's sexual orientation and sexual desire conforms to that individual's sexual identity. For instance, men who are attracted to and desired by women have the identity of 'heterosexual', which is claimed to be a normal identity; men who are attracted to and desired by other men are 'homosexual', which is claimed an abnormal identity. Constructing sexual desire as a 'self' or 'identity' of individual has spread out under different social mechanisms such as family institute construction, marriage, the formation of femininity/masculinity according to ones' biological sex, the distinction of male/female gender roles, and so on. The relevance of these mechanisms is due to the way power is deployed. Scientific knowledge about sex, therefore, intervenes and unconsciously influences individual behavior and practice (Duangwises, 2014a). Sexual desire in scientific society is the new discipline, which motivates individuals to search and assure their own sexual desires. Such discipline is the power crystalized in human bodies. Bodies and natural figures are not organic matter. But it is an object decorated with power. Power is well-absorbed and hidden in our bodies, and we do not realize it is the power that oppresses us. Because it shapes happiness, delight, and satisfaction, and makes us search for our sexual self-identity and sexual desire, to assure ourselves of what we are. This power constructs our sense of sexual desire and sexual happiness. So we do not realize that we are dominated by power, we tend to think that we have freedom to express who we are and our 'real selves'. We believe that expressing our sexual desire is our selves' truth (Duangwises, 2014a).

Foucault (1986) outlined the subtlety and complexities of intervention of scientific of power and knowledge in human's body experiences. In the studies of sexology, sexual psychology, reproduction biology, and ideology of femininity/masculinity, along with, cosmetic and health industry, pornography and sexual business, are all the mechanism that bring scientific knowledge to our bodies. In this context, sex work in modern society is also a mechanism that passes on scientific knowledge and power. Such power makes us content as we can see that people search for sexual pleasure from different kinds of sex services. In Duangwises (2014a) assessment, prostitutes and prostitution in social capitalism can be described

as an ‘instrument’ that applies scientific power to implant values within human bodies. Sex workers are the discipline of rationalism which assists us to see sexual self/identity through sexual desire and the methods we use to fulfill our lusts. In this sense, exchanging money for sex is neither a mere economic exchange activity, nor a challenge towards sexual morality norms (to have outlaw sex or sexual deviancy). But it is an organization of sexual desire; to categorize and substantialize it. So that individuals can gain sexual realization; Who are they? What do they want? What kind of happiness do they desire for? Hence, to fulfill sexual desire through prostitution is a ‘practices of sexual discipline’ which preaches humans to build a sexual relation under the logic of ‘self’ that needs assurance and response. Female prostitutes assure the selves of heterosexual men. Male prostitutes assure the selves of gays/homosexuals. Transgender prostitutes assure the selves of transgender admirers (depends on how they describe themselves). The relation clients have with prostitutes, regardless of their sexualities, emphasizes the discipline of sexual self or gender identity. Accordingly, sex workers are the evidence of implantation of scientific sexuality (or rationalism).

In the next section, I narrate the noteworthy stories of some my respondents in order to provide more insightful data about the lives of Kathoey sex workers in Europe. I have chosen narratives of three Kathoey respondents. These narratives are aimed to fill the gap and lack of information in transgender prostitution study.

7.7. Jinda’s Story

Forty-two year-old Jinda has lived in Europe for more than twenty years. Within the industry, she is now a well-known transgender sex worker in Amsterdams red light district. Similar to many Kathoeyes in Thailand, Jinda had a traumatic childhood; she comes from the lowest class background in rural Srisaket province in the northeastern part of Thailand. She never met her biological father and, because of poverty, her mother gave her away to her uncle. When she was young, Jinda did not understand why her stepfather (her uncle) was so cruel to her; physically and verbally abusive action was a typical family practice, as she explained: ‘I was raised by a beast’. Later in life, she understood that her stepfather treated her that way because he tried to ‘cure’ her cross-gender such as by forcing her to act like a boy

and if she rejected to do, he would hit and yell at her. Her childhood was desolated and filled with suffering, and she had nobody to lean on.

Since her very early memory, Jinda realized she was born to be a feminine person. When she was eight years old, Jinda's family ordained her into Buddhist monkhood with the hope to remedy her transsexuality; however, she ended up gathering with gay and Kathoey monk fellows in the temple and spent time checking out men who came to the belfry. When she was ten years old, she lived completely as a girl. During her lower secondary school years (starting in grade seven), older Kathoey taught Jinda learned how to be a transgender woman; she started to wear thick make-up, manicure, and to have 'screaming' feminine behavior (hyper-femininity) so as to find a 'place to stand' in the society – to create her liberal transgender identity. When she was a teenager, globalization had not penetrated her province. The identity of transgenderism was somehow ambiguous for a rural Kathoey like Jinda. She thought she was somewhat a woman, but then reality hit her when she was rejected by a Thai boyfriend who condemned her for not having real feminine sexual organs and body.

Many of her aunts and others from her village migrated from the Isaan region to work in Pattaya. Jinda travelled to Hamburg for the first time when she was seventeen years old, to visit an aunt who had worked in Pataya as a sex worker and later married a German man. This trip motivated her European dream; the luxurious lifestyle, 'civilization' and desirable white men. After the trip, she moved to Pattaya city to pursue her dreams. Back then, the 'ladyboy' showgirl business was booming in Pattaya city and Phuket town. Jinda got to know so many senior Kathoeyes who worked as drag queens at Alcazar Cabaret Pattaya. They were Jinda's role models, so she auditioned to be a showgirl at Tiffany's Show, but was rejected. By seeing lots of Western sex tourist in Pattaya, Jinda developed her racialized sexual desire for white men. As with other research respondents, Jinda described Western men as people with 'beautiful fair skin color, handsome and great bodies – unlike Asians'. Jinda later worked as a dancer at Simon Cabaret Show and as a casual sex worker in Pattaya for a while, and then her aunt in Germany persuaded her to move to Europe.

In order to migrate to Germany, Jinda paid 15,000 deutschmarks to marriage agency. In Germany, she stayed with her aunt before travelling to the Netherlands,

where she found a Dutch partner. During her first two months in Amsterdam, Jinda stayed with her aunt's friend and worked part-time in the red light district as a sex worker. She earned lots of money from sex work, saving all of it for the sex-reassignment surgery she underwent in Thailand a few months later. Jinda lived with a Dutch partner for more than ten years, during which she finished her Dutch Secondary Vocational Education (MBO) study and worked as a Thai restaurant manager, a part-time sex worker, and for a while owned a Thai restaurant in Amsterdam.

From her lifetime experience as a transgender sex worker in Amsterdam, Jinda observed that there are four generations of Thai migration to Europe. The first generation is mostly groups of Thai women who came to Europe with their Western partners through spousal visa; many people from this generation met their partner in Pattaya, Phuket and other sex tourism areas throughout Thailand. The second generation consists of the family and friends of these first Thai women, notably children from their former husband in Thailand, relatives, parents and neighbors through family reunification visa. This generation settles their lives and work mostly in Thai restaurants in Europe. The third generation arrived after capitalism and internet boom in Thailand: Europeans met Thai partners through tourism and the internet. And the fourth generation, which largely overlaps with the third generation, includes mostly Thai students who come to study in Europe and settle down when they find jobs or European partners (sometimes via the internet).

For Kathoey in Europe, the generational paths are slightly different. Jinda has noticed that Kathoey generally migrated to work in Thai restaurants, to reunify with their family in Europe, to work in entertainment industry (transgender showgirl, cabaret and so on), to study and find European partners, and to work as transgender sex workers in Europe. Additionally, many Kathoey come to Europe through tourist visa and overstay to work illegally in Amsterdam's red light district.

Working in Amsterdam's red light district is pleasurable for Jinda. She loves her job and enjoys having sex with clients. She does not see herself as a victim of human exploitation or sexual inequality; she also explained that she is in control of possible violence from customers as her 'office' has a strict security system. She is also 'active' in choosing her preferred customers and she rejects customers who she

does not feel like servicing, due to their manners, age range (clients shall be between 18–55), appearance, or a rate offer that is too low. She is happy with her job and would encourage people who are interested to join the industry.

Jinda reveals that after she became single, she sometimes dated customers in real life. Many times, this led to a serious relationship. Jinda has undergone sex reassignment; she is a transsexual. So she gets the ‘female rate’, which is two hundred euro per hour, or fifty euro for fifteen minutes; Jinda reports that ‘ladyboy’ sex workers recently started to earn more than the female rate. Customers who choose to pay for fifteen to twenty minutes can only receive sex service (oral and standard intercourse) but are not allowed to touch her or to do more activities. Jinda works from seven p.m. to five a.m., and she pays fifty euro per night for her office rental. She earns from 2,000 to 7,000 euro a month; this income occasionally rises to as much as 15,000 euro per month if it includes the ‘reward’ she receives from being an escort. It is a known fact among people involved in the sex worker industry in red light districts that Asian workers have better reputation and ‘sell better’. Many transgender sex workers moved to Holland because Dutch men invited them, but once these initial relationships ended, they choose to do sex work to make a living elsewhere in Europe. And some Kathoey sex workers find new partners through their work.

In 2000, Dutch authorities reformed the prostitution system with the aim to diminish exploited sex work structured by pimps and madams. But since then, self-employed sex workers started to be more tactical by earning so-called ‘black money’. Generally, the red light rooms’ owners provide a paper form for sex workers to report how much they earn each night. Then they hand in the forms to accountants, who submit the document and receipts from sex workers to the government every three months. Jinda and her friends said that red light district sex workers typically do not register the exact amount to the system, so they do not have to pay all the taxes.

Alcohol, cocaine, ecstasy, methamphetamine and other kinds of drugs are often provided in Jinda and her colleagues’ red light district offices. Clients who pay more than five-hundred euro will get drugs for free, but they have to pay enough to get Jinda to use drugs with them. This rate is negotiable; there is no fixed-price. Her

clients include men from different backgrounds and social statuses: wealthy businessmen, tourists, teenagers, doctors, labor workers and so on. Frequently, her clients paid her for a long chat. For example, few days before our interview, a wealthy Dutch man spent one-thousand-five-hundred euro with her; they cuddled and had eight hours of conversation about his family life, travelling, sex and career issues. She mentioned that this is not uncommon, sex workers sometimes discuss their work and occasionally they play the role of a shrink for lonely and troubled men. Jinda also revealed that some of her customers are famous international football players and actors. Jinda also provides dildos and other sex toys to suit her customers' fantasy. Her customers have diverse fetishes, for instance, she was asked to cross-dress as a man for intercourse, asked to do a threesome, asked to dance, and more. Some customers asked her to wear make-up and hair in particular ways for them, some had trans' feet fetish, some asked her to massage their feet, some came in to take photos of her teeth and feet, and some just paid her to watch him having sex with his wife. Usually, Jinda does not let her customers touch her too much, but if they desire so, they have to pay more than one hundred euro.

Jinda is ecstatic about her career and her life, despite her behavior and career that the mainstream society perceives as socially deviant. She thinks she gains benefit and fulfills life experiences from working as a sex worker. For her, the disadvantages of sex work focus more on health, such as sleeping too late, developing blemishes from the spotlight ever focused on her body and face, and enduring the torture of wearing a bikini and high heels in winter. Also, on a sentimental level, she has become heartless in the sense that she cannot love any man anymore because she gets overwhelming love and warmth from many male customers who treat her as if she is a princess. Jinda is confident that she has no dignity issues; sex work is a career for her and she does it at her best ability. Sex work gives her self-confidence when she realizes that she is a beauty that men reward her with so much money. Moreover, large amounts of money come easily and support her better life. She saves up money to pay personal and family debts, and hopes to move back to Thailand at some point when she has much enough money to have a luxurious retired life. She winds up the interview with this quote;

Some nights I earn more than one-thousand euro. To have money is to be able to survive, so for me money is definitely more important than love. In the

past, I romanticized love, warmth and a prince charming to come along. But no...it is only money that can establish the life you want. I would not do other jobs because it is more tiring and pays less. I am happy with what I do; I know exactly what I am doing. Nowadays I can save at least 1.5 million baht. My family does not know what I do; I told them I do some business in Holland. Money is the important reason why I do this job, but it is not the only thing. When I work, I feel pretty and needed. And that is what keeps me happy. Next year, I plan to move to China with my lover who I met during work in the red light district.

7.8. Nok's Story

Through my fieldwork in Pattaya, an advocate for transgender rights connected me with Nok – a twenty-three year-old Thai transgender sex worker living in London. Nok comes from Angthong province in central Thailand. Unlike other respondents, Nok came to Europe through a transnational transgender sex worker agency based in Pattaya.

Nok believes that she was born to be a woman and realizes since she was young that she is a feminine person. Nok's family was poor. Her father's 12,000 baht (approximately 300 euro) per month as a labor worker was the sole support for five family members. He got sick when Nok was in high school. So when she graduated from high school, she moved to Bangkok and worked as a waitress in a pub and restaurant to lighten the load of family's burden, while studying for her bachelor degree at the same time. Later Nok quit school to work full-time because she did not have enough money to survive in Bangkok. During her two and a half years in Bangkok, she earned 10,000 baht (approximately 280 euro) per month. The combination of a low life standard and the stress caused by her family's debt led to Nok's decision to move to Pattaya, where she knew nobody. She chose to go to Pattaya because of its reputation as a 'Kathoey-town' where Kathoey can make money. She was introduced to an NGO for transgenders, where she ended up working as a clerk for six months and stayed at the staff's accommodation for free. Through her work with the NGO, Nok developed her connections and knowledge about the Kathoey transnational sex work industry. She started her prostitution career in Singapore after her Kathoey friend introduced a new term: 'contract work'.

As a Thai citizen, Nok did not need a visa to visit Singapore. She stayed thirty days doing sex work and collected almost 100,000 baht (approximately 2,200 euro). She lied to her parents that she went there to work in a restaurant, and she sent all the money earned from sex work in Singapore to them. Nok was a street prostitute on Geylang road, under the supervision of a madam or, in Thai, *mae-tact*: แม่ตัก (English translation: contract mama). Nok's contact mama was a Thai lady who had a Singaporean husband. The nature of 'contract work' was that the contract mama deducted 1,200 Singapore dollars (approximately 790 euro) from each sex worker for the first week. And after the first week, each sex worker had to pay 75 Singapore dollars (approximately fifty euro) per day to the madam. For this, the madam provided a petite room that packed five to six Kathoey sex workers inside. Nok earned 50 Singapore dollars (approximately 38 euro) for each service on Geylang road. Her experience in Singapore taught her that sex work makes a better living, but when she saw aged Kathoey sex workers in Pattaya, she told herself that is not the life she wants. Thus, Nok researched Kathoey sex workers in Pattaya who worked in Germany, Bahrain and other countries. Later, she travelled to the United Kingdom.

Nok was in touch with the Kathoey trafficking agency through a friend who gave her the phone number of a 'recruiter.' The recruiter and most of the people in this agency are older Kathoey who worked as sex workers in Europe before changing careers. The agency assisted and guided her with the visa application process; put money in her bank account and then apply for tourist visa to Morocco. Nok paid only 5,000 baht (approximately 120 euro) for the visa application and the agency took care of all other arrangements such as flight tickets, transfer and accommodation.

Nok was smuggled through the UK with complicated plan. The agency sent one Thai staff to fly with her with a flight to Morocco via Ukraine international airlines. That flight had lots of connections: Bangkok → Kiev → London → Morocco. Of course, Nok never intended to travel all the way to Morocco. In London immigration, people who wait for flight transit receive transit visa stamp so that they can visit London for one day, before the next flight departs. And through this process, she was smuggled to the UK by the agency's staff. I have double-checked this fact with other Thai Kathoeyes and a Kathoey madam in London, and they all confirmed that this is a common way to smuggle someone from Thailand to the UK.

She left the airport with the smuggling staff, who sent her off to a hotel where a British man who is part of the smuggling team picked her up. The British man paid Thai staff about 12,000 GBP as a reward for recruiting one Kathoey sex worker to the UK. Nok later arrived to an apartment in London where she met a madam. The madam is a Kathoey who was a sex worker before. She gave Nok 2,000 GBP to decorate her 'office room', to buy make-up and all personal belongings possibly needed. Later, Nok was told that she had a debt of 35,000 GBP. She felt confused about it but she had no choice but keep working to pay the debt and to create the new life she dreamt of. Madam and her team took sexy photographs of Nok and posted them on Asian transgender escort websites such as <http://yummyescorts.co.uk>, <http://www.londontopmodelescorts.co.uk/> and <http://www.naughtyshemales.co.uk/>. Nok explained that these websites are run by the team of Thai people living in the UK or Europe. Customers of Thai and Asian transgender sex workers in the UK check these websites, and then they call the number given. Her madam is the person who talks to client on the phone and makes an appointment for them to meet the sex workers. The madam provides the worker's address to the client. Customers then visit Nok apartment and before they leave, they have to pay money directly to her. The madam will collect money from Nok later. Nok usually earns 150 GBP, she has to pay the website 50 GBP for using their service for every customer, and to the madam 100 for receiving each customer to pay her 35,000 GBP debts. Nok narrated that every day there will be a Thai older lady coming to sell Thai food at her apartment, and this lady goes to the apartments of every Kathoey who works for her madam. Nok and her colleagues generally earned from 6,000–20,000 GBP a month, depending on luck and opportunity. Many of her colleagues are addicted to gambling.

Nok expected to work with the madam for a year to pay all debts, but in reality she could not because she got sick and madam sometimes cheated her by overcharging. She worked there for about four months and one day British police broke into her apartment after tracking the Thai transgender sex work industry from websites. She and other sex workers who were caught implicated the madam's business. This madam, who lived in the UK as an undocumented immigrant, ran away and disappeared. And that was the last time Nok heard about her – and her debt. The police gave Nok a letter from national crime agency, which filed her case

as a victim of human trafficking. They provided her UK resident permit, because she refused to be sent back to Thailand, lying to the police that if she goes back to Thailand she will risk being killed by the human trafficking agency. Nok tricked the authority and fought to be in the UK because she thinks the country gives her the dream life; to be able to send remittances home, to clear family debts, and to find a rich Western partner. Nok is a 'lucky case' in the human smuggling story. Nowadays, Nok has a boyfriend who was her client. He asked her to stop working as an escort and sends 1,000 GBP to her family in Thailand every month. Her family bought a new car from this money. Although, she is not happy with his dominant and possessive behavior, she plans to be with him for a while.

Nok's biggest dream is to go back to school. She was a good student but did not have an equal opportunity. For now, she sends money to her parents in Ang Thong so they can build a house. She says that Thai people in her neighborhood see her as a successful model; they think that she is in the UK working in Thai restaurant and has found a rich husband. Nok looks very much like a biological woman; it would be hard for even Thais to tell if she is a Kathoey or not. Among the Kathoey group, it is a common knowledge that Westerners, unlike Thais, cannot really differentiate Kathoeyes and biological women. That is why many 'beautiful' Thai transgender women living in Europe believe they experience less social discrimination in Europe in comparison with Thailand, although the less feminine or less 'beautiful' Kathoeyes indicated they experience more discrimination in Europe as demonstrated in the previous chapters. Nok herself believes she experiences less trans-prejudice and discrimination in the UK – because nobody knows she is a transgender.

7.9. The lives of Jenny/John

Jenny or John is a 32-year-old who defines herself as a transgender woman; she has lived in Ghent, Belgium for the past twelve years and holds Belgian citizenship. Jenny has two visible 'identities'; during the day, she refers herself as John. John looks like a male person having a homosexual relationship with a long-term Dutch male partner. Then during night time, she refers herself as Jenny. Jenny wears make-up and a wig and dresses up like a woman to enjoy her sexual freedom and life as a trans-woman. They have known each other for more than twelve years

and he supports her cross-dressing practices, but John is the one he loves. As he explained, 'Jenny has a dream to become a woman, but at the same time she is a gay guy who has a gay boyfriend.' For the Western standard, Jenny would be described as a transvestite or a cross-dresser, but her identities are more complex than that of a European social construction.

Jenny thinks that her transgenderism has a biological cause, because she has known since about age five that she is a woman. Jenny came from a middle-class family in Chumphon, a province in Southern part of Thailand. She described her family background as warm and loving. Her family accepted her feminine behavior since she was a little boy. Jenny did not graduate high school because she knew studying was not her thing in life. She did various kinds of work in Thailand before migrating: farming, serving food, factory work, store staff, and sex work. After being ordained as a Buddhist monk (her parents, like many other Thai parents, wish their sons to become monks at some point of life), John moved to work on Koh Samui and Koh Tao; famous tourist islands in the Southern part of Thailand. She first worked in Koh Tao as a 'waiter', earning about 180 euro a month, but her aim there was predominantly to practice English speaking with Western customers. John later moved to Koh Samui to serve food at a cabaret show club. The club is managed by Thai Kathoey and all the shows are performed by either gay or Kathoey performers. All staff members were trans-women or gay. After John's working hours, she then usually went out for after party with customers who visited the club. Often she had sex with these customers; some paid money as a 'reward' of satisfaction, and some became her boyfriends. In Thailand, she never cross-dressed as a woman; she looked like a typical male person who had a boyfriend. But in her mind, she always knew she is a woman or Kathoey who lived a homosexual life.

Jenny met her Dutch partner in this club while he was on a holiday. He is a Dutch man who lives in Belgium. They dated for one week and then he left Thailand. They kept having contact and, two months later, John went to Belgium under a tourist visa to visit him for three months. Then she went back to Thailand and applied for a partnership visa using her male identity. After she returned to Belgium, she started to dress up like a woman because she realized that it is the way to express her real self and to seek happiness. However, she does not want to live fully like a transgender person because she wants to have a 'normal' life and to be able to have a

job in Europe. Jenny figures her life will be very difficult in Ghent if she walks out in a day time looking like a 'tranny'. Plus, she loves her boyfriend, who rather prefers to have a homosexual relationship (male and male), than a heterosexual relationship (transgender female and male) with her. However, they agree to have an open relationship in which she can cross-dress, as well as, have heterosexual relationships with other men. Jenny and John have wholly differentiated identities; she even has two facebook accounts. One is for Jenny and Jenny's feminine life, and the other is for John and John's gay life. It would be difficult for strangers to realize that Jenny and John is the same person because cross-dressed Jenny looks utterly different than John.

Jenny is now working full-time in a Thai restaurant in Ghent. She tried to work in Antwerp's red light district, with the help of a friend, but she did not enjoy it so much. Because money does not motivate Jenny to do sex work; it is principally for self-worth, self-fulfillment, self-esteem and personal delight. She deduces that she loves to get attention from male clients; she feels like a valued and beautiful woman when customers pay money to have sex with her. And, similar to many other Kathoey sex worker respondents, most of all, she enjoys having sex with her male customers. Thus, she does sex work casually for personal amusement and 'identity formation'.

On a daily basis, Jenny dresses up femininely when she gets back home after working in a restaurant, to go out with friends in the evening, to go clubbing, to take pictures and post on social media, to video call with men who she met through trans-women dating websites, or to go on a date. Cross-dressing is a prime time of her days. Jenny wishes she can grow her hair long like women but, as illustrated, it would be hard for her to fit into the Belgian heterosocial norm if she lives there as a non-white transgender woman. Additionally, the transition cost is very high. Thus, she dresses up like a man to go work in a Thai restaurant during daytime. Jenny greatly enjoys cross-dressing and living a female life; she has sex with many local men in Ghent. Jenny's favorite hobby is to be on Dutch and Belgian transgender sex-partner-finding websites and phone applications; when she comes home from work, she cross-dresses and activates herself in a video call with different men who are interested in her. They often exchange addresses and meet up to have sex. Many men chatted to offer or negotiate the price to have sex with her; if they offer she accepts

the money. But if they do not and she is satisfied with their appearance she does not charge anything. As she clarifies:

I use these websites and phone applications to find farang (white) sex-partners anyways. Why not charging them? Free sex and money. It feels good, we rural Kathoey get more attention from farang. Thai men don't find us **beautiful** like farang do. They don't even **accept** us. (emphasis added)

From my observation during fieldwork, some days Jenny has sex with up to four local men she met through websites. They usually have sexual video call first and later Jenny gives her address to them. They came to her flat and then leave after a while. Frequently, Jenny does not charge these men, especially if they are younger men – sometimes still in school. It is customarily about fulfilling her racialized sexual desire, enjoying her life, to get attention and to feel important, rather than prostitution practice.

Jenny believes that discrimination towards transgender women in Thailand is much less violent than in Europe because, unlike in Thailand, Europeans are not as familiar with cross-dressers and transgender women. Jenny also expressed that compared to Belgium, Thailand is much more gay-friendly and open-minded when it comes to sexualities. In Ghent, she sometimes gets yelled at on the street; some people scold at her for being a 'shemale' or make fun of her. However, she added that 'beautiful' Asian transgender women would have a better life in Europe because Europeans find it harder to distinguish identities of Asian biological or transgender women. Jenny also explicated the significance of disparate global ideal aesthetics. The least good looking appearance in Thai society's beauty standard – such as people with darker skin, high cheek bones, a flat nose, smaller eyes and so on – are usually considered exotic and good looking by Western standards of beauty. She feels more comfortable living in Europe than in Thailand because Europeans appreciate her beauty more than Thais. Similar to other sex worker participants, Jenny also evaluates from her and her friend's experience that Kathoeyes are profusely more successful in the sex work industry and they are also more expensive than transsexual women who have undergone sex reassignment surgery.

The findings from this chapter add to the existing evidence and data regarding transgender sex work by exploring areas that have previously not been investigated. This chapter has offered specific information about Kathoey sex workers in Europe: their lifestyles and opinions, the victimization myth and Kathoey sex work, Kathoey's agency in sex work, the processes by which they enter transnational sex work industry (from Thailand to Europe), insights from and about men who buy sex from Kathoey sex workers including their sexuality, the dynamics of Thai transgender prostitute smuggling agencies, transgender social networks, life behind the red light districts' windows, and the effects of social consumerism, crypto-colonization and tourism.

From the interview and participant observation, the factors for Kathoey to join sex work industry in Thailand and Europe can be seen to be rooted in institutional, systematic and interpersonal discrimination. As presented in *chapter four* and *chapter five*, Kathoey's experience both legal and social discrimination in Thailand based on their sexual and gender identity. From my research data, the main reasons which motivate Kathoey to enter and continue sex work industry in Europe are: discriminatory hiring practices, Thai state discrimination, and economical reasons (as many of them are the main source of income for their families in Thailand). Moreover, many Kathoey also see European men as objects of desire, which has previously been shown to be rooted in a crypto-colonial cultural ideology and so are drawn to sex work to give them sense of personal-worth, self-esteem, and acceptance as 'beautiful' women.

Sex work does not only advance Kathoey's economical status but it also provides self-esteem as a 'valued women'. Participants' sexuality and self-pride are validated by male customers and society; they feel accepted as beautiful women by male clients who desire them enough to spend money on their companionship and body service. Many participants' Kathoey identities are constructed and reaffirmed through their practices in sex work. Additionally, Kathoey sex workers in Europe earn more than male and female sex workers. Customers find Kathoey's female breasts and male sexual organ more fascinating and many participants forgo the genital sexual operation because they desire to make more money from sex work. Furthermore, participants report that they do not only work for money, but also for sexual and emotional fulfillment through hyper-femininity. The majority of my sex

worker respondents are satisfied with their job. They also indicated that they experience less exploitation and victimization, and exercise more control and power over working conditions, than most Thai female sex workers in Europe.

However, Kathoey sex workers in Thailand and Europe are regarded as beyond deviant: they are 'triple-stigmatized'. In Thailand, Thai state policies tend to ignore transgender sex workers rights, denying these workers access to social welfare and legal protection. Such situations stem from inequality of how sex workers are understood according to heterosexual norms. While in Europe, even though they are protected by more progressive European laws, their vocation, sexuality, and non-white race legitimize the racism, social exclusion and trans-phobia they have experienced while living in Europe.

In the next chapter, I will further explicate through theoretical analysis why myths regarding transgender woman's aesthetic recreates an unending circle of discrimination. It will also discuss how desire for acceptance by Kathoeyes as social deviants motivate and encourage them to reproduce perfect-femininity and how the discourse of acceptance traps them in the binary opposition.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks

The title of this chapter is influenced by the classic anti-colonial and anti-racism work of Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon's book was first published in 1952, but 64 years later I still discover resemblances with lingering colonial mindsets and the acceptance myth among Fanon's black French research respondents and the Thai transgender women in Europe I surveyed between 2013 and 2016. The similarity between my respondents' collective sense of inferiority and common desire for Europe and European men, on the one hand, and the insights flowing from Fanon's social psychoanalysis of black people in Europe, which emphasizes dehumanization and racism within the context of French colonial domination, on the other, is striking. It inspires me to further explore the epistemology that forms the basis of an explanation for why many Thais express their pride in a refined 'Thai-ness' and conceitedly claim that Thailand has never been colonized. Ultimately, I discovered that Thais have been radically influenced by a crypto-colonial cultural ideology (see Herzfeld, 2002). As many of my respondents expressed:

My kind of guys have to be white skinned, have blue eyes and blond hair. I would not have sex with Asians; it is like having sex with your own brothers.
– Jane, London

Thais don't even accept us [Kathoey from rural areas] because we are dark-skinned, so we suit farang tastes better. Asians like white-skinned people. Nobody would look at me in Thailand; probably I'm considered ugly. But here I'm a hottie. European men treat us as if we are real women. Europe is our market. – Pok, Copenhagen

I like farang because they are so good looking: white skin, blue eyes, high nose. I feel embarrassed when I am close to them because I am dark and my dark skin looks unclean. People who have farang boyfriends are lucky because Thai men are players. – Wai, Chumphon

I want to have a farang boyfriend because it feels hi-class and it looks good that you can speak English. People in the countryside admire those who have

farang partners because it means that you are superior and richer. – Wanda, Nakhon Pathom

I will further discuss in this chapter how Kathoeyes developed inferiority-superiority complexes toward Europeans and how European men become their racialized sexual desire objects, through the effect of post-colonialism legacy. In *chapter four*, I have thoroughly explicated the social and legal discrimination issues toward Kathoeyes in Thailand that motivate them to migrate to Europe, as I further demonstrated in *chapter five*. In contrast to participants' fantasies about Europe before migration, *chapter six* has illustrated the unexpected hardship and discrimination that Europe-based Kathoeyes experience on daily basis. To explore further on Kathoeyes' identity and their discriminated selves in Europe, I now apply Fanon's (2008) concepts of Black Skin and White Mask to analyze Europe-based Kathoeyes' oppressed souls. The term 'Queer Bodies' is selected to describe fluidity of Kathoey identities, and 'Unconvincing Beautiful Masks' reflects the influences of essentialist identity within Euro-centric societies. Based on the stigma and transphobic reactions they experience on the street in Europe: Kathoey's feminine aesthetic discourse cannot convince European societies that they are 'normal'.

This chapter analyses the empirical data about Kathoey identity and discrimination within the frame of selected theories discussed in *Theoretical Framework chapter*. The first section, *The Queer Bodies*, discusses the female bodies of Kathoeyes and argue that essentialist concept of the 'natural self' of Kathoey exists within a context of social power, knowledge and socially constructed gender binary. *Unconvincing Beautiful Masks* more intensively explores my research data and evaluates the relevance of theory-driven expectations to the case of Kathoey self-identification processes in Europe. And lastly, *Discourse of Acceptance through the Beauty Myth* illustrates my theory on how Kathoey desire for social acceptance through femininity and aesthetics traps them in gender-binary box and, on the contrary, forms a vicious circle of transgender discrimination and social stigma.

8.1. The Queer Bodies

‘We act as if, that being of a man, or that being of a woman, is actually an internal reality or something that is simply true about us, a fact about us, but actually it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time. So to say gender is performative is to say that nobody really is a gender from the start.’ – Judith Butler (2013)

The ongoing debates in transgenderism area focused on the ‘hidden truth of self’ hypothesis, which claims that feminine individuals in male bodies have been psychologically feminine since their birth. Most of my research participants share this perspective, claiming they are ‘born to be’ or ‘born this way’ when they explain their origin and the reasons they describe themselves as Kathoeyes. They developed their culturally feminine identities after their ‘self-realization’. The inborn explanations are presented by scholars who believe that the ‘self’ of transgender people is more of a natural production than guided social construction. As a result, transgender women are certain in their own femininity and use it as a method to call for human equality (Duangwises, 2014b).

This discussion overlaps with the ‘women in men’s bodies’ identity description as presented in *chapter one*. That discussion focused on how the Kathoey experience changed as a result of age and peer influences that shaped individual constructions of their gender identity. Kathoey understand that they differ from both men and women, and seek out friends who share similar characteristics. They come together to learn about how women express themselves and construct their physical appearance. Senior Kathoeyes serve as role models for more junior ones, who observe and imitate practices of the older generation. Such social learning perpetuates Kathoey sub-culture, which is comprised of specific and identifiable linguistic patterns, attitudes, behavior, body expression and sexual desire.

As Kathoey create their own culture, a culture that is different from the hetero-normativity, mainstream society looks at them in a negative way, seeing them for example as overly outspoken, hyper-feminine, or seductive to men. The negative images that society uses to judge Kathoey, such as creepy, violent, man-crazy, over-acting, mentally ill, goofy or untrustworthy, are usually accompanied by insulting linguistic phrases, including faggot, shemale, second-type women and tootsie. Such

words could be interpreted as jokes, parody or bullying, depending on how they are expressed and how close the speakers are to their specific Kathoey targets. How each Kathoey responds to this verbal abuse also varies: some see the words as acts of intimacy, others told me that they suffer, but handle the pain in the Buddhist way of ‘accepting’ things in life as presented in *chapters four* and *six*. The responses sometimes depend on the background of each self-defined Kathoey group: ‘Kathoey’ (กะเทย), ‘second-type women’ (สาวประเภทสอง) and ‘transsexual women’ (ผู้หญิงข้ามเพศ), as described in the *introduction*.

Women in men’s bodies desire feminine bodies and, as a result, ‘deviant bodies’ (which I prefer to describe as queer bodies¹¹) are produced. Mainstream society perceives Kathoey bodies to be ‘unnatural’ and therefore deviant (Duangwises, 2014b). Several researchers have looked at transgender women’s experiences with sexual transformation via sex change operations. The results indicate that medical technology assists transgender women who wish to transform their bodies into female ones, even though researchers also hypothesized that medical knowledge is a source of the heterosexual mainstream’s power to influence transgender women to rely on female sexual bodies (Dvorsky and Hughes, 2008). Nevertheless, many trans-women are satisfied with their post-operation bodies since they perceive themselves as having a female mind. Costa and Matzner (2007) suggest that ‘second-type women’ (สาวประเภทสอง) in Thai society perceive themselves as feminine because they are sexually attracted to heterosexual men, also known as ‘real men’ or ‘100% men.’ This desire, Kathoey themselves believe, is no different from how ‘real women’ (cisgender women) desire men. Hence, second-type women attempt to transform themselves mentally and physically to women so that ‘real men’ will not reject them. As Roong explained;

I hated my penis. I had transsexual operation because it was the only way to make me become a real woman. Before the operation, it was quite hard to have serious relationship with men. [...] I also wanted to have a sexual relationship like a real woman. The operation gives me new life. It allows me to finally have good relationship with straight men.

¹¹ I choose the word ‘queer’ as a political term. According to queer theory, the term represents fluidity and covers complexity of Thai Kathoey identity.

Information on men who are attracted to transgender women is still lacking, so explanations regarding why such men accept or reject transgender women as partners must be taken as tentative hypotheses rather than robust conclusions. On the other hand, Thai media and academic work have presented a rich collection of information shared by Kathoeyes about their experiences, for better or worse, with men (Totman, 2003; Pravattiyagul, 2014; Chotiwan, 2014). Many informants convey their stories on why men rarely take relationships with Kathoeyes seriously: as transgenders are not biological women, are unable to reproduce children, and are seen as obstructions for men's families. The relationship between men and Kathoeyes is significant to take into the analysis. It highlights the gender and feminine identities that Kathoeyes apply to themselves. This kind of relationship is a 'duplicate' of male or female partners (heterosexual partnership). Thus, partnership between men and transgender women is dissimilar from partnerships between men and biological women, because the bodies of transgender women are constructed. It is a new invention that tries to replicate the female sex. Most men who are in relationships with Kathoeyes realize that transgendered bodies are not 'natural'; they are 'queer.' Men who pursue such relationships do so despite the queer bodies of their partners, not because of them.

Transgender women try to compensate for the perceived shortcomings of their bodies by making themselves look beautiful. In Thailand, one often hears that some Kathoey are more beautiful than real women. 'Ladyboy' beauty competitions like the Miss Tiffany and Miss Alcazar contests have become famous and admired within the Kathoey community. Beauty has become a cultural ideology that Kathoey pursue to maximize their self-value and self-esteem. Even though their bodies are not 'real,' for many Kathoeyes, their 'beauty' bolsters their claim to be superior to 'real women.' Nowadays, numerous Kathoey are educated on how to repair their bodies and faces to be more beautiful than biological women. Kathoey who have gone through repeated rounds of plastic surgery, until they are satisfied with their beauty, finally feel confident with their identity and expose their bodies to society. That is to say, Kathoey femininity comes together with 'beauty.' But the path to ideal beauty is challenging. It costs lots of money and takes a long time. Participants who realize their goal is to be beautiful have taken care of their bodies and health since pre-puberty. They have taken or injected female hormones and taken anti-male hormone

medication for smooth, radiant and feminine skin. These medications are essential for Kathoeyes because they allow them to pursue their dream of transforming their current bodies into more female ones. A leader of the Thai Transgender Alliance told me in 2015 that, in their efforts to become feminine quickly, many Kathoeyes have overdosed on these hormones, which also are associated with negative health effects such as dizziness, vomiting, edema or breast pain. Many of my participants use hormones according to their peers' suggestions, but without a doctor's prescription or oversight. There is a common understanding among second-type women that taking more female hormones will transform their bodies both more closely to their feminine ideal and more quickly. Some of my respondents revealed they buy illegal hormones via the internet or other Kathoey sales agents. These unprescribed hormones come on top of injections – from licensed doctors or sometimes from cheaper, unlicensed 'doctors.' In addition to taking and injecting hormones, many Kathoeyes have undergone several surgical operations, including breast augmentation, rhinoplasty, chondrolaryngoplasty, facial feminization, buttock implant, alarplasty and, ultimately, MtF sex reassignment surgery. Various transgender women save their money for bodies' transformation. After the sex reassignment surgery, they have to be prepared for maintenance costs for the rest of their lives. As Muna explicated;

I have to work hard to earn lots of money to maintain my beauty. Because with money, Kathoey can be as beautiful as they want. Transition costs a lot, but the maintenance cost is much more. Like for now, I have to fix my nose, breasts and chin every few years. And on monthly basis, there are costs for facial skin laser and treatment, hair removal laser, face botox and more. Beauty maintenance for Kathoey is a never-ending expense. Almost half of my income each month is spent on beauty maintenance, but I'm willing to pay because being beautiful is the most important thing in every Kathoey's life. [...] It brings me a good job, relationships, life opportunities and social acceptance.

Since each of them defines happiness of being feminine and beauty differently. However, it is essential to understand conditions that made 'femininity' and 'aesthetic' become power toward Kathoey body. For transgender and transsexual women, this power is not from duress; it is the constructed principle from scientific

knowledge and modern consumer culture, through educational institutions and industries related to mental health, beauty and medicine. Such principles are formed on the basis of structural relations between ‘good’ and ‘bad,’ ‘perfection’ and ‘defective,’ ‘truth’ and ‘falsity,’ and ‘beauty’ and ‘ugliness.’ Such structural relations were transferred onto Kathoey bodies, second-type women and trans-women, and affects their behavior, expression, emotion and identity-consciousness (Duangwises, 2014b). Binary opposition power does not allow ‘in between’ space; fundamentally, there is no grey area, only clear separation between black and white. Thus, Kathoeyes who reach binary opposition will be persuaded to choose one side or the other. Their physical transition from male to female will not stop at some ambiguous in-between point (half male/female). Crossing this gender-binary boundary involves a power process in which transgender women take risk with their bodies (Duangwises, 2014b).

On the basis of his 1998 study (cited in Duangwises, 2014b), Prosser suggests that a MTF sex reassignment operation does not result in a female; rather, it transforms men and women into sexless creatures by destroying natural sexual organs. So, he argues, sex reassignment surgery is the ‘cause’ that convinces society to perceive sex reassignment operation as ‘unnatural.’ The logic of organ destruction is that the operation does not harm or twist the bodies. But reassignment surgery is ‘freakish’ in and itself, in the sense that sex change operations do not remove a body’s abnormalities, nor do they resolve a physical medical condition. Medically speaking, they do nothing except change sexual organs, which disfigures bodies. However, when relating sex change surgery and beauty, Thai Kathoeyes in general perceive it as a mere physical adjustment practice anyone can have.

Sex reassignment surgery is clearly viewed by my participants as an aesthetic plastic surgery or cosmetic surgery. Cosmetic surgery is not highly esteemed in the medical profession, although it once was. Plastic surgery originated from technological developments in the beginning of the 20th century and was first used to make wounded soldiers feel whole again. Later, cosmetic surgery was used to enable bodies to rise to the level of ideological beauty, which was based on images of healthy bodies (Duangwises, 2014b). Even though the surgical methods and processes for sex change operations are similar to other corrective surgeries, the terms aesthetic or cosmetic symbolize unimportance, as if cosmetic surgery only

reaches the surface of the self. Ever since, cosmetic surgery has been widely viewed as something on a surface level. And body structure impairment surgery is more for psychological and mental reasons. The awareness of identity is awareness of the self through skin. The particular skin is the skin that roots deeply in the body. If changing of body-image appears on the skin, sex reassignment surgery can be compared to the release of something through this skin (Davis, 1995).

Duangwises (2014b) concludes that cosmetic surgery undresses bodies. He recounts stories told by transsexual women, who describe their history of sex reassignment surgery as 'going home.' It is a journey both through bodies and through their desire to exist as members of society. In the cases of transsexual women who fail to construct their bodies in a way that reflects their constructed selves, sex reassignment surgery assists in creating what is not self to become desired self. An understanding of the surgery as repairing and constructing 'appropriate' bodies is consistent with a self-understanding shared by many transgender women: that they lived in the 'wrong' bodies before. On the other hand, transsexuals' stories challenged old beliefs regarding cutting human organs, which transgender people perceive as body adjustment. Perfect body-image and new body construction have become elements of a new explanation for the decision to seek sex reassignment, and patient evaluations of the results – such as 'I'm happy,' 'I succeed, finally,' 'I am what I am' or 'new life in perfect female body' – indicate the value of this explanation. Sex reassignment surgery makes transsexuals' bodies look more consistent with their self-image and hence enhances that image. The drive to have new bodies – to have the bodies that conform to one's self-image – motivates them to surrender to medical blades and implements. Cosmetic surgery can be interpreted as medical treatment when it generates memories of the transsexuals' bodies. The operation forms new cognition. This cognition is also visible in decisions by non-transsexual people to seek plastic surgeries such as rhinoplasty (nose job) or breast augmentation. Cosmetic surgery patients are willing to reveal their selves in public after the surgery because this self now inhabits a body that is consistent with the self (Duangwises, 2014b).

Sacks (1991) points out the power of illusion to give happiness to people with disabilities. Artificial organs give a new self to transgenders and people with disabilities. The illusion replaces the missing or destroyed natural organs. For

transsexual people, living with the wrong biological sexual organs, that is, to live with a penis, is to live as a ‘deviant.’ Hence, transsexuals perceive their natural bodies as something they would not like to remember. And the ‘new organ’ is a ‘real self;’ it fulfills their lives. Duangwises (2014b) explains that a transsexual woman’s vagina is a label. As the new organs are implanted on transsexuals’ bodies, they are believed to become part of the ‘self.’ Many transsexual women perceive that their vaginas, which are transformed from penises, signify the importance of body and physical sensations that can be experienced after sex reassignment surgery. Duangwises (2014b) argues that sex reassignment surgery not only transforms Kathoey/second-type women into women, but also engraves binary opposition onto the bodies of Kathoey and second-type women. In other words, the newly constructed bodies of transgender women are evidence that indicates new bodies overlaying old bodies. It implies ‘goodness’ overlaying ‘badness’, and thus reinforces the idea that second-type women are, in some fundamental way, ‘bad.’ Bodies of transgendered women are used as method that assists science and medicine to have power over humans’ bodies (Duangwises, 2014b). However, their new bodies, in which they constructed to fit in with the norm, are perceived as ‘queer bodies’ by the mainstream societies in both Thailand and Europe because Kathoeyes are seen as ‘unnatural’.

8.2. Unconvincing Beautiful Masks

Similar to many developing countries around the world, Thailand has immense poverty and class gaps. Economic inequality among populations from the rural and urban areas creates a dominant social hierarchy. Within this hierarchy, marginalized minorities such as transgender communities each have constructed their own sub-cultural social hierarchy. My data confirms that, within the Kathoey community, Kathoey classify each other on basis of economic status, social status, success in romantic relationships with Western men and, above all, ‘beauty.’ All respondents explained how important beautiful appearance matters to their lives and makes them accepted and ‘normal’ human beings in Thailand:

Beauty is absolutely power. No matter what those feminists tell us, Kathoey like us need to be pretty to be accepted to work and to have a normal life. Do you know how hard Kathoey try to make a living? We try two times more

than normal [cisgender people] to fit into the society. Here [in Thailand], you have to be either a comedian or a beauty queen for Thai society to imagine you as a normal person - Darat, Pattaya

Who is more acceptable and desirable in Thailand: wealthy transgender women, intellectual transgender lecturers or transgender beauty queens? You see, only transgender beauty queens are not seen as abnormalities. - Maliwan, Bangkok

Due to the Thai state's legal discrimination and social prejudices against transgender people, as presented in *chapter four*, Kathoeyes have limited opportunities in the job market and their basic human rights are continuously undermined. Beauty, however, can provide an outlet. Some of those who put a special effort into making themselves beautiful earn money by participating in pageants, becoming actresses, or finding Western men. These Kathoeyes, and those who emulate them, believe that they will gain social acceptance, self-value, and life success by striving for perfect femininity and beauty, and by having a white, Western partner. Wolf argues that beauty is a myth and that feminine beauty ideals are used as political weapons against women's development. She claims that the promotion of behaviors and appearances associated with the beauty myth is a tool society uses to control women (Wolf, 1991). Thai Buddhism urges women to seek virtue through virtuous behavior more than through external appearance. However, contemporary Thailand's aesthetic myth includes beauty of both behavior and, importantly, appearance (Esterik, 2000).

In the process of self-identification as understood by Fanon (2008), even though the essentialist body identity of immigrants in Europe is black and their physical appearance is not much different from blacks in Africa, their 'souls' are European. Similarly, the essentialist body identity of Kathoeyes in Europe might be similar to that of males (no wombs, and some have masculine features and hormones), but their souls are female¹². Even though there may be limits to a

¹² See 3.2 *Essentialism and the Inferiors* for explanations on Jacques Lacan's theory on 'identification' of infants' development at the 'mirror-stage,' and comparison on Kathoey identity formation.

comparison of race with sexuality, both groups interestingly share the same post-colonial cultural ideologies of inferiority and subject of desire, which relates to social class hierarchy, racism and trans-phobia, through white supremacy and immigrants' 'third world' mentality. I apply Lacanian analysis (see Lacan, 2006) to examine cultural ideology of Thai transgender women in Europe, who have the soul of women. As soon as they faced double-stigma of trans-phobia and racism in European's social reality, these women discovered that their transgender essentialist identity, which was framed and pushed by Western hetero-normative interpretations of their essentialist bodies, became a cage that trapped them. Furthermore, Thai transgender women have desires to have white European partners because they imagine that such partnerships will provide self-fulfillment and affirm them as 'real women' who stand higher in the class hierarchy and have potential for greater life achievement. My respondents asserted that European men treat them better than Asian men, giving them a better chance to have 'normal' and 'romantic' hetero-relationships. Real women can get married, have (adopted) children and feel superior in a 'civilized European world.' Then, white European men are complexly developed in response to their 'object of desire' and fetish. In my informants' words:

Kathoey compete with each other for success in career, money, beauty and accomplishment in finding men. If you have a farang partner, you probably have achieved the top Kathoey goal. Especially, if a farang man brings you to live together in Europe or America, other Kathoey will get so jealous of you. It is like a dream life for us – Muk, Chumphon

All my European partners have been much better than Thais. They treat me well, like I'm a princess. They take me much more seriously, are fairer and treat me much more like an equal partner. With Thai men, Kathoey have to be sugar-mummies. Otherwise, it's unlikely that Thai men would want to be with a Kathoey. Thai men don't take relationships with Kathoey seriously because Thai families won't let their sons marry Kathoey. Many Thai men just want to dig the gold or try exotic sex experiences with Kathoey. Unlike European men, first they might not fully accept that I had been a man. But once they get to know me, they love me for who I am. And later, they accept and love me as a real woman. That would be very unlikely in the Asian male

mindset. European men are much more open-minded and loyal when it comes to relationships with transgender women. – Suay, Belgium

From the two stages of self-identification that Fanon analyzed, I argue that same social drivers affect the identities of Kathoey in Europe, but the action is more subtle because of the double-stigma faced by Kathoey in Europe: it is not only a matter of racism and deracialization, but also of sexism and trans-prejudice. That is, members of this group are both non-white and have ‘queer bodies.’ Their ‘deviant’ sexuality and physical form are both accepted as legitimate grounds for discrimination in Europe. Their desire for deracialization is not as strong as it is for black immigrants in Europe, based on Fanon’s work, but the inferiority and superiority complexes Thai trans-women use to interpret their status relative to other Europeans are analogous. These complexes construct their desire to have European partners, as their remarks during interviews and presented throughout this thesis make clear.

The most complex fact in this case is that Kathoey believe they will be able to fulfill their sexual and gender identity desires by becoming ‘real’ women, and they believe they can gain self-worth and reaffirm their ‘real’ women identity by being with white European partners. This practice is processed during the second stage of Lacanian (2006) self-identification: as individuals perceive ‘self’ through ‘mirror-image,’ they experience contradiction when they interact with the ‘third person.’ Third persons provide feedback that is inconsistent with their imagined ‘symbolic order,’ and their essentialist body identity creates limitations in their ability to understand and engage with the order they understand via third person feedback. This limitation obstructs them from reaching their ‘imaginary’ (for Kathoey, to become real women) and they are unable to attain their ‘real self-identity.’ Thus, their unaccomplished and unfulfilled dreams form their ‘object of desire,’ just as white Western identity/white people became objects of desire for black immigrants in Europe in Fanon’s day. I have found, 64 years after Fanon published his book, that the same phenomenon and mindset of non-white immigrants in Europe from around the world continues to persevere, and the post/crypto-colonial mindset (essentialist identity politics) continues to play a big role in social relations. This post/crypto-colonial cultural ideology persists around the world, and not only in Europe. Europe-based Kathoey are trapped between an essentialist identity, which is linked to a

symbolic order on their bodies, and their real selves, the identity of which is trapped between their desire to be ‘real’ women and the reality of their ‘unnatural body’. Transphobic and racist society in Europe has worsened the issue: the racist and transphobic social norm’s practices adhere to a symbolic order that is based on Kathoey body and skin color – that is, on an essentialist identity.

Applying Fanon’s (2008) analysis of third stage of self-identification, which argues how ‘inferiority’ and ‘superiority’ complexes are built in relation to individually essentialist body identities. Kathoey’s inferiority complex derives from tensions and conflict between ‘essentialist identity’ and the real ‘souls’ of Kathoeyes in European transphobic and racist society. Based on their race and sexuality, my research data shows that Kathoey are mostly perceived as ‘deviant’ or ‘exotic,’ and surely as members of a category far removed from the category of ‘real European women.’ I agree with Bhabha’s (1994) hypothesis that to imitate identity through accessing white societies or try to make white Westerners recognize and accept them as equal human beings, Kathoeyes in Europe share very similar cultural ideology to Fanon’s research respondents: desire for white European partners, inferiority-superiority complexes, and using and wearing European-branded clothes and accessories to fill inferiority holes in their mind, and so on, as a part of their quest for acceptance and recognition as respectable ‘normal women.’ Unfortunately, no matter how hard they try, they can be neither white European nor ‘real women,’ which leads to further social stigma and discrimination they experience in Europe. Combining Fanon and Bhabha, I argue that this imitation and mimicry demonstrates that Kathoeyes in Europe are victims trapped by a post-colonial, transphobic and racist society, and and by a ‘regime of truth’ that relates to the concept of an individual’s ‘natural body’, which itself is a construction by the Western world throughout the history.

Ultimately, the masks in Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* and my study ‘*Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks*’ are unconvincing, because neither white nor beautiful masks can conceal an immigrant’s ‘natural’ skin or sex. An example for comparison is illustrative: Fanon’s respondents, black immigrants in France, believed they would become white people and be more like real humans as their French language fluency improved. Those among my respondents who live in Europe similarly believed that effort on their part would improve their chances for being

accepted by mainstream society; they believed that they would become closer to ‘real women’ if they made themselves more beautiful, indeed, hyper-feminine, and that they would then conform with a certain kind of normative gender expectation, that is, they would be closer to human. While Fanon’s respondents’ aspirations to have white partners were based on a desire to deracialize their skin color as a way to boost self-esteem, my respondents’ desire to have white, male European partners was understood as a way to demonstrate that white men (and, by extension, European society) acknowledge them as ‘validated real women.’ A European partner is also used as a justification for claiming an upgraded position and class status in Thailand’s social hierarchies, for demanding more social respect and romance in relationships, for insisting on access to more lucrative economic opportunities, and for living more luxurious European lives. They wish to conceal and abolish an inferiority complex that is associated with being dark-skinned Asians with queer bodies.

One can also find parallels between Fanon’s respondents and mine in regard to perceptions of inferiority complexes that develop with reference to post-colonial experiences. Our respondents, including those with higher education and better careers than the average white European, felt inferior to white Europeans. As Fanon observes:

The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements. (Fanon, 2008. p.9)

These beautiful and white masks reflect their aspiration and desire, but the masks are unconvincing because an essentialist identity continues to play a dominant role in Euro-centric societies. Blacks can never be white in such societies, nor can trans be validated as beautiful real women. Especially for Kathoey in Europe, regardless of their feminine beauty, and in stark contrast to their expectations before migration, European society highly discriminates against them on a social level, which I illustrate in chapter six, *Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Europe*. Moreover, their sexuality legitimates racism in Europe. Not only does their

aesthetic fail to enhance their prospects of becoming by the society into which they have migrated, it actually exacerbates the intensity of social stigma and trans-phobia thereby undermines their chances of achieving their identity-based goals.

8.3. Discourse of Acceptance through the Beauty Myth

To be transgender women, you have to look **beautiful**. Otherwise, no society will truly **accept** you because you will always be freaks in their eyes, and they bully you on the street. – Toon, Bangkok

Working in the red light district also brings me lots of self-confidence. My customers make me **feel needed** and **beautiful**. – Gee, red-light district, Amsterdam

Europe is much more liberal, and has a better economy and living standards. Plus, I feel much happier living here, because European men **appreciate** my **beauty** more than Thais. They accept trans-identity and treat us better. That is why many of us stay here illegally- – Kao, London

During my interviews, all participants told me about their perceptions of transgenderism and beauty, which I interpret as *'discourse of acceptance through the beauty myth.'* The above quotations from the interviews, highlighted with my emphasis, illustrate this phenomenon.

The body – the way one presents oneself to the world – acts as a 'source of information about the self,' and it indicates individuals' sexual identity either it is male or female. In other words, the body acts as a signifier of identity (Bischoff, 2011, p.118). However, the body cannot specify self-identity; it is an object that subtends meanings, and is a space of constructed gender performativity (Butler, n.d. cited in Chotiwan, 2014.) Thus, gender is not a role construction based on physical sexes, but it is a practice of performativity that is controlled by hetero-normativity social pressures. And, hetero-normativity defines how men and women should express themselves (Duangwises and Jackson, 2013). In harmony with Bischoff's (2011) study, my research result also indicates that Kathoey's affirm their identity through transitioning their bodies and conforming to ideologies of femininity; my

respondents reaffirm their identity through hyper-femininity, the beauty myth and sometimes sex work, which will be further discussed in detail.

Thai social values, which accept Kathoeyes who are ‘as beautiful as women’, motivate Kathoeyes to transform their bodies into more feminine and beautiful forms. The sexual identity of Thai Kathoeyes nowadays is more intensively feminine because the beautiful Kathoeyes gets more social acceptance and admiration, while Kathoeyes whose more ambiguous bodies that mix femininity and masculinity are less desirable and sometimes made to feel undesirable. Jackson (1995) perceives such mix-body Kathoeyes as unmasculine, as opposed to feminine. Kathoey is a character that Thai men are not, and Thai masculinity is defined in part via comparison and contrast with Kathoeyes. In other words, if one is not Kathoey, one is, at least potentially, a man (Jackson, 1995). Accordingly, the feature of Kathoey is a defect, distorted and deformed ‘Thai manhood’. Kathoey characters, as a result, become ridiculous and deviant. Harnessing these variants of Kathoey deviance for comedic purposes is another form of violence toward transgender people.



Figure 8.1: Comedic image of Kathoeyes in Thai TV series ‘Diary Tootsies: the Series’.



Figure 8.2: Madam Mod –a famous Kathoey on Thai media. She is portrayed as freaky Kathoey comedian

One might imagine that Thai society is open toward people with sexual diversity because there is no legal punishment for hate crime, or public record-keeping of physical abuse of transgender people based on their identity like in other countries. But in reality, Kathoey's encounter the kind of violence in which the society makes them clowns or freaks (Chotiwan, 2014), and the Thai media plays a significant role in reproducing such false collective images of Kathoey. Butler (2004 cited in Bischoff, 2011) invokes notions of 'recognition' and 'gendered violence' to explain relationships between 'self' and 'other's interpretations'. Individuals seek acceptance of their self from others, but others used social norms which stipulate individuals' identity and community. That is to say, humans seek acceptance and, in order to be accepted, others must be able to understand an individual's self. Then for others to understand individual, individual must follow the social norms which stipulate identity and community for individuals. If individuals do not follow the accepted cultural norms which determine what are men and women, gendered violence occurs (Butler, 2004 cited in Bischoff, 2011.) Therefore, the phenomenon of

body transformation – as a signifier of Kathoey’s identity and self, is practiced to fit Kathoeyes into the accepted cultural norm to avoid violence and to be accepted from the society.

The power of hetero-normative discourse in Thai society makes Kathoeyes willingly fix their bodies to conform what they interpret as social expectation. At the same time, the ‘less beautiful’ Kathoeyes who do not look like women experience violence against their selves and their identities. Even within the Kathoey community, feminine beauty is crucial. For them, beauty indicates social class, financial status (capability to afford plastic surgery), and the ability to find romantic relationships and partners who will support them to fulfill many success in life. In order to be accepted as ‘non-freak’ human beings, they believe they have to construct themselves as ‘beautiful women.’ This is dissimilar from a case of less good looking women regarding social acceptance which has been subject of discussions in different feminist debates. Base on looks and general circumstances, Kathoeyes are in a much more distressing situation because their self-identity do not conform with the sex assigned at birth to them.

During the interviews, most participants explained to me that feminine beauty is ‘the most important thing for Kathoeyes’ lives.’ Kathoeyes believe that they will gain social acceptance, respect and better treatment through perfect femininity and beauty, in other words, if they are ‘as beautiful as real women.’ Forty-seven interviewees expressed these ideas along the following lines:

Beautiful Kathoeyes have much more place to stand in the society. So we do everything to make ourselves look beautiful and look as much like women as possible; many Kathoey students work part-time or do sex work to earn extra money to buy hormone pills, whitening creams, hair removal laser, plastic surgery. For me, I like when people compliment that they can’t tell I am a Kathoey. People in general have treated me much better after my full transition, especially men! Before I took care of my beauty I was mocked all the time when I walked on the street. Taxi drivers often didn’t let me go in. Now I am more accepted. – Sujeera, Bangkok

Kathoeys try much harder than anyone else so that the society can accept us. We have to try to be better than normal [cis gender] people. We have to try to be beautiful, try to do well in school, try a lot to get someone to love us, we have to be very patient and tolerate lots of crap from romantic relationships and try hard to be good women, because we want to be accepted. Most importantly, if you want to be accepted you must look as beautiful as women...and better to be more beautiful than women. – Da, Nakhon Pathom

Being beautiful is the most important goal in Kathoeys' life; otherwise, it's very unlikely you will be successful or respected by people. - Mote, London

When participants were asked what it means to be beautiful, they clarified in a similar way: ideal beauty for Kathoeys is 'to have a feminine and slim body with white (lighter) skin color and a high nose.' Many referred to a famous Thai transsexual actress – Treechada Petcharat, also known as, Poyd – as their role model and ideal image of Kathoeys beauty.



Figure 8.3: Treechada Petcharat (Poyd), a Thai transsexual model and actress who represents ideal Kathoeys beauty

I argue that, as Kathoeys believe that 'being beautiful' or their beauty myth will fulfill what they desire in life: to be socially accepted as 'non-freaks', to increase

their ability to find romantic relationships and serious partners, to increase chances in job opportunities, and so on. Kathoeyes find body transition crucial and, through this beauty transformation and other practices, they reproduce the concepts of heteronormativity, hyper-femininity and gender binary under social and media institutions. They imitate and reproduce socially controlled feminine gender roles and identities: how to act like normative 'real' and 'good' women, how to look 'beautiful', the feminine roles in romantic relationship and sexual practices, or the overly feminine attitudes and performativity. Besides learning these practices from the hetero-social norm, their reproduction of hetero-normativity, gender-binary and hyper-femininity concepts are also formed through their interpretation of how the Thai media portrays and contrasts 'Kathoey behavior' with that of decent Thai women.

Europe-based Kathoey respondents believe that, to be accepted in European societies, they have to be perfectly feminine and beautiful. Nevertheless, in reality, European societies see both the transgender body and transgender behavior as deviant, regardless of an individual's beauty. As in chapter six, *Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Europe*, I probe more deeply the massive gulf between this reality and the aesthetic myth and accompanying expectations. Kathoey participants in Europe experience verbal abuse, physical abuse and violence on the street, school bullying, job discrimination, racism and social exclusion. The narratives demonstrate an inconsistency between the perception of Kathoeyes who live in Thailand about life in Europe and the lived experience of those who have migrated to Europe. European societies' essentialist perception constructs social stigma and trans-phobia that is conducive towards the kinds of street discrimination that Kathoeyes experienced in Europe. Moreover, many Kathoey sex worker participants have explained to me how the discourse of social acceptance also encourages Kathoeyes to participate in the transnational sex work industry in Europe and facilitates their transnational migration from Thailand to Europe. Through hyper/perfect-femininity practices in their sex work, Kathoey sex worker participants feel that they are accepted as 'beautiful women' by male clients and mainstream society, and male clients reassure their female identity. Sex work does not only reaffirms Kathoeyes' identity as validated women, it also gives them self-worth and self-esteem as beautiful enough women to spend money on. However, such discourse of acceptance through beauty myth and sex work creates unending loop of

discrimination and, on top of that, triple-stigmatizes Kathoey sex workers as discussed in chapter seven: *Kathoey Sex Work in Europe*. Figure 8.4 presents this theory as a visual form.

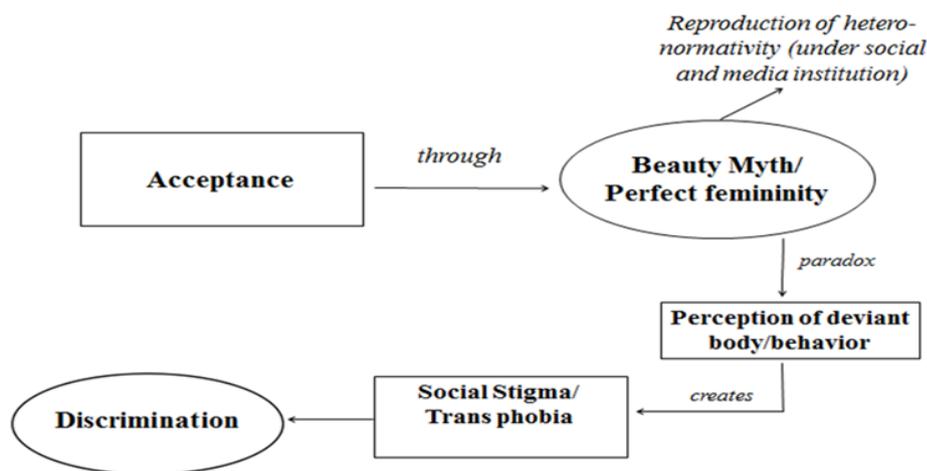


Figure 8.4: Effects of transgender women's discourse of 'acceptance' through 'beauty myth'

Essentialism has been used as rationale for discrimination in employment and education, as well as numerous other varieties of sexist action. The essentialist identity-politics of feminism, transgenderism and masculinity initially aimed to empower collective groups to justify their demands for equality. But in practice, throughout history, similar efforts have led to inequality, conformity and separatism as discussed in *chapter three*. Thai essentialist identity-politics on gender, and especially transgenderism, obstructs equality and strongly reproduces gender pluralism or, in other words, the reproduction of the heterosexual binary box. Most of my research informants pointed out they are 'born to be Kathoey' and they believe their trans condition has a biological basis; some believe that Karma explains their biological condition. My data conforms with Winter's (2006), who found that Thai transgender activists and support groups often campaigned for trans rights by explaining that trans are women trapped in the wrong bodies, or that being LGBTQ is not a choice; they cannot choose their natures. Such inborn-essentialist practices and approaches of Thai LGBTQ calls for social recognition have, in practice, underscored the biological-social construction of hetero-norms, including male and female binary opposition ontology. Kathoeysex workers still experience intense levels of trans-

phobia, trans-prejudice and discrimination in Europe and Thailand, as I thoroughly elucidate in *chapter four* and *chapter six*, because social norms in both places still view Kathoey as people with ‘deviant trans bodies’ that are not consistent with essentialist constructions of the human experience. That is to say, even Thai LGBTQ groups convince and emphasize the society that transgenderism is natural and biological. In reality, the society does not accept trans-bodies (some of which have penises), surgically attached imitations of vaginal organs through surgery, particularly on people who continue to have adam-apples and produce male hormones, but do not have wombs for reproduction, etc.

At the time I completed this research (2017), those proponents of essentialist identity-politics of Thai trans-communities who search for social acceptance and recognition through essentialism or biology, clearly had failed to achieve social acceptance for their constituents. Instead, mirroring the Sati experience two centuries earlier, Thai trans-activism reproduced a more intense hetero-normativity and feminine-beauty myth, both of which marginalized Kathoeyes and pushed them farther from the social mainstream. For instance, many transgender non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations in Thailand organize and support annual Kathoey beauty queen contests, or sometimes advertise their transgender equality campaigns with lines such as ‘let’s show the world how beautiful we are’ , ‘our transcending beauty’, and ‘beautiful, smart and healthy Kathoeyes’. I argue that Thai inborn-essentialist identity politics and discourse of acceptance through beauty myth are ultimately among the factors create discrimination and social stigma.

This chapter has illustrated the critical ontology of Kathoey transgenderism and ‘Queer Bodies’. I further explain how the modern appearance discourse is commercialized by the various institution, which uses aesthetics as a gimmick of their business in, for example, hospitals, cosmetic clinics, fitness centers and so on. These institutions were built in response to capitalist demands to dominate individuals by the power structure of sexuality. The body transition of Kathoeyes reflects the domination of power toward individuals’ bodies in the modern period, as Foucault (cited in Padoongcheevit, 2016) referred as ‘docile bodies’. The crafted bodies (Padoongcheevit, 2016) of Kathoeyes not only show how Kathoey individuals objectify and sexualize themselves to fit into the hetero-norm and to satisfy men’s

needs; they also display the legitimization of individuals' subjectivity and rights to use their bodies to construct 'self' and 'identity'. Through their power and rights and, now, medical capability, to control their own body, the 'making body beautiful' process is believed by the subject (Kathoeys) to fulfill their needs to increase life chances and opportunity to have better life choices. These opportunities, they believed, will lead them to the construction of social bonds and allow them to be part of social groups, membership in which will enable them to improve their position in social status hierarchies. They are mistaken. Kathoeys' queer bodies, however beautiful, continue to be perceived by European society as deviant. European society's transphobic and racist reaction toward Kathoeys identity is discussed in 6.2 *Kathoeys Street Discrimination in Europe*.

Using Fanon's (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks* as a foil, I have explicated how, as a consequence of the post-colonialism, Kathoeys' 'Beautiful Masks' are ultimately unconvincing to European society. I applied Lacanian psychoanalysis to explain differences between 'essentialist-identity' as a regime of truth constructed by the Western world, and 'uncertain identities' or the real 'self' as understood by Kathoeys themselves. Similar to Fanon's (2008) work, I find that 'regimes of truth' are founded by linking such regimes with Kathoeys' 'natural bodies'. The uncertain identity of immigrants became a reflection of the oppressed people's 'souls' (Fanon, 2008). The contradiction between natural body and soul of Kathoeys affect their 'self' construction, as well as leave 'inferiority issues.' Kathoeys participants in Europe who look 'as beautiful as biological women' found out that European society in general will continue to discriminate against them when it realizes that the individuals are Kathoeys. They can never achieve their desired identity as accepted women or European women without hiding their real identity from European society.

Using Fanon's (2008) interpretation of Lacanian (2006) self-identification process, I have also explained how European men become Kathoeys' objects of desire. I argue that Western-constructed essentialism in European society creates the inferiority complex among Kathoeys immigrants in Europe. Orientalist-constructed inferior images influence the perception and mentality of Kathoeys' own 'otherness' identity: their self-perceived otherness based on race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Kathoeys believe in the aesthetic myth as a means to gain social acceptance. I theorize the discourse of social acceptance through the hetero-aesthetic myth by

social and media institution which creates the reproduction loop of homophobia and social discrimination.

I suggest that Kathoeyes should not fall into the beauty myth and hyper/perfect-femininity in order to gain social acceptance, because, in the long term, it will give them nothing; to the contrary, it will reproduce hetero-normative dominance, including the gender binary box, which re-creates a vicious circle of social separatism, trans-phobia, social stigma and discrimination towards Kathoeyes – who will always be seen as ‘deviants’ in the discourse of acceptance through beauty myth. I agree with Fanon (2008) that, to step over limitations of identity as singular and futureless, instead of reproducing perfect-femininity, the beauty myth and inferiority complexes, Kathoeyes should be ‘self-realized’ to oppose inequality in identity politics, because their self-realization is the solutions to succeed achieving their desired social changes. Self-realization will empower Kathoeyes as ‘subjects’ because it enables them to change their status from ‘objects’ of study to ‘active subjects’ who transform their bodies into a form of power that later can be used in a revolution of structural relations. In the *conclusion chapter*, I will elaborate how ‘desire for the future’ will become futuristic identity politics different from Kathoeyes’ essentialist identity politics, and how united identity can become a ‘map of meaning’ to which self-realized Kathoeyes can refer as they connect with mainstream society about their stories and wounds from unjust social structures.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

Recent studies of Thai Kathoey have mainly focused on two critical categories. First, some studies have criticized social discourse and its oppression of Kathoeyes, indicating how society stigmatizes and segregates Kathoeyes from cisgender people, and how society reproduces the myths of ‘social deviancy’ and ‘unnatural sex’. These studies examine the belief system, which purports a direct link between transgender people’s behaviors and social issues and immorality and show responses that are grounded in this belief system exacerbate Kathoey social inequality. Studies of a second type explore Kathoey lives and identity construction, and, by providing illustrations of Kathoey experiences, seek to enlighten society about the obstacles, hardships, and social discrimination faced by Kathoeyes. At the same time, these studies indicate the diversity of Kathoeyes’ sexual and gender identities that, together, comprise a sexual sub-culture different from cisgendered men and women. These studies attempt to bring Kathoeyes’ dignity to social realization.

The present research explores both categories; further, it provides rare information on street and state discrimination against Kathoeyes in Europe, and also explores the trend of Kathoey transnational migration, including Kathoey fantasies about Europe, their racialized sexual desire toward European men, their perception and reality of having Western spouses, and their post-colonial queer identity, which is the new dimension of Kathoey research. It compares the social and legal levels of discrimination toward Thai transgender women in Thailand and Europe as well as theorizes the discourse of social acceptance through the hetero-aesthetic myth by social and media institutions which creates the reproduction loop of trans-phobia and social discrimination. Furthermore, this research also examines Kathoey narratives on European lives and transgender sex work industry in Europe and Thailand.

In *chapter one*, I clarified the complexities of Thai Male-to-Female transgender identities and characteristics, which are different from western interpretations of trans-women. The three self-defined terms of Kathoeyes: Kathoey (กะเทย), ‘second-type women’ (สาวประเภทสอง) and ‘transsexual women’ (ผู้หญิงข้ามเพศ) were described and placed within the varied Thai social contexts and social settings in

which subsets of the Kathoey community find themselves. Similar to the Western perspective, Thai mainstream society does not make these fine distinctions, but rather describes members of all three groups simply as ‘Kathoey’.

First chapter also provides information on global ‘hermaphroditism’ and ‘transgenderism’, arguing that global mythologies and previous anthropological studies reflect fluidity and compatibility of femininity and masculinity. Then, it provides historical knowledge about the Kathoey identity in Thailand: how, after the western modernization era, as Thai mainstream society began to reconstruct and reorganize heterosexuality norms, transgender people and their mixed-gender identity came to be regarded as ‘deviants’ or ‘clowns.’ Before Western modernization forces were established in Thailand, Kathoey had a special position in Thai traditional rituals and performance spaces. Kathoey identity was given substantially more social space and special status. Thai understandings of gender came to be more consistent with western heteronormative expectations when King Rama V and later Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram rigorously controlled female bodies in order to differentiate women from men, and during Phibunsongkram’s Thai Cultural Restoration, which focused on ‘civilizing Thailand’ by following the Western standards, as a national survival strategy during the world war and western colonization throughout the world. Civil hetero-gender reorganization was therefore applied by the Thai state in many instances to modernize the Thai nation. Phibunsongkhram’s nationalism even included authoritative policies and regulations intended to control femininity and masculinity. As a result, these westernising influences excluded and marginalized Kathoeyes in Thai society. Kathoey identity has become perceived as a deviancy and as disordered behaviour in Thai mainstream society under the production of crypto/post-colonialism which has created the current Thai nationalism and most of western civilization.

Nowadays, Thai media sometimes derogates Kathoey as comedians, while other times supports their image as beauty queens who are ‘as beautiful as women.’ The beautiful and very feminine contestants in Kathoey beauty pageants become the standard of beauty to which Kathoey populations aspires. Beauty myth becomes ideology. Kathoey transform their bodies to boost their self-value and self-esteem. Moreover, *chapter one* briefly presented transprejudice issues in Thailand: despite

the large population of Kathoey, transprejudices exist on both street (social) and state (governmental) levels. Thai government has been unsuccessful in protecting trans-people from discrimination and sometimes, governments and their agents are active offenders. Additionally, Thai society is not truly accepting, but has shown more tolerance toward Kathoey. The chapter discussed evidence from previous research, public opinion and social events which outline the reality of continued discrimination against Kathoey in Thailand. Within this socio-political reality, many Kathoey have developed a romantic vision about opportunities for transgender people in 'advanced' Europe. This vision motivates their decision to migrate to Europe. They have used a range of strategies to get to Europe, including finding European partners, accepting low-skill labor work, and performing transgender sex work. To study this phenomenon, the main research questions addressed in this dissertation include 1) *What constitutes the discrimination Kathoey experience in Thailand versus in Europe?* 2) *What motivates Kathoey to migrate to Europe?* And, 3) *Are there any discrepancies between expectations of life in Europe and the reality of that life?*

Next, in the *methodology chapter*, I clarified in detail the methods and methodology applied to conduct this study. Respondents for this study are Thai Kathoey in Thailand and Kathoey who migrated to live in Europe. I have conducted a qualitative analysis along with critical ethnography by using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion, participant observation, and data triangulation. The main areas of data collection were Thailand and four European countries: the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Belgium. The main specific areas for data collection, both in Europe and in Thailand, were Thai restaurants and bars, Thai temples, transgender nightclubs and parties, transgender sex parties, red light districts as well as places my respondents negotiated their daily lives, such as their apartments, salons, local bars, and so on. From 60 Kathoey research participants; 23 were interviewed in Thailand, 11 were interviewed in London, 14 in the Netherlands, six in Belgium and six in Denmark. 21 of the 60 participants were transgender sex workers (part-time and full-time). I also interviewed one female academic, one male academic and five male customers of Kathoey sex work. The fieldwork proceeded intensively over the course of two years, from December 2013 to February 2016. My respondents from diverse

backgrounds, occupations, education or social statuses were interviewed with similar questions. For an inclusive analysis, I therefore interviewed Kathoeyes from different social strata, including sex workers, cabaret show girls, restaurant workers, business owners, royal family members, university students, housewives, madams, scholars, transgender activists, and male clients of transgender sex workers. The *Methodology chapter* also thoroughly discussed this research's epistemological basis and my critical reflection on studying Kathoeyes through three subjective lenses – my personal lens, a justice lens, and a caring lens – in order to trace my subjective self and position while conducting this study. The chapter also thoroughly discussed selection of participants, participants recruitment and access to the field, data collection and research methods, ethical considerations, and narratives from my fruitful fieldwork in Thailand, the Netherlands, Belgium, the UK, and Denmark.

Next, the *theoretical framework chapter* attempted to disclose the phenomena of discrimination against Kathoeyes and its effects by examining a mixture of theories, including post-colonialism, post-modernism, post-structuralism, and gender studies. First, applying various post-colonial and post-structural scholars' concepts (Salisa, 2013; Loomba, 2005; Fraser, 2003; Brown, 1995; Said, 1978; Obeyesegere, 2005; Mani, 1987; Mies, 1980; Loomba, 1993; Spivak, 2010), I demonstrate the harm of essentialist identity politics and outlined that it should be deconstructed because essentialist identity-politics exacerbate discrimination. Moreover, I illustrated how it double or triple stigmatizes minorities of minorities such as people with nonconforming gender, lesbian Kathoeyes, Kathoey sex workers, Kathoey immigrants in Europe, people who identify as 'queer', and more. The discourses of essentialist identities have been framed and represented by the West, and served to sustain colonial operations during the European colonial period. Identity politics has also been widely criticized as essentialist: it is nostalgic about an imagined but nonexistent past in a way that draws socially exclusive boundaries lines between 'us' and 'the others' (Fraser, 2003). I have demonstrated how colonized groups and social phenomenon were negatively affected by essentialist identity politics, 'orientalism' (Said, 1978), and western imperialism, in cases ranging from Sati ritual in India, to Maori cannibalism, to Thai transgenderism. I further assessed that the essentialist identity politics are concentrated on the contemporary powerless situation of the devalued groups globally and it justifies and authorizes social exclusion in diverse

practices – including racism, sexism and stigmatization of ‘others.’ The chapter further examined the discourse of racial and gendered ‘inborn-essentialist identity politics’. In agreement with Loomba (2005), I discussed that the notion of ‘essentialist-identities’ do not reflect genuine past. On the contrary, it is reproduced by anti-colonial struggles themselves in an attempt to analyze and justify the conflict between imperialists and the colonized as a binary opposition between active and passive actors. I also showed analogous patterns in the Thai Kathoey and LGBTQ movements. The Western notion of inborn-essentialist collective identity on transgenderism or gender is often reproduced by Thai LGBTQ groups themselves, to legitimize their so-called ‘natural’ behaviors and sexualities on social and political levels in order to gain acceptance and equality from the ‘superiors’ – the heteronormativity norm, cisgender people and, in the case of this study, European society. Binary opposition analysis on conflict legitimizes identity-politics movements, even though essentialist-identity politics fail to reflect their ‘decentered subjects’ identities.

Then, I showed the connection between colonial influence and the construction of gender, and western influence on gender binary and sexuality in Thailand. Later, I investigated Lacan’s (2006) psychoanalysis work – ‘identification of infants’ and Fanon’s interpretation (2008) of Lacanian self-identification to apply to his black French participants. As I examined Lacan (2006) and Fanon (2008) to analyse my research data in *chapter six* and *chapter eight*, my research results conformed to Fanon’s ideas on ‘essentialist-identity’ as a regime of truth constructed by the Western world, ‘uncertain identities’ or the real ‘self’ of non-white immigrants in Europe, ‘inferiority-superiority issues’ and ‘white Europeans as racialized sexual objects of desire’. At the end, ‘self-realization’ (see Fanon, 2008) as identity politics for non-discriminatory society was deduced.

Chapter four, *Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Thailand*, provided an inclusive analysis of the Kathoey experience in Thailand through my research participants’ words, as well as other primary and secondary empirical evidence as I attempted to answer the first research question: *What constitutes the discrimination Kathoey’s experience in Thailand versus in Europe?* First, I outlined the socio-historical context of Thai sexual binary opposition (hetero-normativity in Thailand) and its revolution, which was decidedly influenced by western

modernization throughout Thai history. Since 21st century developments, Thailand's views on LGBT rights are more liberal than in the past but, regardless of the large number of Kathoeyes and gender diversity populations, the Thai government remains less than fully committed to contributing to equality and to providing legal protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. This chapter thoroughly explored both social and legal issues toward Kathoey in Thailand. It illustrated this argument by presenting participants' own reports of their issues regarding Thai state discrimination, such as on personal documentation and legal status issues, structural employment issues, marriage and family rights, hate crimes, and structural issues in the Thai education system and academic institutions. Besides the legal and policy discrimination, research participants reported diverse levels of social exclusion and transprejudices in Thailand on a daily basis in areas such as employment discrimination, bullying and mockery, and limits on freedom of movement. Lastly, the chapter outlined Thai media reproduction of the transgenderism stigma and its negative effect on Kathoeyes, as well as explained how Kathoey's performativity is influenced by Thai media.

Chapter five: *Kathoey Migration to Europe* answered the second research question: *What motivates Kathoeyes to migrate to Europe?* It explores why Kathoeyes developed their European life aspiration and fantasies about European men. The internationalization of modern homosexual identities in Thailand since the 1980s has produced rapid increases of queer business, space, and organization. Kathoeyes have more interaction with European tourists, which further romanticized Kathoey's fantasies about European life. In this chapter, I initially discussed and critiqued theories on cross-cultural relationships and marriages, including reasons that push people to migrate from the global south to the global north: micro and macro level economic motives, spatial-hypergamy as a concept to explain cross-cultural marriage of women from the third world countries, and gendered migration and sexuality. Afterward, the chapter demonstrated and analyzed my research findings regarding the large phenomenon of Kathoey migration to Europe, including factors that motivate Kathoeyes to move to Europe.

From my data analysis, I have identified subtle structural and socio-political issues behind Kathoey's migration decisions. To directly reply to the second research question, I categorized the structural aspirations of Kathoey migrations to Europe, to

search for 'better life', into seven main groups: economic reasons, state discrimination in Thailand, employment issues in Thailand, street discrimination in Thailand, a romanticized vision of life in Europe, desires for 'normal' lives and romantic relationships; and desires to increase social status in Thailand. The empirical data in this chapter offered many insights regarding participants' oppressed souls: how participants look up to Europe and European men as superior, while Thailand, Thai men and their Asian Kathoey identity as inferior. *Chapter five* also revealed narratives of Kathoey's illegal immigration: marriage fraud, identity fraud, and fake passports which offer an analysis of illegal migration to Europe. Later, I outlined literature that addresses cross-cultural relationships between Thai women and European men in the light of gender, sexuality and migration, as well as related some of these secondary insights to the situation of Kathoeyes and their relationships with European men, such as on how Kathoey agencies use gender stereotype to maintain and negotiate their power in cross-cultural partnerships.

I concluded that, compared to previous research results on Thai women and transnationalism, Kathoeyes do not share the same ideologies about sexuality, virginity, or divorce as Thai women, and they are generally less submissive in cross-cultural relationships. Participants also emphasized that relationships with European men ensure and accentuate their Kathoey feminine identity and that European men enhance Kathoey self-esteem and validate their gender and sexuality as 'valued women.' With the post/crypto-colonial legacy, participants continue to believe that relationships with European men fulfill their soul, make them happier, and make them feel more like they are 'real women' who deserve to be loved, while the 'inferior' Thai men cannot fulfill this desire. In general, all participants are satisfied with the dynamics of relationships they have with European men and their migration decision based on the cross-cultural marriage/relationship. Lastly, I demonstrated participants' expectations before and after migration to Europe and show how the reality after migration or life in Europe and their expectations differ. Before migrating to Europe, Kathoey respondents expected that moving to Europe would increase their economic and social status in Thailand, give them a chance to have 'normal' lives and romantic relationships, give them more job opportunities and, especially, enable them to escape the forms of street and state discrimination they had experienced in Thailand. They saw Europe as a place of social and legal

‘liberty.’ However, some of these expectations contrast with their personal experience of European life. For example, participants indicated that, as expected, all of them have not experienced state (legal) discrimination in Europe, but they have still experienced some forms of street violence which I elaborated on later in *chapter six*.

In chapter six: *Street and State Discrimination towards Kathoey in Europe*, I argued that essentialism hinders equality and strengthens discrimination and builds boxes, such as hetero-normativity, or hierarchies which based on skin color, that alienate ‘others,’ and marginalize people who do not fit into these boxes. To answer the first research question 1) *What constitutes the discrimination Kathoey experienced in Thailand versus in Europe?* I divided the chapter into two main parts. In the first part, I demonstrated that Kathoey respondents in both Europe and Thailand generally felt that there is no legal discrimination against Kathoey in the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, and believed that, with the support of European institutions that ensure liberal gender equality, they could fulfill their dreams of a better and more equal life. Conversely, the second part showed that Kathoey’s pre-migration confidence in non-discrimination, romanticization of Europe, and their contentment on progressive European transgender legal protection was not warranted, all 37 of my Kathoey respondents who live in Europe have reported various stories of the forms of European street discrimination they have experienced. From data analysis, Europe-based Kathoey face five main categories of street or social discrimination: verbal abuse, physical abuse and violence on the street, school bullying, discrimination during job applications, and racism and social exclusion. This further illustrated the discussed argument about double-stigma and how Kathoey’s sexuality legitimizes racism and social exclusion in Europe.

Through Fanon’s (2008) analysis on ‘immigrants’ self-construction’, ‘regime of truth’ and inferiority issues, concept of essentialist identity deconstruction, and post-colonialism philosophies (Bhabha, 1994; Loomba, 2005), this chapter discussed and presented empirical data on street discrimination towards Kathoey in Europe, despite state protection. The gap between European legal protections and negative attitudes toward Kathoey on the street demonstrates the power of universal and essentialist binary opposition; as hetero-normativity and cis-gender bodies are

constructed to comprise normalcy and naturalness, Kathoeyes and transgendered bodies are equated with deviancy and the unnatural.

The participants' perception of Western identity is shaped by their engagement with a Western identity that was constructed, as superior, after the imperialism era. I agree with Loomba that Orientalist-constructed inferior images influence the awareness and mentality of Kathoeyes' own 'otherness' identity. For Kathoeyes, self-perceived otherness is not only about race and ethnicity, but also their gender and sexuality.

In this chapter, I presented arguments that agree with Fanon (2008) and Bhabha (1994) in that individual identities are not inborn or essentialist. I also argued that essentialist identity-politics hinder social justice and traps Kathoeyes within boxes. For Thai transgenderism, such a political environment reproduces heteronormativity, gender binary opposition and trans-prejudices, which intensify discrimination. Moreover, identity-politics also double or triple stigmatize minorities of minorities such as people with nonconforming gender, transgender sex workers, non-white transgender immigrants in Europe, people who identify as 'queer', and more. Essentialist identity-politics cannot bring real equality for all. Indeed, it aggravates discrimination against subalterns and helps to reproduce an imagined past that was constructed by powerful social institutions and classes or by Western colonial authorities. In response to the third research question: *3) Are there any discrepancies between expectations of life in Europe and the reality of that life?* I concluded in this chapter that, although legal protection toward Kathoeyes is sufficient, their reality after migration clashes with their romantic expectations about Europe before they migrated. Participants' narratives demonstrated an inconsistency between the opinion of Kathoeyes who live in Thailand about life in Europe and the real-life experiences of those who have migrated to Europe. Based on empirical data from *chapter four* and *chapter six*, I concluded that Kathoey safety and security are vulnerable – both in Thailand and in Europe. In fact, most participants in Europe reported that social discrimination in Europe is more harmful and life-threatening than in Thailand, despite of the higher level of legal acceptance. Because essentialism and hetero-normativity shapes European understandings about 'normal' sexuality, the power of the 'normality' discourse, as embedded in European societies, it seems to create more violent street verbal abuse toward transgender people in

Europe than in Thailand. Nevertheless, the main reason many Kathoeyes perceived Europe as a better world to live is that, unlike Thais, many Europeans cannot differentiate Kathoeyes from biological women. Their ability to keep their biological secret assists them to have better and non-discriminatory life in Europe.

Regarding social discrimination, participants in Europe informed that Kathoey job discrimination in Europe is the only area which seems to be significantly better than the situation in Thailand. Working in low-skilled jobs in Europe gives Kathoeyes a higher salary than high-skilled jobs in Thailand, therefore European economic recompense might help to explain why participants believe the job market for Kathoeyes is better in Europe than in Thailand. Regardless of the more violent and severe street discrimination that Kathoeyes in Europe experience, participants choose to stay due to legal protections toward transgender people, romantic relationships and family life they are more capable to have, better economic conditions, advanced social status in Thailand, and expanded social networks.

Next, in chapter seven, *Kathoey Sex Work in Europe*, I shared research findings that informed areas so-far unscrutinized by studies on transgender sex work. The chapter started with a general framework about prostitution and assessed how scholars define prostitution as a phenomenon in a multi-disciplinary approach, and how sexuality, power and knowledge are connected to prostitution. I also reviewed the literature on transgender prostitution, including theories behind transgender identity construction through sex work, and then shared new information on clients of Kathoey sex workers, including their sexuality, behavior, motives, experiences, and opinions. Subsequently, I elaborated on the critical literature on sexuality and tourism and provide data analysis of Kathoey sex workers: their lives, experiences as sex workers, access to Europe, and sexual transition. The culture of racialized sexual fantasy, as a production of post-colonialism, was discussed, along with an outline of a post-structural analysis of transgender sex work. Finally, I shared the narratives of three selected Kathoey sex workers'; lives, dreams, and experiences were revealed, thus providing radically new insights on a plethora of details regarding this subculture.

In summary, *chapter seven* offered specific information about Kathoey sex workers in Europe: their lifestyles and opinions, the victimization myth regarding

Kathoey sex work, Kathoey agency in sex work, the processes by which they enter transnational sex work industry (from Thailand to Europe), visions from and about men who buy sex from Kathoey sex workers including their sexuality, the dynamics of Thai transgender prostitute smuggling agencies, transgender social networks, life behind the red light districts' windows, and the effects of social consumerism, post-colonial effects on Kathoey sex work and Western customerism through sex tourism.

Most of my respondents support the legalization of prostitution. They are satisfied with their vocations in Europe and claim the benefits of their work include both receiving sexual pleasure from clients and enabling them to live their lives as 'beautiful females'. Their male clients abundantly express desire for them, which increases their self-esteem. In short, sex work supports participants in a wide range of ways, including their ability to solidify their sense of Kathoey identity. And, contrary to mainstream understanding, most sex worker respondents participate in sex work not for only economic reasons, but also for sexual fulfillment: they enjoy having sex, particularly with European and other Caucasian male clients. This is especially true of those who work legally in red light districts in Amsterdam and Belgium, who explained their 'active' role in sex work. Sex worker participants mostly actively choose customers who they believe can satisfy their own sexual desires, based on those customers' appearances. As such, sex work brings them not only satisfying money, but also Kathoey self-esteem, self-worth and identity formation.

The sexuality of the male clients of transgender sex workers was interrogated. From data analysis, the male clients of Kathoey sex work consider themselves as straight or heterosexual. Transgender sex workers' clients often informed them that they see the so called 'ladyboy' as just the same as biological women, but with more arousing organs and understanding attitudes. Most of them described themselves as heterosexuals because they are straight men that are attracted to only women, either trans-women or biological female. They are not sexually attracted male persons. I then raised a question for further study: what does it mean to choose not to describe oneself as gay, bisexual or queer, and yet acknowledge one's attracted to transgender women and desire to engage in the receiving end of sexual penetration? The existence of such people, whose experiences are presented here, leads to further epistemological and theoretical puzzles regarding which criteria should be used to

measure heterosexuality, homosexuality, masculinity, and femininity in sexual practices. Moreover, these male client respondents reported that hetero-normative social pressure inadvertently pushes them to buy sex from transgender sex workers. Because their discriminatory and homophobic society does not legitimate their sexual preference and behavior of having sex and even loving relationships with transgender women, they satisfy their needs by buying sex from transgender sex workers.

I have argued that sex between Western tourists and Kathoey sex workers is not for only monetary purposes, but also for the purpose of emotional exchange. It includes a 'racialized body' sexual fantasy from both sides. I also discussed how both sellers and buyers hold postcolonial/crypto-colonial ideologies. My data shows that the transnational capitalism that comes with tourism and prostitution does not always mirror the general power-relation. The local sex workers in the Third World choose to do sex work formally and informally. However, the apparent power-relations are not always oppressive, but often happen in the context of a negotiation. Western tourists do not always have more power, and the poor locals are not always taken advantage of. Both Western sex tourists and local sex tourists show their own power within the complex conditions. Moreover, my research data indicates that a minority of clients are abusive and violent, or asking prostitutes to engage in activities that Kathoey informants themselves describe as deviant. My data shows that most clients are decent and acceptable. Nine out of twenty-one of the transgender sex worker respondents had never experienced violence from clients during their sex work career in Europe and the rest had only experienced it in rare occasions. Most of the participants see their sex work career as positive more than negative, and most of them do not feel victimized by their clients.

Kathoeys are pushed to do sex work because of job discrimination in Thailand and Europe, and sex work is the easiest way for many participants to financially support their families. Many Kathoey sex worker participants also explained how the discourse of social acceptance also encourages Kathoeys to participate in the transnational sex work industry in Europe and facilitates their transnational migration from Thailand to Europe through agencies based in Pattaya city, Thailand. They feel that their sex work reaffirms their desired identity as beautiful women.

Lastly, chapter eight: *Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks* analysed the empirical data about Kathoey identity and discrimination within the frame of selected theories. In this last chapter, I applied Fanon's (2008) concepts of Black Skin and White Mask to analyze Europe-based Kathoey's oppression. The term 'Queer Bodies' was selected to describe the fluidity of Kathoey identities, and 'Unconvincing Beautiful Masks' reflects the influences of essentialist identity within Euro-centric societies. Based on the stigma and trans-phobic reactions they experience on the street in Europe, I concluded that the Kathoey feminine aesthetic discourse cannot convince European societies that they are 'normal'. *The Queer Bodies* section argued that the essentialist concept of the 'natural self' of Kathoey exists within a context of social power, knowledge, and socially constructed gender binary. *Unconvincing Beautiful Masks* examined my research data and assessed the relevance of Fanon's (2008) analysis to the case of Kathoey self-identification processes in Europe. And lastly, *Discourse of Acceptance through the Beauty Myth* illustrated my theory on how Kathoey desire for social acceptance through femininity and aesthetic traps them in a constructed gender-binary box and, contrary to their hope and expectation, constructs a periphery of transgender discrimination and social stigma.

The chapter demonstrated that, as the Thai state continues to support legal discrimination and social prejudices against transgender people (see *chapter four*), Kathoey's have limited opportunities in the job market and their basic human rights are incessantly threatened. Nevertheless, beauty can offer an outlet. Some Kathoey's who put a special effort into making themselves beautiful earn money by participating in pageants, becoming actresses, or finding European men. Kathoey research participants believed that they would gain social acceptance, self-value, and life success by striving for perfect femininity and beauty, and by having a white, Western partner. They explained that Kathoey's uphold their identity through transitioning their bodies and conforming to ideologies of femininity; they reaffirm their identity through hyper-femininity, the beauty myth and, sometimes, sex work.

I argued that the 'masks' in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and my study '*Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks*' ultimately are unconvincing, because neither white nor beautiful masks can cover an immigrant's 'natural' skin or sex. Paralleling Fanon's (2008) conclusion, I explained how Kathoey's 'Beautiful Masks' are a consequence of the post-colonialism. Lacanian psychoanalysis was used to explicate

dissimilarities between ‘essentialist-identity’ as a regime of truth assembled by the Western world, and ‘uncertain identities’ or the real ‘self’ as understood by Kathoeyes themselves. Similar to Fanon’s (2008) work, I found that ‘regimes of truth’ are established by connecting such regimes with Kathoeyes’ ‘natural bodies’. The uncertain identity of immigrants became a reflection of the oppressed people’s ‘souls’ (Fanon, 2008). The inconsistency between natural body and soul of Kathoeyes distress their ‘self’ construction, and then leave ‘inferiority issues.’ Kathoey respondents in Europe who look ‘as beautiful as biological women’ learned that European society at large discriminated against them when it realized that the individuals were Kathoeyes. They failed to achieve their desired identity as accepted women or European women without hiding their real identity from European society. Kathoey claims that they are capable of wearing their mask, undisturbed, are based on wishful thinking, that is, on a myth.

Using Fanon’s (2008) interpretation of Lacanian (2006) self-identification process, I also explained how European men become Kathoeyes’ objects of desire. I discussed that Western-constructed essentialism in European society generates the inferiority complex among Kathoey immigrants in Europe. Orientalist-constructed inferior images influence the perception and mentality of Kathoeyes’ own ‘otherness’ identity: their self-perceived otherness based on race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Kathoeyes rely on the aesthetic myth as a means to gain social acceptance. Lastly, I theorized the discourse of social acceptance through the hetero-aesthetic myth by social and media institutions which constructs the reproduction loop of homophobia and social discrimination.

9.1. Final Discussion

This research has displayed the state and street discrimination in Thailand and fantasies about the Western world as productions of western colonial influence, which romanticizes the European experience and motivates Kathoeyes to immigrate there. Kathoey participants discovered after their arrival that, despite well-institutionalized legal protections towards LGBTQ people, European society is somewhat more violent towards Kathoeyes than Thai society is. In Thailand, Kathoeyes are perceived as a foundation for set comedic or abnormality: they are perceived as clowns or beauty queens, while in Europe they are perceived more as

‘deviants’ or ‘queer others’, as illustrated in *chapter six*. Europe-based Kathoey are affected by the legacy of post-colonialism and ‘regime of truth’ which later constructs their ‘inferiority-issues’, while, at the same time, they perceive white Europeans as ‘superiors’. A common Kathoey sense of inferiority to Europeans and self-perceived ‘otherness’ also contributes to a sense of social separatism and conformism that obstructs Kathoey efforts to protect and fight for their oppressed rights. The Euro-centric world and the Kathoey’s self-perceived otherness decreases their efficiency for achieving their identity politics goals. Furthermore, their Queer Bodies, Beautiful Masks ideologies and practices negatively influence Kathoey security and safety, and impedes their ability to gain more social acceptance in Europe. Their desire to be ‘as beautiful as real women’ cannot lead to social acceptance; on the contrary, it creates a loop of social stigma, trans-phobia and discrimination. On top of that, in the long term, such a myth creates a Kathoey self-perception as inferior to hetero-normal and European people, making them more tolerant to abuse, oppression, physical and mental violence and discrimination. Because at the bottom line, they feel that Europeans are superior to themselves – ‘the queer others.’

Kathoeys seek acceptance by donning ‘beautiful masks’, but, ultimately, they receive what Fanon (2008) calls an ‘uncertain identity’ of oppressed souls. In other words, their identity becomes ambiguous and they are not acknowledged as anything but deviants. At the same time, they see themselves as inferior to the white Europeans, a perception that supports them to accept social discrimination. Nevertheless, living in Europe comes with advantages, including as legal rights and protections, and significantly higher income.

I have argued that Kathoey’s essentialist identity politics should be deconstructed, because Thai Kathoey identity politics mainly focuses on feminine beauty and pride for being ‘inborn’ or ‘natural’ Kathoey, and on campaigning that being transgender has biological root causes. The current Kathoey identity political movement obstructs transgender rights development in Thailand, moreover, their belief in Male-to-Female transgender essentialism continues to support socially constructed notions of ‘universal femininity.’

For instance, the right to change legal gender in Thailand is controversial in a public debate. Many research participants would like to change their legal gender to become legally female, however, some Kathoeyes have reported to the Thai media that they do not want to change their legal identity to male, to avoid demographic or statistical issues. Some Kathoey communities even debated that being Kathoey is a natural force, thus, they should be proud and accept their inborn, albeit naturally ambiguous identity.

The rhetoric of femininity is heavily used within many Kathoey communities: it is a production of essentialist identity politics, which I perceive as futureless and static. Kathoey essentialist identity politics rhetoric traps them within hetero-normative cages and opposes their – the ‘unnatural women’ – efforts to be equal citizens. The oppressed Kathoeyes have an uncertain identity that is trapped between the real ‘self’ and ‘inborn essentialism’ (which asserts that it is deviant for male-born person to become a woman). Therefore, I argue that, for progress of Thai Kathoey identity politics to occur, Kathoeyes and activists must step over inborn-essentialist rhetoric and gain more self-realization.

As discussed in *chapter three*, identity politics that advocate social justice and equality are the only means of achieving a better future. When accomplished, identity as a map of meaning in which various groups are recognized as ‘inferior’ or ‘superior’ will no longer be important and will finally disappear. In this sense, the ‘identity for a tomorrow’ is a strategic identity that allows people with various experiences to identify their problems and cooperate to solve discrimination issues (Bhambra and Margree, 2010; Fanon, 2008). Identity for a tomorrow is both uncertain, dynamic and flux. It could be territorialized, deterritorialized and reterritorialized (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972 cited in Salisa, 2013). For instance, the idea of ‘women’s identity’ was applied by feminist movements. It presents and communicates the obstacles women face under patriarchal societies, as part of a strategy aimed at gaining support from every gender in the society, including men. Once justice and gender equality exist, feminine identity will be deconstructed from public space of political contention and demand, but can be brought up in different time-space if gender inequalities occur. Similar to racist structural re-formations regarding non-whites in Europe and white supremacy initiatives in America. Since their request can never be successful without cooperation, realization and

understanding in human rights, justification and social equality from whites is necessary. When, together, blacks and whites can successfully destroy racist social structures, inborn essentialist identity will no longer be the main issue to be raised in the public for discrimination and separating us/otherness (Salisa, 2013). For transgender people and queer people as well, as soon as mainstream society and cisgender people can step over the boxes of hetero-norms and gender binary opposition, and develop an understanding of gender performativity, the 'deviant' or 'queer' identity of transgender people will ultimately disappear. Gender variant people will gain genuine social equality on both state and social levels.

The 'identity for a tomorrow' focuses on forming consensus of universal cohabitation by accepting the differences and 'self' of individuals under the realization of everyone's citizenship and equality. It requests for identity politics for tomorrow's social justice, but it determines neither an individuals' position nor an individual's fixed or desired identity. Identity will eventually vanish, and that will lead to social acceptance and self-determination in life for various individuals who can finally have full-fledged citizenship within a non-discriminatory society.

References

- Agnes, F. (2008). The Bar Dancer and the Trafficked Migrant: Globalisation and Subaltern Existence. In G. Letherby, et al. (Eds.) *Sex as Crime*. Doven, UK: Willan Publishing.
- Agustín, L. M. (2007). *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry*. London: Zed Books.
- Akers et al. (1979) Social Learning and Deviant Behavior: A Specific Test of a General Theory. *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 44, No. 4 (Aug., 1979), pp. 636-655
- Alicea, M. (1997). A chambered nautilus: The contradictory nature of Puerto Rican women's role in the social construction of a transnational community. *Gender and Society*, 11, 597–626.
- Almodovar, N.J. (2002). For Their Own Good: The Results of the Prostitution Laws as Enforced by Cops, Politicians, and Judges. In W. McElroy *Liberty for Women* (Eds.), Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.
- Altman, D. (1996). On Global Queering. *Australian Humanities Review*, Retrieved from <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-July-1996/altman.html>.
- Andrijasevic, R. (2007). Beautiful dead bodies: Gender, migration and representation in anti-trafficking campaigns. *Feminist Review*, 86(1), 24–44.
- Andrijasevic, R. (2003). The Difference Borders Make: (Il)legality, Migration and Trafficking in Italy among Eastern European Women in Prostitution. In S. Ahmed et.al (Eds.), *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*. Oxford, New York: Berg Publication.
- Barme, S. (1993). *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Barry, K. (1995). *The Prostitution of Sexuality*. New York: New York University Press.
- Beall, J. & Piron, L-H. (2005). *DFID Social Exclusion Review*. The London School of Economics and political Science & Overseas Development Institute.
- Beasley, C. (2005). *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*. London: Sage Publications.
- Becker, G. (1991). *A treatise on the family*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders; Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. London, Free Press of Glencoe

- Bernburg, J.G., Krohn, M.D., Rivera, C.J. (2006). Official Labelling, Criminal Embeddedness, and Subsequent Delinquency: A Longitudinal Test of Labelling Theory. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 2006, 43(1), 67-88
- Bethlehem, T. (2005). *Poverty and the social context of sex work in Addis Ababa: an Anthropological Perspective*. Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bhambra, G. K. & Margree, V. (2010). Identity Politics and a need for a ‘tomorrow’. *Economic & Political weekly*, 45(15), 59-66.
- Bischoff, A. (2011). Passing the Test: The Transgender Self, Society and Femininity. *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection Paper*. 1155.
- Bland, L. & Doan, L. (1994). *Sexology Uncensored*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bloor, M. & Wood, F. (2006). *Keywords in Qualitative Methods: A Vocabulary of Research Concepts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Borjas, G. J. (1989). Economic theory and international migration. *International Migration Review*, 23(3), 457–485.
- Brennan, D. (2004). *What’s Love got to Do with It? Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bright, S. (1992). *Susie Bright’s Sexual Reality: A virtual Sex World reader*. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Cleis Press.
- Brown, W. (1995). *State of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2007). *Business Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brunovskis, A., & Surtees, R. (2008). Agency or Illness--The Conceptualization of Trafficking: Victims’ Choices and Behaviors in the Assistance System. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 12(1), 53–76.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2013). *Your Behavior Creates Your Gender* [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://bigthink.com/videos/your-behavior-creates-your-gender>
- Cabesaz A. L. (2009). *Economies of Desire: Sex and Tourism in Cuba and Dominican Republic*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Cameron, L. (2006). *Sexual Health and Rights: Sex workers, transgender people and men who have sex with men: Thailand*. New York: Open Society Institute

Chairat, C. (1999). *Development Discourse*. Bangkok: Krirk University Press.

Chantavanich, S., Nittayananta, S., Ratanaolan-Mix, P., Ruenkaew, P., Khemkrut, A., & Kanchai, S. (2001). *The Migration of Thai Women to Germany: Causes, Living Conditions and Impacts for Thailand and Germany*. Bangkok: Asian Research Center for Migration, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University

Chatterjee, R. (2002). In Ghosh, L. (Eds.), *Prostitution in Thailand: Myth and Reality*. New Delhi: Munshiram Monoharjal.

Chotiwan, P. (2014). "*Factory Kathoey*": *Transgender Lives and Selves of Migrants Labors from the Northeastern Region* (Master thesis, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand). Retrieved from http://library.cmu.ac.th/digital_collection

Collins, H. P. (1997). Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited': Where's the Power?. *Signs*, 22(2), 375-381.

Constable, N. (2005a). Introduction: Cross-border marriage, gendered mobility, and global hypergamy. In N. Constable (Eds.), *Cross-border marriages. Gender and mobility in transnational Asia* (pp.1-16). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Constable, N. (2005b). A tale of two marriages: International matchmaking and gendered mobility. In N. Constable (Eds.), *Cross-border marriages. Gender and mobility in transnational Asia* (pp.166-186). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Costa, L., & Matzner, A. (2007). *Male Bodies, Women's Souls: Personal Narratives of Thailand's Transgender Youth*. London: The Harworth Press.

Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2550 (2007), Article 30. Unofficial translation by the Bureau of Technical and International Cooperation Secretariat General of the Administrative Court. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org/tldb/pdf/Thailand_const_2007.pdf

Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560. (2017). (Legal Opinion and Translation Section, Foreign Law Division under the legal duty of the Office of the Council of State, Trans.) Retrieved from http://www.krisdika.go.th/wps/portal/general_en!/ut/p/c5/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3g_A2czQ0cTQ08jR3M3A0dLL-8Ab88QQ_cwI6B8JJJ8oFOQk4Gnf4hBQKCzq4GBuxkB3X4e-bmp-gW5EeUAZhYxCw!!/dl3/d3/L0IDU0IKSWdra0EhIS9JTIJBQUlpQ2dBek15cUEhL1ICSIAxTkMxTktfMjd3ISEvN19OMEM2MUE0MUKyREhGMEE5Qk05VVJFMzBLNA!!/?PC_7_N0C61A41I2DHF0A9BM9URE30K4_WCM_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/ksdkwebcontent_en/legal+translation/constitution/constitution+of+the+kingdom+of+thailand+%28b.e.+2560+%282017%29%29

Cox, William T. L.; Abramson, Lyn Y.; Devine, Patricia G.; Hollon, Steven D. (2012). *Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Depression: The Integrated Perspective* (PDF).

Perspectives on Psychological Science. 7 (5): 427–449.
doi:10.1177/1745691612455204. PMID 26168502.

Crenshaw, K. W. (2011). Demarginalising the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Anti-racist Politics. In Lutz, H., Herrera-Vivar M. T. & Supik, L. (Eds.), *Framing Intersectionality - Debates on a Multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*. (pp. 25-42). Burlington: Ashgate.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Davies, J. (2009). "My name is not Natasha". *How Albanian Women in France Use Trafficking to Overcome Social Exclusion (1998-2001)*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Davis, K. (1995). *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*. New York: Routledge.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sag Publications.

Di Nicola, A., Cauduro, A., Lombardi, M., & Ruspini, P. (2009). *Prostitution and Human Trafficking: Focus on Clients*. New York: Springer.

Dorfman, R. S. (2011). A Foucauldian Analysis of Power and Prostitution: Comparing Sex Tourism and Sex Work Migration. *POLIS Journal*, 5(1), 1-23.

Dredge, K. (2012). Kathoey 'In Trend': Emergent Genderscapes, National Anxieties and the Re-Signification of Male-Bodied Effeminacy in Thailand. *Asian Studies Review*, 36(4), pp.475-494.

Duangwises, N. (2011, September, 15-16). *Changing Epistemology of Gay Studies in Thailand*. Paper presentation at the Sexualities Studies Associations 3rd Conference, Bangkok, Thailand. Retrieved from http://www.ssa.ipsr.mahidol.ac.th/sexuality/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=26&Itemid=58

Duangwises, N. (2012). Cultural Space of Transgenders and Homosexuals in Southeast Asia. Retrieved from http://www.sac.or.th/main/content_detail.php?content_id=227

Duangwises, N. & Jackson P.A. (2013). *Cultural Pluralism and Sex/Gender Diversity in Thailand*. Bangkok. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Press.

Duangwises, N. (2014a). Kwam-ru-lae-amnaj Buang-lung-sex-lae-sopaenee [Knowledge and Power Behind Sex and Prostitution]. *Queer Anthropology*. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre online Press. Retrieved from http://www.sac.or.th/main/content_detail.php?content_id=785

- Duangwises, N. (2014b) Vipak 'Kwam Pen Ying' Kong Ying Nai Rang Chai. [Criticizing 'femininity' of women in men's bodies]. *Queer Anthropology*. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre online Press. Retrived from http://www.sac.or.th/main/content_detail.php?content_id=782
- Dvorsky, G., & Hughes, J. (2008). Postgenderism: Beyond the Gender Binary. *IEET Monograph Series*, 3. 1-18
- Dworkin, A. (1997). *Life and Death*. New York: Free Press
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. (2008). *Management Research* (3rd ed.) London: Sage.
- Esterik, P. V. (2000). *Materializing Thailand (Materializing Culture)*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Estivill, J. (2003). Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion: An Overview. *Geneva: International Labour Office*. 1-137.
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2017). *LGBTI*. Retrieved from <http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/lgbti>
- Fan, C. C., & Huang, Y. (1998). Waves of rural brides. Female marriage migration in China. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 88(2), 227–251.
- Fanon, F. (2008). *Black Skin, White Masks* (R. Philcox, Trans.). New York: Grove Press.
- Farley, M. (2004). Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart: Prostitution Harms Women even if Legalized or Decriminalized. *Violence against women*, 10(10), 1087-1125.
- Foucault, M. (1986). *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1988). *The History of Sexuality. Volume 3: The Care of the Self*. New York: 1st Vintage Books.
- FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2014). *EU LGBT Survey European Union Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Survey*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Fraser, N. (2003). Rethinking Recognition: Overcoming Displacement and Reification in Cultural Politics, in B. Hobson (Eds.), *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements: Contested Identities, Agency and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Ghosh, L. (2002). *Prostitution in Thailand: Myth and Reality*. New Delhi: Munshiram Monoharjal publisher.

- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers. An Introduction*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma: Notes On the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Prentice Hall
- Gorny, A., & Kepinska, E. (2004). Mixed marriages in migration from the Ukraine to Poland. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(2), 353–72.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 255-286). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hall, S. (2000). Who Need ‘Identity’? In P. du Gay, J. Evans & P. Redman (Eds.), *Identity: A Reader*. London: Sage.
- Haritaworn, J. (2008). Shifting Positionalities: Empirical Reflections on a Queer/Trans of Colour Methodology. *Sociological Research Online*, 13(1).
- Harding, S. (2004). A Socially Relevant Philosophy of Science? Resources from Standpoint Theory's Controversiality. *Hypatia*, 19(1), 25-47.
- Harzig, C. (2001). Women migrants as global and local agents. New research strategies on gender and migration. In Sharpe, P. (Eds.), *Women, gender and labour migration. Historical and global perspectives* (pp. 15–28). London: Routledge.
- Heckathorn, D.D. (1997). Respondent-Driven Sampling: A New Approach to the Study of Hidden Populations. *Social Problems*, 44(2), 174–199.
- Herd, G. (1987). *The Sambia: Ritual and Gender in New Guinea*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Herzfeld, M. (2002). The Absent Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101(4), 899-926.
- Hill, D. B. & Willoughby, B. L. B. (2005) . The Development and Validation of the Genderism and Transphobia Scale. *Sex Roles*, 53, 531-544. doi: 10.1007/s11199-005-7140-x
- Hirschfeld, M. (2000). *The Homosexuality of Men and Women* (M. A. Lombardi-Nash, Trans.) Amherst, NY: Prometheus Book.
- Hoang, K. (2011). “She's Not a Low-Class Dirty Girl!": Sex Work in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 40(4), 367-396.
- Hoffman, B. R. (2014). The Interaction of Drug Use, Sex Work, and HIV Among Transgender Women. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 49(8), 1049-1053.

Humbeck, E. (1996). The politics of cultural identity: Thai women in Germany. In M. D. Garcia-Ramon & J. Monk (Eds.), *Women of the European Union. The politics of work and daily life* (pp. 186-201). London: Routledge.

ILGA (2012). '100% Thai manliness' and the reality of LGBT in Thailand. Retrieved from: <http://ilga.org/on-100-thai-manliness-and-the-reality-of-lbgt-in-thailand>

ILGA, report. (2016). Stated-sponsored Homophobia. *A World Survey of Sexual Orientation Law Criminalization, Protection and Recognition 11th Edition*. Retrieved from <http://ilga.org/what-we-do/state-sponsored-homophobia-report/>

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. (2008). *Thailand: Situation and treatment of homosexuals, transsexuals and transgender persons; whether the government updated the constitution to provide rights to homosexuals, transsexuals and transgender persons (2005-2007)*. Retrieved from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47d6547d28.html>

Jackson, P. A. (1995). *Dear Uncle Go: Male Homosexuality in Thailand*. Bangkok, Thailand; San Francisco, Calif., U.S.A.: Bua Luang Books.

Jackson, P. A. (1997a). Thai research on male homosexuality and transgenderism and the cultural limits of Foucaultian analysis. *Journal of the history of sexuality*, 8(1), 52-85.

Jackson, P. A. (1997b). Kathoey < > Gay < > Man, The historical emergence of gay male identity in Thailand. In L. Manderson & M. Jolly (Eds.), *Sites of desire/economies of pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific* (pp. 166-190). Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Jackson, P. A. (1998). Male Homosexuality and Transgenderism in the Thai Buddhist Tradition. In W. Leyland (Eds.), *Queer Dharma: Voice of gay Buddhists* (pp.55-89). San Francisco: Gay sunshine press

Jackson, P. A. (1999). Tolerant but Unaccepting: the Myth of a Thai 'Gay' Paradise. In P. A. Jackson & N. Cook (Eds.), *Gender and Sexualities in Modern Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Jackson, P. A. (2002). Offending Images: Gender and Sexual Minorities, and State Control of the Media in Thailand. In R. Hiang-Khng Heng (Eds.), *Media Fortunes, Changing Times: ASEAN States in Transition* (pp. 201-230). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Jackson, P.A. (2003). Performative Genders, Perverse Desires: A Bio-History of Thailand's Same-Sex and Transgender Cultures. *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, 9, 1-52.

Jackson, P. A. (2004). Gay Adaptation: Tom-Dee Resistance, and Kathoey Indifference: Thailand's Gender/Sex Minorities and the Episodic Allure of Queer English. In W. L. Leap & T. Boellstorff (Eds.), *Speaking in Queer Tongues - Globalization and Gay Language*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

- Jackson, P.A. & Dejnakintra, M. (2006). 'Therawat Lae Kan Patirup Khorng Nakanawasamainiyom Nai Prathet Thai' (Thai Translation by M Dejnakintra of 'Buddhadasa: Theravada Buddhism and Modernist Reform in Thailand', *Journal of the Royal Institute of Thailand*, 31(3), 679-709.
- Jackson, P. A. (2007, December 29). *Queer theory*. Seminar presented at Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand. Retrieved from <http://www.sapaan.org/article/87.html>
- Jackson, P. A. (2011) *Queer Bangkok: 21st Century Markets, Media, and Rights*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press
- Janssen, M.L. (2007). *Reizende sekswerkers: Latijns-Amerikaanse vrouwen in de Europese prostitutie*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Jenkins, C., Pramoj na Ayutthaya, P., & Hunter, A. (2005). *Kathoey in Thailand: HIV/AIDS and life opportunities*. Washington, DC: USAID.
- Jeffreys, S. (1997a). Transgender activism: a lesbian feminist perspective. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 1(3-4), pp. 55-74.
- Jeffreys, S. (1997b). *The Idea of Prostitution*. North Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex.
- Kempadoo, K. & Doezema, J. (1998). *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*. New York: Routledge.
- Kaleidoscope. (2016). Report on Thailand regarding the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons: 25th Session of the Universal Periodic Review April – May 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.sexualrightsinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/KALEIDOSCOPE-SRI-Thailand-UPR-Joint-Submission-April-May-2016.pdf>. Kaleidoscope Human Rights Foundation.
- Kamudhamas, A. (2012). *Female Transsexual Gynecology*. Bangkok: Union Creation.
- Kempadoo, K. (2004). *Sexing the Caribbean: Race, Gender, and Sexual Labor*. New York: Routledge.
- Kittimahacharoen, S. (2013). The World of Nang Yikay Chai Before and After the Era of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram. In P. A. Jackson Cultural Pluralism and Sex/Gender Diversity in Thailand. Bangkok. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Press
- King, M. E., Winter, S., & Webster, B. (2009). Contact reduces trans-prejudice: A study on transgenderism and transgender civil rights in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 21(1), pp. 17-34.
- King, R., Dalipaj, M., & Mai, N. (2006). Gendering migration and remittances. Evidence from London and Northern Albania. *Population, Space and Place*, 12(6), 409-434.

- Kulick, D. (1998). *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Kulick, D. & Rydström J. (2015). *Loneliness and its Opposite: Sex, Disability, and the Ethics of Engagement*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lacan, J. (2006). The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function. In *Ecrits* (pp. 50-51). London: W.W.Norton & Company.
- Lapanun, P. (2013). *Logics of Desire and Transnational Marriage Practices in a Northeastern Thai Village*. Doctoral dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
- Lavelly, W. (1991). Marriage and mobility under rural collectivism. In R. S. Watson & P. B. Ebrey (Eds.), *Marriage and inequality in Chinese society* (pp. 286-312). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography*, 3(1), 47–57.
- Leichtentritt R. D., & Davidson-Arad, B. (2004). Adolescent and Young Adult Male-to-Female Transsexuals: Pathway to Prostitution. *British Journal of Social Work*, 34(3), 349-374
- Li, J. H., & Lavelly, W. (1995). Rural economy and male marriage in China: Jurong, Jiangsu 1933. *Journal of Family and History*, 20(3), 289–306.
- Liljas, P. (2014, March 5). Thailand's Intolerance of Its Own LGBT Community Will Surprise You. *TIME*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/12603/thailands-intolerance-of-its-own-lgbt-community-will-surprise-you/>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and emerging Confluences. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.) (pp.163-188). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lisborg, A. (2002). Bodies across borders: Prostitution-related migration from Thailand to Denmark. In S. Thorbek & B. Pattanaik (Eds.), *Transnational prostitution: Changing global patterns* (pp. 100–120). London: Zed Books.
- Loomba, A. (1993). Dead woman tell no tells: Issue of female subjectivity, subaltern agency and tradition in colonial and post-colonial writings on widow immolation in India. *History workshop*, 36, 209-227.
- Loomba, A. (2005). *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London. Routledge.
- Loos, T. (1999). *Gender adjudicated: Translating modern legal subjects in Siam*. (Doctoral dissertation, Cornell University).
- Liotard, J-F. (1979). *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (G. Bennington & B. Massumi, Trans. 1984). Paris: Minuit.
- MacKinnon, C. A. (1993). Prostitution and Civil Rights. *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, 1(1), 13-31.

- Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics, and Performance*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Maguire, P. (1996). Considering More Feminist Participatory Research: What's Congruency Got to Do with It? *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2(1), 106-118.
- Manager Online (2015) Ruam-chue-kan! Ban-Kathoey-kao-pub-yan-dung-lamerdsitti-manussayachon (English translation: Together protesting! The ban of Kathoeyes to enter famous pub as it violates human rights) Retrieved from <http://www.manager.co.th/daily/viewnews.aspx?NewsID=9580000016108>
- Mani, L. (1987). Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India. *Cultural Critique*, 7, 119-156.
- Manopaiboon, C., Bunnell, R. E., Kilmarx, P. H., Chaikummao, S., Limpakarnjanarat, K., Supawitkul, S., ... Mastro, T. D. (2003). Leaving sex work: Barriers, Facilitating Factors and Consequences for Female Sex Workers in Northern Thailand. *AIDS Care*, 15(1), 39-52.
- Matteo, C.A. (2016). *Masculine Identities and Male Sex Work between East Java and Bali: an ethnography of youth, bodies, and violence*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Matsueda, R.L. (1992). Reflected Appraisals, Parental Labelling, and Delinquency: Specifying a Symbolic Interactionist Theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 97 (6), 1577-1611
- Mahidol University, Plan International, UNESCO. (2014) *Bullying targeting secondary school students who are or are perceived to be transgender or same-sex attracted: Types, prevalence, impact, motivation and preventive measures in 5 provinces of Thailand*. Bangkok, Thailand. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002275/227518e.pdf>
- Matzner, A. (2002). *The Politics of Re-Presentation: An analysis of Western. Academic Treatment of Male Transgenderism in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://home.att.net/~leela2/politics.htm>.
- McCall, L. (2005). The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Signs*, 30(3), 771-880.
- McKeganey, N. and Barnard M. (1992). *AIDS Drugs and Sexual Risk: Lives in Balance*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Mies, M. (1980). *Indian Women and Patriarchy*. New Delhi: Concept.
- Mix, P. R. (2002). Four cases from Hamburg. In S. Thorbeck, & B. Pattanaik (Eds.), *Transnational prostitution: changing global patterns*. London: Zed Books.
- Monto, M. A. (2000). Why Men Seeks out Prostitutes. In R. Weitzer (Eds.), *Sex for Sale: Prostitution, Pornography, and the Sex Industry* (pp. 67-83). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Monto, M. A. (2004). Female Prostitution, Customers and Violence. *Violence against women*, 10(2), 160-168.
- Monto M. A., & Julka, D. (2009). Conceiving of Sex as a Commodity: A Study of Arrested Customers of Female Street Prostitutes. *Women Criminology Review*, 10(1), 1-14
- Moore, H. L. (1988). *Feminism and anthropology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Morris, R. C. (1994). Three Sexes and Four Sexualities Redressing the Discourses on Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Thailand. *Positions*, 2(1), 15-43.
- Morrison, T. (1987). *Beloved*. New York: Knops.
- Mosse, G. L. (1985). *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*. Madison, Wis:University of Wisconsin Press
- Nadal, K. L. (2013) *That's So Gay! Microaggressions and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association
- Nadal, K. L, Davidoff, K. C, Fuji-Doe, W. (2014) *Transgender Women and the Sex work Industry: Roots in Systemic, Institutional, and Interpersonal Discrimination*. Journal of Trauma&Dissociation. London. Routledge
- Nontapatamadul, K. (2003). *Qualitative Research in Social Welfare: Concept and Method*. Bangkok: Thammasart University Press.
- Mthai News (2016) Won-online Pai-rub-samuk-ngarn Mai-rub-tom-kathoey Songsai-yiad=phet-rue-mai? (English translation: Gone viral, the job application sign not accepting tomboy and Kathoey - is it sexist?) Retrieved from <https://news.mthai.com/social-news/492732.html>
- National Human Rights Commission of Thailand. (2008). *2547-2549 Evaluative Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Field of Sexual Diversity in the Years 2004–2006*. Bangkok, Thailand
- Oakley, A. (1981). *Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms*, in H. Roberts (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*, London: Routledge.
- O'Connell, D. J. (1998). *Prostitution, Power and Freedom*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- O'Donoghue, T., & Punch, K. (2003). *Qualitative Educational Research in Action: Doing and Reflecting*. London: Routledge.
- Obeyesekere, G. (2005). *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Ojanen T. T. (2009). Sexual/Gender Minorities in Thailand: Identities, Challenges and Voluntary-Sector Counseling. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, 6(2), 4-34.

- Olesen, V. (2000). Feminisms and Qualitative Research at and into the Millennium. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 215-255). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- O'Reilly, K. (2009). *Key Concepts in Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Ortiz, V. (1996). Migration and marriage among Puerto Rican women. *International Migration Review*, 30(2), 460–484.
- Oude Breuil, B. C. (2008). “Precious Children in a Heartless World”? The Complexities of Child Trafficking in Marseille. *Children & Society*, 22(3), 223–234.
- Oude Breuil, B. C. (2009). Nachtblind. (On)zichtbaarheid van prostitutiemigratie in Marseille. In C. Brants & S. van der Poel (Eds.), *Diverse kwesties. Liber amicorum prof. Dr. Frank Bovenkerk* (pp. 125–141). Den Haag: Boom Juridische Uitgevers.
- Padilla, M. (2007). *Caribbean Pleasure Industry: Tourism, Sexuality, and AIDS in Dominica Republic*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Padoongcheevit, J. (2016). Arn-Vipak Michel Foucault. [Read Critical Michel Foucault]. Bangkok: Siam Paritas Press.
- Pattaporn, C. (2012). *Women's Transnational Identities and Belonging: The Case of Thai Female Immigrants in Sweden* (Master thesis, Lund University, Lund, Sweden) Retrieved from <https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search/publication/2702074>
- Pedraza, S. (1991). Women and migration: The social consequences of gender. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 17, 303–325.
- Peletz, M. G. (2006). Transgenderism and Gender Pluralism in Southeast Asia since Early Modern Times. *Current Anthropology*, 2006, 47(2), 309-340.
- Peshkin, A. (1988). Virtuous Subjectivity: In the Participant-observer's 'I's. In D. Berg & K. Smith (Eds.), *The Self in Social Inquiry* (pp. 267-282). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Plambech, S. (2010). From Thailand with Love – Transnational Migration in the Global Care Economy. In T. Zheng *Sex Trafficking, Human Rights, and Social Justice* (pp. 32–48). London; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pornthep, P. (2013). Pusao-nahan-molam-kwarm-sampan-rawang-Kathoey-lae-poochai-nai-concert-molam-Isaan [Northeastern Kathoey relation with men in Molum space]. In N. Duangwiset & P. A. Jackson (Eds.), *Cultural Pluralism and Sex/Gender Diversity in Thailand*. Bangkok. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Press.
- Pramoj na Ayutthaya, P. (2003). Contesting Identities of "Kathoei" in Cabaret Show. Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai University Press.
- Prasad, P. (2005). *Crafting Qualitative Research: Working in the Postpositivist Traditions*. Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe.

- Pravattiyagul, J. (2014). Abusive Relationships: Thai Transgender Women and European Men. *CRIMINOLOGÍA Y JUSTICIA*, 7(3).
- Prosser, J. (1998). *Second Skins: the Body Narratives of Transexuality*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Raphael, J. & Shapiro, D. L. (2002). *Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago*. Chicago: Center of impact research
- Ramazanoglu, C. & Holland, J. (2002). *Feminist methodology: Challenges and Choices*. London: Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Ramet, S. P. (1996). Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures. In S. P. Ramet (Eds.), *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures* (pp. 1-21). London, Routledge.
- Raymond, J. (1995, December) Prostitution is Rape That's Paid For. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from http://articles.latimes.com/1995-12-11/local/me-12813_1_human-rights
- Ruenkeaw, P. (1999). *Marriage migration of Thai women to Germany*. Paper presented at the 7th International Conference on Thai Studies, 4–8 July, Amsterdam.
- Ruenkaew, P. (2003): *Heirat nach Deutschland: Motive und Hintergründe thailändisch-deutscher Eheschließungen* (Marriage to Germany: Motive and Background of Thai-German marriages), Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag.
- Reyes, R. A. G. & Clarence-Smith W. G. (2012). *Sexual diversity in Asia, c. 600-1950*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge
- Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as Another*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rubin, G. S. (1984). Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality. In C. S. Vance (Eds.), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. New York: Routledge
- Sacks, O. (1991). *A Leg to Stand on*. London. Picador
- Salisa, Y. (2013). Attaluk-puer-wan-proongnii-bot-vipak-karn-muang-cherng-attaluk-jak-sumnukkid-lung-ananikom [Identity for 'Tomorrow': Criticizing Identity Politics through Post-colonialism.] *Sociology Journal*, 9(2), 61-103
- Sagar, T. (2009). Anti-Social Powers and the Regulation of Street Sex Work. *Social Policy & Society*, 9(1), 101.109.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books
- Samakkeekarom, R. & Taesombat, J. (2013). Couple Life. Family Building Among LGBT People: Types, Acceptance and Needs. *Quality of Life and Law Journal, Mahidol University* 9(2).
- Satz, D. (1995). Markets in Women's Labor. *Ethics*, 106(1), 63-85.

- Schwandt, T. (1997). *Qualitative Inquiry: A DICTIONARY of terms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Schwandt, T. (2007). *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* (3rd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sharpe, P. (2001). Introduction: Gender and the experiences of migration. In P. Sharpe (Eds.), *Women, gender, and labour migration. Historical and global perspectives* (pp. 1-14). London: Routledge.
- Sharpley-Whiting, T. D. (1998). *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminisms*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Shih, J. (1994) A Plague in Prostitution: HIV and AIDS in Thailand. *Rhode Island Medicine*, 77(5), 145-149
- Siegel, D., & Bovenkerk, F. (2000). Crime and Manipulation of Identity among Russian- Speaking Immigrants in the Netherlands. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 16(4), 424–444.
- Siegel, D. (2005). Recent Trends in Women Trafficking and Voluntary Prostitution: Russian- speaking Sex-Workers in the Netherlands. *Transnational Crime*, 4(1), 4–23.
- Siegel, D. (2011). Mobility of Sex Workers in European Cities. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 18(3), 255–268.
- Silapawattanatham Magazine (2016) Wattanatham- samai-jompon- P.Phibunsomgram (English translation: Cultures during Phibunsomgram era). Retrieved from https://www.silpa-mag.com/club/art-and-culture/article_1453
- Sinnott, M. J. (2004). *Toms and Dees: Transgender Identity and Female Same-Sex Relationships in Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Sinnott, M. J. (2011). The Language of Rights, Davience, and Pleasure. In P.A, Jackson (Eds.), *Queer Bangkok - 21st Century Markets, Media, and Rights* (pp. 205.228). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Solomon, A. (2005). Trans/Migrant: Christina Madrazo's All American Story. In E.L. Luibheide, L. & L. Cantú Jr (Eds.), *Queer Migration: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossing*. Minneapolis: London University of Minnesota Press.
- Sorajjakool, S. (2003). *Child Prostitution in Thailand: Listening to Rahab*. New York: Haworth Press.
- Spivak, G. (2010). Can the Subaltern Speak?. In R. C. Morris (Eds.) *Reflection on the History of an Idea 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Suksomboon, P. (2011). Cross-border marriage as a migration strategy: Thai women in the Netherlands. In E. Kofman, M. Kohli, A. Kraler & C. Schmoll (Eds.), *Gender*,

Generations and the Family in International Migration (pp. 221–24). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press-

Sunanta, S. (2009). *Global Wife, Local Daughter: Gender, Family, and Nation in Transnational Marriages in Northeast Thailand* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of British Columbia). Retrieved from <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0067068>

Sunstein, B. S., & Chiseri-Strater, E. (2002). *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research*. Bedford: St. Martin's.

Tassanachaikul, N. (1997). *Achayakram (Karn-pong-kun: KarnOkuab-khum)* (English translation: Crime (Protection: Control). Department of Political Science and Public Administrative, Faculty of Social Science: Kasetsart University Press.

Taweessit, S. (2000). *From Village to Factory 'Girl': Shifting Narratives on Gender and Sexuality in Thailand* (Doctoral dissertation, Seattle: University of Washington). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/33516958_From_village_to_factory_girl_s_hifting_narratives_on_gender_and_sexuality_in_Thailand

The Foundation of Transgender Alliance for Human Rights, (2011). *Joh-cheevit-sao-praphet-song-muang-Pattaya 'Kathoe-y-turian-sunuk' Harm-kao* (English translation: Examining Kathoey's lives in Pattaya. No entry for 'Kathoey's, durians and dogs'). Retrieved from <http://www.thaitga.com/index.php/library/news/209-transgender-life-in-pattaya-kathoei-dog-and-durian-not-allow-to-entry>

Todaro, M. P. (1969). A model of labour migration and urban unemployment in less developed countries. *The American Economic Review* , 59(1), 138–148.

Totman, R. (2003). *The Third Sex: Kathoey: Thailand's Ladyboys*. London: Souvenir Press.

TGEU (2012). *265 Killings of Trans People in Last Year – Trans Murder Monitoring project*. Transgender Europe Media Release. Retrieved from: <https://tgeu.org/265-killings-of-trans-people-in-last-12-months-reveals-tgeus-trans-murder-monitoring-project/>

Tyldum, G. & Tveit, M. (2008). *Someone who cares: A study of vulnerability and risk in marriage migration from Russia and Thailand to Norway*. Norway: Fato report

TvT research project (2016). *Trans Murder Monitoring results: TMM IDAHOT 2016 Update, Transrespect versus Transphobia Worldwide*. Retrieved from: <http://transrespect.org/en/idahot-2016-tmm-update/>

UNDP & USAID (2014). *Being LGBT in Asia: Thailand Country Report*. Bangkok.

Usher, P. (1996). Feminists Approaches to Research. In D. Scott & P. Usher (Eds.), *Understanding Educational Research* (pp. 120-142). New York: Routledge

- Van Blerk, L. (2008). Poverty, migration and sex work: youth transitions in Ethiopia. *Area*, 40(2), 245-253
- Ward, G. (1977). *Teach Yourself: Postmodernism*. Chicago: Contemporary Books
- Weitzer, R. (2005). Flawed Theory and Method in Studies of Prostitution. *Violence Against Women*, 11(7), 934-949.
- Weitzer, R. (2010). The Mythology of Prostitution: Advocacy Research and Public Policy. *Sex Research and Social Policy*, 7(1), 15-29.
- Wilson, A. (2004). *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok: Tomboys, tycoons, and Avon Ladies in the Global City*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.
- Winichakul, T. (1994). *Siam Mapped*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Winter, S. (2002). Countering Kathoey. TransgenderASIA Retrieved from: http://web.hku.hk/~sjwinter/TransgenderASIA/paper_counting_Kathoey.htm
- Winter, S. (2006a). Thai Transgender in Focus: Their Beliefs About Attitudes Towards and Origins of Transgender. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 9(2), 47-62.
- Winter, S. (2006b). Thai Transgenders in Focus: Demographics, Transitions and identities. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 9(1), 15-27.
- Winter, S., Chalungsooth, P., Koon Teh, Y., Rojanalert, N., Maneerat, K., Wuen Wong, Y., ... Aquino Macapagal, R. (2009). Transpeople: A Seven-country Study of Acceptance, Prejudice and Pathologgisation. *International Journal of Sexuality Health*, 21(2), 96-118.
- Winter, S. (2011). Transpeople (Khon-Kham-Phet) in Thailand: Transprejudice, Exclusion, and the Presumption of Mental Illness. In P. A. Jackson (Eds.), *Queer Bangkok - 21st Century Markets, Media, and Rights* (pp. 251-267). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Wolcott, H. (1995). *The Art of Fieldwork*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Wolf, N. (1991). *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Zhang, S. (2011). Woman Pullers: Pimping and Sex Trafficking in a Mexican Border City. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 56(5), 509-528.

Appendix

Appendix A: Interview guideline for participants in Thailand

1. General Questions
 - What is your name?
 - How old are you?
 - Are you single or are you in a relationship?
 - Where is your hometown in Thailand
 - Can you tell me about your life background?
 - What is your occupation?

2. Being Kathoey
 - How or why do people become Kathoey?
 - How does it feel to be a Kathoey in Thailand?
 - What are your life goals?

3. Questions regarding discrimination against Kathoey in Thailand
 - Are you satisfied with the transgender rights situation in Thailand? Why?
 - Do you think Thai society accepts Kathoey?
 - Is there any Kathoey discrimination issue in Thailand?
 - Do you have any concerns about the Kathoey legal right situation?
 - Do you have any concerns about Kathoey social right situation?
 - What do you think about Thai media?
 - If any, can you tell me about personal discrimination experiences based on your sexuality?
 - How do you expect lives of Kathoey in Thailand to be?

4. Questions regarding opinion about Europe and being Kathoey in Europe
 - What is your opinion about Europe?
 - Would you like to migrate to live in Europe? Why?
 - What do you think about European men?
 - Do you think Kathoey in Europe experience less discrimination than in Thailand? How and why?

5. Questions about transgender women and feminine beauty
 - What is the most important thing in life for Kathoey?
 - Can you tell me about your life before transition and life after transition?
 - How important it is for Kathoey to be beautiful? Why?
 - What does it mean for you to be beautiful?

6. Questions about Kathoey and sex work (this section is only for sex workers)

- What is your dream job?
- What motivates you to do sex work?
- How did your career path as a sex worker start?
- What do you think about sex work?
- Are you satisfied with your job?
- How much do Kathoey sex workers earn in Thailand?
- Can you tell me about the sex work industry in Thailand?
- Do you know anything about Kathoey sex work in Europe? If yes, can you please tell me about it?
- Who are your clients?
- How is your relation with clients?
- What are the pros and cons for being Kathoey sex worker?
- Have you experienced violence from your work? How? And how do you feel about that?
- If you can choose, would you still do sex work? Why?

Appendix B: Questions guideline for participants in Europe

1. General Questions

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Are you single or are you in a relationship?
- Where is your hometown in Thailand
- Can you tell me about your life background?
- What is your occupation?
- How did you come to Europe? When?

2. Being Kathoey

- How or why do people become Kathoey?
- How did it feel to be a Kathoey in Thailand?
- How does it feel to be a Kathoey in Europe?
- Are there any differences to being a Kathoey in Thailand and in Europe? If yes, please explain in detail.
- What was your life goal when you lived in Thailand?
- How about now? After you migrated to Europe, what is your life goal?

3. Questions regarding discrimination towards Kathoey in Thailand

- How was it to be a Kathoey in Thailand?
- Are you satisfied with transgender rights situation in Thailand? Why?
- Do you think Thai society accepts Kathoey?
- Are there any discrimination issues for Kathoey in Thailand?
- Do you have any concerns about the situation of Kathoey legal rights?

- Do you have any concerns about the situation of Kathoey social rights?
 - What do you think about Thai media?
 - If any, can you tell me about personal discrimination experiences (in Thailand) based on your sexuality?
 - What do you expect lives of Kathoeyes in Thailand to be like?
4. Questions regarding Kathoey migration to Europe
- How did you migrate to Europe, and why?
 - How is life in Europe for Kathoeyes?
 - What was your opinion about Europe before you migrated here?
 - Now, what is your opinion about Europe after you have lived here?
 - Is life in Europe better or worse for Kathoey than in Thailand? Why?
 - What do you think about romantic relationships between Kathoey and European men?
 - Would you prefer to stay in Europe or Thailand?
5. Questions regarding discrimination toward Kathoey in Europe
- How is it, being a Kathoey in Europe?
 - Are you satisfied with the transgender rights situation in Europe? Why?
 - Do you think European society accepts Kathoeyes?
 - Is there any discrimination against Kathoeyes in Europe?
 - Do you have any concerns about the Kathoey legal rights situation (in Europe)?
 - Do you have any concerns about the Kathoey social rights situation (in Europe)?
 - What do you think about European media and transgender?
 - If any, can you tell me about personal discrimination experiences (in Europe), based on your sexuality?
 - What do you expect life of Kathoeyes in Europe to be like?
6. Questions about transgender women and feminine beauty
- What is the most important thing in life for Kathoeyes?
 - Can you tell me about your life before and after transition?
 - How important it is for Kathoey to be beautiful? Why?
 - What does it mean to you, to be beautiful?
7. Questions about Kathoey and sex work (this section is only for sex workers)
- What is your dream job?
 - What work did you do in Thailand before you migrated?
 - What motivates you to do sex work in Europe?
 - How did your career path as a sex worker in Europe start?

- What do you think about sex work?
- Are you satisfied with your job?
- How much do Kathoey sex workers earn in Europe?
- Can you tell me about the sex work industry in Europe and Thailand?
- Who are your clients?
- What sort of relationships do you have with your clients?
- What are the pros and cons of being Kathoey sex worker?
- Have you experienced violence from your work? How? And how do you feel about that?
- If you can choose, would you still do sex work? Why?

Appendix C: Participants and interviews information

| Participant (Pseudonym) | Age | Country of resident | Place of interview | Approx. length of interview |
|-------------------------|-----|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Jetsada | 28 | Thailand | Bangkok | 1 hour 40 mins |
| Doy Suriyothai | 33 | Thailand | Pattaya | 1 hour/3 hour |
| Toon | 29 | Thailand | Bangkok | 50 mins |
| Ratee | 36 | Thailand | Bangkok | 40 mins |
| Baitong | 26 | Thailand | Nakhon Pathom | 2 hours |
| Nuch | 32 | Thailand | Pattaya | 30 mins |
| Muna | 26 | Thailand | Bangkok | 30 mins |
| Joom | 25 | Thailand | Bangkok | 50 mins |
| Jibby | 37 | Thailand | Bangkok | 1 hour 15 mins |
| Wai | 24 | Thailand | Chumphon | 1 hour |
| Sujeera | 20 | Thailand | Bangkok | 50 mins |
| Maliwan | 42 | Thailand | Bangkok | 1 hour |
| Darat | 39 | Thailand | Pattaya | 2 hours |
| Weena | 30 | Thailand | Bangkok | 2 hours |
| Matsri | 44 | Thailand | Chumphon | 2 hour |
| Alice | 26 | Thailand | Bangkok | 1 hour 40 mins |
| Preeraya | 52 | Thailand | Pattaya | 1.5 hour |
| Dr. Ann | 48 | Thailand | Nakhon Pathom | 40 mins |
| Titima | 44 | Thailand | Pattaya | 45 mins |
| Peraya | 19 | Thailand | Nakhon Pathom | 2 hours |
| Beam | 33 | Thailand | Bangkok | 2 hours |
| Wanda | 21 | Thailand | Nakhon Pathom | 2 hours |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----------------|---------------|---------|
| Muk | 51 | Thailand | Chumphon | 55 mins |
| Da | 21 | Thailand | Nakhon Pathom | 2 hours |
| Ronnapoom Samakkeekarom | N/A | Thailand | Bangkok | 30 mins |
| Fang | 34 | Belgium | Ghent | 3 hours |
| Lyla | 35 | Belgium | Antwerp | 30 mins |
| Jenny/John | 32 | Belgium | Ghent | 3 hours |
| Marasri | 39 | Belgium | Ghent | 30 mins |
| Suay | 41 | Belgium | Ghent | 30 mins |
| Anja | 27 | Belgium | Ghent | 50 mins |
| Pok | 34 | Denmark | Copenhagen | 3 hours |
| Gai | 36 | Denmark | Sweden | 1 hour |
| Chonticha | 28 | Denmark | Copenhagen | 20 mins |
| Ladda | 42 | Denmark | Copenhagen | 1 hour |
| Varee | 33 | Denmark | Copenhagen | 45 mins |
| Molly | 35 | Denmark | Copenhagen | 1 hour |
| Saowanee | 45 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 2 hours |
| Yai | 55 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 2 hours |
| Gee | 36 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 1 hour |
| Jinda | 42 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 3 hours |
| Jessy | 53 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 3 hours |
| Gege | 27 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 30 mins |
| Saifan | 20 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 2 hours |
| Sang | 41 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 40 mins |
| Sunee | 64 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 50 mins |
| Kook | 37 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 1 hour |
| Thida | 38 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 40 mins |
| Dahlia | 29 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 25 mins |
| Roong | 32 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 1 hour |
| Mimi | 21 | The Netherlands | Amsterdam | 2 hours |
| Matthew | 57 | The UK | London | 30 mins |
| Ahmed | 44 | The UK | London | 20 mins |
| Phil | 26 | Belgium | Ghent | 30 mins |

| | | | | |
|--------|----|-----------------|----------|-------------------|
| Pichai | 38 | Thailand | Bangkok | 25 mins |
| Tom | 31 | The Netherlands | VDO call | 40 mins |
| Kao | 27 | The UK | London | 30 mins |
| Nok | 27 | The UK | London | 3 hours |
| Naree | 45 | The UK | London | 1 hour |
| Pip | 43 | The UK | London | 2 hours |
| Jane | 26 | The UK | Bangkok | 2 Hours |
| Bell | 34 | The UK | London | 30 mins |
| Nee | 42 | The UK | London | 1hours 15 mins |
| Mote | 31 | The UK | London | 45 mins |
| Putsra | 25 | The UK | London | 50 mins |
| Yee | 32 | The UK | London | 1 hour 15 mins |
| Jay | 33 | The UK | London | 40 mins |

Appendix D: Participants observation detail

| Location | Period |
|--|--|
| The United Kingdom (London) | Between December 2013 – April 2014 |
| The Netherlands (Amsterdam and Rucphen) | Between April 2014 – November 2014 and between December 2015 – February 2016 |
| Thailand (Bangkok, Pattaya, Chumphon, Nakhon Pathom) | Between November 2014 – February 2015 and between September 2015 – November 2015 |
| Belgium (Ghent, Antwerp and Bruges) | Between June 2015 – August 2015 |
| Denmark (Copenhagen) | Between February 2015 – May 2015 |