

**MODERN WOMEN, SEXUAL DESIRE AND PLEASURE  
IN URBAN VIETNAM**

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M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)

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**ABSTRACT**

While there is substantial evidence to show that young single women in urban Vietnam are facing conflicts between conventional and modern meanings of sexuality and sexual practices, little is known about how they deal with those conflicts. I used postmodern feminism perspective and narrative analysis method to discover the dynamics and fluidity of single “modern” women’s sexual identities/ subjectivities, and realities of sexual desire and pleasure through their re/negotiation process. Total 13 single educated women, including 2 lesbians took part in this study. The recruitment method was snowball, and the interviews were conducted 3-4 times with each participant to “touch” the sensitive stories of sexual experiences and sexual meanings. Narrative analysis was done case by case, and then theme analysis was done for comparison. Secondary data was used to provide a larger context of public/ media discourses, in which single women are struggling to negotiate their individualized discourses.

The findings of this research produce insights to individualized discourses of single women on notions of being “modern women” and women’s sexual issues such as virginity, premarital sex, homosexuality, femininity in sexuality, and sexual desire and pleasure. Among multiple-layer competing discourses, women are not victims, but rather active agents, who turn the power of public discourses to benefit their sexuality. Their interpretations and internalizations of such discourses are various, leading to fluidity of sexual subjectivities, and hence, diversified realities of their sexual desire and pleasure. Sexual desire and pleasure of single women are not physical desire and pleasure per se. Rather, in this study sexual desire and pleasure are placed in a complicated context of social and gender relations, and “moral transgression”. I look at single women in their narratives, trying to link their sexual agency, subjectivities and sexual experiences. It is recognized that women’s perceived femininity and masculinity play an important role in their negotiation, however, as “temporary” means for negotiation rather than objective achievements. I also discuss possible implication of my findings to understand the “sexual value system” and to apply them for further research on sexuality.

Finally, recommendations have been made on sexual right, sexual health education and further research on sexuality, especially sexuality of lesbians in Vietnam.

KEY WORDS: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS/DISCOURSES / SEXUAL DESIRE/  
SEXUAL PLEASURE/ SUBJECTIVITY/ MODERN WOMEN/  
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