

Crit Sum: (See pg. 57 Chap 10 CCC)
Young Sex Workers in Ho Chi Minh City

Rubenson, Birgitta, Le Thi Hanh, Bengt Hojer, and Eva Johansson. (2005) Young Sex-Workers in Ho Chi Minh City Telling Their Life Stories. *Childhood* 12: 391-441.

Birgitta Rubenson works for the Department of Public Health Sciences in the International Division or (IHCAR). She has studied childhood prostitution in Vietnam. Her research documented the life stories of 22 sex-workers, ages 15-18 years old. From the information gathered Rubenson concluded that poverty, lack of other job alternatives, and the responsibility to share in the support of their families, led these girls into prostitution (Rubenson 2005: 391).

In Vietnam, adolescence is viewed as a transitional period from childhood to adulthood. This transition includes independence, responsibility, and maturity to determine when a person is considered to be an adult. The sexual exploitation of children has effects on the physical and the mental well-being of these girls, yet it is the reality of thousands of them living in Vietnam. The estimated number of prostitutes in Vietnam is between 2,000 and 20,000 (Rubenson 2005: 392). The focus of this study was to let the girls tell their stories to increase our understanding of how they live and how they cope with their challenges.

The girls were interviewed in a setting that was familiar to them. They could leave the study whenever they wanted, even though they were given a stipend. The first meeting was used as an introduction of the study to the girls being interviewed. The second meeting was for the girls to tell their story to the researcher. During the third meeting, the girls would identify negative and positive aspects of their job. At the final

meeting, the interviewer repeated the information gathered to the girls to make sure that it was correct.

Many participants turned to prostitution to help with their families' expenses. Some girls acquired the career for an immediate cash flow, aside from the plight of STD's, pregnancies, death, and time spent in prison. Others felt they had nothing else to turn to in light of the abuse they had previously experienced. Their life is a story of endurance and hardship. These girls presented themselves as competent adults with respect to dealing with their lives.

Rubenson organized the girls' life stories into three types of narratives according to how they presented their life to the researchers. These categories are--poverty, lack of job opportunities, and the responsibility to share in the supporting of their families-- which led these girls to prostitution (Rubenson 2005: 391). The focus of this study was to let the girls tell their stories to increase understanding of how they live and cope with their challenges.

(This summary was taken from a paper written by Alexis Koch a student at USU)