

## CHAPTER 4

### **Families, Educational Institutions and the Controls of Schoolgirls' Sexualities**

This Chapter examines the hegemonic power mechanisms of the Thai state, focusing on research participants' families and educational institutions and how they operate to construct an idealized female youth sexual identity, called the '*well-behaved women*' (*kunlasatree*). According to de Certeau's definition, strategies operate at the level of planning that determines key operations necessary to govern. The setting of strategies is always the purview of those in power; strategy presumes control. Strategy is self-segregating, in the same way administration and management are self-segregating, setting itself up as a barricaded insider. In other words, strategies are the identification of key operations that are necessary to accomplish the main objective (de Certeau, 1988). Foucault (1977) compares social control to the model of panopticon to illustrate the systematic arrangements of surveillance over individuals. The panopticon, which was a new structure for prisons, allowed guards to watch prisoners continuously. From a tower in the center of a ring of cells, one or two guards could constantly monitor those inside the cells. This also means that individuals in the cells were always aware of being watched by those in the tower. The prospect of being constantly under scrutiny discourages bad behavior. The model of panopticon fundamentally altered the function and efficiency of prisons and eventually society (Khosravi, 2008). Similarly, the diverse strategies of families and educational institutions in controlling and constructing a desired sexual identity perception, the *kunlasatree* model, among the girls are systematically employed. This Chapter uses the model of panopticon to explore the systematic operation of the families', school's and universities' control mechanisms that force the schoolgirls to discipline themselves while living with the possibility that they are under constant surveillance and under threat of the immediate punishment for any wrongdoings.

## 4.1 Growing Up in Middle-Class Families: Mental, Temporal, Spatial, and Network Control

In this session, the mechanisms of control operated by parents are divided into two main parts – mental control and physical control. For the mental control, parents tried to teach and implant their expectations, especially regarding education and virginity, into their daughters. These expectations would remind the girls of their parents' wishes and would remind them to behave accordingly. Regarding the physical control, it was found that parents employed various surveillance apparatuses to control their daughters in relation to their time, space and network.

### 4.1.1 You Have to Be Good at Studying and Be Virgin!: Embedding Parent's Expectations

According to the stories of research participants provided in Chapter 2, most of their parents were part of the 'new middle-class' in their generation. Although most parents held white-collar occupations such as a lawyer, government officer, police officer or business owner, most of them had originated from lower middle class or working class backgrounds. Some of them were from poor agricultural families that had migrated into Chiang Mai city to pursue educational and career opportunities. Most of families were single-parent families. Most parents complained that they had little time to spend with their children, as Nancy's father and Jill's mother expressed respectively that:

*"I know I have no time with my children [Nancy and her younger brother]. I work at my office during work hours and very often I have extra jobs in the evening. During the weekend I also have to study. You see that I am very busy but I try to arrange my time to pick up my children at their schools. I try to cook for them sometimes if I'm at home in the evening. I realize that they should have a mother to deal with this kind of job. But I try to spend most quality time with them anyway."*

*“I’m glad that you sometimes take Jill back home instead of me. I have no time for her. I work at a tour agency at daytime and do an extra job at nighttime. Please keep your eyes on her instead of me, especially in her studies.”*

The parents expected their children to learn from their own childhood experiences, which were often full of hardship. They usually shared stories full of difficulties and inconvenience, expecting that their daughters would be inspired by these stories and focus on studying for their future in order to have a better life compared to theirs in the past. Nancy’s father shared me his strategy that he always used with Nancy in the car taking her to and from school:

*“I always take a chance when we are in the car together. Do you know why? She cannot open the door and run away from me. We are both stuck in the car. I try to talk to her during dinner. She mostly finds a reason to leave the table when she knows that I’m going to talk. In the car, she cannot run away.”*

Most of parents wanted their daughters to know that they were from poor families in upcountry areas. When they were young they did not have many amenities like their daughters’ generation. Nancy’s father always taught her that during his childhood, he did not even have a television. After he finished his household chores, the only thing he could do was studying because he had realized that only education could pave the way for him to have a brighter future. He told Nancy that he had read the same book many times until he could remember the content by heart. As a result, he managed to reach to the top of his class when he graduated from high school. As a poor boy from a rural area around Chiang Mai, he managed to pass the entrance examination of one of the top national universities. Although he was one of the poorest students in his year, he focused on studying until he obtained his undergraduate degree. During his career, from having nothing, he became one of the highest-ranking employees of the organization where he worked. He had a nice house, a car, and a better quality of life. He always told Nancy that he expected Nancy to be a real fighter like he had been, and he told her to be successful in her education so she could have a good career like him. Meanwhile, Janet’s mother told her stories of growing up in a rural area of the northern part of Thailand. Her

life was not as easy and convenient as Janet's life was currently. When she was a teenager, she did not live with her parents because she had to work in a farm helping her grandparents since she had been very young. In addition to working in a farm, she sold vegetables at a village market very early in the morning. Immediately after returning from a market, she continued working in a farm until evening. Following dinner, she was ordered to work in a rubber plantation to get extra money. She had to leave school when she was in grade four in order to work in a full-time labor job. When she was young, she had no chance to hang out with her friends at all because she had to work all the time. Her life became much better after she got married with Janet's father and move to Chiang Mai city to open a laundry business.

Having overcome hardships in the past, parents used their stories to their daughters so that the girls would keep in mind how much more social activities, freedom, and conveniences they had. Mary's mother complained that her daughter was obsessed with the Internet. She had her own desktop computer at home and a laptop computer with a Wi-Fi Internet connection. She also had an iPhone with an unlimited Internet package. Hence, she would be connected to the Internet at all times. Thai youth in modern society consider mobile phones and access to the Internet as the sixth basic need, following Maslow's idea of Hierarchy of Needs. Mary's mother compared her experience when she was a teenager by mentioning that she only had a home phone. When she was about to make a phone call, she had to ask for permission from her parents and she was not allowed to spend much time on the phone. Mary's mother said that she had more time, compared to Mary, to study and be responsible for household chores. Some parents also complained about their children's spending habits. Lisa's mother told me that when she was young, she spent very little on a daily basis. A bowl of noodles had been only 2 – 2.50 baht and the transportation had cost merely 0.50 baht. Compared to Lisa, and other research participants, they were given around 80 – 130 baht for daily expenses. This did not include other various additional expenses such as petrol, mobile phone and Internet monthly services, books, tuition fees, etc. that were considered a huge burden by the parents.

Despite complaining about the way their children spent a lot of money, most families provided various amenities for their daughters' convenience. Almost every research

participant was given desktop computers, laptops, iPhones, and iPads. Amy's mother told me that she was concerned about her daughter's safety so that she allowed Amy to have her own car. She mentioned that when she was a teenager, she only had a bicycle making it difficult for her to go out far away from home, especially at nighttime. Amy had her own car and sometimes she drove back home late at night. Occasionally they had arguments about this issue:

*“Sometimes she wants to hang out with friends at night. I don't allow her to drive. She replies, ‘why not?’ So I respond that I'm concerned about her safety. When she drives back home alone late at night, it might be someone following her, who could stop the car, hurt, or even rape her. What would I do? She's the only reason I am living. I always tell her like this. She listens to me sometimes and doesn't go out. If she really needs to go, I ask her uncle to drive her to the place and bring her back home no matter how late it is.”*

One of the most important concerns among parents was the association with the opposite sex and the potential of sexual relations, with the biggest fear of course being that their daughter might get pregnant. Janet's parents shared their view that they really worried about the transformation of sexual behaviors among youth in modern Thai society. Janet's mother constantly shared her romantic experiences with her daughter. She had never had any chance to spend time with men when she had been a young lady. She had to help her family work. She happened to meet Janet's father because he was her neighbor; and her parents arranged the relationship for them. The way they associated was under the close supervision of adults. They never had any chance to hang out at night alone. There was no department store or nightlife spot in the area they were living at that time. The only chance they had to hang out at night was the occasional temple fair, but even then they were not allowed to stay very late. The connections among people in the village were also very tight; everyone knew each other very well. As a young couple, they did not dare do anything that was considered 'inappropriate', which included holding hands or touching each other. Janet's father added that when they were a couple, he was in the military service for years and had to be far away from his hometown and from his wife. The only means of communication

were the letters that were occasionally sent by mail. This was a sharp contrast with youth in modern society, who have smart phones and Internet connections and can be in constant 'live' communication. This could lead to unsafe situations for young girls who would establish online relationships with people they did not know.

Robin's mothers regularly reminded her daughter not to establish any relationship with people through Facebook or social media because she said those people only appeared in an 'imaginary world,' not in the real world. In the imaginary world, she could not know how they were in the real life. Many parents constantly showed their daughters the latest news or stories about the girls who met someone through Facebook and afterwards decided to enter into a relationship even they had never seen each other. Once they actually met each other, it turned out that the gentlemen they knew through Facebook turned evils. There were several cases raised by parents to teach and warn research participants about communicating and associating with people in the online world. Some unfortunate girls were raped; some of them were taken pictures of while undressed and the men used those pictures to blackmail them to prevent the girls from reporting them or seeking help. As Robin's mother told me:

*"My neighbor's daughter used to contact a guy she did not know through Facebook. After having talked for a while, the guy lied that he loved her and wanted to see her. Finally they met; they hung out and got drunk. They ended up having sex and the girl got pregnant. As soon as the guy knew, he totally disappeared. The girl's parents were so ashamed because of their daughter's mistake. I always told Robin about these kinds of stories and warned her to constantly recognize her father and her mother's virtue when she would do anything wrong."*

Meanwhile, Cindy's grandmother expressed her concern about pornography that could be accessed on the Internet. She always warned Cindy not to watch any websites or social media content that could contain prohibited content. Cindy's grandmother also confessed that sometimes she could not help herself and checked to see if Cindy had accessed anything illegal, such as drugs or pornographic materials. Despite her limited computer skills, the grandmother sometimes spied in Cindy's computer, laptop and

smart phone to see if she had saved or entered any inappropriate sites. Sometimes, when she was putting Cindy's clothes into a laundry machine, she searched in a shirt or pants pockets for the evidence of undesirable behaviors, such as cigarettes or drugs. But she had never found any of them so far.

Another issue that most parents worried about was the way female youth dressed. They always warned their daughters about this, especially short pants or clothes that revealed too much 'skin.' At home, Nancy's mother always complained that her daughter's pants were 'too short' when she put Nancy's clothes in the laundry. She once displayed her dissatisfaction with a pair of Nancy's pants that were short and intentionally torn in the front. She said, *"I never knew that she wears such disgusting pants like this. I don't like it!"* and threw them in the garbage. Once when Nancy's family was about to leave their house to have dinner at a Korean barbeque restaurant, Nancy wore a sleeveless shirt and short pants. Although Nancy gave as the reason that it was always hot in the Korean barbeque restaurant due to frying meat, her mother suggested her to change, arguing that it was inappropriate to reveal too much skin in public, especially when she was going out with her parents. The 'inappropriate' outfit could possibly bring negative attention from others; people could think that they were bad parents who did not teach their daughter how to behave in public. The mother told me when Nancy was returning to her bedroom to change clothes that:

*"I really don't like it when she wears spaghetti string tank tops and short pants or skirts. No! I can't stand that! I don't want to see her dressing that way. When we are out together, I want her to wear a traditional Thai style of clothes with a long skirt [pointing to her knee level]. When she wears Thai clothing, I always tell her how much I admire her in that look. She doesn't have to be worried about being more beautiful than others. It is classic, comfortable, and looks plain. I really like her to dress like that."*

Once during *Songkran*, the Thai New Year Festival, I picked up Nancy at her house to hang out in the city. Immediately when Nancy's mother saw her daughter's outfit, Nancy was asked to change her dress. Her mother believed the outfit revealed too much skin and said that this kind of dress would draw the attention of men and would attract a

negative image or even harmful consequences. Nancy replied to her mother, *“I think it is okay. Most teenagers my age are dressing this way.”* Since her mother insisted that Nancy should change into something more ‘appropriate.’ Nancy pretended to be obedient to her mother by going back to her bedroom and changing according to her mother’s suggestion, but she packed the set of the same clothes in her backpack and changed into them later. During an informal discussion with Emma’s mother, she complained that she was worried about the way her daughter dressed by following the fashion among young people that was too sexy and too revealing according to her perspective. Emma’s mother said that she warned her daughter about her dressing style all the time, especially when she was in public places. She did this by comparing Emma’s experience with her own:

*“When I was a teenager, my parents did not allow me much to hang out with friends. They were very strict, especially regarding the way I dressed. The fashion has changed really fast, I cannot follow it anymore. When I was young, the pattern of dressing was very plain, just a loose long-sleeve shirt and jeans or long pants. But the fashion trends of youth nowadays are very striking. They dress so revealingly; their skirts and pants are really short. I understand that they have to follow their friends and immerge themselves into their group, but sometimes it is really unacceptable.”*

Parents were also concerned about the effect of media and popular culture on their children, especially regarding sexual attitudes and behaviors. These parents saw these media and popular culture as a great enemy steering their daughters towards ‘Western’ culture and inappropriate behaviors. These inappropriate behaviors included excessive consumption, inappropriate and provocative dressing, and sexual relations at an early age. Nancy’s mother required her daughter to consume less and to resist the temptations of consumerism and expressed her concern about Nancy’s social media use:

*“I think parents should know how to deal with social trends when raising their children, although it can be tough. There are a lot of things that I consider inappropriate. My daughter spends more time with social media than she does with me. She always follows the new*



*trends. Whatever her parents offer becomes old-fashioned for her. When I was young at her age, I felt ashamed when I wore short pants or skirts, even at a knee level, unlike what young people wear nowadays. It's about global change. Western culture and media changed our children's attitudes and characteristics."*

Parents expected their daughters to achieve the highest level of education possible. Some of the research participants' daily lives were carefully planned by their parents in an attempt to reach that goal. Certain potential careers were perceived as ideal. A flight attendant was one occupation that parents saw as desirable for their daughters. They believed flight attendants could earn a large income and would have a chance to travel around the world, speak foreign languages, and could afford expensive cosmetics, fashionable dresses, brand name goods, and other accessories. In order that their daughters could be well-prepared to be flight attendants, parents asked me to assist with their education, especially to tutor them English. Mary's family tried especially hard to encourage and pave her educational path as a future flight attendant. Her mother stated:

*"So far, we [family members] have been trying to push Mary to be a flight attendant. Mary complained that she was too short. I told her that it was okay. If she could not be a flight attendant, ground staff would be fine. We have encouraged her to go this way. Her English is not very good. We have searched for extra English courses and training sessions for her. Being a flight attendant, she could gain a lot of money and have a better life in the future. I told her to enroll in many extracurricular training courses for flight attendance...We have good intentions for her, including Mary's older sister, who couldn't pass the selection process to be a flight attendant. She has done everything to push her younger sister to be a flight attendant instead. She has very good intentions for her younger sister."*

Meanwhile, Nancy's father expected his daughter to pursue the same area of study that he pursued when he was younger. He was different from other parents who openly complained and ordered their daughters to read textbooks. He waited and saw Nancy's performance in her first academic year. It turned out that she did not have a satisfactory

grade. He took that chance to motivate her by constantly talking about his success when he had been an undergraduate student, how he had concentrated in class, and had read as much as possible. He also emphasized that he would not be responsible for her failure and would abandon Nancy if she could not finish her bachelor degree. He always compared the ways Nancy studied to the ways he had done in the past:

**Kangwan:** *“Nancy told me that you were number one when you were a student. This puts a lot of pressure on her because she is afraid that she would not be able to be as good at studying as you were.”*

**Nancy’s father:** *“Because she is lazy... I always remind her to read the same textbook again and again until she can remember the content by heart as I did. When I was a student, I read each book at least five times before the exam.”*

**Kangwan:** *“Studying this subject, she needs to read a lot.”*

**Nancy’s father:** *“I know she reads just a little. I looked at her books and the covers were still new like they had never been touched. I have to remind her again and again so that at least her exam results wouldn’t make her feel ashamed towards her friends.”*

Apart from being good at studying, parents usually taught their daughters that good women have to be skillful in household chores since they had to be well-prepared to be a good housewife in the future. However, some mothers who were responsible for both their careers and household chores confessed that apart from being exhausted from the regular work, they had to play the roles of role-modeled mothers and good wives by serving their husbands and children; these were huge burdens for them. Nancy’s mother expected their daughters to become both good wives and mothers like she was. She taught Nancy everything, such as how to cook, wash up, and do laundry. Nancy was responsible for her own laundry. She was expected to be present at home when her

mother was cooking in case her mother would ask for assistance. After meals, she was required to wash up and clean the kitchen.

Parents revealed that looking after daughters in modern society was more difficult than raising sons. They believed that being female had a higher risk of facing sexual problems compared to boys in Thai society. Some families, such as Mary's, gave more freedom to their son and allowed him to continue his studies in Bangkok, while Mary was required to study in Chiang Mai because her mother was worried that if she stayed in Bangkok, she would be likely to get involved in inappropriate sexual behaviors and become sexually spoiled (*jai taak*). When Mary's older brother was young, he was often in trouble, skipping class and staying at computer game shops overnight until the next morning. Mary's mother used to recover pornographic books and cigarettes in his school bag, but he claimed that these belonged to his friends. Due to his misbehaviors, his grades were not satisfactory and he finally was retired from the school. Despite all this, he was allowed to move to Bangkok to study in a private university after he finished at a high school level from a non-formal education system institution. Although Mary's mother was really concerned about her son, she insisted that, as a man, he could stay by himself away from home. Mary's mother insisted that she had raised her son and daughters quite the same way, but that she provided special care for her daughters:

*“Raising daughters needs special attention compared to boys. I’m afraid that Mary would be influenced by other people and would be dragged into risky behaviors. She mostly stays at home. She doesn’t even remember the road. She is quite innocent. If she stayed far away from me, like in Bangkok, I would be worried about her safety very much.”*

Parents saw preserving virginity as closely linked to the prestige of being a woman. Parents tried to influence their daughters by sharing their love stories, according to which they were faithful and had only one lover until they were married. Nancy's mother believed in being abstinent and having a conventional type of family. Despite a series of serious conflicts with her husband, which sometimes included physical abuse, she was willing to bear the situation in order to maintain, for the outside world at least, her dream of the ideal family. She strongly believed in the value of female virginity and

monogamy by saying that: *'If I didn't mind about monogamy, I would have asked Nancy's father for a divorce a long time ago.'* She wished she would be a role model for her daughter. Meanwhile, Janet's mother held similar attitudes, choosing to tell her daughter directly that she would not allow Janet to have a boyfriend while being a student at either high school or university. She taught her daughter that living as a couple was not very easy. She expected her daughter to graduate with at least a bachelor degree and have a good career. Once she established herself and had a stable financial situation she could choose whomever she wanted to marry. Janet's mother emphasized to her daughter that she should strive to be equal, both financially and educationally, to her future husband; otherwise her future husband and his family would look down on her. If she managed to achieve a high education and was financially stable, she would be independent and dignified. Once I witnessed her teaching Janet about the importance of preserving her virginity by encouraging her to imagine her future if she had an unexpected pregnancy:

*"If you want to have a boyfriend, you have to ensure that you are ready in every aspect. Imagine when you achieved a high level of education; there would be a lot of guys who want to approach you. Then you would be the one who chooses, not the one who would be chosen. You see many girls around you who made huge mistakes by having immature sexual relationships and unexpected pregnancies. They had to quit school. How could you take care of your baby while you had no job and couldn't finish school? Imagine what your life would be!"*

As previously mentioned, Nancy's father mostly taught his children while they were in a car since there was no way for Nancy and her younger brother to escape. Once I accompanied them while he was driving past a noodle shop on the way back home. He made the noodle shop as a topic of his conversation with Nancy. He pointed to the noodle shop while asking her which person in this shop she wanted to be, an employee, owner, or customer. He explained further that in this particular period of time Nancy could not be even an employee because she was not skillful enough at cleaning up. Also she could not be a customer because she was still jobless and had no income. Being the

owner was totally out of reach for her at this moment. Then he told Nancy that if she could graduate and had a career with a good income, everything would be possible for her. In contrast, if she had a boyfriend and sexual relationships that would result in unexpected pregnancy, her future would collapse. Nancy's father then gave her an example of his own life. Although both he and Nancy's mother had graduated with bachelor degrees before getting married, they still had to work hard and had faced many obstacles until they could be at the status they were now. There were many more instances where I heard Nancy's father mentioning to his daughter that if she could not graduate and had an unexpected pregnancy, her future would be totally ruined. When I asked him why he taught Nancy this way, he replied:

*“I'm trying to teach her to understand the different ways that life could turn out. If she is still lazy like this and doesn't focus enough on studying. If she had a boyfriend, she should figure out what her life would turn into in the future. I don't have any inheritance for her except education. I always tell her that I would kick her out from my life when she turned twenty-two. At that age she should be mature. I expect her to be self-reliant. She shouldn't be dependent on me anymore. How could she survive if she stays with me like a little baby forever? So the most important thing she has to accomplish is to focus on her study and graduate with at least a bachelor degree.”*

Amy's mother was different from other parents. She believed that if she forbade her daughter from having a boyfriend, it would lead Amy to secretly hang out with boys behind her back and that this would bring more troubles in the future. Instead, she decided that allowing Amy to have relationships under her supervision would be much better. She therefore allowed Amy to have a boyfriend and welcomed him to visit their home. However, she set the rule that they were not allowed to be alone together and/or have sex. Amy's boyfriend was not allowed to stay overnight at their place. Amy's mother said that she noticed that her neighbors were gossiping about the way she allowed young males to visit her daughter at home and stay all day long; but she did not care much about it. During the four years I knew her, Amy had three boyfriends and she brought each of them for introduction to her mother. Amy felt very comfortable with

her boyfriends while the mother was there with them. They were doing homework, watching television, surfing the Internet, or chatting in the living room. Amy's mother treated her daughter's boyfriends like her own sons. When I asked about the way she taught Amy about having intimate relationships, she replied that:

*"I always tell Amy that she is allowed to have a boyfriend, but I have to know him too so that I will know if that guy is good or not. She is always under my supervision. She has never lied to me so far and never dated anyone without my approval. I also try to be friendly with all of her boyfriends. I even gave them suggestions about their studies and other stuff... I don't care about the way neighbors gossip that I let guys stay at home with my daughter. I don't care. What I care about the most is my family. I allow her to bring her boyfriends to our home. They come in the morning and leave in the evening. I cook or buy food for them. We have lunch and dinner together. I treat all of them like the members of my family. I believe that being under my eyesight is much safer than forcing them to go out and do something without my monitoring... Most parents forbid their children to have relationships, so their kids behave in front of them but act inappropriately behind their backs."*

Despite providing her daughter a certain level of freedom, the mother also taught Amy to keep her virginity by mentioning other female teenagers around their neighborhood who had faced problems with unexpected pregnancy:

*"I taught her by using cases of other girls she knew. They got unexpected pregnancy and had to leave school. I told her 'You see? If you behave like those girls and you have a baby, how will your future be? Don't act like them. If you were in that situation, I would be very upset.'"*

#### 4.1.2 “We’ve Got to Know Wherever You Are!”: Parental Control over Time, Space, and Network

As mentioned above, Foucault (1977) compares social control to the model of panopticon to illustrate arrangements of surveillance as central to the discipline of individuals. This part explores the practices of parents to exercise their control power on their children through arrangements and surveillance of time, space and network.

To ensure that the girls would behave appropriately and devote their time and energy to studying, in line with parental expectations, time management for their daughters was set-up and enforced by parents. During school days, the girls were required to wake up around 6 a.m. to 6.30 a.m. in order to dress up and go to the school before 7 a.m. to 7.15 a.m. After school ended in the evening, the girls were required to arrive home in order to have dinner together with family members. As mentioned above, some of them were assigned to assist parents in preparing dinner. After the meal, they were responsible for cleaning up and then went back to their bedrooms to do homework and go to bed. However, some families could not follow this typical lifestyle and pattern. Jill was raised in single-parent family. Her mother, after her regular work in a travel agency, had an extra job as an administrator in a nightclub in the city and would return home very late at night. After school, Jill therefore had plenty of time hanging out at a shopping mall close to her mother’s office, where I sometimes spent time with her after school. We had dinner and talked, especially about her life. Meanwhile, Kim did not follow the conventional lifestyle compared to other research participants. Because her father was working in another province, Kim mostly lived alone in a house with her father’s secretary, who stayed with her only occasionally. Therefore, Kim had much more freedom compared to the other research participants.

Even though most research participants were raised in single-parent families, their parents stressed on their education. Although Jill’s mother was very busy, she set Jill’s education as her first priority. She believed that if her daughter could enter the high school that was famous for its student monitoring system and educational quality (which was proven by the huge number of students who could pass the entrance examination to various leading public universities) the school would control her

daughter's behavior for her. This school was considered as more prestigious than the school where Jill had studied before:

*“Before the entrance examination to this school, I took her to attend intensive tutorial courses for months. This course guaranteed the result that all students could pass the [entrance] exam for sure. It cost six thousand baht per course. I invested in it because I really wanted her to study in this school. They hired the tutors who were teachers in the school she was going to. That meant they must have known the types of exam questions on the test. I just wished when she moved to this school, the school would control her instead of me.”*

Emma's family could represent most research participant's families. Since parents found their children's education of the greatest importance, they had carefully planned her educational path. Before studying in high school, she had studied in another secondary school that was less prestigious and considered of lower quality. After graduating from that secondary school, Emma's parents invested a large sum of money for her to attend the intensive tutorial classes that advertised that the tutors were teachers from the high school where Emma would be entering. After attending those intensive tutorial classes, Emma was finally able to pass the entrance examination to study in this high school. Although the school was located far from the area they were living, Emma's father was willing to drive his daughter to school every day as well as to her extra tutorial classes during weekend in order to be well prepared for the admission examination into university. But after a year, her parents were too tired of driving, thus they let their daughter take a shuttle taxi which parents in the same area hired to take their children to school in the morning around 7 a.m. and pick them up back home in late afternoon around 5 p.m. After dinner, Emma's parents asked whether she had any homework, and they strictly followed her progress. Emma's mother commented:

*“We admit that we are quite strict on her study. We are afraid that she would get low grades and, in the worst-case scenario, couldn't graduate from her high school. I ask her daily if she has homework and recheck whether she finished it. We always follow her work progress. We have never let her alone.”*



After all research participants graduated from this high school, they continued their studies in various universities. For the first year of their studies, each of them stayed at the universities' dormitories during weekdays. Most parents scheduled to pick up their daughters at the dormitories on Friday evenings and took them back to dormitories on Sunday evenings. Although they had a more flexible time table and extra activities compared to high school, living in campus dormitories could ensure parents that their daughters would not be out off track since there were strict regulations in the campus dormitories and dormitory managers could keep an eye on their children's behaviors. The dormitories' doors were closed at 10 p.m.; therefore, every resident was required to arrive before that time. Some dormitories had managers or responsible officials who randomly visited the rooms in order to check if all room members were there. If any of the room members were not in the room, the ones who were in the room should be able to inform the responsible officials where the missing room members were. The campus dormitory where Lisa was staying was very strict. Sometimes she was showering in a restroom after 10 p.m. when senior residents would follow her into the restroom to check if she really was there as her roommates had said. Parents trusted and praised the effective security system at campus dormitories. Emma's parents mentioned how even student's parents were required to leave their ID cards when they entered to see their children in a dormitory, which they saw as a positive sign. Only mothers and female relatives were allowed to enter in the residential areas, while father and male relatives were allowed to enter only the guest area (see more detail below). When research participants were in the second year, some of them decided to go back to stay at their homes, while some research participants moved to stay at private dormitories located not far from their universities, claiming that sometimes they had to study in evening classes and join extra activities at a night time. Although parents were worried about the fewer regulations in place at these private dormitories, research participants insisted that they would be staying with their close 'female' friends and they could take care of each other; they often assured parents that they could visit them anytime they wanted.

Rose's mother complained that since her daughter was staying in university, it was difficult for her to control her daughter's timetable in the same way she had done when her daughter was in high school. Her mother had constantly been informed from the school authority whether she had arrived late or skipped classes when Rose was in high

school, but the monitoring system of university provided more freedom to students so that she had no idea how her daughter behaved in the campus. Therefore, Rose's mother tried to insert herself into her daughter's network of friends by collecting the phone numbers of Rose's friends. Many times she called me, as one of her daughter's close friends, to ask me whether I knew where her daughter was at that particular moment. Sometimes, she called me to update information about her daughter instead of asking Rose directly. Typically, she would call Rose's friends before or after she called her daughter in order to triangulate and confirm if her daughter had told her the truth.

Checking their daughters' mobile phones and computers was also practiced among parents. Apart from parents checking their daughter's bedroom as mentioned above, Robin's mother was really concerned that Robin would access pornographic websites and other inappropriate content while surfing the Internet. In addition to her constant teaching and despite her limited computer knowledge and skills, Robin mother secretly checked the recorded history of her daughter's computer use and the websites she visited. However, so far she had failed to find any evidence proving that Robin visited any prohibited websites. Emma's parents shared a story about how they had found out that their daughter was having a relationship with a man behind their backs:

*“I checked her phone and found out that she talked to a guy. The conversation was obvious that they were more than friends. So I used Emma's phone and called back to his number. He called me mom. I then replied that don't you dare call me mom. I'm not your mom. And I don't want to have a son like you. I told him not to continue a relationship with Emma. I don't want my daughter to be distracted by him. I told him that if he really liked my daughter, he had to wait until both of them graduated at least an undergraduate degree. It was inappropriate to have a relationship while studying and being dependent on parents' income. Then he just disappeared. I haven't heard anything about him anymore.”*

Meanwhile, in order to keep up with Mary and her friends, her mother learned to use Facebook and set up her own account. She tried to send her friendship requests to Mary's friends after having found them in the friend list on Mary's Facebook in an

attempt to be informed about the people her daughter was associating with. The mother realized that she could know the movements and activities of Mary and her peers by following them on Facebook. She knew what Mary and her friends were thinking by reading their Facebook posts and what they posted on their walls. She knew where they were and what they were doing from the places they were ‘checking-in’ on Facebook:

*“I just talked to her via Skype. I have to catch up with the technological trend. If I’m still being old-fashioned, I wouldn’t be able to follow her for sure. I know her movement from her Facebook account. Sometimes she was in a bad mood she would complain by posting on her Facebook. Recently she complained about the way we [mother and older sister] have forced her to be a flight attendant. I saw it on her Facebook timeline.”*

Technological advancement provided parents with a variety of new mechanisms for surveillance and controlling their daughters. Rose’s mother was a case in point. Apart from using mobile phone triangulation to check and follow her daughter, since Rose moved from home to study in a university and stay in a private dormitory in her second year, she secretly had a Global Positioning System (GPS) installed in Rose car, which was tracked by her parents’ smart phones without Rose’s knowledge. Therefore, the parents were constantly aware of the location where Rose was. When her parents saw that Rose was being at a dormitory, as indicated by the GPS, sometimes they, mostly her mother, would showed up at her room without prior warning to check what she was doing.

Due to these strict control and surveillance regimes most of the parents were confident that their daughters were obedient and not likely to get involved in any ‘inappropriate’ behaviors like other youth they had known. For Emma’s parents, although they had found out that their daughter had secretly had an online boyfriend before, the parents were still confident that they could control their daughter’s behavior; after the incident, Emma became obedient and never had a relationship anymore. The parents believed that because they were staying in a peri-urban area as well as due to the way they disciplined and strictly monitored their daughter, Emma had become a well-behaved daughter. She primarily stayed at home when she was in high school. When she

continued her study in the university, she had to stay in a dormitory during weekdays and they kept a close contact with her all the time. Emma was staying at a dormitory with her close friends from high school. Emma's parents knew her roommates' phone numbers so that they could call to check on their daughter from her roommates any time they wanted. Every Friday evening, they went to pick up their daughter at a dormitory and she stayed at home during weekend until they took her back to a dormitory on Sunday evening. The parents deemed that staying at home was safer than hanging out somewhere outside:

*“We think there are some positive things about the Internet. Since we installed a Wi-Fi connection, she mostly stays at home. She has her iPad and laptop. When she comes back home during weekend or school vacations, she rarely goes outside – just stays in her bedroom. And she's also responsible for some assigned household chores. We're happy for her behaving this way. It's much safer than letting her hang out somewhere we don't know.”*

Although her daughter had her own car and certain level of freedom to go outside, Amy's mother was confident that her daughter constantly informed her while she was away. Sometimes Amy did not come back home but stayed overnight at her friends' place, and her mother commented:

*“Sometimes she stayed overnight with her female friends because they had to finish a report. She told me not to be worried because her friends were all female. When she called me I asked her to pass the mobile phone to her friends so I could talk to them. They answered the same thing, which meant that they didn't lie to me. I also listen to the environment around them. If it was quiet or if there was the sound of a TV in the background, I could be assured that that place was really her friends' place.”*

Most parents were convinced by their daughters' claims that all of their close friends were female, which they considered safe because girlfriends could take care of each other and could keep an eye on their daughters. Parents could be informed about their

children via their close friends and gained a level of confidence that their daughters were not having sexual relationships with the opposite sex. When daughters asked them for permission to go out, parents typically allowed them if they were out with their female friends. As Robin's mother showed the way she trusted her daughter that:

*“She usually goes out with her female friends or feminine gay (kathoei) friends. Her close friends are only female and kathoei; they have been hanging out together since they were in a high school. I know them well. Robin has brought them to my place many times so I don't think she has a boyfriend because I've never seen she stays one on one with a guy. Recently, she started bringing her new female friend to stay overnight with her. They are so close. I also had the number of her friend's mother and we have talked on the phone. When Robin stays at her girlfriend's place, her mom calls me that both of them are there. And when Robin's girlfriend comes to stay at my Place, I call her mom telling that her daughter is here at my place.”*

Lisa's mother was also convinced that her daughter was staying in a university dormitory with a female roommate:

*“Lisa's now staying in a campus dormitory with her [female] roommate. I know her roommate. She's a nice girl. She's from another province and studies in another faculty. They take care of each other very well. They stay together all the time. Lisa took her roommate to many places she's never visited before. I believe that she has a good time while staying in a dorm because she and her roommate get along together very well.”*

## **4.2 Educational Institutions and Their Control Apparatuses on Schoolgirls' Sexualities**

The following section discusses how educational institutions, specifically high schools and universities, implemented their strategies to shape girls' sexualities according to the *kunlasatree* model. While the girls were studying in the high school, their sexual formation and expression were controlled through the effective collaboration of the school and its working partners. When the girls continued their studies in university, the control mechanisms were transformed to the senior students who exercise their informal powers via the *rub nong* (student initiation) rituals and the campus dormitory management system.

### **4.2.1 Beware of the Giant Monster and Its Minions: The Control Mechanisms of the School and Its Alliances**

The school aimed to teach young girls to conform to an idealized female youth sexual identity, the *kunlasatree* model. In the below, it will be discussed how the school implements its strategies to shape girls' sexualities. This part explores how, via various practices, the school tried to internalize a sense of pride and 'privileged membership' among its students. Moreover, rules and regulations, especially regarding sexual issues, were formulated and enforced. A systematic surveillance operation was implemented by the school and students who misbehaved were punished.

In order to internalize new students' sense of pride to become sons/daughters of the school, the leaderships ought to focus on the great reputation and history of the school in various ways. The school museum exhibited the school's antique treasures that represented the school's long history, the great contributions of the school and its alumni to Chiang Mai and Thai society, as well as a directory of important and famous persons who were related to the school. Every new student was required to attend a ritual to devote themselves to be good sons/daughters of the school in front of a statue of a royal historical figure who had named the school and was acknowledged as the royal father of the school. A fragment of a speech once given by this royal figure, encouraging students to be honest, trustworthy and obtain good habits, was acknowledged as the school slogan and was constantly reproduced and circulated

everywhere. Similar to other Thai schools, there was a daily national anthem ritual that consisted of paying respect to the national anthem and the Thai flag, followed by Buddhist chanting. The morning activity ended with a session in which school officials delivered announcements including daily information updates, emphasis on school regulations, and the ways model students should behave in order to honor the school's great reputation. Occasionally, students who had won competitions or received awards were praised as being good sons/daughters of the school in front of all students and teachers at the school.

The school vision, mission and goals were stated to every student highlighting that— together with the provision of educational quality—the school prioritized the development of the morality, ethics and proper attitudes of its students. These characteristics were stressed so that the students could become valuable contributors to society in the future. Around the school area, several signs and billboards presenting awards and certificates the school had received were on display to publicize the school's quality. Series of decorated boards were also erected honoring students who served as 'good role models' by winning competitions, receiving awards or having particular outstanding qualifications. Via quotes and short interview transcripts, it was explained how these good role models behaved in order to become such excellent students. Big billboards displayed at the school entrance emphasizing appropriate school uniforms and stating that every student was considered a son or daughter of the school. Wearing the school uniform appropriately was linked to the promotion of a sense of pride in being part of the school. Once a month, a special session sponsored by the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) was organized for students in a particular grade at the main auditorium. In order to respond to school objectives that aimed to improve morality and ethics as well as create proper attitude and characteristics among students, a variety of activities were organized each month such as religious talks by well-known monks or guidance sessions by school alumni who pursued their studies enrolled in prestigious universities.

The school had developed various disciplines in order to regulate the student's use of time and activities. Prior to every first academic semester, an orientation session for new students and parents was held. The 'handbook for students and parents' was

distributed to every new student and parent as the guideline which students were obliged to strictly follow. A study timetable detailed that students were expected to arrive at school before 7.50 a.m. to attend the morning national anthem ritual. Eight classes were scheduled from Monday to Thursday between 08.30 and 16.30, while there were five classes on Friday in order to spare the afternoon for students to attend practical classes according to their particular interests such as sports, music, community services, or paramilitary training (*ror dor*). Therefore, from 7.50 to 16.30, the student's activities were strictly controlled by the school timetable. Aside from break times, students were not supposed to be found outside classrooms except on Friday afternoon when some students were allowed to leave school, especially those involved in *ror dor* training.

Pictures, information and regulations about how to wear the school uniform properly were also elaborated in the handbook. For female students, wearing of the proper school uniform according to the school's detailed regulations was strictly enforced. Make-up and accessories such as necklaces, rings, earrings, or nails polishing were not allowed. Any modification to the hair that made the hair look unnatural, such as thinning, curling and coloring, was forbidden. Female students who wore their hair long were required to tie properly with a white ribbon. Nails had to remain short and had to be clipped regularly. Adaptations of the school uniform, such as wearing sandals or jeans in combination with the uniform shirt, were prohibited. Outside the school, students were required to present themselves wearing proper clothing in line with the *kunlasatree* model, and to refrain from wearing clothes deemed too fashionable or too sexy.

Every student was given 100 behavior marks at the beginning of the first academic semester. Those who were judged by school authorities for deviating from school regulations would have their behavior marks cut according to a list that was provided in the student handbook. Students whose behavior marks were reduced by more than forty points would be considered as being defiled which led to a negative effect on their profile. Teachers and other school administration staff in general, had the authority to punish students according to five levels of severity: warning, parole, cutting down behavior marks, forced participation in behavioral change activities and transferring to another educational institution.



According to the handbook, student misbehaviors were categorized in three levels: high, moderate and low. High level of misconduct concerned any behaviors that created serious disrepute to the school and overall society, led to severe negative impacts to social morality and discipline or were offensive to criminal law. Moderate level misbehaviors included any actions which could cause or lead to serious harm to the public. Low level misdemeanors included individual behaviors which were considered inappropriate. Misconducts related to sexual issues were categorized in both the high and the moderate level, with a punishment of 40 marks. Carrying weapons would lead to a 60-mark deduction, whereas drug abuse and committing bodily harm to others was of the same severity as sexual offenses (40 marks). Every teacher was given the authority to cut down a student's behavior marks and could inform parents regarding their child's misbehavior and the consequent punishment.

The school used an innovative student-fostering system in order to effectively exercise the school regulations in enforcing the hegemonic stereotype of the *kunlasatree* on female students and to control the formation of their sexual subjectivity. The school was well-known for this innovation, which won a best practice award, of which the school was very proud. Close collaboration among its stakeholders was a key to this perceived success. In each class, particular teachers were assigned to supervise and constantly look after around 20-25 students. These teachers were required to visit the homes or dormitories of the students they were assigned to supervise, in order to observe and systematically document details of their lives, including whether negative factors were found around the areas they were living which could possibly lead students to have risky behaviors; this could include factors such as proximity to nightlife spots or slums. Other related information, such as financial hardship in the family or any history of misdemeanors, was also recorded and reported.

School librarians and related officials also played an active role in monitoring the ways students utilized facilities in the school. Students were offered a range of facilities for their entertainment during free time. Various kinds of books and magazines as well as computers with Internet connection were available in the main library. Televisions were installed around school compound. A mini-theatre room was also opened for students. However, all facilities provided were carefully designed so that teachers and other

responsible officials were able to monitor whether students used them in appropriate ways. Books and magazines available in the library were chosen and approved by school librarians. Televisions were installed in public spaces only. Computer monitors were turned to the public area and students were required to log in to Internet using their own username and password so that responsible officials could check what kind of information or websites they accessed. Regarding activities in the mini-theater, a list of approved movies was made by librarian teachers. A control room was located at the backside of the theater which also served as the librarian's office so that DVD players and other devices, as well as the students' behavior while being in the theater, could be closely monitored.

The SAD (Student Activity Division) was the main administrative sector in charge of organizing extra-curricular activities, and was also responsible for monitoring and promoting positive behavioral change among students. The previous name of the SAD was the "Student Governing Division" (SGD). The SGD was perceived by students as being a strictly disciplinarian institution. Teachers who ran the former SGD had some fearful characteristics in the perception of students, and were often seen holding sticks in their hands around the school area, seemingly longing to punish any students who misbehaved. Therefore, the school administrative board decided to change its name from SGD to SAD in order to create a student-friendly image. The division shifted its priority from student behavior control to organizing extra-curricular activities.

Despite being run under a new name and modified image, teachers who were part of SAD were still feared among students. One of these teachers, for instance, was referred to as 'Mr. Barber'. He usually had scissors with him all the time and if he found any student wearing an inappropriate hairstyle, he would cut that student's hair right at the scene.

In terms of the physical environment of the school, iron and cement fences were built around its territory to protect and divide school space from the outside. Normally, only one entrance was opened during school hours. This entrance was closely monitored by a school security guard. The SAD office building was also located at the school entrance. Wide glass windows were installed in this building so that teachers or other responsible officials could keep an eye on the situation outside. Blind spots around school

compound, such as toilets, isolated areas behind the school and some deserted buildings were carefully redesigned and remodeled in order to prevent students from using these spaces for behaviors deemed inappropriate such as smoking, fighting or having sex. A toilet front wall, which was considered to be a potential hiding place, was remodeled and made lower, with the upper part replaced by flowerpots. Several other areas where students had previously been caught engaging in forbidden behaviors were either cleared or more closely inspected. More than forty surveillance cameras were installed around the school area so that SAD teachers and other responsible officials could keep their eyes on what was going on around the school. The SAD office had been turned into a control room. In addition to security purposes, surveillance cameras also served as tools to inspect students and to prevent them from misbehaving or doing anything against school regulations.

Although surveillance cameras effectively assisted SAD and other related officials in inspecting and recording motion pictures in order to be used as evidence, the fixed position of the cameras was found to be a limitation, as they couldn't follow students all the time. SAD teachers were aware of the tactics students used to evade being monitored; especially when they were in locations where no SAD teachers or related officials were around. Therefore, a group of volunteer students was formed, called "Volunteer Student Inspectors" (VSI), in order to work closely with SAD. VSI consisted of twenty volunteer students and their networks. A group of senior VSI was responsible to search for, and invite young students to join the team. New members were trained by the senior VSI, who then would be expected to serve as trainers for new VSI from younger generations. Members of VSI were taught to dedicate themselves to public service, act according to school regulations and serve as good role models for fellow students. After they participated in training sessions they were assigned to serve as the right hand of SAD in various public service duties. One of the important missions of VSI was inspecting and spying on their fellow students, both inside and outside school, and informing SAD teachers if they found students who misbehaved. As a senior female VSI stated:

*“Our assigned duties are; firstly, monitor the situation around school and make sure everything is going normally. Secondly, inspect our friends whether they behave or act according to school regulations. We give them warnings if they tend to misbehave. Thirdly, if we see anyone is doing anything wrong, we jot down his/her name and inform SAD teachers.”*

VSI were very proud of this mission because they realized that they could help their friends to behave and act according to the school regulations, and because their devotion ensured that the school’s great reputation could be well preserved. VSI were required to arrive at school earlier than other students. They had a short morning meeting regarding their daily work plans. Check-up forms were distributed to each member. While on duty, they wore an armband that identified them as VSI. The school area was broken down into ten zones that VSI would check systematically to make sure the situation was normal. VSI were also assigned to check male and female toilets regularly, according to their gender, to ensure that no student skipped the national anthem morning ritual or did anything against the school regulations in the toilets such as smoking.

During the morning national anthem ritual, VSI also played active roles, together with class teachers and SAD, to approach and identify their friends who were found to have done anything against school regulations. As senior female VSI and junior male VSI explained:

**Senior Female VSI:** *“We walk into the row and scan if any male students don’t have an appropriate short hair cut. For female students, we check for accessories, ribbons and whether they have hairstyles that are against the rules such as coloring or thinning. Then, we take them out to gather in separate groups. After that, the SAD teachers will come and cut their hair.”*

**Junior Male VSI:** *“In winter, we also seize jackets.”*

**Kangwan:** *“Because they wear fashionable jackets rather than school jackets?”*

**Junior Male VSI:** “Yes, we seize them and collect them. Some students hide their jackets but we can take them anyway. We check inside their school bags.”

**Kangwan:** “Could anyone escape from VSI’s inspection so far?”

**Senior Female VSI:** “They usually hide in toilets. So we order junior VSI to follow them in toilets and take them out.”

Apart from verbal VSI reports, concrete evidence such as photographs and video clips were used to identify misbehaving students. Informal networks among other students were established to cooperate with VSI to inspect their friends. VSI and their informal networks played an important role in searching for evidence. Social media spaces were also monitored, especially for sexual issues such as posting of intimate or pornographic pictures, but also for other behaviors the school disapproved of, such as going out to nightclubs. Once, I made the mistake to post some photographs of a group of research participants on Facebook while they were with their boyfriends in a nightclub. They called me the next morning asking to delete all pictures, to prevent them from getting caught. One of SAD teachers showed me photographs of a schoolgirl posing in sexy ways in her school uniform. These pictures were uploaded on a social media website using her personal account. After being caught, she was investigated by SAD. Her parents were informed about what their daughter had done. Although she was not directly sentenced by the school, the social pressure created by the incident among fellow students led her to resign from the school in the end.

From in-depth interviews, VSI members expressed their pride and felt honored serving as VSI. Apart from the certificates they received for being ‘devoted students’, they were acknowledged by teachers as good role models. As two senior female VSI expressed:

*“I am so proud (of serving as VSI). I have been a good role model for my friends. I have followed school regulations strictly. I want my friends to act according to what I have done. I also warn them if it looks like they are going to do anything wrong.”*

*“I am so proud and impressed in many aspects of being VSI. We have good teamwork. We are the team that helps our school to progress further to a higher level”*

Apart from SAD and VSI, the PTA was an important school alliance that aimed to provide close collaborations to the school and other partners. The PTA was very influential over the school management due to its long period of contributions to the school. The PTA chairperson was highly praised by teachers. One teacher told me that the new school building, which was being under construction at that time, would never have been built without the assistance and network of the PTA chairperson. The chairperson and his team actively sought out contributions from outside organizations. The PTA’s income consisted mostly of donations and yearly membership fees. PTA cooperated and worked together with SAD by dedicating its building to be the SAD main office. Apart from monthly special homeroom sessions, which were mentioned above, the PTA sponsored various school activities such as life skills sessions that aimed to train students to be gentlemen and proper women, in line with the school slogan. A PTA newsletter was printed every academic semester and distributed to its members. The list of the administrative board as well as details, addresses and contact numbers of parental network members in every class was printed therein. Therefore, other parents could contact network members for collaboration or assistance. Another important mission of the PTA was to organize and maintain the parental network and build the capacity of its members who were selected from every class to monitor and prevent their children from risk-taking behaviors, especially regarding sexual issues. The PTA chairperson explained the working structure of the parental network and its monitoring system:

*“Besides VSI, the parental network organized by PTA also looks after our children closely. Each class is usually comprised of fifty-five students. They are broken down into five groups, eleven students per group. We let them choose their own group... Then the parental networks are formed according to the student groups; and they have their duty to look after each other... They are required to stay in touch and keep an eye on each other. When student A disappears, we could*

*ask parents of student B or student C to inspect student A for us. All of them have other network members' information... This is what I call a psychology of human control... This kind of social network strategy has been very helpful in monitoring and controlling our students so far."*

#### **4.2.2 Lives in the Campuses: The Transformation of the Control Power**

After the research participants graduated from high school, they continued their studies in various public and private universities in Chiang Mai. While the previous section explored the control power operated by families and school, this section reveals the distribution of power from the top with the parents and school authorities down to the senior students (the second year students onwards). Like the adults, these senior students implemented various strategic practices to control the younger students. The first part of this section illustrates how senior students tried to internalize the sense of "unity and membership" (*roon*) among first-year students through a year-long "welcoming younger students" (*rub nong*) orientation process. Through this, rules and traditions—especially regarding the uniform and to sexual issues—were formulated and enforced by the senior students. The second part of this section illustrates the systematic operation of the campus dormitory's control system, via which senior students played a role in the surveillance and control of the freshmen.

##### **4.2.2.1 Rub Nong Tradition: The Ways Senior Students Exercise Their Power on New Members**

**Lisa:** *"My life has totally changed!"*

**Robin:** *"Yes, life in high school and university are different – like apples and oranges!"*

**Lisa:** *"I cried almost every day during the first year I studied here. I wanted to go home. I really missed my high school friends. Life was tough being a freshman here. Seriously, I almost gave up!"*

Two of my research participants, Lisa and Robin, expressed their frustrations about the first year of their university life, although they had known before hand what they would experience during the *rub nong* tradition when they became freshmen. The *rub nong* tradition has been widely practiced in Thai universities and there had been a history of the senior students being abusive, physically and psychologically. Some universities therefore forbade their students to organize forms of *rub nong* that could lead to a violation of basic human rights; in other universities' *rub nong* practices were totally prohibited. Although physical and psychological violations were disallowed, the *rub nong* tradition still paved ways for senior students to exercise their power by enforcing traditions and regulations they had inherited from previous classes over the freshmen in various settings and contexts.

From the view of senior students who organized the *rub nong* sessions, they intended to instill a sense of belonging and to encourage the group of new students to be united with their fellow classmates, as explained by a senior student:

*“We try to make the freshmen belonging to the same class to realize the importance of being united. All of them have to know each other very well. They have to be able to sing the faculty anthems perfectly. They have to accomplish all activities assigned by senior students to prove that they have become united as a class. Once they could finish all activities within the appointed timeframe, we would consider that as passing the test. The senior students would approve that they become ‘roon’ and accept them to be part of our community.”*

The senior students therefore tried to internalize a sense of pride by emphasizing to every freshman that there were part of a very limited numbers of students who could pass the entrance examination to continue their education in their university and faculty. For that reason, they should recognize themselves as qualified persons and should be proud of the faculty in which they studying. After that, the senior students would make the freshmen apprehensive by describing how the study style in the university was very complicated and difficult. The senior student claimed that the style of studying in university was totally different from that in high school. The students needed to plan which classes to enroll in, decide what subjects they would study, regulate themselves



to attend class on time, and search for learning materials all by themselves. Therefore, if they could be united as a *roon*, they could help each other and would be successful in their academic and in university life. Apart from being alone on a campus and being far away from their homes, the senior students emphasized that being united as *roon* would assist them to overcome difficulties from beginning until the end of their university life. Any freshman that was not included in a *roon* would be isolated from friends and senior students, resulting in having a bad quality of life. That student would lack friends, the ability to network with senior students, and would stay alone all the time. Those who failed to be included in *roon* would also have a difficult time being successful in their future career.

One of the regulations that every first year student had to strictly follow was wearing the university uniform appropriately. Some faculty had additional accessories such as a name badge, ribbon, or necktie. The senior students employed various strategies to instill pride in the uniform and added specific accessories highlighting the importance of their particular faculty and university. One senior student representative who helped in organizing the *rub nong* process explained:

*“Wearing the uniform appropriately can identify that the first year students are proud of being part of the faculty and university. The uniform can express our identity. When we are out of the campus, everyone must recognize that we belong to this faculty and university. This shows that we are above the students from other universities.”*

The “cheering practice session” (*hong cheer*) was one of the main activities organized at most faculties. The *hong cheer* was organized in a formal and sacred atmosphere and led by senior student leaders. In order to be recognized by senior students as being united or *roon*, every freshman was required to attend and accomplish every activity organized in *hong cheer*. Apart from rehearsing faculty anthems, cheering songs, and various disciplinary practice training sessions, one of the most important objectives was to instilling the holiness of the uniform. Since the university had one official uniform, each faculty came up with their own style of additional accessories to signify differences with other faculties. These accessories became part of ‘identities within an

identity,' according to the senior student's definition. The senior students group played an active role in this. As a senior student explained:

*"We make the freshmen realize the holiness of the uniform they are wearing through the narrative about the long history and originality of our faculty and university. We make the hong cheer a sacred atmosphere. The leader and all senior students are united wearing the uniform appropriately. The senior students also wear old accessories such as a necktie, belt, pin, or flags passed down from the older classes to the new ones. If the freshmen could pass all activities, they would be given those accessories—which represent the expectations of the older generations—in hong cheer by senior students."*

The first-year students were required to wear uniform appropriately in classrooms and while meeting university staff or faculty. Those who dressed properly would be given a high praise; the one who did not dress appropriately would be blamed and punished, mostly in public. Research participants stated that they had to wear uniform with accessories given by senior students strictly. When they were out of campus and did not wear the uniform, they were required by the senior students to wear a big name badge all year long. One research participant explained:

*"The first-year students are strictly held to the uniform standards. I'm ordered to wear a huge name badge all year long until it becomes very dirty, but I have to wear it all the times. Otherwise, the senior students will call me out or humiliate me in public; some of them yell out at me in front of my friends that I'm not being respectful to them and that I'm not proud to be a member of this major."*

The first-year students were also required to wear the uniform according to their gender. The research participants who were *toms* complained about the regulation requiring them to wear skirts. Moreover, every female student was forced to wear a large ribbon, which the *toms* also disliked. When they once asked for permission from the senior students to change this, their request was denied, as Kim, who identified herself as *tom*, recalls:

*“We are forced to wear the uniform with skirt. The skirt has to be longer than the knee level. My skirt is shorter than the specific length, so I’m told to have it fixed to be in line with the regulation. Only white sneakers are allowed with the uniform. I asked the senior students whether I don’t have to wear a ribbon because I am tom. They said no and forced me to wear it like other female students do. I don’t agree and feel really frustrated, but I have to do whatever they ordered. Otherwise, the senior students would blame me and my friends.”*

As previously mentioned about the high school’s uniform rule enforcement of the school authorities, at the university level the senior students played an active role in controlling and enforcing rules with the younger students on campus, as Lisa illustrated:

*“The senior students are very strict with us. Lecturers don’t have to deal with us about this stuff because they know that the senior students are controlling and monitoring us closely. If anyone of the first-year students wears their uniform inappropriately and the seniors don’t take any action, the lecturer then will be the one calling us to dress according to the rules.”*

Since the university forbade senior students from organizing any forms of *rub nong* that constituted hazing, the senior students used facial expressions or verbal abuse instead of physical violence. The freshmen were required to be obedient to the senior students to carry on the faculty tradition. Since every first-year student had been trained by senior students how to wear uniform appropriately, the govern division was formed among a group of senior students which were called ‘governing senior students’ (*pii pok krong*). The group of *pii pok krong* played an active role in monitoring whether first-year students wore the uniform correctly or broke any regulations formulated by the senior students, both inside and outside the campus. When they found any first-year students who did not wear uniform appropriately or did not wear accessories and a name badge given by the senior students, *pii pok krong* implemented several measures against misbehaving junior students. Some *pii pok krong* approached those freshmen to give a warning. Some of them blamed or humiliated the junior students in public. Certain *pii pok krong* members remembered or jotted down the freshmen’s names to inform the

group of senior students. In the next round of *hong cheer* or the gathering of first-year students, senior students would publicly berate the whole group of the junior students for being disqualified or disunited because they let some members of the group act against the senior students' formulated regulations.

Through the year-long *rub nong* sessions, the senior students also tried to internalize the ideas of 'gentlemen' and 'gentlewomen' among the freshmen through etiquette lessons. The first-year male students were required to attend the separately organized *rub nong* session—namely 'For Men'—where senior male students taught them how to treat the female student appropriately and be respectful to female friends such as assisting female student with carrying heavy items or recognizing the 'lady first' approach. While walking with female friends, male students should work near the roadside since they could shield the female friends from the accident. Meanwhile, female students were taught to be gentle and well-behaved women.

The control of female student's sexuality was also found in other university where other research participants continued their studies. Apart from the heavily controlling uniform, which was widely practiced in Thai universities, the senior students developed various disciplinary measures in order to regulate the junior students, including female student's sexuality. The list of senior student's formatted regulations was distributed to every freshman—who was called "son/daughter of the university"—to strictly follow. Every first-year student was required to read the list carefully. If any students violated the regulations, they would face unpredictable punishments from the senior students. Twenty-two regulations were stated in the list as follow:

1. Every university son/daughter has to act according to the (senior student formatted) rules strictly.
2. Having a fight with other university sons/daughters is totally prohibited.
3. Revealing the institution's secrets to outsiders is totally prohibited.
4. Acting in any manner that ruins the institution's reputation is totally prohibited.
5. Allowing outsiders to use the institution's label is totally prohibited.
6. Using or bringing other institution labels in to the campus is totally prohibited.
7. Carrying any weapon in the campus is totally prohibited.

8. Occupying or consuming any kind of narcotic in the campus is totally prohibited.
9. Stealing is totally prohibited.
10. Wearing the institution's uniform in the city is totally prohibited.
11. Wearing sandals, t-shirt, or jeans in classrooms is totally prohibited.
12. Using vehicles in the campus is totally prohibited.
13. Misbehaving in sexual matters is totally prohibited.
14. Being boisterous both in and out of campus is not allowed.
15. While passing by shrines, monuments, or any sacred places in the campus, saluting is required.
16. Standing during the national anthem and institution anthems is required every time they are heard.
17. In every encounter, freshmen must obey senior student's commands. They must also answer any question a senior student asks and they must address the senior student politely (*krub* for male and *kha* for female).
18. Freshmen must respect lecturers.
19. Students must use pedestrian overpasses while crossing the road in front of the university.
20. While leaving the dormitories and entering the campus, every freshman has to dress appropriately or wear the university uniform.
21. Do not form subgroups or clubs that could possibly negatively affect to the unity of the overall party.
22. Every freshman has to attend and participate in every university-organized event.

According to the research participants, double standards were common during the enforcement of these senior-formatted regulations. Firstly, the rules were strictly enforced with freshmen, but senior students acted in blatant disregard to almost every regulation. For example, the freshmen were not allowed to use vehicle in the campus and were forced to walk separately between male and female while all senior students could ride motorcycles or drive their cars freely in the university. While first-year students were forbidden from having relationships and drinking, senior students were always found getting drunk and showing their affections with the opposite gender.

Secondly, senior students often extended the interpretations and the enforcements of certain rules. In the case of the rules which prohibited freshmen from having relationships were extensive to the point that no freshmen were allowed in the same vehicle with members of the opposite gender.

Thirdly, the punishments were “inconsistent,” because senior students could devise punishments in different contexts. The punishments ranged from giving a warning, humiliating junior students in public by yelling at them, or forcing the freshmen to do as ordered. Lisa shared her experience that:

*“They (senior students) don’t have any standards for punishment at all. It’s all about their mood at that particular period of time. If they dislike you, the punishment would be more severe. Female junior students who are good-looking are likely to be their targets. I have to be careful all the time. I don’t know when and where they (mostly female senior students) would slander me. I could be wrong even though I don’t do anything. They’ve bullied me because they are jealous of me and they want to exercise their power.”*

Having seen in the list above, several other additional rules were formulated and enforced by senior students. These rules were not officially written, but had been enforced as a tradition. As mentioned that first-year female students were not allowed to have relationships and not allowed to be found in the same vehicle with the opposite gender. The rules were extended further that the offence would be more severe if they had relationships with senior students. According to Lisa, one *tom* student who had a crush on her and she did not respond to her advances. The senior students considered this incident as violating the rules and concluded the research participant deserved to be punished, as Lisa expressed her experiences of *rub nong* practices in the university she was studying:

*“When I was the freshmen, a tom student liked me. I didn’t react to the tom’s advances, but the senior students knew that. They punished me in many ways. They began with yelling in front of my friends at me that my parents paid the tuition free for me to study, not to search for*

*relationships. Then they punished my close friends instead of me by forcing them to run around the soccer field under the sun. While my friends were running, those senior students put pressure on me saying that 'What a kind friend you are. Why do you leave your friends to be punished and you do nothing?' So, I had to run with them. My friends were punished because of me."*

As mentioned that good-looking female freshmen were the targets of the threats from senior students. Lisa revealed that although she did not do anything against the regulations, she was still a target. The fact that she had a white skin was justification enough for her to be persecuted by senior students. They believed that she was likely to attract the attention the opposite gender. As she explained:

*"I was bullied heavily by senior students all year long when I was a freshman. Once, the female senior students threw water on me just because they said that they were jealous of me. I had never faced anything like this before. Since then, there were series of threats from a senior. One day the senior students told me that I was too beautiful, my skin was too white. They ordered me to stand in the afternoon sun without any protection. They told me that I was not allowed to feel hot. I had to put up with it. They just wanted me to get darker. I just could not believe that the university senior student treated their younger cohorts like this!"*

Moreover, there was a case of Robin who got caught by senior students for being in the same car with an opposite gender who happened to be her older brother. They punished her by ordering her to remove grass under the sun. After that, the senior students forced her to lay down with turning her face up and pedal a bicycle in the air. Then, she was ordered to crouch on a hot cement street, and move into a mud well. Other research participants also complained that they were bullied even they did not break any senior formulated regulations, they revealed that:

*“We didn’t do anything wrong. But the seniors intended to harass us, especially because we are female freshmen. The one who looked good and beautiful had to be careful. If the senior [mostly female] students dislike us, they could find ways to shame us in public.”*

#### **4.2.2.2 Campus Dormitories: the Surveillance Mechanisms of the Senior Dwellers**

*“If you want to know about the control of a female student’s sexuality, campus dormitories will be the places!”*

Both research participants and senior students who I encountered during fieldwork gave me the same answer. Since I am a male researcher, I was not allowed to enter to some areas of the female campus dormitories. Therefore, most of the data here was collected from the informal discussions and in-depth interviews among research participants who were staying in campus dormitories. All of them revealed that the control of female sexuality was obvious in campus dormitories. The dormitories implemented various surveillances and control systems, both directly and indirectly, especially to monitor the first-year students.

Gender division was a common practice among campus universities. Male and female students were required to stay in different buildings and areas. For female dormitories, males were allowed to enter certain areas designated as public spaces such as living rooms, study rooms, and cafeterias. Moreover, outsider females or female students who were not the dormitory residents were not allowed to enter the residential area or stay overnight. In order to identify themselves as a resident, every student was required to produce their residential card in which picture, name, year, faculty, and room number were identified. They were required to show this card to security or responsible officials while entering a residential area or upon request. Every residential area only had one entranceway that was closely monitored by a security guard. Apart from checking the residential card of everyone who passed the entrance, security guards were required to remember everyone who was living in the dormitory. CCTV cameras were also installed on the halls of each floor to watch the movement in front of every room on that particular floor.



While the male dormitory entrance was open twenty-four hours, the main gate of a female dormitory closed at 10 p.m. After the time given, no one was not allowed to enter and leave the dormitory. Late arrivals would be recorded which would affect the decision of the dormitory manager to allow them to stay in the dormitory in the next academic year. Some areas in the female dormitory such as a study room and living room were closed at midnight. Kim complained that:

*“I don’t like the way they close the dorm entrance at ten. I was just free from home and school. I also want to hang out at night like those male students. I feel like I’m imprisoned in a dorm. Study room is also closed at midnight. I just have nothing to do. So boring!”*

Apart from the dormitory manager and maids who were responsible to the general managements, there were the ‘dormitory committees’ playing an active role in controlling and monitoring the dormitory residents, especially freshmen. The ‘dormitory committees’ comprised of the group of senior students selected by the dorm manager as the role models according to their devotion to the dormitory. The dormitory committees stayed in the dormitory like other students. One or two dormitory committees were assigned to stay and be responsible to govern the residents on each floor so that they could survey their responsible area effectively.

At the beginning of the semester, the committees inspected members of each room for checking numbers of residents in each room and any prohibited items. After getting to know all residents in their responsible area, one of their main duties was to keep their eyes on the residents constantly. These members would observe whether anyone did anything against the dormitory regulations such as bringing male students or outsiders into the residential spaces, smoking, drinking or even chatting too loud. Once, Kim secretly smoked in her room, she and her roommates were given a notice from the committees since they smelled the smoke from her room. If they did it again, the dormitory manager would be informed. Kim and her roommates would likely be expelled from the dormitory for breaking the dormitory rules. After 10 p.m., the committees were assigned to stay at the dormitory entrance. Those who arrived late had to ring the bell asking for the responsible committees to unlock the door. Their names

would be recorded with reasons of the late arrival to report to the dormitory manager in the next morning.

As mentioned previously, the dormitory managers selected the dormitory committee members. They were senior students who devoted themselves to dormitory activities and behaved well during their stay. They were required to nominate themselves to serve as dormitory committees in the next year. That meant they would be selected automatically to stay further in the dormitory. There was a long waiting list for each campus dormitory since many students, especially those from other provinces, needed to stay in each academic year. Staying in campus dormitories was convenient due to their location within the campus area and low rental cost—1,800 bath per semester (around four months) including water and electricity. The other option was staying in private dormitories located outside the campus that could possibly cost 2,500-5,000 bath per month without including water and electricity.

In another university, the female campus dormitories were stricter. According to the terms used, the dormitory manager was called dormitory mother (*mae hor*) who was the general manager of the dormitory. The ones who took an active role in disciplining and controlling the dormitory residents, especially the freshmen, were the senior dormitory members (*pii hor*).

Like the former university, the *pii hor* were the senior students who behaved as role models and were devoted students who took care of the junior dormitory members. Like the dormitory committees at the previous university discussed, the main gate of the dormitory was closed and no one would be allowed to enter and leave the dormitory at 10 p.m. Every resident on each floor was required to gather at the center space of the dormitory to be checked by the *pii hor*. This gathering was to assure that all first-year student members were in the dormitory. Lisa explained about the rules of the campus dormitory she was staying that:

*“I can’t go or do anything when it’s almost ten, just be ready to gather and be checked by the pii hor. Sometimes I was showering or in the toilet, I had to be presented to the pii hor as soon as possible.”*

*Sometimes, they followed me in the toilet to ensure that I was really in there.”*

Those who failed to be checked by *pii hor* would be punished. They were required to complete chores such as cleaning toilets, sweeping the floor, or emptying the trashcans around the university.

Since the senior students had formulated the rule that freshmen were not allowed to use any vehicle in the campus, every dormitory member was required by *pii hor* to gather in front of the dormitory in the morning. Once, Lisa unintentionally woke up late; the rest of first-year dormitory members were not allowed to go to the classrooms until she showed up. While walking to the classrooms, the junior students were required to walk in separate rows between males and females.



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## Conclusion

This Chapter explores the efforts of families, schools, and universities to enforce the hegemonic sexual identity among schoolgirls. In the families, parents tried to implement both mental and physical control of their children. While the girls were studying in high school, their sexual formation and expression were controlled through effective collaboration of the school's authorities especially SAD, VSI, PTA, and other working partners. Once they continued their studies in universities, the control mechanisms were delegated to the senior students who exercise those powers via the *rub nong* tradition and the campus dormitory management systems.

The findings in this Chapter show that the families, school, and universities developed various means to conduct surveillance, discipline, and punish the schoolgirls. The girls' bodies were manipulated, shaped, trained; their bodies became docile so that they could be subjected, transformed, and improved for the ultimate formation of the hegemonic stereotype of *kunlasatree* (Foucault, 1977). However, de Certeau (1984) stated that such measures to control and shape the schoolgirls could never be perfect. Such strategies are likely to be challenged by the girls' tactics that constantly compromise, negotiate, or render aspects of the strategy of families, schools and universities obsolete. It is to these tactics that the next Chapters now turn.

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