



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

ALEXANDRA LLOYD

BA (University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2015)

**“To Get Out from the Cage’: Transnational Indonesian Women’s
Experiences of Sexual Surveillance”**

Department of Anthropology

Tuesday, July 31st, 2018
9:30 a.m.
Cornett Building
Room A319

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Leslie Butt, Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier, Department of Anthropology, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Catherine Costigan, Department of Psychology, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Prof. Susan Brenna-Smith, Peter B. Gustavson School of Business, UVic

Abstract

Despite a heterogenous array of sexual identities and histories, increasingly conservative ideals around women's sexualities have amplified the social and political surveillance of women in contemporary Indonesia. At the same time, Indonesia's increasing global engagement in the 21st century has created new avenues for unmarried Indonesian women to travel overseas for educational and economic opportunities. Little is known about how transnational migration shapes dynamics around sexuality among women studying overseas, in particular, whether geographic and cultural distance from parents, kin and communities at home changes patterns of sexual surveillance.

Using data collected through qualitative ethnographic methodologies during fieldwork from April to July of 2017, this thesis describes the lived experiences of sexuality and surveillance among 16 unmarried Indonesian women living and studying in Melbourne, Australia. I focus on how women negotiate the challenges of repressive sexual surveillance in the context of their mobility and the tactical opportunities for agency this mobility fosters.

Intensive, often violent, surveillance from home remained central to how women experienced sexuality overseas. They continued to fear the social consequences of shame, stigma, and reputational harm that sexual transgression could provoke. However, women also explored novel opportunities afforded by their transnational positionality. They used a limited range of tactics, primarily variations of secrecy and compliance, to respond to powerful parental, social, and cultural expectations about women's sexualities. This thesis highlights the challenges and contradictions that transnational women face when dealing with pervasive sexual surveillance from parents, community, cultural norms, religion, and the state, and the extent of their struggles to achieve a degree of sexual agency overseas.