

Factors Associated with Sexual Behavior and Attitudes of Never-Married Rural Thai Youth

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Introduction

Research on premarital sexuality among young Thai men and women suggests an increasing acceptance of and experience with premarital sex. These findings also suggests there is a difference in male-female sexual attitudes and behavior and that this difference has important consequences. More than half of Thai male adolescents are sexually active and the majority of sexual activity appears to be with commercial sex workers. In contrast, a majority of young sexually active Thai female adolescents engage in such activity with their boyfriends (Prasartkul et al., 1987; Chompootaweep et al., 1988; Pitaktepsombat et al., 1989 and Xenos et al., 1993). Recently, it was found that there appears to be an increasing level of premarital sexual activity within the courting relationship (Ford and Kittisuksathit, 1995; Podhisita and Pattaravanich, 1995). Nevertheless, most of the males who reported having premarital sexual activity with girlfriends, friends, or acquaintances also reported having sex with prostitutes (Havanon et. al., 1992; Prasartkul et. al., 1987; VanLandingham et. al., 1993; Xenos et. al., 1993). This is of concern, in large part, because this places sexually active female adolescents at risk of infection from the HIV virus and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Most previous research on adolescent sexual experience has overlooked problems related to sexual behavior of rural youth who are the majority of young persons in Thailand and who lack information about reproductive health and have less

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access to services when compared to their urban counterparts. With the rapid change in social environment in urban areas, researchers main concern has been in-school adolescents or urban residents. As a result problems have been identified primarily for students and the urban population, especially for Bangkok (Porapakkham et al., 1986; Xenos et al, 1993). Moreover, most of sex-related behaviour research in Thailand has focused on attitudes and/or experience with premarital sex and contraception, while very few studies have attempted to explain the factors that affect youth on sexual behaviour and attitudes.

In order to create a better understanding of what never-married rural youth are thinking and doing sexually, this study aims to examine premarital sexual behaviour and attitudes of never-married youth. Particular focus is the differences between males and females in their sexual behavior and attitudes. The specific objective is to examine factors such as socio-demographic characteristics, family factors, and peers that may have, at some degree, effects on sexual behaviour and attitudes.

Incidence of Premarital Sexual Relations among Adolescents in Thailand

Although there is a general belief that Thai adolescent sexual activity is increasing, the proportion of never-married adolescent females who are sexually active remains very small (Prasartkul et al., 1987; Wongboonsin and Porapakkham, 1989; OPTA, 1996; Soonthorndhada, 1996). However, a large proportion of adolescent males is sexually active. This is associated with the cultural setting of Thailand where a double standard prevails regarding premarital sexuality. Male adolescent sexual activity is socially accepted, while female sexual activity is not. Girls continue to hold more traditional views than boys.

According to traditional norms and social sanctions that are still prevalent to a substantial degree in Thai society today, Thai women are expected to be virgins when

they marry. Adolescents cannot date freely. The general male attitude toward premarital sex is that it is "the man's gain and the woman's loss." The sexually active woman risks being the subject of gossip and jeopardizes her prospects for marriage. Boys do not respect girls who engage in premarital sex, as virginity for women is stressed in Thai society (PDA, 1985). Marriage remains the accepted form of obtaining access to sexual relationships for women, but men have access to prostitutes as socially approved alternatives (Porapakkham et al., 1986).

As in most modernizing societies, norms and social sanctions toward premarital sex among Thai adolescents are shifting in the direction of greater permissiveness, especially in urban areas. The attitude that premarital sexual intercourse is acceptable for both sexes if it is part of a stable, affectionate relationship has gained some approval. Prasartkul et al. (1987) reported that 40 percent of male youth and 36 percent of female youths endorsed premarital sex within an engagement.

Though changes in attitudes concerning premarital sex have been occurring among Thai adolescents as the society has developed, the double standard in attitudes towards sex remains apparent. Gender differences in attitudes toward, and experiences with, premarital sexual relations are pronounced. A study of students and teachers in Bangkok found that 39 percent of students and 62 percent of teachers reported premarital sexual intercourse as permissible for males but only 16 percent of students and 15 percent of teachers agree to such behaviour for females (Chompootaweep et al., 1988). Praditwong (1990) also reported that 27 percent of adolescents both in and out-of-school agreed that single men should be able to have sex with any women they wanted while only one percent agreed to this type of behavior for single women. It should be noted that the approval for single men having sex with anyone indicates an acceptance of sexual activity with prostitutes. Results from a focus group study of adolescents living in Bangkok (PDA, 1985) showed that there was more permissiveness toward single males engaging in sex, especially with prostitutes, as it was felt by some respondents that this allowed males to gain sexual experience.

Research on premarital sexual behaviour among Thai youth reveals sex difference and inconsistency in reporting sexual experiences. For example, while 14 percent of school boys aged 17-19 reported having had sexual intercourse with their girlfriends, only one percent of school girls reported having had sex with their boyfriends (Muangman, 1982). Prasartkul et al. (1987) found that at least 66 percent of males and 9 percent of female youth were sexually active. In a 1988 nationwide survey of youth, Wongboonsin and Porapakkham (1989) reported 30 percent of male and 3 percent of female youth ever had sex. The inconsistency between the findings of these studies may be because of differences in the populations studied and research methodology used. However, indirect data indicate that premarital sexuality does occur among rural adolescents. The typical consequence of premarital sex appears to be early marriage, which acts both to prevent pregnancy out of wedlock and to preserve the reputation of the girl's parents (Yoddumnern, 1981).

Thai male adolescents appear to be sexually active in large numbers and the majority of these encounters are with prostitutes (Muangman, 1982; Wongboonsin and Porapakkham, 1989; Prasartkul and Isarabhakdi, 1989). At the same time, the majority of female adolescents who have ever had sex are sexually active with their boyfriends. A review of three studies concerning the sexual behavior of school students in Bangkok show that the proportion of male students who ever had sex with prostitutes ranged from 17 to 35 percent (Porapakkham et al., 1986). This estimate is much larger in the later study by Wongboonsin and Porapakkham (1989) where 52 percent of male youth reported having sex with prostitutes. In Paothong's (1985) study on sexually transmitted diseases and condom usage among male high school students in Bangkok, a prostitute is reported as the first sex partner by 55 percent of the respondents. A recent study of male workers and students in Bangkok found a slightly change in pattern of first sexual partner of male youth. One-fourth of male respondents had tried commercial sex at their first sexual episode and one-half of them had first sexual relationship with their girlfriend (Soonthorndhada, 1998).

Conceptual Framework

There is almost universal agreement among the researchers that have addressed the issue that early pubertal development is strongly associated with the early initiation of sexual activity (Udry, 1979; Zelnik et al., 1981). Hofferth (1987) suggests, although there is such an effect, social factors intervene in determining when and how both boys and girls initiate sexual intercourse. Other factors that are strongly associated with the initiation of sexual activity before marriage including age, race, economic status, religiosity, academic achievement, family background and the influence of peer groups. This study focuses primarily on the influences of parental control, peer group behavior, and individual's characteristics as well as experience.

Parents are best positioned to provide advice about timing of each of the major early life transitions of their children. They are proximate socializing agents who influence the plans of adolescents for their youth-to-adult transitions (Hogan, 1985). Parental education is used in this study as a proxy for socio-economic status of the family. It is hypothesized, the higher the status the less likely the young will risk diversions in their life course trajectories (Hayes, 1987). Moreover, parental education is also a proxy for parental support and controls, communication, and interaction among family members. Highly educated parents are better able to institute social controls than less educated parents (Udry and Billy, 1987).

Beside the education of parents, studies in the U.S. support the important influence of family structure on precocious sexual activity. The likelihood of early sex is consistently higher among adolescents living in a non-intact than in an intact family (Hogan and Kitagawa, 1985; Haurin and Mott, 1990; Rosenbaum and Kandel, 1990; Zelnik et al., 1981). A single-parent home may offer limited resources for educational opportunities and parental supervision may also be limited.

Regarding adolescent's educational attainment, attachment to school and commitment to conventional values and institutions are negatively related to early sex experience. Adolescents with high academic ability and educational aspirations tend to initiate sex at a later age than their peers (Jessor and Jessor, 1977; Zelnik et al., 1981).

On the other hand, in developing countries, it has sometimes been suggested that increasing levels of education may be a factor contributing to the apparently increasing levels of sexual activity among unmarried youth. The expansion of the system of formal education prolongs the period of youth while simultaneously shifting many of the socialization functions of the family to school. The age-graded structure of schools increases peer group contacts and decreases the contact of young persons with other age groups (Cherlin and Riley, 1986; Coleman, 1980). They are also more likely to meet potential partners.

Peer groups can affect behavior, as has been demonstrated in studies of delinquency, drug abuse, smoking and many other behavior of teenagers (Yamagushi and Kandel, 1987). Some studies find a positive correlation between having sexually permissive friends and being sexually active. According to Reiss (1967) increased autonomy from the family and increased association with peers and close friends are fundamental to changing one's sexual attitudes in a permissive direction. High peer involvement tends to work against and sometimes overrides the effects of parental involvement. Males are more heavily influenced by peers in their sex behavior than are females, with strong pressures frequently being experienced by males to have intercourse (Chilman, 1983). During adolescence, the peer group increases in importance as a context of socialization. As is often the case, peer acceptance is a powerful determinant of how an adolescent is going to act (Abramson, 1983). In Thailand, male initiation of first sexual intercourse is found to be strongly influenced by peers (Havanon et al., 1992; VanLandingham et al., 1993).

Also examined are differences in sexual activity among youth with migration experience. It is expected that young persons who have spent some time in places away from home are more likely to have experience of sexual activity. The various experiences with urban life, the destination of most migrants in Thailand, may lead to changes in traditional norms and behavior. Although there is no study of the relationship between migration experience and sexual behavior among Thai youth, it is anticipated that migrants who came from socially sheltered rural environments and have moved to urban areas might be vulnerable to engaging in sexual intercourse. On one hand, this is because they are away from home and parental supervision. They also have increasing interaction with sexually experienced peers. On the other hand, rural migrants are selected for boldness and are atypical of men who remain in rural areas or rural men may act differently after they moved to urban areas. Alternatively, it may be explained by age, combined with greater independence and having more resources for leisure (VanLandingham et al., 1993).

Based on these perspectives, it is hypothesized that the following factors are associated with a greater likelihood of having sexual experiences and permissive attitudes toward premarital sex among never-married Thai youth: low parental educational attainment, living in a non-traditional family structure, not in school, migration experience, and having peers who have sexual experience.

Source of Data

Data used for this study are from a project titled 'Determinants of Sexual Behavior that Influence the Risk of Pregnancy and Diseases among Rural Thai Young Adults.' It was supported by the Task Force for Social Science Research on Reproductive Health, the World Health Organization. The survey was conducted during July to August 1993 in rural areas of six provinces in the North and the Northeast of Thailand. The northern and northeastern regions were selected for the study because other research indicates that a high percentage of the population of these regions has had

migration experience in provincial urban areas or to Bangkok. Moreover, the North is widely known as the origin of the majority of commercial sex workers (Boonchalaksi and Guest, 1993; Phongpaichit, 1982).

A structure self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) was utilized to collect data in order to enhance privacy and allow respondents the freedom to answer personal questions that might be threatening if asked by using face-to-face interview technique. This study analyzes data obtained from 577 never married males and 517 never-married females aged 15-24 years.

FINDINGS

Characteristics of respondents

Out of 1,094 respondents, 47 percent lived in the North. The average age of respondents was 18.3 years. The mean age of male respondents was slightly higher than that of their female counterparts. Forty-five percent were enrolled in school at the time of the survey. The majority of respondents were living with their parents. However, almost one-third of respondents had experience with living away from home for at least one month. Most of this time was in a provincial urban, city or Bangkok. The main reason for living away from home was related to economic reasons, usually to work.

Table 1 Characteristics of respondents by sex.

Characteristics	Males (N=577)	Females (N=517)	Total (N=1,094)
Region of residence			
• North	47.8	46.8	47.3
• Northeast	52.2	53.2	52.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age group			
• 15-19	69.5	78.5	73.8
• 20-24	30.5	21.5	26.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Schooling status			
• In school	36.6	44.7	45.1
• Out of school	63.4	55.3	54.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Co-residence			
• Both father and mother	81.2	83.2	82.1
• Father or mother	14.3	10.8	12.6
• Relatives / others	4.5	6.0	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Migration experience			
• Never migrated	67.4	72.9	70.0
• Ever migrated	32.6	27.1	30.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sexual Behavior of Never Married Youth

The sexual behavior of respondents reflects the social and cultural construction of sexual pleasure as a male preserve in Thai society. Males are much more likely than females to experience sexual intercourse before marriage. Half of the never-married males reported they had experienced intercourse, while only two percent of never-married females reported having experienced intercourse. This result confirms findings from other studies that it is common for young Thai males to have casual sex, but that is a very rare occurrence for never married Thai females, particularly in rural areas. This result may also reflect attitudes toward premarital sexual experience of young females in a setting such as Thailand where premarital sexual activity can result, at least for females, in ostracism for those who engage in it (Praditwong, 1990).

Table 2 Percent reporting sexual intercourse experienced by rural Thai youth by sex.

Age	Males			Females		
	Ever had sex	Never had sex	Total	Ever had sex	Never had sex	Total
15-19	37.4	62.6	100.0	2.2	97.8	100.0
20-24	79.0	21.0	100.0	1.8	98.2	100.0
Total	50.1	49.9	100.0	2.1	97.9	100.0
(N)	(289)	(288)	(577)	(11)	(506)	(517)

First Intercourse Experience of Never Married Youth

The age at which male respondents first had sexual intercourse ranged from 13 to 20 years. The range for females was from 13 to 23 years old. The average age of first sexual intercourse was correspondingly lower for males than for females (16.6 and 17.6 years). There were male-female differences in the form of the relationship wherein respondents first had intercourse. These results are reported in Table 3. Almost half of males reported a prostitute as their first sexual partner. Only 30 percent of sexually experienced males reported a girlfriend as their first partner. The comparable percentage for women was 100 percent. It is clear that the first coital experience for young rural Thai women was more likely to occur in a committed relationship, and in a much more emotionally intimate relationship. This sex difference is consistent with the view that males are more likely to view sexual activity as an end in itself and therefore do not restrict intercourse to a particular type of relationship. Women, however, seem to view coitus within the framework of a romantic or marital relationship (DeLamater, 1987).

Table 3 First sexual partner of rural Thai youth who have ever had intercourse

First Sexual Partner	Males (N=289)	Females (N = 11)
Girl/Boy friend	29.8	100.0
Friend	11.8	0.0
Loose girl	12.1	0.0
Prostitute	46.4	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Reasons given for having their first premarital intercourse are shown in Table 4 and also indicate differences between young men and women in the quality of the first sexual relationship. This result confirms findings from other studies that first sexual intercourse was scripted by intensification of peer pressure in combination with subjective pleasure (Soonthornhdhada, 1998). Females were more likely to engage in premarital sexual intercourse because they were in love, and almost half of those who ever had a premarital sexual relationship said it was unplanned sex, it just happened. The majority of young males had their first sexual intercourse because of curiosity. Sexual desire was not reported as a major reason for females having intercourse, but a relatively high proportion of young males (66 percent) cited this reason. Peer influence is important for the young men, with approximately 40 percent of young men stating that one reason for first sex was that they wanted to be like their friends, while only one female reported that as a reason.

One-fourth of females reported that they were not willing when they had their first sexual intercourse, but they could not resist. This could be explained by Thai gender scripting which prescribes that men make sexual advances and women are expected to resist. The women who engaged in sexual intercourse view it as "submission" associated with love. Some of them said that they surrendered because they wanted to sustain the relationship and to please their boyfriend.

Table 4 Percent citing reasons for first intercourse for rural Thai youth who ever had intercourse.

Reasons	Males (N = 289)	Females (N = 11)
Curious	87.2	36.4 (4)
In love	42.6	54.5 (5)
Wanted to be the same as friend	40.1	9.1 (1)
Sexual desire	66.1	9.1 (1)
Chance it just happened	36.7	45.5 (5)
Being forced / pressured by partner	9.7	27.3 (3)

Note: Responses derive from a multiple response questions.

Factors Related to Premarital Sexual Intercourse for Never-married Males

One of major objectives of this study is to investigate factors that related to sexual behavior of rural Thai youth. As shown in Table 2, a very small number of never-married females have had sexual experience, and hence it would not be appropriate to test for statistical significant using multivariate analysis. Therefore, multivariate analysis of factors related to sexual intercourse experience is undertaken only for never-married males.

The results from the multivariate analysis of premarital sexual experience, using logistic regression, are presented in Table 5. Because sexual experience is highly related to age, age is controlled and has the expected positive effects. The results show that net of other effects, region, which is considered as a proxy of socio-cultural

patterns, is significantly related to sexual experience. Young males who live in the North are more likely to have had sexual experience than their Northeastern counterparts. This is consistent with findings from other studies (Sittitrai et al., 1992; VanLandingham et al., 1993; Thongthai and Guest, 1995).

The model shows the strong effects of individual characteristics. Compared to those who were out-of-school, those who were currently enrolled in school were almost half as likely to have had intercourse. Migration experience was also found to have significant effects on premarital sex. Those who had ever been away from home were 50 percent more likely than those who never left home to have had intercourse.

The effect of peer behavior on intercourse experience was found to be statistically significant. Compared to those who reported having a friend who ever had sexual intercourse, youths who did not have such friends were less likely to have had intercourse themselves.

After controlling for age and region, none of parental background characteristics; parental marital status and father's education significantly affected the likelihood of having had intercourse.

The results suggest that it is primarily factors related to a loosening of social constraints, especially parental and community control, that are most likely to affect the probability of premarital sex. In contrast, socialization with the family as indexed by father's education and family structure, has no effect. Possibly because sexual experience of young Thais is influenced by factors outside the family. This result confirms previous study that youth who do not live with parents or relatives are more likely to have had sexual intercourse than those who live with parents or close relatives (Prasartkul et.al., 1987). Ford and Kittisuksathit (1995) in their study of factory workers show that the young feel more freedom when they were living in urban areas

relative to when they were at home in rural areas. Residential arrangements may be an important determinant of how well families are able to enforce traditional norms.

Table 5 Logistic regression model of intercourse experience of never-married Thai males

Logistic Model	Coefficient	Odds ratio
Age	.42 ***	1.52
Region (North)	.46 *	1.59
School enrollment (in-school)	-.75 ***	.47
Father's education (secondary and higher)	.61	1.83
Two-parent family	.08	1.09
Migration experience	.60 **	1.81
Friend's sexual behavior	.65 **	1.91
Intercept	-7.975	
- 2 Log Likelihood	593.632	
Df	7	
(N)	(576)	

*** $P < .001$; ** $P < .01$; * $P < .05$

Premarital Sexual Attitudes

In order to assess the premarital sexual attitudes of rural youth, two questions concerning attitudes toward premarital sex of never-married males and females were asked. Based on responses to these two questions, five categories of premarital sexual attitudes namely, abstinence, a double standard, permissiveness with affection, and permissiveness without affection were constructed (see Table 6). These standards were

modified from Reiss's Premarital Sexual Standards in America (1960). Premarital permissiveness, according to Reiss, is an individual's belief about the acceptability of sexual intimacy before marriage.

The females generally had conservative attitudes about premarital sexual activity. Among 517 females, 63 percent of them supported abstinence for both men and women before marriage. One-third of young women said that premarital sexual activity is permissible for males but not for females. Rural males also had a conservative attitude toward premarital sexuality. Twenty-six percent of young males supported premarital abstinence, while 37 percent said that premarital sexual relationship is acceptable for males but not for females. Males were more likely than females to support premarital sex if it is part of a stable and affectionate relationship (23 percent of males compared to less than 2 percent of females). The most permissive attitude, premarital sexual intercourse is acceptable for both sexes, was held by 13 percent of males, but only 1 percent of females.

Table 6 Attitudes concerning premarital sexual standards for rural Thai youth.

Premarital Sexual Attitudes	Males (N = 577)	Females (N = 517)
Abstinence (wrong for both sexes)	26.2	62.9
Double Standard (males have greater right)	37.6	31.7
Permissiveness with affection (if both are in love)	22.9	2.5
Permissiveness with affection for females but not for males	6.2	1.7
Permissive without affection (anyone can have sex)	6.2	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Multivariate analysis of attitudes toward premarital sex

In this study the individual's attitudes toward premarital sexual relationships at any given time are conceptualized as the outcome of socialization through family and peers, and individual characteristics. Since it is not known that these young people held the same attitude before they started sex as that which they had at the time of intercourse, the response concerning attitudes toward premarital sex may reflect a change in attitudes based, for example, on early sexual experience. Therefore factors that are hypothesized to relate to having sexual intercourse experience such as individual characteristics and experiences as well as past sexual intercourse experience are used in the model for the analysis of permissive attitudes.

The young who have permissive attitudes in this study are defined as those who express the attitudes that either men or women and whether or not they were in love could have sexual relationships before marriage. As shown in Table 6, these people are those who are not in the abstinence category.

The results of multivariate analysis of factors that related to permissive attitudes for males and females are shown in Table 7. It seems that attitude toward having sex before marriage is a product of normative responses to the influences of family, community, and past behavior. However, factors that influence attitudes toward premarital sex of males and females are different.

For males, region of residence exhibits a strong relationship with sexual attitudes among males. Those who live in the North are more likely to be liberal than their northeastern counterparts. Parental control seems to be significantly important to attitudes toward sexual relationship before marriage. Males whose fathers have secondary education are more likely to have traditional attitudes. Fathers who have higher education may have high expectation for their children, therefore they tend to

transmit the traditional values regarding appropriate behavior and social expectations to their children.

For females, factors that influence attitudes toward premarital sex are family variables and past sexual experience. Those who live with two parents and whose fathers have secondary education are more likely to have traditional attitudes. This finding indicates that parents play important roles in the socialization of their children. Moreover, living with two parents may not only indicate that parents exert a certain level of control over their children but also it implies that the children are living in traditional family structure in Thai society.

As hypothesized that an individual's current attitude is the result of his or her previous experience, the sexual experience of respondents is significantly related to attitudes toward premarital sex. Both male and female respondents who have sexual experience are more likely than those who had no such experience to have liberal attitudes.

The logistic regression results for sexual behaviour and attitudes are very different. While family variables have no effect on sexual behaviour, they are influential in forming attitudes. Sexual behaviour is also positively related to attitudes. The results suggest that the main causal path is from behaviour to attitudes, rather than vice versa.

Table 7 The logistic models of permissive attitudes toward premarital sex of never-married males and females.

Logistic Model	Males		Females	
	Coefficient	Odd ratio	Coefficient	Odd ratio
Age	-.07	.93	-.01	.99
Region (North)	.38 *	1.46	.61	1.84
School enrollment (in-school)	-.40	.67	-.16	.85
Father's education (secondary +)	-.82 *	.44	-1.18	.31
Two-parent family	-.39 **	.68	-1.34**	.26
Migration experience	.02	1.02	-.05	.96
Friend's sexual behavior	-.15	.86	.46	1.58
Have sexual experience	.80 ***	2.22	2.41**	11.15
Intercept	.703		-2.118	
- 2 Log Likelihood	711.517		196.848	
Df	8		8	
(N)	(577)		(517)	

*** P < .001; ** P < .01; * P < .05

Conclusion and Discussion

The data analyzed in this study show differences in sexual behaviour and attitudes of never-married male and female youth in rural areas of Thailand. The overall sexual culture of youth is structured in terms of the gender construction of the "double standard" in which premarital sexual activity is legitimate for boys, but tolerance of female premarital sexual activity is very low.

Premarital sexual experience is almost absent among never-married female youth, while approximately half of the never-married young males in this study had experienced sexual intercourse. Young men who have experienced intercourse is likely to have already left school, have migration experience, and have friends who have had intercourse. However, they not likely to confine sexual activity to girlfriends, but have relationships with multiple partners, including prostitutes.

The results suggest that family variables are very influential in forming attitudes, however, they have no effect on sexual behaviour. The factors that are most likely to affect the probability of having premarital sex are related to loosening constraints, especially parental and community control. During adolescence, the peer group increases in importance as a context of socialization as found in other studies that male initiation of first sexual intercourse is found to be strongly influenced by peers (Havanon et al., 1992; VanLandingham et al., 1993).

In terms of cultural norm pertaining sexuality in Thailand, differences in attitude and behaviour between young males and females can be explained by the impact of differences in early socialization on patterns of young people's sexual behavior. These socialization patterns impose constraints on female sexual behavior in adolescence in a variety of social and cultural contexts. As in other societies, in Thai society sons are to be given more freedom than daughters are. Boys are exposed more to peers. They spend a lot of time hanging around with friends. Moreover, the saying that 'A man who does not frequent prostitutes is not a real man' is probably one factor that pressures young men to initiate sexual experience (Archvanitkul and Havanon, 1993). Thai men who do not frequent prostitutes would feel different from other men (Kabilasingh, 1991).

A major reason for daughter not being given more freedom in their adolescence is the fear by parents that their daughters will be enticed or forced into premarital sex. Traditional values in Thailand stressing virginity and modesty in females and the

importance of the feminine roles of wife and mother are clearly reflected in the attitudes and behavior of female youth. Young women in this study express more non-permissive attitudes about premarital sexuality and have much lower rates not only of sexual intercourse but also of all types of sex related behavior, compared to their male counterparts.

The persistence of acceptance or endorsement of sexual activity among young men, particularly sex with prostitutes, but not among young women in a country in which the risk of contracting HIV is high, is alarming. Not only are these young men at risk, but this pattern of activity put at risk the lives of their future wives and children.

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