

Thai college student challenge traditional sexual pattern

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Introduction

This paper explores present day issues of youth sexuality among Thai college students in terms of sexual companionships or *chii wit khu*¹ in order to understand the changing patterns of sexual diversities and how such relationships challenge existing social controls. Globalization and industrial development in Thailand has brought high economic development and increasing migration of youth from rural areas to cities, particularly for education and employment participation. These rapid socio-economic and mobility changes have greatly affected patterns of social and sexual behavior of Thai youth (Thawesit, 2000; Ngamprapasom, 2001; Chamratrithirong et al., 2007). Thailand's population growth rate has been low in recent decades due to a number of factors including people remaining single or delaying marriage for longer periods, a higher rate of divorce and couples cohabitating without marrying or having children (Chamratrithirong, 1979; Limanonda, 1983; Xenos & Gultiano, 1992). The phenomenon of unmarried sexual companionship among youth is happening as Thailand starts its second demographic transition² which shows the sexual patterns and sexual values, norms, practices and behavior among adolescents and youth are constantly in transition.

The changing pattern and diversity of youth sexuality are important to understand the impact of these situations. The traditional sexual relationship within the context of marriage is widely validated by social norms and values which view this as a "good" sexual relationship (Songsamphan, 2004). The changes in sexual relationships among young people have been emerging for several decades in western societies, where patterns of cohabitation are widely accepted (Manning, 1993; Nevid & Ratus, 1995). This has raised a new discourse on cohabitation and youth's sexual relationships/ companionship which challenges the traditional norm. With time the new norms have diffused more broadly with less resistance from society (Foucault, 1979). In the developing countries, where traditional social norms governing sexual relationships are often more strict, cohabitation and/or sexual companionship among young people are new and still challenge the traditional norms and values.

In the Thai traditional context, sexual relationships are accepted within wedlock. In the past, patterns of sexual relationship were determined by well-defined social norms and values. Men having premarital sex was tolerated if not accepted, however women were not allowed to engage in such sexual behavior (Yoddumnern-Atig, 1992; Podhisita, & Pattaravanich, 1995; Ngamprapasom, 2001). During the past few decades, many studies have found that sexual relationships among young adults have been changing rapidly in Thai society (Chamratrithirong et al., 2007; Prasartkul et al., 1989; Sittitrai et al., 1992; Danthamrongkul et al., 2004, Boonmongkol, 2000). It is therefore important to examine the diversity of youth sexuality in terms of patterns, behavior, functions and mechanisms of sexual relationships and role of social institutions towards sexual behavior and how youth resist such controls. The focus of this paper was conceptualized using Rubin's (1984) theory of sex hierarchy and Foucault's (1978) theory on sexuality and how power controls sexual behavior.

The Study Setting

Students' Sexuality in a Thai Context

In Thailand, as in many countries, patterns of sexuality among youth, irrespective of gender, are in transition. Traditionally, sexual norms and values in Thai society have been very strictly defined and rigidly controlled (Aeusrivongse, 2004). Movies, for example, are still highly censored and scenes of a sexual nature are edited out or fogged over. Premarital sex is still frowned upon in Thailand, particularly among unemployed youth. College students engaging in sexual companionships have also not traditionally been accepted by society, with particularly strong social norms applying to young women engaging in sexual activity. (Podhisita, & Pattaravanich, 1995; Ford & Kittisusathit, 1995). Young men generally experience less social constraint and more freedom to 'go out for fun' in sexual companionships than their female contemporaries (Podhisita, & Pattaravanich, 1995). *Pai Tiaw*⁴ among adolescent boys begins with their core group of male friends and although the make-up of the group may change, this feature of male behavior continues into adulthood (Pramualratana, 1992).

In Thailand's contemporary transitional society, there are many young unmarried college age students to have sexual relationships. These relationships may involve living together in the same domicile or spending time together as a couple (Mookhaew, Sophin, 2001). *Chii wit khu* in Thai refers to two people, usually heterosexuals, who live together and have a sexual relationship. *Chii wit khu* includes couples who are married and couples who live together but are not married. In recent years *chii wit khu* has become a normal practice in college student sexual life. In this study *chii wit khu* is not limited to only heterosexual relationships. It refers to any unmarried students of either sex who identify themselves as *chii wit khu*, including couples where the partners are of the same sex or the opposite sex. The phenomenon of *chii wit khu*, or unmarried sexual companionship among youth, is happening as Thailand starts its second demographic transition with increasing levels of premarital sex and a distressing trend of low levels of practicing safe sex (Ford & Kittisusathit, 1994; Podhisita, & Pattaravanich, 1995; Isarabhakdi, 1997; Chamratrithirong et al., 2007).

Both heterosexual and homosexual behaviours have been becoming regular among young Thai college students. Male same-sex relationships take several forms with men expressing their attraction for other men in variety of way including denial and confusing. Some male college students had to resist and surrender their behavior to the power as well as hide their own sexual identity bowing to the norm of heterosexuality (Thamrongvit, 2003). Rosaline Morris (1994) examines the co-existence of the *kathoei*⁵ category with newer homosexual and bisexual identities and suggests that the contemporary Thai sex/gender discourse represents a complex of "two irreconcilable but coexistent sex/gender systems". One system is original and based on gender, while the other is borrowed and structured around the Western sexuality. Morris applied Foucault's model, proposing that the "man -*kathoei*-woman" system of three identities was constructed within a system of gendered discourses, while the recent gay, lesbian and bisexual identities have emerged as products of the eruption of a new discursive domain of sexuality. Jackson (1997 cited in Jackson & Sullivan, 1999:5) has countered that Thai discourses have not borrowed the Western "gay"/"straight" binary. He suggests that the term "gay" has been borrowed but it has been reconstructed within a gender discourse based on "man", *kathoei* and "woman," rather than constructed in opposition to heterosexuality.

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Sexuality, and How they Apply in Thailand

Gender and Sexuality

Gender and sexuality have been explored from different perspectives in different contexts. This paper takes a feminist perspective to examine youth sexuality and gender issues, drawing on the Gayle Rubin's (1984) theory of sex hierarchy and Foucault's (1978) concept of power, knowledge and discourse in sexual control. Sexual Script theory (Gagnon & Simon, 1973) emphasizes the impact of roles and culture on sexual patterns. This scripting theory indicated that the subjective understandings of each person about his or her sexuality substantively determine that person's choice of sexual actions and the subsequent qualitative experiencing of those sexual acts. Script theory presents much of sexual behavior as learned behavior and also posits that the types of sexual expression found in different settings reflect the social context. Among adolescents and young adults, social expectations about appropriate sexual behavior are likely to influence actual sexual behavioral that exist in a sub culture (Gagnon and Simon, 1973). Since many young Thai students' sexual life is influenced by their peers, script theory provides a useful framework to explore sexual orientation and peer influence on student's sexual identity.

The feminist perspective defines most societies as being patriarchal (Pongsapich, 1997) with men dominating nearly every sector in society, including politics, economics, business, health/medicine and education, as well as within the family (Archavanitkul & Tharawan, 2003). The difference in social roles and status between men and women is not a consequence of biology, but rather the meaning that society has placed on being male or female. Both male and female identities are socially constructed as a product of male-designed social indoctrination and bias (Butler, 1990; De Beauvoir, 1984). In traditional Thai sexuality, power relations between men and women have been determined in a similar way to that highlighted in Gayle Rubin's (1984) theory of sex hierarchy which focused on sexual relationships between men and women through marriage and for the purpose of reproduction. This is the social definition of good/ normal/ natural sexual practices - heterosexual, within marriage, for the purpose of reproduction - while other types of sexual behavior - unmarried sex, sex between women, sex between men, commercial sex or sex for pleasure rather than reproduction - are perceived as bad, abnormal or unnatural. Contemporary sexual diversity implies sexuality is fluid, and sexual preference can change from heterosexual to homosexual and vice versa (Rubin, 1984). In addition, students' sexuality, sexual behavior and the social controls regarding sexuality are determined by the connection between knowledge and power that exist at different levels of social organizations. Foucault (1988) articulated important questions about power, how power works and controls the human body, as well as about sexual practices and behavior. These power centers are related closely with discourse and knowledge. Power produces knowledge and vice versa as they directly impact one another.

Social controls operate through power and knowledge in determining the sexuality discourse. This social control has been regimented and institutionalized by rules, policies and regulations for controlling power centers such as schools, hospitals, military institutions and prisons, etc. (Foucault, 1988). The type of knowledge that represents power depends on the prevailing ideology of a particular society. How power takes over and consumes sexuality and sexual desire is illustrated by the Victorian era's attitudes toward sex, defining it as a forbidden issue. Under repressive social control mechanisms, individuals suppressed their sexuality, many people got sick and depressed (Foucault, 1978). Foucault believed that

discourse is combined with power and the technology of power, such as religion, family and medical institutions in producing an individual's sexual subjectivity. Power is related to resistance, he believed that wherever there is power, resistance is there also, existing side by side. Its forms and occasions are many (Foucault, 1978). Foucault's work *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1979), discusses "docile bodies" and "bio-power" as the result of power – knowledge in disciplinary practices. This takes place in institutions such as the military, education, hospitals and prisons using the discourse in the discursive systems of sciences, to train and correct individuals both as objects and instruments. The discursive practices are the medium or the means of putting the concepts into operation through training (Foucault, 1979).

Foucault (1979) describes governmentality as the change in technologies which is not only limited to state politics, but includes a wide range of control techniques, and that applies to a huge variety of objects, from one's control of the self to the "biopolitical" control of populations. This involved a greater emphasis on the state's ability to manage its resources economically and efficiently, and a concomitant increase in state intervention in the people's lives. There have been two important consequences of this change. First, people are both "regulated" by the state and its institutions and discourse, and educated to monitor and regulate their own behavior. Second is the appearance of understanding on the part of population, of the need to "negotiate" those forces of "subject regulation" through a process of "self-governing" (Danaher et al., 2000: XII). Self governance is one of the aspects of sexual control of individual using the technologies of the self to make humans objects of the discourses and subjects of self-governing operations on their own bodies and souls, including their way of life. This is a prescribed way for people to achieve happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality (Foucault, 1988). At the micro level, the technologies of the self allow individuals to learn and monitor themselves against institutionalized discourses that control them. In short, power and knowledge can be very powerful tools to examine subjects. Regarding sexuality issues, governing or regulating sex means to govern a population both at the individual and group level by various technologies and strategies employed through the governmentality.

Methods

The findings discuss in this paper are based on data and experience that I gathered during my eight months stay at student community in doing ethnographic research on youth sexuality dynamics in one province of Thailand. Living with student community made me developed a close understanding of how present day youth deal with sexual issues, desires and patterns of sexual companionships, the significance of sexual relationships and how sexual behavior in student sub-cultures challenges traditional Thai values and norms. Gathering in-depth information from students and their partners and key informants I could feel and explore the reality of different kind of sexuality groups such as male heterosexual, female heterosexual, male homosexual, female homosexual and female bisexual in college student community. During March 2006 to January 2007 in field work, I conducted 72 in-depth interviews and five group discussions apart from non participant observation. The research assistants who were undergraduate students and local youth approached the informants to arrange an interview and ensured verbal consent was given prior to participation in the study. Each interview included discussion regarding the participant's sexual relationships/companionships, the prevalence and acceptability of student sexual companionships, why they participate in these relationships and the social circumstances of sexual companionship. Also discussion on how they deal with the social institution that control sexual behavior.

The resulting transcripts were then systematically coded and analyzed using text and content analysis software⁶. The analysis of qualitative data is particularly consists of rich information to examine diverse patterns of youth sexuality, behavior, functions and mechanisms of sexual companionships and role of social institutions towards sexual behavior and resistant behavior against such controls. The following cases are some of my indepth analysis.

Pond- Female, 3th year university student

Pond's current partner is a university classmate who feels affection for her but had not shared his feelings with her. He had raped Pond when she was drunk at a party. She was very furious and refused to be friends with him. However, after a few months she felt better as he continually attempted to show her that he really loved her and begged her for forgiveness. She felt this was ok because he knew everything about her and spoil her.

Pond and her boyfriend did not live together. She did not allow him to live with her at the dormitory. She would stay with him at his home on some weekends. She would not allow him to live with her because she protects her privacy and does enjoy going out at night without him. Some of her close friends reported that she sometimes has sexual relationship with other males.

Pond thinks the future is uncertain and might not marry him though he wants to marry her. If she could go back in time, she would choose to be single with no commitment. As a single person Pond would have more freedom, not have to tell lies or make stories or ask permission to do anything. She feels she would have more fun and freedom and is very sorry to be in a relationship with him.

Pond usually spends most of time at her dormitory and some at her partner's home. She may visit her parents but does not stay overnight at their home. Pond believed her parents know about the relationship but they decided not to talk about it.

Fern : Female, 2nd year vocational college student

Fern is a 16 year old who is the second of four daughters in her family. Her mother does laundry and her father is a tricycle taxi driver. Fern has worked in a veterinary clinic since she was in grade 7. She works weekends and school holidays.. She earns 150 baht for one day's work from 8:30 am. until 8:00 p.m.

Fern has a boyfriend which her mother has helped her to keep secret from father. They have known each other since she was in grade 8 (14 years), in secondary school. Her boyfriend is 20 years old, unemployed, finished secondary school and lives with his parents.

Fern first knew him as a friend of her friend for about 6 months before they became lovers. During the first 6 months when he courted her, he picked her up at school in the evening 5 days a week and called her nearly every day. They went to the movies or the shopping mall or met at a friend's house because she told her mother that she goes out with female friends. She explained at that time she was young she did not think much about anything. At that time in grade 8, among her friends (over 10 friends) over half had had a boyfriend. Her attitude about having sex with boyfriend is very common among school friends and this is her first love.

They have had a sexual relationship for nearly three years which began after they know each other around 10 months when she was in grade 8. The first sexual intercourse experience happened one weekend when she came to see him. He asked her to meet him at his friend's room when no one was there. She felt very close to him, and that they had bonded. She also felt that she was ready because they were going together, did everything together, and he gave her some money, too.

Fern got pregnant, her mother and elder sister bring her for abortion 5-6 month ago since she did not practice any contraceptive. Fern plans to give up this relationship and have a good job. As she discovered her boyfriend have had another relationship. Also she have had a *kik* but she think she will not have any more sexual relationship as she want to have a job and be a good girl for her parents.

Fern's peers' experiences did not positively impress her because she felt they introduced her to having sexual experience before she was ready for them.

"If I could change I would like to change some of my friends, meaning not to be close to friends who asked me to try something that I had not experienced before. Some friends who live with their boyfriends say to me 'try it, it is good.' Something like that. They might be ready for living like that but I am not ready yet."

Ting : Female, 2nd year university student

Ting is 22 years old whose parents separated when she was very young and both of them have remarried. Her mother lives abroad and her father lives in another subdistrict with new family. Before he retired, he worked for the government. He always visits her every month at his home in town where most of time she lives on her own with friends. Ting has two elder brothers who both live in Bangkok.

Ting is very feminine, pretty, and lively but not be open with her feelings and thoughts even to her partner. She is very spoiled by everybody around her including her friends. She receives around 6,000 baht a month from her father, and mother occasionally sends her some money. When she is out of money, she sometimes asks her brother for help.

Her home was sometimes a gathering place for friends such as her classmates and some other friends always stay overnight or live with her. Her partner also live with her, they are together nearly a year. This is her first same sex relationship, as she has had many boy friends relationship before. Her partner was a few years older than her, she is a friend of her friend who live in her house. Ting started this relationship as many of her friends cheered both of them even she dated with many male friends at the same time. Her partner described that she try very hard for many months to win Ting's heart as she always belief her sexuality is only be with opposite sex. This is one of the reason of the fighting between them. Her partner moved out a few times in this one year relationship, as Ting does not know exactly what she want or which is ok for her same sex or opposite sex relationship.

Bean : Female, Ting's partner

Bean is 25 years and has another two brothers and one sister. She identifies herself as *tom* and always wears pants, is slim, nice, shy, and has a very strong accent. She finished high school at grade 12 and works for government as a temporary officer in the same office where her sister works. When she found this job, she accepted it on the condition that she can wear pants to work.

Bean lives with her partner, Ting in Ting's house. This house usually has many friends living there because no other family members live there. Bean and Ting fight and hit each other which creates an uncomfortable situation causing most of the friends to move out. Once Bean moved out because they quarreled too much, then Ting has asked her to come back again and again.

Nong: Female, Daeng 's partner

Nong is 25 years old, was born in Bangkok, but grew up in this province town. Her father works for the government, and remarried after her mother died when she was young. She has another younger brother who identifies himself as gay and elder sister. Nong has long hair, is pretty, attractive and polite. She usually wears sexy feminine clothes.

Nong was married since she was in a secondary school grade 7. So she left school at a young age and always felt that she had no teenage life. During her marriage, she lived in a remoter *amphoe* with her husband who farmed and gave birth to two sons. She separated from her husband one year ago and moved to town where she lives with her brother in her father's house. After separating from her husband last year, she works in town to send some money for her 2 children who are being taken care of by her husband. She works in a clothing shop where she earns a salary of 3,500 baht a month or up to 5,000 baht with commission. Her expenses always exceed what she earns.

Nong started having a sexual relationship with Daeng, over 3 months ago Daeng identifies herself as *tom*. At the same time she occasionally had sexual affairs with 2 married males for extra money. During sex with her partner, Daeng, Nong always plays a passive role because her partner will not allow her to play an active role.

Nong wishes to be with Daeng for a long term relationship. She does not live with Daeng because she is a student and does not have her own place to live. They see each other when Daeng stays with cousin Korn. Nong's father accepts that his son is gay but does not like Nong to be close with a *tom*.

Imm : Female, 1st year university student

Imm is 19 year old, was born in *amphoe* Muang. Her father works for local government and mother earns money from recycling garbage. Imm has another older brother and sister who lived at home. Imm receives 500 baht a week from her parents.

Imm identifies as a *tom*. She has long hair and does not wear female university student's uniform, but prefers to wear blue jean pants and a loose white female uniform blouse.

Imm asked her parent's permission to allow her girlfriend, Pop, to live with them. They seemed to accept her girlfriend as another member in the family. Imm and Pop have been in the same class since they were in high school grade 7. They were friends at that time and once Imm showed some special attention to Pop before they left school at grade 9. They continued contact again after Pop broke up with her boyfriend who she had planned to marry.

Imm prefers playing an active sexual role in bed, wearing male underwear on top of boxer pants when they go to bed. She will not allow Pop touch her genitals.

Pop : Female, Imm's partner

Pop is 19 years old and was born in this province. Pop is only child in a military family. Her mother has her own business in another province where Pop met her first boyfriend. Pop grew up and attended the same school as Imm. She continued her education in a vocational school in the another province, where she had her first sexual relationship with her previous boyfriend. They planned to marry and both families were aware of this situation at the time.

After the relationship finished, Pop move back to live in this study province and continued studying at another college. She called Imm and not long afterwards they became sexual partners. Pop's first same-sex relationship was with Imm and it was also Imm's first sexual experience.

Imm admitted to Pop not long after they move to live together, that Imm did not love Pop at the beginning of the relationship. Imm explained that her feelings of love began slowly many months after they were in the relationship. This information really upset Pop.

Pop fought constantly with her father, though they loved and cared for each other. The fights consisted of him physically hitting her. After a while Pop decided to move out and live with Imm. Pop receives around 3,000 baht a month from her father, and mother secretly gives her another 6,000 baht per month. She is spoiled by her mother, and also Imm's parents love her as another daughter. This means that they cook for her and she is not asked to pay for the cost of food and accommodations.

Pop identifies as a *di* and always play only passive role in sexual relationships with both males and females. She explained the difference between having sex with a partner of both sexes:

"I feel males always enjoy with their sex more than females."

Ang : Male, 2nd year university student

Ang is 21 year old who was born in one of remoter subdistrict. His father is a farmer. He has one elder brother and one younger brother.

Ang migrated and lived in a temple in town when he was a secondary school student. After he went to university he lived in a dormitory and have had a girlfriend. Ang earned money from working in the temple through doing various tasks including setting the ceremony for spirit house and as a photographer. He has received some money from a university loan.

Ang began dating his current girlfriend in his first year at university. She is his classmate and has a part time job promoting one car brand. Also, she and her brother and sister run a mini-mart near the university. Ang helps them in this business and sometimes stays overnight at their shop. Her parents know they have sexual relationship but do not discuss it. They treat him like one of the family.

He uses condoms, and sometimes practices the withdrawal method.

Rose : Female, 3rd year university student

Rose is a 22 year old, one of two daughter of farmer. Rose works some weekends at the department store in town where her younger sister work, also receives some money from her parents. Rose is a small good-looking, quiet, calm-natured woman.

When Rose and I first met she was staying with one of her classmate (Ting) in town. Then she moved in with her partner, (Korn), before they started having sexual relations. She moved in with him without planning ahead. It started when Rose began to stay overnight after going to the disco with group of friends. Another reason she wanted to live with Korn is because at that time her friend with whom she stayed continuously fought with her partner. Rose wanted to get away from the fighting.

The following is Rose's description of how she eventually had sex with this partner:

"I drank, we all went out together. Before that day, he had never did anything more than change clothes for me. He had many opportunities. He was under so much pressure from our friends to have sex with me saying things like why why do you leave her alone like that? .., why don't you do it? He is the type of person that needs to be encouraged or stimulated or he will not take the first step to do anything with me (have sexual contact)."

Rose did not love him, but she felt sorry for him. She loves one of her boyfriends who lives in another town. Actually, one of her friends reported that the other boyfriend is in a military jail. She got to know Korn after she had other boyfriends. Korn accepted the conditions that Rose can answer their phone or go out with other boyfriends. Korn always seems to be very sad, quiet or withdrawn and depressed whenever Rose contacts other boyfriend. His behavior makes Rose feel guilty. He asked Rose not to leave him.

Rose does not want to live with him because she is afraid the other boyfriend will find out about this relationship. She wants the freedom to do anything she pleases. Rose feels that she is responsible for Korn's feelings. She wants to leave him but is afraid Korn will be very upset or too sad.

Rose plans to live far away from Kanchanaburi after she finishes her education and that moving will end this relationship. Actually, she prefers to end this relationship before finishing school.

Korn generally used the withdrawal method and sometimes uses a condom for contraception. Whenever they are not so sure about using the withdrawal method, she brings emergency contraception. He purchased the pill for her. She read how to take it and knows that is quit dangerous to take the pill too often. She has taken once every few months.

Her parents knew that she had lived with Ting. But now they were informed that she lives with her sister who rents a room with her friend in town. Rose's sister works in a department store where Rose also works part-time.

Korn: Male, Rose's partner

Korn is a 26 year old who was born in Kanchanaburi. He lives with his mother who remarried a carpenter. Korn is the student Rose's boyfriend and a cousin to Daeng. He works for the government and attends a special program to earn a technical diploma on the weekends.

Korn knows Rose from a group of friends he met at the discotheque. They always seem to be among big group of friends who support them as lovers. He courted her for 4 months and after that she moved in with him they began having a sexual relationship. He loves her, but she has never said she loves him because she loves somebody else. His mother knows about the relationship but her parents do not.

Rong : Male, 4th year university student

Rong is 23 years old and was born in one province near Bangkok. His parents were separated and both have remarried. He lives with his mother and moved to live in one sub district in this study province when he was in grade 8. He has one younger step-sister. His mother works selling meatball barbecue. Since Rong was young he has worked as a tour guide during the weekend at a famous waterfall in this district. He won many prizes in speech and received a university scholarship, as well as a loan to attend school. Rong is a small built, lively, and is actively gay. He enjoys participating in student activities.

Rong has lived in a dormitory with his boyfriend, Earl, since he was a second year university student. He approached Earl while they were students and was attracted to his character, the way he dress and his personality.

Rong became aware of his own sexual identity at a young age knowing that he wanted same sex partners. His mother and everybody at his home knew about his sexuality except his biological father. Rong brought his boyfriend home, and his mother accepted both him and his boyfriends.

The first boyfriend Rong brought home was not accepted by his mother until he told her what the nature of their relationship was. Rong's mother said that she was not concerned about his sexuality or sexual preference, but wanted him to be a good person. After that he started to open himself to his family and close friends.

Rong had his first sexual experience when he was 18 years with a male who was 10 years older than him. They stayed together in his home for over 1 year before the relationship ended. This recent relationship is new for his partner, so Rong prepared him, advised, introduced and taught him by using VCDs, books and magazines.

Rong's relationship changed his life because it has more order; he eats healthy food, no longer goes out at night, saves more money and practices financial planning. They help each other do the housework. They share everything including finances and future planning to live together. Rong and his boyfriend both have leadership personality types which creates some conflict, especially when somebody is attractive to him.

Earl: Male, Rong's partner

Earl is 25 years old and was from Chinese family in nearby province. He is the youngest child in family, has older two brothers and one sister. He is closer to his father than mother. Earl lives in a dormitory on his own first and pays 1,500 baht for monthly rent. His father had been giving him 1,000 baht a week, but after the father discovered he had relationship with same sex friend, the amount was reduced to 500 baht per week. Earl just finished his education last year. But his partner, Rong still studies at the university.

Earl had his first sexual experience when he was a third year university student. He was aware of his sexuality and sexual preferences but he had no experience as a gay men. He believed that gay men were promiscuous and he did not want that kind of lifestyle. Earl was aware of his sexual preference before having any sexual experience with men and never had girlfriends. He started becoming excited about males when he was in grade 5, but kept these feelings to himself. Earl is a very good looking man and comes from wealthy family; many females would like to be courted by him. One reason he is open as a gay man is because he wants friends to stop matching him with women. Earl has answered his father's question about the relationship with his boyfriend and about being gay. His mother had a very difficult time accepting his homosexuality and was afraid his boyfriend would take his money. After Earl completed his education he began working on his own and not in the family business as before.

Earl practiced an active role in bed, but neither he nor his partner liked it. He was always in a passive role. He learned about these roles from his boyfriend, the media, websites, and also among gay friends.

Earl plays the role of a planner and decision-maker when it comes to buying things and clothing. He washes all the white clothes because he is neater than his partner. They help each other with all the housework. He believes in being monogamous and detests dealing with gay men because he thinks they all are promiscuous. Earl believes homosexuality is related to human instinct, not because of the way a person was raised. But when he talks to others he says that homosexual behavior is abnormal because that is what people want to hear. He thinks society does not need to change its attitude toward gays, but gay themselves have to change their behavior to be monogamous.

Findings

Meaning of Sexual Relationship/Companionship

The meaning of sexual relationships among college/university students varies depending on their beliefs, circumstances and experiences such as love and intimacy; sexual pleasure and desire; finances, shared activities and living arrangements; sexual identity and orientation; and alternative ways of being single, having pre-marital sexual relationships or cohabitating outside of marriage.

“Starting new life, I wanted to have someone taking care of me. I am always think about the one I love and that he loves me. I feel I am ready and have decided to spend my life with Earl. He loves me and I love him, I can feel it. I do not want to be alone anymore. I was lonely before.”

23 year old homosexual male.

“He is good for taking care of my emotions and many things such as, one day I

was crying and depressed. He makes me laugh by acting like a baby and buys me many things. If my niece has some problems, he will help solve the problem and will not ignore it.”

23 year old heterosexual female.

“We share sexual feelings, and also good friends. We share everything..., I sometimes I bring my dirty clothes she will do all the washing and ironing.”

21 year old heterosexual male

“We don’t want to marry...we are still too young...I don’t want to marry her.. I want to finish college study first.. then want to get good job....”

21 year old heterosexual male.

The first expression male is in a same sex relationship and looks for mutual love and caring in his relationship. The psychological and emotional needs for companionships were shown from 23 year female student’s expressions. The last male one had a girl friend runs a small shop with her elder sister and younger brother near the university. He spends most of his time with his girlfriend as they study in the same class, work, live and have every meal together. His girlfriend handles all the financial. He talks about his relationship. Thus it is clear those sexual companionships, relationships, or *chii wit khu* among student community were determined under different meanings. It has meaning beyond sexual satisfaction. Sometimes it seems their psychological needs are primarily to share love and sexual desires. Some students have companionships for sharing economic and social activities. Thus the phenomena of premarital sex, cohabitation and companionship have become more practice and acceptable behavior among university and college students. Modernization, economic and social transformation causes many young students not to accept or conform to the same ideology as in previous generations. Students are adapting their behavior to modern sexual practices instead of following the traditional norms that society wants them to follow.

There are many cases showing they started and continue their relationship, connectedness as it go on the way from situation such as modernization, peer pressure or their own feeling of sexual desire. There are two female cases were raped and many students were falling in the situation that they were forced/persuaded/convincing or willing to had sexual intercourse with the current partner and accept them as partner/boy/girlfriend. Another word means the traditions value of virginity/monogamous or keep the relationship with the one you have sex with as your partner are still playing a major role. Anyway these situation appearances there are some cases especially female express they do not want to continue the relationship or feel sorry for these relationship and want to get out of it. It is not so clear the sexual relationship cause of the resist of the social norms and value or the situation they are falling to as it go on. However it is show that the present Thai social institutions are weakening and not intervening as much as in the past which may mean that they are beginning to accept the current generation’s sexual values and norms.

Social Control

Social institutions such as family, school and state have controlled youth’s sexual behavior in the past. This study describes contemporary patterns of youth sexuality in Thailand, a developing sub-culture that has emerged as a norm among the students. Peer association

influences students' behavior as they often follow their friend's practices. Access to modern information and peer behavior among youth influence them to resist prevailing societal controls. Study findings show that while some Thai families are tolerant of their children's choices, accepting their premarital sexual behavior (both heterosexual and homosexual), other families are unwilling to accept the choices their children are making, especially their daughters' sexual companionships.

"My mother did not want me to have sexual experiences while I am a student. ...but I had sex with my boy friend ...so, I feel I am a bad girl. I am sorry about my mother I am not honest to her."

J20 year old heterosexual female.

"I cannot let my father knows that I have a boyfriend. He is very strict to me and does not want me to have boy friends when I am studying... If I go out late even with my female friends , he will call me and I will be blamed."

16 year old heterosexual female.

"My close friends, who are in the same gang, had sexual experience while they were in secondary school .. I was told by them that they ever had sexual experience, I too, don't see any wrong of students having sexual partners ... it is normal .. almost all of our college friends have sexual companionships .."

20 year old heterosexual female.

Family Control: Family is the first important social institution that socializes and shapes human behavior. Most parents in Thailand expect that their children will not become engaged until they finish their studies. Thai college students are financially dependent on their parents and many parents use this financial dependency to stop their children participating in unacceptable behaviors. Unacceptable behaviors are also controlled through family rules. Some parents exert control or try to make leaving home difficult by not allowing their children to live independently in a college dormitory. Many students do not live far from their educational institution. They want to live on their own but their parents, especially their fathers, will not allow. The social discourse operates through family, with parents educating and refining their children and family members. This form of social control can be effective in limiting students' expressions of sexual behavior that counter social norms. However, for some college students, family is not a strong enough control mechanism to stop this emerging pattern of sexual companionship within the youth culture. In contemporary society, many students resist these social controls and allow themselves to experience sexual relationships. Sexual companionship or living with a sexual partner has become regular practice among adolescents and youth. This seems to be a first stage of recognizing the changing phenomenon which may become more wide spread within the sub-culture in the future.

In the past in Thailand, a couple who breached social values or family norms could conduct a ceremony termed '*kho kama*'⁷ asking their parents to forgive them, especially members of their family who opposed their decision. For example a couple who ran away from home to live in a defacto relationship in another place where their family could not find them could seek forgiveness through *kho kama*. In the past this ceremony would be arranged when the couple was sure that their parents had calmed down and were ready to forgive them and accept them as husband and wife.

Today in this province, some students live with their partner, some do not and some bring their partner to live in the same house with their parents. A major factor contributing to the weakening of family control has been college students living in dormitories. For some students this is a practical arrangement as the college is far from home. For others it is a convenient way to avoid parental supervision.

“I am only one child in my family. My parents let me stay in a dormitory in my third year at university, Before that I was not allowed to stay over night outside the home and to go out alone anywhere. If I go out late, my father will drive to pick me up.”

21 year old heterosexual female.

The extent to which family control is weakening in this student community is illustrated by the following comment by a college teacher;

“I believe parents nowadays spoil their children; they do not stop or correct children’s behaviour. Young female students bring boyfriends to their parent’s home. Parents are accepting this behavior and allow the relationships to continue. Some female students ran away from home to stay with their boyfriend. Parents of male students did not send that female back home, but accepted them as a couple. Anyway, some families cannot change and accept this new trend. I believe 80 % of college or secondary school students above are having sexual experiences.”

College teacher, male.⁸

“My parents trust me...they want me to be a very good student and concentrate only on my studies. I have never shown to them that I am having intimate relationship”

22 year old heterosexual female.

School and State Control: School (college and university) is another important social institution that controls student sexual behavior. Colleges have a number of rules that affect the students sexual behaviour including dormitory guidelines. In 1964, the Thai state issued a law called the Dormitory Acts B.E. 2507 (1964) that is administered by the Department of Public Welfare, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. The purpose of this law is to protect and accommodate students who live in dormitories. The main requirement of this law is for any dormitory with five students or more to register. Two kinds of dormitories are stipulated, one for female students and the other for male students. Dormitories are required to have written documentation showing that they meet the intent of the regulations including the rate of rent, times for entering and exiting the dormitory, visitors, health care (primary care/emergency care), overnight stays outside the dormitory, noise and other annoyances, etc. The law holds the dormitory manager responsible for maintaining students’ records. This law authorizes the government to inspect any dormitory between sunrise and sunset. The authorized government official from the Department of Public Welfare can close down or reject the registration paper if the dormitory is not compliant with the law or does any thing that is “not peaceful, harmonious, moral or is dangerous for the state.”

The punishment for dormitory owners/operators found to be violating the regulations can be a six month jail sentence, or a fine of not more than 2,000 baht or both in cases regarding the dormitory's registration. In cases where the dormitory registration is lost, damaged, changed or is not presented to the government representative, the fine is 500 baht. The manager will face jail for one month or a fine of not more than 1,000 baht or both in cases of non-cooperation with students involving their education and behavior. To make requirement in female dormitory are require to have all female staff.

At a basic level this law was issued to control student's sexual behavior by prohibiting them from living together and by establishing dormitory rules and regulations that do not allow males and females to reside in the same building. Any dormitory where more than five students reside is required to register as a student dormitory. Government officers from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security inspect these dorms every semester especially during the time when politicians or leaders are attempting to promote their image and work. In addition to student dormitories these inspections include clubs, bars and discotheques. This is considered to be good public relations and shows that the government and the politicians are interested in youth's health, security and their sexual behavior.

Dormitory inspections are conducted by a team that includes the police, a teacher, a tax collector, and someone from the social security department. Whenever a couple is found staying in the same room or if there is evidence of persons of the opposite sex living in the same room, such as clothing, or drugs or any other illegal objects, these findings violate the regulations. The findings are reported to school officials, the students' parents, and also the dormitory owner. Any students who have violated the regulations who have received a government loan will lose their financial assistance.

Some students mentioned during the interviews that they did not stay with their boyfriends/girlfriends because they do not want to face the inspection and any consequences. They do not want to loose their financial aid including scholarships and education loans, and do not want to report to their parents. Many other students however decide to take a risk and disregard the rules. These students run away or lock the door and pretend that nobody is home during an inspection. Also, sometimes the owner is given advance notice of the inspection and announces this to the students before the inspection. Some students avoid inspections altogether by staying in a rented house. Every landlord/lady accepted and allowed both male and female students to stay together because they want the business. If rules and regulations are implemented, these young students will move out and stay somewhere else. Now most of dormitories allow both male and female students to reside in the same building as university and government officials are unable to stop young students from resisting their requirements.

In Thailand today, students prefer to live in accommodation where they have the freedom to walk in and out any time, and where they can live independently including inviting friends to their room. If a landlady/landlord is too strict, the student will move out and this will affect their business. In the end, most of these businesses have to adjust to the needs of their young clients. The area around the university has more than 200 places for students to live, but there are only a few dormitories that are designated as women's dormitories where men can not enter, not even the female student's father. These dormitories serve the needs of the parents who check how their daughters live. The reality is that some women living in women's dormitories still sneak men into the building as well as stay over night outside the dormitory.

“There are some students become pregnant every year – some are known to us and others are not. We try to help them if the baby is not grown up, we can hint at it easily. They are lucky if the pregnancy is close to the delivery time, especially when they are on the long summer school holidays. If not, they have to end school to delivery the baby, then they come back to school. But some students feel ashamed to carry her pregnancy while at school, then they decide to leave school. In some cases the school has to terminate their education because it is against the rules, except when they show their marital registration.”⁹

College teacher, female.¹⁰

“When I was in grade 7-9, whoever got pregnant left school without telling to anybody, even for close friends. They feel ashamed; it means that having a sexual relationship with male is very shameful.”

21 year old heterosexual female.

“Many students do not like to stay in university dormitories as they don’t have more freedom and adhere to given rules and regulations.... So students choose to stay outside university”

University dormitory officer, male.

Sexual Diversity

Sexual diversity is apparent in Thai society and has been visible for a long time. During the past decade some words, magazines, associations, pubs, clubs, organizations for both gays and lesbians have become part of Thai culture (Jackson 1999, p. 3-6). There are some words showing the diversity of sexual identity such as *kathoei*, *tom*, *di*, *gay*, *gay king*, *gay queen*, and *les*, etc. There are so many words that some students themselves were confused and could not explain their meaning or the differences in meaning. They could explain only how they themselves identify and sometimes they did not call or identify themselves using these particular terms. This reflects the interesting reality that people are different; they act differently and feel different. Some students could not put themselves in any available categories, which may reflect that their sexual identities are not the same as others.

“When I was growing to young adult I favour female association . At that time I did not know I loved persons of the same sex. I knew that my interests were similar to girls, liked to dress up in women’s clothing, did not like play any rough games with boys, but liked to play with girls. At that time I did not know about sex or how to act, I knew only that I liked the same things as woman.... Before entering school grade 7, I did not want to go to boy’s school I was afraid boys would treat me badly and scared that I could not hide my sexuality from them.”

21 year old, Kathoei

“I opened myself when I was in grade 9. I felt I had to get out of the closet. I was very frustrated....I found my friends came out of the closet, then I did because my character is quite clear, people always asked me ... Are you Tom¹¹? But I was afraid to accept this and felt ashamed, afraid they will blame me - a tom who loved women who were the same sex as me. I was scared to say anything until I met my

older school friend, she asked me and I did not answer. She encouraged me... then I accepted that I am tom ..”

21 year old female, tom.

Witt was confused when he started to be attracted to his boyfriend and for the first four months he wondered about his sexuality. He talked to a classmate about his sexuality who was a *kathoei*:

“He told me that I am kathoei. I am not; I do not want to dress as a woman. ‘So you are gay’, then I ask what that meant. He said he is not gay so he didn’t know. Most information is from the internet. I have internet access at home. I want to know and searched Google for ‘gay.’ I learned from my own feelings in the past and experiences from people around me about what gay is. How do you know who is gay? What kinds of people are gay? I have a headache when think a lot, so I do not want to know.”

26 year old homosexual male.

One apparent reason why study participants did not identify by using these terms is because they do not want to be seen as different from heterosexuals. This may be because Thai society still reinforces the old beliefs that homosexuals are abnormal or deviant. Students do not want to have this stigma. It may also be because they are changing or their sexual identity is changing so they do not know which category suits them. It is clear that sexuality among college students in Thailand is diverse and students identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and transgender persons. Their sexual partners are same sex, opposite sex and some they have both male and female sexual partners.

Some students who had sexual experiences with same sex partners also discovered they enjoy relationships with persons of the opposite sex, and vice versa. Some of them had partners of the opposite sex before having a same-sex relationship. Interestingly, some students believe their sexuality and sexual role is fixed and permanent. Perhaps they believe gays/lesbians could not have sex with the opposite sex and heterosexuals could not have sex with people of the same sex. The following student had her first sexual experience with a friend of the same sex. She has never identified herself as a *tom* and said:

“I feel I am a woman. I do not feel like a bully, tuff and strong as a man but my personality as my friends said is like a man’s. My feelings tell me I am a woman.”

20 year old heterosexual, female

This heterosexual student expressed about her same sex experience;

“When I was in the first year in university I had a tom as my girlfriend. There are both good and bad experiences between boyfriend and girlfriend. Toms could not give warm as much as men, but she can understand women more than men. Women know what women want. Men do not know what women want.”

22 year old heterosexual, female

Some students believe their sexuality and sexual roles are fixed, permanent sexual stereotypes. Male heterosexuals and masculine lesbians (*toms*) insist on playing only the active role in sexual relationships and allowing females to play only the passive role as in a patriarchal society which illustrates the power relations and gender relations within the

couple. Students who dominate or have more power show they enjoy or receive sexual pleasure by playing the same role and not allowing their partner to play another role. In other words the sex roles are rigid or fixed. The question then arises as to whether their partners are sexually fulfilled. Some students have talked to their partners about changing their roles or sexual behaviors, but their partner have remained inflexible on this point.

“I do not like my ‘faen’¹² to be an active partner. I insist that she never takes the active role. Once when she asked, I screamed at her like crazy saying that I did not want oral sex from her and that she should never offer to “go down on me” as though she was giving oral sex to a man. After this, she became very quiet. I told her that everything was okay and to just lay down and I would do everything.”

21 year old female, tom.

Some feminine homosexual males and masculine lesbians enjoy or receive sexual pleasure playing a fixed role and will not allow their partner to change their role at all. In both cases, partners talk to each other, but both of them insist and confirm what they want. Conversations about sexual play, obviously take place because their partners want to try something different and to try another sexual role. This means that the partners are not entirely content with their roles; otherwise they would not ask to change. This partner gave up discussing this issue because she became very angry and made it clear what her attitude was regarding her sex role.

Females who play a feminine passive role very rarely initiate the sexual act or relationships. But they believe some women can play and enjoy the active sex role, too.

“I have never been in the active role before, but some women might be.”

16 year old heterosexual female.

This relates not only to sexual stereotypes, power relations and gender relations among couples, but also to patriarchal societies. Whoever in a couple has more power, receives more sexual enjoyment and pleasure than the other. This affects the ability to be sexually fulfilled and is an indicator of future problems also.

Sexual health & Violence

“I raise my hands and “wai”¹³ (ไหว้) (respect) him. I begged him not to do this and told him that I already have boyfriend and love him. He did not say anything but squeeze my arms strongly including threaten me. It was very scared, and have experienced nothing worse than this in my life. Nobody was there and he had a gun. I bit his tongue and arms and cried. He said he loved and want to own me. I said that if he did this to me, something similar would happen to him. This rape happened because I trust people. Normally I just go out for fun and recreation, I was not interested in any guy or sex.”

21 year old heterosexual female.

“My first pregnancy occurred because I did not take any pill, I did not know how to take it and knew nothing. The second pregnancy happened because I forgot to take a pill. I took the 21 pill and used the rhythm method. Since I had another boyfriend and more sexual partners, I used condom because I am afraid of HIV.”

21 year old heterosexual female.

“The first pregnancy happened when I was in grade 12. I borrowed money from friends for an abortion. I could not ask mother (grandma), if I did she would know because I started to get big and was eating a lot, also she would throw me out. The second time was when I was in the second year in university. I went to the same place on Sukhumvit Road for an abortion. I was not using any contraception, knew nothing. When I learned about it at school, I was not interested at that time because I didn’t think anything like this would happen to me. I am too young, and started to think seriously about these things when I was in the third year in university. Now I know and can think as adult, but my actions don’t match my thinking.”

21 year old heterosexual female.

This student is 21 year old fourth year university student lived with her partner who raped her. She has had two abortions because she did not know, and was not interested in, sexual health and contraception. Therefore, sexual dynamics, issues and challenges should address the changing discourse in order to minimize the negative consequences such as reproductive health risks, family problems, sexual violence, sexual coercion, etc.

For decades Thailand’s traditional sexual norms and values have powerfully and strongly dictated and controlled the sexual behavior of the Thai people. How can these students resist the existing state of affairs while the overwhelming majority of conventional society wishes things to remain as they are? Why, then, do present-day students have relationships, sometimes sharing their life with another or living with a boyfriend or girlfriend? First, students have more freedom to live independently, especially those who move far from home. This is a new phenomenon for young Thais, especially young single females. Living and taking care of themselves reinforces the idea that they have grown up enough to be responsible for themselves. Many students insist that it is their right to do what they like with their own bodies, and that they have the right to have sexual intercourse if they so desire choose.

Gayle Rubin (1984) mentioned that most people in society believe what is ‘good’ and what is ‘bad’ as the social norm and values have narrowed people’s thinking in only one direction. Some students also believe homosexuality is not ‘normal’. Some believe sexual roles are fixed, and cannot be altered. Many students have family and friends who have a different sexuality from them, and have learned to accept them without prejudice or discrimination. This demonstrates how the status quo is slowly impacted when people are more open and accepting and see sexuality and sexual practice as more fluid and not rigid.

These younger generations’ new patterns of behavior are still based on patriarchy where males continue to dominate females in many ways including, sexual roles, division of labour in domestic issues, sexual practice regarding contraception, etc. Most males play the active sexual role and do not appreciate, and sometimes look down on, females who may also play the active role. Also, some masculine females as *toms* embrace role models perpetuate by patriarchy, and will not allow their partner who is a feminine female to play an active role. Hence, sexual pleasure remains one-sided through male domination. Now, although many things have changed, the basic ideology of the past still has remained the same. How will future generations of young people change to make themselves equals, both male and female, balancing gender roles through various forms of sexual expression? How they can equally

express and enjoy their sexuality together? How are they going to express themselves freely without being discriminated against or avoid being offended?

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper examined how the patterns of sexual companionships, relationships, and *chii wit khu* are determined in the student context. Findings highlight the fact that students choose alternative ways of being single, having pre-marital sexual relationships and cohabitating outside of marriage. These new patterns of relationships have become acceptable norms among students in their community. The sexual patterns and sexual values, norms, practices and behaviors among adolescents and youth are constantly in transition thereby challenging the traditional norms. These findings are consistent with the sexual transformation that had been taking place in Western societies in 19th century which started from a small group of young adult students (Landale and Forste, 1991; Rubin 1984).

However, cohabitation among young adults in the Thai context and in Western societies is different in terms of meanings and practices. The literature divides the meaning of cohabitation into three groups, namely, a trial marriage, means of having a sexual relationship while being single, and alternative forms of marriage (Landale and Forste, 1991; Rindfuss and Heuvel, 1992, Axinn and Thornton, 1993; Bumpass, 1990; Wu, 1999). This study found that the meaning of cohabitation or sexual companionship among these Thai students was as a means of having a sexual relationship. In addition, cohabitation or sexual companionships, in Western societies is often motivated by economic factors as a way of reducing the cost of living. However, in present society, students are economically and financially dependent on their parents or government loans. The patterns of sexual companionship among young adult in this province seems to be consistent, to some extent, with the pattern which has been occurred in Western society. However, in this society young adults seem to be less responsible and also do not appear as concerned about the consequences of having unsafe sex. In addition, sexual companionship with multiple partners sometimes creates psychological conflicts among youth, especially females.

Second, I explored how social institutions control youth's sexual behavior and found that youth's sexual behavior is challenged by the existing social institutions namely, family, school and state. Additionally these institutions are not exerting enough control to stop this emerging pattern of sexual companionship within the youth culture. In present Thai society, many students resist these social controls and allow themselves to experience sexual relationships. Having sexual companionship or living with a sexual partner has become common practice among adolescents and youth in Thailand. A sub-culture has emerged among Thai youth that accepts this behavior as the norm. Peer association influences students' behavior as they often follow their friend's practices. Access to modern information and peer behavior among youth influence them to resist prevailing societal controls. Study findings demonstrate that some families were tolerant of their children's choices by accepting their children's partners (both heterosexual and homosexual) while still many were not accepted, especially their daughters. This seems to be a first stage of recognizing the changing phenomenon which may become more wide spread within the sub-culture in the future

Regarding the roles of school and government in controlling sexual relationships of youth, both school administrators and government officials formulate and implement the rules and regulations for students who stay in the dormitories. As discussed previously, the law requires student dormitories to separate men and women, when, in fact, most private

dormitories do not follow the rules because of student's demands. This allows students to resist the existing social controls. It seems students' resistance to the social controls has weakened the enforcement of existing rules and regulations of social institutions. This issue brings about new knowledge and power to resist social control. In this sense, the findings are consistent with Foucault's (1978). On the other hand, this study, seems to reflect the collective behaviors of youth rather than the power relationship between youth and social institutions.

Third, I wanted to discover youth's sexual identity in terms of sexual hierarchy. This study revealed that sexual hierarchy among youth has been weakened both among partners of the same sex and the opposite sex. "Bad" categories of sexual relationship/companionship have already become acceptable in the youth culture. The existing mainstream values and norms regarding sexual issues are not treated as important as once they were. It is interesting to note that in the old days virginity was considered to be an important aspect of female sexuality before marriage (Aeusrivongse, 2004). This norm can suppress the sex drive of many females in a society (Pongsapich, 1997). This study found that youth are not as concerned about maintaining virginity now. Therefore, it can be theorized that virginity and sexual hierarchy are not as important among college and university students in the contemporary student context. Due to changing societal attitudes toward virginity, women appear to have more sexual freedom than ever.

This study did find diverse sexual relationship/companionship among youth including partners of the same sex, opposite sex as well as partners who have been with persons of the same and opposite sex. Some participants believed sexual relationships were fixed along heterosexual and homosexual lines, while others viewed heterosexuality or homosexuality as fluid. Not being rigid, but rather viewing sexuality as fluid seems to be more helpful for youth to understand his/herself as well as others when changing identity or sexual preference (Rubin, 1984). Those students who believe sexual identity as being fixed have difficulty changing their own sexual orientation or identity and allowing others to change theirs. As a result students sometimes face psychological frustrations and discriminate against others at the same time.

Knowledge and attitudes about sexuality among students varies depending on their individual experiences. The importance of these findings shows that sexual diversity impacts the mainstream discourse and challenges the old knowledge that defined homosexuality as deviant or abnormal (Rubin, 1984). The evidence shows that Rubin's theory can help in explaining sexual diversity in the Thai context.

In addition, another interesting finding regarding changing dynamics of youth sexuality was that youth enjoyed having multiple partners rather than having a single partner. In Rubin's (1984) theory, these relationships are considered as "bad" hierarchy or misbehavior. In contemporary this student society, many young students, both male and female students, heterosexual and homosexual, have casual relationships with a *kik*¹⁴ as means of sexual, psychological and social satisfaction. This has become a common practice and also fashionable among the younger generation.

Finally, various types of sexual companionship identified in this study will impact a number of demographic, social and health indicators in society. The literature emphasizes that the low rate of population growth over the last three decades is primarily due to changing marital patterns with larger proportions of males and females remaining single or delaying marriage

(Raley, 2002; Sobotka et. al., 2003). This study also confirmed that changes in sexual dynamics in terms of a high proportion of youth cohabitation, sexual companionship or living together without being married have an impact on postponing conventional marriage. Many couples would prefer to enjoy their life without having children. Thus the findings suggest that Thailand has entered a phase of Secondary Demographic Transition that may cause further changes in sexual relationships, marital patterns and low fertility throughout the country.

At the individual level health consequences are important as youth practice unsafe sex and are exposed to STI/HIV, as well as psychological complications. Young women especially have more health risks in terms of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, as well as experiencing violence in the form of rape or other types of physical/sexual abuse. On the other hand, it can be argued that young women have become more independent and have more freedom and opportunities to experience and make decisions regarding their sexuality than in the past. The paradox within the changing discourse is that gender roles are still dominant in homosexual and heterosexual relationships. Even though young people enjoy more freedom to experiment in terms of their sexuality, sometimes one partner wants to maintain a dominant role while making the other partner be subservient and submit to their preferences, particularly during intimacy. Consequently, the young people may be faced with engaging in more risky sexual behavior.

At the family level, if parents do not accept their children's new behaviors, the entire family may be negatively affected. Both parents and students may become overwhelmed or depressed as they may feel they are unprepared to address these diverse issues of sexuality. However at the societal or macro level youth's sexual patterns challenge the existing sexual values, norms and social controls. Thus it is clear that the sexual norms, values and practices prevailing among youth in Thailand have been changing. Cohabitation and sexual companionship have become an integral part of student life and have created a new discourse and sub-culture among youth in society. The conventional social controls formerly exerted through institutions have weakened and do not exert the same power to control sexual behavior as in the past. Therefore, existing social institutions need to understand and adapt to the changing discourse. Furthermore, the attitude regarding virginity which controlled sexual behavior in past centuries has been diminishing. Both male and female students believe that the virginity is not an important value to be honored. In this sense, females have more opportunities and freedom in terms of exercising their sexuality.

However in this study showing there are many students start and continue the relationship as it go on the way from the situation, peer pressure and etc. They felt sorry and some of them want to finish the relationship. These cases are difficult to conclude their sexual practice were resisted or challenged the social control.

Considering the above findings, it is important to highlight that present day issues of sexuality within the wider context of sexual companionship. The changing scenarios demonstrate that a new discourse needs to be considered and accepted by social institutions. Future interventions should be more focused on addressing consequences that could enhance the sexual health of students. This requires that this new discourse is brought to the attention of the public and policy makers. Also the female youth situation, environment and social activities should be more considerable for their safety, security and healthy.

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Endnotes

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- 1 *Chii wit khu* in Thai ชีวิตคู่ means couple.
 - 2 Demographic Transition is the model that explains demographic changes from the high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates as part of social, economic and health development especially accepting new innovations of contraception and medical science. At the end of the Demographic Transition period, population growth rates are usually very stable low because birth rates have been low for many years. The Second Demographic Transition has been occurring only in some Western countries where control birth rates have been low for a long time and the fertility behaviors have changed due to people delaying marriage, more people remaining single, high divorce rates and cohabitation including high rates of childlessness and births out of wedlock
 - 4 *Pai Tiaw* in Thai ไปเที่ยว means going out for fun or recreation.
 - 5 *Kathoei* in Thai กะเทย means transgender male who is born male but adopts the female gender role.
 - 6 We utilized Nvivo software programme to expedite the systematic review of the content of the transcripts.
 - 7 *Kho kama* in Thai ขอขมา means ceremony for forgiveness from run away for the unaccepted marriage.
 - 8 Interviewed on July 8, 2008.
 - 9 Thai colleges and universities have no rules or regulations regarding students' marital status. Student who are married can study in the universities. However, it is not common for Thai youth to continue their student status after they are married.
 - 10 Interviewed on June 6, 2008.
 - 11 *Tom* in Thai ทอม means a lesbian who adopts a butch or masculine role.
 - 12 *Faen* in Thai แฟน means lover, sweetheart or spouse.
 - 13 *Wai* in Thai ไหว้ is a way to show respect for another person.
 - 14 *Kik* in Thai means a sexual partner (*faen*) who is not publically acknowledged as a partner e.g., casual sexual partners.

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