

# Pre-marital Sex and Pregnancy: the High Price of Forgiveness

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**Abstract**—Thai society is filled with different viewpoints, whether they are political, economic, or cultural. Generally speaking, Thais believe in a conservative approach regarding a woman's sexual behavior and virginity, which includes not violating cultural traditions and to preserve one's virginity until the wedding day; Thai society has focused on these beliefs as social norms to which "good" ladies should adhere.

Thai society believes that males have superior social status to females, especially regarding the value of sex in society. Thus, males have the privilege of sexual freedom, whereas Thai women have been inculcated to be careful as well as control their sexual behavior, and believe in conserving the virginity as a determiner of a female's value. However, according to the present social trend, more people have become open minded about couples cohabitating before marriage and this trend is evident in all age groups, from students to adults, yet this might also be the cause of many problems in Thai society. Specifically, many problems are in direct contrast to Thai people's values, including the state of being pregnant before getting married. This article aims to explain Embree [12] and Moerman's theories [11] about the structure of Thai society, in terms of the values and standards of Thai society in regards to sexual freedom and the double standard in the society as a determiner of a female's value. It can be concluded that Thai society did not use only one standard for judging a human's societal value, especially in females. Only, a double standard was used by administering the value and norm of Thai society as determinants of a person's value in society.

**Index Terms**—Double standard, Females' value, Norm of Thai society, Pregnant before marriage, Sexual value, Structure of Thai society.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The present state of Thai society has changed very much from the former time by the influence of western countries. Changes include the way people dress, expression to the public, behavior or conduct, manners, values, as well as sexual behavior causing distinct changes to Thai society. These rapid changes have affected the way people think as well as rationale in behaving oneself in daily life.

The society changed rapidly especially in regards to technology. There were many kinds of equipment for receiving news, and channels for communication. All of these things allowed everyone to have an opportunity to receive new information and ideas from all over the world, which were different from what they were familiar with. The danger with advancement, quickness, and modernity, is that it could cause the people to become disillusioned with the

technology or want to embrace it; for instance, the way people dress or styles being expressed or imitated from what they had seen or heard from different media sources, including sexual expression stimulated by magazines, cinemas and the internet.

According to a number of different factors, they could lead males and females to express their sexual behavior both in public and in private, including holding hands, touching, hugging, kissing one's cheek, lying on one's lap etc. to become common or normal occurrences in Thai society, which could be seen as an acceptable type of behavior in every place. At present, both males and females give an importance to sexual relationships by comparing them with power as well as might. The talk of sexual relationships was performed openly, including the sexual relationship which could be found from students to working aged people.

However, the attitude of Thai society towards sexual relations was still very confusing. While the adults were criticizing or blaming the search for sexual pleasure, as well as avoiding talking about sexual relations and feelings of sexual needs, which were natural things in human beings, children had their opportunities in perceiving various sexual stories from various sources such as newspapers, magazines, movies and television. In some families, there were expressions showing the sexual relations of their family member. Therefore, it could be viewed that most Thai people grow up with a lack of appropriate readiness in advance.

According to the norm of Thai society in freedom of sex, it recognizes a women's virginity before marriage as an important thing. As a result, the sexual relationship before getting married which could lead to being undesirably pregnant, is a serious problem in Thai society in the present day, whether it occurred with any group of people or in any field, it could always be attentive. So, this article attempts to provide citation in the theory of Embree [12] and Moerman [11] for explaining the structure of Thai society in order to compare the sexual value with the double standards used as influencing and determining women's value in society. This was overlooked by many people, in order to suggest guidelines in viewing the problem of sexual relations before being married, which could cause the problem of being pregnant before marriage.

## II. INTERPRETATIONS OF THAI SOCIAL STRUCTURE

It has been mentioned in general that Thai society had many prominent characteristics; for example, the social class, and others. However, two scholars, Embree [12], and Moerman [11] have been debated, namely, whether or not Thai social structure can be characterized as 'loose' or 'tight' in relation to social relations and the obligations that they

engender.

*A. Embree – a loosely structured social system*

The first interpretation, advanced by Embree [12], characterized Thai society as a 'loosely structured social system' since it represented a 'culture in which considerable variation of individual behavior is sanctioned' when compared with the more 'rigid' Japanese society. In support of his loosely structured paradigm, Embree points out that family member lacked a strong sense of obligation or duty to each other, and thus the family unit was not tightly bound; there are, however, set duties and obligations among Thai family members towards each other within the family unit. He quotes [16] who mentioned Buddhist rules of family obligations: 'These are duties of parents to their children: giving food, clothing, and shelter, forbidding wrongdoing, encouraging right conduct, giving education, assisting them in matrimony, and transferring properties to them in good time.' Embree [12] notes however, that this transmission was a female responsibility: 'It is the mother who transmits these teachings to their children, not the father. She transmits them as sage advice rather than as mandatory obligations' [12].

Embree [12] viewed Thai People as having four major dimensions: 1) Thai People are very individualistic, are self-willed, and have no discipline, 2) Thai people have good conduct and prefer AD-Hoc Activities, 3) Thais are very flexible, easily adaptable in any situation, but Thai people are not particularly proactive. 4) Lastly, they accept constructive criticism and rules and regulations as well as social norms. Yet, while they fully understand the rules, they often fail to abide by them because the punishment for breaking the rules is not severe.

Embree's depiction of Thailand as a loosely structured social system quickly gained in popularity and influence to such an extent that anthropologists working in Thailand became curiously reluctant to investigate further, or even tries to explain Thai social structure in any other way. Embree's theory implied that the attempt would be fruitless [14]. Eventually, other Thai scholars were to discover flaws in Embree's interpretation of the Thai family unit that had so long dominated Thai studies.

Similarly, Ruth Benedict [10] studied Thai Culture and Behavior as well as prominent characteristics of culture passed on as notable personality traits. Benedict studied Japanese Culture during World War II and found that the Japanese had two poles of culture as: *Chrysothenum morifolium* and Samurai for comparison of two aspects of Japanese's Cultural Aspect: 1) the aesthetic aspect, including politeness, consideration to other people, nature loving, sensitiveness, tenderness, empathy, and 2) the seriousness, firmness, determination, loyalty to super-ordinates (exemplified by the United States of America's decision to end WWII through bombing Japan in order to force the Japanese Emperor to admit defeat). Finally, the Japanese people conceded defeat according to the order of their Emperor.

Later on, Benedict studied Thai People's personality by writing a book called "Thai Culture and Behavior," stating that Thai People had neutral culture living as sufficiency, and being happy is based on personal condition. Therefore, Thai

People's personality included: being inert, fun loving, comfortable, patient, not being enthusiastic, avoidance from confrontation or violence, and enjoying life in the moment. The important thing was that the Thai Culture was dominated by males as the family's hope which was caused from the religious belief that the males would become monks. As a result, their parents could adhere to the monk's yellow cloth in heaven.

*B. Moerman – a rigidly organized society*

The second interpretation opposes Embree's theory and claims that the Thai social system is not loosely structured, but rigidly organized. Moerman [11] studied Thai society's structural aspects, and found a large number of informal structural principles. First, he proposed that social behavior is directed by numerous alternative principles, and that the individual is expected to choose the alternative which will best advance the interests of his or her family. In particular, he noted that economic alternatives heavily influenced the choices the individual Thai makes. In studying his research village, Moerman saw less similarity in what he was observing in terms of the loosely structured paradigm. In his view, 'Individual variation, although characteristic, seems to be less striking than it is in some societies, which are rarely called loosely structured' [11].

Similarly, Thai scholars also began to doubt the validity of Embree's paradigm. Punyodyana's [20] work began by comparing the relationship and interactions that local administrators had with the average peasant workers, discovering that rather than being 'loosely organized,' the relationships he observed were, in fact, governed by extensive structural norms. Even certain lists of formal acts existed to govern the interaction between the local bureaucrats and workers. This high level of formality gives Thai society a more tightly integrated culture than other cultures which lack such formalistic norms [21].

In family relations, two scholars, Potter, J. [13] and Potter, S. [14], also noted that relationships were tightly organized. Potter, J [13] listed eleven structural elements which seemed to generate rural Thai communities. These elements included: the extended stem family and compound; the bilateral kindred; neighbors and neighborhood; cooperative labor exchange groups; class and status divisions; the junior-senior (hierarchical) relationship; the entourage; political factions; the natural village community; the government's administrative apparatus; and the temple. For Potter, J. [13] all of these elements – working singularly and together – led to intricately intertwined social relationships and, thus, a tightly organized social system.

Again, Potter, S. [14] describes family life in Northern Thailand, observing in one family how economic behavior of family members was influenced by the social structure of that family. She also suggested that the Northern Thai family structure was matrilineal. This female-centered system, as she labeled it, was a reflection of a delicate and complex order of roles, statuses and relationships. Her conclusions were that four significant guiding factors influenced family order: formal authority rested in the hands of men rather than women; the younger deferred to the elderly; elders assumed responsibility for the well-being of the younger; and family

relations were primarily lineal in nature.

Bunnag [15] was another scholar of Thailand who argued against the 'loosely structured' society put forward by Embree. He indicated that the unit of production in the household consisted of a core family of husband, wife and children. As the household aims to be self-sufficient in terms of labor and food, women are involved both in field and household chores while men perform fieldwork. Moreover, his analysis in urban settings showed that normally the husband's work takes him away from home every day, and in such circumstances it is more difficult for woman to take an active role outside the home.

When both of their theories were referenced, it was viewed that Thai society had controversial characteristics in the context of Thai society itself. According to Embree's approach, a Thai women's sexual culture was more controlled than a man's. The sexual system as a rigid state of creation focusing on teaching Thai women to be more well-behaved than males, whereas Moerman viewed only the strength of Thai society with culture determining Thai people's lifestyle, including sexual role by determining the women's value through their role in inculcating, preaching, and being a role model of proper conduct in good culture.

### III. THAI FAMILY STRUCTURE: ROLES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The best way to understand the social organization of Thai society is to examine the structure of its basic unit, the family. Nuclear and extended families form the basic structural units of Thai society [20]. The extended family unit typically consists of one or more of the following: maternal grandparents, parents, married daughters, and unmarried daughters and sons.

Among the village's agricultural activities, such as farming, tobacco cultivation and vegetable gardening, women participate almost equally in all areas of production and services. Both male and female adult members of the village will spend about 75-85 percent of their time in agricultural activities [28].

#### A. Husband and wife role

The family structure in Thailand is authoritarian in nature. The husband is the primary decision-maker, and his decisions will steer the family's course throughout his married life [23]. The picture of husband and wife roles in Thai society follows the age-old view of husbands as 'breadwinners' and wives as 'homemakers' [24]. This characteristic is still apparent in rural areas, but less so in urban Thai society. Historically Thai women were the silent and passive partners of men, and were largely confined to the house [25]. Outside of the household, the husband was primarily in charge of dealing with others, especially in the case of high ranking officials or the wealthy [24]. Within the family, a husband and wife share an equal level of responsibility. Each obligation to the family unit is shared between the spouses, with both shouldering the burdens of support. Frequently, a wife addresses or calls her husband by the term 'phii' (elder brother) [26]. A husband-wife relationship is also seen as similar to sibling relationships, the same type of loyalty and duty being emphasized

between married partners in couples.

Within both urban and rural areas, however, the present situation surrounding women in Thailand has changed. Although not the official household head, a Thai woman nonetheless may play a central role in household management, especially where it concerns economic matters [27]. Thai women often serve as the financial manager, in addition to their principal roles of mother and wife. However, the productive activities of the household are the responsibilities of both men and women, and both are expected to contribute [24]. Increasing economic demands on the Thai family have contributed to a breakdown of the once sharply distinct line dividing so-called 'women's' work from 'men's' work [28].

Husband and wife are expected to equally share responsibility for most of the problem areas of family life [24]. In addition, both spouses will decide on matters pertaining to family social activities, e.g. religious rites, having insurance, as well as the education of their children. When it comes to choices in the area of family planning, a couple will discuss together the number of children they would like to have, and whether they are going to use birth control methods [29].

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#### B. Roles of children

Officially, a Thai baby receives his or her name usually from a monk, relative or their own parents, and thereafter is listed as an individual in the records of the local village leader [27]. Soon after birth, the child's close family and friends typically will give him or her a sobriquet; intimates will continue to call the child by this nickname for the rest of its life everywhere i.e., school, workplace, surrounding communities, and of course at home. For example, my official name is Wilailak, but people normally call me by my shorten name, Laila. It is not uncommon for an individual to have trouble remembering his or her given name after several years, sometimes even forgetting it altogether after a long enough period [27].

A son's role changes according to his life course position. Traditionally, an unmarried son provided his birth family with both his labor and additionally a stable economic base [16]. After marriage, a son will move into his in-law's house, providing extra labor for his in-law's fields [16]. This move may also have the practical benefit of avoiding potential rivalry between mother and daughter-in-law in assuming control of the household affairs [27]. Despite this transfer, the son will still fulfill his familial duty by forming an alliance between his in-laws and his own family household [17]. This alliance often proves valuable in times of need.

A daughter is expected to take her husband in to her house, where he will also provide care and support for her parents and younger siblings [23]. In rural areas the new husband's duties will primarily consist of working the land to produce foods from different areas, and providing

assistance when family members fall ill [23]. In return for this added service, a piece of the wife's family land is partitioned off and given to the new couple in order to raise their own family [16]. Eventually, the last daughter will remain unmarried to assist her parents, as they grow older. It is the custom among Thai siblings to render aid whenever and whenever it is requested [17], one example of which is the need for a baby-sitter. Often older siblings care for younger ones through baby-sitting, feeding, providing clothes, and emotional support. This responsibility becomes more significant when both parents are infirm or dead. Once this occurs, the eldest sibling typically a married daughter-takes over the parental role and cares for her younger siblings, treating them as if they were her own children [17]. The relationship that exists between sisters within the same family typically becomes stronger than between brother and sister, due to the brother's removal from the family home and into the role of his wife's provider [16]. Once removed, he is not as able to help compared to the sisters that remain. His major responsibility becomes supporting his wife and her family

#### IV. THAI WOMAN AND THEIR INDIVIDUAL ROLE

Sobha [16] outlines in her book *Traditional, Present and Future Role of Women in Thai Society*, how to be a success at marriage in terms of the traditional view of Thai women. A Thai woman who married a wealthy man could count on support for the rest of her life. This support would guarantee that she would not have to work outside of the home. Inside the home, her primary responsibility would be to supervise her staff of domestic workers, who in turn would perform all the household chores at her bidding. Left free, the wife would be sure to remain in her husband's favor, often receiving as a reward lands and finances and, of course, her husband's devoted attention. Working outside the home was not really an option for women in this position, because the husband would suffer a significant loss in self-image by being perceived by others as unable to adequately support his family [16].

Overall, Thai women were able to achieve a significant level of authority within the household as a result of the traditional family structure [16]. At the same time, Thai women were socialized to emphasize subservient behavior more than men. The primary reason for this social norm had to do with the rite of passage men had to undergo before attaining adulthood, a rite that was long in duration and hence respected [17]. Men were expected to pass through a rite of passage ordination as a monk, fulfilling a traditional aspect of Buddhist culture [16]. Podhisita [18] explained that in the past a man who did not enter the monkhood was considered 'unripe,' whereas one who did so was regarded as a 'ripe' person, or one who was fit to take on the responsibilities of adulthood, and more specifically marriage and family life. No male over 18 including the King is exempt from his vow. This obligation on the males of Thai society is ubiquitous, and has the same significance from the largest urban center to the most remote village in Thailand. By virtue of this training, men were held to have earned a higher respect than women by having been exposed to spiritual teachings, thus elevating

them in Thai society. A man who completed his spiritual obligation through spending a period as a monk would be allowed to take his mother into heaven; furthermore, a man who married afterwards could take his wife into heaven with him as well.

In contrast, Thai women were traditionally taught by their mothers and grandmothers to leave the important responsibilities of earning money and providing food to men alone [19]. This special sense of responsibility is 'drummed into the ears of young girls.' The ideal for Thai women's behavior may be best described by citing at some length translated pieces from 'A Maxim for Ladies' (Ovahat Krasattri), written in 1844 by Sunthorn Phu, a famous Thai poet, who continues to form part of the school curriculum and whose advice to women continues to be wistfully cited by Thai romantics:

Walk Slowly. While walking, do not swing your arms too much ... do not sway your breasts, do not run fingers through your hair, and do not talk. Do not stare at anything, particularly a man, to the point where he can tell what's going on in your mind ... do not run after men.

... love and be faithful to your husband

... be humble in front of your husband

... when your husband goes to bed, wai him at his feet every night without fail. When he has aches and pains, massage him, then you may go to sleep.

... get up before your husband and prepare water for him to wash...

While your husband is eating, sit and watch him nearby so that when he needs something he does not have to raise his voice. Wait until he finishes before you eat (quote in Cooper and Cooper, 1986:45).

The status of Thai women today has its roots in ancient times, when roles were assumed by virtue of living in an agricultural, family-based society, and upon the traditional beliefs of Theravada Buddhism. Scholars have differed over whether the overall structure of Thai society is loosely or rigidly organized; however, it is clear that much of the family structure has changed little over time, with the family still forming the most basic unit of Thai society.

#### V. THE APPROACH OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Sigmund Freud was a major pioneer of Psychoanalytic Theory. He classified the human's livelihood and said that it consisted of two kinds of instincts: life instinct included the need for food and happiness, as well as sexual need, and death instinct, which included the expression of aggression, violence, and quarreling.

Life instinct or reproduction would occur in development of a human's life from childhood to old age. Surely, it starts to develop during adolescence by having relationships with process in entering to maturity and expressing as the need for attachment as well as the interest in the opposite sex.

Sigmund Freud set up the theory "only sex that could control the world." He confirmed that human beings had sexual feelings since they were born, not when they were grown up, or being limited in adults only. He viewed that sexual development was a determinant of the process of being mature. When children were grown up to be

adolescents, they would begin to have their physical, emotional, and mental changes as well as love as youngsters with sexual need based on the nature and sexual relation with the opposite sex differently from their children's age [4].

In psychological perspective, sexual relation was not learnt. On the other hand, it was a kind of human beings' instinct. The human beings had physical, mental, and emotional changes. Consequently, they were interested in the opposite sex. If they were stimulated by the tempted environment, they would tend to react to their sexual emotion easily. If both males and females were mature but they were not ready for having shared responsibility, social problems would occur later. In addition, the problem as an important issue being especially interesting to Thai people would be the undesirable pregnancy or being pregnant before being marriage.

#### VI. MALES AND FEMALES INCLUDING SEXUAL DESIRE

Many people feel that "Men have a greater sexual desire than women," and that there is a traditional belief that "Women should not express their sexual desire." Instead, women had to conceal their desire in order to maintain their good image. Some people believe that a good woman should not have any sexual desires, when in fact; both males and females have a natural desire for sex and intimacy. Again, this depends on the individual.

When comparing men and women, it is difficult to determine which gender has a greater desire for sex since it is specific to the individual. However, sexually, men can be more easily stimulated than women. Also, there are differences in sexual ideas between males and females. Men believe in having sex for sport while women feel that sex is something that should occur between two people in a loving relationship. Furthermore, men and women rarely talk about this polarized view of sex for fun and good feelings versus sex as an integral part of a loving relationship. This is partially because Thais are taught not to talk openly about sex[30].

This lack of communication and understanding about sex ultimately causes couples to unintentionally engage in sexual relationships. The confusion and misunderstanding between the genders is clearly exemplified when a man expects sex from a woman during the first date just because they are holding hands or in a romantic setting and acting like a "couple." Basically, when a woman accepts an invitation from a man to go on a date, most men believe that this will lead to sexual intercourse. Some women who are in committed relationships with their boyfriends still believe that while they love their partner, the courtship is more important than sexual intercourse.

#### VII. THAI CULTURE AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

Thai society was a society influenced by tradition and culture affecting Thai people's lifestyles like the other societies as well as unique characteristic in inculcating the members in society strictly such as to be respected, to obey with, and follow the elders' instruction without focusing on the reasons. Again, they had to focus on seniority as the

major thing.

Not only the behavior in daily life, but also sexual relations in which Thai people were limited, due to tradition, focusing on this thing as a concealed topic not to be talked about openly; specifically, the women's sexual behavior, which was restrictive and included serious rules and regulations. For Thai culture regarding women's sexual relationships, it was more limited and narrow-minded in the field than for males, with the belief that women had to live at their house, do housework, not dress themselves too beautifully or travel outside their house alone, especially during the nighttime, and not to express their sexual need overtly.

According to rationale, Thai women were strictly inculcated for contacting with the opposite sex as well as behaving themselves according to the tradition. A family with daughters had to be especially careful in her behavior with special attention paid to being virtuous women, well behaved, not to do before the appropriate time or age, and keeping her virginity, requiring her to be married according to one's own custom and tradition before having sexual relations with one's loved one. If a woman lost her virginity before marriage, she would become worthless, especially having a sexual relationship before being married because if she were to become pregnant, changes in her physical appearance would be obvious, which would lead to a serious reaction from people in society and thus she would be criticized or gossiped about as not being well-behaved, while males were not affected by their sexual behavior and it was not considered to be disgraceful.

For making friends with the opposite sex, or having sexual relationship before being married, for males, in Thai society, still included the value and belief that it was not disgraceful or a serious thing. Thai males' freedom in sexual expression was not as limited as females. On the contrary, many cases viewed that they were normal or recognized which was supported by research study of Wisedsang [7] in "Moral Judgment of Adolescents in Bangkok between males and females," found that both male and female adolescents had their morals judged and that males sexual expressions were more correct than females in every situation.

#### VIII. SEXUAL VALUE AND VALUE IN THE STATE OF BEING MEN-WOMEN

In general, adolescent males and females would make friends with members of their age group of the opposite sex. Everyone would need friendship, love, and freedom from their parents. Therefore, they would seek out like-minded friends, which would eventually lead to love and end up in marriage.

Sexual behavior in rural and urban areas shows many differences. In rural areas, they would date the opposite sex during ceremonies such as the merit fair or during the Buddhist Lent. The young adults would collaborate in cleaning the temple. So, they would have their chance to make friends as well as be familiar with each other. In rural society, to contact or make friends between young men and women had fewer problems than in the city due to the characteristics of rural society, plus the villagers often had their settlements close to each other. Consequently, young

people had opportunities to know each other. Therefore, dating between young adults in the country was not so confusing. Furthermore, the values of people in the rural areas still emphasized tradition and culture. The women would be inculcated to be well behaved by living at home, not making contact with young men. So, pre-marital sexual relationships were both uncommon and taboo.

Males and females living in the urban area were influenced by the mass media. As a result, the young adults in the city had opportunities to obtain the influence of western culture by dating with the opposite sex alone as well as having sex before being married. Some of them were unlucky by facing problems of being undesirably pregnant or exposed to sexual diseases from their partners.

However, sexual behavior of males and females in Thailand, at the present is more prominent than the past, since the focus of national culture is not as prominent. In the past, there was only the western culture transferred into Thailand; but now, even the foreign cultures of neighboring countries like Japan, or Korea, is another factor that is affecting changes in the viewpoint, attitude, and value of Thai people, whether in the way they dress, their freedom of sex, and outside environmental influence including movies, magazines, and entertainment venues.

Males and females in the present time are encouraged to express their sexual needs and have sex before being married, since the medical technology is more progressed, whether with the various techniques in birth control as well as abortion which is safer than before. In present Thai society, most women who came for an abortion were students with an age between 13-14 years old [8].

Having sexual relations before being married in Thai society was viewed as an unethical thing. The guilt would be with the females more so than the males. In former time, both male and female adolescents were under control of their caretakers all the time. So, there was very little opportunity to have sexual relations before being married. However, in the present, both males and females have more freedom in their day to day lives. Consequently, they have more opportunities to meet both genders. The control for having sexual need is now less. Furthermore, there are more places for them to express their sexual need overtly such as the hotel, motel, karaoke, café etc. engaging in sexual relations. Both males and females took risks for having deviant behavior as well as causing various problems, for instance, being undesirably pregnant or exposing themselves to a contagious disease. These problems are increasing every year. For Thai society, such issues are disgraceful for both themselves and their family, especially in female students facing such problems which cause the interruption in their studies. Besides, illegitimate children often considered to be inferior and cause social problems in the future. Often it is the case that the pregnant adolescents during studying try to solve the problem by having an abortion, which affects their physical well-being and can be dangerous [6]

#### IX. SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG ADOLESCENTS

In 2003, the survey of National Statistical Office [31] found that there were increasing numbers of single families. Thirty percent of those families had single mothers as the

head of household. The other thirty percent included adolescents spending their lives by themselves.

Also, the Population and Social Institute in collaboration with the Institute of Capital for Health Support and Enhancement [22] found that the average age of Thai Adolescents engaging in their first sexual experience was sixteen years old. In addition, based on the information from Dr. Amonwich Nakontap, the director of Ramjitti Institute, in a one-year-cycle during 2005-2006, from Secondary School Students to Higher Education, he found that their sexual behavior increased from sixteen to twenty percent compared to the previous two to three years. Furthermore, in this group, thirty percent of those adolescents also had previous sexual experiences. On the other hand, on average, people got married at the age of 24. Therefore, an eight year gap occurred from the age of sixteen, when many adolescents had their first sexual experience, and the average age (24) when many people entered into marriage. Thus, this trend reflected the increase in long lasting sexual behaviors and risk without the responsibilities of social acceptance. There were many factors leading to stimulation such as teenagers "growing up faster" which can be attributed to the onslaught of inappropriate media to which they had access. As a result, the sexual behavior caused social problems. Moreover, the effect of this kind of behavior increased as more violence, rising divorce rates, and men deserting their marriages increased as well. All of this placed undue stress upon women and required that they take on even more responsibility.

Illegal abortion was also on the rise. But, according to the report, approximately 300,000 teenage abortions took place each year and many of these happened with complications [31]. Moreover, scores of teenage moms who could not find solutions to their pregnancy would desert or abuse their children, and in at least 30 cases per year, would kill their child. Apparently, sex education among teenagers was insufficient. It was found that adolescents participated in sex education beginning at fourteen years of age, while most of them (approximately sixty percent) obtained information from their friends and the internet [31].

Teenagers did not know how to protect themselves in sexual situations, whether it would be how to refuse to have sex, or protection by using condoms (only twenty percent of the teenagers used condoms during intercourse) [31]. The use of contraceptive pills was not widespread and this issue was hotly debated after Thailand topped the list of Asian countries for teenage pregnancy rates. In 2003, UNICEF [32] found that teenage births accounted for 70 out of 1,000, and those 70 girls was comprised of young adults between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years old. Presently, it has increased to 90 out of 1,000 women, or almost 200 women a day, while the average value throughout the Asia was 56 out of 1,000 women between the ages of fifteen and nineteen. In addition, the global average value was 655 out of 1,000 persons, and there was an increasing number of adolescents younger than 15 years old when compared with the past two to three years [32]. More than sixty percent of them had sexual behavior, were exposed to sexual diseases, or got pregnant during the initial year of sexual behavior. However, after the first year of sexual behavior, most of this group of

teenagers began to search for help in order to protect themselves [32].

The measure used by the United States of America, Japan, Holland, and Switzerland for alleviating the adolescents' problem of undesirable pregnancy consisted of: strategies in being well-behaved or Abstinence, developing the teenagers' self protective skill, especially the campaign for using condoms during sex, legal abortions, a work unit providing support as well as the school system, family, and society at large [22].

Conversely, Thailand measures for lowering the teenage pregnancy rate consisted self protective strategies for adolescents, with particular focus on using condoms every time and the work unit providing support, including the school system, family, and society; Abstinence and good behavior were also focused upon.

#### X. FACTORS AFFECTING MALES AND MALES AND FEMALES AND FEMALES' SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Nowadays, men and women are more likely to associate with the opposite sex since they think that associating with same sex friends is boring and potentially troublesome. However, if they connect only with the opposite sex, they will feel more comfortable and less pressure. Furthermore, it would be invigorating. In recent times, males and females who interact in social settings often end up in a sexual relationship regardless of whether they have known each other for a short time or a long time. Wittaya Nakwachara [33] stated six factors affecting males and females' sexual behavior:

1) Adolescents are naturally curious so they like to pursue a variety of different partners. In recent times, various temptations, such as films, cartoon books, and other supplementary sources have influenced teenagers to act even more upon their sexual impulses. Even though in the past Thai Society found it was difficult to accept the changing sexual norms, these norms are now considered to be more mainstream.

2) Beseeking or begging, on the part of the male lover, is often one-sided and when the love is not reciprocated, then one could assume that true love does not exist. For example, a woman could not bear to tolerate his begging or beseeking during different holidays, such as "Valentine's Day," because it may cause her lover to think that sexual intercourse, which happens as a norm on that day, might take place. This kind of scenario frequently played out in Thai society, and, in the "old days," the woman who scorned her lover or even became pregnant before marriage would face undue embarrassment and humiliation by the villagers until she finally had to move away in order to live a normal life. But now sexual relations are solely between the man and the woman who are in the relationship and not, like in the old days, subject to what the villagers think is right or wrong.

3) Presently, having intercourse among adolescents seems rather fashionable. In other words, if a couple of anyone's beloved for a long time without sexual relationship would be out of date. In some cases, if the woman does not agree to have relationship with the man, they might be broken up since she would be accused that she does not have true love. "When the word was cited as does not love, does not

love, consequently, she might agree with him." Again, in the past of Thai Society, many couples of males-females would be contacted by their elder persons whereas the couples would meet only a few times before getting married or it was called "arranged marriage," in which males-females might not be willing to marry. But, they had to follow their elders' opinion.

4) A couple feels the sense of belonging to one another, therefore touching each other's bodies in sexual ways makes them feel like they are in unison and act as one. In the past, males and females could only engage in this kind of touch on their wedding night. For some couples, if they did not have the opportunity to sexually consummate the relationship on their wedding night, then they simply had to wait, as doing otherwise was considered taboo to wait. If a married woman had sex outside of the marriage, she would be blamed and accused of committing adultery. In the present, when a woman has sexual relations with anybody, it depends on her willingness to do it. Moreover, she is now able to have a relationship with another person without fear of being labeled immoral, as in the past.

5) The feeling as one's worth for another side, being acquainted until being called "Fan," many couples spend very short-long time differently. It is certain that almost one hundred percent of couples would end up with their sexual relationship as to make the other one feel that one would be wanted or worth another side. For presently, very few Thai women could preserve their virginity until their wedding day. However, for any Thai woman who remains a virgin up to the day of matrimony, it would be considered very valuable.

6) Sex and the reproductive instinct is natural among humans and animals. However, animals mate during a specific mating season whereas for human beings, there is no time limitation (someone may add that "place,") as well. When people reach the adolescent stage of life, their bodies go through physiological and hormonal changes, thus causing teenagers to act upon their sexual curiosity and impulses. Of course, this physiological need to act out sexually is not universal and depends on the individual. Some people can resist the urges to act out sexually while others commit horrific sexual transgressions, such as raping or even molesting relatives. Many adolescent couples who experience this sexual awakening rarely remain together or get married after graduation. It might be because each of them returns back to their hometowns to work or they meet other potential partners in their office, etc. So, they start to feel the excitement of spending time with a new person. Recently in Thai society, these kinds of relationships do not last very long, not to mention that the social ills caused by such relationships, are numerous. For example, having multiple sex partners, and in some cases, "gigs" (In Thai society, a gig is a secret lover that a man or woman has outside of their committed relationship) cause social problems such as pregnancy, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, and hostility among families.

#### XI. LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE GETTING MARRIED

In general, male and female adolescents are interested in

making friends with the opposite sex, which leads to searching for friendship and love, as well as freedom from their family. Therefore, they tend to look for an attractive member of the opposite sex, with the view to marriage. Both males and females try to get to know each other before deciding to choose their preferred partner. This always occurs in the form of dating, having physical relationships and finally having sexual relations. Eventually, they get to know each other in every respect whether in their habits or tastes, and they adjust to each other's personalities.

A general characteristic of being an adolescent is that it is the time in a young person's life when he/she is stepping into maturity. It is an age of development in attitude, belief, and adjustment [3]. It is very difficult for adolescents to distinguish between love and sexual desire. In addition, the recent environmental state is full of temptation; most human beings could not classify the difference between 'love' and 'lust'.

Wasikasin [5] stated that to have sexual relationships before getting married was the behavior being stated very much. The touching between a young man and woman was performed more overtly, which was likely to result in the engaging of sexual relations before getting married. After having sex with women, men felt a sort of dominance and the power to control women, as well as feeling proud of themselves for having sexual intercourse.

There have been various research studies about the value of sexual relationships between males and females. Chaowalit's [1] study found that the male and female students' opinion on sexual relationships before marriage are seen as a normal thing. Moreover, the study of Pochanakool [2], found that 59.42% of male students viewed that the sexual relationship before getting married was not harmful, and 54.55% of them believed that couples should have sexual relations before being getting married.

Likewise, Wongpechsa-nga's [9] study found that the social factors which students allowed to have sexual relations before being marriage included: the parents sex and marital status. Students living dormitories, flats, and houses had more opportunities to have sexual relations before being marriage than the students living with their parents. While Prasartkool [2] studied pre-marital sexual behavior of adolescents in urban and rural areas, found that living alone was a factor causing pre-marital sexual relationships.

It might be because today's adolescents have more freedom than their forbearers. Consequently, they have more opportunities to obtain stories regarding sexual relationships, for instance, the expression between the opposite sex, the dating between opposite sex, hence, the sexual relations. On the other hand, the value of Thai society as a Buddhist society focuses on virtue, the traditional culture, and tradition. As a result, the adolescents were confused about the relationship between males and females and thus asked themselves: How should we conduct ourselves?

Nevertheless, the positive factors of living together before being married include: (1) Both people could get to know each other before being married and (2) They could adjust themselves well after getting married. Besides, many couples viewed that living together before getting married was a technique for reducing loneliness and solidarity. They

had more confidence as well as feelings that their lives were more meaningful. The most important factor was the prevention of homosexual behavior.

## XII. THE OUTCOME OF LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE GETTING MARRIED

It cannot not be denied that the males and females who have a sexual relationship would be at risk of causing unwanted pregnancies. According to Witeedharm [8] concluded that, in general, a large number of women felt that if they used the birth control devices or medications, it would affect their emotional feeling very much. In sum, sexual behavior should occur naturally from the climate of love. Most women did not want it to be known that they needed sexual relations, although they really had that feeling.

Unwanted adolescent pregnancies were a major problem since it was likely to increase due to the growth of science and technology affecting changes in tradition and socio-cultural norms as well as incorrect sexual beliefs. Therefore, the learning and comprehension of the impact of being pregnant in order to avoid the problems affecting sexual behavior were important. Also, the development in self awareness and the application of ones' critical thinking to solve the problem by themselves efficiently also came about.

Being undesirably pregnant referred to the situation of getting pregnant unintentionally without any advance planning, knowledge and comprehension regarding being pregnant, and getting pregnant before marriage as well as not being ready for future economic situations, and the lack of responsibility demonstrated by the fathers of the children.

The information from National Institute for Children and Family Development at Mahidol University reported that the average age of adolescents having sexual relationships before the appropriate age was between sixteen and eighteen years of age. Part of this was caused by easy access to inappropriate media and the resulting temptations. Consequently, teenagers imitated behaviors that they saw in the media and on the internet and the increased sexual behavior led to an increase in undesirable pregnancies. In addition, according to those stimuli, there were many new mothers who became pregnant but they were not prepared to deal with the societal, cultural, economic, or any other consequences.

According to many research studies, undesirable pre-marital pregnancies were often caused by no prevention for various reasons. For example, 1) The lack of knowledge about what kinds of the birth control are safe and efficient, 2) The rejection to use the birth control techniques for religious reasons, 3) The need to prove the state of being male or female, 4) The lack of mental, emotional, and educational maturity, 5) The belief that not to use birth control would make them happier and 6) The feeling that "we would not be unlucky."

When the unmarried woman was pregnant, there would be 3 alternatives: to be married and have a child, to have an abortion, and to have a child without being married, hence the term, illegitimate child [5]. Whether one chooses any of these alternatives, the woman was affected in every aspect.



Being pregnant before being married in Thai society was a serious issue and had a huge impact on the mental feeling of sexual value determining the Thai female's value in being a virgin until getting married.

The major responsibility for Thai females facing problems of dealing with pre-marital pregnancy, started from being forced to be married for concealing their own pregnancy, facing problems in following through with the pregnancy, or living with gossip for being guilty of violating good ethic and tradition of society for the remainder of their life. All of these incidences could very much destroy the potentiality of females as human beings.

During their sexual relations, it would lead to their physical and emotional consents causing both physical and mental risks. Physically, being undesirably pregnant and having an opportunity to be exposed to sexual disease. Socially and mentally, many people who had sexual relationships before marriage felt embarrassed or guilty for their families, their own specified standards, or their friends whom they hoped to see marry in future.

### XIII. CASE STUDY

One well-known Thai phenomenon in judging the women's value can be seen in the case of a famous movie star actress. On the 2nd September 2005, she announced that she was five months pregnant as good news, which made her very happy since she loved children and wished to have some of her own. She gleefully announced her child's birth, hoping that everyone would be excited as well as pleased with her good news.

After her announcement, a startling development occurred. Various websites were down because Thai people throughout the country were very much interested in this news. People accessed the websites and asked many questions and expressed their opinions a hundred thousand times during the span of only a few minutes. Every television channel and newspaper published the news of her pregnancy in great detail.

The announcement of her pregnancy caused the presentation viewing this topic as a negative one by giving many reasons including: the inappropriate behavior as a public person, the concealment of her pregnancy, and the questioning of the ignorance of her statement in which she said, "I did not know I was pregnant."

According to that phenomenon, it obviously showed the usage of value and norm of Thai society as a determinant of women's values as a double standard in judging something.

Starting from whether they were reporters, moderators of many items, or some representatives of parliament, most Thai people all over the country believed that the actress' pre-marital pregnancy was serious because she was the first person who covered up the fact and told people a lie as a public person. There were many cases occurring in which Thai society should raise questions about as being major issues. For instance, the corrupt politicians, or the politicians who promised to solve the problems of poverty, traffic, etc., all of which, of course, remain major problems to this day. But, it could not be viewed that Thai people all over the country or various publications were opposed to what the

actress did in her personal life.

Thai society gave a clear explanation regarding the second standard (pre-marital pregnancies). Basically, Thai society believes that if adolescents were pregnant before getting married, many problems would follow because they would have to be dependent on their parents since they would not be able to earn a living themselves. It showed that Thai society used "age," "occupation," or "social status," as criterion for judging the state of "readiness" or "non readiness," for being pregnant as well as raising a child whereas this phenomenon occurring with the actress who was older than 30, held an honest occupation, a firm economic status, and a socially accepted position, was seen as unacceptable. Then, why was she seriously blamed by society for "being pregnant before getting married?"

The last standard is commonly overlooked by many people; Thai law provides permission for women who were raped or pregnant with danger for their health, to have an abortion. Some women were pregnant while they were studying and there were only two alternatives: have an abortion, or not have an abortion. Therefore, regardless of the choice a woman made, it would not deprive her of her human rights and values.

### XIV. DISCUSSION

This article tried to understand the cause of why males and females engage in premarital sexual relationships and the different reasons in order to develop the good comprehension in such behavior as well as the usefulness for related persons to give their suggestion or advice. This advice is geared towards females who were largely impacted by accidental pregnancies so that they would behave themselves in a good and appropriate way. There were many effects of premarital sexual behavior which might cause many women to lose the opportunity to live a more fulfilling life.

According to the above articles, it could be viewed that the sexual behavior of males and females in the present time was expressed overtly more than in the past, since the information, news, education and culture from different nations were obtained. As a result, the sexual behavior of present human beings is more prominent and accepted. Again, the acceptance is not the acceptance in freedom of sex or equality between males and females; rather it leads to the point of whether Thai society included the loosely structured social system or the rigidly organized system as stated by both scholars, Embree and Moerman.

However, these two approaches were considered by many academic disciplines regarding the structure of Thai Society. Whether it was concrete or abstract developed for analysis, we could not deny that it was an important factor for the country as well as a determiner of current and future trends for the nation.

Moreover, considering the problem of premarital sexual behavior which could lead to pregnancy before marriage, one might conclude that in the area of Thai culture using age, occupation, working position, responsibility and social status as the indicators, it could be seen that Thai society did not use only one standard for judging the human's value especially in females. On the other hand, a double standard was used by

administering the value and norm of Thai society as determinants.

Therefore, the social phenomenon of “Being pregnant before getting married,” Thai society should use only one standard to judge, whether it be the behavior or social expression. The issues of “age,” “occupation,” or “social status,” should not be used as a criterion. Otherwise, from comparison, women’s value would be judged with bias.

No man is infallible. So, every social human could make a mistake. When a woman has made a mistake, she should be encouraged or have the opportunity from her family or society “to learn” what she “did not know,” and to cope with the problem as well as analyze as her lesson for decision making in her future. If given that chance, then that woman would be able to raise her child in a quality environment. Do not forget that the major cause of women “getting pregnant before marriage,” was having sexual intercourse without prevention; this kind of carelessness which resulted in unwanted pregnancies was unintended.

Was it the appropriate time for Thai society to search for the correct and meaningful meaning of “value and freedom of gender,” whether one would be male or female? Everyone should behave himself/herself appropriately in sexual behavior as well as combine it to be his/her real personality. Woman should not be born for being only a “wife” of her husband or a “mother” of her child. She might make a mistake just like a man would make. She should use her mistake as her life lesson as well as to prepare to face the problems by being encouraged to not make the same mistake again. If Thai Society still focused on various things without looking ahead to the future, by emphasizing old norms and beliefs while the developed countries forged ahead for progress development as well as selecting to conserve with reason. Consequently, we did not dismiss the fact that conservative Thai people helped to restrain the structure of Thai society in that they resist change.

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