

2019

Thailand's Kik Culture: Society, HIV and Public Policy in a Changing World

Claudia Intama

University of Maine at Farmington

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umf.maine.edu/honors_theses

Recommended Citation

Intama, Claudia, "Thailand's Kik Culture: Society, HIV and Public Policy in a Changing World" (2019). *Honors Theses*. 4.
https://scholarworks.umf.maine.edu/honors_theses/4

This Research Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors at Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholar Works. For more information, please contact sotley@maine.edu.

Approval Page
HON 499 Thesis or Creative Project

Claudia Intama
May 6, 2019

John Messier

Thesis Advisor's Name

John Messier

Thesis Advisor's Signature

Kristen Case

Honors Director's Name
(acting)

Kristen Case


Honors Director's Signature
(acting)

Thailand's Kik Culture:
Society, HIV and Public Policy in a Changing World

Claudia Intama

Submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the
University Honors Scholar Designation

April 29th, 2019



John Messier, Thesis Advisor

5/3/19

Date

Introduction

Culture has never been static; subtle shifts in society have the ability to bring about radical changes in the way people interact with one another. Recent changes due to technology and globalization have brought about great change within Thai society. Sexual norms have been pushed to new limits, and due to this new embrace of sexuality by the youth, there inherently runs the risk of an increase of HIV among vulnerable populations within the country. The government's public policy response is currently failing to provide adequate comprehensive sex education around prevention to its citizens. Due to the lack of deep knowledge around issues such as HIV, these changing norms bring with them dangerous consequences.

Thailand has had a reputation in the West for being a mecca for open and free sexual exchange. A common misconception is that the prevalence of a strong sex industry equates with sexual freedom for the populace; this simply is not true (Banwell, 2015). Thailand has been entrenched with a strong sense of sexual conservatism within the public sphere since the mid-1800s (Loos, 2005). These long-standing traditions of secrecy and female shame, as well as the overall sexual oppression of women, have colored relationships and shaped power dynamics at all levels of society.

Starting in the early 2000s, Thailand underwent a massive shift in societal norms in regard to sexuality. Increased mobility, coupled with technological changes, helped usher in a new way of perceiving sex among the youth (defined in this study as anyone between the ages of 18 and 35), as well as for female access to sexual relationships. In response to the rapidly evolving Thai culture around sexual liberation, one way Thais were able to forego the traditional negative stereotypes around premarital sex and sexual promiscuity was with the introduction of

the word “kik” into the vernacular. Defined loosely as a relationship, either sexual nature or not, outside traditional structures, this word took a positive connotation of what had previously been scorned by the conservative social norms (OK Nation, 2007). This change in perception of sexual behaviors has allowed for the youth to gain control over their own sexuality, and with the advent of new technology and increased influence from the West through movies and social media, has allowed for people to meet beyond traditional social circles to increase the number of potential partners. This new freedom, however, has brought with it unintended consequences, namely increased HIV and other STI rates among the youth, as well as an increase in teenage pregnancy. Public policy surrounding these issues has been minimal to non-existent, and has largely failed to provide comprehensive services and education to the young.

While there is a wealth of research around the sex industry, traditional family life, and the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, there has been little research on sexuality, particularly female sexuality, after the early 2000s. To the author’s knowledge, no one has yet to look at the concept of kik, how it has directly or indirectly affected HIV rates for heterosexual young people in Thailand, nor has anyone yet to study the causes that brought about the loosening sexual norms that came along with the introduction of kik. The author was unable to find a comprehensive academic survey of the public policy response to these changing norms.

This preliminary study had the explicit goal to determine the perceived understanding of kik in Thai culture, the influence of the internet and Western movies on sexual norms, and the awareness of public policy surrounding sex education and HIV campaigns in addressing the new landscape of sex among the youth. The author also queried the respondents’ perception of equality of sexual liberation between the sexes. While able to capitalize on existing historical

research and reports on HIV, STI, and teenage pregnancy as reported in Thailand, the author was also able to travel to Thailand for a total of 14 days in January, 2019, in order to collect primary data through interviews with both participatory observers and those who work in the field.

Methods

In January of 2019, the author was able to travel to Thailand in order to conduct interviews with those who have lived through the emergence of kik culture, current youth, and various players who work with HIV, public policy, prevention, and/or youth development and community capacity building. The purpose of the interviews was to collect information with the goal of understanding the definition of the word kik, how it spread through Thai culture, the consequences of kik culture, the influence of Western culture on sexual norms, how HIV has been affected by kik culture, and the public policy response from the government to tackle these new norms.

The author was able to conduct twenty-one interviews in fourteen days and spoke to people in the greater Bangkok region and the north (Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces). Participants were selected by using a snowball method where the subjects were introduced to the author by prior association with or previous contacts in the field. This method was chosen due to constraints on time and financial resources.

Birthplaces of the interviewees included locations from Central, Northern, Northeastern and Western regions of the country. No interviewees were from the Southern provinces. Ages of the interviewees varied from twenty years to fifty-three years, and education levels varied from sixth grade to PhD. The author spoke with ten females, ten males, and one person who identifies

as queer. Occupations ranged from currently unemployed, freelance workers, a truck delivery driver, government workers, NGO workers, a teacher, employees for a private business, business owners, an HIV researcher, and a lawyer. Interviews were conducted in a private setting, where the interviewees could not be overheard by others.

Interviewees were classified into two groups, either participatory observers or those who work in the field. The author interviewed eleven people from the participatory observers and ten from the workers in the field. For the participatory observer group, questions ranged from the definition and stereotypes of kik, how it spread through Thai culture, how it differs from choo, the concept of “free sex,” globalization and the growth of the internet, attitudes on premarital sex, the frequency of visits to sex workers among the youth, how prevalent sex education is in schools, and about any government-sponsored HIV prevention campaigns (see Appendix A for interview questions).

For the workers in the field group, the author also asked about the meaning of kik and any stereotypes surrounding kik, how it differs from choo, free sex, the role of globalization and the internet in changing norms, the frequency of visits to sex workers and if there has been any change in the commercial sex work in the past 15 years, changes in HIV infections rates among those aged 18 through 35, HIV prevention education, government-sponsored campaigns to promote HIV prevention, HIV policy over the past 15 years, any changes in HIV-related policy after the 2014 military coup, the role of NGOs in providing HIV services to the public, and changing attitudes concerning sex among the youth (see Appendix B for interview questions). The interviews ranged from 12 minutes long to over an hour in length.

These interviews provided valuable insight from primary sources who have direct experience with kink culture, public policy surrounding HIV, and changing sexual norms within Thai society. This preliminary study acts as a pilot to determine the feasibility of greater study into the social shifts regarding sexuality and policy responses over the past fifteen years in Thailand.

Theoretical Context

While there are many theories related to explaining society, power, and social change, such as folk theory, critical theory, feminism, and dependency theory, for the purpose of this paper, the author makes an argument for constructivism (Lebow, 2008). Constructivism in Political Science describes the phenomena that political and social structures are constructed by social interaction with those surrounding said structures (Wendt, 1995). The resulting understandings are based on collective value and meaning from the society rather than based on a “naturally occurring” truth. As political life takes on many forms, it is important to examine the dualities of citizenry, focusing on the construction of public and private spheres, family and nation, and social and sexual life. The benefit of using constructivism as a theoretical foundation is that it allows for a critique of prescribed social norms and how they fit into the political structure of a nation (Green, 2001).

Sex, as a matter of personal choice, is often viewed as something hidden away in the private world behind closed doors. But the truth is that, when looking through a constructivist lens, sex itself and the way humans interact with sex is very much based on local social ideals, traditions, and customs, which in turn shape the way people participate in sexual activity (Goode,

2011). Culture molds sex, determining if a certain activity is positive or negative, appropriate or deviant. Once sex has moved past physical ideation and has entered into the realm of social construct, then it begins to have meaning as a shared cultural value and norm. According to social constructivist thought, society is what drives sex, and any intrinsic meaning behind the physical act is nothing more than what is agreed upon by the culture as a whole (Goode, 2011).

Sex is power and power is political. Sex, in this light, oftentimes is not only a way for one to seek physical gratification, but is also a way to assert power over another person. In many societies, it can be argued that female sexuality is created and disseminated in a way that sustains the social and political dominance of men (Pereira, 2009). Sex and love are often exalted to fairy tale status, while in reality, it is based more on socio-historical factors rather than what is seen in movies and popular literature. All relations are based on never-ending series of negotiations and each party is constantly making choices about the relationship, both consciously and unconsciously (Chou, 2012). This power balance is what defines relationships in the bedroom as well as in the public sphere. Sex can either lend itself to political equity between two or more people, or it can cause shifts in the dynamism of all those involved. By using a constructivist perspective, sex is political and will be addressed as such.

Sex in Thailand has traditionally been used as a way to exert power and as a way to gain power and social status. Men would have multiple wives, which helped cement one's political and economic status in the public sphere (Chia, 2017). While seemingly "natural," this use of sex as a way to access power has been shaped by the long-lasting historical and social constructs generally agreed among those within Thai society.

Historical Background

Thailand has historically had liberal attitudes towards sex; sex was seen as a way (especially for women) to gain access to power and prestige within Thai society (Loos, 2005). Temple murals dating back hundreds of years depict sexual activity in village life, and sex and relationships have been an integral part of politics for over a thousand years (O'Conner, 1993). Women were used as symbols of power, but also were able to manipulate that power for their families, children, and themselves.

Harems were a way for men to show their social status within the community, and acted as a way to exhibit wealth and power; King Rama V, the most powerful man in Siam in the mid-1800s, had a harem of over 3,000 women at its prime, and no other man but he was allowed to enter the “inner city” of female lust and attention (Loos, 2005). Men would have a “major wife” (*mia luang*), who acted as the head of the household, oversaw purchasing and other financial matters, and was chief delegator of responsibilities around the house. She would accompany her husband during community events, benefitting the most from her husband's social prestige. “Minor wives” (*mia noi*) performed other household duties and provided additional sexual outlets for the husband (Chia, 2017).

Starting in the Ayutthaya Kingdom in the late 1300s, Siam at the time adopted a class system called “*sakdina*.” This was a numerical system where people were given a number that related to the amount of land one could hold; the higher the number, the more prominence one had in society. In terms of land accumulation and wealth, while *mia nois* did accumulate a partial value of the husband, they received only half the total value of a *mia luang*. As sex providers and household managers, women were forced into a system where they were required to accept male

infidelity as a social norm in order to maintain social prestige within Thai society. Sexual digressions from men were accepted as a normalized part of everyday life (Chia, 2017).

Prostitution has enjoyed a long history in Thailand. Evidence suggests that from the 1300s through the 1700s, prostitution was legal and taxed by the ruling classes. Prostitution, however, was mostly limited to poorer men who could not support larger harems yet wanted to have access to sexual relations outside of the social framework of marriage, as well as to temporarily express the power and privilege of wealthier men (Lines, 2013). Sexual promiscuity became normalized as a natural expression of power and masculinity, and men have been expected to partake in multiple sexual partners—either long- or short-term—for hundreds of years.

In the beginning in the Rattanakosin Period, Siam became a strategic outpost as it lay between important trade centers, including India, China, and the Malayan Peninsula. As foreign nations, chiefly England and France, began to set their sights on Indochina and Burma, Siamese advisors quickly understood that in order to remain uncolonized, Siam must prove its civility to the Western World (Jackson, 2005). The reign of Rama V brought in many inventions and traditions from the West, including military parades, the use of forks and spoons, a formal civil servant bureaucracy, and the order for Thais to dress in a more European style.

In order to maintain its independence, Siam felt it had to adopt many of the cultural values of the West. One way to prove their ability to conform to Europe was through female dress. While elements of traditional Thai dress remained apart of the national costume, Victorian-era silhouettes and materials became the new norm among the royal harem and the Bangkok elite. For the wealthiest, women began to cover themselves from the high neck and lower, only

allowing for the skin on their hands to show. The female figure was completely hidden, as breasts and curves were lost in a sea of lace and fabric. This small change in the way Thai females presented themselves to the outside world affirmed to the would-be colonizers that Thailand possessed the ability to adapt to Western traditional and cultural norms (Peleggi, 2002). Conservative attitudes towards female dress began to permeate through the rest of society and manifested itself in the way Siamese women expressed themselves sexually, both publicly and privately.

Despite Thailand's reputation as a sex tourism destination, Thailand has carried its Victorian conservatism into the modern world. In 1904, Siam officially made slavery illegal. With this, many of the harems that comprised of sex slaves were disbanded, leaving men with diminished households (Loos, 2005). In 1935, Siam officially decreed that a man can only be legally married to one woman, though this did not completely eradicate the role of minor wives in Thai society. Men continued to take on multiple wives and sexual duties would be shared among the women in the house. Multiple families would live under the same roof, or in the same compound, and the antiquated social system of *sakdina*, while no longer an official measure of class, dictated social hierarchy among the women and children in the harem (Hong, 1998).

Controls on Female Sexuality

For men, having multiple sex partners was normalized and accepted by society as a whole. With the rise of the middle class and the increased role for the bureaucracy and civil servants within society, the rate of traditional harems has been steadily declining (Chia, 2016). While moving towards a more Westernized idea of one wife per family structure, the

overwhelming majority accepted male promiscuity as a natural behavior, often projecting the image of a monogamous marriage while at the same time, continuing to engage in polygynous relationships (Rangsivek, 2018). Women, on the other hand, were forbidden to act in a sexual manner and were not allowed to embrace their sexual desires in the public sphere. Gender roles remained dictated by societal norms and women were expected to accept male indiscretions without any expression of jealousy and rage (Chia, 2016).

As a way to control the female expression of sexuality, the social construct of “choo” was weaponized to hurt women who had sex outside of the official bonds of marriage. Choo can be defined as “mistress” or “adulterer,” and carries a negative social stigma when used mainly against women. Once designated a choo, a woman has become branded as promiscuous and is unaccepted in many social circles as she does not hold the coveted rank as an official major or minor wife. The negative social stigma that comes with choo can be detrimental not only to the woman herself, but can also carry on to have negative backlash for her parents and children (Fletcher & Gearing, 2000). Once deemed a choo, this negative identity can follow a woman for years even when the relationship has ended. It also hurts her chances of getting into a stable and successful marriage with another man.

For many women, marriage is a way to climb the social ladder and is a way to ensure stability for herself and for her parents. “Sinsod,” a bride price, is offered to the parents of the bride when a man enters into marriage with their daughter. For many families in rural Thailand, sinsod is a way to ensure financial stability in later years in life. This social pressure from parents has helped to maintain female virginity and pureness until a marriage, either arranged or for love, can be decided upon by heads of households for the bride and groom. If a woman has been

denoted with the stigma of choo, however, her bride price falls dramatically and the parents have lost an important commodity, both monetarily and of social prestige (Lines, 2015). Choo has been used as a control against female sexuality while men were able to operate outside of this social norm to engage in sexual activities with multiple partners.

Because women have been forced to keep close reins over their sexuality for fear of being disgraced in society, men would turn to sex workers as a way to engage in what was considered the natural sexual behavior of men. Sex work became a ubiquitous way for men to partake in expected one-night infidelity while not taking on the social and financial responsibilities of a full harem. Brothels are located throughout the country and men would often end nights out with friends in the comfort of a sex worker. Called ob aub nuad, brothels took on the form of saunas, baths, and massages. Men could enter into these places, choose a woman from a glassed room and could then receive services that often ended in acts of sexual pleasure (Steinfatt, 2002). In Bangkok alone, these types of brothels are so common that legitimate environmental concerns have arisen as the baths draw water from the underground water table, thus are causing Bangkok to sink even faster than it would normally (Murdoch, 2017).

Another type of brothel is situated within karaoke bars or clubs where men can choose from a female worker sitting in front of the establishment. These women will act as personal servers to the men, bringing them drinks and acting as companions throughout the night. If the man so desires, these women will go to a local motel that can be rented by the hour. Depending on the ownership and structure of the karaoke bars, the women will either receive a portion of the money used to buy the sex act, will receive all the money and will give a small cut to the owner, or keep the money for herself (Steinfatt, 2002). In 1999, 95% of Thai men had used sex workers

at least once, and 46% reported losing their virginity to a prostitute (Kuo, et. al, 2008). This “sex for hire” attitude permeated through all walks of life and was widely accepted by both men and women as being a social norm.

While the West experienced loosening of sexual norms, throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, Thailand remained on a trajectory of social conservatism throughout much of the twentieth century. While Thais were aware of relaxed sexual attitudes towards women from the West, Thai women were unable to access this degree of sexual freedom. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Thailand saw massive economic growth in industry and manufacturing. As factories were built, there was increased urbanization in city centers and industrial parks. People from different backgrounds throughout the kingdom were able to converge in factories and stayed in close proximity together in small, one-room apartments (Chareonloet, 2014). Despite long and grueling shift work, this new migration helped to create an increased ability to express oneself in short term sexual relations with other migrants to these industrial centers.

Because women were far from home and had suddenly escaped from traditional cultural norms in village life, there was a greater opportunity to experiment with long term relationships without getting married. These relationships were kept a secret from families back home, and thus allowed women to escape traditional social stigma. While some of these relationships did end up in marriage, others were able to easily end once the woman returned to her home village (Anglewicz, 2015). Globalization through increased industrialization brought in higher opportunity for wages among uneducated village workers while, at the same time, allowed for increased expression of sexuality outside of the traditional social norms.

The Rise of Kik Culture

As greater access to sexual relations became open to women, there was a movement towards greater accessibility to sex in Thailand without cultural stigma. In order to combat negative stereotypes of choo, a new word entered into Thai vernacular as early as 2003. This word, “kik,” is derived from the Thai word “kookkik,” which can be translated as “adorable” or “small” and as a verb, “to talk flirtatiously between two people.” Thai youth readily picked up on this new vocabulary and replaced this new “cute” word to describe what had previously been the very negative connotation of choo (interview, 2019). Kik, which would eventually become synonymous with hookup culture in Thailand, can now be defined as “a sideline affair,” “a new relationship that has not yet be formalized (which may or may not be sexual in nature),” “casual sex partner” or, as a verb, to describe when a person “partakes in keeping multiple partners” (OK Nation, 2007). According to one interviewee, “kik is a person who isn’t a girlfriend or a boyfriend, but isn’t a friend either; you can go together, sleep together, have sex, but the relationship isn’t deep enough to call a true partner.” Another person said:

“kik is...like another friend. A close friend. You guys can stay together. Only friends, but you have a good feeling with each other. Maybe love has a bit of a role to play, but you don't want to live with them forever, or make them a big part of your life.”

However, the true meaning of kik is hard to define, as the connotation of the word is subjective and is often left up to the interpretation of the individual. Many of the interviewees agreed that kik refers to unmarried partners, but others defined it as a third party that “comes in the middle

of two people who have good feelings towards each other” (interview, 2019). One interviewee described kik as “a person who isn't your boyfriend or girlfriend, but has power over your feelings...of love or wanting.” Kik, while not defined as a traditional relationship, wields power for all parties involved, and thus creates a greater sense of equality between men and women.

Kik serves a purpose to describe certain types of relationships that fall out of the traditional norm as prescribed by society. It allows for people to interact with each other on sexual and emotional levels while remaining free from any concrete obligations. By using this new word, those participating in the relationship are able to use vocabulary to attempt to free themselves from any unethical wrongs or sinful behaviors (interview, 2019). Traditional relationships consist of a single partner, and there are inherent rules to abide by, including clear definitions of responsibility and monogamy. But kik is “something floating that can't be tied down” (interview, 2019). This grey area allows for the exploration of sexuality and/or emotional needs without fear of stigma or judgment from the greater overriding society.

Since its origin, the word traveled through social circles of the youth and was easily picked up by a generation that was growing up in a world brought closer together through economics and technology. Once this word was introduced, it spread through Thai society like wildfire. Several of the interviewees believed that the word was able to gain popularity from entertainment news outlets who needed a way to describe relationships and affairs among actors and musicians, but didn't want to use words as “harsh” as *choo*. In order to accurately describe the behavior while avoiding any liability of social stigma, these outlets picked up the word kik. Movies and dramas then started using the word in order to sound “hip” or “cool,” and through the vehicle of mass media, Thais of all ages were then exposed to this word which helped to

further plant it into the local vernacular. As mobile texting and social media grew in popularity and had an increased ease of usage for both young and old, the word moved easily from its roots as teenage slang and coded speech, and became an accepted vocabulary that, despite varying definitions, is, in general terms, easily understood by all in Thai society.

Changing Sexual Norms

Public attitudes towards sex have changed in Thailand, and the concept of “free sex” is becoming more common than before. Free sex is defined in the Thai context as a “one night stand” that is independent from the direct exchange of money; sex work is not included in the idea of free sex. Money often does play a role in the one-time relationship, however, as one of the participants will often pick up the tab at the bar/restaurant, or will pay for the cost of a hotel room for the night. These relationships are purely physical and are terminated once the physical act of sex is over (interview, 2019).

The greater openness to free sex is another way for people to discard traditionally-enforced boundaries imposed on relationships. People can go out, have sex, then return to their partner with no one any the wiser. This short-term, little-to-no strings attached relationship is often preferred to *kik*, as it limits commitment and shared responsibility between the participants (interview, 2019).

Thailand, despite being a traditionally conservative society, has had a culture of sexual liberation, specifically male sexual liberation, for a very long time, though it was kept away in secret. Now, however, Thais are becoming more accepting of their personal sexuality, and are more willing to show desires and needs in a semi-public sphere. According to one interviewee,

Thirty or forty years ago, there was the same percentage [of sexual deviance], except that it wasn't in the open like it is now. People were opposed to that kind of behavior, but now that society has accepted it and is opened up more than in the past...people are more brave to show this kind of behavior.

This new openness has created an environment where people do not feel pressure to hide or limit themselves sexually, a stark divergence from what was common in the past.

The introduction of kik and the relaxation of sexual norms have not only benefited men as just another way to validate sexual relations outside the institutions of marriage, but it also has allowed for women to access unprecedented levels of sexuality without fear of social stigma. What had once been deemed choo-like activity was now suddenly much more acceptable as denoted by the word kik. Young women could move in and out of sexual relationships without having to worry as much about stigma as previous generations (interview, 2019).

In the past, sex, according to one interviewee, wasn't "something you are supposed to pick up and have an open conversation about[;]...sex [didn't] make you friends in society." It was especially hard for women to speak openly about sex, desire, or fairness within their relationships. While men often had multiple wives, women were forbidden to access any sort of physical or emotional connection outside the confines of marriage. Women did not have any choice in their situation, nor did they have opportunities to explore their sexuality beyond their husbands. Women were taught to be soft, virginal, feminine, and submissive to their husbands (interview, 2019). On the surface, many women were required to appear at the mercy of men, as was the cultural norm of the time. Societal values, however, have changed, and equality is closer

between the sexes now than in the past. Women are able to explore their sexuality without the same levels of fear of judgment and can gain access to single-night sexual relationships without the same social restrictions as in the past (interview, 2019).

The introduction of kink culture has created new power balances within personal relationships, but Thai society has yet to accept that women can be completely sexually free. One interviewee stated that:

Women do have more power now, and in some respects, women are equal to men. But not one-hundred percent. In the future it might be equal, but not now. Not in my generation. I mean maybe it might be faster, but in Thailand, I'll probably be really old before Thai society accepts female sexuality as equal to men.

Traditional ideas of sex and gender roles remain a barrier in achieving parity, and while some progress has been made, women have not yet reached true equality with their male counterparts.

Historical and traditional norms of men having multiple partners as a source of power instead of romantic love— while women are expected to remain loyal despite the perceived “bad behavior” from men— still run deep in Thai cultural belief (interview, 2019). Increased awareness of sexuality and greater access to sexual relationships has helped to create an aura of equality, but that equality is only surface deep. One interviewee stated:

[Acceptance of sexuality] is getting better and better. But the fact it is getting

better is misleading because things are not equal. Men and women are not equal. Male and female are still the dominant genders in Thailand, but underneath that, there are still many different kinds of love and relationships. They [Thai people] didn't think a lot about it, but everyone has a friend that doesn't fit into the traditional gender norms... While the areas of acceptance and the areas where one can show their true gender and sexuality have grown, Thai culture still needs to adapt.

Kik culture has helped to foster increased power for women to make decisions about their sexual behaviors, and while women do not yet enjoy the same freedoms as men, they are able to show greater independence over their bodies and choices.

Recent surveys have shown reports of increased adultery among both Thai men and women. In the year 2000, 58% of Thai men reported having sexual (and possibly romantic) affairs outside of the marriage while only 26% of women reported the same type of activity. By 2016, that number has increased, making Thailand the world's most adulterous country. 54% of Thai men reported incidences of sexual affairs while 59% of women reported having extramarital relations (McCarthy, 2016). Over the past years, more women now have greater access to greater sexual relations outside of traditional social structures, as female sexuality is now expressed in ways that it has never been in the past.

Despite the greater access to sex without social stigma, women still are often at the mercy of men when it comes to relationships. Thai media portrays men as leaders in the relationship and perpetuates existing social constructs of Thai femininity. Men have embraced this newly identified kik culture as just an extension of traditional social norms where male infidelity is seen

as natural and expected (Chia, 2016). While women have the ability to engage in sexual activity primarily before marriage, however, they are still expected to fulfill stereotypical gender roles once marriage is initiated. Looking through popular internet forums and social media pages, one will find women anonymously posting about the extramarital affairs of their husbands. Most women are ashamed and embarrassed to admit the indiscretions of their husbands publicly thus turn to the internet community in order to seek advice on how to deal with these situations (Chia, 2016). Kik culture has benefited women for short term sexual gain but has continued to perpetuate long-standing social norms where only men have continued sexual freedom.

Technology: Smaller Worlds and Closer Contacts

As urbanization continued to shift city demographics and as students flocked to urban areas in order to gain an education, this concentration of young people further spread the acceptability of kik and the culture surrounding this new attitude. Sexual experimentation and promiscuity depend on location and environment, as it remains easier for both women and men to partake in sexual behavior in more urban areas. Clubs and bars grew around universities and women could enter and drink without fearing being branded as a sex worker or a karaoke server. These places of business allowed for flirtation mixed with alcohol, far away from the judging eyes of their elders (Anglewicz, 2014). Whereas in the past, letter writing was the only means to maintain long-distance relationships, cell phones became an important medium to facilitate new relationships and sexual flings. While starting as a symbol of status, low-cost telephones became available by the early 2000s. Cheap prepaid cellular services facilitated greater ease of communication and text messaging quickly became a preferred way of contact (interview, 2019).

The youth embraced this new mode of communication, and it became the first wave of the technology-driven sexual revolution.

In 1987, Thailand became the third country in South-East Asia to gain internet access (Magpanthong, 2013). While in the beginning years after the introduction of the internet, coverage was localized to urban areas; by the late 1990s, however, internet cafes had sprung up across the country. Thai youth converged at these areas of internet access to partake in early online gaming, download popular Thai music, and to connect with friends via internet chat applications (Palasri et. al.,1998).

While email never gained traction as a way to communicate, chat applications blossomed into forums for young people to connect with each other. Microsoft Live Messenger became the premier mode of communication through its instant messaging platform. People were able to create anonymous profiles of themselves using only nick-names and profile pictures that could be uploaded by the user. Group chats could be formed where young people were able to discuss topics completely away from the oversight of parents, teachers, and other elders (ThaiPR.net, 2009). This allowed for conversation around topics that would have once been deemed too controversial or shocking for young people to talk about. Discussions surrounding drug and alcohol use, schoolyard drama, and sex became the norm. Females were able to participate just as freely as males, and women were now given an opportunity to openly discuss sexual desires and feelings like never before. Without the fear of judgment, young people were able to exchange information (and misinformation) about sex and love (Ounjit, 2015). Small internet chat groups grew in size and eventually, web-board platforms such as the local website Pantip.com became a public community where people could openly discuss a wide variety of

topics and meet others throughout the country. In the early years of the internet, there was little censorship regarding sex, and access was easy if one knew where to look.

Another platform, Camfrog, became a popular website for people to join live chat-rooms and talk about sex with others (Ounjit, 2015). This platform was connected through live webcams, and each forum was moderated by a volunteer user known as a “DJ.” People were able to access this website, create anonymous personas, and participate in discussions about sex that had never been available before. DJs would train the video camera on themselves and people would watch with an air of voyeurism. Commenters could type in messages to the DJs, requesting music, conversation topics, or even sexual shows. While this very rarely included female masturbation, these performances often had some form of stripping and suggestive dance. Many DJs refrained from showing their faces and, because users were able to create anonymous profiles, this became a popular yet safe community to discuss sexual fantasies and acts. Women had the ability to own their sexuality by anonymously putting it on public display without repercussions from society as a whole (Ounjit, 2015). Sex suddenly became available to people living in both urban and rural areas on a scale never seen before. This new avenue led to greater discussion and knowledge about sexual activity outside of strict traditional village mentality and allowed for those living in rural areas to participate in the hyper-sexualization of the internet.

As social media began to connect closer to individual identities, the web platform, Hi5, quickly swept through early Thai internet as a way to connect people throughout the country (Russell, 2010). This created individual profiles that they could build to reflect personal taste and identity, or remain completely anonymous depending on the intentions of the user. People were able to build up social networks of like-minded individuals who were able to leave

messages or connect through telephone or MSN Chat. Other internet forums specifically related to personal sexual identities were another place for users to meet one another and start up either online relationships or meet up in real life for sexual flings (interview, 2019).

By 2008, Facebook had entered the Thai social media market and quickly became the leading networking platform within the nation. This switch from Hi5 to Facebook came quickly and within the span of just over a year, the majority of Hi5 users had almost completely switched completely to Facebook (Morrison, 2010). Facebook brought with it greater ease of communication because it had an internal messenger system built within the platform. Facebook friend suggestions became a quick way to expand one's social network and allowed for others to be introduced to people outside of traditional social circles. Popular pages became communities within themselves and gained mass amounts of followers that were able to interact with each other in the comment section. Facebook became a marketplace and internet shopping first started to gain popularity through commercial pages inside the social media network (Suvachart, 2016).

The increased use of Facebook, however, started to blur the lines between fictitious internet personas and real-world identities. Facebook allowed for people to have an online extension of themselves and it became a public place where one could show off in a culture of saving face. People received news, were able to discuss entertainment and political dramas, and keep in touch with friends from other areas and from abroad (Suvachart, 2016). Facebook membership has been increasing steadily and in the years that Facebook has had a presence in Thailand, the number of users has reached over 49 million and is the 8th largest country to use the social networking site. The majority of users, over 24 million, are in Bangkok and surrounding areas, which allows for easier access to meet fellow users in real life (Leesa-

Nuangasuk, 2018). As smartphones have gained in popularity, users are able to access Facebook and other social media sites from wherever they may be located. This allows for people, especially the youth, to be in constant connection with others as long as they have access to their mobile phone. The new opportunities to meet more people through internet networks are a direct contributor to increased sexual relations among Thailand's youth.

With the onset of new technology, the nature of dating in Thailand was fundamentally changed from previous norms of the past. People were able to access new groups of people on a scale that had never been seen before. Instead of relying on letters to communicate with one another, or finding specific times to meet (often with adult oversight), the youth were now able to have more control over their own relationships and choice of partners. One interviewee described this change as if

it is our own zone—we can do what we want and create ourselves into whatever we want. It's a world where we can create anything for ourselves...It's easy, and everything is easily accessible, no matter where we are. It's a completely private world.

Thai youth have been able to maneuver out from under cultural dictation of sexuality in order to take control of their own decisions when it comes to love, sex, and relationships. The internet has been the vehicle in which this change has been able to happen.

The instant gratification that comes from the ability to quickly discover, meet and develop connections, be it for the purpose of flirting, casual sex, or to form some sort of relationship, has had negative consequences as well. According to several that were interviewed,

it has caused people to become less patient and “skip steps” when getting to know one another. Instead of following traditional paths of meeting and choosing partners, there is now a lessened sense of obligation when entering a relationship. Because the youth are now in complete control of their own romantic and sexual activities, they have missed out on important lessons from parents and guardians about commitment and respect. As this is not discussed openly in Thai society as a whole, the youth are left to figure out the unspoken rules of interaction by themselves (interview, 2019). Sexual needs and desires are often raised to greater importance than commitment, compromise and mutual respect for one’s partner. Relationships are easily broken off once someone is confronted with a new person who may be deemed more interesting than their current partner. One interviewee stated bluntly:

People can break up with their current lover to have a relationship with someone they just met on the internet or through social media. These people don’t really know each other on a deep level but have maybe only talked on the telephone [or through chat applications]. There isn’t really any way to know if these words are true or not, but still, people will break up with one another to date [the new person], or secretly date them while still in a relationship. [The internet] is a path to let this happen.

Decisions about sexual behavior in Thailand now has come from within the individual, and from what appears to be the normalization of certain behaviors from peer groups; the rules of the older generation have become near obsolete. This new sense of freedom is both liberating, but creates

strains on existing relationships, and has negative effects on family structures and personal health.

The Influence of Movies and Implied Sex

Another strong contributor to changing sexual attitudes is greater access to Western movies and media, which has thus influenced the type of media coming out of Thailand itself. The Film Censorship Board of the Department for Cultural Promotion, under the control of the Ministry of Culture, makes decisions on censorship around issues deemed inappropriate or offensive in Thailand. Most of these censors continue to push forward a conservative view of what Thai culture should look like (BBC, 2015).

With that being said, sexual innuendos and implied sex can be seen in popular movies of the time. Both men and women benefit from viewing female characters in Western movies, and more frequently in Thai movies, that rebuke traditional gender norms by taking charge in relationships and initiating sexual relations without the fear of stigma or social backlash (interview, 2019). By seeing movies as vehicles for sexual emancipation, Thais are empowered to take more control over their own expression of sexual identity. Ideas of free sex for both men and women have gone from being as seen as a solely Western ideal and have now been incorporated into Thai sexual identity.

Many see movies as both provoking and encroaching into the lives of people, and have worked to erode the traditional boundaries of normalized sexual behavior (interview, 2019). By seeing behaviors on television and movie screens, it has, according to one interviewee, “caused people to see the outside world and know that they have the freedom to have sex without

judgment.” Increased exposure to sex in media has helped the youth to internalize the behaviors they see, and then use it to reflect their own desires on the personal and private level.

Many interviewees argued that Thai culture has always had a tradition of sexual promiscuity, however, and that although movies might have had a role in normalizing sex, especially sex before marriage, it has not had a role in promoting equality in relationships. People may see sex scenes, but do not understand the cultural meanings and power dynamics behind the acts depicted on screen. As one interviewee pointed out:

Thais don't understand the culture or meaning behind the sex scenes. They don't know that in other cultures, once you get married, you are expected to be loyal to your partner. Since this isn't promoted in our own culture, people will continue to go out and have multiple partners. They don't make promises to stay loyal once they are in a relationship. Instead, we say things like “be patient with me [about my infidelities].” And often it is the women who have to be patient while their husbands or boyfriends are off having affairs.

Since sex scenes in movies often lack any sort of explanation of various cultural nuances, it is left to the viewer to determine the meaning by themselves.

HIV and Sex Work

HIV first came to Thailand in the early 1990s through sex tourism. Because men were often socially expected to seek the services of a sex worker, once HIV entered into the sex

industry, the prevalence spread throughout the entire country. Due to a lack of knowledge of prevention techniques, Thailand soon had some of the highest levels of HIV infection rates in all of Asia (WHO, 2010). The government saw a necessity in emergency prevention to stop the spread of the infection in sex workers to their clients, who would then pass the virus on to their wives at home. While previously the government did little to acknowledge the existence of the sex industry, rising infection rates were no longer something it could ignore. A major government campaign started in the early 1990s, encouraging one hundred percent use of condoms when men sought out the services of sex workers. Free condoms were made available in brothels and Thailand was hailed as an international success story in reducing the number of new infections among its citizens. Today, less than one percent of all female sex workers are infected by HIV (WHO, 2010).

Despite being a relatively safe way for men to engage in sexual activity, the sex industry in Thailand is often viewed as a luxury service that is out of reach for many young men. There was a strong consensus among the interviewees that the youth do not partake in these services as they can rely on finding sexual partners (either long- or short-term) from the pool of women their own age. As one interviewee put it:

Teenagers are young and handsome and look good, so they can find people to have sex with and don't have to pay for it. The people who go to see sex workers are people who have a lot of money already, and they are old[er].

Many young men can find sexual partners in their own social circle or through the help of the internet. The greater female sexual freedoms have helped men enter into sexual relationships without turning to the sex industry.

Long-term financial implications may be a hindrance for some men to start relationships, so they see a freedom in having temporary relations with sex workers. While not considered a norm for students, working men often do not have the time or money to devote to a partnership, and will turn to prostitution as a way to “release tension” (interview, 2019). One interviewee explained:

Some guys don't have enough money for a girlfriend, so seeing prostitutes is a good way for them to have sex without any further responsibilities. Sex and relationships come with responsibilities, but if you buy it with money, then once you are finished, the whole thing is over.

Some men see having sex with sex workers as “exciting” and “new,” and prefer the “sex without responsibility” they can have with sex workers.

While young men do not use sex workers nearly as frequently as in the past, a majority of sex workers are young women who are looking to seek financial gains from temporary means. Many sex workers have been able to capitalize on new technology, and have moved away from traditional locations for sex exchange and into the world of the internet to sell their services (Manopaiboon, et al., 2013). Popular chat applications like Line and Facebook Messenger have become a way for sex workers to connect with customers in a way that takes out the traditional

middle man (interview, 2019). This new autonomy has allowed for more economic control, but leaves the choice of using a condom up to the sex worker and the customer; without oversight, the responsibility of protection now lies solely within those participating in the direct exchange.

Because so much effort was placed in condom usage in the sex industry to stop the spread of HIV, an unintended consequence emerged, especially among women who are not in the field. Condoms became stigmatized as something to only be used by sex workers (Chamrathirithon & Kaiser, 2012). In the early days of kik culture, many women would scoff at the thought of using a condom as a form of HIV prevention due to a negative image of prophylaxis. By implying that condoms equate prostitution, women showed they are not apart of the sex industry by refusing to allow for their sex partners to use condoms during intercourse (interview, 2019). This stigma has become a barrier, keeping many young from protecting themselves when they first become sexually active.

HIV and Education

An unintended consequence of this sexual revolution can be seen in rising HIV rates among those aged 15 to 35. Currently, Thailand reports having 440,000 cases of HIV rates reported with an average rate of 6,500 new cases per year. One of the highest risk groups for HIV infection is young people between the ages of 15-35 (Avert, 2018). From 2003 to 2015, HIV rates rose among those aged 22 or younger from 13% to 22%. Condoms are often used only when given freely, and 48.7% percent of young people have reported having sex without protection on a regular basis (Haque & Soonthorndhada, 2009). Due to incomplete sex education, however, many young people are left to figure out the means of protection on their

own. There is often a general misunderstanding of the ways one can become infected by the virus and proper knowledge of condom use remains unstable depending on access to resources and education programs (Tipwareerom, et. al., 2011).

Another barrier is that young people often assume themselves to be “clean,” free of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). There is often a disconnect among the young, especially in rural areas, that it is possible for young people to catch and pass on STIs, as these types of infections are most commonly associated with sex workers, despite being a false assumption (interview, 2019). By engaging in sex with others of their same age group, men are able to partake in what they consider “clean” and “safe” sex, often forgoing condom usage just because their partner is young.

Due to conservative elements from older generations, sex education has been either non-existent or left to the bare minimum where students only learn of abstinence while not learning about the proper ways to protect oneself from STIs and HIV (Ounjit, 2015). While everyone interviewed stated they did receive some sort of sex education, the quality varied between schools. Most people were taught how to use a condom properly and were told that they must use condoms in order to protect themselves from HIV and pregnancy. The time given to these lessons was scant for all interviewees and was often taught not by teachers, but by outside sources invited into the classroom. Abstinence-based sex education was common, and no one reported learning about healthy relationships in school (interview, 2019).

The taboo nature of sex in Thai society has been a hindrance for a fully integrated and robust sex education program in Thai schools. While the Ministry of Education does provide a curriculum for sex ed, many teachers do not have adequate training to provide the level of

knowledge needed to explore these topics in a meaningful way (interview, 2019). Several interviewees complained that, for them, sex education didn't consist of much more than knowing how to keep oneself clean and that one should use condoms. A few interviewees claimed that the reason behind this lack of engagement is due to cultural taboos that you should not speak with young people about sex. While this is loosening—as one interviewee who works in the field pointed out, it is now possible to talk openly about sex and protection with university students—many people still believe that frank discussions around sex will lead students to become sexually active where they otherwise would not. Another interviewee summed up the situation as the following:

Thailand uses the boundaries of culture to be the definition of what should or should not be done....In Thailand, we say we have an 'amazing' culture, but we shouldn't teach our children about sex. People shouldn't learn about sex until they are over the age of twenty. But that isn't at all how it should be. People should learn about gender and sex education from a very young age. Boys need to be taught to respect women, or if they have sex, that they have the ability to get someone pregnant or catch an STI. We don't teach them what is important, but instead teach people how to properly clean their genitals, or that they must be abstinent. We don't tell them how to protect themselves... Our silence has helped to cause an increase in teenage pregnancy and in cases of HIV. Our 'amazing' Thai culture has caused this. We put too many definitions on society so that it causes it not to be amazing after all.

As long as conservative elements in the education system are unwilling to fully educate students about sexuality and healthy relationships, HIV and STIs will continue to be a problem into the future.

HIV and (lack of) Public Health Campaigns

HIV campaigns on a national scale have not received wide-scale media attention since the Yeud Ok Pok Toong campaign in 2007, translated as “Proud to Carry Condoms.” The slogan for this campaign read, “Love your girl/boyfriend, worry about your partner, be merciful to your kik. Carry a condom” This is notable not only because it was the last national campaign on HIV prevention, but it is the only time that the author found an official acknowledgment/usage of the word “kik” by the government. This campaign utilized television commercials where both young women and men spoke frankly about multiple sex partners. The premise of many of the commercials included a storyline that there is no real way to know the complete sexual history of your partner as most people do not talk freely about their sexual past. Another common theme was to not feel ashamed or embarrassed to buy or ask for condoms (Ministry of Public Health, 2007). The goal of the campaign was to build up the confidence for the youth to carry condoms and be able to speak up and ask for condom usage when having sex (WHO, 2010). It associated condom usage with fear and infidelity rather than love and loyalty, and it did not encourage people to openly discuss sex and their sexual history. The campaign was eventually pulled for encouraging sexual behavior among the youth, as it had been criticized by social conservatives for going against traditional values (WHO, 2019).

Since then, however, there has been a lack of visibility and conversation around HIV for the general public. While health policy in Thailand has focused on sex workers and gay men as high-risk groups, the youth have essentially been ignored as a potentially high-risk group in need for access of preventative education (Youngkong, et. al., 2012). As a public health issue, HIV has fallen away from the forefront of conversation and this lack of public education has allowed for misinformation and relaxed attitudes to spread.

Although HIV medication and antiretroviral medications are readily available through government subsidy programs, there is not a culture among the youth to seek regular HIV testing (WHO, 2010). According to one interviewee, “we [Thais] don’t have a culture of HIV testing, and as long as the government doesn’t support this, it will continue to be a problem.” The virus can take up to eight years to progress into AIDS. If not treated and controlled, it can have devastating effects on the health of those infected. The virus can be passed on through unprotected sexual relations, and those with high viral loads are more susceptible to passing on the virus to their partners (Glesecke et al., 1990). Testing for the virus would be a positive step in controlling the virus and protecting the health of those infected. As one interviewee stated:

Thais don’t have a culture of getting tested [for the HIV virus]. Teenagers don’t go to get tested. They might be able to have mandatory testing for certain groups like those in the military draft, but normal, regular teenagers don’t get tested. They start having sex in early high school, and then they go to college six years later. In that time, they haven’t been having sex with only one person--it is more like ten in those six years. And they aren’t using condoms, but they also don’t get tested. We can’t know the truth [of the

exact statistics of HIV in Thailand] because we can't force people to get tested--we can't take away their rights, and if we tell them to get tested, they will think we are passing judgment on them.

Because there is now a kik culture where young men and women are able to participate fully in sexual activity, it is possible that the spread of HIV has increased among this demographic due to changing societal attitudes and held beliefs about safety and sexuality.

Study Limitations

As this was only a preliminary study into the development and implications of kik culture in Thailand and how the government and public health entities have responded to these new sexual norms, more study is warranted into these particular topics. The author was only able to interview a very small subsection of the population, and those interviewed were not chosen by means of random sampling. It is possible that this body of research suffers from selection bias. While the results are interesting, the small sample size prohibits any sort of statistical measurement in order to obtain a valid research result. Time and financial restraints were placed on the author due to limited time within Thailand to perform primary research. Budgetary restraints did not allow for travel outside of three provinces and Bangkok.

Lack of prior research into kik culture and changing sexual norms over the past decade hindered the author from being able to source academic work from other researchers. The terminology, "kik culture," was created by the author in order to describe this new sexual phenomenon and may not be widely understood in other academic circles.

While these are limitations to this study, it shows a unique opportunity for further inquiry is needed into this particular subject. In order to fill in the gaps in the small sample size, the author would need to spend more time in Thailand and choose from a greater subject pool. Further research funding would also be needed to continue this necessary study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Thailand has had a dynamic and complex relationship with sex, and for centuries, sex has been as a way for both men and women to gain power within society. Rather than being “natural,” the dynamics behind these sexual relationships have been shaped by the social and cultural norms of the time. As these relationships have played out in the personal and public spheres, they have helped to shape power politics for generations.

Thailand, like the rest of the world, has been greatly affected by social and cultural change sparked by technological advancements and the rise of social media. These changes have brought about a new way of looking at the world and has considerably expanded traditional social circles well beyond the small village communities of the past. These greater opportunities for people to meet and get to know each other has led to increased ability to enter into sexual relationships, especially for the youth. As the stigma around sex has diminished, women now have greater access to their own sexuality, and have the freedom to enter into sexual relationships without the same fear of judgment from elders in the community. As attitudes around sex are changing, Thai society once again finds itself grappling between the past views of sexual morality and the new perspectives of the modern world.

Now that the Pandora's box of sexuality has been opened, there is no way to reign in the new sexual freedoms that have been embraced among the young. Once the young have embraced open and free sexual experiences, conservative elements within society have acted as a barrier to education, forcing the youth to find information regarding sex on their own. Given Thailand's lack of culture around HIV testing, it is of the highest importance that the government focus attention on HIV prevention. Until the older generations are willing to speak openly about sexual behaviors and protection, it is imperative that the youth have access to reliable information regarding sex, relationships, and protection. Comprehensive sexual education within schools should be standardized so that all receive the necessary information needed to protect themselves. In order to ensure a healthy and protected populace, the government needs to make HIV prevention targeted specifically at the youth as the forefront of national public health policy. If this is not done, it remains likely that HIV rates will skyrocket among the vulnerable population of the young over the next few years.

Works Cited

- Anglewicz, Philip, Mark VanLandingham, and Dusita Phuengsamran. "Rural-to-Urban Migration and Sexual Debut in Thailand." *Demography* 51, no. 5 (2014): 1955-976. <http://www.jstor.org.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu/stable/43697490>.
- Avert. (2018). HIV and AIDS in Thailand. Avert. Retrieved from https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/asia-pacific/thailand#footnote23_m74e10x.
- Banwell, S. (2015). Globalisation masculinities, empire building and forced prostitution: a critical analysis of the gendered impact of the neoliberal economic agenda in post-invasion/occupation Iraq. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(4), 705-722. Doi:10.1080/01436597.2015.1024434
- BBC. (2015). Thai film director decries censorship. BBC. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34540734>.
- Chamrathirong, A. & Kaiser, P. (2012). The dynamics of condom use with regular and casual partners: analysis of the 2006 national sexual behavior survey of Thailand. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0042009>.
- Chia, J. (2016). Rethinking Thai sex work: the mistress culture. *Harvard International Review*, 37(4), 9+. Retrieved from http://link.galegroup.com.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu/apps/doc/A473844753/ITBC?u=maine_farmington&sid=ITBC&xid=dc105ea3
- Chia, J. (2017). Men and their mistresses. *The Bangkok Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/special-reports/1330319/men-and-their-mistresses>.
- Chou, R. (2012). *Asian American Sexual Politics : The Construction of Race, Gender, and Sexuality*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 16, ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umf-ebooks/detail.action?docID=947980>.
- Fletcher, M. & Gearing, J. *A wife in the shadows*. Asianow. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/ASIANOW/asiaweek/97/0606/feat2.html>.
- Glesecke, J., et. al. (1990). Incubation time of AIDS: progression of disease in a cohort of HIV-infected homo- and bisexual men with known dates of infection. (1990, October 15). *CDC AIDS Weekly*, 21. Retrieved from http://link.galegroup.com.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu/apps/doc/A9039236/AONE?u=maine_farmington&sid=AONE&xid=42f2ac42
- Green, R. (2001). *Constructivism and comparative politics*, Routledge, 2001.
- Goode, E. (2011). *Deviant behavior*. Boston: Prentice Hall.
- Haque, M. R., & Soonthornhada, A. (2009). Risk perception and condom-use among Thai youths: findings from Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System site in Thailand. *Journal of health, population, and nutrition*, 27(6), 772-83.
- Jackson, Peter A. "Semicolonality, Translation and Excess in Thai Cultural Studies." *South East Asia Research* 13, no. 1 (2005): 7-41. <http://www.jstor.org.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu/stable/23750140>.
- Lebow, R. N. (2008). *A cultural theory of international relations*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu>
- Leesa-Nuangasuk, S. (2018). Thailand makes top 10 in social media use. *The Bangkok Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/news/1420086/thailand-makes-top-10-in-social-media-use>.
- Lines, L. (2013). *Welcome a novel and women's rights and prostitution in Thailand an exegesis* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://proportibazar.com/article/womens-rights-and-prostitution-in-thailand-an-exegesis_5a64818fd64ab291e54ac180.html.
- Lines, L. (2015). Prostitution in Thailand: representations in fiction and narrative non-fiction. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 16(3), 86+. Retrieved from http://link.galegroup.com.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu/apps/doc/A429565502/ITBC?u=maine_farmington&sid=ITBC&xid=1e553ee2
- Loos, Tamara. "Sex in the Inner City: The Fidelity between Sex and Politics in Siam." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 4 (2005): 881-909. <http://www.jstor.org.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu/stable/25075903>.
- LYsa, H. (1998). Of consorts and harlots in Thai popular history. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57(2). 333-353. Doi: 10.2307/2658827.
- Magpanthong, C. (2013). Thailand's evolving internet policies: the search for a balance between

- national security and the right to information. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 24(1), 1-16. doi: 10.1080/01292986.2012.717089
- Manopaiboon, C., et. al. (2013). Unexpectedly high HIV prevalence among female sex workers in Bangkok, Thailand in a respondent-driven sampling survey. *International Journal of STD & AIDS*, 24(1), 34-38. Doi: 10.1177/0956462412462300.
- McCarthy, N. (2016). The most unfaithful nationalities. Statista. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/chart/6841/the-most-unfaithful-nationalities/>.
- Min-Hsun Christine Kuo, Siriporn Yamnill & Gary N. McLean (2008) The dilemma of prostitution in Taiwan and Thailand from an NHRD perspective, *Human Resource Development International*, 11:5, 493-505, DOI: 10.1080/13678860802417635.
- Ministry of Public Health. (2007). Yeud ok pok toong. Ministry of Public Health. Bangkok, Thailand.
- Murdoch, L. (2017). Sex industry in Bangkok is sinking the city, literally. *The Sunday Morning Herald*. Retrieved at <https://www.smh.com.au/world/sex-industry-in-bangkok-is-sinking-the-city-literally-20171006-gyv88.html>.
- Morrison, C. (2010). Thailand may be Facebook's next big Asian market. *Adweek*. Retrieved from <https://www.adweek.com/digital/thailand-may-be-facebooks-next-big-asian-market/>.
- Pereira, C. (2009). Interrogating norms: Feminists theorizing sexuality, gender and heterosexuality. *Development*, 52(1), 18-24. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu/10.1057/dev.2008.84>.
- O'Connor, R. (1993). Interpreting Thai Religious Change: Temples, Sangha Reform and Social Change. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 24(2), 330-339. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20071553>
- OK Nation. (2007). "Kik...more than friend...but not a boyfriend/girlfriend." OK Nation Blog. Retrieved from <http://oknation.nationtv.tv/blog/mangapoon191/2007/07/18/entry-1>.
- Ounjit, W. (2015). Social and Cultural Dimensions of Adolescent Sexual Relationships in Thailand. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 171, 606-612.
- Palasri, S., et. al. (1998). The history of the internet in Thailand. The Network Startup Resource Center. University of Oregon. Retrieved from <ftp://ufo.cs.ait.ac.th/pub/pdf/ENDOWNLD.PDF>.
- Peleggi, M. (2002). *Lords of things: the fashioning of the Siamese monarchy's modern image*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Rangsivek, K. (2018). Between polygyny and monogamy: marriages of the political elite and the Thai regime of images. *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 33(1), 166+. Retrieved from http://link.galegroup.com.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu/apps/doc/A540002039/ITOF?u=maine_farmington&sid=ITOF&xid=e72732d2.
- Russell, J. (2010). Hi5 Thailand's most popular mobile social network, says Opera. *Asian Correspondent*. Retrieved from <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2010/01/hi5-thailands-most-popular-mobile-social-network-says-opera/>.
- Steinfatt, T.M. (2002). Working at the bar: sex work and health communication in Thailand. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ursus-proxy-6.ursus.maine.edu>.
- Suvachart, N. (2016). An exploratory study of behavior-based segmentation typology of Facebook users in Thailand. *Asian Social Science*, 12(3). Doi: 10.5539/ass.v12n3p140
- ThaiPR.net. (2009). The world's most popular instant messenger is ten years old. RYT9. Retrieved from <https://www.ryt9.com/es/prg/83756>.
- Tipwareerom, W., Powwattana, A., Lapvongwatana, P., Crosby, Ri. (2011). Effectiveness of a model of risky sexual behavior prevention among adolescent boys in Thailand. *The Southeast Asian Journal of Tropical Medicine and Public Health*. 42. 726-36.
- Voravidh Charoenloet. (2015). Industrialization, globalization and labour force participation in Thailand. *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*, 20:1, 130-142, DOI: 10.1080/13547860.2014.974336
- Warakamin, S., et. al. (2004). Induced Abortion in Thailand: Current Situation in Public Hospitals and Legal Perspectives, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 12:sup24, 147-156, DOI: 10.1016/S0968-8080(04)24018-6.
- Wendt, A. (1995). Constructing International Politics. *International Security*, 20(1), 71-81.

doi:10.2307/2539217.

WHO. (2010). Thailand's new condom crusade. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, Volume 88, 401-480.

Youngkong, S., et. al. (2012). Multi-criteria decision analysis for setting priorities on HIV/AIDS interventions in Thailand. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 10(6). doi 10.1186/1478-4505-10-6.

Appendix A

Interview questions for participatory observers

1. Demographic questions: age, gender identification, education level, place of birth, current residence, student and/or employment status, job title.
2. What does “kik” mean? When did you first become aware of this word?
3. Where did the word “kik” originate? How did it spread through the Thai vernacular?
4. How does “kik” differ from “choo”?
5. What, if any, are the stereotypes of “kik”?
6. Did the arrival of the internet and social applications (i.e. Instant Messenger, Hi-5) change attitudes towards sex/dating? If yes, how so? If not, why?
7. What does “free sex” mean to you?
8. Do you feel that Thailand has a “free sex” culture? If yes, how so? If not, why?
9. Do you feel imported movies and music have played a role in sexual liberation? If yes, how so? If not, why?
10. How prevalent do you feel “kik” culture is in Thailand?
11. Does “kik” go against Thai established cultural norms, or has it been assimilated into the overriding culture? How so?
12. Have attitudes concerning premarital sex changed in the past 15 years? If yes, how so? If not, why?
13. Would you say there is a social stigma against premarital sex for men? For women?
14. Do you feel that visits to commercial sex workers are common among the youth? Why or why not?
15. Were you taught about HIV prevention in school? If so, can you explain the methodology used to teach HIV prevention?
16. Was sexual abstinence taught in school?
17. Can you remember any campaigns sponsored by the government in the past 15 years that support HIV prevention? If so, which ones/what were the names of the campaigns?
18. Is there anything else you would like to say about “kik” culture, sexual norms and attitudes in Thailand or HIV?

Appendix B

Interview questions for workers in the field

1. Demographic questions: age, gender identification, education level, place of birth, current residence, student and/or employment status, job title.
2. What does “kik” mean? When did you first become aware of this word?
3. Where did the word “kik” originate? How did it spread through the Thai vernacular?
4. How does “kik” differ from “choo”?
5. Did the arrival of the internet and social applications (i.e. Instant Messenger, Hi-5) change attitudes towards sex/dating? If yes, how so? If not, why?
6. Do you feel that Thailand has a “free sex” culture? If yes, how so? If not, why?
7. Do you feel that visits to commercial sex workers are common among the youth? Why or why not?
8. Since the emergence of “kik” culture, have you seen any changes in HIV infections in those aged 18-35? If so, what were those changes?
9. Do you feel that the youth (those aged 18-35) are adequately educated about HIV prevention? Why or why not?
10. Since 2004, have there been any government sponsored programs to promote HIV prevention among the youth? If so, how would you gauge their effectiveness?
11. Since 2004, have there been any government sponsored programs that have tackled the idea of “kik”? If so, how would you gauge their effectiveness?
12. How prevalent is sex education in schools?
13. How has the government responded to HIV in the past 15 years? Can you provide any data?
14. Have there been any changes in HIV services (education, medical access, prevention programs) from the government since the 2014 military coup? Can you provide any data?
15. How effective are NGOs at providing HIV services (education, medical access, prevention programs) to the public? Can you provide any data?
16. In your line of work, have you explicitly seen attitudes towards premarital sex change among the youth? If yes, how so? If not, why?
17. Has the role of commercial sex work changed in the past 15 years? If yes, how so? If not, why?
18. As a worker in this field, why do you think the notion of “kik” became so popular?
19. How has the globalization of culture played a role in the relaxation of sexual norms in Thailand?
20. What, if any, are your biggest concerns about changing sexual norms among the youth?
21. What, if any, are your biggest concerns about HIV and youth populations?
22. Is there anything else you would like to say about “kik” culture, sexual norms and attitudes in Thailand or HIV?