

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

In Thailand, it is observed that boys and girls can play together and study in the same elementary school during the period of childhood. Usually, however, they begin to be separated into same sex schools at the stage of pre-adolescence (about 10 or 11 years old). During this stage, they are separated not only in school, but also out of school. This separation is seen in their personal choice of friends as well. Sureng Kowatrakul (31) reports a sociometric analysis of pre-adolescents (about 11 years old) which indicates that boys and girls show a very strong preference for same sex friends in all situations tested. (e.g., classroom, lunch room). The separation between the sexes indicates that there may not be a great deal of interaction with members of the opposite sex. Because of their lack of experience, as the students grow older they may not understand each other. The girls may not understand the boys' needs and behavior and thus, they may not know how to behave when they have contact with boys. The same may be true for the boys. The lack of interaction between boys and girls may lead them to misunderstand each other, and this may lead to an unsatisfactory relationship. In situations where they must interact with each

other, their behavior may not be suitable, because they may not know how to behave in an appropriate manner.

It is known that boys and girls at this age are interested in the opposite sex (2,9). But how can this interest be satisfied unless they are permitted to interact with each other? In reality, the desire on the part of young adolescent boys and girls to understand each other does not seem to be fulfilled. Rather, what seems to occur is that instead of gaining knowledge about each other through interaction with one another, boys and girls develop an image of the opposite sex which is based on their imagination and not on reality. As a result, when boys and girls do interact with one another they may do so not on the basis of actual experience but on the basis of their own and their friends' imaginary pictures of the opposite sex.

If these events only occurred in young adolescent students, one could possibly attribute it to a stage of development which would be overcome in later life. However, since the separation of the sexes and the fear of close relationships between members of the opposite sex is reinforced by the educational system in Thailand, and continues through young adulthood, the future marital adjustment and happiness of young adults is also affected.

A question that can be raised at this point is what were and are the societal standards and values which lead to and reinforce the separation of the sexes? What image does

society have of the way a girl should act with a boy and a boy act with a girl?

In the past, Thai girls were trained very strictly with regard to sex behavior. A girl would have a good reputation if she acted as if she were very innocent about sex. Her reputation was very important for her and for the name of her family. A girl who was studying in school, regardless of the grade level, seemed to be restricted more than a girl who was out of school. Because she was a student, she was perceived by others to be more innocent in terms of sex than a girl who was not attending school. The degree of restriction also depended on the values, practices and traditions of subculture of the society of which the girl was a member. For example, in different regions of Thailand girls were treated differently. The level of education was also a factor. The girl who was studying in secondary school was more restricted than the girl who was studying in a college or university.

In Thailand, except in urban areas, people know their neighbours. Thus, if any girl did something wrong with regard to sex or anything else, her behavior could be gossiped about and it may have given her and her family a bad name. In order to prevent this from happening, the parents and other adults in the family would teach her how to act properly towards the opposite sex. In general, in the last few generations, the girl had to control herself in many ways in order to be accepted by society. She had to stay at home and was not

permitted to go out if not necessary; she was taught not to encourage boys to talk to her and not to make friends with members of the opposite sex except upon introduction by her parents. A girl was expected not to go anywhere with a boy alone, especially at night. If it was necessary to go out at night, the parents or another relative had to go with her. But if she was determined to go out alone, or with her boy friend, she would be scolded by her parents and would be gossiped about by her friends or her neighbours in a negative way. A girl, also was expected not to permit a boy to touch any part of her body. If a boy touched her without permission, it would be perceived that he did not have respect for the girl or her family. The girl would be angry with him and would no longer trust him. If she did something that made the boy feel that she wanted him to touch her, she would not be respected by that boy and others might perceive her as not being a respectable girl. Therefore, she had to control herself in every situation in order to prevent her and her family from getting a bad name.

In the generation after World War II, the attitude toward sex changed, especially in urban areas. The concept of the good reputation of girl is now wider than it was in the past, due to the influence of many factors such as mass communication media, the impact of western ideas, and the establishment of new schools of higher education which permitted many more girls to receive a higher education, and,

therefore, to attend the same school and the same class as the boys (2). But not every individual accepts new things in the same way or to the same degree. Different people have different conceptions of sex and sex behavior; some people change very much, and some change a little. Many things concerned with the good and bad reputation of the girl, especially in terms of sex behavior, are very confused in this transitional period; parents may teach their daughters to behave in widely different ways; the school rules about the behavior of the girl in terms of sex and the relationship between boys and girls may be viewed in different ways. As a result, the girl in this transitional period is very confused and finds it difficult to adjust herself to the sometimes contradictory standards of society.

A study was done by the Ministry of Education in 1957 which dealt with the ways in which adults in Bangkok and Dhonchuri perceived the adolescents of today in comparison with the former generation. The results showed that the adolescents of today were perceived as worse than those in former times in terms of controlling themselves in sexual expression and controlling their actions which may lead them to have a bad reputation. (3)

The role of the Thai boy is very different from that of the girl in terms of their reputations regarding sex behavior and in terms of the changes that are now taking place in the society. The reputation of the boy does not seem to be concerned very much with sex. A boy is not concerned with his

own chastity and when a girl wants to marry him, she will not care about his chastity either. Thus, the boy can do many things that the girl cannot do. However, when judging the girl, he still seems to accept the standards of society discussed above.

The boy is able to speak about sex and many things concerned with sex in his same sex group without being perceived of in a bad way. However, this depends on the situation and the degree; he will be perceived as an impolite boy if he mentions sex when a girl or an older person is present. A boy can go to visit prostitutes and nightclubs with out fear of gossip. Every time he wants to leave his house he can; he can go out alone, or with someone of the same or opposite sex. And, because his sex behavior does not cause him to lose his reputation, his parents are not strict. However, in his relationships with the opposite sex, he has to be concerned with the girl's reputation. If he helps the girl maintain her reputation he will be perceived as trustworthy by her parents as well as by other people.

For the past few decades, the girl's parents have been concerned with the trustworthiness of the boy as one of the main criteria to evaluate whether or not he will be suitable as their son-in-law. In they trust him, his desirability as a suitor is increased. But now, in urban areas, people do not know each other well, so the parents are not in a position to help their daughters choose a husband, as they did in the past. Perhaps it will be the duty of the girl to make this

choice almost completely by herself; in such a situation her ability to understand the boy's behavior is extremely important.

Western social changes have affected the role of the boy in this generation, especially in urban areas, but still less than that of the girl. However, the boy has to relate to the girl and if the girl's role is confusing and changing, then the boy may not know how to act in the appropriate way. Thus the relationship between boys and girls in Thailand during this period of social change is very confusing. They may not know exactly how to relate to a member of the opposite sex.

The relationship between boys and girls seems to be affected by many factors: the nature of adolescence differs then to be interested in each other, the pre-university, college and university educational system provides them with the opportunity to study together; they come under the influence of western idiosyncrasy which are transmitted through the mass communication media. These factors and others influence their behavior. But, often, they are trained to behave in the traditional manner, the standards of which are often in conflict with the western and foreign influences. These factors may cause confusion for the boys and girls of today and may cause many problems for them with regard to their adjustment as adolescents as well as adults.

Recent research in Thailand shows that a very high percentage of university and teacher training college boys and girls desire to choose their future spouse by themselves (4,7). If the above standards are to be maintained, what

difficulties are the university and college boys and girls faced with? How can they get to know each other in order to make a more intelligent choice? How can such an important decision be made then on most of their knowledge of the opposite sex is based on the imagination of themselves and their friends? What effect does the lack of contact of boys and girls have on their marriage choice? What effects do these patterns of courtship have on future marital adjustment and happiness? If these students seem to desire a marriage of love and friendship, how do the present patterns of courtship and interaction between the sexes affect the students ability to realize these desires in the future? (1,7) In Howard wrote:

"...It can be said that courtship is a period during which one tests his own and his partner's compatibility in marriage. This period should consist in the process of gettingone's boy or girl friend to see if the pattern is one likely to contribute to future harmony. ..." (2, 1971)

While one may object that this is an American writing about courtship patterns in the United States, some truth may be said to exist in the same in our knowledge of one's partner leading to future marital harmony.

If the general approach of this introduction is accurate, then we would expect that a great deal of room and misgiving should surround the university students' attitudes towards dating and marriage. We would expect this to be especially the case for the girls. We would expect the girls to be afraid of breaking their part of the "double standard" for fear of their friends' gossip as well as the gossip of other people.

we would also expect that when going out with a boy friend, the girls would desire to go out in groups while the boys would desire to go out alone.

In general, we would expect boys and girls to have a great deal of fear and contradictory expectations and desires of themselves and the opposite sex as a result alone, other things, of the general separation of sexes during the important period of adolescence. This general separation and the resultant misunderstanding between the sexes leads to a paradox in the attitudes of the students toward members of the opposite sex.

The paradox is that the students covetously desire to free themselves from the very rules that they are instrumental in maintaining. For example, the boys who want to marry girls who will be their friends as well as their wives, who will satisfy them emotionally as well as physically, are one of the most important factors in making it extremely difficult for girls to be free to find the kind of person they can be most friendly with and with whom they can have a meeting of minds. And, the necessary purity which the "good" girl must maintain leads her all too often to fear sex, to view sex as something not clean, as something mainly for the satisfaction of the man. Hence, the boys, by the restrictions they place on the girls they will marry, set up barriers to their own future marital happiness, barriers which might lead them to seek satisfaction of their desires outside of the wife.

Girls, similarly, restrict the possibility of their realizing their desires by the pressure they impose on their girlfriends. A girl who desires to meet a boy alone as a friend (not in a serious way), and thereby getting to know many boys before she makes a choice about a boyfriend, will be looked at by her friends and relatives as not following the correct standards for a "good" girl. For indeed, who often themselves would like to get to know many boys as friends, force the girl who does take this risk to stop. By doing this, the girls may force themselves into a situation where they may marry a man whom they do not

really know and the boy not as a friend and may not remain faithful. In a sense, the girl is in a state of conflict between standards that society tells her are correct, her own desires which include partial acceptance of society's standards. (4, p. 1)

The purposes of the present study

1. The general purposes of this study:

What is the role of the boy as perceived by the boy himself and as perceived by the girl? What is the role of the girl as perceived by the girl herself, and as perceived by the boy. These are very important questions if we wish to know whether boys and girls understand each other or not.

2. The specific purposes of this study:

1. To discover whether the way the boy wants to behave towards the girl, and the girl's expectations of the boy's behavior are the same or not.

2. To discover whether the way the girl wants to behave towards the boy, and the boy's expectations of the girl's behavior are the same or not.

3. To discover the similarities and differences between the attitudes of boys and girls to such things as love, friendship, dating, marriage and sex.