Modern Asian Studies **41,** 2 (2007) pp. 287–313. © 2007 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S0026749X05002258 Printed in the United Kingdom

'Relationships Based on Love and Relationships Based on Needs': Emerging Trends in Youth Sex Culture in Contemporary Urban Vietnam[1]

PHUONG AN NGUYEN

Lund University
Leeds University

Abstract

This paper addresses one of the important dimensions of the experience of youth in contemporary urban Vietnam; that is their sexual practices, behaviour and attitudes. Within a conceptual framework that focuses on sexuality and social change in a modernising and increasingly open society, and based on data collected from ethnographic fieldwork in Hanoi from 1999 to 2004, this paper describes an emerging sexual culture among urban youth. It highlights the emerging trends, issues, and activities which constitute youth sex culture in present-day urban Vietnam. It further argues that the emerging trends in youth sexual culture are reflective of rapid and diverse changes in Vietnamese society as well as the impacts of market reforms on its moral codes, values, and perceptions. There has been a continuation of the 'traditional' perceptions of gender roles (particularly the expectation of women to uphold propriety and chastity) and, at the same time, a recognition of the increasingly assertive role of young women in 'modern' sexuality and hence of increasing gender equality in this regard. Meanwhile, young Vietnamese nowadays form heterosexual relationships based on both the grammar of love and the grammar of the market.

Introduction

The market economy which has decisively penetrated Vietnam during the past two decades has brought with it not only economic liberalisation but also an increasingly relaxed and open social life.

[1] A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the 22nd ASEASUK Conference in Exeter, 29 April–1 May 2005. I would like to thank Professor Victor T. King for his constructive comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

0026–749X/07/$7.50+$0.10

Since the mid-1980s there have been major social transformations in Vietnam as reflected in the easing of political controls on citizens, widened access to information and travelling, enhanced activities in cultural, religious and recreational spheres, and so forth, which have had significant impacts on young people, their lives and experiences. In fact, as a sizable segment of the population[2] considered most susceptible to socioeconomic changes resulting from market reforms and economic renovation – better known as *doi moi* – youth and their lifestyles, behaviour and attitudes in the present Vietnamese context of a rapidly changing society are attracting a great deal of attention from state and party officials, policy-makers, social researchers, as well as parents and members of the senior generation.

Part of the reason for this increasing attention to youth has been the contrast or even clash between the reality of a market-oriented society in which young people come of age and form their identity and value perceptions, and the expectations which the older generations who grew up under socialism have of young people. Prior to the liberalisation of the economy from the late 1980s, youth in socialist Vietnam were celebrated by the political leaders for their role as 'nation builders' and as the vanguard of socialist revolution. Subsequently, in the years following *doi moi*, although party officials continue to cite positive features of Vietnamese youth such as 'activeness, vitality, responsiveness to [*doi moi*] reforms, and bravery' (Pham, 1996: 17), many young people have become involved in alcohol addiction, drug abuse, prostitution, crimes, and various other 'social evils' (*te nan xa hoi*), which have become a genuine cause of concern for the authorities, parents, and older people. Increasingly, the local media are full of reports on karaoke bars that were in effect a front for brothels, bus stations plagued by scenes of drug use in broad daylight, and young boys and girls staying away from their parental homes for days or even weeks (see, for example, Thien Nguyen, 2003; Huong Duong, 2004; *Gia dinh va Xa hoi*, 9 April 2005). In such a context, there has arisen the need for an understanding of youth in Vietnam, although as soon as they became a subject of social science research in the country in the mid-1980s, the subject of 'youth' was immediately recognised as 'a challenge to social studies' (Dang, 1996: 23).

[2] According to latest figures, 70 per cent of the Vietnamese population is under 30 years of age, and people belonging to the 15–30 age group account for approximately 30 per cent (some 24 million people) of the national population of 80 million (Youth Research Institute, 2003).

My inquiry on Vietnamese youth began with a concern about the serious lack of studies of the perspectives, attitudes, motivations and values of young people: until recently, most studies by local researchers were politically driven and policy oriented, typically focusing on the youth as seen from the perspective of the ruling communist party and the state and following the tradition of constructing a forward-looking, developmental image of the youth. On the other hand, studies by independent overseas scholars have been relatively few in number and have often been confronted with various obstacles, not least administrative, cultural, and language barriers (Nguyen, 2002). Subsequently, I set out to observe youth in their own settings – at work, at school or university, in the family, among friends – in the context of present-day Vietnamese market-oriented society. I then recorded their stories, opinions, and experiences, as well as my own observations. As such, my research was a qualitative investigation, and the data thus collected provided a rich and in-depth ethnographic portrayal of various aspects of Vietnamese youth.

This paper focuses on one of the important dimensions of the experience of youth in contemporary urban Vietnam; that is their sexual practices, behaviour and attitudes. Research data were collected from in-depth interviews with over 100 young men and women (with a roughly equal number of male and female interviewees) conducted in Hanoi between 1999–2004. Due to the complexities of defining youth, in particular approaching them as an age category (Nguyen, 2002), I do not attempt a definition of Vietnamese youth in this paper. Instead, in order to make this research manageable and to reflect the conceptualisation of youth both in daily life and in the social sciences in Vietnam (see, for example, Nguyen, 1996; Thai, 1995; Youth Research Institute, 2003), I have used a set of specific, non-abstract and operational criteria and have chosen to focus on unmarried people who were under thirty years of age in Hanoi. Obviously, as an individual from the same generation as my interviewees, and who also had first-hand experience of social changes resulting from market reforms in Vietnam, I was able to connect and interact with my interviewees. In other words, my interviewees were generally open to me in their narratives and in effect I was also carrying out participant observation during fieldwork. Data collected from in-depth interviews were supplemented by sustained social interaction with key informants, as well as countless casual conversations with people of all ages and backgrounds in the Hanoi area. These conversations were valuable inasmuch as they helped to

inform aspects of the research as well as confirm my research findings. I also monitored local newspapers, particularly the *Tuoi Tre*, *Thanh Nien*, *Phu Nu, Gia dinh va Xa hoi*, and *Vnexpress* daily news online.

This paper describes an emerging sexual culture among urban youth. Situating this paper in a conceptual framework that focuses on sexuality and social change in a modernising and increasingly open society, and building on recent literature on sexuality in Southeast Asia, I start with a brief overview of Vietnamese perceptions of sexuality during the socialist period and before that in 'traditional' Vietnamese society. Subsequently, I present the cases of four informants (two men and two women) with whom I maintained sustained contact and interaction over long periods of time. For reasons of anonymity, I do not use their real names. Their stories and the quotes extracted from in-depth interviews with them as well as their friends will illustrate the dating lives and personal sexual experiences of unmarried heterosexual people in the age group of roughly twenty to thirty. Due to the very limited knowledge of Vietnamese youth's premarital sexuality (Gammeltoft, 2002a), and the fact that youth do not constitute a homogeneous category, I do not claim that the sexual experiences described by my interviewees can be generalised to Vietnamese youth. However, based on data collected from in-depth interviews, my first-hand experience and observations, interaction and conversations with countless people in the field as well as local press coverage, I can reasonably assert that the accounts of four of my informants presented here are illustrative and typical of experiences and perspectives shared by many young urbanites in Vietnam today. Through the stories of these four young people, I then discuss the emerging trends which constitute youth sex culture in present-day Hanoi. In the conclusion, I highlight some of the changes in youth value orientations as seen from their sexual practices, behaviour and attitudes in the context of a fast changing society. Overall, my aim is to provide a description not only of an emerging youth sex culture in post-reform Vietnam, but also of changes in Vietnamese society and the impacts of market reforms on its moral codes and values.

Social Change and Sexuality in Modernising Societies

Starting with the overall theoretical position that Foucault developed that sexuality is a social construct, operating within fields of power,

not merely as a set of biological imperatives which either do or do not find direct release (Giddens, 1992), my concern here is with sexual behaviour as socially constructed practices which are constituents and indications of personal and social identity. I apply a broad definition of sexuality as a complex of values, concepts, and behaviours that include sexual practices and perceptions of what constitutes acceptable and desirable sexual activity (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, Sharpe and Thomson, 1990). From this perspective, the sexual activities, practices, behaviour and attitudes of young people in urban Vietnam constitute part of their social life and connect with their value orientations and the formation of their identity in the context of social changes which confront and challenge them, and which characterise present-day Vietnamese society under market reforms.

In his writings on what he termed 'the repressive hypothesis', Foucault further aligned modern social life, and also modern sexuality, with the rise of 'disciplinary power' which manifests itself in the mechanisms of discipline and control of new medical, social, and educational institutions such as the prison and the asylum as well as schools, hospitals, and businesses. In general, Foucault saw power as functioning in two contradictory or opposite directions: it is both a constraining and, at the same time, a mobilising force. Specifically, with regard to sexuality, disciplinary power does not only set limits to and controls and regulates our reactions to the promptings of desire, but also plays an instrumental role in the generation of energy and the production of pleasure (Foucault, 1978; Giddens, 1992).

Interpreting Foucault more broadly, I argue that a market-based society itself imposes a new regime of discipline on youth, which acts both to regulate their desires and actions and, at the same time, provides opportunities for young people to act out their sexual desires and drives. In addition, I see the need to consider Vietnamese market-oriented society in the context of a layering of multiple modernities, including not least the modernity of a centrally controlled and planned society under socialism immediately preceding the market (cf. Farrer, 2002). Social change and the combination of present-day market conditions with the mentality and perceptions of the pre-market socialist period further create and impose controls, regulations, and restrictions on youth, but at the same time influence and urge them to live out various desires and needs.

In examining youth sex culture in the context of social change currently taking place in Vietnam, and drawing upon Giddens's

analytical framework, I also consider the ideal of romantic love (1992). This concept of romantic love, which I shall discuss later in this paper, began to make its presence felt in urban Vietnamese society in the early nineteenth century but was subsequently de-emphasised, or even deliberately ignored, during the period of socialist modernity, and has once again emerged with the rise of market modernity in Vietnam. In addition, the ideal of romantic love is seen as effectively a way of subordinating women to men in the present-day context where such Confucian doctrine as the 'three submissions' (*tam tong*)[3] can no longer be sustained (Soucy, 2001). In other words, Vietnamese women are submissive to their man simply because it is an expression of love (*Ibid*., 41). In this paper, I further see romantic love as essentially being associated with as well as encapsulating the ideas of love, freedom, and self-realisation; it breaks with sexuality while simultaneously embracing it (Giddens, 1992).

In the context of contemporary Southeast Asia and regarding youth sexuality, social science research, initially focusing on the issues of family planning and fertility control during the 1980s and early 1990s (for example, Swee-Hock and Wong, 1981; Laing, 1984; Hull, 1987), has, since the mid-1990s, shifted its concern towards a focus on sexual and reproductive health (for example, Vanlandingham, Suprasert, Grandjean and Sittitrai, 1995; Goodkind and Phan, 1997; Gammeltoft, 1999; 2002a; Wolffers, Fernandez, Verghis and Vink, 2002). This shift in scholarly attention from the rather narrow focus on family planning towards the wider topic of sexual health has been part of a response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Largely focusing on prostitution and sex work among young people, this body of research has indicated that in Asia HIV is transmitted not only along the lines of trucking routes, through homosexuality, needle-sharing, and prostitution, but notably also because of specific political, economic and cultural conditions (Manderson and Jolly, 1997). Poverty has been identified as a common factor forcing young women into prostitution (Dwyer, 1993), but at the same time, new economically disadvantaged nation states have sought to reduce their foreign debt through the commodification of sex in association with tourism (Heyzer, 1986; Manderson, 1995). In addition, prostitution sometimes has the role of managing (male) desire while upholding conservative values and

[3] According to Confucian teaching, the woman was subject to the three submissions (*tam tong*): she had to obey her father when young, her husband when married and her eldest son when widowed.

protecting the chastity of women (Manderson and Liamputtong, 2002).

More recently, writings on these issues have begun to address further explicit questions of youth sexuality, particularly young people's sexual experience and behaviour as well as the perceptions, mentality, and political, social and cultural events behind these behaviours and experiences. For example, Tine Gammeltoft examines the experiences of unmarried young women in urban Hanoi, Vietnam, who underwent induced abortion. She then documents the sufferings of these young women and the ritual practices to which they turn in order to cope with the experience of abortion (Gammeltoft, 2003); she also highlights the clash between 'traditional' morality and social expectations regarding female virginity prior to marriage on the one hand and contemporary urban dating culture on the other as part of the reason for the high incidence of premarital abortion in Vietnam (Gammeltoft, 2002b). The tension between 'traditional' morality and the social impacts of modernisation and globalisation processes also underline the way in which young women elsewhere in Southeast Asia enact their erotic desires and premarital sexual relationships (see Bennett, 2002; Jennaway, 2002; Utomo, 2002; Bellows, 2003, for example). In contemporary Indonesia where most of these studies were conducted, while young people negotiate and reformulate sexual identities and sexual practices and are increasingly exposed to liberal attitudes towards sexuality amid rapid social, cultural, economic and political change, they still maintain that marriage is highly desirable, if not a life goal especially for young women (Robinson and Utomo, 2003). Other studies examine the social and political dynamics of premarital sexuality, typically reflecting the concerns of the governments about youth morality, as well as examining the roles and perspectives of the governments and other social institutions with regard to the formulation of policies and education programmes (see, for example, Nguyen-Vo, 2002; Stivens, 2002; Utomo, 2003; Holzner and Oetomo, 2004).

In modernising societies of Southeast Asia, as Manderson and Liamputtong (2002) have noted, academic research on and our understanding of sexuality tend to focus primarily on the elites, whilst little is known about the sexual lives of ordinary people – farmers, villagers, and labourers. Whilst this also holds true for Vietnamese society, the present-day Vietnamese urban scene makes it the ideal laboratory to observe and study youth sexuality. With its fast pace of social and cultural change, urban Vietnam now offers

young people a variety of avenues to experience sexuality (including through prostitution and at sexual recreation establishments), as well as exposes them to liberal sexual culture not least through easy access to erotic literature and pornographic films (via the Internet, for example), all of which, in turn, influence urban youth sexual culture (Nguyen, 2005). Given rapid social changes in Vietnam and the paucity of youth studies there, undertaking research on sexuality and youth sex culture is both a challenge and, at the same time, a necessity. It helps reveal one of the important preoccupations of young people in a liberalising, more open social, cultural and economic environment.

Sexuality in the Vietnamese Context

Traditional Vietnamese Society[4]

In 'traditional' Vietnam, premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy were strongly condemned. At the centre of this condemnation of sex before marriage was the woman herself. In accordance with Confucian ethics, a 'good' woman was to abide by the foremost principle of chastity (*trinh*), which included not only the defence of virginity before marriage but also absolute faithfulness and devotion toward one's husband (Marr, 1981: 192; Jamieson, 1993: 27). As an old proverb goes 'Chastity is worth thousands of gold coins' (*Chu trinh dang gia ngan vang*), the chastity of the woman was not only the foundation of her dignity and morality, but also a matter of reputation or, if transgressed, of humiliation for her whole family and her wider network of kin. Women were under strong pressure to get married, because of a traditional assumption that an unmarried woman was 'like a dais not nailed down', and that only within the framework of marriage could she find a secure base to live and act (Marr, 1981: 248). For women in particular, marriage was then the only channel for them to enter sexual relations. Male chastity, on the other hand, was supposedly required, but in practice chastity for men was almost never emphasised. In fact, since men were permitted

[4] By 'traditional' I mean the social structures, rules, customs, values and ideas that existed in Vietnam until around the mid-twentieth century. However, I also recognise that prior to this period, 'traditional' Vietnamese society was not static, but had experienced changes during the pre-colonial and French colonial period.

multiple wives, they could 'theoretically be chaste within marriage and still enjoy variety', something forbidden to women (O'Harrow, 1995: 163).

Apart from the emphasis on the virtue of chastity, our understanding of sexuality in traditional Vietnam is piecemeal, and we have only a few glimpses from a relatively small number of literary works of contemporary authors. In the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, poets and writers such as Ho Xuan Huong, Vu Trong Phung, Ngo Tat To, and Nam Cao portrayed traditional Vietnamese society as under the strong influence of a hierarchical and patriarchal Confucian doctrine, in which polygamy and adultery on the part of men were tolerated and widely accepted while women were frequently subjected to either sexual exploitation, or strong criticism, if not severe punishment, when failing to remain 'virtuous', 'chaste', and 'faithful'.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, Vietnamese society under French colonialism (1883–1954) saw a degree of Western influence, particularly upon and among the urban élites. Notions associated with feminism (*chu nghia phu nu*), individualism (*ca nhan chu nghia*), personal freedom (*tu do ca nhan*) and free marriage entered the Vietnamese vocabulary, and inspired Vietnamese writers and intellectuals to address such issues as love, free marriage, suicide, or women's rights and roles in the family and in society (McHale, 1995; Marr, 2000). Reflecting this process of social change, romantic love subsequently emerged as a new theme in contemporary Vietnamese literature[5] with many writers calling for the abolition of the Confucian moral code and for marriage based on love (Durand and Nguyen, 1969). Stepping out of literature and into real life was the 'new girl' who 'flaunted Western ways' in her saucy form-fitting *ao dai*, a garment invented in the mid-1920s, as a visual representation of the seminal ideas of women's liberation and emancipation (McHale, 1995: 174; Rydstrøm and Drummond, 2004). However, such perceptions and ideals were discussed only among a minority of Western-educated youth in urban centres. The majority of peasants living in rural Vietnam remained far from the influences of Western culture, and were unaware of these concepts and ideals.

[5] In the West, the rise of romantic love more or less coincided with the emergence of the novel or 'romance' in the late eighteenth century. One of the meanings of 'romance' was the telling of a story, which was individualised and made no explicit reference to wider social processes (Giddens, 1992).

Under Socialism prior to Market Reforms (1954–1986)

During this period, marriage could not take place without the involvement of the state and required official approval, which also involved the need to check individual life histories (*ly lich*). Bélanger and Khuat (2001) note that when seeking to marry one of their children, the family had its own preferences (for example, the consideration of the educational background and the urban or rural origin of the future spouse), often inherited from the traditional marriage pattern prevailing until the middle of the twentieth century, but the state also directly influenced the selection of a spouse so as to ensure that the couple were also politically compatible.

In addition to its direct involvement in spouse selection, the state further extended its interventionist role to other aspects of citizens' married life and sexuality. It established rules and mechanisms to govern and monitor the code of conduct for men and women, comprehensively covering the issues surrounding both premarital and extramarital relationships. When a man and a woman started to date one another, they were both to report to their respective work units with regard to their interest in pursuing a relationship. This gave rise to the phrase *bao cao to chuc*, literally 'reporting to the organisation', and this expression is still used when young people teasingly refer to the making of their relationship public. Pregnancy outside of wedlock and adultery were practices that would occasion disciplinary action against those involved.

Hanoi Young Men and Women in Post-*Doi Moi* Urban Vietnam

Tuyet, Female, aged 23

In the local context of urban Hanoi where the average income per capita was under 1000 US dollars per annum, Tuyet can be seen as a relatively well-paid young professional. Working as an employee for a foreign marketing company in Hanoi, she earned a monthly wage of an equivalent to nearly 400 US dollars. She was in a romantic and sexual relationship with a married man who was called Thanh, in his late forties, and who had children. Her relationship with this man was public knowledge among her friends and colleagues. At the same time, she was also known to have a string of casual sexual encounters and

relations with other men, both single and married, although in my conversations and interviews with her she never referred to them as boyfriends.

In my own social outings and interaction with her during my field research in 2003 and 2004, I got to meet three men with whom she told me she had slept after meeting them only once on various occasions, ranging from a night out in a disco club and a dinner out with friends to a party. These men were unmarried, university graduates, and in stable employment, although my interaction with them was never sufficient to enable me to gain a better understanding of them. As far as I know, her sexual encounters with at least two of these men were more than 'one night's stands'. Tuyet lived with her parents and younger brother, but she rented hotel rooms in central Hanoi when spending the night with her boyfriend and other men. On such occasions, she normally told her parents that she was out of town on business trips (*di cong tac*).

My interaction with Tuyet also brought me into her circle of friends and co-workers who hung out with her regularly and yet who had very contrasting opinions about her. Lam, one of her co-workers, said:

> I am a bit hesitant to label her behaviour, but she sleeps with men for money. I know a receptionist at a hotel where she often rents a room to spend the night with many different men, and so I know many stories about Tuyet and her customers. But it is hard to understand why she behaves the way she does, given the fact that she is a smart girl, university educated, and has a good job.
>
> (Interview in Hanoi, July 2003)

Defending Tuyet and her sexual behaviour, Le (female, also aged 23), a friend of Tuyet from high school and subsequently university, told me:

> I can understand why she is acting in such a way. She never used to be like that. She used to be faithful in her relationship [with Thanh]. But lately she has become desperate in her relationship with Thanh, because he has had difficulties in securing a divorce from his wife, and so she started to have casual relations with other men. I do not see her as a bad woman.
>
> (Interview in Hanoi, July 2003)

Meanwhile, Ha (male, aged 25), another of her work colleagues, declared himself a fan of Tuyet and her personality: 'She is a very typical girl. I like girls with their own personality and who are not afraid to live out and act their personality. I am a great fan of Madonna

and to me Tuyet is similar to Madonna in her attitudes and behaviour. She is very modern'.

Lan, Female, aged 22

Lan was an office worker in a state-owned enterprise in Hanoi. She had a busy social life, not least because she had two boyfriends simultaneously. Her first boyfriend, Giang, 27, was a lawyer whom she met at a party. The pair had fallen in love with one another by the end of the party. Since then she had been together with Giang for nearly half a year until she started her employment at the state-owned enterprise, met co-worker Thang, 22, and became involved in an intimate or romantic relationship with him.

Her simultaneous involvement in the two relationships was known by her friends and accepted by the two boyfriends. In fact, Giang and Thang had met one another on a number of occasions. She told me that both of her relationships involved sex, and she was in love and got along well with both men. As such, it was difficult to make up her mind:

> I am unable to decide with whom I should be. They are nice and intelligent men in their own different ways. Besides, I am the only child in the family and I cannot wait to get out of my parents' home. I would love to enjoy my own freedom, and the freedom from parental control. Some of my friends were able to achieve this freedom by moving out of their parents' home, but for me the only way to gain this freedom is through marriage. So, I will end up being with whoever proposes to me first.
>
> (Interview in Hanoi, November 2004)

She had made this point clear to both boyfriends. And in a conversation I had with Thang, he told me that he was aware of this fact but at the same time, he found himself still too young to commit himself to marriage. He added that, although not entirely desirable, it was at least acceptable to be in love with more than one person; and since it was quite common for men to be in several relationships and/or have several sexual relations at the same time, why then should Lan be the subject of criticism simply because she was a woman.

A male friend of Lan whom I had interviewed was of the view that it was justifiable for her to go out with two men at the same time, because it was important that she was fully able to understand both of them and make the right choice before committing herself to marriage. In Lan's own argument, although it was 'pragmatic' to keep her options

open, she was not 'a bad person' in the sense that she did not enter a relationship out of materialistic calculation, as did many young people nowadays. She told me that, although she was involved in multiple dating, these were both ultimately love relationships, because she felt for both men, and she will eventually commit to the one who was willing to be with her for life (interview in Hanoi, November 2004).

Tuan, Male, aged 20

Tuan represented a small but increasing proportion of young Vietnamese who were children of Vietnam's growing middle class and whose parents were so wealthy that they invested in property and had a second or third home often placed in the care of their children. In his case, as the only son, he was given his own house by his parents when he was in the second year of his university education. As soon as he moved out of the parental house, he immediately had greater personal freedom. This newfound freedom, in turn, enabled him to cohabit with his girlfriend, Lien, also aged 20, who was a fellow student at the same university.

I met Tuan and Lien in the summer of 2003 when they went on holiday with two of their friends to a popular tourist location some nine hours by train from Hanoi. We became acquainted during the week's stay in the same mini-hotel, and maintained regular contact upon our return to Hanoi. Tuan told me that premarital cohabitation with his girlfriend Lien had met with initial objections from Lien's parents. However, there was little they could do to control the couple's sexual behaviour, given the privacy of Tuan's house. As such, Lien's parents had eventually no option but to accept the couple's wish to cohabit. Tuan told me:

> My parents are open-minded and very pleasant indeed, but perhaps it is because I am a man and this makes it easier for them to be liberal. With regard to Lien's parents, I do respect them and understand their concerns, but it would have been unrealistic for them to ban us. People of our age or even younger than us are 'going all the way' [and have sex] in their relationship, and increasingly couples are living together without having to get married. This is an irreversible trend in society.
>
> (Interview in Hanoi, June 2003)

By the summer of 2003 Tuan and Lien had been living together for two months, but they broke up in the autumn of 2004 when Tuan went to the Netherlands to attend a graduate course leading to a Master's

degree. When I carried out my recent fieldwork in November 2004, I spoke to Lien and she told me that they had foreseen the end of their relationship prior to Tuan's departure and were quite relaxed about the prospective closure, because neither of them wanted to put up with the inconvenience of the long physical distance apart.

Hung, Male, aged 29

Working in the department of customer relations of an airline company enabled Hung to meet and socialise with many people. However, he chose the Internet, specifically the Internet chat room, as one of his favourite places to hang out. In 1999 he joined an online friends-making club (*cau lac bo lam quen*) where, over a period of over a year, he had met, made friends, and dated first virtually and then subsequently in person a number of girls.

When I spoke to him in late 2000, one of his cyber relationships had developed further. He had been going out with Nga, a girl he met and dated on the Internet, for nearly a year, the relationship looking 'stable enough' that they might decide to get married. Nga, 21, hailed from Vinh city, some 300 km south of Hanoi, and was about to finish college education in 2000. Hung's family strongly opposed their proposed marriage, citing the distance between Hanoi and Vinh as a potential obstacle preventing her from taking care of his side of the family. On their part, however, the pair was keen to marry: besides their love for one another, according to Hung, the marriage would also enable Nga to stay in Hanoi after her graduation and increase her chance of getting a good job thanks to a Hanoi residence registration.

Prior to his current girlfriend, Hung had had contacts and meetings with a number of other girls whom he had met via the Internet. He found Internet dating 'fun, convenient and reliable' and recommended it highly to several of his friends.

> Internet dating is different in Vietnam. In the West, everybody has access to the Internet, and the computer is not a luxury item. But in Vietnam, you can get to know other people, make friends and start a relationship on the Internet. Once you're connected, you belong to the more educated proportion of the population who not only know about computers, but also own a computer and can afford access to the Internet. You aren't just anybody. In Vietnam you'd find a lot of interesting people meeting each other on the Internet. There are a lot of students and professionals.
>
> (Interview in Hanoi, June 2000)

Emerging Trends in Youth Sex Culture in Urban Vietnam

The stories of the four young men and women which I have presented above are illustrative and typical of a number of aspects and trends in youth sex culture in present-day urban Vietnam, which include premarital sex, unmarried cohabitation, multiple dating, and Internet dating. These issues, which I shall discuss in more detail in this section, provide a narrative of an emerging sex culture of urban youth and changes in their value orientations as well as changes in society at large.

Data collected from my research demonstrate that *premarital sex* has become a common trend among urban young people. I hasten to clarify, however, that in identifying premarital sex as an emerging trend in youth sex culture in present-day urban Vietnam, I do not in anyway suggest that this practice did not exist at all among young Vietnamese people in the periods prior to *doi moi* nor that it does not occur among rural youth.

Since the opening up of Vietnam and the associated processes of cultural and social liberalisation, premarital sex has been increasingly and openly referred to by young people, and acknowledged and accepted (though perhaps reluctantly) by their parents and elder people, as a *de facto* practice in heterosexual liaisons among young men and women, particularly in urban areas where social liberalisation is taking place at a faster pace than in rural areas. In this context, I argue that premarital sex has emerged as a new trend in youth sex culture in urban Vietnam not because of its occurrence, but rather because of its wide acceptance and acknowledgement by urban young people. Nowadays, young people whom I interviewed and encountered in Hanoi spoke about their sexual experiences and relationships with comfortable openness, although I recognise that because of the similarity in my age and background with my interviewees, that this could have perhaps been a facilitating factor in encouraging such openness.

In my interviews and conversations with Hanoi youth, I have further established that to my young men and women interviewees, sex before marriage had broad definitions, ranging from sexual relationships with a stable partner to casual sexual encounters, and sex with prostitutes. Take, for example, Khanh, aged 26, who had a stable girlfriend, and who told me that during a trip to Hai Phong with a number of his male friends, he had slept with a prostitute: 'We originally intended to stay in Hai Phong for the night, but we felt so "itchy" and "restless" and

could not bear it, so we drove down to Do Son beach and stayed there the night to see some prostitutes' (interview in Hanoi, July 2000). And it was not the first time he had done so.

Another male interviewee, Viet, aged 27, was also in a long-term relationship, and intended to marry his girlfriend in the near future. He told me:

> You'll find that it is quite a common practice among businesspeople to take clients out for entertainment at those places where you can drink and have girls. Sometimes I found myself being in my girlfriend's arms and yet thinking of girls [i.e. prostitutes]. My girlfriend knows it and she was not happy, but I told her that everybody is like that, and the most important thing is I love her and want to be with her for life.
>
> (Interview in Hanoi, December 1999)

Data collected from my early fieldwork in 1999–2000 demonstrated that young women tended to have sex only with their boyfriends, whilst a number of male interviewees told me that they had had experiences with prostitutes, sometimes even while they were in a long-term relationship (Nguyen, 2003). At that stage, in the light of data collected from interviews and fieldwork observations, I discussed parental attitudes and behaviour as one of the factors influencing young women's premarital sexual behaviour and activities. Despite having considerably relaxed their control on youths, many parents were of the view that premarital sexual relationships and unwanted pregnancies were shaming. Therefore, they went to great lengths to safeguard the virginity of their daughters, preventing them indulging in premarital sex. As for unmarried men, however, engaging in premarital sex, casual sex, and sex outside of a stable relationship were generally seen as 'going without saying' or were socially accepted; this was indicative of a continuation of the general perception of gender inequality, which stresses the importance of the propriety and chastity of women in matters of sexuality and sexual culture in Vietnam. As women were neither able nor supposed to experience intimacy outside marriage, my female interviewees were then less likely to engage in, or admit their engagement in, casual sex.

In the light of more recent observations and interviews, I would now remark that urban young women are engaging in premarital sex, including casual sexual encounters, as well as being more open about their premarital sexual experiences. I hasten to add that it is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine whether and how many women actually engage in premarital sexual relationships,

since this depends almost entirely on the information volunteered by the interviewee. In other words, the popularity of this trend is not measurable, especially in Vietnamese society which is still relatively reserved as well as judgemental about sexuality in general and female sexual behaviour in particular. However, the cases of Tuyet, Lan and Tuan's girlfriend exemplify the emergence and existence of this trend. My research data as well as the latest newspaper and magazine coverage of young people and their lifestyles further reveal that the relaxed attitude towards premarital sexual relations was becoming increasingly popular and more common among women in the younger age groups, typically among teenagers and those in their early twenties (roughly 15 to 22-year-olds). For example, a recent article in the *Gia dinh va Xa hoi* (Family and Society) magazine describes young girls who were 'good as gold' up to the age of 15–16 and suddenly became 'mad' and left home to 'drift' and go rough (*di bui*). It told stories of girls of school age who 'drift' from the familial home, often with other girl friends of theirs, for days, and in exceptional cases even for one month, and rent rooms in guesthouses and call other boys to come and join them in these rooms. Sometimes when they are short of money to pay for the room, they are willing to spend the night and have sex with men whom they hardly know but who are willing to pay the bill for them (*Gia dinh va Xa hoi*, 9 April 2005).

Whilst the 'loss of virginity' for young men has obviously never been seen as either a loss or a moral consideration, female chastity is no longer regarded, at least by my young women interviewees and also an increasing number of other young women and teenage girls, as a sacrifice and as something morally wrong and undesired. Urban young women whom I interviewed do not deny their erotic desires and their sexual encounters to appear chaste. Instead, to some of them, to love a man is to 'go all the way' or 'love with one's whole body' (*yeu het minh*) and to 'give oneself' to him (*trao than*). These women do not regret (*hoi han*) having sex with the men they love, although their romantic relationships may not lead to marriage. As for these young women, giving up their virginity was indeed an act of love and devotion, which was within the ethical grammar of romantic feelings. To a number of other young women who would not be considered as prostitutes by society at large, sex could be used as a means to achieve their professional and/or material goals (fieldwork, 2004). Here I must stress the fluidity of sexuality, behaviour, attitudes, and values, which has made the task of identifying the grammar and purpose of youth sexuality an extremely difficult one and one that further depends on

personal perspectives and cultural perceptions. In any case, we now see the breaking of the connection between sex and reproduction, which has enabled young women to engage in sexual relationships without entering marriage.

A second trend in youth sexual culture in urban Vietnam is *unmarried cohabitation*, which the story of Tuan and his girlfriend exemplifies. Within the framework of this qualitative research, I have not been able to establish the frequency or popularity of this practice among urban youth. During my fieldwork, I interviewed five men and three women who were unmarried, had a Hanoi upbringing and were living on their own. Another eight men who hailed from provinces outside of Hanoi also live on their own. All of the sixteen young men and women were living with an unmarried partner for various lengths of time. My personal observations and conversations with people of different ages and various socio-economic backgrounds in Hanoi and other urban areas as well as recent articles in the press enable me to remark that the phenomenon of unmarried cohabitation is an increasingly popular practice. I have further observed that this practice is more popular among young people who come from rural areas outside of Hanoi either to work or study in the city. On the one hand, moving to the cities to pursue their education or to seek employment enables these young men and women to have greater opportunities and freedom to gain sexual experiences and experiment with their sexuality away from parental or adult supervision. On the other hand, precisely because they live away from the parental home and hence lack familial support, there has arisen the need for them to rely on and help one another in the face of the perceived greater competitiveness, faster pace of life, and not least the dearer costs of living in the city. Dang Canh Khanh, Director of the Youth Research Institute in Hanoi, is of the view that the latter is often the main reason for young people of rural backgrounds to cohabit in large cities such as Hanoi (personal communication, April 2005).

The rise of this practice has indeed been reflected in the passage of the revised Marriage and Family Law in 2000, when Vietnamese law for the first time recognised the practice of unmarried cohabitation. In June of that year the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) reported the National Assembly's passage of the revised Marriage and Family Law, which allows cohabitation and 'trial marriages' and recognises that 'a woman could have a child without a husband'. While making such 'progressive' regulations as compared to the previous law passed in 1986, the new law stresses 'the preservation of traditional and moral values

of Vietnamese society'. However, it also reported that the revised law was passed not without opposition from some delegates who spoke of 'fears of the possible unexpected consequences', and who wanted to have these practices outlawed (VNA, 2000). While the passage of the new law was described in the VNA report as a 'progressive' move on the part of the state, such a recent recognition and the reluctance and even opposition of a number of representatives reflect the more general reluctance of the wider society to accept unmarried cohabitation. On the other hand, this new law signified a new trend of couples cohabiting and children being born out of wedlock.

Multiple dating. The stories of Tuyet and Lan as well as accounts from my interviewees in Hanoi illustrated cases of young men and women who were dating and having sexual relationships with more than one partner. For my interviewees there are various reasons behind multiple dating, but they all reflect changes in young people's value orientations in the time of marketisation towards more liberal and self-centred values (Nguyen, 2005). Lan, for one, involved in multiple dating out of love and romantic feelings rather than material aspirations and materialistic calculations, and therefore was understood and accepted not only by her friends, but also by the two boyfriends, although it was not an ideal situation for them. Tuyet's story, on the other hand, is first of all an indication of her adoption of liberal values and attitudes towards love relationships, but also a reflection of perhaps her insecurity in the relationship with a married man, which was exacerbated by the conditions of market society. In my fieldwork experience I further encountered numerous first-hand as well as second-hand accounts of multiple dating in which the importance of money was stressed and elements of romantic love were almost non-existent. Among the young people I interviewed and with whom I conversed, materialistic calculations in relationships were common for both men and women, as expressed in the words of Giang, a female interviewee aged 25:

> It is true that nowadays youths are more pragmatic and more materialistic even in a love relationship. They would not love just for love, but they'd have to look at the social status, the family background, and the financial situation and status of the partner. This is not only true with men, as you'd hear girls say, but it applies to girls as well. It is not difficult to find girls whose criteria for an ideal boyfriend are to do with his money, his [social] position and jobs besides his other things. At the end of the day, girls would find men too materialistic while men also find girls very pragmatic.
>
> (Interview in Hanoi, June 2003)

As young men and women in urban Vietnam increasingly engage in multiple dating, this trend reflects young urbanites' adoption of liberal and individualistic values (Nguyen, 2005), but at the same time, it points to the insecurity and uncertainty of a market reality which is facing youth. In fast changing urban Vietnam, young people compete fiercely to gain education; they neither get allocated jobs nor do they receive housing and other benefits from the state; instead, they have to work hard to succeed, or face unemployment. In this scenario of grave tensions between options and commitment, insecurity (including financial insecurity), and uncertainties of a market society, multiple dating has become a new way for young people to establish intimacy and test relationships without a hasty commitment to marriage.

The story of Hung exemplified an emerging and fast becoming popular trend of *online dating* among urban youth. During 2000–01 when I conducted my earlier fieldwork, telecommunications were not generally affordable for the average household. As such, when someone was connected, it means that (s)he could afford not only a computer, but also a high monthly Internet subscription fee.[6] At that stage, my interviewees told me that registering with *cau lac bo lam quen* did not mean they were lonely, without a chance to meet people, nor that they were desperately searching for a partner. Also, in their opinion, it did not mean that one was susceptible to unreliable, 'dodgy' or unknown characters. Rather it meant that one was keen to interact with a network of people who had the same sort of social and educational backgrounds and who shared the same interests. Members of the *cau lac bo lam quen* whom I interviewed in 2000–01 then saw themselves as making up a rather 'exclusive' club of more well-off and educated people, and for them the Internet had become a new means of socialisation.

Since then, socialisation over the Internet has rapidly expanded, partly due to the government's efforts at and commitments to making telecommunication services more affordable and accessible to the

[6] Take, for example, an Internet user who spent one hour per day in the evening on the Internet. In 2000, the fixed monthly subscription fee was 30,000 *dong*, off-peak connection charge was 250 *dong* per minute, and the telephone rate for local calls was 65 *dong*per minute. This incurred a monthly bill of 559,200 *dong*, which was equivalent to nearly US$40 per month – not so small a bill given the average GDP per capita of around US$400.

general populace.[7] Since late 2001, the fall in the cost of Internet connections has enabled a rapid expansion of Internet cafés in Hanoi and urban areas nationwide, and allowed a greater number of people to access Internet chat rooms.[8] In addition to the increasingly affordable price of online connection, such unique characteristics of the Internet as interactivity, speed, and the allowance for 'virtual community' formations and interactions have been observed elsewhere as enabling the Internet to surpass other media to become an unrivalled popular medium among youth (Lee and Chan, 2003). This is also true in the case of Vietnamese urban youth where the privacy of the Internet offers an additional attraction, as it enabled them to 'chat' without being overheard, especially by their parents, and also to view certain web pages without parental control and government censorship. A survey conducted in 2002 by the Vietnamese Culture and Information Ministry reveals that most of the customers at the country's estimated 5,000 Internet cafés were students between the ages of 14 and 24, and the vast majority used the Internet for chatting (*Associated Press*, 3 February 2003). My observations at Internet cafés in Hanoi (fieldwork in 2003 and 2004) as well as Hue, Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City (fieldwork in 2004) showed that out of every ten customers there were at least eight or nine people chatting and/or browsing Internet pages with pornographic content, and there were only occasional email users.

As the latest popular leisure places for young people, Internet cafés and chat rooms have enabled them to hang out both locally and globally as well as beyond parental control and government censorship. Young Vietnamese were able not only to see their fellow friends face to face at the café, but also communicate with and date, online and instantaneously, both local Vietnamese and overseas Vietnamese as well as foreigners. At the same time, young people's online activities are widely acknowledged, even by state-controlled media, as having surpassed both parental and governmental controls (fieldwork 2003;

[7] The Vietnamese government will have invested US$100 million in the information technology sector over the period of 2003–2005 with the aim of increasing the number of Internet users to four million (or five per cent of the total population) by 2005 (*Asia Pulse*, 9 September 2002; *Associated Press*, 3 February 2003). Latest available figures show that the number of Internet users rose from around 190,000 in 1999 to 1.9 million in 2002, making Vietnam's telecommunications industry the second-fastest-growing in the world after China (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2003: 23).

[8] In 2003 the access rate at Internet cafés was in the region of 2500–3000 *dong* per hour, and by 2004 Internet it had dropped to as little as around 1000 *dong* per hour.

2004; *Thanh nien*, 29 January 2004; CMT, 2003). The practice of surfing Internet pages with pornographic content and recent cases of rapid dissemination of sexual photographs and footage of a number of Vietnamese singers, actresses and models (including the case of a male model) testify to the fact that Internet use among young people is now beyond government censorship. Firewalls are easily overcome, even to an average user without hacking knowledge.

The phenomenon of the Internet provides a glimpse of globalisation processes taking place in Vietnam. It shows the willingness of an increasing number of young Vietnamese to participate in online activities, including courtship over the Internet where geographical boundaries have ceased to be so significant. Also, it has transformed the way young people can now exchange information and express themselves more liberally and without parental and government controls. This, in turn, encourages and enables young people to grow beyond parental influences, gain access to things which are deemed 'new' and 'foreign', and live increasingly individualistic lifestyles.

Concluding Remarks

An article published in the *Thanh nien* in 2004 entitled 'Characteristic living: A new fashion among youth' (*Thanh nien*, 5 September 2004) remarks:

> Typical girls place their individual freedom above all else. They rent a place to live on their own away from their parents' home as early as when they are still at university. In exceptional cases, some girls already move out when they are still at high school . . . When girls and boys are fond of one another, they pack up and move in with one another without the need to get married. But as soon as they feel no love for one another, they would simply move out, literally walking out of the relationship without any commitment and obligation. They clearly distinguish two types of love: love by the heart and love out of needs (such as sexual need, material need, and the need of power).

The above quote, although referring specifically to young girls, touches upon a number of new trends that have emerged in the current scene of youth sexuality in urban Vietnam. They include practices such as premarital sex, unmarried cohabitation, and multiple dating, which as I have argued in this paper, are increasingly popular among Vietnamese young men and women. The wording of this article is particularly interesting because it provides a glimpse into present-day social attitudes: there is a continuation of the 'traditional' perceptions

of gender roles (as manifested in the criticism exclusively directed to young girls for failing to uphold propriety and chastity, in spite of the implication that the article was addressing young people in general) and a recognition of the increasingly assertive role of young women in 'modern' sexuality and hence of gender equality in this regard.

In uncovering these trends in youth sex culture in urban Vietnam, I also note a number of changes in their value orientations in the context of the social changes currently taking place in the country. Practices such as premarital sex, unmarried cohabitation, and multiple dating indicate a shift in young people's values in the direction of more 'liberal' attitudes and behaviour towards sexual relations. These contrast with such virtues as chastity and fidelity which had always been emphasised strongly in pre-*doi moi* Vietnam, and are demonstrations of a generally more open society today. The emerging trends in sexuality and value orientations of Hanoi youth echo the findings of other recent studies by Farrer (2002), Lee (2002), Stivens (2002) and Utomo (2002) which demonstrate that in Asia's large urban centres such as Shanghai, Manila, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta an increasing number of young men and women are engaging in pre-marital sex, including sex with prostitutes/paid partners, multiple dating, as well as unmarried cohabitation. In these studies, youth value orientations have been remarked upon as increasingly self-centred and more liberal, focusing more on romance, personal desires, and free choice than on 'conventional morality'.

At the same time, however, such sexual behaviour and practices could also indicate a response by young people to rapid social changes, particularly in urban areas. As education and employment opportunities are expanded, young Vietnamese are becoming more oriented towards education, jobs, and careers and therefore delaying marriage (Nguyen, 2004). Late entry into marriage is then one of the reasons for young people to indulge increasingly in 'sexual experimentation' (Lee, 2002: 144), and engage in premarital sex as well as unmarried cohabitation. Then, as I mentioned earlier in this paper, unmarried cohabitation could also be a response by young people (as in the case of young people coming to urban areas for education and employment) to the social and economic conditions of urban living which give rise to the need for them to rely on one another and hence live together. Another response is multiple dating which demonstrates their need to be certain (both with regard to spouse selection and to financial matters) before they commit themselves to marriage amid rapid social changes in market-based society.

Finally, youth sex culture in post-reform urban Vietnam is formulated by both the grammar of romantic love and romantic feelings (in other words 'relationships based on love') and the grammar of the market (which gives rise to 'relationships based on needs' and which stresses the importance of money and materialistic calculations in dating). This dual grammar in youth sex culture is reflective of diverse social changes currently taking place in Vietnamese society. On the one hand, the diminishing intervention of the state in the lives of individuals (as well as reduced parental authority) has increasingly created spaces for people, including young people, to express, experiment, and live out their ideals (such as the ideal of romantic love). At the same time, the principles and workings of the market on the other hand have brought about fierce competition and have resulted in an emphasis on the importance of money (even in courtship and dating). In my view, in the process of 'coming of age' amid these rapid and diverse social changes, young Vietnamese men and women will continue to fall in love and play with love.

Bibliography

Asia Pulse. 2002. Vietnamese Internet users to reach 5 per cent of population by 2005. 9 September.

Associated Press. 2003. Vietnam wrestles with dilemma in Internet growth. 3 February.

Bélanger, Danièle and Khuat Thu Hong. 2001. 'Parents' Involvement in Children's Marriage: Intergenerational Relations in the Choice of a Spouse in Hanoi, Vietnam'. *Vietnamese Society in Transition: The Daily Politics of Reform and Change*. Ed. John Kleinen. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, pp. 250–263.

Bellows, Laura J. 2003. 'Like the West: New Sexual Practices and Modern Threats to Balinese-ness'. *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 37(1): 71–105.

Bennett, Linda R. 2002. 'Modernity, Desire and Courtship: The Evolution of Premarital Relationships in Mataram, Eastern Indonesia'. *Coming of Age in South and Southeast Asia: Youth, Courtship and Sexuality*. Eds. Lenore Manderson and Pranee Liamputtong. Surrey: Curzon, pp. 96–112.

CMT. 2003. "Cau' Viê_t Kieu qua chat' ['Fishing' for overseas Vietnamese via chat], 12 September, *VnExpress* archived on <http://vnexpress.net/Vietnam/Xa-hoi/2003/09/3B9CB432/>

Dang Canh Khanh. 1996. 'Khi thanh nien tro thanh doi tuong nghien cuu khoa hoc' [When youth becomes a subject of social science research]. *Nghien cuu thanh nien: Ly luan va Thuc tien* [Studying youth: Theory and Practice]. Eds. Dang Canh Khanh, Pham Bang, Duong Tu Dam and Le Xuan Hoan. Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Thanh nien.

Durand, Maurice M. and Nguyen Tran Huan. 1969. *An Introduction to Vietnamese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dwyer, John. 1993. 'Foreword'. *Economic Implications of AIDS in Asia*. Eds. David Bloom and Joyce Lyons. New Delhi: Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, UNDP, pp. v–vi.

Economist Intelligence Unit. 2003. *Vietnam Country Profile*.

Farrer, James. 2002. *Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. New York: Random House.
Gammeltoft, Tine. 1999. *Women's Bodies, Women's Worries: Health and Family Planning in a Vietnamese Rural Community*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
Gammeltoft, Tine. 2002a. 'Seeking Trust and Transcendence: Sexual Risk-Taking among Vietnamese Youth'. *Social Science & Medicine*, 55: 483–496.
Gammeltoft, Tine. 2002b. 'The Irony of Sexual Agency: Premarital Sex in Urban Northern Vietnam'. Eds. Jayne Werner and Danièle Bélanger. *Gender, Household and State: Doi Moi in Viet Nam*. Cornell: Cornell University Press, pp. 111–128.
Gammeltoft, Tine. 2003. 'Ritualisation of Abortion in Contemporary Vietnam'. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology 14* (2): 129–143.
Gia dinh va Xa hoi. 2005. 'Nhung nu sinh di bui' [Schoolgirls who drift], 9 April.
Giddens, Anthony. 1992. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Goodkind, Daniel and Phan Thuc Anh. 1997. 'Reasons for Rising Condom Use in Vietnam'. *International Family Planning Perspectives* 23 (4): 173–178.
Heyzer, Noeleen. 1986. *Working Women in South-East Asia: Development, Subordination, and Emancipation*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
Holland, Janet, Caroline Ramazanoglu, Sue Scott, Sue Sharpe and Rachel Thomson. 1990. 'Sex, Gender, and Power: Young Women's Sexuality in the Shadow of AIDS'. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 12: 336–350.
Holzner, Brigitte M. and Dédé Oetomo. 2004. 'Youth, Sexuality and Sex Education Messages in Indonesia: Issues of Desire and Control'. *Reproductive Health Matters* 12(23): 40–49.
Hull, Terence H. 1987. 'Fertility Decline in Indonesia: An Institutionalist Interpretation'. *International Family Planning Perspectives* 13(3): 90–95.
Huong Duong. 2004. 'Ma tuy nao loan ben xe Kim Ma' [Drug users stir up Kim Ma bus station], *Vnexpress* online: <http://vnexpress.net/Vietnam/Xahoi/2004/12/3B9D965E/>.
Jamieson, Neil L. 1993. *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Jennaway, Megan. 2002. 'Inflatable Bodies and the Breath of Life: Courtship and Desire among Young Women in Rural North Bali'. *Coming of Age in South and Southeast Asia: Youth, Courtship and Sexuality*. Eds. Lenore Manderson and Pranee Liamputtong. Surrey: Curzon, pp. 75–95.
Laing, John E. 1984. 'Natural Family Planning in the Philippines'. *Studies in Family Planning* 15(2): 49–61.
Lee, Romeo B. 2002. 'Social and Cultural Contexts of Single Young Men's Heterosexual Relationships: A View from Metro Manila'. *Coming of Age in South and Southeast Asia: Youth, Courtship and Sexuality*. Eds. Lenore Manderson and Pranee Liamputtong. Surrey: Curzon, pp. 132–146.
Lee, Waipeng and Brenda Chan. 2003. 'Communication and Relationships in Online and Offline Worlds: A Study of Singapore Youths'. *Asia.com: Asia Encounters the Internet*. Eds. K. C. Ho, Randolph Kluver and Kenneth C. C. Yang. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 249–262.
McHale, Shawn. 1995. 'Printing and Power: Vietnamese Debates Over Women's Place in Society, 1918–1934'. *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*. Eds. Keith Taylor and John Whitmore. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, pp. 173–194.
Manderson, Lenore. 1995. 'The Pursuit of Pleasure and the Sale of Sex'. *Sexual Nature, Sexual Culture: Theorizing Sexuality from the Perspective of Pleasure*. Eds. Paul R. Abramson and Steven D. Pinkerton. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 305–329.

Manderson, Lenore and Margaret Jolly. 1997. 'Sites of Desire/Economies of Pleasure in Asia and the Pacific'. *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*. Eds. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1–26.

Manderson, Lenore and Pranee Liamputtong. 2002. 'Youth and Sexuality in Contemporary Asian Societies'. *Coming of Age in South and Southeast Asia: Youth, Courtship and Sexuality*. Eds. Lenore Manderson and Pranee Liamputtong. Richmond: Curzon, pp. 1–15.

Marr, David G. 1981. *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 1920–1945. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Marr, David G. 2000. 'Concepts of "Individual" and "Self" in Twentieth-Century Vietnam'. *Modern Asian Studies* 34 (3): 769–796.

Nguyen, An Phuong. 2002. 'Looking Beyond *Bien Che*: The Considerations of Vietnamese Young Graduates When Seeking Employment in the *Doi Moi* Era'. *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 17(2): 221–248.

Nguyen, An Phuong. 2003. 'Between 'Still Society' and 'Moving Society': Life Choices and Value Orientations of Hanoi University Graduates in Post-Reform Vietnam'. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hull.

Nguyen, An Phuong. 2004. 'Pursuing Success In Present-Day Vietnam: Young Graduates In Hanoi'. *Rethinking Vietnam*. Ed. Duncan McCargo. London: Routledge, pp. 165–176.

Nguyen, An Phuong. 2005. 'Courtship and Marriage of Hanoi University Graduates: Changing Values in a Time of Market Liberalisation'. *South East Asia Research* 13 (3).

Nguyen, Van Trung. 1996, ed. *Chinh sach doi voi thanh nien: Ly luan va Thuc tien* [Youth policy: Theory and practice]. Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia.

Nguyen-Vo, Thu-Huong. 2002. 'Governing Sex: Medicine and Governmental Intervention in Prostitution'. *Gender, Household and State: Doi Moi in Viet Nam*. Eds. Jayne Werner and Danièle Bélanger. Cornell: Cornell University Press, pp. 127–151.

O'Harrow, Stephen. 1995. 'Vietnamese Women and Confucianism: Creating Spaces from Patriarchy'. *'Male' and 'Female' in Developing Southeast Asia*. Ed. Wazir Jahan Kasim. Oxford: Berg Publishers, pp. 161–180.

Pham, Tat Dong. 1996. 'Nhung quan diem chi dao nghien cuu chinh sach the he tre' [Guiding viewpoints for the research of young generation] *Nghien cuu thanh nien: Ly luan va Thuc tien* [Studying youth: Theory and practice]. Eds. Dang Canh Khanh, Pham Bang, Duong Tu Dam and Le Xuan Hoan. Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Thanh nien, pp. 17–20.

Robinson, Kathryn and Iwu D. Utomo. 2003. 'Introduction: Youth, Sexuality and Personal Life in Indonesia'. *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 37(1): 5–16.

Rydstrøm, Helle and Lisa Drummond. 2004. 'Introduction'. *Gender Practices in Contemporary Vietnam*. Eds. Lisa Drummond and Helle Rydstrøm. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, pp. 1–25.

Soucy, Alexander. 2001. 'Romantic Love and Gender Hegemony in Vietnam'. *Love, Sex and Power: Women in Southeast Asia*. Ed. Susan Blackburn. Clayton: Monash University Press, pp. 31–41.

Stivens, Maila. 2002. 'The Hope of the Nation: Moral Panics and the Construction of Teenagerhood in Contemporary Malaysia'. *Coming of Age in South and Southeast Asia: Youth, Courtship and Sexuality*. Eds. Lenore Manderson and Pranee Liamputtong. Richmond: Curzon, pp. 188–206.

Swee-Hock, Saw and Aline K. Wong. 1981. *Youth in Singapore: Sexuality, Courtship, and Family Values*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Thai Duy Tuyen. 1995. *Nghien cuu con nguoi Viet Nam: Cac quan diem va Phuong phap tiep can* [Studying the Vietnamese people: perspectives and approaches]. Hanoi: Chuong trinh khoa hoc cong nghe cap nha nuoc KX–07.

Thanh nien. 2004. 'The gioi ngam "gay chat"' [The underground world of 'gay chat'], 29 January.

Thanh nien. 2004. 'Song ca tinh: mot cua gioi tre' [Characteristic living: A new fashion among youth], 5 September.

Thien Nguyen. 2003. '15 nguoi bi bat giu do to chuc mai dam trong quan karaoke' [Fifteen were arrested for prostitution in a karaoke bar], *Vnexpress* online: <http://vnexpress.net/Vietnam/Phap-luat/2003/11/3B9CCF28/>

Utomo, Iwu D. 2002. 'Sexual Values and Early Experiences among Young People in Jakarta'. *Coming of Age in South and Southeast Asia: Youth, Courtship and Sexuality*. Eds. Lenore Manderson and Pranee Liamputtong. Surrey: Curzon, pp. 207–227.

Utomo, Iwu D. 2003. 'Reproductive Health Education in Indonesia: School versus Parents' Roles in Providing Sexuality Information'. *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 37(1): 107–134.

Vanlandingham, Mark J., Suprasert, S., Grandjean N. and Sittitrai. W. 1995. 'Two Views of Risky Sexual Practices Among Northern Males: The Health Belief model and the Theory of Action'. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 36(2): 195–212.

Vietnam News Agency (VNA). 2000. 'Updated Marriage Law Recognises Single Mothers, Bars Mercenary Marriage with Foreigners'. 8 June.

Wolffers, Ivan, Fernandez, I., Verghis S. and Vink. M. 2002. 'Sexual Behaviour and Vulnerability of Migrant Workers for HIV Infection'. *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 4(4): 459–473.

Youth Research Institute. 2003. *Tong quan tinh hinh thanh nien* [Overview of Youth]. Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Thanh nien.