Date Rape Perceptions of Thai University Students

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Abstract

This study investigated Thai college students' perception of date rape situations. The conceptual framework used was developed from the literature. It was designed to indicate how individuals' gender, attitudes, experiences and characteristics affect their perceptions when presented date rape scenarios as well as their attributions of blame and responsibility toward the perpetrators and survivors. Data were collected on two focal groups with Thai male and female graduate students in Chicago and ten focal groups with undergraduate students in two universities in Thailand. Discussion with each focal group was guided by interview questions and the use of date rape vignettes that reflect the Thai social context. The vignettes were available in both English and the Thai language versions and the interviews were conducted in the Thai language. Qualitative data analysis techniques in the Thai language used manual procedures and were corroborated by "ATLAS/ti" software. The results revealed that the term date rape is not used in Thailand and that Thai culture supports a double standard for men and women in terms of dating, premarital sexual relationships and sexual violence against women. The results of this study provided useful information for raising Thai society awareness regarding sexual violence against women as concealed in dating relationships. The implications of the findings contribute to the development of policies for initiating date rape prevention programs and services in Thailand.

Keywords: Date rape, rape vignettes, qualitative data, ATLAS/ti software, premarital sexual relationships, sexual violence, perpetrators, survivors.

Introduction

Adolescence is an important stage of development that involves many complex issues. Within this period, the formation of dating relationships is characteristic of healthy development. However, sexual abuse occurs in a significant percentage of adolescent dating relationships (Pirog-Good and Stets 1989). The issues of hidden sexual assault on adolescents and young women are rampant in many societies worldwide. In Thailand, dating relationships become a common characteristic of relationship development among Thai adolescents and young adults. However, the issue of date rape is not recognized. Culturally, there is a double standard for premarital sexual relationship and inequality in the treatment of women and men in issues related to sexuality. Society places a high responsibility on women to look after themselves and their girls' sexuality. Presently, the concern of HIV infection and the more liberal attitude on sexuality resulted in changing of sexual behavior and attitudes among Thai men. In a recent national survey, 73% percent of Thai male college students reported having premarital sex with their girlfriends but no distinction between forced sex and consensual sex were reported (Foundation for Women 1997).

The problems concerning adolescent sexual assault, sexual harassment, and date rape were rarely reported and little research has been conducted in the area of rape, acquaintance rape, especially among adolescent and young adults. The lack of recognition of the problem and the scarcity of data does not mean that date rape is absent. More likely, it is a deeply hidden problem embedded in the society.
This study aims to explore the perceptions of date rape of Thai college students. The purposes of study are to: (i) describe Thai college students perceptions of date rape situations, (ii) explain how rape myth acceptance, sex role stereotype and the gender of participants affect the Thai college students perception of date rape situations, and (iii) explore Thai students attribution of blame and responsibility for date rape to survivors and perpetrators. Findings can be used to estimate the extent of the problem and characteristic of date rape issue in Thailand. This study can serve as a first step to alert the Thai society's awareness to initiate appropriate social action and policies to eliminate this form of violence against women.

Background

Date rape is one form of acquaintance rape. It is more common and more serious than is often realized. A number of studies in the US have revealed the existence of date rape or other forms of sexual victimization among acquaintances during this stage (Cowan and Campbell 1995; Erickson and Rapkin 1991; McIvor and Harting 1990; Moore et al. 1989; Moynihan 1981; Small and Kerns 1993; Vicary et al. 1995). Findings revealed that more than 80% of women rape survivors were raped by someone known to them rather than a stranger (Benson et al. 1992). This finding is also supported by Russell (1984) who indicated that 62% of the women sampled reported being victims of rape or attempted rape by an acquaintance, such as current or former boyfriends, lovers, husbands, and other male relatives, compared to 11% of the women who reported being victims of rape or attempted rape by a stranger. Gidycz and Koss (1989) conducted the Sexual Experiences Survey with 67 female high school students. The results revealed that more than half of the sample experienced at least one act of sexual coercion. Of the group, 75% of the victims knew their assailants.

A number of studies in the US have focused on college students and found a high incidence of this problem (Bostwick and Delucia 1992; Dull and Giacopassi 1987; Hall and Flannery 1984; Kanin and Parcell, 1977; Kopper, 1996; Ryan (1988); Sandberg et al. 1987). Between 20 and 25% of college women reported a victimization experience that consisted of a forceful attempted intercourse by their date (Kirkpatrick and Kanin 1957; Koss and Gidycz 1985; Koss et al. 1987; Koss and Oros 1982).

The National Women's Study, a 3-year longitudinal study that used a sample of 4,008 women, revealed that 22% of women 11-17 years old were rape victims. Among these rape incidents, 10% were perpetrated by a boyfriend or an ex-boyfriend (Ogletree and Gast 1993). Muehlenhard and Linton (1978) also reported that 15% of their sample reported date rape. Ageton (1983) asserted that these data affirmed the nature of adolescent sexual coercion that occurred primarily within the context of a date.

Date rape is considered as one form of violence against woman, which is a major health and human rights concern. This action not only creates severe health consequences but also poses a social problem for its victim. According to the World Health Organization, violence against women is "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life." (WHO Fact Sheet #239, June 2000). Any form of violence against women is currently a global health concern and the public health approaches to prevention are needed. Violence against women has received public attention in Thailand for almost a decade. A number of family law and social policies have been initiated and changed. However, in the area of health policy specific to the rape issue, there has been little development.

Date rape issues are usually underreported. The extent of rape crime especially stranger rape is also underestimated because police reports fail to reflect the true scope of rape issues due to inadequacies in the methods used to measure sexual assault, national crime statistics, crime victimization reports, and conviction rates.

In the case of date rape, women involved in dating relationships, due to victim blaming, are even less likely to report. They often feel their behavior is on trial and many victims blame themselves for doing something to cause the rape,
such as drinking alcohol, going to the male’s apartment, or using poor judgment. In Russell’s (1984) survey of San Francisco women, 89% did not report the rape when the attacker was a boyfriend, and 99% did not report when the rapist was a date. Ward et al. (1991) found that 20% of their samples had experienced unwanted sexual intercourse, but only 4% had talked to a counselor. Koss et al. (1988) asserted that the better acquainted a woman is with her perpetrator, the less likely she is to discuss her experience with anyone. If the victim files a police report, she is frequently disbelieved or blamed and often asked inappropriate questions about her sexual behavior.

Date rape is often viewed as not a legitimate crime either by its victims and assailants or by society at large. The victims of these assaults, especially adolescents and young women, usually do not consider their victimization as rape. They rarely come forward and identify themselves as victims to families or friends. Therefore, this issue is deeply embedded in many societies.

Thai Women’s Status and Sexuality

Culture and gender role socialization in each country has played a crucial role in confronting and perceiving the problem of rape by acquaintances or dates. Women in an extremely traditional culture, as in Thailand, persistently experience gender inequality in social status and sexuality. Historically, the problems concerning adolescent sexual assault, sexual harassment, and date rape or acquaintance rape were rarely reported. Premarital sexual relationships were prohibited for women but usually were more acceptable for men. The prevailing double standard for premartial sexual intercourse is documented by recent surveys conducted in Thailand. Limsumphan (1997) asserted that 39% of Thai students reported premarital sexual intercourse as permissible for males.

Ideology about males’ sexual initiation, sexual aggression, and premarital sex is commonly demonstrated through folk tale, story, novel, fiction, and history. Prior to 1900, polygamy was acceptable among Thai males, especially in wealthy families. Inequality in the treatment of women and men was found in family, social, and economic status as well as in issues related to sexuality. Women in every social class were socialized to be passive and docile. Society placed a high responsibility for women to look after themselves and their daughters’ sexuality. Parents would be extremely ashamed if their daughter had premarital sex and got pregnant. This notion never applied to young men who have premarital sex as they were more likely to be socially rewarded than blamed for this behavior. Presently, although younger Thai generations are still socialized in the old ways, a change in certain social values has been influenced by pluralism and lessening of the intensity of the ancient Thai cultural traditions. Relationships between men and women, especially male and female teenagers, have changed considerably. Limsumphan (1997) stated that 40% of male students and 36% of female students in Bangkok approved of premarital sex within an engaged relationship. A survey of sexual behavior and attitudes of 4,789 male college students aged 17-21 in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, and Songkhla found that 73% had premarital sex with their girlfriends and 11% used no protection (Foundation for Women 1997). Among the students polled, 46% had sexual relationships with their friends at the same college, and 45% with friends from different colleges (Sukkrung 1997). Statistics show a rise in unwanted pregnancies and babies abandoned in public places (National Commission on Women’s Affairs 1995).

The problem of young Thai generation involved in premarital sex is a sensitive and complicated issue. The nationwide survey about sexual behavior and attitudes of Thai male students (Foundation for Women 1997) revealed inherently biased attitudes toward women. The high percentage of Thai young college men having sex with their girlfriends is leading to a significant social debate. Ironically, few people view this issue as related to men; most consider it a problem with women. The news headlines sent a major concern through the public. Many institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, began to launch a campaign to revive the value of
'protecting one's virginity'. Not surprisingly, adolescent girls in high school and college were target groups for this 'morality' awareness project. This reaction not only aggravated existing problems but also reflected the severe bias of authorities in choosing the target for problem solving. According to the reaction of Thai women advocates, the campaign to protect women's virginity reflected sexism in Thai society. Men were encouraged by society to be sexually active without restraint, whereas a woman who responded to a man's desire would be condemned. Instead of constantly teaching girls to place a high price on their chastity, boys should be instructed to be more responsible sexually. Although the new generation was more liberated and educated, many girls were still influenced by the deeply-ingrained culture of pleasing their loved one sexually in return for his love. With an inequality in relationships, many girls were trapped by their boyfriends' persuasion to have sex even if the girls did not want to. The distinction between consenting to unwanted sexual relationships and having sex without consent or being forced to have sex was still obscured in the reports. A conflict exists between raising Thai women to be submissive in general behavior and sexual behavior, and the increasing influence of capitalism and liberalism in current Thai society.

To date, no study has investigated the incidence of date rape among young unmarried adults in Thailand. This study is significant because it addressed gaps in current knowledge about adolescent sexual behavior and the other dimensions of those behaviors caused by hidden sexual violence against women in Thai society. The present study served as a first step to alert or raise the Thai society's awareness regarding one form of sexual violence against women that is concealed in dating relationships, and to address date rape issue as a women's health threat.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study developed from the literature, guided the development of the research questions, purposes and methodology, and was used to design date rape scenarios to examine the effect of gender, attitudes, experiences and characteristics on the perceptions and attributions of blame, and responsibility toward the perpetrators and survivors (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of date rape.
The variables examined include demographic, attitudes, characteristics and experiences of an individual participant, and the scenario of dating (i.e. dating activity, length of a dating relationship, alcohol and drug abuse, characteristics and behavior of partners).

Date rape perceptions incorporate at least three concepts:
- the definition of the situation,
- the seriousness,
- the consequences of the situation.

The perceptions of date rape affect the participants' attributions of blame and responsibility for the date rape situations.

**Methodology**

**Design and Sample**

A qualitative design was implemented where two focus group interviews were conducted with Thai male and female graduate students in a Midwestern city in the US (N=12) and ten focus group interviews with Thai male and female undergraduate students in the university in central Thailand (N=88) in 1999. Each focus group consisted of 6-10 members, segregated by sex (Table 1).

The recruitment procedure used a snowball technique with the assistance of the student organization, university staffs and faculty members for the initial advertisement.

The instrument consists of three vignettes and a set of interview questions. The vignettes illustrated some different and some common dating contexts in terms of relationship timing, dating location, date rape incident location, dating expenses, alcohol consumption, sexual foreplay, verbal pressure and/or seduction, media, and time of the date rape incident.

**Data Analysis**

Data collection and analysis were simultaneous activities (Miles and Huberman 1994). In this study, tape-based analysis (Krueger 1994) was applied. Data recording of the focus group discussions were initially reviewed, the tape-analyzed, and an abridged transcript prepared. The analysis focused on the convergence or divergence of the participants' responses and comments. The congruence of interview questions and the responses of the participants were examined. The analysis was conducted in the Thai language in order to enhance cultural sensitivity in interpretation of the data and to eliminate the introduction of bias while conducting back and forth translations from Thai to English. To meet the goal of qualitative data analysis, interpreting meaning in the data (Miles and Huberman 1994), the analysis of data obtained from focus group interviews consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

The initial impressions of the data were held as tentative or open to revision and skepticism until they were verified. The tactics for conclusion drawing and verification proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) were applied in this study. These tactics helped the investigator to generate meaning from a specific aspect of data.

The analysis was improved by requesting participant debriefing and verification of the investigator's summary of critical points identified by the focus group at the end of each session. This procedure verifies the validity of the data, ensures the investigator's understanding, and improves data analysis. In addition, immediately after the focus group interview, the moderator and assistant moderators met for a debriefing discussion of the notes, including critical points that emerged from the focus group and the data obtained from the observations during the focus group process. The elements not included in the transcript of group dialogue, such as the mood of the discussion and the willingness of participants to talk with each other, were noted.

Thematic analysis and code development (Boyatzis 1998) were also applied in the data analysis process. Three phases of inquiry were reached during the conduct of thematic analysis. Observation of raw data from the transcript preceded understanding, recognizing important information from the pattern of data preceded encoding, and this, in turn, facilitated the interpretation. Categories were derived from research questions and the key concepts. In this study, the investigator read through each entire
transcript and the investigator’s notes to get a sense of the entity. Then, the significant phrases, statements, or words were extracted from the participants’ responses. A list of themes was inductively generated from the raw information and organized into a cluster of themes.

The present study used manual procedures in sorting data, determining the pattern of data, developing themes, and coding. Duplicated transcripts were used for coding, and a margin coding approach (Bertrand et al. 1992) was applied. Themes were identified then numbers and letters were used to represent the themes. The investigator read through the transcripts and noted the appropriate thematic code. A colored marker was used to note the transcript information that appeared to be an important and vivid example. All of the coded transcripts were then duplicated again before cutting them into separate slips of paper that could be categorized. These slips or units of data were sorted into relevant piles and pasted on separate sheets under the title of themes and/or categories for future reference and easy retrieval during analysis.

Although the analysis of data from focus group discussions emphasizes groups as the unit of analysis, information from the individuals who made up the group and the dynamics of the group as a whole were also taken into account. To avoid psychological reductionism in the analysis of focus group data, the investigation sought a balance that acknowledged the interplay between individual and group levels of analyses (Morgan, 1997). Categories that provided an organizational theme for data in this study were developed by applying both a theory driven approach and an inductive or data driven approach (Boyatzis 1998). The investigator used the conceptual framework developed for this study and the theory of other researchers such as the concepts of gender role stereotypes and rape myth acceptance (Burt 1991) and token resistance (Muehlenhard 1988; Muehlenhard and Hollabaugh 1988; Sprecher et al. 1994). Data were analyzed using the inclusion criteria described in these concepts and sorted by categories. After all of the raw information units had been sorted, the information in all of the categories were reviewed again to determine whether they overlapped and were completed. The step of negotiating categories (Vaughn et al. 1996) was performed by discussing them with the academic advisor to determine the agreement of the categories, especially in terms of appropriateness and relevance to the research questions.

Results

Participants in Focus Group Interviews

Twelve focus group interviews were conducted for data collection. Participants in the study were 100 Thai college students. There were 12 graduate students studying in universities in a Midwestern city in the US and 88 undergraduate students from universities in Thailand; 50 were males and 50 were females (Tables 1 & 2).

Perceptions of Dating Relationships

Male and female participants are similar in their perceptions of dating relationships, dating activity and dating development. The participants’ perceptions are shown in Table 3 according to categories, themes, and meaning.

Perceptions of Premarital Sex

Thai college students perceived premarital sexual relationships as taboo in Thai culture. However, 20 male (40%) and 12 female (24%) participants indicated that this behavior is increasing not only among adults but also college students. Most male participants viewed sex before marriage as a normal thing for them but not for every woman. However, the attitude of male participants toward premarital sexual relationships showed certain traditional conflicts. While they were more likely to reveal that they accept this as a common matter, they also noted that this picture is considered ‘not good’ in Thai society, especially when it is happening to their own sisters or relatives. Then they were more likely to see this situation as ‘unusual’. The proverb, ‘Rak Nuan Sa-nguan Tua’, meaning to keep the body intact, pure, or virgin was frequently noted by the male participants in each group. This implied that the responsibility for maintaining virginity was being placed on the women.
Table 1. Demographic data for the Thai date rape focus group participants (N = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate level</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergrad. level</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai public university</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai private university</td>
<td>Group 7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Group 8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Group 10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Group 12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Mean age of Thai date rape focus group participants (N = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For female participants, every group mentioned that premarital sexual relationships were now increasing, especially among college level and high school students. Only the participants from the US group mentioned that premarital sex was normal. They also believe that premarital sex was usually consensual. According to attitudes toward premarital sex, more men (18%) than women (2%) viewed premarital sex as a way to experiment sexually before entering a serious relationship.

Family factors such as the inattention of parents in taking care of their children, lack of family discipline, and the lack of love and understanding from parents were mentioned to explain the potential reasons why college students engaged in premarital sex. These factors were identified as driving young women to fulfill their longing and thirst for love in a premarital relationship. Other reasons given for young people participating in premarital sex include sexual desire and sexual advantage (12% of men and 2% of women), and peer pressure (10% of men). Westernization and liberalism were mentioned by the participants as a factor influencing the increase in premarital sex among college students.

Premarital sexual relationships were identified by the participants, especially woman group (48%), as insecure relationships. Both male and female participants estimated that less than 50% of the couples who have premarital eventually marry. Women who experience and stigma if the relationship breaks up. Not surprisingly, the word 'Yom Maeo' (painting the cat) means to refurbish women or become 'a fake virgin' in order to be able to get married was mentioned frequently by male participants during the interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes/Descriptions</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dating relationship</td>
<td>Relationship between men and women who have a special emotional connection or serious loving relationship.</td>
<td>Dating development mentioned by the participants in this study was applied primarily to heterosexual relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating activity</td>
<td>Going out/spending time together, shopping, watching TV, going out of town, going to the beach or park.</td>
<td>Initial activities mostly start in the public place then move to more privacy after the relationships developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating place</td>
<td>Dating relationships that take place in night spots such as pubs, bars, nightclubs, and discotheques are considered ‘not serious’ and likely to be considered as a ‘one night stand’, assume consensual sex, discount the belief that forced sex occurred, and more likely undertaken for sexual purposes.</td>
<td>It is not well accepted in traditional Thai culture for women to go to these places. Women will not be respected by men as ‘good women’. Sex role socialization and traditional Thai values influence this interpretation. Women are socialized to behave according to the social norm and to be convinced that approaching men in these places with sexual permissiveness is inappropriate. Women are held responsible for the consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating development</td>
<td>Men initiate dating through friendship. Some women may initiate dating relationships.</td>
<td>Gender role stereotypes still reinforce this tradition. New attitudes have resulted in women initiating a dating relationship. This observation was more frequently mentioned by the female participants and implied that women wanted more freedom in making decisions about dating. This finding was limited to college students Who can access Internet communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet chat has become a new way to initiate and develop dating relationships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perceptions of Forced Sex in Dating Relationship**

Participants were asked to discuss forced sex in dating relationships before they read the vignettes provided by the investigator. Surprisingly, more men (22%) than women (4%) believed forced sex in dating did happen in Thai society. Women (22%) were more likely than men (8%) to believe that sex is consensual in dating relationships.

According to the participants, verbal force is more common than physical force. However, drug abuse was widely mentioned. They shared that women who were physically forced to have sex with their dates because they were drugged either were given sex stimulant pills (love pills) or sedative pills in alcoholic beverages or soft drink.

**Perceptions of Date Rape**

After the vignettes were presented to the participants, the discussion that followed reflected a number of themes (See Table IV). An almost equal number of male (14%) and female (16%) participants verbally indicated that situations similar to the vignettes are presently occurring in Thai society. The term ‘date rape’ was not acknowledged by the participants. Date rape is considered a new word in Thai society.
This term was not used by any participant because there is no specific Thai word for a direct translation. In addition, in the Thai language there are no specific legal categories in defining or distinguishing date rape from general rape. Rape is a word that has been applied only to the situation in which a woman was physically forced to have sexual intercourse or vaginal penetration by a man or group of men who are not a husband and are not known by the women. Several Thai words reflect the meaning as nonconsensual sex, forced sex, coercion, and rape as used in the literature on these topics. The term ‘rape’ (‘Khom Khuen’) was frequently mentioned by both male (50%) and female (44%) participants during the discussion of the vignettes. ‘Khom’ means intimidating, or power over someone. ‘Khuen’ means forced, coerced physically and mentally. The passive voice, ‘Thuk’, is used to indicate that one is forced by another's action. Hence, ‘Thuk Khom Khuen’ means being raped. After debating the definition of rape (‘Khom Khuen’), most of the participants were not willing to label the situations in the vignettes as rape. They more often changed the word to a less severe term since the vignettes were not presenting “real rape”. Therefore, the terms ‘Khuen Chai’, ‘Khuen Bangkhap’ (‘coercion’, or ‘forced’, or ‘to be taken sexual advantage’), and ‘Mai Tem Chai’ (‘not willing to’) were suggested. ‘Chai’ means heart, mental, willingness. ‘Bangkhap’ means enforce or intimidated enforcement. Thus, ‘Khuen Chai’ means to force one's heart or one's willingness. ‘Khuen Bangkhap’ means to force someone to do something. These terms were well accepted by most participants in every group.

Participants viewed dating as a voluntary relationship and women were expected to take good care of themselves if they decided to go out with men. They were expected to perform with ‘good manners’. Acceptable manners in Thai culture include the way women dress, the places and time they go out, the personal space maintained between people, and the topic of conversations between men and women.

Acceptance of rape myths played a crucial role in explaining how participants perceived the situations in the vignettes. Twenty-five female and 16 male participants verbally demonstrated their acceptance of rape myths during the discussions. These included rape myths that fall into the categories presented by Burt (1991) as ‘no rape happened’ and that a classic ‘real rape’ is rape committed by a stranger, a weapon was involved, it occurred outside the house at night, it was violent and the woman resisted and was severely injured. Participants used rape myths as a mechanism for discounting the situations in the vignettes as a ‘real rape’. The perceptions of date rape context and the attributions of blame and responsibility were analyzed and presented in Table 5.

Table 4. Themes in Thai college students’ focus group discussions of vignettes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Perceptions of date rape | 1. Women ask for it  
2. It is not rape  
3. She didn’t say no at the beginning |
| 2. Rape myths            | 1. Women who survive rape  
- Only bad girls get raped  
- She deserved it  
2. Token resistance  
- ‘No’ means ‘yes’ |
| 3. Gender role stereotypes| 1. Traditional gender role in social and intimate relationships  
- Women should not express their desire for intimate relationships  
- Women are passive and nice |
Table 5. Thai college students’ perceptions of date rape context and attribution of blame and responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>1. Date rape perception</th>
<th>Vignette 1</th>
<th>Vignette 2</th>
<th>Vignette 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. It is not rape</td>
<td>Necking</td>
<td>Necking</td>
<td>Necking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woman is sober</td>
<td>Flirting</td>
<td>Flirting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alone in man’s house</td>
<td>Allows man into her apartment</td>
<td>Both are sober</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alone in man’s bedroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Stranger rape victims deserve pity and sympathy
2. Dating situation
3. Media
4. Power imbalance between men and women
5. Alcohol

1. Blame female date rape survivors
   - Women are too loose
   - Do not deserve sympathy
2. Blame date rape perpetrators
   - Men are not gentlemen
   - Men did not respect their dates
   - Men are blamed if they do not assume responsibility for the situation
3. Attribution of responsibility
   - Men should take responsibility for the outcomes of rape
   - Men and women equally responsible for the situations

1. Men should be gentlemen
2. Men should control their sex drive
3. Virginity valued in women

2. Male sexuality
   - Difficult for men to stop sexual excitement/arousal
3. Acceptance of gender double standard
   - Men have more privileges in social activities than women
   - Women’s role is to prevent rape by men
   - Good women don’t provide sexual opportunities for men
   - Men who rape are justified if they assume responsibility for the outcomes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b. It is 'Khuen Chai') (sexual coercion)</th>
<th>Woman drunk</th>
<th>Man is sober</th>
<th>Woman may be drugged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. It is 'Mai Tem Chai' (Not willing to)</td>
<td>Steady date</td>
<td>Man drunk</td>
<td>Man is sober</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Men plan to take sexual advantage</td>
<td>Man seduced woman</td>
<td>Woman sober</td>
<td>Woman drunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal pressure</td>
<td>Woman may be drugged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Rape myth acceptance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. It is not rape</th>
<th>Man is steady date</th>
<th>Man is casual date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. Women ask for rape</td>
<td>Necking Stay alone with the man too late</td>
<td>Necking Flirting Provide too much opportunity (isolated from friend/stay alone with the man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Necking Did not seriously resist Say &quot;no&quot; too late</td>
<td>Allowed man into her apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Token resistance</td>
<td>Necking Did not seriously resist Say &quot;no&quot; too late</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Blame woman who survived rape

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Woman asked for it (See 2b)</th>
<th>Necking Stay alone with the man too late</th>
<th>Necking Flirting Provide too much opportunity (isolated from friend/stay alone with the man)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allowed man into her apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alone in the man's bedroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following are examples of the citations from certain themes.

**Themes: Woman ask for it**

One woman stated:

If the woman, especially in the third case, didn't participate in flirting with the man, or if she should stick with her female friends and not be alone with him in the bedroom, I didn't think this situation was going to occur. She provided the opportunity and she asked for it.

**Themes: It is not rape**

One woman stated:

Woman in all of the scenarios presented a willingness to become involved in romantic relationships with the men at the beginning and then when the situation moved to more advanced activity, they just changed their mind and cried rape. I think this is not rape because women consent from the beginning.

**Themes: It is not rape**

One man said:

I don't think it was rape, especially the second scenario, the man did not have the intention or plan to have sex with her at first but because she was drunk and she couldn't control herself, she provided the opportunity for the man to do anything...he was not guilty. I will not count the situation as rape if the opportunity is opened by the woman.

**Themes: She did not say no at the beginning**

One woman stated:

It seems to me that the woman allowed the man to do that to her. Once she allowed him to kiss and hug, the man probably perceived that it was OK to continue. It is the indirect way men ask for permission to have sex with the women.

---

One man said:

"I would call this situation as consent to be raped."

**Themes: Rape myths**

One woman stated:

Rape is done by strangers or the men known to the women but without any emotional connection. If the women really don't want sex, they should fight back. I don't think men are going to stop when women just say no, without serious physical resistance.

**Themes: Male sexuality myths**

One woman stated:

It was difficult for men to stop. Men want it anyway, no matter what is going to happen. Men also fear loss of male dignity if they do not finish the sexual act.

It is a ridiculous threat to male identity as well as their ego. Therefore, in this situation, if the woman did not cooperate, he must rape her.

**Themes: Gender role stereotypes**

One woman stated:

If our friends know what is going on, and if they know you stop at that point, you did nothing to the woman in that situation, you become "buffalo". Themes: Token resistance

One man stated:

It is common that men initiate the sexual relationship and women usually play a tricky game. Nobody will simply go to it. They use their feminine manner and pretend. They say no but in fact they mean OK.

**Themes: Token resistance**

One woman stated:

Women realize that it is unacceptable to have out of marriage sex in the Thai culture. Their mouths say no but their emotions and desires are going in the opposite way.
Discussion

The results of this qualitative study reveal that male and female participants are similar in their perceptions of dating relationships, dating activity and dating development. Dating is more likely to be viewed by male participants as an activity with potential bad consequences for women because many dating activities are inappropriate for traditional Thai women (e.g., going out alone with a man, holding hands, etc.). This finding confirmed the existence of gender role stereotypes among the younger generation in Thailand.

Some dating traditions reported by the participants in this study were reinforced by the cultural norms of a patriarchal society. Patriarchy, as noted by Gamache (1998), is “the institutionalization of male dominance over women in both the public and private spheres”. In such systems, men have greater power than women and greater access to resources and ability to define and control social rules. The hierarchical patterns in such power relationships are so pervasive that male domination and female subordination are accepted as normal and natural. The rigidity of the system means that the subordinate group - females, in this case - has few perceptions of inequality in social activities.

Through gender role socialization, women learn to obey the authority and “rules” that reflect the social norm and perceive it is important for them to stay out of trouble, to insure their own survival and to be accepted as “good” women. Belenky et al. (1986) asserted that extreme sex-role stereotypes and culture supply women with experiences in maintaining their senses of dependence and deference to authorities. This explanation also applies to the perceptions of premarital sexual relationships and date rape situations found in this study.

Social and cultural sanctions toward premarital sex among teens and students plays a crucial role in shaping the participants’ attitudes. Some discrepancies were found between what they think and what their peers actually do. Overall these findings indicate that current Thai college students were closing the gap between Eastern and Western sexual values. This was apparent in the increasing acceptance of premarital sex as a common practice among couples who are in serious romantic relationships. This change in values creates a conflict between those persons who espouse the traditional view that maintains a double standard for men and women concerning sexuality and those who accept the belief that women should have more control in a sexual relationship. This conflict creates ambivalent perceptions about premarital sexual relationships (Ogena and Kittisukathit 1997).

In the current study, women were more likely than men to relate premarital sex to love and serious emotional commitment, and men were more likely to view premarital sex as sexual experimentation. This finding indicates that the perceived responsibility for the premarital sexual encounter differs for men and women. It is unfortunate that while women give of themselves willingly to please their dates sexually, they are subjected to blame for the behavior and are believed by society to be responsible for their own behavior and that of their male partners. This finding strengthens the existing evidence of cultural prejudice concerning women’s sexual behavior. Sexual socialization processes in the Thai culture need to be reformed to include equality for women in order to break the vicious cycle of blame which currently exists and the equality in responsibility for men to decrease the risk of rape and shared social consequences.

Participants in this study reported that the control parents and/or family exerted over their children was a significant factor in preventing premarital sex among adolescents and college students. This finding is congruent with previous studies in Thailand (Bond 1995; Fongkaew 1995; Limsomphun 1997). However, participants indicated that for college students who stay in the dormitories or private apartments, close attention by parents is impossible. Therefore, in those environments premarital sexual relationships occur more frequently. Instead of censuring those young people and trying to prevent their behavior, there is a need to provide them with appropriate sex education. Education programs should stress the need for sexual responsibility and include information aimed at reducing sexual violence against women.
In the present study, it was determined that premarital sex was common among college students in the high and medium social class because they had financial freedom to afford dating expenses and had independence from family control. Young people who obtain a higher education were viewed by the Thai participants as being more sexually liberal in their attitudes and having adopted the Western culture. However, it is conceivable that young people have the same opportunity to be exposed to sexual liberal ideology through the present public media in Thailand. Therefore, further research is needed to determine whether this finding can be attributed to socioeconomic status and educational level or other factors contributing to the sexual relationship in dating situations.

Before presenting date rape vignettes to the participants, a discussion about forced sex in dating relationships was conducted to elicit the participant’s opinions of this issue. More men than women believed that forced sex in dating really happens and physical violence is possible. Because the men believed that the women’s behavior in the Thai sexual scripts reflected token resistance, they were not surprised that the men ignored the women’s resistance and forced them to have sex. Women believed that dating was usually related to love and/or a special emotional connection, and they were more likely to believe that sex in dating was consensual not forced, unless seduction by the man was explicit and drugs were involved. In addition, women were viewed by the participants as being limited to certain activities in acceptable places in order to avoid being at a sexual disadvantage. This finding supports the social acceptance of power imbalances in sex and the use of sexual violence against women (Buchwald et al. 1993). Token resistance was mentioned as an important factor contributing to men’s misinterpretation of women’s refusal to have sex. Culturally, women are submissive in sexual relationships, sexual desire, and sexuality. It is more common for Thai women to demonstrate indirect and/or negative responses toward sexual encounters to avoid being seen as ‘loose’ or ‘easy’. In contrast, it is socially acceptable for men to demonstrate sexual intent, sexual activeness, and/or sexual aggression. These beliefs combined with misinterpretation of sexual intent may contribute to male sexual violence against women. The extent of sexual misinterpretation resulting in forced sex or nonconsensual sex and consent to unwanted sex is unknown. Further research is needed to provide more insight into the problem of forced sex in dating relationships.

Although the participants reported the existence of date rape situations, the term ‘date rape’ does not exist and was not acknowledged by those taking part in the focus groups. The term ‘Khom Khuen’ or ‘rape’ is used only for the actions of forced vaginal intercourse initiated by men, especially strangers but sometimes acquaintances, who do not have an intimate or special emotional connection to the women they rape. Participants did not perceive the date situations as rape and did not define the result as ‘date rape’.

Participants perceived dating as a voluntary activity between men and women within a romantic context. This perception tends to lessen the perceived severity of forced sex with a date. During the focus group discussions, participants indicated they believed in rape myths and sex role stereotypes and used them in judging the date rape vignettes. Both male and female participants reported the acceptance of rape myths in their discussions of forced sex in dating situations and date rape vignettes. Discussion of the date rape vignettes elicited a number of rape myths that were congruent with Burt’s rape myth categories “It is not rape”, “She asks for it”, and “Women do not seriously resist at the beginning” (Burt 1991). The rape myths related specifically to the Thai culture were myths that labeled raped women as bad women, women who had done something to provoke the rape such as going out at night, drinking alcohol in a night spot, staying alone with men in private places, engaging in sexual foreplay with men, wearing provocative dresses, and behaving in a sexually suggestive, ‘loose’ or ‘teasing’ manner. These myths fall into the category of “women ask for rape.”

The myths that non-virgin women never get raped, that rape does not occur between people who fall in love or are engaged in an emotional relationship, and that sexual relationships between ‘fans’, such as date, lover, or boyfriend/girlfriend all happen as ‘consensual sex’ can be categorized
as “rape never happens”. In addition to these myths, other myths were identified in the way participants viewed the women in the vignettes; these myths included the notion that real rape or classic rape is committed only when a weapon is used to intimidate a woman and survivors of rape must have a certain degree of injury resulting from resisting the attack. These myths illustrate the categories of “no harm was done” and “women’s token resistance.”

Token resistance to sex is a form of sexual misunderstanding such as interpreting a ‘no’ to sexual advances as meaning ‘yes’ (Sprecher et al. 1994). In Thai society, a belief in the existence of token resistance is attributed to cultural restrictions on women’s freedom to express their sexual desires. The suppression of sexual expression is a well-accepted cultural norm for ‘good women’. This idea has been perpetuated through socialization practices. Thus, it is assumed that women engage in token resistance because they fear they will appear promiscuous if they do not. However, confusion or ambiguity between genuine resistance and token resistance is reinforced where media sources, including TV, film, and literature, emphasize token resistance as a popular stereotype of a sexual script between men and women. Therefore, in a collectivist culture, such as Thailand, that emphasizes a patriarchal hierarchical arrangement (Dion and Dion 1988), the ability to distinguish or understand this ambiguity is rare, and the myth of token resistance is perpetuated. These findings strengthen the notion that Thai women are culturally limited to certain social activities and freedoms that they face a social double standard similar to that faced by women in many other societies. Therefore, if women engage in those activities which are beyond the accepted social limits and something happens to them, they are subjected to blame for their unacceptable behavior and their claims of mistreatment are not believed.

Participants referred to the public media conformity to traditional culture as supporting rape myth acceptance. Like sex role stereotype, rape myths may be embedded in Thai society because this ideology is transferred from generation to generation through socialization processes. The two concepts just mentioned are interrelated and are mutually supported by the mores of the Thai society. The findings of this study indicate that acceptance of rape myths makes it difficult for participants to conceptualize the vignettes as rape and, consequently, to recognize sexual aggression as assaultive behaviors. These findings can be explained by a sexual scripts theory, based on socialization theory, where sexual behavior is learned through social interactions. A basic premise of this theory is that a culture follows certain sexual scripts that are commonly understood by the members. Such scripts provide instructions that dictate the sexual behavior of members of that society (Gagnon 1990).

Forced sexual intercourse during a date is not perceived by most Thai college students, either and intrapsychic level (Gagnon 1990). On the cultural level, participants are socialized as to what they should or should not do sexually. At an intrapsychic level, individuals solve problems by making connections between the meanings learned through the influence of culture and actions learned through social interaction. The integration of these two scripts leads to a new script that is unique for every individual. For example, the female participants in this study did not perceive forced sex with a date as rape because of the definition that has socially been ascribed to rape in the Thai context (i.e., committed by stranger, etc.) and/or the traditional definition socially ascribed to a romantically committed relationship with a ‘good’ woman. Similarly, men may not view forcing their dates to have sex as a form of violence against women. They tend to justify their behavior on the basis of gender role socialization patterns that interpret forced sexual intercourse as ‘normal’ courting behavior (Humphreys and Herold 1996).

Gender role stereotypes and rape myth acceptance also affect how participants view rape survivors. Participants viewed with pity and sympathy survivors who were raped by strangers. This feeling was not applied to women in the date rape vignettes. Participants did not perceive the vignette situations as date rape; therefore, they also did not view women in the vignettes as rape survivors although they mentioned that the situations have the same impact and produce the same stigma for the women involved. In addition, gender role stereotypes and rape myth acceptance
shape the participants’ perceptions of factors contributing to date rape. Women are expected to be well mannered if they do not want their behavior to be sexually suggestive to men. Many men also misinterpret women’s willingness to date and engage in romantic activity as interest in sexual intercourse. Other factors mentioned by the participants indicated that women were expected to control the situation and take care of themselves include dating location, environment, time, and opportunity to engage in physical contact, as well as alcohol consumption. Both women and men accepted the double standard in a dating relationship as normal practice and both judged the date rape situations from the perspective of this double standard. Although many women did mention that they were aware of the double standard in Thai society concerning gender, they did not find its existence to be problematic as they adopted it into their worldview and used it as the basis for their judgments. Not surprisingly, women blamed women for being in a date rape situation more than men did.

The basic moral principle that male and female participants in this study used in judging date rape situations and placing blame toward the characters in the vignettes was relevant to two moral orientations, justice and care, postulated by Gilligan and Attanucci (1988). Male participants, autonomous in relation to women in general, were more likely to attribute blame according to how an individual conformed to the rules of society and performed the appropriate roles according to their rules. For instance, men in the vignettes were blamed by male participants for their lack of self-control and responsibility as gentlemen, and women in the vignette were blamed for their failure to perform the ‘good women’ behaviors set forth by society. In contrast, female participants, who were interdependent in relation to others, were more likely to judge the situation by how an individual responded to others in terms of caring for the other in order to maintain and sustain the relationships. For example, men in the vignettes were blamed by female participants, if the men betrayed the women who had a good relationship with them by forcing the women to have sex. But if the man assumed responsibility for the woman by continuing the relationship or marrying her, the behavior was viewed as justified. The women in the vignettes were blamed if they provided an opportunity for a man to take sexual advantage of them by engaging in sexual foreplay with a man they barely knew prior to the rape. The rape vignettes were viewed as personal problems, not rape or forced sex, if at the end of the story the couple continued their relationships.

However, the blame attributed by female participants combined two moral imperatives (care-justice) of Gilligan (1982) due to the influence of a rigid patriarchal system that socializes women to be passive and to conform to the cultural norms and social values. They are socialized to sustain their relationships with people by conforming to the rules and roles in order to be accepted as good social members. Not surprisingly, women frequently attributed blame to women who deviated from the sex role stereotypes.

The consciousness of the women in the dating situations was used as an element in debating the responsibility for the rape. If women were sober, they were more likely to be held responsible for the rape situation. Women who were drunk or drugged were more likely to be considered raped, but they were still blamed for drinking alcohol.

The discussion of date rape vignettes reflected not only the participants’ acceptance of rape myth and sex role stereotypes but also placed full responsibility for date rape on women. As mentioned earlier, acceptance of rape myths, especially in the category “She deserved it” (Burt 1991), reinforces the belief that the women in the vignettes deserved the rape because they did something to incite the rape.

Participants revealed that they were unaware of any appropriate legal, social, or health services to help them when they encountered problems related to sexual issues, especially date rape. Instead of getting outside help to resolve the problem, they preferred to conceal the problem and to use self-care practices, such as reading books, listening to music, practicing relaxation, and applying religious concepts in coping to alleviate their distress. No report is made to the authorities and no professional counseling is sought. These findings suggest that
health care and social services in Thailand may not be accessible or adequate for adolescents and young adults, especially, those in college.

Implications and Recommendations

1. Implications for Public Policy

Concealed sexual violence in dating relationships occurs in Thai society but the extent of the issue is unknown. Participants of this study revealed that date rape has been occurring among their friends and persons they know. Date rape is one form of sexual violence against women that needs public attention to expedite a health and social policy initiative that will effectively deal with this issue. Unfortunately, the seriousness of this issue is not recognized because this type of sexual assault is viewed as a personal problem rather than as a crime. Therefore, to deal with this issue, both rape law reform and public education policy are necessary.

a. Rape Law Reform: Findings from the present study indicated that no explicit term for “date rape” is found in Thai society. The legal definition of rape in Thai criminal law contains no description of date rape, acquaintance rape, or other forms of rape in intimate relationships. To alert the public to this issue, the term “date rape” should appear and be brought to the awareness of the Thai people in general as well as the legal profession (police, attorneys, and judges). A date rape awareness campaign should target these groups as a priority.

Lessons learned from the U.S. experience, particularly the women’s movement in rape law reform and the elimination of rape law bias toward genders, class, and race (Dixon 1991), offer some useful strategies for Thailand, especially in relation to the gender issues and economic status/class bias. The U.S. literature about the rape reform movement in the last three decades (Bohmer 1991; Dixon 1991; Donat and D’Emilio 1997; Koss and Harvey 1991; Schulhofer 1998; Spohn and Horney 1992) evidences a change in rape definitions, the focus of legal practice, and the essential services and activities including advocacy and support for rape victims. The term rape/sexual penetration has been redefined to cover many forced sexual acts against one’s will for both women and men and to place more emphasis on the behavior of the offender. The terms, sexual penetration or forced sexual activity, as defined by most of the states in the US, covers vaginal and anal intercourse, fellatio, cunnilingus, or any other intrusion without the requirement of semen emission (Koss 1993). It was found in this study that the perceptions of participants toward women who survive rape was not very different from that of the colonial period in Western countries and close to what had happened in the 19th century (Donat and D’Emilio 1997). Women who have been sexually assaulted by someone they knew are still expected to prove non-consent to the sexual crime by complying with male standards for women’s behavior and their physical and verbal resistance.

To accelerate rape law reform in Thai society, the definition of rape should be carefully redefined to include date rape, acquaintance rape, and/or marital rape. Thai women should be educated and empowered to be more assertive and involved in public reform, to examine traditional feminine roles and behaviors, to free themselves from dependence on men, and to become more self-reliant. In addition, efforts should be made to increase the number of women in law and law making professions and in the legislative enactment process (Largen 1988). Women’s organizations in Thailand should take a major role in supporting this evolution and advocate for women who are rape survivors by increasing essential services such as rape crisis centers, shelters, and hotline services. The issue of rape perception as found in this study should no longer adhere to a standard of judgment based on men’s rules. Rape, especially acquaintance rape and date rape, represent a form of sexual violence against women that should be perceived as a crime and not a personal problem. The perpetrator rather than the victim should be blamed and expected to assume responsibility for the crime.

Rape law reform should include changes in the scope and types of cases covered and incorporate better treatment of rape victims in the criminal justices system (Largen 1988). A hindrance to rape law reform and its effectiveness...
are found in the attitudes and disagreements about sexual ‘consent’ or ‘force’ that occur in the criminal justice system (Schulhofer 1998). For date rape situations, sexual autonomy and the freedom of individuals to decide whether and when to engage in sexual relations should be emphasized in rape law reform (Schulhofer 1998). The issue of consent in rape cases, especially date rape, is a very difficult problem to deal with. Across all focus groups in this study, participants viewed the consent of women in date rape vignettes as problematic. Women were expected to show non-consent by utmost resistance. This implies an old standard of judgment for rape. The term ‘consent’ should be reviewed in terms of its meaning and context, taking individual sexual autonomy into account. As Schulhofer (1998) stated, “Determining what counts as consent is fundamental to the effective protection of autonomy”. According to Cowling (1998), aspects of sexual consent include what to consent, intending to consent, communication of consent, and threats to free choice.

The issue of miscommunication, misinterpretation and/or token resistance between couples in sexual relationships must be resolved in both law reform and social norms. Rape law must change the focus to a “no means no” rule and the requirement of actual permission for sex (Schulhofer 1998). To resolve the controversy of women’s ambiguous consent to sex, new rape laws should regard individual autonomy by emphasizing the consent absent rule. A verbal-permission rule is more likely to reduce the possibility of men’s misunderstanding/misinterpreting sexual situations. In a date rape situation, a woman who engages in sexual foreplay has the right to say ‘no’ to sexual intercourse later on. As Schulhofer (1998) asserted, “The legal standard must move away from the demand for unambiguous evidence of her protests and insist instead that the man have affirmative indications that she chose to participate. So long as a person’s choice is clearly expressed, by words or conduct, her right to control her sexuality is respected”.

Efforts to change social norms would be another significant step in reducing the confusion of young people toward sex and enhancing responsibility for their sexual activities. Young people should be reoriented and educated in this issue through assertiveness training and rape prevention programs. Public media should also be developed to eliminate the wrong message about token resistance for the younger generation by emphasizing the respect of other persons’ sexual autonomy and accepting the rules of actual permission.

b. Public Education: Public media, as mentioned by the participants, constantly reinforce young people to believe that a token resistance to sex is acceptable behavior for women. This contributes to men’s misinterpreting women’s protests concerning the sexual advances of men. This study revealed that sex role socialization places women in the position of being passive and lacking the assertiveness needed to stand up for their sexual rights. In addition, a societal double standard allows men to express their sexual desires and have a sexual outlet while controlling women’s sexuality. It is viewed as the woman’s role to determine when a relationship will become more intimate and to assume responsibility for avoiding rape. If women do not behave according to social norms, they are not protected by law when they are raped. These attitudes support women’s oppression. Feminists have long argued that women are punished when they violate gender role expectations (Parrot and Bechhofer 1991). Findings from the present study suggest that public education is needed, especially for parents, teachers, and students, to raise awareness concerning the negative consequences of rigid sex role stereotypes and continuation of a social double standard that contributes to sexual violence in dating relationships. Such education should also emphasize social change initiatives (Koss and Harvey 1991) to change prevailing values and attitudes toward date rape issues, confront rape-supportive myths, and develop new understandings of date rape and women rape survivors.

Intervention and education programs should be developed to help students and school/educational administrators recognize date rape and confront its existence and its effect on high school and college students (Parrot 1991). Date rape prevention programs that include knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral training
should be launched in schools and universities. These programs should later be expanded through the public media to men and women in the same age groups who are not in the school system. Men should be educated to take more responsibility for their sexual activities. Women should be educated to know their sexual rights, and to recognize and identify date rape, sexual coercion, sexual harassment, and sexual assault in the university and school setting as well as to respond effectively and assertively to those situations. Educational programs also should emphasize the use of effective communication about sex and eliminate the myth of token resistance to sex. Both men and women should learn to take responsibility for their sexual decisions and actions.

Participants mentioned public media as a source for learning about sexual interactions. This finding suggests that public media could play a crucial role in educating young people. To launch a campaign on date rape reduction, it will be necessary to identify social policy that emphasizes public media development and effective strategies for public education that frees the younger generation from confusion.

1. Implications for Nursing and Health Profession Education and Service

Findings from this study indicate that young people in Thailand have limited access to health care services and under utilize the existing services following an episode of sexual violence in dating relationships. University students will choose not to report the incident and not to seek health care service because they are afraid they will be blamed or disbelieved by adults and health care providers, although they realize that date rape creates negative consequences for women who are date rape survivors. Findings show that young people have no information about where to go and whom they can talk with without experiencing more abuse.

Date rape creates health problems for women and places men at risk of getting and spreading sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection. Results from this study indicated that college students use no protection in sexual relationships with their dates. This situation is especially true in forced sexual encounters. If the rape causes a pregnancy, a young woman in Thailand who wants an abortion is seeking a procedure considered illegal. Consequently, it is often unsafely provided and may be a threat to her life. Nurses and health care providers need to be aware of this issue when providing care for adolescents and college students. Date rape must be addressed by all health professionals as an issue of the highest priority. Education for nurses and other health care providers should emphasize developing a sensitivity and awareness concerning the complexity of this issue. Early rape detection and screening protocols should be developed and initiated in school health programs and in regular health care settings. Nurses socialized to rigid gender-role stereotypes and rape myth acceptance beliefs may experience self-conflict when providing care for young women who have experienced date rape. Both cognitive and affective training should be included in the professional curriculum. Discussion about sex, especially with young people is considered difficult and inappropriate for lay persons in Thai society. Nursing programs must prepare nurses, especially school nurses, to work effectively with students regardless of their own personal and cultural beliefs, and thus, provide better health care for young people, especially women, who are rape survivors.

At the macro level, these findings can be used as baseline information for health administrators in developing appropriate health policy in the area of adolescent sexual health. Necessary health services for college students should be provided in school- and university-based settings. Services should include professional counseling programs and effective referral systems with local public health care delivery systems to ensure that college students will be able to access appropriate health care and other social/legal services as needed. College students should be provided with information about available professional health and counseling services and information about how they can gain access to these services in the freshman orientation.

2. Implications for Future Research

Findings from this study indicate that
mainstream culture and social norms and values of Thai college students influence date rape perception. Date rape issues will be visible if these obstacles can be urgently eliminated. Research can assist in date rape resolution and the development of effective prevention programs. However, to research date rape issues, investigators, who are not immune from this culture and value constraints, should be aware of their personal values and political biases as they design and conduct their studies. Muehlenhard et al. (1992) asserted that "no research is value neutral" (p. 220). Therefore, to study rape issues, especially date rape in Thailand, researchers should recognize their personal values and the political aspect involved in defining rape. Otherwise the resulting scientific evidence will contribute only to social control of women and will reinforce women oppression (Muehlenhard et al. 1992).

Data from the current study suggest that forced sex in dating relationships was occurring among Thai college students. The incidence or prevalence of date rape is unknown. Future research should endeavor to gain better estimates of the problem in order to gain public attention more effectively and to further policy initiation.

To further understand date rape issues in Thailand, future research should replicate focus groups with younger students and with young people who are not in formal educational settings, such as people in different categories of the work force. Future research on date rape should also focus on the intervention and evaluation of date rape education and prevention programs in school and university settings.

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