

## Sexual Culture and Family Life of Homosexual<sup>1</sup>

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**Key word:** Phenomenological, Homosexual, Sexual Culture and family life

### Background of study

In the era of capitalism, globalization and ideas of country's modernization, many people are pressed into a "marginalized group" or "unprivileged of financial, social, cultural, resources and political system". It dues to their diversity of nationality, religion, culture, tradition, believes and social value. However, there is another group of people who are driven to be an overlapping marginalization that practically found in the marginal society because of themselves having different sexual behavior and preference. This group of people is homosexual which is composed of other subordinate groups with various sexuality identity<sup>5</sup> or gender identity<sup>6</sup>, for example a group of men who love men (gay or male homosexual) and women who love women (lesbian or female homosexual). It includes people who would not like to be a male but they are sexually attracted to men and those who would not like to be a female but they are sexually attracted to women (transgender and transsexual) as well as those who prefer dressing clothes of the opposite sex or transvestite and those who love two sexes or bisexual.

In consideration of culture and history about ideas of sex and gender, it was noted that people who had characteristics without suited to their sex and gender like male-female would be arranged to be a marginalization, more than hundreds years. It was influenced by an evolution and popular construction of conceptual framework, which clearly found that people who were not in the sexual structured would be seen as valueless person and were often maltreated

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<sup>5</sup> Sexuality identity as one's self attribution of sexuality, which involves sexual preference, desires, practices, and gender identity

<sup>6</sup> Gender identity as one's self-definition or attribution base on one's acceptance, manipulation, rejection, or redefinition of one's culture gender role expectation

and be painful. Those people would be called in various names such as homosexual, hermaphrodite and transsexual<sup>7</sup> etc.

As people had been orderly arranged only two categories of sexual structured like male and female, so people with disqualification to male-female structured would be categorized into a new group of marginalization which normally had only two sexes (Heterosexism<sup>8</sup>). Therefore, according to the theory structured framework, these people were looked as doubtful identity, uncertain, dirty, lack of moral precept. As we considerate in term of sex and gender in the popular construction of framework, problems would be occurred. People who were ungroup of male and female structured can be categorized into many groups, which could be questioned, that "Are there only two categories of sex and gender<sup>9</sup> based upon the conceptual framework?"

For consideration of conceptual framework of sexual structures with two or more than two sexes in the Thai society; it was found that an idea of sexual (*Phet*<sup>10</sup>) structures in Thai society was not only based on paired sexuality system as male-female. "*Phet*" also means a set of plan and action in performing of individual status which is obviously in Buddhist ideas, for example, the sexual status can be appointed as the layman *Phet* in the world and Buddhist priest *Phet* in Dharma. In practical, if their performances of those people had not agreeable with the sexual status in the world and Dharma, they would be called "deviance (*Lakka Phet*)"<sup>11</sup>. Later, the word of "deviance (*Lakka Phet*)" was borrowed and used it together with male-female sexual conceptual framework in Thai modern society, and used this word with a group

<sup>7</sup> Thai language called *Kathoei*. Originally, a male or female hermaphrodite or neutered being. The royal institute Thai language dictionary (1982) defines the term as "A person who has both male and female genitals; a person whose mind and behavior are the opposite of their sex. In contemporary usage, the term refer to male and female transvestites and transsexuals. In can also denote a male homosexual or, occasionally, a female homosexual

<sup>8</sup> The assumption that identifying as heterosexual and having sexual and romantic attractions only to members of the other sex (than oneself) is good and acceptable, and that other sexual identities and attractions are bad and unacceptable. The assumption that anyone is straight whose sexual orientation is not known, usually coupled with a "blindness" to the existence and concerns of Lesbian Bisexual Gays.

<sup>9</sup> Gender, for the purposes of this article, is the perceived or projected (self-identified) masculinity or femininity of a person. A person's gender is complex, encompassing countless characteristics of appearance, speech, movement and other factors not solely limited to biological sex.

<sup>10</sup> Jackson (1997) demonstrator that Thai terminology reflects the absence of rigid conceptual distinctions between sex and gender, for both are denoted by the word "*phet*". *Phet* can indicate sexual acts, "to have sex" is expressed as "sexual intercourse (*rum-phet*)"; and *Phet* can also mean "sex" as in "female sex (*phet ying*)" "*phet ying*" like the masculine referent "*phet chai*" can also refer to the gendered identity of an individual rather than specifically to biological status – transgender males or *toms* may refer to themselves or be referred to as "*phet ying*" or "*phet chai*" respectively, indicating their gendered status as feminine or masculine. A female's statement that she is "*phet chai*" is not a claim to a male body or physical hermaphroditism.

<sup>11</sup> The term "*lakka phet*" means literally "to steal another's sex/gender," implying that one acting against one's "proper" sex or gender. Academics and authoritative-sounding journalists often use "*lakka phet*" as an equivalent to the western category of "transvestite". For example, a journalist defined "*lakka phet*" as people who "gain satisfaction from wearing clothing of the opposite sex" "*lakka phet*" unlike "third sex / gender" has an inherently negative implication and almost never used as a positive self-identity.

of people who had behaviors differ from the male-female sexual system, for example, a group of homosexual. This group is often called "misgendered (*Phit Phet*)"<sup>12</sup>.

Although the sexual conceptual framework in Thai society has a part to set up the sexual status in the world and Dharma but the male-female sexual conceptual framework is highly an influence in the current society, in particularly, it can be described in term of scientific and evolution theory. For an idea of sexual structured in the medical system, human is divided as male and female according to an anatomy. However, it has been changed in the Western when being found a person with combination of two sexes (Hermaphrodite). Anatomy is newly described in term of sexual behavior that is a man who played sexual relations both active and passive in oneself. Sexual status can be also described besides these categories by social behavior.

Studies on homosexuals in the past found that the majority of studies had hypotheses to these people being behavior deviance from the model of different sexual relations. It was considered as a norm and used to determine that perverse behavior was abnormal because of their mental or physical illness which needed to be treated and prevented. Many studies generally tried to find its problems and presented the prevention and improvement of that sexual behavior rather than studied to understand the life style of homosexual, which appear in the society along with the sexual relations.

### Problem Issue

According to the context of reform has played an important issue for Thai society development, it is necessary for everyone to have various knowledge and intellect about life around oneself including the method and important objectives for driving social movement. Knowledge of sexuality and inter-sexual relation structures in the society is a body of knowledge as the based of the whole relations system but there are rarely studies and promote to the public knowledge. Results of lacking a body of knowledge on sexuality is obviously found in current situations in Thai society with facing the crisis on sex such as crimes, violence, sexual transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS. Indistinctly on sexuality which be placed between the aspect of being controlled, closed and freely opened make an issue on sexes "*Phet*" is unclear status, unable to visibly establish its body of knowledge and unable to receive communication with appropriate process and contents.

The researcher is interested in the study of homosexual life style because beside this people being in the social structures with closed opportunity in developing potential or no choice for their life like other general

<sup>12</sup> The term "*phit-phet*" can be translated as "misgendered" or "mis-sexes" implying that one is acting against one's normative gender. Thus a *kathoe*y (feminine male) or a *tom* (masculine female) may be call "*phit phet*"

people, they have to face with prejudice and pressure from society. It due to homosexuals has their concept about family differ from other in the society. For example, they do not follow the role of father and mother and sexual norms like the majority do. Therefore, these people are against to the social framework although they know or do not know their behavior, and the punishment to these people has a various level severity depend on rigid of the society.

### Objectives of the study

1. To explore the sexual culture of homosexual
2. To examine the pattern of life's family and concept about family of homosexual
3. To examine the effect of idea family in Thai sociality toward the way of homosexual life.

### Research Methodology

This research design was the qualitative method using philosophy and concept theory of Phenomenology to describe meaning of human life and experience. Although in daily life and experience of individual is important for Phenomenology research, the objectives of study does not stop only at life's experience but also focus on the understanding how individual is able to construct the daily life's experience and how their behaviors in daily life is a significant for them. Phenomenology explains that if we would like to understand why people make this or that things or why they do like that, it needs to understand how people give definitions to things and how they mean their acting to that event so that the definition is an important goal of study. An analysis of Phenomenology is an interpretation to search meaning and find explanation of study things from the perception of doer.

The theory of Phenomenology by Alfred Schultz (1899-1959) has developed from the concept of Edmund Husserl, it was a Phenomenology with the hypothesis that human was a person to establish many definitions in society. To build the reality in society is the rules or regulations for people to co-understand and jointly implemented or living together. According to this concept, human is an important key factor to make social structures. However, the social structure was setup after the acceptance of people in general would be affected as a model for them to follow. The social structure was not the assumer at the beginning but it was a human productivity afterward.

An interesting point of Phenomenology theorist was a period time of life activities or daily life (Life World). It included studying the dialog about rules, regulations or activities of people during that particular time that why those people performed while other accepted its meaning, and how they made rules or proposed projects, in other ward how those people built their own world. This study is to search the reality perception of people in society



as its objectives, not take the theory to be a conceptual framework. It would take all information from people to support the conceptual framework by self theory.

Concept of Phenomenology is divided into many aspects according to the strengthen points of multiplicity thinker in philosophy. Although there is a different strengthens point but every Phenomenology has a same characteristic that is to except Empirical Realism, which the real thing is a visible perception that can be only touchable feeling. However, for the perception of Phenomenology, the real thing is unnecessary to be a perception with touchable feeling. Many things can be accessed by Intuition though understanding of feeling or inside of individual. With this perception, Phenomenology study would describe the appearances of Life – world of people, and the objectives of description are not only empirical issue but understanding how the appearance is significant to the observers so that the study is necessary to “deeply explore” until the background of that appearance.

Concerning about the selection of sample study, the important is to select appropriate people with focus on the understanding of appearance (the perception of observers) rather than the variety of representative's samples. For samples of this study, all selected people should have plenty and similar experiences. People with just new experiences or who have too much experience would be excluded in the study. Samples should be limited, not excess 10 persons per one researcher for easy implementation by using primarily deep interview.

## Summary

From reporting on history of “Homosexual<sup>13</sup>” who is “gay<sup>14</sup> or male homosexual” or “lesbian<sup>15</sup> or female homosexual” point out that being gay or being lesbian is established from the context as norm, tradition and common practice under the rules, regulations, agreement and ideal or philosophy of society.

<sup>13</sup> Homosexuality is usually contrasted with heterosexuality and bisexuality. Anthropologists divide homosexuality into three major types: egalitarian, gender-structured, and age-structured, of which one would generally be privileged over the others in a given society at a given time. As there are different biological, historical and psycho-social components to sex and gender, no single label or description will fit all individuals.

<sup>14</sup> Gay originally meant in English happy. In modern usage, the term is often applied interchangeably with homosexual though there are important differences between the terms. While “homosexual” relates specifically to sexuality, the term “gay” is a political or social marker. When people say they are gay, they are saying that they are open about their attraction to people of the same gender, not necessarily that they are sexually active with someone of the same gender, or with anyone at all for that matter. A person can be homosexual, but not be gay- terms such as closeted or the down low discreet, or bi-curious may apply in this situation. Similarly, a person can be gay, but not be actively homosexual- such is the case for some celibate individuals, such as monks, or for young people who have come out of the closet as gay for political reasons but are not yet ready to form a sexual relationship. Finally, the term “gay” can reasonably be applied to figures such as John Lennon who were open about their attraction to people of the same gender even if they were entirely heterosexual.

<sup>15</sup> lesbian - A woman who has significant sexual and romantic attractions to members of the same sex, or who identifies as a member of the lesbian community. Bisexual women often do not feel included by this term.

For the past 30 years of country development has affected to a change of family institution both in structures and family relationship system. Although family has been numerous changed in the earlier time, a meaningful ideal family is still important and inherits lasting until today. The definition of family with instilled for long time has composed of persons with different sexes living together at least two members, having sexual relations and blood bonding with their own children. Mostly society expected that women (Phu ying<sup>16</sup>) have to love or like male (Phu chai<sup>17</sup>) or men have to love or like female only. For the homosexuals, although their behavior looked like refusing a family by uninvolved with the opposite sex but there are a number of lesbians or female homosexuals and gays or male homosexuals that accept the philosophy of "Family" and have sexual relations with the opposite sex that is affected to their life.

This study found that the influence on concept of "Family" has affected to the homosexual life, counting from the definition of self because they were taken care by their family and social of different-sex love. The seal and negative explanation about homosexuals also shape their mind to be confused when they discover they differ from others that make these people have to hide their own feeling. According to the reporting on "Gay" history, it noted that gays must show themselves act like a man in general and want to avoid their feeling needs. They want to change their sexual behavior by following the sexual norm in the society, which is a normal to have sexual relations only with the different sex. Homosexuals think that if they have sexual relations with a commercial sex worker, it will change their behavior; but when they have paid for services, that behavior can not be changed. With an afraid of their friends know and mimic them, so they make an agreement with a commercial sex worker to tell their friends about having sex with her because they want to conceal their behaves to the others. When looking at this point, the process of learning about self of homosexuals is not easy because people who accept themselves must pass varied confusion or anxiety from the conflict between their needs and it's assigned by the society.

Regarding to the way of female homosexuals life who think that female have to match with male, so that a masculine woman (Thom<sup>18</sup>) has to play its role likes a man while a lipstick lesbian (Di<sup>19</sup>) also plays a role like a woman. It is a reflect image of conceptual framework being a family that imitate the relationship of different sex. Nevertheless, some female homosexuals give reasons for loving female that they do not want to marry with a man and want

<sup>16</sup> A colloquial term denoting both the biological sex and the gender of females. Literally, "female," "woman" or "feminine"

<sup>17</sup> A colloquial term denoting both the biological sex and the gender of males. Literally, "male," "man" or "masculine"

<sup>18</sup> A masculine woman. May be use to describe a woman who is masculine in appearance or who exhibits masculine mannerisms. A thom is often assumed to be a female homosexual who performs masculine roles.

<sup>19</sup> A term referring to a female woman, often also denoting a person's sexual preference, i.e., a feminine lesbian, a female homosexual, a femme or a lipstick lesbian.

to stay with a woman, not a man or one who copy like a man. Beside they refuse to follow the society rules that female have to be a pair with male; they also refuse to imitate the sexual relations with different sex. The influence on concept of family is an important factor to assign thinking method of performance. If a couple has received the greater concept of family, they are more likely to think and act similar to a couple of male-female relations. Whatever, it is a kind of relations; it has to be under the society which is an idea family. The perfect family is composed with father, mother and child. This is all influenced and pressured by an idea of family.

The researcher views that the phenomenon of homosexual is one aspect of society which is considered as the social problem similar to other phenomenon such as commercial sex worker, abortion and unwanted pregnancy, etc. These are all sexual behavior problems outside the family's framework that assigned by society and controlling of sexual behavior. Group of people who perform and out off the family's framework would receive its painful from the sociality seal. However, the gather of phenomenon of homosexuals may reflect to their desires regarding the way of life rather than being under the framework as assigned by society. As well as it is a reflect picture of various ways of life in the society.

The researcher realizes that the attempt to present the ways of life and idea of homosexuals with closer to the most reality is hard work and needs more times. It is hoped that the challenge of researcher to this study will be pointed to understand various ways of homosexual life in the society. It is the phenomenon which remains in the society and goes together with sexual relation

#### Reference to in the research

Pseudonym	Age	Status/Occupation	Sex	Identity
Kai	41	working class/office worker	Female	FSF*
Ann	38	middle class/sale officer in private business	Female	FSF
Uok	36	working class/private nurse	Female	FSF
Nai	33	middle class/private business owner	Male	MSM**
Lek	35	working class/Professional	Male	MSM
Jom	38	working class/office worker	Male	MSM

\* Female have sex with female "ying rak ying"

\*\* Male have sex with male "chai rak chai"

### Acknowledgments

To all the FSF and MSM who patiently answered my question and told me their life stories. I owe a huge debt of gratitude. I also grateful to my committees, my parent, whose support, both financial and emotional, made this research possible.

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