

THE DYNAMICS AND CONTEXTS OF  
MALE-TO-MALE SEX IN

# Indonesia and Thailand



Australian Research Centre  
in Sex, Health and Society



**LA TROBE**  
UNIVERSITY



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Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS)  
La Trobe University, Melbourne Australia

Professor Marian Pitts  
Mr Murray Couch  
Dr Stephen McNally  
Dr Jeffrey Grierson

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Method

This two country (Indonesia and Thailand) project was a qualitative study employing one-on-one semi structured interviews. A total of 105 interviews were conducted in five sites: Surabaya (25); Batam Island (10); Manado (20); Chiang Mai (25); and Bangkok (25). This report summarises eight major thematic domains across these five sites.

## Findings

### Sexual network evolution

Sexual networks emerge out of, and build upon, prior existing social networks. Networks, once established are constantly maintained, enlarged and re-configured through the flow of social activity. When men talk about male-to-male sex they construct an account of *what they do* with someone in particular, and somewhere in particular, rather than construct an account of *who they are*. The social networks which provide the possibilities of sexual networks are most commonly formed in places of education, workplaces, and establishments such as the military, the police, or religious institutions.

### Network overlaps

Sexual identity, opportunity and practice may exist within social networks as constitutive characteristics or as structural determinants. These play a part in determining the constitution of the network, the nature of the relationships within the network, and the structure of the networks.

The ways in which these factors are involved in the selection, maintenance and rupture of social networks include: current, past or potential sexual relationships; shared sexual identity; 'acceptance' of sexual identity or practice; and shared sexualised geographies.

Those with a similar sexual identity may be able to 'shorthand' social negotiation around desire and aspiration. This has the potential to create particular forms of social intimacy. Shared sexual identity may also act as a constraining factor in social relationships. Familial structures within identity networks may create taboos around sexual relationships.

Network members who share a social characteristic are likely to cluster together to some extent within the network or within sub-networks. Degree of openness about sexuality seems to be an important factor in network structure.

### Partnership formation and sexual health risk

Partnerships from casual to long term are often created from and built upon existing social and sexual networks. Friends are often critical in forming these partnerships. Familiarity with a

location and knowing who will be there at a particular time is important. Partnerships are often created through everyday practices; some are conscious and involve considerable planning and active seeking, while others are the result of an accidental meeting. Social and cultural contexts play an important role in what happens locally and how opportunities are identified. The use of condoms appears to be related to how well a partner is known; with casual partners there is a greater chance that a condom will be used. Condom use is selective and inconsistent.

### Sameness/difference

Differences in factors such as age and status between sexual partners within networks are common and often do not matter. Almost all of the respondents gave a liberal impression that differences in age, occupation or status didn't matter. This may be the result, however, of the already existing homogeneous character of social networks based on schools and workplaces.

### Women

Women occupy many places within the social and sexual networks of those who have male-to-male sex. Within social networks, women are often named as friends or confidants and may play a part in occupational networks also. There were marked differences in the degree to which male-to-male sex was discussed with female companions. Many of the respondents reported some lifetime history of sex with a woman. Some describe the sexual encounters as early explorations of their sexuality and sexual preference. However for others there are continuing sexual relations with women. The prospect of marriage and children was an important element for a number of respondents.

### Sexual practice

While there may be a broad range of sexual practice for the sample as a whole, for individual men the range of sexual behaviours engaged in most of the time tends to be small. The meaning of receptive anal intercourse is not fixed, but varies according to a range of contextual factors. The wider sexual repertoire may or may not include anal sex, giving and receiving, ejaculation, orgasm, 'small sex' (sex without penetration), rubbing, kissing and hugging. The breadth of the potential sexual repertoire was principally influenced by past experience, the degree and content of discussion among peers about sexual experience and pornography.

### Communities and context

It is clear that male-to-male sexual practice does not occur in a vacuum, but in intersection with the social values, norms and expectations of the neighbourhood, city, region and country. There is often considerable tension between the sexual and gender categories that form the common currency and the practices and relationships that constitute the men's social reality.

## Mobility/globalisation/internationalisation

The narratives of the beginning of male-to-male sexual activity are often associated with mobility and once formed networks are affected by members moving. The data reflect that rich phenomenon of local experience shaped by the global.

## Implications

The analyses conducted in this project by the country investigators and the La Trobe University team have clear implications for research and health promotion practice in the five sites studied, the two countries in which these sites are found and potentially for other settings in the Asia-Pacific region.

1. Male-to-male sexual practice is a more useful construct than 'men who have sex with men' (MSM) both as a descriptor and as an analytic frame. Male-to-male sexual practice focuses precisely on practices rather than on individuals or on presumed predisposing identities.
2. It follows from this that we need to be concerned with the broad social category of 'men' that will include a number of men who have male-to-male sex.
3. The current public health response in this area has not taken full advantage of the broader work in the areas of sexual health and sexualities. This study demonstrates that there are considerable opportunities for intervention design, policy development and program implementation that are able to integrate this body of work.
4. There is a clear need to focus on issues concerning sexual health, in general, for men. This involves a shift from an older model of public health that operates from a basis of surveillance and control to new strategies that focus on settings through which people move, and dynamic networks.
5. There is a need to address the considerable social sanctions against male-to-male sexual practices. A human rights framework is likely to offer considerable enhancement of the opportunities to intervene in this area.
6. Peer-based intervention remains central to the public health response. However, there needs to be greater clarity and precision in the employment of the constructs of 'peers' and 'peer networks'. Men who engage in male to male sexual practice may not, in many contexts, constitute a peer network, nor may they engage with interventions that presume that they are.
7. There are clear opportunities for peer education in the sites studied, but these opportunities largely relate to settings and contexts in which male to male sexual practice occurs, and not to categories of men.
8. Public health interventions are least useful when directed at individuals, since this requires some means of identifying those who have male-to-male sex. Rather, interventions can most usefully be directed at settings, events and occasions where men meet together and where there are possibilities for male-to-male sex.
9. Further research is required to extend and refine our understandings of the constitution of social and sexual networks.
10. The development of health promotion interventions could derive considerable benefit from the incorporation of smaller scale action research in early project planning.
11. The knowledge base established through this project should be extended to other settings in the Asia-Pacific region. This is in recognition that the contextual and dynamic aspects of these social and sexual networks are not universalised and that local, cultural and politico-legal factors may be critical in tailoring interventions in this area.
12. The qualitative examination of social and sexual networks suggests that there could be significant utility to be gained from formal quantitative sociometric network studies in this area. Research of this nature should rapidly follow the qualitative work to take full advantage of the contemporaneity of the findings.
13. The findings of this research project should be broadly disseminated, with a particular emphasis on those with responsibilities for the planning and delivery of interventions (particularly peer based interventions). The planning and refinement of such interventions could benefit from both the specific findings and from a broader understanding of the utility of a network approach to the dynamics and contexts of male-to-male sexual practices.

# INTRODUCTION

The lack of interest from international development organisations, donor agencies, and national and regional AIDS programs in the experiences of men who have sex with men (MSM) throughout the Asia-Pacific region has recently begun to change. This change can be witnessed through growing number of workshops, conferences, and programs conducted by these agencies and community based organisations (CBOs). This growing attention towards MSM is based on the recognition that sex between men occurs in all societies, and that in particular epidemiological contexts, sexual practices between men carry a high risk of HIV transmission. Understanding both the epidemiological realities and the dynamics of sexual practice between men has now become a significant priority in many Asia-Pacific countries.

The widespread denial that sexual behaviour occurs between men, along with stigmatization and discrimination towards men who engage in sex with other men continues to present a significant challenge to research into the social and cultural dynamics and contexts of male-to-male sex. Poor quality data and in many cases lack of data adds to this challenge.

A number of surveys indicate that between 3% and 4% of men in the general population in the Asia-Pacific region have reported "recent" sex with men (MAP 2005).

Research among young Thai males has shown varying proportions (3.3 to 16%) of men reporting same-sex experience (Dowsett, et al 2006). While there is no systematic sentinel HIV surveillance for populations of men who have sex with men in Thailand, the paucity of reliable and generalisable data on the current incidence of HIV in MSM in Thailand has begun to change. The first large scale epidemiological study conducted in Bangkok in 2003 found 17% HIV prevalence (van Griensven, et al 2005). Some data on male sex workers reports prevalence rates of up to 20% (Dowsett et al 2006).

The data that are available (eg Koetsawang 2003) suggest that, at least for certain populations of Thai men who regularly or occasionally have sex with other men, either in the context of sex work, affectional or opportunistic relationships, there may be a higher incidence of HIV infection than in the remainder of the population.

The majority of Thai based research to-date has been conducted on three distinct (but not mutually exclusive) populations:

- 1) Research on Kathoey (transgenders)
- 2) Research on military conscripts
- 3) Research on sex workers

The cumulative effect of this pattern of research, however, particularly given the position of male same-sex practice in Thailand, has created a significant silence on what may be the bulk of same-sex behaviour in the country. The bulk of the empirical work on MSM behaviour in Thailand has been focused on sex work. Most of the research on Kathoey pre-dates the HIV epidemic and operates with a project of social control and the amelioration of social disadvantage. Research on military conscripts has dominated the literature about MSM.

The structure of the research within Indonesia has so far created three 'cultures' of MSM:

- 1) male sex workers
- 2) transvestites of various kinds
- 3) various clusters of men who seek male sexual partners, sometimes loosely called 'gay men', sometimes as clients – local and foreign of MSW, and/or of *waria*, and the 'real men' partners of *homos* and *waria*

The few studies conducted in Indonesia to date offer some ideas on MSM sexual cultures operating within several culturally and locally specific, fluid, and importantly, remote contexts. What we know from existing studies (see for example Boellstorff 2005) is that MSM in Indonesia do not sit as a culture apart, but as a culture intrinsically embedded in Indonesian social and sexual life. Indonesia is a vast country of many distinct populations and cultures, and this makes any characterisations of an Indonesian MSM population extremely complex. Indeed, the ways in which MSM activity is characterised in public and private forums, by class and by location, makes this an impossible task.

As with Thailand, there are few reliable data on the prevalence of male to male sex in Indonesia. Estimates in different populations engaging in male-male sex range between 2.5% and 22% (Dowsett et al 2006). In a recent study, 59.3% of transgender sex workers and 64.8% of male sex workers reported recent unprotected anal intercourse with clients, and 53.1% of other MSM reported unprotected anal sex with male partners (Pisani et al 2004). The 2004–2005 Behavioral Surveillance Survey (BPS 2005) found that 56.4% of male respondents reported that they used a condom the last time they had anal sex with a male partner. Higher percentages were found in 25-plus age group (58% Vs 54% for <25).

Available literature indicates that there is no clearly identifiable group of men who can be labelled 'men who have sex with men', there is no singular MSM population and there are no key MSM groupings. The concept of MSM as a behavioural category masks the diversity and complexity of male-to-male sex. Often terms such as 'gay', and 'homosexual' are used as

unproblematic categories. The literature also reveals that there are no socially or self-defined groups of men that fit into an overarching category of MSM (Dowsett, et al 2006). What can be read from the available literature from and about Thailand and Indonesia is that the categories of men who engage in sex with other men are exhaustive. Students, factory workers, taxi drivers, hotel workers, military recruits, spray boys at the local shopping mall, and men who sell sex and more are present in past studies and again their voices are heard in this study. What appears from the growing data are that the possibilities of same-sex-seeking cultures and patterns of sex between men in Thailand and Indonesia are endless.

Another limitation to the existing knowledge base is that most HIV surveillance data on male-to-male sex are collected from a limited and predictable range of (often visible) sites where men go to meet one another (Dowsett, et al 2006). This seems to lead to a bias towards male sex workers and towards feminine-identifying and appearing men, since these are more visible. This approach produces results of limited utility.

Existing research, generally recognised as lacking a rigorous approach to methodology and analysis, indicate that a considerable amount of sex takes place between men within diverse configurations, some more firmly within easily identifiable networks than others, but in the main within relationships that are very fluid and changeable.

Given the local and specific configurations of the cultures of male-to-male sex, it is important to examine the dynamics and contexts of male-to-male sex in a number of sites within countries, and, given the mobility between countries in the region, to attempt to understand the phenomenon from a regional perspective. In addition, the findings of the research will inform the design of appropriate interventions targeting MSM populations or strengthen the current ones in the region.

This report outlines the methodology, findings and implications of a project which set out to:

***Explore and describe the social and cultural dynamics and contexts of male-to-male sex in Indonesia and Thailand in order to improve HIV interventions for them.***

The specific objectives of the project were:

1. explore and describe how, in relation to male-to-male sex, social and sexual networks are found, entered, maintained, changed and discarded
2. explore and describe the ways in which, in relation to male-to-male sex, social and sexual networks overlap, and operate in public and private spheres

3. develop understandings of how, in these social and sexual networks, partnerships of various nature are formed, and the way in which each type of partnership and/or relationship is assessed for sexual health risk
4. explore and describe how the dynamics of sameness and difference operate in these male-to-male social and sexual networks, including characteristics such as age, social class, power differentials, gender identity and ethnicity
5. understand the importance of women to, and the role that they play in, the lives of those involved in these male-to-male social and sexual networks
6. document the manner in which those involved in these male-to-male social and sexual networks seek information and support, and the issues around which such information and support is sought
7. explore and describe the sexual practices desired, preferred and engaged in within male-to-male sex in each country

A more detailed description of the operationalisation of these objectives can be found in appendices A and B.

# METHOD

This project was a qualitative study employing one-on-one semi structured interviews. The choice of a qualitative methodology for this study reflects the current paucity of systematic and detailed understandings of the constructs under investigation. Semi-structured interviewing allows for the exploration of the complexities and particularities of the contexts in which male to male sex is experienced. Rather than beginning from a set of limited categorisations of experience, behaviour and meaning, the interviews have allowed the participants' narratives, descriptions and conceptualisations to shape our understanding of these experiences.

## Study sites and sampling

Two countries were selected for this study on the basis of the aims of the research and existing contacts. The selection of sites within the countries was arrived at through negotiation of all involved parties, taking into account considerations of budget, logistics, infrastructural support and the need to obtain a usefully diverse sample of project participants.

## Research Methodology

The recruitment technique of snowballing was employed, and the sample was shaped through the procedure of theoretical sampling. It was an aim of the recruitment to maximise heterogeneity in the sample (e.g. across age, marital status, locality, degrees of visibility etc). Decisions about categories to begin recruitment differed in each site and were driven by the needs of the research design, and the intention to include previously under-researched groups.

Participants provided informed consent, either by signing a consent form or by giving verbal consent, prior to the interview. The number of interviews completed in each site is set out below:

Sites	Number of interviews
Surabaya	25
Batam Island	10
Manado	20
<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>55</b>
Chiang Mai	25
Bangkok	25
<b>Thailand</b>	<b>50</b>

In-depth, semi-structured interviews, using open questions were used to collect data. Interviews were audio taped, transcribed and then translated into good-enough English. No personal identifying information was collected, and interviews were conducted in a private setting agreed to by the participant.

## Interview Schedule for Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview schedule comprised open questions, designed to *explore and describe* the social and cultural dynamics and contexts of male-to-male sex in Indonesia and Thailand. The open questions addressed each of the study's objectives. A framework in which the questions are placed (including the relation to the research objectives and its lines of enquiry) is attached at Appendix B. The open questions were preceded by a set of demographic questions, and a question about recruitment into the study.

The analysis of the data involved the progressive establishment of key issues, concepts and themes through which the data was examined and referenced, remaining as close as possible to the language of the data itself. The data was then indexed, and an interpretation developed through the creation of typologies and associations between themes. Training was provided to the Country Investigators, based on the use of the qualitative software, NVivo, and covered data management, analysis and interpretation.

The country investigators conducted the initial coding and analysis of the data in the original language. During the mid-project country visits the La Trobe team worked with the country investigators to finesse this analysis. The country investigators prepared reports on the major findings from this analysis. A summary of the on the major findings from the country analyses follows.

This report does not attempt to replicate the analyses conducted by the country investigators. Rather the analysis offered here is an attempt to integrate the findings of the country teams and offer some reflections and discussion of the themes emerging from an overview of the larger set of data. In arriving at the discussion within each of the thematic domains in this report we have utilised the analyses conducted by the country investigators, the good-enough English translations of interviews, the material arising from workshops conducted with the country investigators at various stages in the project and contextual information gathered during the mid-project site visits.

*Note on the presentation of quotes:* Quotes used in this report are taken from the 'good-enough' English language translations provided by the country investigators, edited for brevity and readability. Within the quotes, "I:" and text in italics refers to the interviewers' comments and "R:" refers to the respondents. Where there is no label, the text is that of respondents. An ellipsis (...) indicates that intervening material has been removed to improve readability without altering the substance of the quote.

# SUMMARY OF COUNTRY REPORTS: INDONESIA

The three Indonesian study sites were Batam Island, the East Java city of Surabaya, and Manado, in north Sulawesi. Each site has an internationally funded program implemented by a community-based organization, and the selection, training and employment of the interviewers in built research capability in these organizations. Fifty-five interviews were conducted across the three sites, and interviewees ranged in age from 18 to 56 years. Most were in their 20s (29), and 30s (17). The sample was heterogeneous in terms of social class, ethnicity, faiths and employment type. No respondent self-identified as being HIV+.

## Findings

Data from all of the three sites indicate that the primary networks of respondents have a social rather than a sexual basis. While some are connected to potential sexual relations, such as networks of *waria*, gay men's and male sex worker networks, and some centred on clubbing and entertainment networks, most networks are related to things other than sex - e.g. employment and mobility (motorcycle taxi and taxi drivers, travelling salesmen, itinerant evangelists, migrant workers). Contact for sex occurs in a number of social locations. Town squares, shopping malls, clubs and discotheques, internet cafes, mosques, churches and prayer meetings were all identified as venues for finding sexual partners.

A wide repertoire of male-to-male sexual techniques were reported: masturbation (including group masturbation in all-male gatherings), mutual masturbation, rubbing (frottage), receptive and insertive inter-femoral sex (sex between the thighs), receptive and insertive oral sex, rimming, and receptive and insertive anal sex, in addition to insertive vaginal sex for those who also have sex with women. Respondents report in terms of a search for pleasure, rather than a preference for particular sexual practices. There was a high level of understanding about safe sex practices. Men who were married constructed the meaning of sexual intercourse with wives as being associated with the duty of marriage and family, and not as pleasure seeking in the way they described sex with *waria* and other men.

To varying degrees, respondents reflected the view that male-to-male sex is socially transgressive and not readily accepted in general. Anxiety was reported most often by self-identified 'gay men', reflecting fear of being discovered by family, and from the pressure to form a heterosexual family. There was some evidence of the use of discourses of democracy and basic human rights, including the right to be different in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation, reflecting increasingly common uses of discourses on democracy and human rights since the change of regimes in 1998.

## Implications for Interventions and Further Research

Field situations change rapidly, so what is needed is not only the information itself, but how to go about finding out about gay men, other MSM and *waria* with regard to the dynamics and contexts of their sexualities.

Based on the findings of the research, the Indonesian team offer the following recommendations:

1. Programs for *waria* need to address the issue of stigma and discrimination, especially violence (physical and sexual) perpetrated by members of the police, municipal police and military.
2. The issue of poverty is critical to the achievement of good sexual health for most *waria*.
3. Programs for gay men must include psychological counselling related to sexual identity issues, especially with regard to heterosexism from families. Creative means must be devised to reach out to closeted gay men, such as using the internet, where many now meet each other.
4. Clubs and entertainment venues need to be utilised more in conveying sexual health messages, without segmenting the target audience too rigidly. We should assume that differently orientated sexual activities might occur in this context.
5. We should engage with more liberal and progressive faith-based organizations to tackle issues such as homophobia and transphobia in the more conservative factions.
6. Learning from the meanings given to condoms and lubricant, we should be more aggressive in devising messages connected to transgressive pleasure seeking in certain subcultures.

# SUMMARY OF COUNTRY REPORTS: THAILAND

The two study sites in Thailand were Bangkok and Chiang Mai. These are the two large urban centres, metropolitan Bangkok has a population of 6,355,144 and Chiang Mai a population of 174,438. They are also centres in which there are visible gay business infrastructures and established NGOs providing support and health promotion activities with MSM populations.

The investigators from Mahidol University achieved a sample of 50 interviews equally divided between the two sites. Data collected on the place of birth of participants indicates a high degree of mobility that may be associated with MSM migration to urban areas, or more general migration within Thailand. Of the 50 participants, 6 were born in Bangkok, 13 in Chiang Mai and 28 in other provinces.

Four key themes were identified as the main focus of the Thailand report: social networks; sexual networks; the dynamics of MSM sexual relations; and sexual practice and health risk.

## Social networks

The researchers report that social networks of the men in the study are “generally formed along [the lines of] their sexual identification, degree of openness or revealing of one’s sexual identity and socio-economic status.” These interviews suggest that while there is considerable variation in the composition of social networks, there is notable homogeneity in them, particularly in regard to ‘educational and occupational status’. The researchers note that there is a degree of ‘segregation’ between “those MSMs who act and dress as general men (gay) and those who consider themselves as women and act and dress like women in the general public (TG).” This however is not universal and the interviews suggest a degree of connectedness between gay and TG networks either through specific individuals or shared social spaces.

## Sexual networks

The researchers categorise the relationships of the study participants with other men in four groups: casual relationships; low-commitment relationships (*Gik*); steady relationships (*Faen*); and spousal relationships. The interviews suggest that men engage with these, or similar categories in a knowing way and understand the categories as a convenient way of organising the complexities of their social and sexual lives and the instrumentalities of meeting and relating to partners.

## Dynamics of MSM sexual relations

The authors report that most of the study participants have more than one male partner at any one time, generally across the relationship categories they have used. Partners may move from one of these categories to another.

## Sexual practices and health risk

The authors report on a broad range of sexual practices among the men interviewed. Importantly, the authors conclude that “Our data ... suggest no association between the role in sex act and sexual identification of gay men. For example, those who identify themselves as “king gay men,” are believed to take only an insertive role and those who are “queen gay men” take only receptive role. According to our data such belief is not confirmed.”

In terms of sexual health the authors report that condom use appears to be mediated by the degree of “intimacy” or “commitment” in the relationship. Condom use appears to be most common and consistent with casual partners. “For partners ... such as *faen* or somebody who is treated as “spouse or husband” (special one) a condom is often not used; or it is used but not consistently.”

The authors identify three areas that are important for policy; these are: the importance of sexual pleasure and multiple concordant relationships among the men; the lack of fit between stated sexual/gender category and actual sexual practice; and the relationship between condom use and partner type.

# THEMES

This section summarises the major themes emerging from the analyses conducted by the country investigators, the good-enough English translations of interviews, the material arising from workshops conducted with the country investigators at various stages in the project and contextual information gathered during the mid-project site visits. This analysis is organised into eight major thematic domains: sexual network evolution; network overlaps; partnership formation and sexual health risk; sameness/difference; women; sexual practice; communities and context; and mobility/globalisation/internationalisation.

# SEXUAL NETWORK EVOLUTION

Accounts of the evolution of sexual networks in all five sites are marked by the way in which they emerge out of, and build upon, prior existing social networks. In particular, it is common for sexual networks to be rooted in the social networks established in places of education and employment. Apart from their beginnings in social networks, accounts of sexual networks (and, indeed sexual activity) are marked by detail that is very specific in relation to place (e.g. geography and site) and situational contingency (i.e. what was possible because of where and with whom the respondent was). That is to say, the accounts are marked by opportunities and learnings which emerged, rather than being anticipated or planned for. In moving from social situation to the building of a sexual network, there is extensive reliance on electronic linkages. Most of the respondents live and operate in an environment dense with email, internet, telephone (for voice and texting) and they report very strategic use of these. Networks, once established are constantly maintained, enlarged and re-configured through a constant flow of social (and not single-mindedly sexual) activity. A mark of the networks so formed and maintained are that they are relatively small and fluid. The social networks in which the sexual networks are nested almost always include a number of men who engage in male-to-male sexual practice; although sometimes the social networks are themselves exclusively formed of men engaged in male-to-male sexual practice.

As commented on above, accounts of network formation and maintenance almost always have a spatial component. Detailed reference is made to: locations of employment or study; specific towns and regions; types of entertainment venues; particular entertainment venues; particular civil spaces (gardens, port, in front of cinema etc); where they live; where a sex partner lives; and rented spaces (hotel, boarding house). In reading these accounts, it appears that when men talk about male-to-male sex they construct an account of **what they do** with someone in particular, and somewhere in particular, rather than construct an account of **who they are** (in an identity sense). This appears to be the case particularly in the Indonesian accounts.

As observed above, much of the evolution of networks occurs through social connections and social activities, e.g. the sharing of meals and shared social spaces like saunas.

*I: You said you have regularly been meeting with these friends. How? Are you living together in a dormitory?*

R: No. We normally have some meals, go to saunas or entertainment places at Silom areas together.

*I: How often have you gone to either saunas or Silom?*

R: I cannot just say often or not often. It depends on if our convenient time is the same time. If my friends have free time, but I don't, so we won't meet. But if you ask only about me, I do go these places quite often.

*I: Are you going alone?*

R: Yes.

*I: How often have you gone alone?*

R: Now, it's quite often as I have no jobs, so plenty of free time.

(Bangkok, T101)

When asked where he goes to meet up with friends, this respondent replies:

R: Mostly, a shopping mall. Sometime [the] fitness [club]. We usually go to gay pubs and nightclub in Bangkok to dance.

*I: Do you or your friends get guys from those places?*

R: Never. We go there just to have fun, not sex.

(Bangkok, T109)

The social networks which provide the possibilities of sexual networks are most commonly formed in places of education (schools, universities) or workplaces. In some cases these social networks centre on institutions such as the military, the police, or religious institutions.

R: In elementary we have not yet... had sex right away. Usually in elementary it's just puppy love, monkeying around.

*I: Okay, let's move on to the serious love.*

R: Oh... that was in second grade of junior high, a love story ... with my physical ed. teacher, bo!

(Manado, I130601)

The following example from Chiang Mai demonstrates how, although these settings may offer opportunities for male to male sex, the experiences are not always welcomed or consensual.

R: I had been studying between Mattayom 1-6 in the temple while I was a novice. But the point is there was such behaviour in the temple. Someone who had power there and monk who had been ordained many years and also chief monk, took me to sleep with ... They took me to bed to peck on my cheek. Then I became relaxed and also felt the warmth ... There was a monk who had been ordained many years, came to me every night. Though I locked the door, he climbed along the beam ... to see me every night. He must have brushed his teeth with 'Close up' toothpaste. I remember because its commercial was very popular then. He must brushed his teeth before had sex with me. I didn't like him because he wasn't handsome so I [did] 'Mai-sao'...

*I: What does it mean 'Mai-sao'?*

R: You don't know Mai-sao? It's a bamboo. I used it to poke him.

*I: Do you mean you used Mai-sao to expel him.*

R: He really annoyed me. He came to me every night so I let him do whatever he wanted.

(Chiang Mai, T209)

There are also numerous examples in which men are able to reconfigure institutions and contexts that are ostensibly for other purposes as opportunities for sex and social connection with other men.

R: I used to really enjoy chatting .... when I was in high school, but I haven't for the past three years, or two at least.

*I: What chat group did you join?*

R: #gim

*I: Eh, how did you find out?*

R: I found out from a friend, a girl. she told me that we didn't have to go via #gim but via the Bethany channel. The Bethany church. ... my girl friend knew a guy, they were friends, and I got to know him. At the time I wasn't thinking about gays, you know, [ke kina], I thought as friends we could talk about what we were going through... 'Hey, let's get together.' 'Ok, if you want.'

*I: Ok, but this couldn't have had anything to do with sex, right?*

R: So we decided to get together. He was 28 years old. As for our relationship, we didn't make love. No, we didn't, didn't even have sex. Our friendship was just like older and younger religious brothers. ... But what confused me was that why would an older brother from the church on the congregation kiss a younger brother from the church on the lips? Was that ok, I had to think about it first.

*I: Was it a French kiss or just on the lips?*

R: A French kiss, and I really enjoyed it. I was confused ... oh God.

*I: But there wasn't any follow-up?*

R: No, I just thought of him as my older religious brother.

(Manado, I30207)

In some cases the beginnings of the practice of male-to-male sex happened during the high school years. Sometimes the sex is with a teacher (sometimes involving pleasure and consent, sometimes not), and in some cases the sex is with a peer.

R: I began to like one of my classmates. He was a musician. I was a singer. I didn't express being gay. I had man personality. During going to [high school], I didn't sleep with him but I wanted to. I'd like to let him know I liked him because it's the last year. It came out I slept with another friend. He was gay and asked me to have sex with.

*I: Did he know before that you are the same as him?*

R: He may watch me and could feel it. So we had sex that night.

*I: That's the first time?*

R: The first time to have sex with man who is friend, really the first time.

*I: In a bedroom.*

R: In a tent.

*I: Tent for two of you.*

R: We had sex. I did oral sex for him, kiss his lip in a child way, not very deep.

(Bangkok, T115)

The networks formed during school sometimes continue as the basis of social and sexual connection post-school. One interviewee (Surabaya, I21802) gave an account of how he keeps in touch with friends from his Islamic boarding school through SMS, and phone.

Networks formed in tertiary institutions sometimes work in the same way, and workplaces become the base of many of the social networks (often with a diverse composition) which open up into a sexual network

One Manado interviewee (I30106) first met other men for sex when he was working in a hotel in Manado. He worked late one night and had to stay over at a workmate's house because there was no transport. They hugged and kissed "etcetera". He was scared because it was his first experience.

In some cases, the sexual network which flows from the social context of work includes peers, sometimes it includes customers or clients. Sometimes the networks (social and sexual) are spatially constrained.

## Modulation of behaviour

As the respondents give accounts of their circulation through social and sexual networks, they very often report on the need for self-monitoring and modulation of their behaviour to make it consistent with context, and to avoid 'recognition' (say, from family) through the toning down of any excess of affect, and keeping closer to the normative performance of 'masculinity'.

This was the case even among some katoey. Sometimes the mention of behaviour modulation concerned others.

At my work place, nobody notice I'm katoey. When I think about this point, I think I'm gay because I don't behave like katoey screaming. I'm not like that. I already passed that stage. I'm not a kid anymore. Before, there was a katoey-screaming group. I didn't like that, I was in the antigroup. For now, I think I'm gay.

(Chiang Mai, T201)

*I: How do you keep it so other people don't find out about it?*

R: To keep from others to find out?

*I: Well, y'know, so others won't find out.*

R: Ouw, that... well, how do I say? Umm... in... it's just that I, um, for me... I mean... I don't want those that are not like that to find out. Y'know. Like at the office, y'know, I behave normally.

*I: 'Like that' you mean like what?*

R: That are gay like me. Well, if [we're] both gay then [he] would automatically know, y'know, and I won't need to cover it up. Well, I mean automatically he would definitely know that we're both gay. As far as how we do it outside, well, we got ways to cover it up.

(Batam, I10203)

# NETWORK OVERLAPS: PUBLIC/PRIVATE

It can be seen from the interviews conducted in these five sites that sexual identity and sexual practice play important roles in the construction and regulation of social networks. A distinction needs to be made between networks of sexuality and sexual networks. Networks of sexuality can be seen as social networks constructed around shared sexual identification that may or may not offer sexual or romantic opportunities. Sexual networks can be seen as structures that are built around sexual partnering and sexual opportunities *per se*. Sexual networks as independent structures are rare within these interviews, existing primarily in the context of commercial sex or sexual exchange. More often it is the social networks that are the primary relational structure in which these men operate. Thus, it is perhaps more useful to examine the place of sexual identity, sexual opportunity and sexual practice within social networks than to examine the overlap between artificially segregated social and sexual worlds.

Sexual identity, opportunity and practice may exist within social networks as constitutive characteristics or as structural determinants. That is these elements play a part in determining the constitution of the network (the members), the nature of the relationships within the network (for example offering opportunities for sex or romance, creating constraints and taboos around sexual relationships, structuring the context of intimacy as one that includes or excludes discussion of sexuality), and the structure of the networks (through the integration or compartmentalising of the network on the basis of sexual identity).

## Network Constitution

Sexual identity is rarely the primary determinant of social network constitution. Social networks evolve over a lifetime and arise from a range of social processes and settings including schooling, family, work, and geographic mobility or stasis. The ways in which sexual identity, opportunity and practice are involved in the selection, maintenance and rupture of social networks include: current, past or potential sexual relationships with network members; shared sexual identity; 'acceptance' of sexual identity or practice; and shared sexualised geographies (bars, parks, cruising areas, cities or neighbourhoods).

R: Chatting ... or else, well, from friends. For example, I have a friend, then he would introduce, and introduce, introduce... so that's what the network is like.

I: Which was first, the physical community or the internet community?

R: The physical network came first. I've been playing on the internet for only... well, about three years, two years... three years at most.

(Surabaya, I20402)

Shared sexual identity may play an important part in the selection or maintenance of social network members. The motivations for socialisation with similar others are the same as one would find for any other important social characteristic. These include shared experience or history, shared world view, information sharing, social support, solidarity and commonality of social geography or social setting.

We all know ourselves what we are, what we like. But the matter is whether or not we can reveal that. If we reveal we are gay, we don't know what to happen to us. I myself was so scared to come out. I was scared of being hated by friends, unacceptable in community, and having to be alone. I used to be drastically and sarcastically talked of by friends at home, my friends in rural area. It was quite drastically for me so I decided not to disclose myself. Also at work, I disclosed but until I met with the one who could guess about me and we went out to entertainment places together. And this just widened my network; I started to have more and more friends.

(Bangkok, T101)

Acceptance of sexual identity or practice may also influence the selection of social network members, though this is more evident as an influence over the type of relationship with others or the intimacy or longevity of the relationship.

Shared sexualised geographies may lead to the development of social relationships in much the same way as school or workplace may facilitate social connection.

R: Not a walk-in customer. But he was in a network. He knew where he could get the service

I: How did he know?

R: Through friends. It was like a chain system. He came to see me and would bring another friend along. This new friend would keep my contact. Whenever there was opportunity, he would arrange to see me.

I: Why did this network broaden all over the country?

R: We met in the community fair. We went together as a large group and would meet another large group. Then we would keep contact of everyone.

I: Large network resulted from having members who came from different places.

R: Different places all over. My first date was in Bang San Beach

I: Who was he?

R: He was from this network and already slept with my co-worker. I was a junior staff so I had to wait for my turn after the senior already tried with him. It was like a rule at work.

(Bangkok, T108)

## Network Relationships

Sexual identity, opportunity and practice play a more evident role in the development of relationships with social network members. It is important to note that both the presence and absence of these characteristics may be evident (and important) in the social relations with network members. Current, past or potential sexual relations with the network member have a clear role in the type of relationship that exists, though this relationship can in no way be universalised either within or across these interview sites.

*I: Ok. Do people in your own social network also become your sexual partners?*

R: Yeah of course.

*I: From which circles?*

R: From student circles ... the sex network from student circles, ojek (motor bicycle taxi service) friends who are junior high school students who always meet me and immediately make love, [I] take them to the boarding house.

(Manado, I30503)

Sexual identity also influences the nature of social relationships. This is not as simple as particular relationality existing with other networks members based on their sexual identity, but rather sexual identity becomes one of the aspects involved in the negotiation of a relationship. This can be seen in a number of ways in these interviews. Those with a similar sexual identity may, through shared experiences or world view, be able to 'shorthand' social negotiation around desire and aspiration. This is evident when men talk about 'similar others' with whom they do not have to 'explain themselves' or 'hide from'. This has the potential to create particular forms of social intimacy that are not available with other network members. It is important to note that shared sexual identity may also act as a constraining factor in social relationships. Two men who utilise the identity of 'gay king', at least in some settings and contexts, may be constrained in the degree to which they can express mutual desire. Similarly, familial structures within identity networks (for example 'sisterhood') may create taboos around sexual relationships, either between the men themselves, or with the past partners of the men. These constraints also become evident when the male-to-male sexual practice has an aspect of material or social exchange. There are implicit, and occasionally explicit, restrictions placed on access to other men's clients, *kiks* or casual sexual partners. There are, of course, contrary examples in the texts, where men may share, concurrently or sequentially, clients and casual partners.

*I: How about friends at work, or else?*

R: I don't like being friends with men. I think they are too fussy that making me headaches. Most of male I know are my customer, and there are a lot.

*I: How intimate are you with your female friends?*

R: Most of them are at moderate level.

*I: Can you draw a diagram of your network?*

R: Do you mean sexual network or just network of friends?

*I: Both.*

R: No sexual network could be drawn within my group.

*I: Nobody has sex with someone in the same group.*

R: No, not at all. It is not appropriate. It is the serious rules, not to do so.

(Bangkok, T102)

## Network Structure

Sexual identity, opportunity and practice may have critical roles in the structuring of social networks. To some extent most interviewees described some level of clustering within their social networks on the basis of these factors. That is, network members that share a social characteristic (like sexual identity) are likely to cluster together to some extent within the network or within sub-networks. For example other network members who are also *waria* may form a distinct sub group within a network, or other men who have sex with *kathoey* may form a cluster within a workplace network.

*I: Now about sexual relationship network. Recently you said there are many types in your group: active, passive, bi and others type. Also there are women in the group. As you've seen, is there any sexual relationship within the group including yourself?*

R: Among friends maybe no. Friend is friend and lover is something else.

*I: You've just said sometimes being lovers then join the group, meet each other, know each other.*

R: Know but not close. Only knowing the name of that person, this person.

*I: Is there anybody in the same group as you've seen or known having sexual relationship within the group?*

R: Maybe not. Going to have sexual relationship, they won't be friend. But if being friend, no sexual relationship. Personally, I can't have sex with friend.

(Chiang Mai, T204)

Degree of openness about sexuality seems to be an important factor in the degree to which sub-networks based on sexual identity or practice are segregated from other parts of the social network. In addition, the fit between a person's extant sexual identity and practice and the social expectations around these also seems to play a structural role. By this we mean not just the fit between broad societal expectations (for example to marry and have children) but between cultural norms associated with male-to-male sex (for example to be either active or passive in anal sex, or to have sex with either 'real men' or *waria*, but not both).

In this way it can also be seen that the notions of 'public' and 'private' are far more dynamic and contextual than is usually implied through the use of these terms. From these interviews we can see that the construction of public and private domains for sexual expression may be re-configured contextually in that what constitutes private in the context of family and work may constitute public within a sub-network of those who share a similar sexual identity or sexual practice. In addition, the role of social expectations, as discussed above may operate at different levels of private/public depending on the social context. For example, in a more public domain (such as in a gay sauna in Thailand) an individual may utilise the social category of 'gay queen', but among more intimate friends or sexual partners may distance themselves from the category as it is not completely compatible with his sexual desires or practices.

In addition to considering the constitutive and structural aspects of the sexualisation of social networks, we can also examine the mechanisms and processes involved in the development of networks that are to some extent informed by sexual characteristics. These can include the mechanisms whereby sexual relationships facilitate the formation of social networks and mechanisms whereby social networks facilitate sexual opportunity.

And there's one more, one group from the chatting network who ... I consider to be my little brother. We're at the same university, but in different faculties. We often get together, still ... go out together. Then there's a group from ... I don't know from where ... the important thing is he knows my hand phone number if he wants to call me. He's from Tomohon. Now ... now he has moved to Bitung because he works in Bitung now. There's a group guy from Malaysia, but he's Manadonese, Chinese, Chinese, Chinese but born and raised in Manado. He went to elementary school through senior high school in Manado. But he's going to university in Malaysia now. When he was on vacation he came to Manado, came home to Manado, meet me and we dated [*jadian*]. Now he's gone back to Malaysia, I don't ... I've broken up with him.

(Manado, I31003)

One mechanism through which sexual relationships influence the formation of social networks is the interlinking of social networks through the establishment of sexual partnerships of various types. This interlinking brings together two previously unconnected or weakly connected networks, offering additional opportunities for social connection and social exchange. Similarly, the rupture of partnerships may transform social network structure. Networks may also be linked through the establishment of connections that are formed around sexual identity and this may bring particular social and material benefits or risks. For example, some men discussed how linking into social networks through their relationships offered employment or business opportunities, while others discussed how these relationships could bring the risk of social exposure or discrimination.

The other major mechanism that influences the formation of social networks is geographical concordance. This may operate at micro or macro levels. Migration to cities or neighbourhoods that offer sexual opportunities brings together men that may otherwise have not encountered each other. This is particularly striking where such geographies create the potential for social connection between men of divergent socio-economic status. At a more micro level, specific social geographies such as saunas, shopping centres or bars may offer similar opportunities.

Among the mechanisms through which social networks offer potentiality for sexual contact are those that create higher concentrations of potential partners. These include where an individual links into a social network with a number of men who also have sex with other men, and where social networks frequent geographies that offer sexual potential. In addition, the reconfiguration of relationships within social networks may offer sexual opportunities. For example, when a relationship within the network ends there may be an opportunity for the establishment of a new relationship. This however may be constrained by systems of taboo within the network.

# PARTNERSHIP FORMATION AND SEXUAL HEALTH RISK

The stories that these men tell show how partnerships, from casual to long term, are often created from, and built upon, existing social and sexual networks. Friends are often critical, even catalysts in forming these partnerships. Knowledge frequently gained from friends and networks helps to provide opportunities for men to find other men. Familiarity with a location (e.g. 'behind the marina', or 'in the foyer of a hotel') is important, as is knowing who will be there at a particular time. Many of the encounters are often discernible by a specific place and a particular time.

Finding a partner often involves a conscious act connected to a specific place and time. These men hang out at billiard halls, behind the marina, at the market but only after 10pm. They log in to chat rooms; hang out at a particular internet café because of the men who go there, and they do so because they know they may find a partner. However, this is not to dismiss the accidental encounter.

Many of the encounters which these men speak of are ordinary. The partnerships are often created through everyday practices; some very conscious and involving considerable planning and active seeking, while others are the result of an accidental meeting. Some evolved slowly, others were instant. The ordinary nature of finding a partner for sex often presents itself through everyday practices:

He lives on my street, in the same housing complex  
...Met him hanging out on the street – had a relationship  
with him for 6 months.

(Manado, I31202)

Networks, both social and sexual are often critical; however they are not always necessary.

## Seeking out opportunities

Prospects present themselves in many different ways. Social networks can be vital for men to know not only where to go to find a partner, what to expect, but also how to act. One respondent tells about how to make the most of opportunities surrounding weddings in Manado.

What's unique is that they get together whenever there's an event, when there is a wedding...when there's a wedding, they gather together because they know for sure the people who put on makeup on the bride and groom are waria... that's why they come...In the daytime they see there are waria who themselves are dressed to the nine. So they make a date for later in the evening...Now those guys are all straight guys, right. So, if we look straight, we wouldn't get laid. So whether you like it or not, you camp it up!

(Manado, I30207)

Finding the opportunity sometimes is not enough. Finding the nerve is also important. The following quote is not unique, whereby one respondent in Bangkok recalled a time when he was travelling home on the bus and he plucked up the courage to say hello:

R: [O]ne day in the evening after finishing work, I met him, so I went to say hello to him, and he was okay. He was a good-looking one that I prefer.

I: *Having set eyes on him, you went to talk to him at once?*

R: Yes, when he saw me (he knows I am katoey), he ...talked to me.

I: *Really, Was it so easy?*

R: Yes, then I persuaded him to my apartment... By then I had not been afraid, I had learnt and developed myself... this one I would like to get, I must dare to talk. But firstly I was scared. I was on the bus until it passed my apartment... at first I was fearless, I met him while I was taking a bus at the Victory monument... I didn't go hunting for a man... He was a waiter at [bar, Silom area]. He was handsome and so cute; ... Then I went to talk to him until the bus went past his home.... We talked to very long, he did not get off the bus ... I persuaded him get off at the entrance of the side-road, my area. Finished talking and eating, I let him to my room. I trusted him because he looked straightforward. I was not afraid because there was friend's room by me, if anything happened, I would phone to her. ... Having finished sexual intercourse I told him to go back home, not allow him to stay at my room. If he did, I did not know what will happen, I did not trust him, I have lots of valuable things in my room.

(Bangkok, T103)

## Knowledge about where to go and what to do

Knowledge about where to go is not only about a site or location. Social and cultural contexts play an important role in what happens locally and how opportunities are identified. The stories these men tell vary between the five study sites. Local events can reflect cultural acts.

There is a place... a special place, only for once in a month, on the night of *Legi* [a particularly sacred day in the Javanese calendar] Friday in Mount Gangsir. There is a myth that in the night of *Legi* Friday, a man's wish could be granted if he slept with a waria. I don't know where that myth came from, so... up until today, on the night of *Legi* Friday, all waria go to Mount Gangsir, in Pasuruan.

(Surabaya, I122104)

In Batam there's a ... place especially for people like me to get together at night...maybe there were signals [laughing] and our conversation went that way and then it happened...he took me to his place. At the time his family weren't there.

[Batam, I10401]

Usually if we want to meet waria, at least we go to Sarapung. They're not easy to find elsewhere, but in Sarapung you can find them.

[Manado, I30207]

## Place

Knowledge about where to go can also be uncomplicated. Gay guys hang out there.

The IBN [Nusantara Business Institute]...Before I got a job, I often went there to hang out too. There it's mostly gay guys hanging out, we sometimes cruise as well...Those days I cruised straight guys who were willing to have sex without me paying them. I wanted to have it free, you know...yeah, real guys.

[Manado, I30207]

Well, I just look at the way they carry on. It's clear, you know. I can sort of guess if a guy is game if you flirt with him, if he's going to be willing if you make a pass at him...We just have to be good at guessing and in my case, if I see someone who is a potential, I just approach him.

[Manado, I30207]

## Friends

Friends often play a central role in the formation of partnerships, and are sometimes important, even critical in helping to find 'a man'. Friends enable, though sometimes they constrain, chance meetings. For some men, their social networks are useful for finding men.

Friends are useful for finding sex partners in terms of "having good relations" and it is "also safe." Has met 10 partners through his friends. He meets people on the Internet They hangout behind the marina – play at hotels/motels. Friends from work, home village etc. never his sexual partner. Only from the group.

[Manado, I31603]

*I: Are the friendships in the community useful...are these friendships in the group a good way to get men to have sex with?*

R: I think they are, they are useful. Sometimes we exchange information...Usually I use [internet] chatting...If I don't use chatting, I go to places where MSM usually hang out, like at discos, or swimming pools, or cafés. They usually have a community, like that. So, for us, if we can or not, we ask ourselves. Sometimes, if we're walking along they smile, and then we talk. So, that's what he has in mind.

*I: The way to get new guys, how to know that there is a new person to have sex with?*

R: You mean how I and my group find new people?... Sometimes we go out together and intentionally, what do you call it, intentionally get to know [people]. For example, if there's someone who we want, you know what I mean, right?... we really want. So, we don't [bother] reading [the situation], don't hold back, we just introduce ourselves and it goes in that direction...Honestly, yeah, I had this experience. I was going home from work, taking public transport... [I got] talking to this guy, invited him to come to my house. Invited him to my house...and after all sorts of efforts I invited him to have sex.

[Batam, I11002]

Men from other groups get his number from his friends and call him for sex.

[Surabaya, I20804]

Usually if we meet it is with the same sex or from chatting. Usually introduced by close friends.

[Surabaya, I21002]

To meet men for sex, friends exchange information. Also meet men through chatting on the Internet. Also goes to cafés, discos and swimming pools where MSM hang out: walking along, man smiles and then they talk; sometimes goes out with friends to "intentionally get to know people." For example, if there's someone...we really want ... we don't [bother] reading [the situation] – don't hold back, we just introduce ourselves and it goes in that direction.

[Batam, I11002]

His friends are not that important for finding sex. If he can't get someone from the group, he usually finds someone himself through chatting on the Internet or "off the street." Finds it helpful if his friend gives out his mobile number. Chats on the Internet to people from Indonesia and overseas. Guys have come to Manado to meet him. His regular sex partner is from his campus chatting network.

[Manado, I31003]

## The way in which each type of partnership/relationship is assessed for sexual health risk

The use of condoms appears to be related to how well a partner is known. For casual partners there is a greater chance that a condom will be used. For long term relationships condoms are used less. However, as the Thailand data shows there are exceptions. Condom use is selective and inconsistent.

One respondent talked about his partner's body temperature as a sign whether or not to use a condom. (Chiang Mai, T225)

The most notable accounts when condoms are not used are with partners who are good looking and who meets someone's sexual requirements and most importantly someone who is trusted.

*I: When do you use condoms?*

R: Whenever I have it ready to be used. With all my *giks*, I use, but with my *faen* I don't

*I: With you *giks* you have all kinds of sex, didn't you?*

R: Of course

*I: You mean both from the front (oral) and the back (anal) and hand too?*

R: All kinds, as much as we can do

*I: As much as you can. Do you use a condom? With *gik* did you have a condom ready?*

R: Yes, with *gik* I have time to prepare. But with my *faen*, I tell you I have no time. And I don't believe that it will be any safer to live with a *faen* like this. You may have blood tests, but who knows.

(Bangkok, T102)

R: Risk. I think I have a high risk

*I: Why do you think so?*

R: Because I and my *faen* don't use condoms

*I: With *gik* do you use?*

R: Yes, I use condoms with all *gik*. I never fail to use one.

*I: Why don't you use [a condom] with your *faen*?*

R: Ever since we began living together...we never used it. We talked between us that if we have something (sex) with others we must use it

(Bangkok, T123)

*I: Suppose you and I meet in a sauna.*

R: If I meet you there and you like me, I would use a condom with you. But if I like someone as a special one – like a *farang*, sometimes I don't use.

*I: Why? Is it because you want to have a real touch of him as much as possible?*

R: That too. Also I want to test his heart. More than that, I want to win his heart.

(Bangkok, T101)

T218 – his partner says that he has no problem with respondent going out, but he must protect himself

For casual partners, can't ask them if they have an STD, but by looking at the shape of his 'thing', would definitely know whether he has a disease like syphilis.

(Manado, I30601)

# SAMENESS/DIFFERENCE

There were differences between sites in the way in which questions were asked to elicit responses about sameness and difference within the membership of male-to-male networks. The findings for this theme are, therefore, somewhat tentative.

The most common kind of response suggests that differences in factors such as age and status between sexual partners within networks are common and often do not matter. The following response, indicating a sexual or aesthetic preference for 'sameness' is not typical.

*I: The types of people that you meet, that you like, do you have your own taste... meaning, you like someone like this, or a certain age, or, or maybe... meaning, are there criteria or not?*

R: There are.

*I: Like what?*

R: Well, someone of the same age as me... Meaning, like if there's a difference, only a slight difference. If he's older it's alright, as long as he's only slightly older... Then, well, if he has characteristics that suit me... Meaning, when he talks... Communication, sharing... sharing of problems, like that.

(Manado, I30302)

Apart from the examples of teachers or priests coercing students, there don't appear to be references to age/status differences being associated with coercion. Almost all of the responses gave a liberal impression that differences in age, occupation or status didn't matter. This may be the result, however, of the already existing homogeneous character of social networks based on schools and workplaces.

R: For a long time I had a partner, but he was older than me ....

*I: Older .... How did that feel? Uh, did he treat you like a kid, or ...?*

R: Yes, maybe there's a difference because I'm older than my partner, so ... the level of compatibility sometimes isn't the same as I felt before with my friend who was older... he already knew what I liked.... I mean, he did everything I asked. That doesn't mean that I don't fulfill all of my partners needs now, no.

*I: So, when you were with your first partner who was older ... did you ever feel uncomfortable? When you'd go out, yikes, what would your friends say, going out with an older guy?*

R: No, not really ... the thing is, when I was with him I was about... nineteen, if I'm not mistaken... and my partner, my partner was about twenty-seven ... twenty-eight years old, so I didn't feel uncomfortable with him...

He still looked young, so it wasn't uncomfortable going out in public ....

*I: Not uncomfortable, not a problem ...? Oh, I see. In your group, you have a group, right? Are there older guys also?*

R: Yes, there are. Some are older, there are also some who have wives... Yeah ... they get together with us.

*I: They ... don't feel uncomfortable?*

R: Not uncomfortable.

*I: No ... if ... uh ... in your view, if an older [guy], an older [guy] is interested in a younger [guy], what do you think of that?*

R: If an older guy is interested in someone who is younger?... Yeah ... if you look at developments, the way I see it is if an older guy likes a younger guy, that is something personal... The way I see it, that's normal, the same as ... uh young guys who like other young guys... Just the same, I'd say.

(Manado, I30401)

Affection and love often play a significant role in ameliorating difference. Sometimes this is in a matter-of-fact way, and at others there is an heroic aspect to the transcendence of difference.

Our family background is so very different from each other, completely. His family is rather rich... We love each other even we are not equal.

(Bangkok, T115)

R: If you are mature, you don't care about financial status of your partners. But the young tend to like richer guy because rich guys can offer them much more than the normal guy.

*I: What about your friends, are they come from the same class?*

R: No. Some come from higher status family such as having a father who is a General. Some are from lower status family such as a son of a vendor. However, there is no class of status different between us. My boyfriend comes from a very rich family. He does not care whether I am rich or poor.

(Bangkok, T104)

In other transcripts the discussion of difference is around the opportunities that different status or experience can bring. These opportunities may be instrumental (for example financial or employment options) or experiential (for example broadening one's world view and understanding).

*I: So let's go back to [the topic of] your special friend earlier, the first one, yes, was he a different age from you?*

R: Yes, different...Um, five years.

*I: Um, was your partner's activities or work different from you own?*

R: Almost the same. Uh ... we didn't work in the same office, but almost the same.

*I: So, are there differences with your other friends? Do those differences cause problems in communicating with your friends?*

R: Oh, no. So far there haven't been problems. Not right now. We complement each other. So far, social-economic differences don't really stand out. At present they aren't a problem.

*I: And in your view, in your group ... maybe some of the guys are old and some are young, right. And some are well off and some not so. In your opinion, are there any like that ... I mean, an older guy who likes a younger guy, or the reverse, a younger guy who likes an older man, and the younger guy ... isn't too well off likes guys who are well off. In your friendships, in your group, does that cause problems or not in your group of friends?*

R: [M]y friend who is ... let's say not so ... not so well off, and he prefers those who are well off, that's for sure. But so far...we can ... be understanding. For me personally, we have to be understanding,

*I: And how about the age difference we mentioned, in your opinion? Does that cause problems too in your friendships?*

R: Age difference doesn't ...doesn't stand out, yeah. So far, there hasn't ... hasn't been a problem of age difference. So maybe the one who is older can provide guidance to the younger one, and the younger one can understand the older one.

(Batam, I11002)

*I: Ok. You have all kinds of friends, yeah ... is that a problem for you in how you relate to people?*

R: No. That enriches me with, yeah ... experiences ... with all kinds of... *persons*, yeah ... lots of people, so I know character, that can help situate me ... yeah, like that.

*I: How do you feel having friends from all different ethnic groups?*

R: I like it. Because we can understand, yeah, Indonesia has lots of culture[s] ... lots of variety ... so it feels complete to have friends from all over. Sometimes if you need ... if you're playing somewhere, for example, and

you have friends [there], it's nice. We can stop by their place, there's someone to show us ... where to go ... where good places are in the area, they know that, so ...There are lots of advantages.

(Surabaya, I21301)

In some narratives highly heterogeneous social networks are observed. These are not necessarily constructed around sexual connections, but may offer sexual opportunities.

*I: Oh, yes, yes. Ok. If I may know ... what are your friends' professions?*

R: [M]y friends ... some are also entrepreneurs, some are friends from the office ... some are lawyers, some work in factory marketing ... a manager ... all sorts...There's also one who is a drug dealer ... that too...Some at the office, some from the neighbourhood.

(Surabaya, I21301)

A common response is an instrumental one. This view, proposed without judgement, is that age/status difference could benefit both sides: a younger person with less status gets the value of support, and the older person with status gets access to the younger body.

*I: How do you see your friends' lives? Any of them becomes very successful, and any of them otherwise?*

R: Varied. I saw some of them become successful in their lives. I think myself very lucky; as I got help once I started to go down. Some of my friends don't have even rice to eat, just waiting for some rich old guys to treat. When I was still using drug, I was treated by a rich old man from Bangkok. He sometimes came to see me, and though he was not present he would still transfer money for me to use around 20,000 baht a week.

(Chiang Mai, T202)

A particular form of difference about which there is discussion is 'the foreigner' or people from different ethnicities or religions. As with other forms of difference, this may be neutral or bring with it a particular valence.

I dreamt that I had foreign partner. Anyway, I believe in destiny. If it is my time, I will get a good one. I cannot expect anything accompanying with Thai guys.

(Chiang Mai, T202)

In some transcripts one can see evidence that other forms of difference are erased, or at least minimised, by the connection that men have through sexual identity, but this is by no means universal.

R: Yes... we have different lifestyles. Some live a simple life, some are financially better than the other... some are just average...Just enough to make the end meet.

*I: How is their social life?*

R: Their social life is similar to mine...

*I: Are they from different ethnicities?*

R: They have different ethnic backgrounds...Manado, Ambon, and East Nusa Tenggara...There are many from other islands...There are those from Medan too...There are those from West Java ... Most of them are from Manado and East Nusa Tenggara....

*I: You have a lot of friends from different ethnic backgrounds... Do you have problem in befriending with them?*

R: Not really... my principle is not to be too picky...So long as they are nice to me, I will be nice to them. And sometimes friends from different ethnic backgrounds can understand me better, know my situation, and even more helpful than those from my own ethnic.

*I: what do you feel having a lot of friends from different ethnic backgrounds?*

R: Filial feeling... we are like brothers...There are people from other religions too...We treat each other like brothers.

(Surabaya, I20701)

Some respondents do give an account of why they put a value in accepting difference within social and sexual networks.

*I: How about other friends, does the difference between status or education affect the relationship? Does it cause any problem among a group of friends?*

R: not at all. I myself can get along with people in all levels. I work and have enough education. I can have a conversation with ones who have bachelor degree, master degree. Maybe I have different attitude from my family. It seem like I were born there and would like to raise myself up and be away from there, from that slum. I think it's a reason I can get along with others.

(Bangkok, T115)

R: For me this kind of life is already normal. So differences aren't a problem. The important thing is that we don't hurt each other.

*I: Hmm .... In general, in the groups you know ... what happens if someone who is older and better off ... or, for example, the opposite, [and]... is interested in someone who is younger and less well off?...*

R: Hmm ... and he's ... my friend, for example?

*I: Yes, someone in your group.*

R: There are some like that. But if they're already interested ... it seems like this is a matter of money, yeah? Actually, 'well off' in what way?

*I: Yeah, maybe in terms of material things, social ....*

R: Material things, social, like that, huh? Uh ... it seems like one just goes ahead with it as usual. I mean, if he is already ... even though the person is older, [if] he isn't well off [but] is still interested ... then there isn't a problem, he can go ahead like normal.

*I: So you would support that or ...?*

R: I'd support it. The important thing is happiness. Life is about happiness...Even though one isn't well off in economic terms, you know ... you can still be together [*makan sepiring berdua*, literally 'eat off the same plate']...The important thing is that he can make my friend happy. That's all.

(Batam, I10903)

While age and status may not matter, some physical differences might!

*I: Ok, did you ever mix with men or waria whom you felt were different from you?*

R: I have, I did hang out with men but... but they only...were looking for money, meaning he needs money, he stops at my place. So he satisfies me, I satisfy him and then I give him money. But there are also men who only give pleasure, yeah *waria*. They do not give satisfaction... when he who likes to be with that *waria*, but the *waria* does not like him. So the *waria* pays him, the *waria* who he... that *waria* he satisfies.

*I: Do those differences become a problem?*

R: For me it is no problem. For me, as a *waria* and since I started mixing with *waria*, for that it is not a problem. What's for sure when we are together that is the only satisfaction we seek, it is no problem.

*I: But what are your feelings when you see those differences?*

R: [I]t doesn't ...Especially if I personally do not really love that man. Except if he is handsome or yes, satisfies me, and what if the man comes, I'm in luck... if he is handsome but has a small dick, *bajao jo*!!

*I: What is the meaning of bajao jo?*

R: It means, the Manadonese say *bajao jo*, ee.., meaning he'd better piss off, he does not need to be with me.

(Manado, I30503)

# WOMEN

Women occupy many places within the social and sexual networks of those who have male-to-male sex. Within social networks, women are often named as friends or confidants and may play a part in occupational networks also. A number of the informants, both in Thailand and Indonesia, reported close family ties, particularly with female relatives. Mother was named as the most significant person in many of the respondents' lives. There were marked differences in the degree to which male-to-male sex was discussed with female companions; most usually this part of respondents' lives was not discussed with either male or female network ties.

## Sexual Practices

Many of the respondents reported some lifetime history of sex with a woman. Some describe the sexual encounters as early explorations of their sexuality and sexual preference. For some respondents this early exploration resulted in a realisation of difference:

*I: So, what about women who are important in your life? Can you tell me who they are?*

R: There are two women who are special in my life. The first is my mother, my mother. I love my mother because she ... yeah, I feel that's she's my mom, the most perfect mom. The second is my ex-girlfriend, my ex-girlfriend. Yeah, she is also ... maybe I'll never love another woman. But maybe I will [love] a man. But it would be hard for me to love another woman. Because she .. yeah ... I really love that girl, love her ... because when I got to know that girl, I didn't yet know this world, this world in Manado. Maybe at the time my orientation was still ... still to girls maybe. Only after I met her .... But after I broke up with her, my sexual orientation ... is more to guys now. The thing is, maybe, entirely oriented to guys, so not to girls anymore. I don't know, because for a long time I haven't tried girls. I once ... almost got together with a girl, but didn't ... it didn't feel right dating a girl now. Now, now maybe because of trauma being with girls, she broke my heart.

(Manado, I31003)

However for others there are continuing sexual relations with women. An analysis of the sexual practices of the respondents from Bangkok and Chiang Mai found that 16 out of 50 respondents reported experience of vaginal sex. Respondents also frequently reported sex with *katoey* or *waria*, sometimes referring to them as men and other times as women, but most usually as *katoey* or *waria*. In contrast, a few respondents indicated they had never had sex with a woman, nor desired or expected sex with a woman in the future. One respondent indicated men go to men for sex because women don't do anything,

R: Woman won't absolutely do it. She won't do anything except lays down in bed. I used to doubt why men bought service from male sex workers more than from female sex workers and finally I knew it was because women rarely did anything.

*I: Are there other things that man does better than woman?*

R: We are good at kissing. And as I said that woman do nothing except lays down.

*I: Are all women like you said or only some women?*

R: Every woman.

(Bangkok, T113)

Male-to-male sex was regarded by some as more engaging. Sex with a woman is functional; sex with a man is desirable.

*I: Who have you done it with?*

R: With girls, I also have... with guys I also have...

*I: With waria?*

R: Ho oh.

*I: What could one say about your inclinations, leaning towards men or women?*

R: More towards women.

*I: So, why can you have sex with a man then?*

R: That's because the... addiction yeah.

*I: Meaning? Oh, because your lust hey?*

R: High addiction.

*I: Oh, so at the time you were really bursting yeah?*

R: He em. Something like that.

(Surabaya, I21402)

The sexual passivity associated with women was regarded as unappealing for some in contrast with more exciting practices described in male-to-male sex:

Women have many limitations...sex, emotion, physical. I can't take care of anyone...I think women have many limitations ... women want to be treated and taken care so much. ... One thing, woman's goal is having a baby, but baby let you have more responsibility ... When I was in other countries, I had girlfriends because they don't have limitations. They can do everything. In addition, they are active, not slow. Most women have limitations...they can't do that, they can't do this...even when they have sex or work. When I had sex with them, they also told me don't do these, don't do those.

(Chiang Mai, T220)

## Marriage and children

The prospect of marriage and children was an important element for a number of respondents. A number of the participants were currently or had previously been married. For others, marriage was a likely future event. Current male-to-male sexual practices, whilst regarded as preferable, were sometimes seen to be transitional. For those respondents who were already married, the relationship with the wife was ambiguous:

Yes, gay king is only an active while gay queen is only a passive. Bisexual can have sex with both man and woman. Homosexual and *katoey* are men who love men and they may wear short hair or long hair. I think I am bisexual because I am both active and passive and I also can sleep with woman. Sometimes I like man but sometimes I like woman.

(Bangkok, T113)

Rarely did the wife know about the male-to-male sex.

# SEXUAL PRACTICE

We choose the term sexual practice to allow for an elaboration that includes, but is not restricted to, sexual behaviour. Sexual practice includes the social and relational context in which sexual behaviour occurs.

In examining the interviews from these five sites and the analyses made of them by the in-country researchers, we can see that while there may be a broad range of sexual practice for the sample as a whole, for individual men the range of sexual behaviours engaged in most of the time tends to be fairly small. This is not to say that men are limited in their awareness of the range of sexual behaviour, or have a limited sexual repertoire. Rather, when we examine these behaviours in their social context, there are sexual practices that more commonly bring pleasure or satisfaction, or other emotional and material benefits than others. There are also sexual practices that the individual may have greater access to, by virtue of the partners available to them, the socio-cultural norms around such practices, or the practicalities of where and with whom they have sex. In this way, we can see that the meaning of receptive anal intercourse is not fixed, but varies according to a range of contextual factors. For a man who is engaged, at a specific instance, in receptive anal intercourse in exchange for money, the practice is one that has a commodity value to it within a specific market, and this value may or may not coincide with the physical pleasure the man experiences. Similarly, for a man in Thailand whose avowed sexual identity is that of a 'gay queen', the practice of receptive intercourse may result in less ontological tension than for a man who identifies as a 'gay king'. In a relational sense, the same behaviour may bring emotional satisfaction when the man's romantic partner places particular value on being the penetrative partner.

*I: What do you usually like to do when you have sex?*

R: Oral sex. ... and sometimes anal sex ... but I don't do that all the time. ... Anal ... yeah, I like it. But ... rarely. It depends on who I'm with. If he's my type, why not?

*I: When do you do it that way?*

R: Maybe when I like someone ... who is my type? And also maybe ... yeah, maybe if I'm not tired ... maybe I'll want to. But [if] I'm not very fit and get tired because I work all day ... I don't want to.

[Batam, I10503]

Seen through this lens, the wider sexual repertoire may or may not include anal sex, giving and receiving, ejaculation, orgasm, 'small sex' (sex without penetration), rubbing, kissing and hugging. It also allows for a consideration and discussion of intimacy, lust and desire. In many of the interviews the idea of compatibility was discussed in relation to sexual practice. This was not simply in the sense that someone who preferred to be

passive in anal sex was compatible with someone who preferred to be active. Compatibility included the concordance of sexual desires, but also included liking, suitability, power equality or differential, social status, politics, religion, world view, commitment or freedom, availability, and body type. This compatibility was important, both in its own right, and in providing a social space in which preferred sexual practices could be negotiated.

*I: What do you like to do when you have sex?*

R: Kissing maybe... but kissing is only with certain people. Then ... oral sex ... anal... that's only with certain guys. Anal sex is not so common ... because I'm not used to it.

*I: So then... like, when do you have anal sex?*

R: Only when I feel like it.

[Batam, I10203]

R: I'm top pure.

*I: Pure?*

R: Yeap.

*I: Never been bottom?*

R: Never.

*I: Do you prefer anal, oral or how?*

R: Depends on who's the partner. If the partner doesn't like to be 'anally done' [passive], there's no use for anal sex. If he asks, then yeah, as long as he likes it.

[Surabaya, I20402]

Sexual practice also extends the temporal context beyond any sex act to include the possibility of post-coital satisfaction and/or regret that more usefully reflects the full meaning of sexual partner. In doing so we can both recognise the importance of sexual partner categories used by men, and appreciate that these do not always reflect the complexities of the relationships they describe.

In terms of men's understandings of what constitutes the potential repertoire, categories of sexual identity certainly come into play for many of the participants. For some these categories are absolute and constrain the practices that can occur within a particular dyad. For example, some men were quite clear that *waria* could only be passive, or that *lekong jreng* could only be active partners in anal sex. For others, however, these categories acted as guides for what one might be most likely to expect, and the reality of sexual engagement was negotiated on that basis, always with the opportunity for surprise or disappointment. For others, the categories that were most critical for setting the sexual agenda were relational ones. For

some, for example, sex with friends could only take certain forms, sex with paying clients other forms and sex with strangers yet others.

R: Gays have sex... there is oral sex, anal sex, many things... there is also squeezing, rubbing dicks ... like that.

I: *What about waria? Like when they have sex with lekong jreng, how do they usually have sex?*

R: It's various for my friends who like to be prostitutes, for example they like being thrust, oral, and they also like to thrust.

[Surabaya, I22401]

It's not like that. For me, if I know someone and consider the person a friend, he's just a friend. There's no making love, no sex. ... If from the beginning I have sex [with someone], I rarely become friends with the person. Almost never. It has been like that for most of my life.

[Batam, I10503]

The breadth of the potential sexual repertoire was influenced by a number of factors, but principal among these was past experience (particularly those that had either a positive emotional valence or those that were memorably unpleasant), the degree and content of discussion among peers about sexual experience (including gossip, boasting, infatuation and sexual abuse) and, particularly in the Indonesian sites, pornography.

Many of the male-to-male sexual practices form part of longstanding social patterns. For example, *waria* and *kathoe* represent longstanding categories of men who are known to be available and pursue sex with other men. Sexual practices between men have also emerged as a result of modernisation and urbanisation.

I had my organ penetrated into his anus. You know, now there are a lot of men like to have sex this way. And we call a *kateoy* who is active 'penetrating girl'.

[Bangkok, T102]

R: In order to find out, my way is to ask how they like to have sex; before we do I ask 'how do you like to do it?' Because to be honest I don't know other ways ... that are more, more ... than that.

I: *Can you tell me what your friends do when they have sex with, uh, their partners?*

R: Yes, as for ... for ... I know a little bit, yes, but I don't know everything because that is their private matter. But most of them have anal or oral sex. Mostly ... on a daily basis, like a daily meal, they have oral sex most.

[Manado, I32003]

I think it is very common. Most *kateoys* love doing oral sex for men, but I myself dislike it. I feel so disgusting. As I told you I consider myself a woman, so I don't like having sex that way, though sometime I have to.

Most men like *kateoys* who can do oral sex very well, using tongue licking very well. But I don't like doing so. I prefer that man treating me as a woman. Anyway, most men I met like pushing my head down to his penis and wanted me to do oral sex. They liked me to do oral sex before they give anal sex. I think most men know how to have sex with *kateoys*, how to make *kateoys* agree to have sex with them.

[Chiang Mai, T202]

Once these 'behaviours' are regarded as 'practices', socially contextualised activities whose character derives from their contexts and not merely the acts, then HIV vulnerability among these men disperses from any assumed singular category of risk to multiple possibilities for infection. One picture that emerges is of a multiform sexual economy of men in which female sex workers, male sex workers, boys, other men, *waria*, *kathoe*, girlfriends, boyfriends, family members, workplace colleagues, wives and institutional partners all feature. This economy is partitioned by some structural determinants, such as work, age, social class, marriage, the social role of sex work, gender categories, economic trends, and the impact of HIV/AIDS activism and interventions.

We will learn since the first steps, at our first sex, and it will be normally stay the same. One is active, one is passive. Somebody can be 'both'. Okay, now I will tell you about my sex with the one I define my fan. I mean the one that agreed to be fan. Once we agree, we will have our blood test, and if it is found neither of us are positive, we will not use a condom when having sex. Not using a condom means that we are giving our hearts to each other. I give you my life, you give me your life, and we'll spend our lives together. We will be like husband and wife, like male-female partners.

[Bangkok, T101]

# COMMUNITIES AND CONTEXT

Across the five sites in this study, it is clear that male-to-male sexual practice does not occur in a vacuum, but in intersection with the social values, norms and expectations of the neighbourhood, city, region and country. Thus, community values around male-to-male sex are part of the context in which these men live their lives. At times, community norms are unproblematic and men find creative ways to operate within these contexts. At other times, the experience of stigma or ignorance may isolate, constrain and endanger men.

Many of the study participants were actively engaged in shaping their social world to allow more freedom to experience not only male-to-male sex, but also to express the social aspects of their sexual identifications. This shaping of the social world includes geographic mobility, selection and structuring of social networks, choice of recreational activities and settings and pursuing specific educational or employment opportunities.

The manner in which men perform, enact or trouble popularised sexual and gender identities is a critical aspect of this study. The men interviewed are aware of the global and local constructs of sexuality, but are not constrained by them. There is often considerable tension between the sexual and gender categories that form the common currency, and the practices and relationships that constitute the men's social reality. The critical dynamic here is the ways in which men negotiate this terrain. The challenge for policy and service provision is to recognise that men may repeatedly use, change and discard these categories.

# MOBILITY/GLOBALISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION

## The Mobility of People

It may not be unusual in either country, but it should be noted that many respondents were born and brought up in locations other than the place of interview. The narratives of the beginning of male-to-male sexual activity are often associated with mobility. This might be expected, too, because the age of moving from, say, home coincides with the age of beginning to engage in sex practice. The reasons for mobility are also predictable given the sample: movement for education (school or tertiary) and finding work both within the country and overseas.

Once formed, networks are affected by members moving. It may be that members of a network move because of work (even back to own village if work runs out). Responses made to this mobility vary: There are some examples of network members keeping in touch by phone or SMS; there are other examples of network members losing touch, because they are actually and/or metaphorically 'out of range'.

Some accounts are of mobility creating opportunities for new experiences, like first seeing a *waria* when moving to study in Jakarta or making contacts with and through 'foreigners'.

## Globalisation/Internationalisation

The data reflect that rich phenomenon of local experience shaped by the global (discussed, inter alia, as 'glocalisation' in the literature).

The data contain very many local, colloquial terms. There is the long and local cultural history of *waria* and *katoey*. At the same time there are people doing jobs which are the outcomes of global financial economies and manufacturing and there is the constant and ubiquitous use of the globalised technologies (internet, email, SMS, etc). There are some examples of respondents moving out of the local into the global.

My community is indifferent...they say, "so what?" "who cares about what they say?" as long as we are happy with what we have, right? ... No...the general public doesn't need to know about it. I don't have to tell everyone, "I'm gay." ... I've never had a boyfriend [in Singapore]. Never. I never got a chance to do that in Singapore. At the time...When I was in Singapore ... I just went shopping every day ... and going out clubbing ... and when I went out clubbing, I felt comfortable in the sense that, maybe because over there, their communities, the straight ones, they're indifferent, not as gossipy as the people here, so it's not a problem over there. Plus it's not our country over there. Who do I know over there? Not that many people.

(Surabaya, I20202)

R: Foreign network... never. I have only met through [online] chatting with a number of persons abroad, in Malaysia and Singapore, and until today the relationship is still good. We'd [communicate] through SMS and all that, but we never met [in person].

I: *Have you been abroad and where?*

R: I have, for work. Where was it? Korea, Singapore, Thailand.

I: *Have you had extended relationships with people there?*

R: Never, because I went there for work, so...The context was work, so I never knew. I did want to find out, but because there was no opportunity to go to those places, I never did.

(Surabaya, I20402)

# IMPLICATIONS

The analyses conducted in this project by GAYa NUSANTARA Foundation, Mahidol University and the La Trobe University team have clear implications for research and health promotion practice in the five sites studied, the two countries in which these sites are found and potentially for other settings in the Asia-Pacific region.

- 1. Male-to-male sexual practice is a more useful construct than 'men who have sex with men' (MSM) both as a descriptor and as an analytic frame. Male-to-male sexual practice focuses precisely on practices rather than on individuals or on presumed predisposing identities.**

The findings in this report show that people move through identities over lifetimes and across contexts. Many men do not identify consistently and unproblematically with sexual identities, and even less identify with a sexuality category like MSM. Interventions designed around identities or categories of sexuality (including MSM) will fail to reach many men who engage in male-to-male sex.

This means that interventions should be not be designed around the process of identifying and capturing specific classes of individuals. Rather the focus should be on sexual cultures and in some cases specific subsets of sexual practices and contexts in which they are likely to occur.

- 2. It follows from this that we need to be concerned with the broad social category of 'men' that will include a number of men who have male-to-male sex.**

The findings in this report show that men gather together in a range of settings and contexts. While these settings and contexts offer the possibility of male-to-male sex, only occasionally are they organised around sexual opportunity. In addition, these settings are rarely constituted solely of men who currently engage in male-to-male sex.

This means that interventions should take advantage of opportunities in spaces and places where men predominate. Identifying these settings and developing interventions around them will afford access to a broad range of men that may currently, or at some time in the future have male-to-male sex.

- 3. The current public health response in this area has not taken full advantage of the broader work in the areas of sexual health and sexualities. This study demonstrates that there are considerable opportunities for intervention design, policy development and program implementation that are able to integrate this body of work.**

The findings in this report show that sexual behaviour is neither universal nor stable but highly contextualised. While many interventions have assumed a central role of HIV in the lives of

men, the way in which the men in this study talk about their sexual practices, for example condom use, is not driven solely or consistently by concerns of HIV. The findings from this study make it clear that HIV and sexual practice sit alongside multiple aspects of men's lives including work, leisure, relationships, family, religion, pleasure and friendship. The broader research in the areas of sexualities and sexual health suggest that approaches which focus on individual behaviour change will fail precisely because they do not reflect the realities of the lives of individuals and the structural and relational determinants of sexual practice.

This means that interventions should incorporate the broader public health approaches around prevention that do not assume previous or current risk practice, identity stability, centrality of HIV or group identification. In addition, general community campaigns around sexual health and reproductive health need to take into account male to male sexual practice. This approach avoids the problems of partitioning populations on the basis of current or past sexual practice and recognises both the potentiality of male-to-male sex and the citizenship of men who may practice it.

- 4. There is a clear need to focus on issues concerning sexual health, in general, for men. This involves a shift from an older model of public health that operates from a basis of surveillance and control to new strategies that focus on settings through which people move, and dynamic networks.**

The findings in this report show that sexual practice is not individual, it is relational. People do not construct their sexual practice on the basis of their individual characteristics but rather relationally with sexual partners, networks and locations or settings. While surveillance remains an important method of understanding behaviour and epidemiology at a population level, it offers only limited guidance to the focus and methodology of interventions. In part this results from the reliance of surveillance mechanisms on past practice and closed categorisation.

This means that interventions should be developed in recognition of the dynamic nature of sexual practice and could usefully be designed around settings and networks. The design of interventions needs to incorporate qualitative evidence that offers clearer indications of how, where and when to intervene.

- 5. There is a need to address the considerable social sanctions against male-to-male sexual practices. A human rights framework is likely to offer considerable enhancement of the opportunities to intervene in this area.**

The findings in this report show that men's sexual practice operates within normative social environments and legal

frameworks. The men talk about constraints in their sexual practice and protective behaviours that arise from contested social and cultural attitudes and legal sanctions. The cultural and legal environment that men negotiate includes aspects that are global, international and local. Citizenship and associated human rights are central concerns for many of these men.

This means that interventions could usefully address ways of changing restrictive social norms and legal impediments. At the very least, pragmatically, interventions should acknowledge and respond to the social and legal constraints in which men live. Aspirations may be an important focus of interventions. This may include instrumental, material and emotional aspirations. Aspirations may also arise from increasing access to global representations of what citizenship, sexuality, and desire may constitute. There are myriad emerging opportunities for novel interventions that take full cognizance of these aspirations.

**6. Peer-based intervention remains central to the public health response. However, there needs to be greater clarity and precision in the employment of the constructs of 'peers' and 'peer networks'. Men who engage in male to male sexual practice may not, in many contexts, constitute a peer network, nor may they engage with interventions that presume that they are.**

The findings in this report show that men do not necessarily or exclusively regard other homosexually active men as peers. A network perspective offers a more complex but useful understanding of peer relationships. These data also demonstrate that peer-ness may be transient or contextual.

This means that interventions should begin with a critical analysis of the meaning of peer relationships within the specific setting or context in which they are to be conducted.

**7. There are clear opportunities for peer education in the sites studied, but these opportunities largely relate to settings and contexts in which male to male sexual practice occurs, and not to categories of men.**

The findings in this report show that some peer networks exist in specific and temporally limited contexts. In these specific contexts there is clear evidence that peer influence may be of considerable value. In other contexts there may be little or no sense of sustained peer relationships. In these contexts peer influence may not be effective.

This means that interventions which utilise a peer-education model should be cognisant of the contexts in which peer influence is likely to be efficacious. These interventions will be at their most effective in the contexts where peer-ness is stable.

**8. Public health interventions are least useful when directed at individuals, since this requires some means of identifying those who have male-to-male sex. Rather, interventions can most usefully be directed at settings, events and occasions where men meet together and where there are possibilities for male-to-male sex.**

The findings in this report show that site-specific settings and contexts can be easily identified while identities within sites are fluid and multiple. The data also show that multiple identities operate within specific settings and contexts, and therefore a setting or context based intervention will cover these multiple identities.

This means that interventions should take advantage of settings and contexts identified for the specific aims of the campaign. These contexts may be small scale, for example a specific space or event, or broader social-level, for example 'sexual and reproductive health'.

**9. Further research is required to extend and refine our understandings of the constitution of social and sexual networks.**

The findings in this report provide an important starting point for understanding the complexities of men's social and sexual networks. Further investigation of the complex ways in which these networks intersect, interact and co-modify would provide a more detailed understanding of how factors such as age, social status, religion and mobility operate in the longitudinal aspects of network evolution. This could be achieved through focused interview based research or incorporated into formal network studies (see below)

**10. The development of health promotion interventions could derive considerable benefit from the incorporation of smaller scale action research in early project planning.**

Action research methodologies may enable site and intervention specific evidence around the contexts and dynamics of male-to-male sex. This specification of the local enactment of broad processes would involve directed and focused enquiry into the everyday interactions within communities or contexts. This would benefit not only the efficacy of interventions, but also the evidentiary rigour.

**11. The knowledge base established through this project should be extended to other settings in the Asia-Pacific region. This is in recognition that the contextual and dynamic aspects of these social and sexual networks are not universalised and that local, cultural and politico-legal factors may be critical in tailoring interventions in this area.**

The findings in this report show that five sites differ in substantive ways. While many of the processes and structural determinants of sexual practice are shared between sites, it is the local context which truly illuminates the opportunities for effective intervention. Therefore, while the findings of this study may offer some broad guidance for other settings in the region, enormous benefit would be obtained through replication of the methodology in other settings.

It is clear from the experience of this project that considerable benefits accrue from multi-site research, the meaningful involvement of in-country partners, the building of research capacity and opportunities for cross-site dialogue.

**12. The qualitative examination of social and sexual networks suggests that there could be significant utility to be gained from formal quantitative sociometric network studies in this area. Research of this nature should rapidly follow the qualitative work to take full advantage of the contemporaneity of the findings.**

The social and sexual networks examined in this study suggest that there are some particular structural characteristics that would be able to be utilised to facilitate interventions. Formal network analysis of social and sexual networks would clarify the form, regularity and characteristics of these structural aspects to an extent that qualitative research would be unable to achieve. A symbiotic relationship between qualitative research in the form of the current study and formal sociometric analysis would provide both the detail and meaning of social connections and the extent and structure of network relationships.

**13. The findings of this research project should be broadly disseminated, with a particular emphasis on those with responsibilities for the planning and delivery of interventions (particularly peer based interventions). The planning and refinement of such interventions could benefit from both the specific findings and from a broader understanding of the utility of a network approach to the dynamics and contexts of male-to-male sexual practices.**

The findings from this study provide unique insights into the experiences and meanings of male-to-male sexual practice. These insights could be of considerable benefit not only to those working in the countries in which the study was conducted, but to other workers in the region. This report would offer an opportunity for these workers to take a critical perspective on what is an important and emerging area of research and health promotion practice.

There would be significant potential benefit in the extensive dissemination of these findings to major funding organisations,

and their partner organisations, which support those who engage in male-to-male sex. Complementing such a dissemination strategy, and adding considerable value, would be a series of focused workshops with such funders and partner organisations, on the local implications and opportunities for the design and implementation of health promotion activities.

The joint experience of the country researchers and ARCSHS as principal investigator, has created a unique and timely opportunity for the development of a capacity building workshop module, for delivery in in-country settings, in the design and management of small-scale action research components that assist in optimising intervention design.

# APPENDIX A: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

## Aim

To explore and describe the social and cultural dynamics and contexts of male-to-male sex in Indonesia and Thailand.

## Objectives

In order to achieve this aim, this project will:

1. explore and describe how, in relation to male-to-male sex, social and sexual networks are found, entered, maintained, changed and discarded
2. explore and describe the ways in which, in relation to male-to-male sex, social and sexual networks overlap, and operate in public and private spheres
3. develop understandings of how, in these social and sexual networks, partnerships of various nature are formed, and the way in which each type of partnership and/or relationship is assessed for sexual health risk
4. explore and describe how the dynamics of sameness and difference operate in these male-to-male social and sexual networks, including characteristics such as age, social class, power differentials, gender identity and ethnicity
5. understand the importance of women to, and the role that they play in, the lives of those involved in these male-to-male social and sexual networks
6. document the manner in which those involved in these male-to-male social and sexual networks seek information and support, and the issues around which such information and support is sought
7. explore and describe the sexual practices desired, preferred and engaged in within male-to-male sex in each country

## Cross Cutting Themes

### General

1. the occurrence, dynamics and experience of stigma and discrimination against those engaged in male-to-male sex
2. the perception of HIV/STI risk and vulnerability with regard to particular locations, specific partners or types of partners, and their identities, and especially risk and vulnerability associated with knowledge and perception of HIV/AIDS
3. the function of emotional, financial and other dependencies between those engaged in male-to-male sex

4. the manner in which particular sexual identities are performed, assuming the fluid nature of identities
5. common understanding and beliefs about particular behaviours attaching to particular identities among those involved in male-to-male sex
6. the mobility of those involved in male-to-male sex, both within and between locations
7. the associations between male-to-male sex and drug and alcohol use

## Social, Cultural and Political Regimes:

1. local and specific gender regimes
2. local and specific cultural expectations of manhood and masculinity
3. local and specific regulatory regimes, including those associated with broad culture, religious beliefs and structures, and practices of policing
4. the commercialisation of sex and the circulation of male sex workers
5. the place of women in social and cultural dynamics and structures
6. the place of all-male environments, such as the army, monasteries and prisons on the dynamics and contexts of male-to-male sex

## Globalisation and Internationalisation

1. the effects of the processes of globalisation and tourism, including the global circulation of ideas such as 'gay identity'
2. the local influence of the global circulation of media images, including pornography
3. the local and international ideas about human rights, including sexual rights
4. the shaping influence on understandings of male-to-male sex, of institutions and organisations such as international development organisations, which generate local re-considerations.

# APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

NETWORKS		
Objectives	Lines of Inquiry	Open questions
<p>1. explore and describe how, in relation to male-to-male sex, social and sexual networks are found, entered, maintained, changed and discarded</p>	<p>That social and sexual networks (whether recognised as such or not) form around, and between, men engaged in male-to-male sex</p> <p>That such networks are constantly changing</p> <p>That people experience differing engagement with these networks over time</p>	<p>Can you tell me about the men you spend time with?</p> <p>Tell me about whether you see these men one-by-one, in groups or in both situations?</p> <p>Can you tell me about the time when you first met a man whom you knew was interested in other men?</p> <p>Can you tell me about how you first made contact with other men like this? What was happening for you at the time?</p> <p>Can you tell me where you meet these men now? Is it always in the same place? How many of you meet at a time?</p> <p>What things do you do together? Does everyone in the group do the same things when they are together?</p> <p>Do you stay in regular contact with each other? How do you stay in contact with each other?</p> <p>What happens when any of these friends move away? Where have they gone?</p> <p>Are these friendships useful to you in finding other men to have sex with?</p> <p>Tell me about how you, or the group, meet new people?</p> <p>Do you lose contact with some of these men? Can you tell me how does that happen?</p>

## NETWORKS

Objectives	Lines of Inquiry	Open questions
<p>2. explore and describe the ways in which, in relation to male-to-male sex, social and sexual networks overlap, and operate in public and private spheres</p>	<p>That networks are not discrete, but involve overlap and movement within and between</p> <p>That these male-to-male social networks exist and function in private or hidden spheres and the boundaries with the public sphere are constantly self-monitored and kept under surveillance</p>	<p>Do all of the friends of yours who are interested in sex with other men have other groups of men they spend time with?</p> <p>Do men in one group know about other groups of men? Do you tell each other of new men or new groups?</p> <p>Can you tell me about other groups of men interested in sex with men that you know about, but don't belong to?</p> <p>Who else knows that you are interested in sex with other men?</p> <p>Who knows that you meet with other men because of your interest in male-to-male sex?</p> <p>Do you keep this private, or hidden? If you do, how do you keep people from finding out?</p>

## PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN NETWORKS

Objectives	Lines of Inquiry	Open questions
<p>3. develop understandings of how, in these social and sexual networks, partnerships of various nature are formed, and the way in which each type of partnership and/or relationship is assessed for sexual health risk</p>	<p>That men engaged in social and sexual networks, establish connections of different kinds</p> <p>That some of these connections are more significant and/or durable than other (e.g. partnerships v. relationships)</p> <p>That the different nature of partnerships and/or relationships implies variability in sexual health risk (related to Objective 7)</p>	<p>Among these men and groups, do particular men have a special place in your life? How are they special? Tell me about this.</p> <p>Tell me about how long you have had this special connection to each of these men.</p> <p>Can you tell me whether being in love is part of this connection?</p> <p>Do you have sex with these special friends in different ways to sex with other men? Can you tell me in what ways the sex is different?</p>

SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE		
Objectives	Lines of Inquiry	Open questions
<p>4. explore and describe how the dynamics of sameness and difference operate in these male-to-male social and sexual networks, including characteristics such as age, social class, power differentials, gender identity and ethnicity</p>	<p>That male-to-male social and sexual networks incorporate people with a range of personal and demographic characteristics</p> <p>That men have a range of ways of relating within networks across these differences in and with dynamics that are symmetrical and asymmetrical</p>	<p>Think about the men in your groups: are they very different from each other in the ways they live their lives?</p> <p>Are the men who are special to you that you mentioned earlier, about your age? Do they work in similar jobs?</p> <p>Can you tell me if you have ever been with men whom you thought were different to you? How were they different to you? Did it matter at the time? How do you feel now about that?</p> <p>Generally, in the groups you know, can you tell me what happens when someone who is older, or richer, is attracted to some one younger or poorer?</p>

PLACE OF WOMEN		
Objectives	Lines of Inquiry	Open questions
<p>5. understand the importance of women to, and the role that they play in, the lives of those involved in these male-to-male social and sexual networks</p>	<p>That men involved in male-to-male social and sexual networks are, at the same time, involved in significant social and sexual ways with women.</p>	<p>Can you tell me about the women who are important in your life?</p> <p>Are you involved with any of these women sexually?</p> <p>Can you tell me whether being in love is part of this involvement?</p> <p>Tell me about what the women close to you know or understand about the sex you have with men, and the groups of men that you know?</p>

## INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Objectives	Lines of Inquiry	Open questions
6. document the manner in which those involved in these male-to-male social and sexual networks seek information and support, and the issues around which such information and support is sought	<p>That men involved in male-to-male social and sexual networks experience a need for, and take action to acquire, specific types of support and information</p> <p>That there are specific support and information needs that can be articulated and met</p>	<p>Are there things you don't know, but would want to know about male-to-male sex? What things?</p> <p>Do you talk with anybody about this part of your life? If you do, can you tell me what things you talk about?</p> <p>If you don't talk to anybody, do you ever want to talk to anybody about this part of your life?</p>

## SEXUAL PRACTICES

Objectives	Lines of Inquiry	Open questions
7. explore and describe the sexual practices desired, preferred and engaged in within male-to-male sex in each country	That practices desired, preferred and engaged in within male-to-male sex differ between men, within and between networks, and between the broader cultures of different sites and countries	<p>Generally, what things do you like to do when you have sex with a man?</p> <p>Is that what usually happens to you? Why? When?</p> <p>Can you tell me about the things men do with each other in sex within the groups you know?</p> <p>Does anything go wrong for anyone when doing these things during sex? Can you tell me about anything that might be dangerous when doing these things?</p>

# GLOSSARY

(Terms from Thailand and Indonesia used in this report)

<b>faen/fan</b>	regular primary sexual partner
<b>farang</b>	foreigner
<b>gik/kik</b>	steady relationship- not exclusive
<b>jadian</b>	dating
<b>kathoey/katoey/ladyboy</b>	male-to-female transgender person in Thailand
<b>Legi</b>	sacred day in the Javanese calendar
<b>lekong jreng</b>	(masculine) male partner in Indonesia/metrosexual
<b>waria</b>	male-to-female transgender person in Indonesia

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Australian Research Centre  
in Sex, Health and Society  
La Trobe University  
1st floor  
215 Franklin Street  
Melbourne, Victoria 3000  
AUSTRALIA

Telephone +61 3 9285 5382  
Facsimile +61 3 9285 5220  
Email: [arcshs@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:arcshs@latrobe.edu.au)  
Internet: [www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs)



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