

Romance and Sexual Initiation among Unmarried Young People in Vietnam:
A Multi-Method Approach

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ABSTRACT

Romantic love can potentially undermine safe sex messages. Ethnographic studies suggest that young people tend to conflate love with sex and view condom use as violating trust and therefore, risking the possibilities of love. Evidence suggests that sex has increasingly become an important component of romantic relationships among young Vietnamese. The increasing prevalence of sexual activity – combined with reportedly low levels of knowledge about sex and sexually transmitted diseases and an aversion to contraceptive use – suggest that Vietnamese youth might be at risk of having poor reproductive outcomes. This study combines survey-based and qualitative data to describe young people's pre-coital behaviors and progression to first sex. It also features the role of young people's predisposition to romantic love on their pre-coital and sexual experience. These two areas have important implications for adolescent reproductive health intervention but have not yet been addressed adequately in empirical studies on premarital sex in Vietnam.

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INTRODUCTION

Premarital sex is continuing to rise in Vietnam (Ghuman et al. 2006). The increasing prevalence of sexual activity – combined with reportedly low levels of knowledge about reproductive physiology, sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases and an aversion to contraceptive use – suggest that Vietnamese youth might be at risk of having poor reproductive outcomes. Abortion rate in Vietnam is one of the world's highest, with premarital abortions accounting for a substantial proportion of induced abortion (Henshaw et al. 1999). More recently, evidence indicates that half of all new HIV infection cases in Vietnam are young men ages 15-24 (Ministry of Health 2005). The epidemic may soon no longer be confined to injecting drug users. Heterosexual transmission rates have been climbing since men infected through commercial sex work or drug use increasingly spread the virus to their regular female partners (Family Health International 2006; Go et al. 2006).

The current situation portrays young Vietnamese as being ill-prepared for Vietnam's emerging AIDS epidemic. Empirical research on adolescent sexual transitions has largely focused on assessing timing and prevalence of premarital sex (General Statistical Office et al. 2006; Ghuman et al. 2006; Le et al. 2006; Mensch et al. 2003a; Vu 2006). An understanding of pre-coital behaviors which may pose young people at sexual risks is particularly lacking. More specifically, little is known about young people's behaviors prior to first sex and the roles of love and romance in determining their pre-coital behaviors and sexual practice.

Studies in various settings demonstrate that understanding characteristics of adolescents' dating experiences can offer insights into their potential risks and reproductive health outcomes (Miller et al. 1997; Upadhyay et al. 2006). In addition, ethnographic research in Vietnam reveals that sex has increasingly become an important component of romantic relationships among young Vietnamese as they consider sex to be an ultimate expression of love (Belanger and Khuat 1999). The tendency to conflate love with sex (i.e., predisposition to romantic love) in turn influences their sexual practice, particularly condom non-use (Gammeltoft 2002a). Traditional stereotypes describing boys want sex and girls want romance have recently been contested (see Giordano et al. 2006). Studying gender differences in how young men and women in Vietnam perceive love and sex could have direct implication for promoting healthy sexual transitions among adolescents.

This study has four main objectives. The first goal is to understand characteristics of progression toward first sex among young Vietnamese. I describe prevalence of emotional relationships (having boyfriend/girlfriend) and physical behaviors (kissing and petting) and assess how young men and women differ. Second, I aim to understand the current discourse on love and sex. In doing so, I examine attitudes of males and females towards acceptability of premarital sex based on the notion of love in

comparison with their attitudes toward other contexts of premarital sex. Third, I plan to determine how predisposition to romantic love affects young people's experiences in precoital behaviors and sexual intercourse and their contraceptive practice during first sex. Specifically, I aim to investigate whether unmarried youth who are predisposed to romance are more likely to progress through all types of precoital behaviors and tend to have premarital sex and are less likely to have unprotected intercourse. Finally, I combine nationally-representative survey data with in-depth and focus group interviews. I utilize a multi-method approach with an emphasis on the integration of quantitative and qualitative data in the analyses.

BACKGROUND

Sex before marriage is not uncommon in Vietnam. Men are more likely to have premarital sex and generally initiate sex at an earlier age than women¹. Further, young people tend to initiate sex with regular partners such as boyfriends, girlfriends or future spouses rather than with casual partners or commercial sex workers (General Statistical Office et al. 2006). While premarital sex is far from being rare, studies based on representative samples² indicate that the current prevalence is more modest in Vietnam than in neighboring countries³ (Ghuman 2005). For example, life-table estimates based on a survey in six provinces in the northern, central, and southern regions of Vietnam indicate that 29 percent of men initiated sex by age 22, whereas about 16 percent of women did so (Mensch et al. 2003a). A more recent study by Ghuman and colleagues (2006) also finds comparable reported levels of premarital sex and indicates that the prevalence is continuing to increase. Analyzing a sample of married persons in the Red River Delta and Ho Chi Minh City and environs, the authors show that premarital sex among the Red River Delta men increased from 6 percent for those from the wartime marriage cohort to 30 percent for those who were married after the economic reform.

Beyond the timing of first sexual intercourse and the factors that influence it, relatively little is known about the patterns of emotional relationships and physical behaviors Vietnamese youth engage in before first sex. Studies in various cultures demonstrate consistent patterns of precoital behaviors among adolescents (see Upadhyay et al. 2006 for review). Young people first have crushes and then have admirers (or begin admiring others). This is followed by group dates and proceeds to having first boyfriend/girlfriend and finally having their first single dates. Researchers observe a

¹ According Vietnam Population and AIDS Indicators Survey conducted in 2005, the median age at first intercourse is 21.2 for females ages 25-49 and 23.5 for their male counterparts. The difference reflects earlier timing of marriage among women compared to men.

² A majority of studies on this topic in Vietnam rely on anecdotal evidence, small convenience samples of adolescents and women in various settings such as university campuses and abortion clinics. One study, for example, conducted among students ages 17-24 estimated that between 30 and 70 percent of young people engaged in premarital sex (Vu Quy Nhan 1996). While compelling, these findings are not based on representative data.

³ According to Singh and colleagues (2000), 57 percent of males and 39 percent of females ages 20-24 in Thailand became sexually active before turning age 20. In the Philippines, the percentages of those who initiated sex before age 20 are 32 for males and 28 for females.

gradual physical progression that usually starts with holding hands, kissing, caressing and petting to sexual intercourse. The timing of precoital behaviors usually varies from one society to another. Within each culture, the gender differences in timing patterns are often significant. Males generally experience precoital behaviors earlier than females and proceed through the sequence at a more rapid pace.

Evidence suggests that a substantial proportion of young Vietnamese remain sexually inexperienced before they get married. Miller and colleagues (1997) point out that an attempt to lump this group of young people together in one category of not being sexually active is counterproductive and that studying their precoital behaviors (e.g., having crushes, kissing and petting) can provide useful insights for understanding adolescent sexual transitions. A study among adolescents ages 17-19 in Cebu, Philippines shows that males progress through a series of precoital behaviors at younger ages and at a faster pace than females (Upadhyay et al. 2006). While there is a gap of at least one year before adolescents have sex after they progress through a series of romantic relationships, the rapid progression was associated with earlier sexual initiation for females but not for males.

In addition to studying adolescent precoital behaviors, another promising area for reproductive health intervention research in Vietnam is to consider the role of love and romance in determining youth sexual transitions. Prior studies indicate that the construction of sex as safe through its relationship with love is an issue of particular importance with regard to HIV/AIDS and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (see Rosenthal et al. 1998 for review). Evidence suggests that in the context of love and romance unprotected sexual intercourse is considered more romantic and special. In the US and Brazil, for example, condoms are viewed to interfere with the romantic ideals of spontaneous sex and called into questions the issues of trust and love.

Young people in Vietnam increasingly express that sex has become an integral part of what it means to love (Khuat 1998). The country's transition from a redistributive to a market economy in the late 1980s is thought to have led to increased individualism and lessened familial control over young people. This, in turn, has resulted in more acceptance of premarital sex, which was once socially taboo. This is particularly true in certain contexts such as having sex with one's future spouse. In general, there is a greater tolerance for premarital sexual behaviors for males than for females. Although attitudinal changes are underway, for many young women premarital sex is still considered a deviation from tradition and an indicator for moral degradation. To soothe their anxiety and shame, some use love and romance to justify their sexual activity (Belanger and Khuat 1998; Gammeltoft 2002a).

An ethnographic study of unmarried women experiencing abortion in Hanoi vividly illustrates how women equate their motivation to have sex with love and commitment to their boyfriends and sometimes an aspiration for future marriage (Gammeltoft 2002a and 2002b). Young women in this study tend to stress their innocence and loss of self-control during sexual encounters, which are then reinforced by their aversion to contraceptive use. Consistent with findings elsewhere, young Vietnamese are usually

well aware of sexual risks such as unintended pregnancy and STDs infection but refuse to initiate contraceptive use because such negotiation would reflect on them as having a calculating mind. Young people tend to relate modern contraceptive methods with promiscuity and sexual exploitation, while contraceptive non-use or use of safe periods or withdrawal is associated with trust and true love (Gammeltoft 2002b). This perception is consistent with the Vietnamese government's past condom criminalization, in which condom use was interpreted as a promotion of "social evils" – a term coined by a Vietnamese prime minister in 1995 to refer to foreign social and cultural influences considered contrary to moral traditions (Family Health International 2003).

The discussion of love and romance in reproductive health research is not entirely new but most empirical studies on sexual behaviors and risks have failed to consider it seriously. There is also a tendency to stereotype the motivations for having sex among females as centering on love, commitments and romantic relationships, whereas males are concerned more about physical pleasure and sexual prowess. This has led to an emphasis on exploring girls' view of romance and sex. The studies on boys' perspectives are therefore noticeably lacking. This is particularly the case for Vietnam⁴. A recent study among adolescents in the US contested the traditional stereotype of boys as less emotionally engaged (Giordano et al. 2006). Researchers find that boys are as emotionally involved in romantic relationships as girls and tend to report significantly lower levels of confidence in various aspects of their relationships. Such evidence calls for attention toward gender dynamics in predisposition towards romantic love – an issue which merits further investigation in research on adolescents' progression to first sex and prevalence of premarital sex.

In an attempt to bridge the current gaps in research on adolescent sexual transitions in Vietnam, the analyses in this study are conceptualized based on the review of literature presented above. Consistent with the literature, I hypothesize that males are more likely to engage in pre-coital behaviors and premarital sex than females. They also tend to do so at an earlier age. Further, I expect young men to generally approve premarital sex at a higher rate than their female counterparts. Among women who approve premarital sex, I hypothesize that they are more likely to accept premarital sex based on the notion of love than they do with other scenarios of premarital sex (precursor to marriage and maturity). Moreover, I hypothesize that both males and females who accept that love is a legitimate reason for having sex are more likely to progress through all pre-coital behaviors and to initiate sex than peers who do not. Finally, I expect that young people who are predisposed to romantic love tend to avert to contraceptive use during their first sex.

⁴ Few existing studies on men focus nearly exclusively on HIV high-risk groups, including injecting drug users, migrant workers, gay men, or customers of commercial sex workers (for example, see Family Health International 2006; Vu et al. 2003). According to these studies, peer influence and alcohol consumption are significant determinants of sexual initiation among men in these groups.

DATA AND ANALYTIC APPROACH

I combine data from the Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth (SAVY) with in-depth interviews and focus group interviews from the Youth and Family Study (YF). The values of mixed method approach extend beyond data corroboration, elaboration, and interpretation to include model specification (Short et al. 2002). While recognizing that quantitative data analyses can be used to improve qualitative data analysis, this study illustrates how qualitative data can be utilized to improve the analysis and interpretation of survey data. Not only are findings from in-depth and focus group interviews useful for illustrating quantitative findings, but they also help validating choice of variables in the survey data analysis and constructing a measure of predisposition to romantic love.

My analyses incorporate nationally representative SAVY data for a sample of 6,427 never-married males and females between ages 14-25 in 42 provinces across Vietnam in 2003 and qualitative YF data for 120 in-depth interviews and 16 focus group interviews in four communes in the North and South of Vietnam in 2003.

To date, SAVY has been regarded as the most comprehensive survey to study consequences of Vietnam's rapid socioeconomic change on youth livelihoods. The survey was conducted by Vietnam's Ministry of Health and General Statistical Office with support from WHO and UNICEF. Young people were interviewed about various aspects of their livelihoods including education, work, friendship, health and wellbeing. Urban residents were over-sampled, while individuals under-represented in the survey include young people who were married, did not enroll in school and lived in non-household arrangements such as dorms or barracks.

The survey provides relatively rich information about adolescent sexual and reproductive health transitions. It features an effort to improve the measurement of youth sexual activity. It is widely recognized that biased reporting poses a number of challenges for researchers since young people, especially females, may feel reluctant to give accurate information about premarital sex in a face-to-face interview. To address this issue, all sensitive questions asked in SAVY, including those related to sexual attitudes and behaviors were self-administered by respondents. During the survey's pilot phase, the self-administered format was shown to improve reporting accuracy of sensitive behaviors by eliminating reluctance between interviewers and respondents and increasing a sense of anonymity for young people⁵ (Ministry of Health et al. 2005).

Young people were asked several questions about their experience in pre-coital behaviors, first sexual intercourse as well as recent sexual activities. SAVY asked all never-married respondents whether they had ever had a boyfriend or girlfriend. For

⁵ A method of audio computer-assisted self-interviews (ACASI) has recently been introduced in a small-scale survey of adolescent sexual health in Vietnam (Le et al. 2006). According to prior research in other developing settings, ACASI provides a more accurate reporting of sensitive behaviors compared to other methods including face-to-face interviews and self-administered questionnaires (Mensch et al. 2003b). Le and colleagues find that ACASI yields higher prevalence rates of premarital sex (17 percent for unmarried men ages 15-24 and 5 percent for women) than other data collection techniques they utilized.

those whose answer is yes, they were further inquired whether they had ever gone out with a partner of opposite sex, kissed, and touched their partners in private parts. Regardless of one's romantic relationship experience, every respondent was asked if they ever had sexual intercourse. Various questions about first sex were then probed, including age at first sex, characteristics of first partner, place of first sexual encounter, contraceptive use, and reasons for contraceptive non-use.

SAVY allows for a construction of key dependent variables including respondents' precoital behaviors (i.e., having boyfriend/girlfriend, kissing and petting) and experience in sexual intercourse. Among those who are sexually experienced, types of first sexual partners and contraceptive use during first sex can be described. Non-response does not impose any restrictions to the analyses in this study⁶. One obvious limitation of SAVY is its lack of information about timing of each precoital behavior. Such information would have enhanced the assessment of young people's progression toward first sex, particularly the pace of the progression and sequence of precoital behaviors. In addition to questions related to sexual behaviors, respondents were also inquired about their attitudes towards premarital sex. Different statements about premarital sex were presented to respondents. They were then asked whether they agree, disagree, or felt unsure with each attitudinal statement.

While one of primary objectives is to address gender differences in progression towards first sex and attitudes towards premarital sex, I include various background variables in the analyses. This will allow me to account for possible differences between the gender subgroups on basic characteristics of young people and examine whether these variables operate as mediators for any observed gender differences. Table 1 shows the distribution of selected background characteristics of the sample: age, current residence, ethnicity, father's education, respondent's education and work experience, all by gender.

[Table 1 about here]

Mean age is 18.2 for males and slightly younger for females (17.8). Current residence is measured as a dummy indicating whether respondent lives in urban or rural areas. Urban areas including big and small cities and towns account for slightly over one third of the sample. Further, ethnicity is incorporated in the analyses as a dummy variable indicating if respondent is majority Kinh or ethnic minority. Because the ethnic Chinese who account for 1.6 percent of the sample enjoy far better economic status than other ethnic minority groups, they are categorized into the same group as Kinh (non-minority). In this study, father's education is included as a proxy for respondent's socioeconomic status indicating whether the father had primary education or less, lower secondary or

⁶ My diagnostic analysis shows that all unmarried respondents gave answers to the questions on whether they had ever had sex and who their first sexual partner was. There are 7 respondents who failed to answer the question about contraceptive use during first sex (2 percent of those who were sexually experienced). While about 42 cases (15 percent of respondents who were sexually inexperienced) did not report age at first sex, this does not cause a problem because I do not attempt to document exact age at first sex in this study.

upper secondary schooling⁷. Moreover, respondents' educational attainment is also incorporated as a categorical variable with similar labels like father's education except for an addition of tertiary education. Like other selected background variables, differences between male and female respondents in educational attainment are not salient. This reflects Vietnam's gender equality in education. The last variable to be considered is respondents' experience in paid work. As a proxy for young people's autonomy, it is incorporated as a dummy variable indicating whether respondent has ever worked and received income remuneration. Table 1 shows that a smaller proportion of girls had ever worked (46 percent) compared to 54 percent among boys.

The in-depth interviews and focus group interviews I analyze come from the Youth and Family Study (YF) conducted by Vietnam's Institute of Sociology in collaboration with the Population Council. Note that YF was carried out in the same year (2003) as SAVY but the two studies did not share a similar sampling frame. Unlike SAVY which is a nationally representative survey, YF was conducted in two communes in the Red River Delta (north) and another two communes in the Mekong River Delta (south). For each region, one peri-urban and one rural site were purposively chosen. The characteristics and attitudes of young people in peri-urban locations are likely to resemble those in major cities because these sites are sending areas of young people who migrate to study or work in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City – the economic and political centers of the Red River Delta and Mekong River Delta respectively. Evidence indicates that the differences in economic, social and political histories between the two regions have implications for premarital sexual behaviors of northerners and southerners (Ghuman et al. 2006).

While adolescent reproductive health is not the highlight in the YF study, it does provide useful information on young people's attitudes toward premarital sex, their perception toward romantic love, criteria for spouse selection and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. Respondents were not directly inquired about their premarital sexual activity since past studies suggest that face-to-face interviews produce underreporting of early sexual experience among youth in Vietnam (Goodkind and Phan 1997; Le et al. 2006). YF researchers asked respondents to narrate about a relevant experience of their peers instead.

In each study commune, in-depth interviews were held for 15 males and 15 females ages 15-29 from 30 households. Subsequently, respondents' parents of the same sex were interviewed in a follow-up visit. Additionally, in each location, four focus group interviews were held with young men and women ages 15-29 and older men and women who were of the parental generations. The interviews contrasted men and women, generations, the North and South, peri-urban and rural contexts. Although I might sometimes make reference to these contrasts, the analyses emphasize similarities rather than differences between groups. The consistency in answers across

⁷ Non-response for father's education is quite high (8.5 percent of the total sample). I include them as a separate category. While this category is included in the following analyses, the results for non-response are not reported because of lack of interpretation.

diverse groups reaffirms the confidence in conclusions drawn from the qualitative analyses (Short et al. 2002).

The analyses proceed in four steps. First, I analyze qualitative data to understand the perception toward love and attitudes toward current dating behaviors and premarital sex. Second, with the survey data, I describe the prevalence of pre-coital behaviors (having boyfriend/girlfriend, kissing and petting) and examine the determinants of attitudes concerning premarital sex. Further, in-depth and focus group interviews give insights on the current discourse about romance and sex, particularly validating attitudinal changes that are underway. As a result, I use these insights to develop a survey-based measure of predisposition to romantic love that goes beyond a simple dichotomy to capture varying degrees of how respondents really think about premarital sex. Finally, I analyze the survey data to address the extent to which predisposition to romantic love influences young people's experiences in pre-coital behaviors and sexual intercourse as well as their safe sexual practice during first sex.

Note that the analyses are largely descriptive. Because of lower reported levels of premarital sex among women, for the presentation of some results (e.g., prevalence of premarital sex among adolescents under age 18, distribution of first sexual partner), I limit my attention and interpretation to men.

RESULTS

Gender Differences in Pre-coital Behaviors and Premarital Sex

In this section, I describe prevalence and characteristics of pre-coital behaviors and premarital sex among young men and women in Vietnam. The analyses based on the SAVY data provide an overall picture of current trends whereas in-depth and focus group interviews are used to illustrate the quantitative findings. Table 2 shows the proportions of young people who reported engaging in specific emotional relationships (having girlfriend/boyfriend), physical behaviors prior to first sex (kissing and petting), and sexual intercourse. The percentages are presented by gender and age groups.

[Table 2 about here]

Results indicate that there are no significant differences in proportions of males and females having experienced emotional relationships. At ages 14-17 about 11 percent of males and females reported having had a girlfriend/boyfriend. The prevalence rose quickly and steadily by age groups. The proportions of young people ages 18-21 reported having experienced emotional relationships are 43 percent for males and 45 percent for females. At ages 22-25 approximately two thirds of young men and women reported having had a romantic partner (note that the proportions might be underestimated since men and women ages 22-25 can be selective of those who get married late).

Consistent with past studies in other settings, there were significant differences between males and females in the reported experience of precoital physical behaviors and sexual intercourse. Males were more likely to report experiencing physical intimacy than females. At ages 14-17, 5 percent of males and 3 percent of females reported having kissed. At ages 22-25, these proportions increased to 56 percent and 50 percent respectively. Survey-based data indicate that petting and sexual intercourse were somewhat unusual for adolescents ages 14-17. These physical behaviors became more common among respondents of older age groups, particularly males. Proportions of young men reported having petted are 16 percent for those in the 18-21 age group and nearly 40 percent for the 22-25 group. Prevalence of this precoital behavior was much lower among females. At ages 22-25, only 18 percent of females reported such experience. Further, about one tenth of males ages 18-21 reported having had sex. The proportion rose about three times to 32 percent among men ages 22-25. Such upward increase was not observed among females. The proportion of women reported having initiated sex was 2 percent for young women ages 18-21 and 4 percent for women ages 22-25.

The in-depth and focus group interviews consistently revealed that physical intimacy had become common for young people who engaged in romantic relationships.

Focus group, Female, Parents' generation, Peri-urban, North: "In my generation, we did not even dare to hold hands, even though we had been together for three years."

Nguyet, Female, Age 18, Student, Peri-urban, North: "Our lifestyle is more modern now. Today young people engage in romantic relationships earlier. Kids in the 6th or the 7th grades might already have a girlfriend or a boyfriend. Some of them may even know how to kiss."

Nha, Female, School teacher, Age 27, Peri-urban, North: "When young people like the 8th grade students in my class are courting one another, they might not only exchange love letters... Although they are still very young, some of them have already had sexual experience."

A combination of factors related to Vietnam's rapid social transformation was thought to contribute to these changing patterns of adolescent sexual transitions. These factors included an overall improved living condition, which allowed young people to have a better diet and in turn, affected their reproductive physiology and accelerate the timing of puberty. Further, young Vietnamese experienced increased mobility, particularly opportunities to study or work far away from home. Consequently, this led to greater personal freedom and less parental control. Other factors mentioned by respondents were the mass media, especially western movies and pornography, and lessened state control over individuals.

Evidence from quantitative and qualitative data consistently indicates that it was common for adolescents to have developed an emotional relationship with opposite sex

by the time they reached late teens and early 20s. Physical progression toward first sex was rather gradual among both males and females. Yet, degrees of physical intimacy and their timing varied significantly by gender. While kissing could normally be expected among those who reported having had romantic partners, petting and actual intercourse were less common. Considerably higher proportions of men in their 20s progressed to greater levels of physical intimacy (sex included) than women and younger men. The following analysis presented in Table 3 examines the characteristics of first sexual partners among respondents who reported having initiated sex. Percentages are shown by gender and age groups.

[Table 3 about here]

One of the most important findings is that a majority of young people in Vietnam initiated first sex in the context of romantic relationships. Approximately 70 percent of sexually experienced men reported that their first sexual partners were girlfriends or fiancés. Likewise, a similar pattern was observed for females. Nearly 80 percent of women who reported having had sex initiated sex with their romantic partners. Sexual initiation outside romantic relationships was less common in Vietnam. About 15 percent and 22 percent of sexually experienced males and females initiated sex with casual partners (friends or acquaintances). Meanwhile, sexual initiation with prostitutes was restricted to males. The overall proportion of sexually experienced men had their first sex with prostitutes was about 15 percent.

According to the survey-based estimates, premarital sex appeared to be rare for women but fairly common particularly for young men in their 20s. Yet, a majority of males reported that their partners were girlfriends. These findings were in conflict, suggesting that there were gender differences in reporting. It is likely that young women in the sample underreported their experiences, although the reverse could also be true for young men.

Qualitative Perspectives on Attitudes toward Premarital Sex

The descriptive patterns of young people's pre-coital experiences and sexual initiation suggest that these behaviors often took place in the context of romantic relationships. Is love and romance the main motivation of these behaviors? To what extent are young Vietnamese predisposed toward romantic love? How does this inclination differ by gender? One of the main goals of this study is to develop a survey-based measure of young people's predisposition to romantic love. The measure aims to summarize young people's attitude toward premarital sex and take into account the extent to which they perceive love as the motivation for sex.

Ethnographic research in various settings argues that young people, particularly females, tend to conflate love with sex. A rather simplistic explanation of this argument is that sex is viewed to lead to the possibility of love and if condom use risks the chance of having sex, then safe sex can be seen as a risk for the possibility of love (Rosenthal et al. 1998). Such rationalization undermines safe sex messages. Recent studies in

abortion clinics in Hanoi confirm a similar rationalization among a selective group of unmarried young women who underwent induced abortion (Gammeltoft 2002a and 2002b). One of the limitations of past studies is that they focus on girls' view of romance and sex and take for granted the male experiences. I aim to examine both male and female views toward romantic love and premarital sex. In this section, I analyze in-depth and focus group interviews to understand the extent to which the discourse on premarital sex was constructed in terms of love and romance. Further, I examine alternative contexts in which young people in Vietnam find premarital sex acceptable.

The qualitative data suggests that for many young Vietnamese, sexual intercourse was considered a common part of modern romantic relationships. However, males and females articulated their attitudes toward premarital sex differentially. In Vietnam males tended to articulate more openly than females that love was the motivation for premarital sex. The discourse among young men revealed the way in which sex was conflated with love. Love was generally thought to precede sexual intercourse. When love became intense, youth discarded the norms and expressed it through sexual intercourse. For some, sex was considered a way to demonstrate their commitment to future marriage. Note that it is plausible that young people might view sex as a way to gain love (Gammeltoft 2002a; Rosenthal et al. 1998). But the interviews with young people did not show that they discuss love and sex in this direction of causality. The following examples are typical.

Toan, Male, Age 20, Farmer, Rural, North: "Premarital sex is common these days. When two persons love each other, they can have sex."

Anh, Male, Age 21, Factory worker, Peri-urban, North: "When young people love each other passionately, they don't listen to their parents. They listen to their hearts and they have sex. I don't see anything wrong with it. But men should not just have sex without love or have sex just to satisfy his needs. If I have sex with my girlfriend, it's because I want to marry her."

Young women were more reluctant to rationalize premarital sex based on romantic love perhaps because they received less tolerance for premarital sex than males and virginity was to a certain extent considered a female virtue. Interestingly, the interviews with young women revealed that some discussed the issue of love and premarital sex in the context of individualism.

Thu, Female, Age 17, Student, Rural, North: "[The decision to engage in premarital sex] is up to each person. If you are happy, you love each other and believe that you can live together, you can do whatever you want."

Unmarried people, both males and females, in the sample consistently demonstrated that they were more comfortable discussing the notion of love in the context of marriage prospects than in the context of sex. In this regard, they tended to talk about love in a hopeful and positive light. Love was stressed as a significant, if not the most important, criteria for mate selection and marriage. Some youth expressed very idealistic notion of

love, whereas others emphasized the importance of other factors such as economic stability and family acceptance, along with love. The following quotes are common:

Luyen, Female, Age 20, Factory worker, Peri-urban, North: “Before getting married, two persons must love each other. It’s the most essential thing. If I find someone that truly love and understand me, other things in life are not important anymore. They will be just an addition that will make your love more beautiful.”

Toan, Male, Age 26, Worker, Rural, North: “This issue has often been discussed on TV or in newspapers. Love is important but young people should also concentrate on learning how to make a living first until they are old enough to love.”

I find that respondents who were in their teens and in school at the time of interviews were likely to express downright disagreement with sex before marriage. Meanwhile, those who articulated that love was a precondition for sex tended to approve of premarital sex. There were also a substantial number of young people who remained ambivalent about premarital sex. They may not accept love as the prime motivation for premarital sex but were willing to agree with premarital sex in other contexts. According to the qualitative analysis, the two preconditions that young people in Vietnam thought premarital sex was acceptable were 1) sex as a precursor to marriage and 2) sex a the time one reached age maturity.

The interviews indicate that sexual intercourse was sometimes acceptable if it took place after an official commitment to marriage was made. Such commitment secured parental approval and guaranteed the wellbeing of young women in case that they became pregnant.

Nga, Female, Age 20, Factory worker, Peri-urban, North: “It is acceptable to have sex once two persons are engaged - like a month or so before wedding. If two persons are just dating and not sure if they will get married, they shouldn’t have sex.”

I find that young people used age as a proxy for one’s maturity, economic stability and readiness to start a family. There was no consensus regarding which age was considered appropriate for unmarried people to initiate sex.

Nga, Female, Age 20, Factory worker, Peri-urban, North: “People over 30 can decide to have sex. It doesn’t matter if they have married or not. At that age, they are mature enough to make their own decisions. People my age are too young to engage in premarital sex. We’re not capable of planning our future career, let alone having sex.”

Evidence from the qualitative analysis indicates that attitudinal changes regarding premarital sex and love are underway in Vietnam. Young people increasingly

found premarital sex acceptable. How they rationalized their attitudes varied quite greatly – ranging from the notion of love to marriage commitment and age maturity. An individual may find him/herself approve of premarital sex in more than one context. The ambivalence surrounding young people’s attitude toward premarital sex calls for a measure that is more inclusive of this diversity. The following section demonstrates how I use these insights to develop a measure of predisposition toward romantic love that include different dimensions of how young people perceive premarital sex.

Measure of Predisposition to Romantic Love

For guidance on how best to develop a measure from the survey data that summarizes young people’s predisposition toward romantic love, I turn first to the validity assessment based on the in-depth and focus group interviews. In SAVY, respondents were asked to evaluate five attitudinal statements about premarital sex, including whether premarital sex is acceptable 1) if young people are willing to do it; 2) if two persons love each other; 3) if two persons are about to get married; 4) if two persons are mature; 5) if the woman can be prevented from pregnancy. For each statement, there were three possible answers: agree, disagree, and unsure.

Based on the qualitative analyses, three out of five attitudinal statements emerged as predominant discourses in which young people referred to when they were asked to express their opinions about premarital sex. These contexts are: romantic love, precursor to marriage and maturity. Drawing on these insights from qualitative findings, I focus on these three contexts in developing a measure of predisposition to romantic love. I first turn to address the gender patterns of attitudes toward premarital sex based on the survey data analysis.

[Figure 1 about here]

Figure 1 presents the proportions of male and female respondents who reported that they found premarital sex acceptable in the contexts of 1) romantic love, 2) precursor to marriage and 3) maturity. Gender differences in acceptability of premarital sex were apparent in all three contexts. Males were generally more likely to report that they agreed with premarital sex. About 31 percent of males reported that it was acceptable to have premarital sex if two persons loved each other. Higher proportions of males approved of premarital sex as a precursor to marriage and if two people were mature (about 37 percent each). Females were more likely to disagree with the attitudinal statements about premarital sex. About one fifth of them expressed that premarital sex was acceptable if those who engaged in it were mature. Only 15 percent and 11 percent of females approved premarital sex in the contexts of marriage prospects and romantic love. Consistent with the qualitative findings, young people were least inclined to agree with premarital sex based solely on love.

Table 4 shows associations between agreement with the three attitudinal statements and background characteristics of respondents by gender. Levels of acceptability were

significantly much lower among younger men in all items. This pattern was also observed among women – but only for one out of the three items. Women ages 22-25 were statistically more likely to approve premarital sex in the context of romantic love than younger ones. In general, urban residents tended to be more receptive of premarital sex than their rural counterparts. I observe this association among females in all three items but for two out of three among males. Moreover, levels of agreement were significantly higher among ethnic minority with the acceptability of having premarital sex when young people were about to get married. This was true for both males and females. This pattern, however, was not observed for two other attitudinal items. Further, agreement had no consistent and statistically significant association with father's educational level (a proxy for respondents' socioeconomic status).

[Table 4 about here]

Relationships between agreement and respondents' educational level were inconsistent, yet interesting. First, I do not find any statistical significant association between respondents' education and acceptability of premarital sex as a precursor to marriage. Further, results suggest that better educated males and females were generally more likely to accept premarital sex in the context of maturity. However, such association was reversed among females when examining acceptability of premarital sex in the context of romantic love. Generally, women with less education expressed higher levels of agreement with premarital sex in the context of romance than better educated women. This trend was not repeated among males, though. Having paid work experience was associated with higher levels of agreement in all attitudinal items. The only exception was among women for acceptability of premarital sex in the context of maturity.

In sum, young men appeared to be more receptive of premarital sex than young women. Older age, urban residence and having paid work experience were positively associated with higher levels of agreement with the three attitudinal statements among both males and females. Education had a strong positive association with agreement with acceptability of premarital sex in the context of maturity. But it is negatively related with acceptability of sex in the context of love. When comparing all three contexts in which premarital sex are acceptable, levels of agreement with premarital sex in the context of romantic love is the lowest for both males and females. Proportions of males approving premarital sex as a precursor to marriage or in the context of young people's maturity are generally about the same. Meanwhile, slightly higher proportions of women agree with acceptability of premarital sex based on young people's maturity than based on marriage prospect.

The following step is to create a measure of predisposition toward romantic love. Evidence from the quantitative and qualitative data consistently suggests that young people's attitudes toward premarital sex were not clear cut. Those who found premarital sex acceptable might approve it for more than one reason. Table 5 presents proportions of respondents who expressed approval of premarital sex in more than one context. Findings suggest that males who found premarital sex acceptable based on the notion

of love were more likely to approve premarital sex in other two contexts when compare to those who accepted premarital sex on the marriage or maturity contexts. Such patterns were consistent for females but the levels were somewhat different. If I were to operationalize the measure of predisposition toward love using a dichotomy variable (e.g., agree or disagree with premarital sex based on love), it would fail to capture these dynamic patterns.

[Table 5 about here]

Constructed based on these insights, the measure of predisposition to romantic love reflects both respondents' attitudes toward premarital sex and their tendency to seek love as the motivation for sex. It consists of three categories to account for the varying degrees in which one might find premarital sex acceptable. First, respondents who showed acceptability of premarital sex in the context of love and/or in other contexts would be labeled as "highly likely" to be predisposed to romantic love. Second, respondents who approved premarital sex based on either marriage prospect or on maturity reasons (but not love) would be labeled as "moderately likely" to harbor the predisposition to romantic love. Finally, respondents who expressed disagreement with premarital sex in all three contexts, were labeled as "unlikely" to be predisposed to romantic love. Figure 2 shows the distribution of this newly constructed measure of predisposition to romantic love by gender.

[Table 6 about here]

There were noticeable gender differences in level of predisposition to romantic love. All age groups combined, higher proportions of males (31 percent) were categorized as "highly likely" predisposed to romantic love compared to 12 percent among females. The proportions of males with high level of predisposition to romantic love increased significantly by age. For example, about 23 percent of men ages 14-17 were classified as very likely to be predisposed to romantic love. The proportions in this category rose to nearly 50 percent among those ages 22-25. Such age pattern was also observed among females but to much lesser extent. A majority of females of all age groups (71 percent) disagreed with premarital sex in all three contexts considered in this study and therefore, were classified as unlikely to be predisposed to the notion of romantic love.

Romantic Love, Precoital Behaviors and Sexual intercourse

Tables 7a and 7b present four binary logistic regression models of precoital and first sexual experiences for young men and women respectively. This multivariate analysis addresses two main questions. The first question is whether predisposition to romantic love increases the likelihood that young people experienced romantic relationship; engaged in kissing and petting and had premarital sex. The second question is whether young people's precoital and sexual experiences are affected by background characteristics such as age, ethnicity, residence, education and SES, in addition to the predisposition to romantic love. The coefficients in Tables 7a and 7b are expressed as the ratio of

the odds of having experienced each specific behavior relative to the comparable odds of the reference category for each variable.

[Tables 7a and 7b about here]

Predisposition to romantic love had a very strong and significant positive impact on all pre-coital and first sexual experiences of males. Table 7a shows that young men who were predisposed to romantic love (i.e., those in “high likely” category), were twice more likely to have had girlfriend than those without any predisposition. Further, results suggest that such romantic inclination increased the probabilities that young men engaged in greater physical intimacy by several folds. For example, given all other characteristics being equal, men with this romantic predisposition were nearly 5 times more likely to have experienced petting and 8 times more likely to have had sex. It is interesting to note that among men who were moderately predisposed to the notion of love, the probabilities of experiencing each specific pre-coital and sexual behavior barely changed only slightly across the four models.

Consistent with the male pattern, there was a direct positive effect of predisposition to romantic love on the likelihoods of pre-coital behaviors and sexual initiation among females. Young women with high inclination to romantic love were much more likely to engage in each of these behaviors than her counterparts with lower or without the romantic predisposition. For instance, compared to the reference category, they were over ten times more likely to report having had sex, whereas those with moderate inclination experienced about three times greater likelihood.

In addition to the effects of predisposition to romantic love, results shown in Tables 7a and 7b indicate that age and paid work experience were perhaps two of the most significant determinants of young people’s experience in pre-coital behaviors and sexual initiation. For both males and females, older age (particularly ages 22-25) was strongly and positively related to higher probabilities of engaging in all behaviors in these series. Having paid work experienced also increased the likelihoods of reporting most of these pre-coital and sexual experiences among both gender. The only exception is that work experience had no significant effects on the likelihood that young women reported having had sex.

While there were no systematic effects of father’s education in all the four models, I find that urban residence and ethnic minority had important, yet inconsistent effects. For males, urban residence increased the likelihoods of having had girlfriend and engaged in kissing and petting but not sexual intercourse. For females, it had direct positive effects in all behaviors in the series except for reporting having petted. Further, results indicate that ethnic minority men were less likely to have ever kissed than non-majority. Meanwhile, ethnic minority females were nearly three times more likely to report having had sex.

Among males, education had strong positive impact on the progression toward first sex but had no independent effects on the likelihood of sexual initiation. Young men particularly those with tertiary levels of education were generally more likely than men with lower education to report having had girlfriend, kissed or petted. Similar impact of education on precoital behaviors was also observed among females. It is interesting to note that the effects of women's education on the likelihood of having sexual intercourse reversed. Females with lower education were much more likely to report having initiated sex (e.g., six times greater among women with primary education or less).

In sum, results suggest that the effects of predisposition to romantic love on increasing the probabilities of precoital and sexual experiences were direct and remained strong even after an inclusion of other factors in the analysis. Other important determinants of these series of behaviors were age, paid work experience, urban residence, education, and ethnicity.

Romantic Love and Safe Practice during First Sex

The final analysis presented in Table 8 pools data from males and females to determine whether predisposition toward romantic love discouraged young people to practice safe sex during sexual initiation. Two binary logistic regression models of safe sexual practice during first sex are presented. Safe sex is referred to experiences of survey respondents who used safe modern contraceptive methods during first sexual initiation. Non-use and use of rhythm and withdrawal are classified as not safe.

[Table 8 about here]

The sample for this multivariate analysis are sexually experienced young people (N=358). Males account for 89 percent of the sample. The number of females reported having sexual experience is relatively very low (N=41). Therefore, it is not possible to assess the determinants of safe sexual practice among women in a separate analysis from men. Gender covariate is incorporated in the models to account for gender differences in sexual practice. Variations in types of first sexual partners are also taken into consideration.

Three questions are addressed in this analysis. The first one is whether predisposition to romantic love affects the likelihood that young people practice safe sex during their first sexual intercourse. The second question is whether there are differences by gender and other background characteristics in the practice of safe sex. Finally, the last question is whether types of first sexual partner account for differences in the likelihood that young people practice safe sex.

Results shown in Table 8 indicate that there are no significant effects of young people's inclination to romantic love on the likelihood of safe sexual practice. Model 1 suggests that young people who are moderately and highly predisposed

to the notion of love were less likely than those without this predisposition to practice safe sex by 32 and 27 percent respectively. Yet, the odds ratios are not statistically significant. These remained unchanged in Model 2 when type of sexual partners was added.

Age had strong positive impact on safe sexual practice. Findings suggest that young people who became sexually experienced at earlier age were more likely to have risky sexual practice. One of the most striking findings is distinct gender differences in safe sexual practice during first sex. Given other characteristics being equal, males had greater probabilities of engaged in safe practice during the sexual initiation than females. Even when controlling for the types of sexual partners, men were twice more likely to practice safe sex than females. In addition, education, particularly primary level or less, had significant negative effects on safe sexual practice. The odds were barely changed when more covariates were added. Compared to those with tertiary education, sexually experienced young people who had primary education or less were about 60 percent less likely to use condom or other modern contraceptive methods during first sex.

Type of first partner was perhaps one of the most significant determinants of safe sex. The coefficients indicate the effects of this measure direct and very strong. Young people were much less likely to use modern contraceptives once they perceived that sex was outside the context of commercial sex. The probability of practicing safe sex was reduced by 95 percent if the sexual partner was considered serious partner and by 90 percent if it was casual partners.

DISCUSSION

This study combines survey-based and qualitative data to describe young people's precoital behaviors and progression to first sex. It also features the role of young people's predisposition to romantic love on their precoital and sexual experience. These two areas have important implications for adolescent reproductive health intervention but have not yet been addressed adequately in empirical studies on premarital sex in Vietnam.

Findings suggest that nearly half of Vietnamese youth had already developed romantic relationships by the time they reached age of early 20s. Physical progression to first sex was rather gradual among males and females; yet, there were significant gender differences in prevalence and timing. At all age groups considered, higher proportions of males engaged in intimate precoital behaviors such as petting and sexual initiation than females. Additionally, I find that young people in Vietnam generally initiated first sex in the context of romantic relationships. A majority of sexually experienced males and females reported that they initiated sex with serious partners – not casual partners or sex workers. Consistent with past studies, at ages 22-25, nearly one third of males reported having had sex. Reported levels of premarital sex among females were much lower than males. This finding was in conflict with the prevalence and characteristics of

first sexual partners reported by males prompting a possibility that women underreported their experiences.

Both survey-based and qualitative findings suggest that males were more receptive of premarital sex than females. They were also more likely to accept love as the motivation for premarital sex. The two other important contexts in which premarital sex was regarded acceptable were when it was considered a precursor to marriage and when persons involved were mature. I find that there was a great deal of ambivalence surrounding young people's attitude toward premarital sex. An individual may find him/herself approve of premarital sex in more than one context. I use these insights to construct a measure of young people's predisposition toward romantic love.

I find that both males and females who accepted that love was a legitimate reason for having sex were much more likely to experience all precoital and sexual behaviors than peers who do not. Yet, evidence does not support the hypothesis that young people who were predisposed to romantic love stayed avert to contraceptive use during their first sex. The probabilities of safe sexual practice were reduced dramatically when first sex was initiated with serious and casual partners and when females initiated it. It might be plausible that the effect of predisposition toward romantic love was operated through young people's assessment of sexual partners.

More discussion will be added here regarding limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and implication for intervention and promotion of adolescent sexual transitions.

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Table 1. Percentage distribution of survey respondents, by selected characteristics, according to sex.

Characteristics	Total (N=6427)	Male (N=3367)	Female (N=3060)
Mean Age	18.0	18.2	17.8
Current residence			
Total	100%	100%	100%
Urban	37.5	36.4	38.6
Rural	62.5	63.6	61.4
Ethnicity			
Total	100%	100%	100%
Kinh-Chinese	86.5	86.4	86.6
Ethnic minority	13.5	13.6	13.4
Father's education			
Total	100%	100%	100%
Primary or less	25.6	26.0	25.1
Lower secondary	35.7	36.3	35.1
Upper sec or higher	30.2	29.1	31.5
DK	8.5	8.6	8.3
Educational level			
Total	100%	100%	100%
Primary or less	13.8	13.7	14.1
Lower secondary	37.6	38.3	36.8
Upper secondary	34.9	35.0	34.9
Tertiary	13.6	13.1	14.2
Paid work experience			
Total	100%	100%	100%
Ever worked	49.7	53.8	46.4
Never worked	50.3	46.2	53.6

Source: SAVY 2003

Table 2. Characteristics of emotional relationships, precoital behaviors, and sexual intercourse by sex and age groups.

Dating behaviors	Age groups		
	14-17 (N=3213)	18-21 (N=2206)	22-25 (N=1008)
% ever had girlfriend/boyfriend			
Male	11.6	42.7	65.7
Female	11.0	45.0	66.7
% ever kissed			
Male	4.9	30.7	55.7
Female	3.1 **	23.1 **	50.3 **
% ever petted			
Male	2.1	16.4	39.0
Female	0.7 **	6.3 **	17.8 **
% ever had sexual intercourse			
Male	1.0	10.0	31.8
Female	0.2 **	2.0 **	3.9 **

Source: SAVY 2003

*Differences between males and females are significant at $p < 0.05$, ** significant at $p < 0.01$

Table 3. Patterns of first sexual partners among respondents ever had sexual intercourse by sex and age

Types of first sexual partners	Age groups	
	Male (N=317)	Female (N=41)
Total	100%	100%
Serious partners	70.0	78.0
Casual partners	15.1	22.0
Sex workers	14.8	--

Source: SAVY 2003

Note: Serious partners include girlfriends/boyfriends and fiances/fiancées; casual partners are defined as acquaintances or friends. Meanwhile, the sex worker

Figure 1. Percentage respondents ages 14-25 who agree that premarital sex is acceptable by gender and contexts

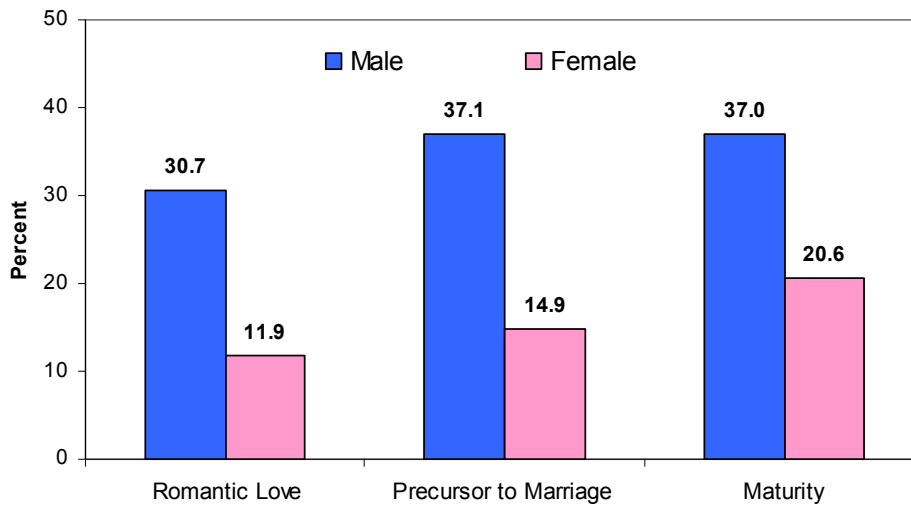


Table 4. Percentage of respondents who agree with statements about the acceptability of having premarital sex by selected characteristics, according to sex.

Characteristics	It is acceptable for young people to have premarital sex if they are ...					
	Loving each other		About to get married		Mature	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Age groups						
14-17 ^a	23.2	10.8	28.1	15.1	28.3	19.9
18-21	32.8 ***	11.9 *	40.4 ***	14.5	41.2 ***	20.3
22-25	47.5 ***	15.7 *	55.2 ***	15.3	52.9 ***	23.5
Current residence						
Urban	32.3	12.2 *	41.3 **	15.3 *	45.5 ***	25.6 ***
Rural ^a	29.8	11.7	34.6	14.7	32.2	17.4
Ethnicity						
Kinh-Chinese ^a	30.3	11.1	36.1	13.5	37.8	21.0
Ethnic minority	33.3	16.9	43.3 ***	24.0 ***	31.9	17.8
Father's education [^]						
Primary or less ^a	32.3	14.2	37.1	17.5	35.4	17.9
Lower secondary	29.2	11.3	36.5	14.1	33.6	19.9
Upper sec or higher	29.4	9.9	37.9	13.8	43.3	25.3
Educational level						
Primary or less	41.1	18.4 **	43.7	20.5	35.4 ***	17.7 *
Lower secondary	31.1	13.0 *	34.0	16.0	32.0 ***	17.7 ***
Upper secondary	23.3 **	8.5	33.5	12.0	35.3 ***	20.7 **
Tertiary ^a	38.5	10.8	48.8	14.0	57.6	30.5
Paid work experience						
Ever worked	37.0 ***	14.5 *	43.6 ***	16.9 ***	41.9 ***	21.2
Never worked ^a	23.3	9.6	29.5	13.2	31.3	20.0

Source: SAVY 2003

* Significant at $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Significance levels are based on logistic regressions of each attitudinal statement on selected characteristics.

^a Indicates the omitted category.

[^] Missing cases are included in the analysis but the percentages are not reported.

Table 5. Typology for respondents' levels of predisposition to romantic love.

% Accepting premarital sex based on...	Men who accept premarital sex in the context of ...			Women who accept premarital sex in the context of ...		
	Love (N=1034)	Marriage (N=1248)	Maturity (N=1246)	Love (N=363)	Marriage (N=457)	Maturity (N=629)
% Love	--	65.4	55.0	--	53.4	34.5
% Marriage	78.9	--	62.4	67.2	--	40.2
% Maturity	66.2	62.3	--	59.8	55.4	--

Source: SAVY 2003

Table 6. Distribution of respondents' levels of predisposition to romantic love.

Level of predisposition to romantic love	Male				Female			
	All (N=3367)	14-17 (N=1600)	18-21 (N=1198)	22-25 (N=569)	All (N=3060)	14-17 (N=1613)	18-21 (N=1008)	22-25 (N=439)
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Highly likely	30.7	23.2	32.8	47.5	11.9	10.8	11.9	15.7
Moderately likely	23.9	22.9	25.5	23.0	17.7	18.7	17.1	15.3
Unlikely	45.4	53.9	41.7	29.5	70.5	70.5	71.0	69.0

Source: SAVY 2003

Table 7a. Binary logistic regression analysis - Determinants of precoital behaviors and premarital sexual intercourse among males

Selected characteristics	Ever had girlfriend		Ever Kissed		Ever Pelted		Ever had sexual intercourse	
	Odds ratio	Std. Err	Odds ratio	Std. Err	Odds ratio	Std. Err	Odds ratio	Std. Err
Predisposition to romantic love (unlikely = ref)								
Highly likely	2.06 ***	0.10	2.80 ***	0.11	4.61 ***	0.14	7.65 ***	0.23
Moderately likely	1.74 ***	0.11	1.99 ***	0.13	2.05 ***	0.17	1.98 **	0.28
Age (14-17 = ref)								
18-21	4.23 ***	0.11	6.14 ***	0.14	6.64 ***	0.21	7.38 ***	0.28
22-25	9.28 ***	0.14	13.66 ***	0.16	16.18 ***	0.22	22.84 ***	0.29
Urban residence (Rural = ref)	1.33 **	0.09	1.26 *	0.11	1.21	0.13	1.57 **	0.15
Ethnic minority (Kinh-Chinese = ref)	0.90	0.14	0.55 ***	0.17	0.70	0.20	0.67	0.25
Father's education [^] (Primary or less = ref)								
Lower secondary	1.02	0.11	0.90	0.13	0.83	0.16	0.90	0.19
Upper sec or higher	1.02	0.13	0.96	0.15	0.74	0.18	1.06	0.21
Educational level (Tertiary = ref)								
Primary or less	0.62 **	0.17	0.53 ***	0.19	0.62 *	0.22	0.98	0.25
Lower secondary	0.65 **	0.15	0.73 *	0.16	0.79	0.18	1.24	0.21
Upper secondary	0.77 *	0.13	0.65 **	0.14	0.69 *	0.17	0.96	0.20
Paid work experience (Never = ref)	1.49 ***	0.10	1.84 ***	0.12	2.07 ***	0.15	2.22 ***	0.19
-2 Loglikelihood	3401.18		2710.06		1967.37		1450.36	
df	13		13		13		13	
Number of observation	3367		3367		3367		3367	

Source: SAVY 2003

* Significant at p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

[^] Missing cases are included in the analysis but the odd ratios are not reported.

Table 7b. Binary logistic regression analysis - Determinants of precoital behaviors and premarital sexual intercourse among females

Selected characteristics	Ever had boyfriend		Ever Kissed		Ever Petted		Ever had sexual intercourse	
	Odds ratio	Std. Err.	Odds ratio	Std. Err.	Odds ratio	Std. Err.	Odds ratio	Std. Err.
Predisposition to romantic love (unlikely = ref)								
Highly likely	1.77 ***	0.14	2.33 ***	0.16	5.08 ***	0.21	10.98 ***	0.39
Moderately likely	1.53 ***	0.12	2.00 ***	0.15	1.74 *	0.24	2.98 *	0.50
Age (14-17 = ref)								
18-21	5.12 ***	0.11	6.31 ***	0.18	6.61 ***	0.35	8.50 ***	0.57
22-25	9.22 ***	0.15	14.48 ***	0.20	14.35 ***	0.37	16.71 ***	0.62
Urban residence (Rural = ref)	1.53 ***	0.10	2.08 ***	0.13	2.14 ***	0.21	1.62	0.38
Ethnic minority (Kinh-Chinese = ref)	1.23	0.15	0.86	0.22	1.81	0.32	2.96 *	0.45
Father's education [^] (Primary or less = ref)								
Lower secondary	1.23	0.13	1.00	0.17	1.10	0.28	1.25	0.45
Upper sec or higher	1.01	0.15	0.93	0.18	1.01	0.30	1.99	0.52
Educational level (Tertiary = ref)								
Primary or less	0.55 ***	0.19	0.42 ***	0.23	0.64	0.34	6.46 ***	0.64
Lower secondary	0.68 **	0.16	0.50 ***	0.18	0.40 **	0.31	3.61 *	0.60
Upper secondary	0.67 **	0.14	0.55 ***	0.16	0.76	0.25	3.17 *	0.58
Paid work experience (Never = ref)	2.22 ***	0.10	2.36 ***	0.14	2.06 **	0.23	1.74	0.43
-2 Loglikelihood	2926.43		1963.46		915.431		328.48	
df	13		13		13		13	
Number of observation	3060		3060		3060		3060	

Source: SAVY 2003

* Significant at p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001

[^] Missing cases are included in the analysis but the odd ratios are not reported.

Table 8. Binary logistic regression analysis - Determinants of safe practice during first sex among sexually experienced young people.

Selected characteristics	Model 1		Model 2	
	Odds ratio	Std. Err	Odds ratio	Std. Err
Predisposition to romantic love (unlikely = ref)				
Highly likely	0.73	0.34	1.01	0.38
Moderately likely	0.68	0.42	0.76	0.46
Male (female = ref)	3.35 **	0.42	2.28 *	0.42
Age (14-17 = ref)				
18-21	3.96 *	0.64	4.22 *	0.68
22-25	3.71 *	0.65	3.59 †	0.70
Urban residence (Rural = ref)	0.94	0.25	0.88	0.27
Ethnic minority (Kinh-Chinese = ref)	1.11	0.44	0.91	0.48
Father's education^ (Primary or less = ref)				
Lower secondary	1.32	0.31	1.42	0.33
Upper sec or higher	0.84	0.34	0.84	0.37
Educational level (Tertiary = ref)				
Primary or less	0.41 *	0.41	0.40 *	0.45
Lower secondary	0.89	0.35	0.89	0.38
Upper secondary	1.49	0.33	1.41	0.35
Paid work experience (Never = ref)	1.14	0.37	1.23	0.39
Type of first partner (Sex worker = ref)				
Serious partner	--	--	0.05 ***	0.56
Casual partner	--	--	0.11 ***	0.62
-2 Loglikelihood	460.61		409.92	
df	14		16	
Number of observation	358		358	

Source: SAVY 2003

† Significant at $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

^ Missing cases are included in the analysis but the odd ratios are not reported.