

YOUTH
IN CONTEMPORARY THAILAND
Results From The Family And Youth Survey

Chai Podhisita
Umaporn Pattaravanich

Institute for Population and Social Research
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This study was part of the research project, The Family in Contemporary Thailand (THA/93/P07). Support for the project was made possible by fund provided by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Support for this report was provided by funds from the Program on Population, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, and in part by the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University

ISBN 974-588-231-3

IPSR Publication No. 197

YOUTH IN CONTEMPORARY THAILAND
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by Chai Podhisita and Umaporn Pattaravanich

First published: October 1995
1,000 copies

IPSR Publication No. 197

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Chai Podhisita

Youth in Contemporary Thailand: Results From The Family And Youth
Survey: Chai Podhisita, Umaporn Pattaravanich. (Mahidol University, Institute
for Population and Social Research Publication; no 197)

ISBN 974-588-231-3

1. Youth--Thailand 2. Health and hygiene 3. Employment 4. Sexual
behavior 5. Domestic relation. I. Umaporn Pattaravanich II. Title III. Series:
Mahidol University, Institute for Population and Social Research Publication; no.
197

HQ 799.75 C434Y 1995

Published by:
Institute for Population and Social Research
Mahidol University, Salaya
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FOREWORD

Current demographic fact indicates that more than one out of five people in the Thailand population are in the youth age-range of 15- 24 years. This group of young men and women accounts for over 12 millions. But the number alone is not sufficient to suggest how important youth are. The real importance of youth lies in the fact that they are a viable and dynamic group of people who play a crucial role in the nation's future. This crucial role can be seen in certain key functions performed by the youth in perpetuation of the society. First, youth *inherit* and absorb the national ideologies, values, norms and traditions from the people of older generations through various processes of socialization in the family and from formal institutions. Second, youth also *create* 'new culture' of their own. And third, in the long run, youth *pass on* what they inherited from their predecessors and what they themselves created to those of the younger generations. It is in this manner that continuity and changes in society is possible. Viewed from this perspective, youth are truly the nation's hope.

Social science research on youth in Thailand is relatively limited in both scope and depth. In the past two decades or so our social scientists at Mahidol University paid much interest in the areas of family planning and reproductive health. Now that the country has been better off in the family planning, some of our researchers have turned their interests to other issues of social and policy relevance. Among these, research on youth and the family are of high potential for social and policy implications. In addition to contributing social science knowledge about the Thai youth and family which is very much needed, continuing studies in various aspects of these issues can be a good monitor of the society as well. I do hope that our researchers in many research institutes and faculties will continue to work on these areas.

On behalf of Mahidol University I would like to express sincere thanks and appreciation to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for its significant support to this research. Needless to say, without the UNFPA's generous and continuing supports this study and many others conducted by Mahidol University's researchers would not have been possible.



Professor Dr. Pradit Chareonthaitawee
President
Mahidol University

PREFACE

This research report presents important findings from the research project, the Family and Youth Survey (FAYS). The project, started in the last quarter of 1993, was part of the activities in celebration of the International Years of the Family, 1994. Given the current stage of development where Thailand has undergone considerable demographic, social and economic transitions, this subject of investigation, youth and the family, is timely and of high social and policy relevance. The study also fits well with the overall research scheme of the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University.

As the readers will see, this report contains important topics related to youth and the family. These include family circumstances and family relations, education, work, youth's contribution to the family, social network outside the family, health status, knowledge on prevention of STD and AIDS, abuse of substance and sexuality. In discussion of the findings, the authors have pointed out the policy relevance and the kind of intervention programs which may be needed for youth development. This makes the report more valuable for practical purposes. I hope that the readers -- individuals as well as organizations working in the areas of youth and human resource development -- will find this report informative, interesting and useful for their work.

On behalf the Institute for Population and Social Research, I would like to congratulate the authors for this significant contribution to the pool of knowledge on the Thai youth and family. I also want to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for making possible the fund for this important study.



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors acknowledge valuable contributions by several individuals and organizations to the success of this study. First, we want to express our sincere thanks to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for providing financial support without which this project would not have been possible. This significant contribution is highly appreciated.

Well before the beginning of the research activities the project benefited considerably from advice and comments provided by the project Steering Committee. In the process of field research we received valuable assistance from the National Statistical Office regarding the sampling design and selection. Once in the field, our data collection was made convenient and enjoyable by the generous cooperation of the young men and women who gave us their valuable time and thoughts in answering the survey questions which often touched some of their personal matters. To all these contributions we are very highly grateful.

Before this final report was prepared a seminar was held in Bangkok in December 1994 to disseminate important results of the study. Comments and suggestions made by several participants in the seminar were taken into consideration in preparing this report. We are thankful to those participants who gave constructive suggestions.

This report was prepared while the authors were a Visiting Fellow and a Research Intern at the Program on Population of the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA. Financial and logistic supports from the Program on Population have made possible not only this report but also our pleasant stay in this beautiful place. We highly appreciate this kind support of the East-West Center.

Dr. Peter Xenos, Senior Fellow at the Program on Population of the East-West Center has provided significant contributions to this project in many ways. He contributed valuable thoughts and suggestions in preparation of the project proposal. He agreed to act as the project consultant and has provided valuable suggestions at several stages as the project developed, from the beginning of the field work to data analysis and report writing. We acknowledge his significant contribution and sincerely thank him for all his help.

Last but not least, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to all co-investigators in this projects, Dr. Chanya Sethaput, Dr. Sairudee Vorakitphokatorn and Dr. Anthony Pramualratana. Their valuable contributions in the earlier stage of the field survey have made this research report possible. Our special thanks are for Mr. Piyapan Thientong, research assistant, who worked hard and helped us throughout the project period.

Although a number of individuals and organizations have contributed to this project in many ways, they bear no responsibility for the interpretations and conclusions that are presented in the report. The authors are solely responsibility for any errors and inadequacies that may remain.

Chai Podhisita
Umaporn Pattaravanich

October 1995

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The present research project, *The Family and Youth Survey*, was born out of an awareness of two macro processes taking place in Thai society during the past decades. The first is the transformation of society in terms of economic and social characters, and the second is the demographic transition taking place simultaneously in the same period. These two processes deserve mentioning in some details here.

Resulting from the economic and social development over the past 30 years or so, the Thai economy has undergone substantial changes which has never been experienced before. The major change process seems to be a gradual but steady shift from the an agricultural based economy toward industrial and export production. As this economic transition is well under way, subsistence agriculture, the main occupation for the large majority of the population, has become weakening. While the national gain from the economic development continues to grow, the outcome at the small-scale family production seems to be on the opposite. Thus, the gap in income and welfare between families in different sectors has become wider. The trend is likely to continue at least for some time in the future.

Educational development coupled with rapid expansion in transportation and media communication have brought home changes in a number of aspects directly related to every day life of the people. More exposure to education and media means that personal tastes, expectation and even attitudes and values also undergo changes. These seem to have more impacts on children and youth than on the older generation.

On the demographic side, the transition taking place in the past decades has resulted in a changing population structure in Thailand. As mortality and fertility steadily declined, the population's age structure has shifted toward shrinking proportion of children while relative sizes of adolescents and young adults are increasing. The past censuses and a recent projection indicate that both relative and absolute sizes of youth aged 15-24 expanded steadily from 18.2 per cent in 1960 to 22.2 per cent in 1980. The proportion, and not the absolute number, of this age-

group just reached stabilization at a ratio of about 1 youth to 5 people in the entire population in the 1990. A medium variant projection into the next two decades shows that it will continue to drop to a lower level (United Nations, Population Division 1993).

It is believed that as these processes advanced they have left considerable impact not only on individual's life style but on key social institutions as well. Among the individuals and institutions affected, youth and family are of particular interest since they can make much difference to structural foundation of society and the future of the nation.

There are a number of reasons why youth should be studied. From a sociological perspective, youth form a segment of the population that provides linkages between their preceding generations and their proceeding ones. They do so by carrying on existing social ideologies, values and traditions while creating the new ones of their own (Hartley 1992). Indeed, a good part of social continuity and changes can be seen through the people of younger generation. Youth studies, therefore, can be seen as a monitor of social continuity and change.

From another perspective, youth is often considered as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, a period which involves a number of important changes. Personality and social formation taking shape in this period can have profound impacts, lasting throughout individual's life. On the other hand, since youth are naturally a very dynamic group of people, they can have positive or negative impacts on the society and the world surrounding them -- as much as the society and the world can have impacts on them. Information from youth studies can have significant policy implications for human and social development.

Objective

The main objective in this project is to gain an understanding of youth in contemporary Thai society. Special reference is made to certain key aspects in the youth lives. The key aspects presented in this report include family circumstance, education, work experience, social network outside the family, health status, abuse of substance and first sexual experience. By focusing on these aspects, we hope to be able to identify some policy-relevant information needed for youth development.

Studies on Thai youth

Sources of information on youth in Thailand are varied. At the national level the important source is a series of survey focusing on children and youth by the National Statistical Office (NSO). This series of national survey, started in 1974 and conducted once every 5 years, is devoted mainly to collect data on education and some other activities such as work experience and leisure. Other national sources, although not primarily designed for collecting data on youth, give information on population of different age-group including youth. Worth mentioning here are the Labor Force Survey, providing information on participation in the labor force of the population in the working ages, the Household Socioeconomic Survey, providing data on some key issues of the household economy, and the Health and Welfare Survey, providing information on health. Another source, also providing information on health behavior, is the Survey of Cigarette Smoking. Other surveys by NSO which are not mentioned here may also provide information related to youth but in a much lesser extent.

Analyses of youth based on the data from the national source are limited in topic and scope. In a way this reflects limited availability of the youth data rather than lack of interests. Here we want to point out two recent studies based on the data from these sources. The work done by Kerry Richter (1989), using the data from the Household Socioeconomic Survey, takes transition to adulthood as the key concept for analysis. Richter investigates the timing of important events in individual's life course such as school exit and entry to work force. The result shows important difference in the pattern of transition to adulthood between males and females and between those from urban and rural areas.

Knodel and Kaufman (1993) used the data from the Children and Youth Survey in their analysis of the relations between education and work status (type of work, amount of pay, etc.). The main finding reveals the values of additional schooling beyond the compulsory primary level in terms of entering higher prestige occupation and obtaining higher pay among youth who work.

Youth studies based on small-scale surveys by individual or groups of researchers seems to be limited to a few topics, mainly fertility and reproductive health behavior. Studies designed (broadly or specifically) to address other sociological issues surrounding the youth in the past ten years or so were rare, if ever they existed. For the purpose of our review here we loosely divide the studies into two groups, those which focused mainly on fertility and family planning and

those that were devoted to an investigation of risk sexual behavior. The latter were largely conducted after the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic in Thailand. However, studies in both groups hardly differ in their main content, both take adolescent sexuality as their main theme for investigation.

In 1979 a survey of adolescent fertility was conducted with support from the Population Council (Muangman 1979). This was probably the first survey which focused exclusively on adolescent sexuality. (Although the title used the term 'fertility'.) The sample consisted of unmarried males and females both in school and out of school in Bangkok and in a province of the Northeast. In addition to providing the information on love, mate selection, marriage and premarital sex, the investigator also collected data on related issues such as reproductive knowledge, venereal diseases and drug use.

Following this study, in 1985 a study based on secondary data was conducted with an emphasis on identifying the needs for family planning among the adolescents (Porapakham et al 1985). The data were drawn from three surveys conducted earlier, including the one by Muangman mentioned above. The other two surveys that were included focused exclusively on high school students in Bangkok. the analysis reveals some difference between the in-school and the out-of-school groups and also between males and females with regard to knowledge of basic reproductive biology, sex and marriage. Like the Muangman's study, this study brought to the attention the needs to provide appropriate family planning service for the adolescents and to give sex education in school.

Almost as soon as the AIDS epidemic hit the country around the middle of 1980's, interests in adolescent and youth studies shifted to the new subjects of sexuality and reproductive health. Questions pertaining to other issues rarely had an opportunity to be translated into the research activities. Around 1987 and 1988, researchers in the field of population and demography in Thailand began an investigation into 'new' territories of sexuality and AIDS, not only among adolescents and youth but in general population as well. Some of the early studies focusing on adolescents in these new territories include those by Prasartkul et al (1987), Chompootawee et al (1988) and studies reported in the volume edited by Phitaktesombati (1989). All these studies and many others that followed had a common interest in exploring sexual knowledge, attitude and practice of adolescents. Some of them tried to identify factors underlying these. All were geared toward the control of HIV infection and the AIDS epidemic.

The years after 1990 have seen a rapid increase in the number of studies addressing various aspects of behaviors related to sex and AIDS. Obviously, this is a response to the rapid increase of the HIV infection in Thailand. In addition to the so-called risk groups (homosexual individuals, commercial sex workers, intravenous drug users), youth in various educational institutions and factories were the main targets for survey. To mention just a few surveys which take youth as the sole target group, or part of the target group: The survey of partner relations and risk of HIV infection in Thailand (Sittitrai et al 1992), the study of military conscripts (Nopkesorn et al 1991), the behavioral research for AIDS prevention in Thailand (Podhisita, forthcoming), the study of sexual activity among never-married men in Northern Thailand (VanLandingham 1993) and the study of determinants of sexual behavior of the rural youth (Israbhakdi 1995).

While the youth studies reviewed above may be seen as responding to and keeping up with the current situations, one has to admit that there is a gap in the social science research about youth in Thailand. Not much effort has been made to collect and analyze data pertaining to their life courses, and certainly not much analysis has been made on such subjects as youth's values and attitudes in various social issues, gender construction, family relations, social networking, self image and self esteem, mental well-being, and so forth. Even fewer effort has been made to measure the extent to which changes taking place in the macro-processes affect various aspects of the youth's life. In short, we lack the kind of research which can contribute to a holistic understanding of youth in the present day.

The present study, while not specifically designed to be an alternative to the existing research, is taking a more sociological step toward understanding of the youth. Certainly, some of the findings presented here are fairly much in line with the 'topical' issues in contemporary Thailand (that is, youth sexuality), but others fall more or less in the broader scope of sociological inquiries. In both the cases we hope that the findings presented here fit with the need for program and policy formulation at some levels.

Organization of the report

In the chapters that follow we present research methodology and the findings. Chapter Two provides a summary of the method and the data collection. This should facilitate interpretation of the results where there is need. At the end of this chapter a short description of the sample youth is also provided. Chapter Three presents results on family relation and family circumstance. This is to give a family profile of the youth. Chapter Four looks at education, work status and

contributions of the youth to their families. Chapters Three and Four basically concern with the issues within the family context. In Chapter Five information on social network outside the family is presented. This includes relationships with friends and peers which often play an important part in the youth life. Chapter Six looks at the health status and health related behavior, while Chapter Seven takes the issues of substance abuse and first sexual experience. The last chapter, Chapter Eight, presents discussion of important findings and conclusion of the report.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THE SAMPLE POPULATION

This chapter describes the research methods and data used in the present study. The aim is to provide information necessary for interpretation and evaluation of the findings that follow. The chapter consists of four sections: The first section gives a brief description of the sample design in general; the second describes the fieldwork and data management; the third discusses adjustment of the sample. The final section presents general characteristics of youth in the sample.

Sample Design

The sample design involved the following stages:

- Division of the country into 5 regions: North, Northeast, Central, the South and Bangkok (treated as a region).

- For the North, Northeast and Central, selection of three *changwat* (provinces) and for the South, two *changwat*.

- For each *changwat* selection of two *amphur* (districts). One of the two has a municipal town (urban portion) from which urban blocks are later selected. In both the *amphur*, three *muu ban* (rural villages) were selected. (Note that in the Central region a third *amphur* was added in order to obtain the target number of interviews in the urban area.) Bangkok is over-represented in that 19 districts were selected.

Systematic random sampling method was used in selection of *changwat*, *amphur*, *muu ban* and urban blocks. Table 2.1 below gives distribution of the sample *Changwat*, *amphur*, *muu ban* and urban blocks by region.

- For each urban and rural community selection of households to screen for eligible respondents (ERs). Method of household selection is described below.

Work in all these stages benefited considerably from lists of rural and urban communities prepared earlier by the National Statistical Office (NSO) for use in the 1993 Labor Force Survey (LFS).

The sample design described above follows standard sampling procedure fairly strictly. However, selection of the sample households, which is the entry point for screening for eligible respondents deviated slightly from the conventional procedure. The deviation at this level was purely for practical reasons. The process of household selection is as follows:

Without a listing of households for random selection in each sample community, we employed a less rigorous method by sending interviewers out in different directions from the center of the community. Each was instructed to stop at every household on the way to screen for eligible respondents. While doing this, the interviewers were also collected information from every household they visited, recording it in a screening form specifically prepared for this purpose. Where eligible respondents existed and when their cooperation was obtained, the interview was conducted. This process continued till the target number of interviews in the community (16 for rural community, 25 for urban block) was reached. By this time, various proportions of households in the sample communities had been covered, depending on their size. For communities of small size (less than 100 households) usually all or nearly all were covered, but for large communities (130 or more households) about half or slightly more were visited.

This method is, no doubt, less systematic than that normally required in the conventional random sampling technique. We did not have a conventional listing of households in the village communities, except for urban blocks, but we did have the number of households from community leaders. We did not have a list of sample households but we had (a) the number of households approached; and (b) the number of households actually screened. The former is our number of sample households, and the latter is our actual household sample. In addition, we did collect information from each screened household on the number of eligible youth, their basic characteristics (such as age, sex, marital status, whether they were at home or not, whether interview was conducted, etc.) and the number of youth interviewed and not interviewed in each household. This information is very useful for adjustment of the sample in the later stage. With these cautions taken in the field and with the data adjustment later, we are confident that the resulting sample households and youth in our study are of acceptable quality.

Study Population

The target population for this study is male and female youth. Although there is some confusion about definition of youth (depending on who defines it and for what purpose) and the age-range to be included in the category called 'youth',

the present study finds it sound and reasonable to follow the definition set forth by the National Statistical Office (NSO) in its series of *Children and Youth Survey*. According to the NSO's definition, male and female individuals aged between 15 and 24 years are included in the youth category (*yaowa-chon*), regardless of other characteristics. Below this age-range they are referred to as children.

For our purposes, taking individuals aged 15-24 years as study population is appropriate in many ways. First, boys and girls aged 15 years and older are matured enough. Below this age-range they tend to be too young; their physical and mental development is closer to childhood than to that of adolescence or the higher developmental stage of life. On the other hand, individuals beyond 24 years of age tend to have passed the stage of adolescence to enter into adulthood. If *youth* is understood as that stage of life during which the process of transition from childhood to adulthood takes place, the age-range of 15-24 is considered appropriate. Secondly, for practical reason, boys and girls aged 15 and older are better able to answer the present survey questions which include many aspects of life and often require certain level of maturity.

Targeting youth aged 15-24 as the study population has some disadvantages, however. The most important and the one which can have direct implication for the field survey is that young people of this age-range are generally highly mobile. Thus, in the fieldwork it may prove to be very difficult to find eligible youth for interview. The present design did anticipate this, but not much could be done. (When respondents are away from home, there is not much a field worker can do, anyway.) The best we did in the field was taking relevant information about all youth identified in a household regardless of whether or not they were interviewed. This information proves to be useful for the sample adjustment in the later stage.

The fieldwork and data management

The fieldwork activities began with recruitment of 20 interviewers (14 females and 6 males). They were collage graduates or third or fourth year university students who wanted to do a part-time job. The interviewers were trained for 7 days by the project's principal investigator and staff. Training schedule includes general principles for survey interview, familiarization with the questionnaire, techniques for asking questions, role play, and practice interview in a natural setting.

The field staff was divided into two teams, each consisted of ten interviewers and two supervisors. Interviews started in the last week of March and continued through the middle of May 1994. Field routine of checking and editing of the completed questionnaires was done daily by the supervisors, and where necessary, responsible interviewers were sent back to obtain missing information and to cross-check inconsistencies with the respondents.

In all the urban and rural sample communities there were 15,196 households. Using the field strategy described above from the beginning till the end of the fieldwork, the field staff were able to contact 7,384 households (49 per cent of all in the sample communities) for screening. Out of these, 5,504 households (74.5 per cent) were successfully screened for eligible respondents. Screening was not able to be completed with 1,880 households due to absence of any (knowledgeable) members at the time of contact. It is worth nothing that most of these are households in the urban communities, especially in Bangkok.

Not all the households have youth eligible for our interviews. Of all the screened households ($N = 5,504$) only 2,985 cases (54.2 per cent) were identified as having any youth aged 15-24 years. The total number of youth identified as members of these households was 5,282, that is, an average of 1.8 youth per household with any youth, or 0.7 youth per contacted household.

But not all youth identified were at home at the time of our survey, and certainly not all who were at home (i.e. who did not temporarily migrate to other places for whatever reasons) were available for interview. As mentioned above, in this survey we are dealing with a kind of respondents who are highly mobile. This is demonstrated by the information obtained from our household screening which indicates that out of 5,284 youth listed as members of 2,985 screened households, only 2,243 youth (42.5 per cent) were successfully interviewed.

Of all the interviewed cases, 2,180 completed questionnaires were selected for use in the analysis; the rest (63 cases) were excluded due to incomplete information or poor quality. Among the 3,039 youth who were not available for interview (57.5 per cent of all identified youth), majority were not at home (either migrated or went out of the communities); a small number of these did not want to be interviewed (refused) or did not have the time for interview. Table 2.2 summarizes household screening and interviews completed over the field period.

The questionnaire which is an instrument of data collection consists of 10 parts; each is designed to collect data on a specific aspect of the youth and their family. Content of the questionnaire is listed below:

- Part One: Background of the respondent
- Part Two: Family and family relations
- Part Three: Education, work, income and expenses
- Part Four: Help from family and contribution to the family
- Part Five: Self image, values and attitudes
- Part Six: Family formation
- Part Seven: Leisure, friends and network outside the family
- Part Eight: Health
- Part Nine: Respondent's household information
- Part Ten: Sexual experience (Confidential)

Interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis, except for Part Ten (sexual experience). Questions in Part Ten were separated from the main questionnaire book, and was to be handed to the respondent in an envelope for completion. Respondents were advised to fill out the questions privately, not to write names or other personal identifications on any part of the questionnaire or envelope. Upon completion, respondent gave the questionnaire back to the interviewer in a sealed envelope which was provided. Questions in Part Ten are short and are meant to explore a possibility of the method for collecting data on limited aspects of youth sexual behavior.

In addition to the routine checking and editing in the field, the completed questionnaires were examined again in the office before coding. Coding and data entry were performed, using standard software package for data processing. The data were checked for logical inconsistencies and cleaned so that they are ready for analytical runs.

Adjustment of the sample

Given the sample design and the field method for household selection described above, adjustment of the sample youth is desirable for some important reasons. First, since youth are highly mobile people as already noted, one would expects that in their mobility there may be difference at least in terms of age and sex. More older youth may move than younger ones and more males than females, for instance. Secondly, the rural-urban distinction with regard to mobility of youth may also be a relevant issue here. Since migration of the young people is largely

from rural to urban areas, it may be the case that proportionately more young people are found in the cities, especially during the dry season which is the time of our survey (March to May 1994). Thirdly, selection of households for screening for eligible respondents described above may result in certain biases (failure to contact or to screen, nobody at home, no information, etc.) that could affect distribution of households and youth in the sample.

Indeed, a comparison of the distribution of youth in our Family and Youth Survey (FAYS) sample with that of youth population in the Census 1990 reveals some significant differences. (See Table 2.3.) Generally, the differences in terms of age (younger youth versus older youth), region and urban-rural distributions are clearly noticeable. For instance, in the FAYS sample both younger and older youth in the urban areas of the four regions including Bangkok are over-represented while in rural areas they are under-represented. This is mainly the result of our sampling design (which over-sampled urban youth) and, to some extent, an outcome of the sampling procedure (loss of households and interviews due to failure to contact and to screen etc.). Proper adjustment, therefore, is desirable for a sample population such as this.

The goal of our adjustment is to obtain a sample which bears similarity to that of the reference population in the Census 1990, in terms of regional, urban-rural and age-sex distribution. To achieve this we performed steps of adjustments using information from our screening forms and from the census to create the weights. Technical procedures involved in each step of adjustment are not discussed in details here, but they are summarized below:

- Considering our sampling design and selection of the sample households, the first step is to adjust for different probabilities of inclusion in the sample of households in each unit of the sample area. This involves probability proportional to size (PPS) adjustment factors for each region, each *changwat* in each region, each *amphur* in each *changwat*, each *muu ban* in each *amphur*, and each urban block in each municipal area.

- Adjustment to take into account the different loss of households due to failure to contact and screen. This step is necessary because not all households were successfully screened. The weight factor for this step is the inverse of the proportion of successful screening obtained from the total number of households in the community and the number actually screened.

- Adjustment to take into account loss of eligible respondents at the household level. If in each screened household we were able to interview each and every eligible respondent, adjustment in this step would not be necessary. But this was not the case in our fieldwork. A large number of identified youth were away from home at the time of the survey; many of them were not available for interview for various reasons (See section on “Field work and data management” above.). The weight factor for this adjustment is the inverse of the proportion of eligible respondents identified who were successfully interviewed.

- Adjustment to take into account regional and urban-rural distributions of youth in the sample. The adjustment factor here is the ratio of percent regional and urban-rural distribution of youth in the census divided by the same distribution of interviewed youth in the FAYS sample. Outcome of this adjustment gives similar regional and urban-rural distribution of the FAYS sample with that in the census.

- Finally, adjustment to take into account age-sex distribution of youth in the sample. The adjustment factor in this step is the ratio of percent age/sex distribution of youth in the census divided by that in the FAYS sample. The outcome gives similar age/sex distribution in the FAYS sample with that in the census.

Table 2.4 compares the FAYS weighted sample with the 1990 Census in terms of regional, urban-rural and age/sex distribution. It will be noted that the FAYS distribution appears to be very close to that of the Census, yet it does not exactly duplicate it. This is probably due to some minor inaccuracies in sampling selection. Nonetheless, the resulting weighted sample is quite satisfactory in its quality.

Analyses in the following chapters are based on this weighted data set.

Characteristics of youth in the sample

Table 2.5 presents selected characteristics of youth in the sample. The total sample consists of 2180 youth aged 15-24 years. Of these, 1087 cases are males and 1092 are females. Distribution across the age-range is similar between males and females, with slightly over two-fifths are of the age group of 15-18, about one-third aged between 19-21, and one-fourth aged 22 and older. The data indicate that the sample youth from the Northeast are of largest proportion, followed by those in the Central region, the North, Bangkok and the South

Table 2.2
Summary of household screening and interviews

	Urban	Rural	Total
Number of households in sample communities	7062	8134	15196
<i>Mean</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>131</i>
<i>Minimum</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Maximum</i>	<i>525</i>	<i>287</i>	<i>525</i>
Number of households contacted	3661	3723	7384
Number of households screened for ERs	2231	3273	5504
Number of households with ERs	1243	1742	2985
Number of ERs actually identified	2258	3024	5284
Number of identified ERs who were interviewed	1079	1164	2243

Table 2.3
Distribution of youth in the FAYS sample (unweighted)
compared with the distribution in the Census 1990

Region / Age		Urban		Rural		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
FAYS (unweighted)						
Bangkok	15-19	5.8	7.8	-	-	13.8
	20-24	4.6	4.9	-	-	9.5
Central	15-19	2.4	2.8	4.0	5.2	14.5
	20-24	1.1	1.3	2.3	2.4	7.1
North	15-19	2.0	2.8	4.5	4.8	14.0
	20-24	0.6	1.4	2.4	2.9	7.3
Northeast	15-19	2.8	2.2	4.1	4.8	13.9
	20-24	1.0	1.0	1.7	3.2	6.8
South	15-19	1.4	1.5	2.5	2.8	8.2
	20-24	0.4	1.1	1.6	2.1	5.1
Total ¹		22.1	26.6	23.1	28.2	100.0
Census 1990						
Bangkok	15-19	2.7	3.2	-	-	5.9
	20-24	3.3	3.7	-	-	7.0
Central	15-19	0.6	0.7	4.8	4.8	10.9
	20-24	0.7	0.7	4.8	4.8	11.1
North	15-19	0.4	0.4	4.2	4.0	9.0
	20-24	0.4	0.4	4.2	4.0	9.0
Northeast	15-19	0.6	0.6	8.7	8.2	18.1
	20-24	0.5	0.5	7.6	7.5	16.2
South	15-19	0.4	0.5	3.0	3.0	6.8
	20-24	0.4	0.5	2.6	2.6	6.0
Total ¹		10.0	11.1	40.0	39.0	100.0

Table 2.4
Distribution of youth in the FAYS sample (weighted)
compared with the distribution in the Census 1990

Region / Age		Urban		Rural		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
FAYS (weighted)						
Bangkok	15-19	3.1	3.1	-	-	6.2
	20-24	4.1	3.1	-	-	7.2
Central	15-19	0.7	0.7	3.5	6.1	11.1
	20-24	0.7	0.5	5.9	3.7	10.7
North	15-19	0.4	0.5	5.1	3.9	9.8
	20-24	0.1	0.3	4.4	3.3	8.2
Northeast	15-19	0.8	0.4	7.9	7.9	17.0
	20-24	0.6	0.5	5.8	10.0	16.9
South	15-19	0.5	0.4	3.2	2.4	6.6
	20-24	0.2	0.5	2.8	2.9	6.4
Total		11.2	9.9	38.8	40.2	100.0
Census 1990						
Bangkok	15-19	2.7	3.2	-	-	5.9
	20-24	3.3	3.7	-	-	7.0
Central	15-19	0.6	0.7	4.8	4.8	10.9
	20-24	0.7	0.7	4.8	4.8	11.1
North	15-19	0.4	0.4	4.2	4.0	9.0
	20-24	0.4	0.4	4.2	4.0	9.0
Northeast	15-19	0.6	0.6	8.7	8.2	18.1
	20-24	0.5	0.5	7.6	7.5	16.2
South	15-19	0.4	0.5	3.0	3.0	6.8
	20-24	0.4	0.5	2.6	2.6	6.0
Total		10.0	11.1	40.0	39.0	100.0

Table 2.5
Distribution of the sample youth, by selected characteristics

Characteristics	Male	Femals
Age		
15-18	42.9	40.9
19-21	32.5	30.0
22-24	24.6	29.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Region		
Bangkok	14.4	12.3
North	20.1	15.9
Northeast	30.4	37.4
Central	21.7	21.9
South	13.5	12.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Place of residence		
Bangkok	14.4	12.3
Other urban	8.3	7.6
Rural	77.3	80.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Schooling status		
Currently in school	33.0	30.2
Currently out of school	67.0	69.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Marital status		
Never married	84.6	60.6
Currently married/ cohabiting	13.9	36.8
Separated, divorced, widowed	1.4	2.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Parents' religion		
Buddhism	86.2	90.4
Islam	3.9	2.8
Christianity	9.4	6.5
Different religions	0.4	0.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

(Continue next page)

Table 2.5 (continued)

Characteristics	Male	Female
Co-residence with parents		
With both parents	64.7	57.9
With father only	2.2	2.1
With mother only	12.2	10.6
With no parents	20.9	29.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 2.6
Economic characteristics of youth's households

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Main source of income		
Agriculture and fishing	36.6	34.5
Trade, self-employment	17.6	16.8
Employee, laborer	28.7	32.8
Government service & enterprise	17.0	15.6
Other	0.2	0.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Household's monthly income (Baht)		
5,000 or less	38.4	37.8
5001 - 12,000	30.2	32.4
12,001 or more	31.4	29.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Mean</i>	<i>14,023</i>	<i>12,595</i>
<i>Median</i>	<i>7,000</i>	<i>7,500</i>
Ownership of land		
<i>For earning</i>		
No	35.1	42.5
Yes	64.4	56.8
Don't know	0.5	0.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>For residence</i>		
No	21.6	29.6
Yes	78.1	70.1
Don't know	0.3	0.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

CHAPTER THREE

FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCE AND FAMILY RELATION

This chapter presents findings on an important aspect of the youth's life. It examines living arrangement and some aspects of key relationship between youth and other family members. We are aware that measurements of these aspects of the youth's life presented here are not the only possible way that lends a sufficient understanding of the issues. Certainly, there are many other ways to this. But with the data available to us we hope to be able to present a comprehensive picture of the youth in the sample with regard to the aspects mentioned above. This chapter first provides information on type of residence of the youth, then it proceeds to describing of certain aspects of relationship between youth and other family members.

Type of residence

At the outset it will be worthwhile to examine living arrangement of the youth around the time of the survey. Table 3.1 presents finding on the type of residence where youth were currently living. A simple distinction is made between those who lived with the family and those who were living away from the family -- in dormitory and rented places, for example. There is a fairly distinctive difference between youth who were interviewed in the urban areas and those in the rural areas, and to some extent, between male and female. More youth in urban areas were found in dormitory or rented rooms/houses than those from rural areas. This is particularly true for those living in Bangkok (proportion not included in the Table). The proportion of male youth living in dormitory or rented places is greater than that of female youth (23% compared to 16%). Presumably, youth living in dormitory and rented rooms are migrant workers or students. In rural areas, nearly all youth live at home with their families.

The difference in type of current residence noted above probably reflects rural-to-urban migration rather than a shortage of housing in the cities. A closer look at youth who were interviewed in Bangkok alone indicates that about half of males and about one-fourth of female youth in this portion of our sample lived in dormitory or rented places. (Data not presented in the Table.) This suggests that a substantial portion of our Bangkok sample consists of migrants.

Parental circumstance and co-residence with parents

Youth in the sample are of different family background. Table 3.2 gives per cent distribution of youth in all residential areas with regard to current circumstance of their parents. As indicated in the Table, the majority of youth have both parents alive and still live together. The proportion in this case ranges from nearly three-fourths to about four-fifths. These are the youth who are in *in-tag families* where both parents are present. The rest are in *incomplete families* of some forms.

Youth whose both parents have died and those who have no ideas whether their parents are alive or dead account for negligibly small proportions. A small difference is observed between youth with divorced parents in urban and rural areas; more youth in urban areas have divorced parents. This seems to reflect the fact that divorce / separation is more common among urban couples. Males and females also slightly differ in this regard; more female are likely to have divorced parents than male in both urban and rural areas. Youth with only father or mother alive account for more than one-tenth of all in both the urban and rural areas. (Proportions range from 12 to 16 per cent).

Living arrangement is an important issue which may have considerable impact on the youth's life. Living with the family, particularly with parents or close to them, means more than just love and affection; it also means necessary supervision in times of need. Our data in Table 3.3 show that youth in the cities and youth in rural areas differ in this respect. In rural areas, youth are more likely to live in the same residence with their parents than in urban areas. The reverse is true with regard to co-residence with *none* of the parents. Youth in cities are 2-3 times more likely to live with none of the parents than are youth in the rural areas. Migration to city seems to better account for this differential than other demographic or social forces.

Taking both the parental circumstance and living arrangement into account, our data show an interesting finding on single-parent families. Altogether more than one out of ten youth from both urban and rural areas live in families with only one parent. Note that greater proportion with only one parent is observed among youth from the rural areas.

On average youth in our sample are from families of a relatively small size; they have 2-3 siblings, excluding themselves (Table 3.4). In general, youth in the rural areas have more siblings than those in the cities (about 3). This is obviously

due to differential prevalence of family planning in Thailand around the time when youth in our sample were born, i.e. from 1970 to 1979. Considering family planning activities in Thailand over this ten-year period, one may assume that older youth (those who were born before 1975) probably have more siblings than the younger ones who were born toward the end of the 1970's when family planning activities were very much intensified. A small proportion of youth (5 per cent in each residential area) have no sibling; they are youth from one-child families.

In this connection, it should be noted that the data used in this report are not aggregated to present the type of family in which youth in the sample live. We are aware that type of family (nuclear, extended, joint, etc.) has analytical significance, but considering the dynamic nature of youth, we believe it is useful to simply present the data in terms of co-residence. And here we focus only on co-residence with parents (see above) and not with other family members. Hence, the data on sibling do not directly indicate co-residence of the respondents with their brothers and sisters, although this may be the case for most of them.

Relationship with other family members

In this report we assess relationship of youth with other family members using three indicators: (a) emotional attachment measured in terms of *especially close feeling* toward certain members in the family; (b) actual behavior of relationship measured in terms of day-to-day *getting along* with other members and whether having a *relationship problem* with others in the family; and (c) *time* given to the family. Subjective data on these three indicators were collected by asking the respondents to assess and report themselves in each of these aspects.

It is not unusual for members of the family to have different degree of *closeness* among themselves. For instance, a son may feel especially closer to his mother than to his father or other family members; similarly, a daughter may feel especially closer to father than to mother. The point to stress here is the feeling or special emotional attachment a member of the family has toward other members, maybe just one or a few of them and not necessarily all. This kind of special feeling can be resulting from several things between individuals concerned. Put in other terms, this kind of emotional attachment reflects the amount and level of exchanges (material or otherwise) between the members in question. It also reflects compatibility of personalities of the members concerned. Regardless of whatever it reflects, such a special feeling or emotional attachment suggests level relationship and harmony within the family.

Table 3.5 presents data on the family members to whom youth in the sample feel especially close. It is interesting to note that mother is far more favorite than father and perhaps than other members in the family in this regard, although the proportion mentioning especially close relationship *with mother only* is about one-third (except for the female youth in rural areas which is 44 per cent). On the other hand, those who feel especially close to *father only* account for less than one-tenth regardless of residential areas. In the respects discussed here there is virtually no difference between male and female youth.

Feeling especially close to *both father and mother* is of slightly greater proportion among youth in rural areas than those from cities, but the highest proportion is only 17 per cent among the rural males. Various proportions ranging from nearly one-fifth to slightly more than one-fourth reported that they were especially close to all members in the family. Those who reported such close relationship with *siblings only* account for about one-fifth, except in the case of females in urban areas. A negligibly small proportion of youth reported that they were not especially close to any one in the family.

The finding noted above seems to point to the fact that mother is the center of the Thai family in terms love and special affection. This being the case, one may raise a question: Why is mother in a better command of love, and emotional attachment of children than father? In absence of relevant data, we can only speculate an explanation. If not resulting from factors at structural level of the Thai family which stress *structural significance of women* slightly over that of men (Potter 1975), this special feeling in favor of the mother simply reflects different roles that mother and father play in child rearing. In Thai society, as in most developing countries of Asia, child care and child rearing are traditionally the duty of mother. Indeed, essential parts of child care and child rearing in the Thai context may be properly described as in the hand of the mother, in most of the cases father plays his part only when other non-family source of child care is not available (Richter et al, 1992).

Interpretation of the findings in Table 3.5 must be made with caution. The findings by no means suggest that when the respondents reported their 'especially close feeling' to one member they excluded others from their *good* relationship. The findings simply reveal *who* in the family that the respondents had especially close feeling to. 'Normal,' and even good relationships with other members, prevail in most families.

However, what discussed above does not automatically implies how youth get along with different family members on a day-to-day basis. To pursue this issue, we present the findings in Table 3.6. Subjective self-evaluations of youth was obtained in the interview whether they got along well with specified members in the family. The finding seems to be in line with what discussed in Table 3.5 about a significant status of mother in the Thai family. Well over half of youth (ranging in per cent from 55 to 59) reported that they got along well *with mother only*. Those who reported getting along well *with father only* account at best for about one-fifth only. This is a smaller proportion when compared to those who reported that they got along well *with both father and mother* which account for 20 per cent or more. In this regard, the findings do not show any consistent difference between males and females and between youth in urban and rural areas.

Getting along with siblings looks much better when compared to that with the parents. Nearly all male and female youth in both urban and rural residence reported that they did well in getting along with all brothers and sisters. Perhaps, this may be due to the a narrow age gap among siblings themselves. Only a negligibly small proportion admitted that they did not get along well with any of their siblings.

Taking all kinds of family members into account, what is the proportion of youth who have or seem to have relationship problems with others in the family? The findings given in the lower portion of Table 3.6 may well indicate this. An emerging picture is that about two-thirds (for youth in the urban area) and over three-fourth (for those in the rural area) reported *no relationship problems* with any family members. The second group, ranging in per cent from 14 to 30, said they have some problem with *any one* member in the family, while the third group of yet smaller and various proportions admitted that they had problems with *any two or more* other members. Note that there seems to be a fairly clear difference between youth from rural areas on the one hand and those from urban areas on the other. Urban youth are more likely to have problems with other family members, and more of them have problems with any two or more members, too.

What the above findings tell us is that there are at least a small number of youth who seem to be in an unhappy relationship with other family members, and that more of them live in urban communities. These findings by no means suggest level and magnitude of the problems; at best they simply hint that relationship in the family is not always smooth and healthy. Considering the policy significance of it, we suggest that a deeper investigation on this issue be pursued by interested social scientists. Special attention may be paid to the issue of family relations and

adolescent problems such as crimes and abnormal behavior. Another area worth investigating is family relations and adolescents' physical and mental health.

Relationship in the family may also be assessed in terms of the amount of time given to each other among the members. In this case we are referring to the time that the family members give to each other outside the context of work; it may be the time for leisure or rest or just being in company of each other when needed. The amount of time spent together among the family members, among other things, has a significant social implication. It indicates frequency of contacts which often brings about understanding (rather than misunderstanding) which, in turn, reinforces the existing relationship. Our data in this respect give a subjective evaluation of youth, whether they felt they were giving *enough time* to their families as a whole. Table 3.7 presents summary of the findings.

An emerging pattern is that although majority of youth (ranging in proportions from 62 to 80 per cent, reported that the amount of time they were giving to their families was enough or just about right, substantial proportions (ranging from about 14 per cent among rural females to 32 per cent among urban males) felt that the time they were giving was less than sufficient. A minority of youth, however, reported that they were giving too much time to their families. (Note that females are of slightly greater proportion in this case.) Urban-rural and gender differences are fairly clear, with rural youth being more likely to give *sufficient time* to family than the urban counterpart and females more than males in general. Among other things, the difference observed here probably reflects differential *life styles* between cities and rural villages on the one hand, and between males and females on the other.

A question was asked more specifically: To whom do you want to give your time, should you had more? The findings reveal similar patterns between youth of the younger and those of the older age-groups. That is, majority in both the groups reported that they wanted to give the time to all in their families and to parents. Siblings seem to be of lesser importance than girl/boy friends or friends since they are mentioned by smaller proportions of respondents in both age-groups and from both urban and rural residences. Spouse and children are more frequently mentioned by female of the older age-group, presumably because a larger proportion in this group are married and have children.

Variably small, but worth noting, proportions (about 10 per cent or less) reported that they would rather give more time, if they had it, to themselves. The difference between male and female youth is insignificantly small, but that between

those who live in the cities and those in the rural area is fairly clear. The urban youth seem to be more conscious about their personal time than youth from the villages. This suggests different degrees of privacy awareness among youth who were born and raised in urban and rural environments.

Degree of freedom

One important aspect of the youth's life has very much to do with relative freedom they can enjoy in various activities. If youth is the period of transition from childhood to adulthood, a successful transition involves appropriate degree of freedom and independence. By nature youth are enthusiastic, energetic and even challenging. Freedom is, therefore, important in the process of growing up to maturity and adulthood. But freedom, not to mention the appropriate degree of it, is a relative concept better understood in a specific cultural context rather than in a generalized sense. Indeed, to a certain extent, freedom is a subjective concept. Thus, one's freedom may be others' lack of it.

In this report, we address the issue of youth's freedom with an intention to understand another dimension of relationship of youth with others members in their families, assuming that the degree of freedom implies the extent to which the family controls over its young members. Like other issues already addressed above, freedom in selected aspects is assessed in a subjective term by asking the respondents to evaluate their own situations. The selected aspects include choosing people to make friend with, spending money, going out for fun, courting/dating, and choosing what to study (for the in-school). Results are presented in Table 3.8.

One common pattern emerges. That is, in all five aspects of the youth's personal life majority of youth reported that they enjoyed *much freedom*, although proportions so reporting vary. Specifically, in choosing people to make friends with and in choosing the subjects to study (for the in-school youth) the proportions reporting 'much freedom' are noticeably higher than in the other three aspects (ranging in per cent from 78 to 90).

There is some differences, although inconsistent, between males and females in the sample. With an exception in the case of freedom in spending money, more males generally enjoy freedom than females. In spending money, however, females seem to have slightly more freedom than males. The male-female differential becomes clearest in only two aspects, namely, going out for fun and courting/dating, in which males seem to enjoy far more freedom than females.

Urban-rural differential also exists but it is less distinctive. In general, youth in the urban areas are more likely to enjoy freedom than those in rural areas.

In sum, the findings presented here reveal that, although some difference exists, Thai male and female youth in both urban and rural areas seem to share much similarity in that they enjoy relatively much freedom in all important aspects of their lives. The only aspects in which females' freedom becomes more limited are those which are traditionally considered *improper* for females, such as going out to seek fun of various sorts and courting/dating which is believed to put females at risk of undesirable, premarital sex. However, it may be possible that females' responses in some of these aspects -- going out for fun and courting/dating, particularly -- are reflecting the 'ideal' more than their actual behavior.

Table 3.1
Type of current residence of youth in the sample

Type of current residence	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Dormitory, rented places	23.4	16.0	3.0	2.0
With family	76.6	84.0	97.0	98.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.2
Parental circumstance of youth in the sample

Parental circumstance	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Both are alive & live together	73.4	73.4	80.5	76.7
Both are alive but divorced/separated	9.3	12.9	5.0	8.6
Only father or mother is alive	15.6	12.1	13.7	13.3
Both died	1.5	1.0	0.8	1.3
Don't know, never lived with parents	0.2	0.5	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3.3
Current co-residence with parents

Co-residence	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
With both parents	49.8	44.7	72.4	63.6
With father only	2.3	2.6	2.4	3.3
With mother only	10.6	9.5	12.5	12.0
With none of the parents	37.3	43.3	12.7	21.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 3.4
Number of siblings of youth in the sample, by sex and urban-rural residence

Number of Siblings	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
No sibling	5.0	5.2	4.8	5.4
1-2	49.2	51.9	43.4	40.8
3-4	30.9	27.1	28.1	30.1
5+	14.9	15.9	23.7	23.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Mean</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>3.2</i>

Table 3.5
Family members to whom respondents feel especially close,
by sex and urban-rural residence

	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>Feel especially close to:</i>				
Father only	7.5	6.6	7.4	5.2
Mother only	34.0	34.5	32.8	43.7
Both	10.6	8.8	16.7	14.0
Siblings only	19.1	26.0	19.1	16.9
All , or with relatives only	27.4	23.8	23.3	19.0
Nobody	1.5	0.3	0.8	1.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 3.6
Current status of relationship with other family members,
by sex and residence

	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Getting along with parents :				
Well with father only	15.8	19.8	15.2	11.6
Well with mother only	59.2	59.4	55.1	59.1
Well with both parents	24.9	20.8	29.7	29.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>461</i>	<i>562</i>	<i>481</i>	<i>584</i>
Getting along with siblings:				
Well with all siblings	88.6	86.3	94.4	92.6
Well with some siblings only	9.6	11.9	5.2	6.0
Well with none of siblings	1.8	1.8	0.4	1.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>449</i>	<i>548</i>	<i>480</i>	<i>580</i>
Relationship problem with other family members:				
No problem with any family member	66.2	66.5	78.3	79.8
Problem with any <i>one</i> family member	22.9	21.3	14.6	13.5
Problem with any <i>two or more</i> family members	10.8	12.2	7.1	6.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>397</i>	<i>508</i>	<i>438</i>	<i>524</i>

Table 3.7
Time given to family, by sex and urban-rural residence

Time given	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Give enough time to family?				
No, not enough	32.0	22.4	23.2	13.7
Yes, about right	62.2	66.6	72.5	77.9
Yes, too much	5.8	11.0	4.2	8.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>465</i>	<i>563</i>	<i>499</i>	<i>611</i>
If you have more time, who to give?				
<i>Age 15-19</i>				
To all in family	33.8	35.0	36.7	42.6
To parents	34.4	35.6	37.0	32.5
To siblings	8.6	3.8	4.2	2.3
To friends, boy/girl friends	12.4	12.1	11.8	6.0
To own spouse & child	-	4.3	1.5	7.5
To self	10.8	9.2	8.8	9.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>371</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>385</i>
<i>Age 20-24</i>				
To all in family	36.9	30.6	32.9	25.2
To parents	30.4	27.8	30.1	23.5
To siblings	4.2	3.8	4.0	2.6
To friends, boy/girl friends	13.7	7.2	9.8	3.0
To own spouse & child	4.2	22.5	15.6	41.3
To self	10.7	8.1	7.5	4.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>173</i>	<i>230</i>

Table 3.8
Youth's assessment of their freedom in selected aspects

Aspect of freedom	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Choosing people to make friends with				
Little or no	12.0	20.3	19.1	22.4
Much	88.0	79.7	80.9	77.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	482	580	503	615
Spending money				
Little or no	33.0	28.4	36.1	33.0
Much	67.0	71.6	63.9	67.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	482	580	502	615
Going out for fun				
Little or no	28.6	56.2	34.3	55.8
Much	71.4	43.8	65.7	44.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	482	580	502	615
Courting/dating				
Little or no	32.1	49.7	33.1	48.9
Much	67.9	50.3	66.9	51.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	461	555	492	597
Choosing what to study				
Little or no	10.9	10.5	14.4	15.9
Much	89.1	89.5	85.6	84.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	338	390	271	289

CHAPTER FOUR

EDUCATION, WORK AND CONTRIBUTION TO FAMILY

This chapter presents findings on youth's education, their work and their contributions to family. Our aim is to give a cross-sectional information which will help in understanding an aspect of the youth's transition to adulthood. The first section of this chapter deals with schooling status and educational attainment. This is to give backgrounds on schooling and education of the youth in our sample. The second section examines possible relationships between family backgrounds and educational attainment. An analysis in this section focuses on two dimensions of the family which may impinge upon educational opportunity of young people. The two dimensions include family size and main source of family income. In the third section, we present results on work status of both the in-school and the out-of-school youth. And in the final section we discuss some economic contributions of youth to their families. In this section, we consider amount of cash given to parents and help in the household work as an important aspect of the youth's contribution.

Schooling status and educational attainment

Table 4.1 gives results on schooling status of youth in the sample. It will be recalled that about one-third of youth in our sample are currently in school, the rest are currently out of school (see Table 2.5 in Chapter Two). Based on this information, Table 4.1 divides youth into two groups, *in-school* and *out-of-school*, and presents the distributions within each group by sex and age. The results reveal that majority of the in-school youth are of younger age-group (15-19); those of older age-group account for 1 in 5 cases in the urban areas and for much smaller proportions in the rural areas. This suggests that youth in cities are more likely to have opportunity for higher education than those in the rural areas. This should not be surprising considering the wide socioeconomic gap between urban and rural families in Thailand. In the in-school group the difference between males and females is minimal and virtually insignificant. Among the out-of-school youth, the age distribution of both males and females is fairly even and somewhat similar in both urban and rural groups.

Table 4.2 present findings on educational attainment. Here, levels of education and not years of schooling are taken as the point for measurement. For the in-school youth the level currently attending is considered and for the out-of-school group, the level completed. Results in this Table reveal a few points which are worth noting here.

First, There is a salient difference between the in-school and the out-of-school youth with regard to levels of educational attainment. About 80 per cent or more of the out-of-school youth completed not more than lower secondary level (junior high school) or below that. Those who continued till they completed upper secondary or college levels account for only one-fifth in the urban areas and less than one-tenth in the rural areas. This indicates that youth in this group stopped their schooling at an early age; for the majority of them (about one half of urban youth and well over two-thirds to over three-fourths of rural youth) school exit took place right after they finished the six-year primary level. On the contrary, nearly all youth in the in-school group are currently attending upper secondary or college level. There are greater chances that most of these youth will continue at least till they finish their current levels or higher. However, in absolute terms we are actually talking about a small number of youth since the in-school youth account for only about one-third of all in the sample.

Second, the difference between urban and rural youth is reconfirmed by the finding in this Table. Urban youth in *both* in-school and out-of-school groups are better off than the rural youth in that they are more likely to have completed (stopped schooling at) higher levels; or, if still in school, they are currently attending higher levels of education. The difference in this case reflects socioeconomic gap and different welfare opportunities between cities and rural areas.

Third, gender difference in education is small as demonstrated in Table 4.2. If we combine secondary or equivalent and college/university levels, and consider them a "higher" level, the differences between males and females in both the in-school and out-of-school youth is only a small fraction and inconsistent. Overall, it appears that more males are currently studying at the higher levels; and if they already stopped schooling, they did so at a higher level than their female counterparts. Nonetheless, our findings show that the gender difference is much smaller than the rural-urban difference in education.

Limited as they are in scope and depth, our findings on education of youth presented here indicate that Thailand has much more to do in educational development. So far, the country has done very well in expanding education at the compulsory, primary level. Recent data reveal that education at this level is near universal in the general population (Knodel and Wongsith 1989). But in secondary level and higher, the prevalence rate is far from being satisfactory. To this issue, many individuals have expressed concerns, pointing to the fact that slow expansion

of national education beyond primary level will, in the long run, constrain future economic development. (Chutikul 1989; TDRI 1989)

Table 4.3 focuses on the in-school youth only. We want to know whether or not those who are currently in school are actually taking the subject of their interests. The result reveals that nearly all of them are taking the subjects they are interested in. Only a small number reported that they wanted other subjects but could not take them mainly because they could not pass the entrance exam or because they did not get approval from their parents.

In Table 4.4 Reasons for not being able to continue schooling of the out-of-school youth are examined. Of particular interest are two reasons given by the youth themselves: One has to do with problems related to family which include poverty, parent's disagreement, dissolution of parents' marital union, need to help in the family work, giving opportunity for education to other siblings and need to take care of other members in the family. The other is a personal problem which has to do with lack of interests to study in part of the youth themselves.

Note that in both the urban and rural areas more *females* cited the family problems while males are more likely to cite personal problems. Put this in other terms, when it comes to opportunity for higher education it is females (daughters) who are more likely to be affected by the family circumstances. The findings seem to imply, although not very strongly, that when it comes to the point where the family has to make a choice whether to give educational opportunity to son or daughter, son is slightly more favored than daughter in most families. Based on this observation, it is quite appropriate to call the attention to an educational policy which emphasizes equal opportunity for women and men in Thailand.

Family status and education

An earlier study has revealed that in rural Thailand children from small families tend to receive higher education than those from large families, everything equal (see Knodel et al 1990). In Table 4.5 we examine levels of education completed or attending (if they are in school) against the sibling size. If we consider any levels from lower secondary upward as 'higher,' then it is clear that youth with a small number of siblings is of advantage. This is observed in both younger and older age-groups. Regardless of birth cohort, those with fewer siblings tend to be able to continue to the higher levels of schooling. Thus, the results presented here are in support of the earlier findings.

In terms of economic background of the household, we examine educational attainment against the main source of family income. Table 4.6 reveals that regardless of urban-rural residence, sex and age of youth in the sample, those from families whose main sources of income are agriculture or fishing and wage employment or labor are lacking behind. Youth from the families that draw main income from trade or self-employment and government service are in a better position.

Since agriculture and fishing are typical rural occupations in Thailand, one can assume on the basis of our findings in this Table that it is the rural youth who are largely worse off in education. Wage employment and labor, on the other hand, are more associated with urban environment. But since the two occupations draw more people from the rural areas, we can assume that urban youth who have some sort of rural background (through migration of their families) tend to also be worse off in education.

Based on the above findings, a policy which enhances more higher education for the rural population and the urban poor is needed.

Work status

Part of the transition to adulthood involves work status. Sociologist sometimes compare work status of the young people in terms of the timing when they first involve in the full-time paid jobs. In this report, we examine youth's work status not in terms of the timing of the first full-time paid job but in terms of whether or not youth in our sample are working around the time of this study. While we are aware that the concept of *first job* is important especially for the analysis of life course transition of the young people, we are also aware that the concept itself is more or less limited to the *western* environment. The point which sometimes makes a substantial difference is that work in a developing society such as Thailand often is unpaid and limited within the family context. Young adults and even individuals of pre-adolescent age in such societies do involve in the family work, but the timing of their entry is often unclear. In this sense, the Western concept of first job does not fit quite nicely in the non-Western context, and for this reason is seen as of limited merit.

Table 4.7 examines work status of youth in the sample on the basis of their current schooling status, age, sex and urban-rural residence. *Work* here is defined in a fairly broad sense, including all economic activities (other than household work) within or outside the family context and whether or not they are generating

cash income. The time reference of this definition is the period of 12 months prior to the survey. In this broad sense of the term, our data reveal that various proportions of the in-school youth were doing part-time work while they were studying.

Interestingly enough, youth in the younger age-group (15-19) are more likely to engage in both study and work than the older ones. The data available do not suggest a possible explanation for this finding. However, a closer examination of the kind of work done by youth in this group reveals that the majority engaged in the family work. It may be the case that since the in-school youth of younger age are more likely to live with the family or close to it, they are more likely to be needed in the family work. Thus, they are more likely to engage in both study and work than the older youth who tend to live far away from home where schools for the higher level of education are available but where the needs for family work rarely extend to them.

For the youth who are currently out of school work is common, but substantial difference exists between males and females. Males are more likely to engage in work than females in both urban and rural areas. We suspect that this gender difference in current work engagement reflects family status of female youth rather than availability of job for them. It may be recalled that a larger proportion of females than males in our sample are married (see Table 2.5 in Chapter 2). Because of their marital status many of the females youth may be in the stage of child care and hence stop working temporarily. Thus the overall proportion of currently working females is lower than that of males.

For the in-school youth who engaged in part-time work, their main reasons are the need for cash to spend on tuition or personal use and the need to gain job experience or to spend their time productively (Table 4.8). The need to help in the family work is found in relatively small proportions and it seems more important for the rural youth than for the urban youth. Other than this, there is no consistent difference between males and females in this regards.

Income, expenses and contribution to family

Needless to say, all or nearly all, in-school youth are dependent on their families for *income*, while most of the out-of-school are less so. The income we are dealing with in this section includes cash received from all sources during the past 12 months up to the time of survey. Table 4.9 presents the results focusing on mean of monthly income and expenses of youth. Note that the mean presented

here is but a crude estimate of income and spending, and is for those valid cases (i.e. those youth who had income or expenses in the specified period) only. Thus, the number of valid cases for each item and in each cell varies (not presented in the Table).

The results show that monthly income (for those who earned) generally varies with age, sex and residence. Older youth earn more than younger youth and males more than females. In terms of residence, however, average earning of the rural youth is greater than that of the urban youth in the younger age-group, while in the older age-group it is the opposite. On average, males and females in the urban areas earn about 2,900 and 2,400 baht per month respectively, while in the rural areas the average earning is 2,200 baht for males and 1,800 baht for females (rounded figures). (US \$ 1 = 25 Bath)

Data on personal spending per month are available on the following items: clothes, food, housing and boarding, transportation, recreation, drinking, and spouse and children. Information on saving is presented separately. When these are compared among youth in the sample, a general pattern is observed. Based on the observations from the findings, the following points are noted:

First, with very few exceptions, urban youth spend more money per month than rural youth. This is true in both the age-groups. If children and spouse is not included, the greatest amount of spending is on food while housing or boarding ranks second in the list.

Second, in nearly every item males spend more than females, and again this applies to all across the sample. For those who are married, males' spending on children and spouse (i.e. the amount given to their children and spouses) is much greater than the female' spending.

Third, the older youth spend more than the younger youth in nearly all items. On average, males' spending is higher than those of females,' but the difference is not so much. In urban areas males of the younger age spend about 2,200 baht per month and females about 2,900 baht; in the rural areas the average spending is 1,500 baht among the males and 1,300 baht among the females. Among the older youth, average monthly spending is about 4,400 baht for males and about 3,400 baht for females in urban areas; for males and females in rural areas this is about 2,600 and 1,700 baht respectively. (Note that the figures are rounded.)

Four, taking their average monthly income and spending together, we note that for all -- except the younger youth in rural areas -- the average spending is either about the same or exceed their average income. This means that a large number of them probably have some financial problems. (This issue will be addressed below.)

Five, Another point to note here is that the amount of spending on *recreation* and *drinking* is substantial for all youth who did have spending in these two categories. It should be mentioned that recreation here includes all kinds of entertainment but drinking is limited to alcoholic consumption only, and this was explicit in the interview question. The relatively large amount of spending on these two items suggest that a number of youth are not spending their income so wisely.

Six, for those who can save, the average amount of their saving is relatively small and vary. Older youth can save more than younger youth, presumable because they can earn more. Among the younger youth, those from rural areas can save more than those in urban areas, but the opposite is true for the older youth. However, when mean of saving as percentage of mean earning is compared, there is virtually no difference in the younger youth regardless of sex and residence. Among the older youth, on the other hand, rural females are the best saver, saving about half of their earning. Urban males are the poorest saver of all; while their earning is highest, they saved only a small proportion -- just about one-fourth of the earning.

Financial status was self-reported by the youth themselves. This is presented in Table 4.10. In general, the results indicate that only a small proportion (slightly more than 1 in 10 cases) of youth, mostly of the older age-group, are having financial difficulty. This group of youth reported that their income was not sufficient to meet their monthly needs, and that many of them had to borrow some cash sometimes. Among the rest, youth who have just enough for spending each month and those who can save at least some are of about the same proportions.

Contribution of youth to their families is an issue of interest. For our discussion here we identify contribution in terms of cash given to the family (either to parents or to siblings or both) and responsibility to household chores.

Table 4.11 presents the findings on cash contributed to the family. Distinction is made between youth in school and those currently out of school. Noted that in both the groups not all youth worked during our defined period of one year prior to survey, and certainly not all who worked contributed cash to the

family. The findings in Table 4.11 show similar patterns of youth's contribution to family. Most of the working youth, regardless of their school status, do contribute cash to their families, although the proportions vary considerably within and between groups as well as between urban and rural residence. Because of variations it is difficult to say whether males are more likely to contribute more than females. For the out-of-school group, urban youth seem to be doing so more than rural youth. Among all who ever gave, the average amount given by males of the in-school group is slightly larger than that of females; but for the out-of-school, it is females who give much more on average.

Table 4.12 presents finding on youth's help in the house work. Here, *house work* includes four activities needed on a daily basis in most households: cooking, washing, house cleaning and laundry. Contribution to the house work is identified in terms of degree of participation. Youth are classified as those who *do all as principal person*, if they are the main persons responsible for all four activities. They are referred to as those who *do all as secondary person*, if they do all activities but mainly as assistant to somebody else in the household. If they do no more than three out of four activities, then they are grouped as *do most house work*. Those who do two or less activities or do sometime only are categorized as youth who *do some house work*. The last group consists of youth who usually *do no house work*. Table 4.12 divides youth into males and females of younger and older age-groups in urban and rural areas.

The results reveal that females' contribution to the family in terms of the house work is far more greater than that of males. Moreover, rural females are more active in the house work than their urban counterpart. Among the males, the majority do some house work; those who engage in 'most house work' account for only about one-tenth at best. Some older males reported that they did all the house work. Apparently these are the males who live separately from their families.

Overall, males make very little contribution to family as far as house work is concerned. This seems to suggest that traditional gender roles in the family still have strong influence in Thai society. Given the direction of socioeconomic development currently under way in which male and female members of the family are increasingly needed to help in the house work, change toward gender equality in the share of house work is desirable. Males, therefore, should be socialized early in their lives to take an active part in the house work. This can be done through formal education as well as living example in the family context.

Table 4.1
Current schooling status of youth, by age-group, sex, and urban-rural residence

Schooling status	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Currently in school				
<i>All ages (N)</i>	271	307	172	202
Age 15-19	80.4	78.5	87.2	88.1
Age 20-24	19.6	21.5	12.8	11.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Mean age</i>	<i>17.4</i>	<i>17.6</i>	<i>17.1</i>	<i>17.0</i>
Currently out of school				
<i>All ages (N)</i>	211	273	331	413
Age 15-19	45.5	47.6	54.4	50.1
Age 20-24	54.5	52.4	45.6	49.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Mean age</i>	<i>19.7</i>	<i>19.6</i>	<i>19.1</i>	<i>19.6</i>

Table 4.2
Educational attainment of youth, by schooling status, sex and urban-rural residence

Schooling status / educational attainment	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>Currently in school (level currently attending)</i>				
Any Primary	-	-	1.2	-
Lower secondary	7.7	9.1	19.8	18.8
Upper secondary / equivalent	58.3	54.4	62.8	58.4
College / University	33.9	36.5	16.3	22.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>271</i>	<i>307</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>202</i>
<i>Currently out of school (level completed)</i>				
Any Primary	46.4	52.7	69.5	78.9
Lower secondary	31.8	28.2	21.5	14.5
Upper secondary / equivalent	12.8	11.4	6.6	4.1
College / University	8.1	6.2	2.1	1.9
No schooling	0.9	1.5	0.3	0.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>273</i>	<i>331</i>	<i>413</i>

Table 4.3
Distribution of in-school youth, by subjects of their interest
and reasons for not being able to take them in their studies

	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>Is current subjects what you are really interested in?</i>				
Yes	90.4	91.5	94.8	92.1
No	9.6	8.5	5.2	7.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	271	307	172	202
<i>if "No," what subject are you really interested in?</i>				
Technical, vocational	46.2	3.8	62.5	18.8
Business & administration	7.7	11.5	-	12.5
Physical sciences	34.6	26.9	12.5	31.3
Social sciences, Humanities, arts	11.5	57.7	25.0	37.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	26	26	8	16
<i>if "No," Why not able to take what really interested in?</i>				
Couldn't pass entrance exam	46.2	52.0	75.0	46.7
Lack of money	3.8	8.0	-	6.7
Parents' disapproval	34.6	28.0	12.5	40.0
Other reasons	15.4	12.0	12.5	6.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	26	26	8	16

Table 4.4
Distribution of the out-of-school youth, by reason for not being able
to continue their studies, sex and urban-rural residence

Reason	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Got a job, looked for job	10.0	8.6	4.6	4.1
Problem related to family *	45.0	54.6	52.9	69.3
Health problem, not good at study	14.8	8.2	8.8	7.5
Problem related to school **	2.4	2.6	1.5	2.2
No interest in study	26.3	20.8	30.7	14.8
Other reasons	1.4	5.2	1.5	1.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>269</i>	<i>329</i>	<i>411</i>

Note * Included in this reason are: family poverty, parents' disapproval, parents' divorce or separation, had to help in the family work, wanted to give educational opportunity to other siblings, and had to take care of others in the family.

****** Such as no school nearby.

Table 4.5
Education (level completed / currently attending) and number of siblings, by age-group

Age / number of siblings	<i>Level completed (attending)</i>				Total	Number
	Any primary	Lower second.	Upper second., equivt.	College, Univ.		
Age 15-19						
0	19.2	25.6	33.3	21.8	100.0	78
1-3	27.1	18.1	43.1	11.6	100.0	910
4+	40.3	17.4	33.4	8.8	100.0	407
Age 20-24						
0	36.4	15.2	18.2	30.3	100.0	33
1-3	46.2	17.3	11.4	25.2	100.0	481
4+	53.6	19.9	12.3	14.2	100.0	261

Table 4.6
Education (level completed or currently attending) and main source of household income

Main source of household income	<i>Level completed (attending)</i>				Total	Number
	Any primary	Lower second.	Upper second., equivt.	College, Univ.		
Agriculture, fishing	53.7	17.6	21.1	7.7	100.0	769
Trade, self employed	15.6	19.9	40.9	23.7	100.0	372
Employee, labor	45.2	22.4	23.4	9.0	100.0	670
Government service & enterprise	6.8	10.5	49.6	33.1	100.0	353

Table 4.7
 Schooling and work status of youth, one year up to the time of survey,
 by urban-rural residence, age and sex

	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Currently in school				
<i>Age 15-19 (N)</i>	218	241	150	178
Study only, no work	37.6	31.5	45.3	45.5
Study and work part-time	62.4	68.5	54.7	54.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Age 20-24 (N)</i>	53	66	22	24
Study only, no work	37.7	59.1	77.3	54.2
Study and work part-time	62.3	40.9	22.7	45.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Currently out of school				
<i>Age 15-19 (N)</i>	96	130	180	207
Working	88.5	83.1	88.3	77.3
Not working	11.5	16.9	11.7	22.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Age 20-24 (N)</i>	115	143	151	206
Working	93.9	73.4	93.4	73.3
Not working	6.1	26.6	6.6	26.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 4.8
 Reasons for working of the in-school youth, by age and urban-rural residence

Reason	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age 15-19 (N)	82	73	67	80
Wanted to earn for tuition, personal use	34.1	35.6	29.9	33.8
Wanted to help, labor needed in family	12.2	19.2	28.4	28.8
Job experience, spending time productively	53.7	45.2	41.8	37.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
Age 20-24 (N)	19	39	17	13
Wanted to earn for tuition, personal use	36.8	51.3	47.1	53.8
Wanted to help, labor needed in family	21.1	7.7	11.8	30.8
Wanted job experience, spending time productively	42.1	41.0	41.2	15.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 4.9
Mean monthly income and expenses of youth, one year before the survey,
by urban-rural residence, sex and age

	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Mean monthly income * (Baht)				
Age 15-19	1,566	1,539	2,000	1,704
Age 20-24	4,597	3,342	2,503	2,019
<i>Mean income</i>	<i>2,908</i>	<i>2,383</i>	<i>2,213</i>	<i>1,821</i>
Mean expenses per month (Baht)				
Age 15-19				
Clothes	395	423	306	301
Food	852	773	522	537
Housing, boarding	663	660	384	814
Transportation	298	247	272	234
Recreation	429	338	342	242
Drinking	446	353	375	229
Children / spouse	3,000	493	1,017	477
<i>Mean expenses</i>	<i>2,196</i>	<i>2,889</i>	<i>1,469</i>	<i>1,316</i>
Saving (mean)	480	475	615	508
Mean saving as % of mean earning	30.7	30.9	30.8	29.8
Age 20-24				
Clothes	537	640	377	352
Food	1,452	1,176	853	870
Housing, boarding	890	1,078	1,421	743
Transportation	526	468	401	250
Recreation	881	602	552	403
Drinking	725	639	537	278
Children / spouse	2,394	986	1,079	560
<i>Mean expenses</i>	<i>4,419</i>	<i>3,449</i>	<i>2,623</i>	<i>1,751</i>
Saving (mean)	1,312	1,385	1,035	991
Mean saving as % of mean earning	28.5	41.4	41.4	49.1

Note * Income includes cash received from all sources
US \$ 1 = 25 Baht

Table 4.10
Financial status of youth, one year up to the time of survey,
by urban-rural residence, sex and age

	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Age 15-19				
Income barely meets expenses/month	40.1	36.1	48.5	42.9
Income greater than expenses, can save some	47.5	54.7	35.8	42.3
Income smaller than expenses/month	6.7	3.0	3.9	3.9
Can't tell, income not divided	5.7	6.2	11.8	10.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>371</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>385</i>
Age 20-24				
Income barely meets expenses/month	45.8	34.9	39.9	45.2
Income greater than expenses, can save some	34.5	45.9	36.4	28.3
Income smaller than expenses/month	12.5	14.4	14.5	11.3
Can't tell, income not divided	7.1	4.8	9.2	15.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>173</i>	<i>230</i>

Table 4.11
Cash contribution to family by working youth, one year before survey,
by urban-rural residence, sex and schooling status

	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Currently in school				
Never gave	41.1	35.7	42.4	54.3
Ever gave	55.9	64.3	57.6	45.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>94</i>
Among those working and ever gave				
Mean given	7,548	6,311	5,495	3,766
<i>Valid cases</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>43</i>
Currently out of school				
Never gave	20.2	15.0	30.7	37.9
Ever gave	79.8	85.0	69.3	62.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>193</i>	<i>213</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>311</i>
Among those working and ever gave				
Mean given	10,640	15,465	7,110	11,254
<i>Valid cases</i>	<i>154</i>	<i>181</i>	<i>208</i>	<i>193</i>

Table 4.12
Youth's participation in the house work, by urban-rural residence, sex and age

	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Age 15-19				
Do all -- as principal person	1.0	13.2	1.2	28.3
Do all -- as secondary person	4.1	1.6	3.6	2.1
Do most housework	12.7	22.6	10.3	16.1
Do some	59.6	53.4	62.1	48.3
Do nothing	22.6	9.2	22.7	5.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>371</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>385</i>
Age 20-24				
Do all -- as principal person	5.4	24.4	1.2	50.9
Do all -- as secondary person	6.5	3.8	4.0	3.5
Do most housework	11.9	17.2	5.2	10.4
Do some	42.3	42.1	41.6	32.6
Do nothing	33.9	12.4	48.0	2.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>173</i>	<i>230</i>

CHAPTER FIVE

NETWORKING OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

The process of transition to adulthood is one which involves not only learning and gaining *experiences* necessary for establishing an adult life in the future, but also building up *social network* beyond the family context. Networking beyond the family context means that relationships are established with people of various types who may or may not share direct kinship ties. Such social network plays very important roles in shaping up personality, ideas, attitude, behavior and world view of the young people.

The following presentation is not meant to explore how youth build their social relationships outside the family; nor is it intended to discuss the influence of such networking on many dimensions of the youth's lives. What we present here is some basic information focusing mainly on relationships with friends and, to a lesser extent, organized groups.

This chapter begins with a brief account of leisure activities which often bring youth into contact with others who may become part of their social network in the later stages. Leisure is viewed here as one of the important areas in which youth and their friends interact in the process of building up their relationship. Next, the chapter presents information on friends and interactions with friends. Following that, youth's contact with organized groups is presented. In the last section of the chapter information on courting and dating experience is provided.

Leisure activities

Although a wide range of activities may be included in *leisure*, it seems appropriate to focus only on selected activities which potentially lead to social contact with others. These include reading newspapers and magazines, playing games and sports or exercise, playing music, going out or hanging around in town and shopping malls, participation in community work, religious activities and visiting entertainment places. Of these, reading newspapers and magazines appears less social, but it is one among important sources that keep the people informed about social trend and indirectly stimulate social aspirations. It is for this reason that exposure to the printed media (newspapers, magazines), is included here. Other activities are more 'social' and thus can well serve as points for measurements of youth's social contact.

Table 5.1 presents proportions of youth reporting their involvement in various leisure activities on a regular basis, i.e., at least 2-3 times per week. The time reference for participation in these activities is not specific, but it is understood that this is around the time of the survey.

Findings in Table 5.1 suggest that in general males are more actively involved in most leisure activities than females. In certain activities such as playing music, males are four times more active comparing to females. This should not be surprising, since males in Thai society are usually more social and out-going than females under most circumstances. But it is interesting to note that females youth from both urban and rural areas in our study are more likely to be going out for fun or hanging around in town and in shopping malls than males.

To the extent that male-female distinction observed in this case reflects true difference in their lives, this finding seems to suggest that young females in present day Thailand are quite liberated. It may be the case, however, that a number of females interviewees misinterpreted the question and included their regular market visits (to buy food stuff or shopping, which females usually do more frequently than males) in the responses. Thus, the proportion for females appears higher for this particular activity. According to traditional norm on sexual division of labor in Thai society, household and market activities are largely carried out by females while males are supposed to be engaged in political, religious and professional work that is believed to bring to family honor and prestige (Kirsch, 1975, 1985)

In yet another area, namely, religious activities, females are much more active than males, although the proportions reporting doing these are not so large for both. Religious activities in this case include a fairly wide range of acts such as regular visiting to the temple, church or mosque for any religious purposes, making donations and daily alms-giving to the monks, etc., but ordination into monkhood or novicehood is excluded. Our finding in this respect seems to be fairly consistent with what has been observed among Thai Buddhists in all parts of the country. That is, women are more active in providing daily support to the temple and the monks; they are even more religious-minded than males but they are not allowed to enter the monkhood (Keyes 1984).

There is some difference between urban and rural youth in these leisure activities. Generally the urban youth are more active except for participation in community work and religious activities. Here we would like to comment on the urban-rural distinction with regard to participation in community work. We view this in terms of the difference in the *sense of belonging to a community* between

urban and rural ways of life. The urban way of life is often characterized by higher degree of individualism. The higher the degree of individualism, the weaker is the sense of community belonging. This in turn results in fewer opportunities for community work. On the other hand, in the rural way of life this spirit is relatively stronger and hence people have more chances to participate. The urban-rural difference in participation in religious activities observed in our data may also be understood in the same perspective.

Friends and their importance

Friends and peers play an important part in the process of personality and behavior formation among the youth. Indeed, in some social and psychological perspectives influence of friends and peers surpasses that of the family. There are a number of things that youth learn *better*, and they do so more often, from their friends and peers rather than from other family members. Studies of certain risk behaviors, such as unsafe sex, among youth in Thailand indicate that friends and peers have strong influence in this respect (see, for example, VanLandingham 1993; Nopkesorn et al 1993).

In this section we first present an overview of youth with regard to the number of friends they have, and then try to indirectly assess importance of friends to the youth themselves and *vice versa*. This is done by examining the proportions reporting they would consult friends, or their friends would consult them, if faced with some hypothetical problems. In addition, we also examine the proportions who said they learned specified things of various significance from friends. All this is to get an idea of how important friends are to youth in our study. Results are presented in Tables 5.2 -5.5

In Table 5.2 information on number of friends and whether or not youth have peer group is given. Here a distinction is made between *close friends* and people who are *just friends*. Definition of the two kinds of friends is open for individual respondents to interpret by themselves. But by and large 'close friend' are understood as those with whom the respondents have frequent personal contact with much intimacy, and 'just friends' are people with less frequent personal contact and less intimacy.

A few points may be noted on the basis of the data in Table 5.2:

First, as expected, *close friends* are smaller in number than *just friends*. This can be indirectly inferred from the mean and median numbers of them presented in the Table. The *median* number of 'close friends' is 3 for males and 2 for females, but for 'just friends' this is about 10 for females and 20 or more for males.

Second, although friends of the two types are common, a small number of youth reported that they did not have any close friends. In this small group females outnumber males, and there are more rural than urban youth in this category. Given the importance of friends and the values that youth in general give to friendship, this small group is of particular interest socially, if not psychologically.

Third, there exists a difference between males and females. While nearly half of females have not more than two close friends, as many as two-thirds of males have 3-4 or more. A similar pattern of distribution is also observed with regard to friends who are not especially close. Males generally have more friends of any kind. All these indicate that males have a wider social network than females. This observation is confirmed by the information about peer groups. Not only more males are likely to have peer groups, but they are also more likely to meet their peers more frequently.

How important are friends to these youth? And how important do these youth think they are to their friends? These two questions are addressed in Table 5.3 and 5.4. But first, let us keep in mind that we are here dealing with 'close friends' rather than 'just friends'. In order to assess the importance of friends we asked a hypothetical question: Who would you most likely turn to for help/advice if you have these problems? The problems identified in the questionnaire include problems about job, money, boy/girl friend, loneliness or disappointment, and having problems with other family members. Sources of help and advice were given in multiple choices, ranging from various family members to friends and institution. For each problem the respondents were asked to make their first *and* second choices of people they would most want to go to for help. (Each choice is exclusive of others for the same problem.) We report here only the proportions who chose friends as their *first* choice, assuming that person of the first choice is the most significant person to them for that particular problem.

Table 5.3 presents the results for younger and older youth separately. One important note we can make based on this result is that friends (in this case, close

friends) seem to be the most important source of help and advice on problems related to loneliness and disappointment and the problem about boy/girl friends. For these two problems, males are more likely to count on friends than are females, and youth of the younger age-group tend to do so more than the older one. With regard to other problems, the proportions reporting friends as their important source of help range from the low of about one-fifth to the high of about two-fifths only.

Considering the fact that sources of help on various problems are open and vary from one individual to the next, the results presented above suggest that friends are very important for adolescents and youth. However, when we compare results in Table 5.3 with those in Table 5.4 we are led to a conclusion that most youth tend to consider themselves more important to their friends than their friends to them. For the results in Table 5.4 which deals with the importance of the respondents to their friends, we asked whether the respondents thought their friends would be likely to come to them for help or advice if they faced with the same problems. The responses summarized in this Table show very high proportions who reported that their friends would be likely to count on them for help. The proportions are much higher than those in the Table 5.3 which deals with the importance of friends to them.

If the results in Table 5.4 are accurate, they indicate that most youth consider themselves more important to their friends than their friends to them. Psychologically, however, this may not be the case, since people generally tend to unconsciously have bias in favor of themselves rather than otherwise. Nevertheless, the results in both Tables 5.3 and 5.4 together show that youth are aware of the importance of friends in much the same way as they are aware of the importance of themselves to their friends.

To further assess how much friends actually help, we asked the respondents to report the sources from which they had learned several important things in their lives. Again, a wide range of sources was provided for them to choose for each item; friend is one among these. The items in question are arbitrarily selected and can be grouped into two categories, *social* and *non-social*. The latter includes knowledge and skill for work, job or source of job, health care, courting, and sexual knowledge and practice; the former (social) includes what one should and should not do when in social events, and how to treat male and female friends and goodness/badness or merit/demerit. The results are summarized in Table 5.5.

Indeed, friends do help, but in general the proportions who had learned from friends are not very high. For the 'social' items, except 'what one should and should not do when in social events' and 'goodness/badness,' the proportions are around one-fourth among males but much lower among females. For the 'non-social' items, the highest proportions who had learned from friends are found in courting (well over 40 per cent) and sexual knowledge and practice (around one-third among males and much less among females). Only about one-fourth of males learned about job and sources of job from friends. Very small proportions learned about health care from their friends.

Overall, although friends may provide a source of knowledge in a number of important aspects, the proportions who actually benefited from friends are not very high. Males seek knowledge from friends more frequently than females. Among all other aspects, knowledge on courting and sexual behavior is more frequently provided by friends.

Experience with organized groups

Contact with organized groups is limited to small proportions of youth as indicated by the results presented in Table 5.6. The *organized groups* we are dealing with here include a wide range of formal and non-formal organizations such as Youth Group and Village Scout Group in the rural areas which are formally organized by the Interior Ministry. Clubs and groups commonly organized by students in most educational institutions are also included in this case.

Table 5.6 shows that small proportions of youth are currently involved in organized groups and younger youth are more active than the older ones. One explanation may be that since a large number of the groups in which these youth involve are in educational institutions, and since more younger youth are in school than older youth, the proportions involved in organized groups among the younger are thus higher.

Although the organized groups reported by respondents are numerous, they are aggregated into 4 types on the basis of their main orientations: academic and occupational, recreational, community/social development and political. Of these, groups with social/community development and academic/occupational orientations are more favorite among the youth.

Courting and dating experiences

The life course of adolescents and youth is often associated with *special* interest in friends of the opposite sex. Such a special interest, if positively responded to, develops into a special kind of relationship known as *love*. This relationship, of course, does not necessarily lead to a more permanent tie of marriage, although many do so. The following presentation is to provide information on the youth's experience regarding courting and dating which is in the interest of most adolescents and youth.

Table 5.7 shows that at the time our study approximately two-thirds of youth in the sample ever had boy/girl friends. This proportion, of course, includes those who are ever married and those who are not. On average, youth who ever had experience had 3-4 boy/girl friends in their lifetime. However, about one half of these youth had only 1-2 boy/girl friends. The other half consists of those who have about the average or more. It is worth noting that there is hardly any difference in this respect in terms of gender and urban-rural residence of the respondents.

Courting begins fairly early, just a few years after reaching puberty. The mean age of onset of the first courting is about 16 for both boys and girls. For all of them, by the time they reach the age of 15-16 about half already had their first courting. Substantial proportions (more than one-fifth for boys but less than that for girls) began courting behavior quite early, i.e. before the age of 15. Youth in the urban areas, especially boys, entered courtship relationship relatively earlier than those in the rural area. But once they started, the rural youth caught up soon so that by the time they reached the age of 18-19 years nearly every of them has had the experience -- just as those from the urban residence.

Courting is often associated with dating which, in this case, is understood as a private meeting of the concerned parties, largely involving going outside the home environment, although meeting within the home environment is not uncommon in the Thai context. Table 5.8 shows that dating is quite common among all the youth who ever had boy/girl friends. The proportions ever had dating are particularly high among the older youth, and more males admitted having this than females. To the follow up question 'Who initiated the dating?', most females said it was their boy friends' while most males said it was theirs'. So, the typical pattern of dating is that males initiate or propose the idea.

Table 5.1
Proportions of youth engaging in various leisure activities
2-3 times per week or more, by sex and urban-rural residence

Leisure activities	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Reading newspapers, magazines	66.4	65.3	46.3	44.1
Playing games, sports, exercise	67.0	40.5	66.4	32.4
Playing music	32.0	8.4	16.7	4.7
Going out, hanging around in town, shopping malls	51.5	62.2	43.1	45.7
Help in community work	12.4	11.2	20.9	17.2
Religious activities	17.2	29.0	28.6	37.4
Visiting entertainment places	18.9	14.5	18.5	10.1

Table 5.2
Distribution of youth with different number of 'close friends,' 'just friends'
and peer groups, by urban-rural residence and sex

Types / number of friends	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Close friends				
No close friend	1.7	4.3	4.2	7.2
1-2	37.1	46.0	40.0	48.6
3-4	33.8	26.7	29.6	28.1
5+	27.4	22.9	26.2	16.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>482</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>503</i>	<i>615</i>
<i>Mean</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>2.7</i>
<i>Median</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>
Just friends				
0-10	34.6	49.0	40.8	59.8
11-30	22.4	24.0	28.6	20.3
31+	42.9	27.1	30.6	19.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>482</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>503</i>	<i>615</i>
<i>Mean</i>	<i>66.0</i>	<i>39.3</i>	<i>46.9</i>	<i>28.0</i>
<i>Median</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>12.0</i>	<i>20.0</i>	<i>10.0</i>
Peer group				
Yes	83.0	68.3	83.9	60.3
No	17.0	31.7	16.1	39.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>482</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>503</i>	<i>615</i>
<i>If yes, how often meet peer group</i>				
Very often	64.7	56.7	67.1	61.5
Often	23.9	28.5	25.2	27.5
Once in a while	11.3	14.9	7.6	11.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>397</i>	<i>390</i>	<i>420</i>	<i>371</i>

Table 5.3

Proportions of youth reporting that they would count on friends as first source for help if facing various specified problems, by urban-rural residence, sex and age

Age-group / problems	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Age 15-19 (N)	314	371	330	385
Job problem	26.4	19.9	21.2	19.2
Money problem	30.9	19.7	26.1	20.5
Boy/girl friend problem	67.2	55.3	66.1	54.8
Loneliness, sad, disappointment	65.6	60.1	67.3	67.3
Problems with family members	34.1	44.7	33.3	41.6
Age 20-24 (N)	168	209	173	230
Job problem	39.3	33.5	32.9	20.9
Money problem	33.3	19.6	20.2	9.6
Boy/girl friend problem	58.9	43.5	53.2	37.4
Loneliness, sad, disappointment	64.3	53.1	69.4	49.1
Problems with family members	35.1	38.8	30.1	23.9

Table 5.4

Proportions of youth reporting that their friends are likely to count on them if facing various specified problems, by urban-rural residence, sex and age

Age-group / problems	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Age 15-19 (N)	314	371	330	385
Job problem	70.4	77.4	74.8	72.7
Money problem	73.6	72.2	68.8	60.5
Boy/girl friend problem	71.0	82.2	65.2	75.3
Loneliness, sad, disappointment	83.1	88.9	80.9	87.8
Problems with family members	51.3	70.4	54.8	58.7
Age 20-24 (N)	168	209	173	230
Job problem	75.0	77.5	85.5	70.9
Money problem	76.2	70.8	75.1	64.8
Boy/girl friend problem	64.9	78.0	69.4	70.0
Loneliness, sad, disappointment	86.9	81.3	85.0	80.4
Problems with family members	63.7	63.6	55.5	60.0

Table 5.5
Proportions of youth reporting having learned many important things
from friends, by urban-rural residence and sex

Things learned	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Social:				
What to behave in social events	12.9	7.6	13.7	5.4
How to treat male friends	28.8	15.5	23.5	10.4
How to treat female friends	28.4	15.5	23.7	13.7
Goodness/badness, merit/demerit	2.7	1.6	2.6	1.0
Non-social:				
Knowledge, skills for work	19.7	12.1	14.5	12.0
Sexual knowledge & practice	31.5	20.0	33.6	13.2
Courting	44.6	47.2	45.9	42.3
Job, sources of job	25.5	16.7	27.0	20.8
Health care	0.8	1.2	1.4	1.0

Table 5.6
Proportions of youth reporting being members of organized groups,
by urban-rural residence, sex and age

	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Membership of any organized group				
<i>Age 15-19</i>				
Yes	17.5	16.4	10.9	13.0
No	82.5	83.6	89.1	87.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>371</i>	<i>329</i>	<i>385</i>
<i>Age 20-24</i>				
Yes	11.3	11.5	6.9	15.2
No	88.7	88.5	93.1	84.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>173</i>	<i>230</i>
If "Yes," type of organized groups				
<i>Age 15-19</i>				
Academic, occupational oriented	39.6	23.3	30.6	38.8
Recreational oriented	34.0	25.0	22.2	12.2
Community, social development oriented	26.4	51.7	38.9	44.9
Political oriented	-	-	8.3	4.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Age 20-24</i>				
Academic, occupational oriented	10.5	41.7	25.0	36.4
Recreational oriented	21.1	4.2	8.3	3.0
Community, social development oriented	63.2	54.2	41.7	54.5
Political oriented	5.3	-	25.0	6.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>33</i>

Table 5.7
Distribution of youth with and without courting experience,
by urban-rural residence and sex

	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Ever had boy/girl friend?				
Yes	64.7	64.0	63.6	69.9
No	35.3	36.0	36.4	30.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>482</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>503</i>	<i>615</i>
If "Yes," how many boy/girl friends in lifetime?				
1-2	47.3	53.4	44.8	55.3
3-10	46.6	42.0	49.5	42.8
11+	6.1	4.6	5.6	1.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>372</i>	<i>319</i>	<i>430</i>
<i>Mean</i>	<i>4.1</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>3.0</i>
<i>Median</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>
If "Yes," age at first courting				
Below 15	27.3	18.6	21.0	16.3
15-17	54.7	58.0	64.5	60.9
18-19	13.5	17.0	20.4	18.1
20 or more	4.5	6.5	4.1	4.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>371</i>	<i>319</i>	<i>430</i>
<i>Mean age</i>	<i>15.6</i>	<i>16.0</i>	<i>15.9</i>	<i>16.2</i>
<i>Median age</i>	<i>15.0</i>	<i>16.0</i>	<i>16.0</i>	<i>16.0</i>

Table 5.8
Distribution of youth with dating experience,
by urban-rural residence, sex and age

	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Ever had dating?				
<i>Age 15-19</i>				
Yes	73.4	56.8	63.4	46.7
No	26.6	43.2	36.6	53.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>227</i>
<i>Age 20-24</i>				
Yes	89.4	72.7	83.3	49.0
No	10.6	27.3	16.7	51.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>202</i>
If "Yes," whose idea?				
<i>Age 15-19</i>				
His/hers	14.5	82.8	11.7	81.9
Yours	73.9	3.4	75.7	5.7
Both	10.1	12.1	10.8	7.6
Others'	1.4	1.7	1.8	4.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>116</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>105</i>
<i>Age 20-24</i>				
His/hers	9.1	86.7	13.3	90.8
Yours	70.0	2.5	71.7	3.1
Both	20.9	9.2	12.5	2.0
Others'	-	1.7	2.5	4.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>98</i>

CHAPTER SIX

HEALTH STATUS AND KNOWLEDGE ON STD/AIDS PREVENTION

There are reasons why appropriate attention should be given to health and health behavior of youth. As a generation that is expected to perpetuate and further develop the society, healthy youth are but most desirable for any nations. But youth's health cannot be taken for granted, although youth are generally believed to be healthy. Because youth often is that period which is associated with a unique life style, certain health problems are more common among youth than among people of other life stages. For instance, the health problems related to reproductive behavior, violence and abuse of substances are considered to be relatively common among adolescent and youth. At the policy level, therefore, investment on programs aiming at enhancing the good health of the population in general and that of youth in particular is of considerable importance.

In this chapter we examine certain aspects related to health of youth in our sample. First, we present physical health status and health behavior just to get an overview of their health condition. Then we identify some conditions which are believed to associate with mental health status. Following this, we make a simple assessment of the capacity of youth and their families to absorb financial burden that may result from major health problems. In the final section we assess youth's knowledge of the practices to prevent infection from sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. We are aware that several previous studies have done this with various degrees of depth. Our results are intended to be part of the broader HIV/AIDS surveillance system and add to the increasing literature in this aspect of the health problem which is becoming more threatening.

Health status and health-related behavior

Table 6.1 shows proportions of youth who had various health-related experiences over different periods of times prior to the survey. The experiences included here are meant to serve as indicators of health status of the respondents. At the outset, it will be noted on the basis of the results in this Table that females and males are generally of different health status. Overall the results seem to indicate, although not very strongly, that females youth are probably in poorer health than males youth as demonstrated below.

Proportionately, more females than males reported having any health problems which, in this case, mean experiencing illness of any kind. Females are also more likely than males to be seen by doctors or to take supplementary medicine and health diet in the period of one month prior to survey. Fairly large proportions, ranging from about 39 to 45 per cent, of youth reported they had bought drug for their own use in the past one month prior to this survey. Perhaps, this is an indication that many of them had minor illness. Up to one quarter reported that they had serious illness (one which needs bed rest for 2 days or more) in the past one year.

Overall, the data in Table 6.1 seem to suggest that female are experiencing more health related problems than males. Given what the data imply, we are yet to find out the physical, social and behavioral processes underlying this. However, it may also be the case that what is reported in Table 6.1 just reflects gender difference in health awareness and perception rather than the real difference in health status of males and females. But whatever the explanation may be, health policy and programs to enhance women's health are needed.

It is also worth noting that male and female youth are clearly different with regard to accidents related to traffic and work. While the highest proportion of females who ever experienced traffic accidents ranges between one-fifth in rural areas to nearly one quarter in the urban areas during the past three years before the survey (which is considered high), the proportion for male is substantially higher -- ranging from over one-third in the rural areas to nearly one half in the urban areas. This difference is probably explained by differential life style and the kinds of daily activities that males and females engage in. This is another area that needs to be addressed by the national policy.

The high rate of traffic and work accidents has been observed in Thailand in the recent years. In fact, accidents of all kinds have been one among the leading causes of death of the Thai people; and among all accidents, road accident ranks highest. This finding is in support of the call for appropriate measures to reduce the accident rates.

Also different between male and female youth in the sample is the proportions who ever had venereal diseases. Among the general Thai people (excluding commercial sex workers) venereal disease is believed to be experienced largely by males; some females may get it from their spouses or boy friends, but such incidence is rare. Our finding in this study seems to be in line with the popular belief, i.e. the disease is found almost exclusively in male population. The

proportion who ever had venereal diseases of any kind is well over 3 percent (or over 30 per 1000 people) for male while for females this proportion is 0.3 percent. [Note that we are dealing here with a lifetime experience.]

Considering that access to commercial sex is relatively easy in Thailand, we believe that these young men must have the disease from their involvement in prostitution. The lifetime rate of venereal diseases among male youth reported here is admittedly high, especially when we take into account the fact that these young men have spent their 'sexually active period' not more than ten years (for the oldest ones in the sample). The findings, thus, call the attention to more serious efforts and measures to confine prostitution, to reduce men's visitation to the commercial sex places, and to reduce the rates of sexually transmitted diseases.

The youth who had any health problem were asked to report their illnesses or the symptoms they experienced. The responses were grouped according to the diseases classification employed in the Survey of Health and Welfare (National Statistical Office, 1991). The results in Table 6.2 present distribution of urban and rural youth according to their reported illnesses. Note that the illnesses grouped under 'Other' are of relatively large proportion. This is due to the fact that the illnesses are self-reported and many of them are unclear. A number of respondents, for example, simply reported that they had fever or headache.

Difference between urban and rural youth with regard to some illnesses is small but worth noting. Perhaps this difference may be accounted for in terms of the very difference of the urban and rural environment and way of life. To mention just a few, more urban youth seem to suffer from illnesses of respiratory and cardiovascular systems than rural youth. The two diseases are known to be more prevalent in the urban environment and urban way of life.

Only about 1 per cent of urban youth reported symptoms related to nutritional status while 6 per cent of the rural youth reported them. This indicates, among other things, different levels of poverty between rural and urban households. Females in rural areas are more likely to report illnesses related to female reproductive system, suggesting lack of knowledge on female health care and/or lack of women health service in the rural setting.

Finally, it is worth noting that illnesses of respiratory, digestive and cardiovascular systems are among the top three illnesses reported by youth in the sample (not including those grouped under 'other'). Also note that the proportion

reporting illness related to accidents is slightly more than 3 per cent for both urban and rural youth.

Table 6.3 summarizes the information on what we consider pertaining to health behavior, i.e. frequency of involvement in playing games, sports and exercise, in the past one month up to the time of survey. Some clarification is necessary here. The interview question from which this information is derived is rather inclusive, lumping together games, sports and exercise. Some of these, such as computer games available mostly in the urban areas, may not be properly considered an exercise activity for physical fitness. Others may be taken mainly for a recreational purpose rather than for the purpose of physical health. Still others may be properly considered as work and not exercises, but the respondents consider them to be good exercises (such as farm work which involves a continuous use of physical force). Although in the process of interview there was no prompt and the respondents were allowed interpret the question the way they felt appropriate, chances may be that some of these activities are included in the responses summarized in this Table.

As indicated in the Table, the highest proportion involved in more frequent exercise activities (4 times per week or more) in the past month is about 45 per cent among urban youth. This is nearly two times more frequent than among youth in the rural areas. Those who involved in the activities 2-3 times per week account for about one-fifth. More than half of the rural youth never had, or hardly had, any exercise activities during the specified period, while the proportion for the urban youth is about one-third or slightly more.

If we consider involvement 2-3 times per week or more as good health behavior, then about two-thirds of urban youth -- both males and females -- are in this category comparing to less than one half of the rural youth. Our findings show relatively higher proportions who involved in exercise than the result from the Children and Youth Survey which gives about 44 per cent of the youth aged 15-19 and 21 per cent of those aged 20-24 involving in exercise (National Statistical Office 1992). Obviously, the difference is due to our broader definition of the term.

Mental health

In the broad sense of the term *mental health* implies a state in which one's mind functions normally and is well-balanced in most, if not all, circumstances. Mentally healthy persons may experience various states of mind, such as stress,

tension, depression, anxieties, excitement, sadness and so forth, during the course of their daily activities, but they can manage the circumstances or manage their own minds, or both, so that their minds can always function normally and are in good balance.

For our purpose here we use the term 'mental health' in a rather narrow sense to include one with little or no conditions which indicate the lack of mental well-being. Due solely to limitation of the data, we are unable to examine how the youth in our sample managed their circumstances and/or their minds when experiencing certain mental conditions. Healthy or unhealthy mind in the sense we are discussing here is measured simply in terms of the presence or absence of certain conditions and the frequency that youth experienced them over a specified period of time. We are aware that the conditions listed here are arbitrarily selected and limited, yet we hope that they will shed some light into mental health status of young people in our sample.

In Table 6.4, a few points of interest emerge and they will be noted here. *First*, the proportions who experienced specified mental conditions vary from one condition to the next. In some cases the proportions appear to be noticeably high. In melancholy (hypochondria), for example, the proportion who experienced this 4-6 times or more over the defined period of 3 months before the survey is 26 per cent for female youth in the urban areas (highest). On the other hand, the proportion experiencing other conditions is fairly low, accounting for only 7 per cent as in the case of rural males who experienced boredom with their lives and surroundings (lowest). *Second*, urban-rural differential in the experience with these mental conditions does exist and it is fairly clear and consistent, with the urban youth more likely to have the symptoms than the rural counterparts. And finally, males and females in both the residential areas seem to experience these mental conditions differently; females are more likely to have such mental conditions than males.

In Table 6.5 we summarize what presented in Table 6.4, but here showing the proportions who reported having any mental symptoms 4-6 times or more during the past 3 months prior to the survey. This information just lends support to what was already noted above. In sum, being female youth and urban dwellers seem to be of disadvantage as far as mental well-being is concerned.

In Table 6.6 we want to know if there is a difference in mental well-being among youth with different backgrounds. Here we found that larger proportions of the out-of-school youth experienced these unhealthy mental conditions compared

to the in-school youth. The proportions are also higher among those in the urban areas. The findings in the rest of Table 6.6 do not indicate a uniform association between youth mental health and family backgrounds. This is probably due to the skewed distributions of cases in each of the family background characteristics.

In this connection some comments may be appropriate. The fact that urban youth are more likely to experience adverse mental conditions than the rural youth may be understood in terms of the differential life style and social environment of the urban and rural areas. Urban life is often characterized by higher degree of *individualism* and *competition* and these tend to vary with the size of the city or the degree of urbanism. Life of the urban dwellers is known to be more competitive comparing to that of the rural dwellers. On the material side, *city light* often presents various consumer goods and entertainment which are tempting. Those who are unable to afford them but yet cannot control their desire for them can eventually become mentally restless.

Individualism, constant competition and mental restless due to uncontrolled desire, all these could result in some adverse symptoms of mind. Unless properly managed, these symptoms could affect mental health of the individuals. To the extent that this comment holds, it calls for the family as well as the public sector to have culturally sensitive measures for socializing the urban youngsters, particularly in big cities, so that they can live the life with a sound mind.

Our findings also show that female tend to experience the adverse mental conditions more than males. This point is more subtle and difficult to comment. What is it in being females in Thai society that causes them these adverse mental conditions more than males?

According to the Thai norms on gender, females are generally under more social and cultural restrictions and expectations with regard to their roles and behavior. Starting from their adolescence, young females are supposed to be less out-going, more self-controlled and self-restraint, responsible for the household work, caring for others in the family, and so forth. Is it possible that these sociocultural restrictions and expectations eventually put stronger pressure on young women so that they are under more stress and tension than males? These questions cannot be resolved with the data available to us in the present study. We hope that the issue will be further investigated by interested researchers.

Here we just want to register an observation: The process of gender construction in contemporary Thai society is associated with considerable stress and tension particularly in part of young women. Recent economic changes demand more participation of women in the market production (earning income outside the household), but the family does not free them from the household production (house work, child care, etc.). Women are caught up in between the two functions which are often in conflict. Yet, they are expected to fulfill both. Thus, in a large number of cases tension and stress are often inevitable. Among young married women of the working class this is quite obvious. In this perspective women's mental well-being is seen as closely related to social and cultural norms as well as gender construction.

Capacity to absorb health care costs

During the past decades health services in Thailand have been improved considerably in terms of both availability and quality. An evidence of this improvement is a steady decline in mortality rate and the increase in life expectation associated with it. Yet, the cost of health care is getting more expensive, especially when it is provided by the private sector. Low income families are increasingly facing difficulties in coping with this cost, particularly in case of the major illness.

Some public programs have been put forward to alleviate the problems. These include the Health Card Program for the rural families and the Social Welfare Insurance Program for industrial workers (but not their families). In addition, for the workers in the government service and government enterprise health benefit is provided which covers the costs of health care for the workers themselves and members of their immediate families (parents, children and spouse). Nonetheless, majority of the families cannot not benefit from these programs, either because they are not qualified for them or because the programs are still limited in their scope.

In our survey we made a simple assessment of the youth's and their families' capabilities to absorb the costs of health care, should they need one in case of major illness. We consider as 'capable' those who are covered by such programs as discussed above or by other programs of similar nature. Youth who are not covered by such programs but consider themselves as financially capable are also included in this category. Table 6.7 presents only the proportions who are *unlikely* to be able to absorb the costs. These are the ones who are likely to face difficulties in covering the health care costs, should they are needed.

It is clear that the majority consider themselves as financially incapable to absorb this cost. Nearly two-thirds or more are not in any programs which will help them cover the health care expenses, should the need happen. Less than half youth are from the families with no access to health benefit of any kind. Overall, the information in Table 6.7 suggests that there is much to develop as far as the public programs to help absorb health care costs are concerned. As the costs of health care services rise, public as well as private programs which provide people with access to health benefit of affordable costs seem to be appropriate in this case.

Knowledge on STD and HIV/AIDS prevention

By the time this study was under way, HIV infection and AIDS problems in Thailand, first recognized ten years earlier, had almost gone out of control. The rate of infection -- mainly through sexual contacts -- was rapid and will probably continue to be so for at least some time in the future (Weniger et al 1991). Recent projections of the HIV/AIDS status in Thailand, based on the very conservative assumption, indicate that the prevalence rate of close to 2 per cent will be the case for the next 5 to 10 years. During the same period the cumulative HIV-infected cases will range between 750,000 to 1,200,000 while the annual new AIDS cases will range between 40,000 to 45,000 (Chin 1995; cf. NESDB Working Group 1994). Despite tremendous amount of resources and many active programs in part of the public and private sectors, responses in terms of changes in risk behavior have not been significant enough to confine the infection rate.

Intervention programs aiming at providing the public with AIDS awareness and knowledge to prevent HIV infection have been widespread for some time now. Recent studies indicate that knowledge and attitude on AIDS are pervasive. People of the youth age-range or older who never heard about the epidemic are few, if any (Thongthai and Pitakmahaket 1994). Yet, despite these evidences of good knowledge and attitude, our results presented in Table 6.8 suggest that there is some gap to be filled up among the young people.

In our survey, respondents were asked to say whether specified practices can or cannot prevent AIDS and STD infection. The statements were read to them one by one by the interviewers. Responses are summarized in Table 6.8. Here we present only the incorrect responses to get some ideas of the extent of misunderstanding with regard to the practices for HIV and STD prevention.

As indicated in the Table, only a small proportion (less than 10 per cent for most practices) do not seem to understand effective methods to prevent AIDS transmission. Nearly all youth show that they know well about conventional methods to prevent the infection (no sex with prostitutes, no sexual promiscuity, no needle sharing, taking no contaminated blood and using condom). But with regard to the practices -- such as taking 'preventive medicine' and washing genitals, popularly known among males who frequent the brothels -- there appears to be substantial misunderstanding. Such misunderstanding is found in various proportions of youth, ranging from 20 to 25 per cent of rural youth but slightly lower among the urban youth. As many as 30 percent of the youth in rural areas, and nearly the same proportion in the urban areas, think that AIDS cannot be transmitted from a healthy-looking person, which is incorrect. With regard to STD, the proportions who have misunderstanding about preventing methods are even greater, ranging from about one-third to about two-thirds.

Our survey results reveal that as many as 10 percent or more of the respondents think that condom cannot prevent HIV and STD infection. This is particularly worth nothing given the fairly aggressive campaigns on condom use in the recent years. Clearly, this information can tell public and private program managers that there is the need to improve their educational programs on condom use. (What messages to be communicated to what target groups, etc..)

In sum, our data suggest that although knowledge of STD/AIDS appears to be widespread among the population in general, misunderstanding about effective methods for prevention of the diseases prevails in substantial proportions of youth. This suggests that appropriate information programs designed specifically for youth should address the popular, but ineffective, beliefs and practices and find socially and culturally acceptable ways to familiarize them with correct, effective practices.

Table 6.1
Health status of youth as indicated in the percentages who experienced various health conditions during the specified periods of time, by sex and rural-urban residence

Health status	Urban		Rural	
	Male	female	male	female
<i>% with different medical experience</i>				
Currently having any health problem	14.9	25.2	14.1	20.3
Seen by doctor in past 1 month	23.2	33.1	22.9	29.9
Bought medicine for self in past 1 month	39.2	41.9	45.1	41.5
Taking supplementary, in past 1 month	17.8	21.6	20.3	23.1
Serious illness in past 1 year	21.0	25.3	22.1	22.1
Had traffic accident in past 3 years	48.5	24.1	37.8	20.3
Had work accident in past 3 years	13.9	5.7	17.5	5.7
Any venereal diseases (lifetime)	3.5	0.3	3.4	0.3

Note: Percentage in each cell is exclusive.

Table 6.2
Recent illness reported by youth in the sample, by urban-rural residence

Type of illness	Urban	Rural
<i>Diseases related to:</i>		
Respiratory system	28.0	12.1
Digestive system	13.7	12.8
Cardiovascular system	10.4	6.9
Endocrine system and metabolic diseases	5.2	2.1
Musculoskeletal system , connective tissue	4.3	6.4
Oral cavity, nose and eye	4.3	4.8
Urinary, liver and bile	4.3	2.7
Accidents	3.3	3.2
Female reproductive organ	2.8	6.9
Nervous system and mental disorder	2.4	1.6
Infectious diseases	0.5	-
Nutritional status	0.9	5.9
Skin	-	1.1
Others (ill-defined conditions)	19.9	33.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>188</i>

Table 6.3
Proportions of youth who engaged in playing sports, games and exercise
in the past one month before survey, by sex and urban-rural residence

Frequency	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Every day	29.0	31.9	12.5	11.2
4-6 times per week	16.4	12.4	12.3	12.7
2-3 times per wee	21.0	21.0	21.5	20.2
Once a week or less	17.8	18.1	22.7	19.8
Never	15.8	16.6	31.0	36.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>482</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>503</i>	<i>615</i>

Table 6.4
Proportions of youth experiencing various mental conditions 4-6 times or more
during the past 3 months before survey, by sex and urban rural residence

Mental conditions	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Feel melancholy	21.0	15.9	14.7	22.1
Anxiety and restless sleep	22.4	23.6	14.9	16.6
Stress/ tension/ moodiness	24.1	24.8	16.9	21.1
Bored with one's life, and surroundings	10.2	16.7	7.0	13.5
Feel perplexed and have unexplained headaches	11.8	25.0	12.3	19.5
Be absent-minded	10.8	11.7	7.8	9.1

Note: Percentages in the Table above are exclusive and hence do not sum to 100.

Table 6.5
Proportions of youth experiencing any mental conditions 4-6 times or more
in the past 3 months before survey, by sex and urban-rural residence

	Urban <i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	Rural <i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Experiencing no conditions	52.1	45.2	62.4	53.7
Experiencing any one or more conditions	47.9	54.8	37.6	46.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>482</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>503</i>	<i>615</i>

Table 6.6
Distribution of youth with any mental conditions,
by sex and selected characteristics

Characteristics	Male	Female
<i>Residence</i>		
Urban	55.0	52.7
Rural	45.0	47.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>420</i>	<i>603</i>
<i>Schooling status</i>		
In school	40.2	40.3
Out of school	59.8	59.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>420</i>	<i>603</i>
<i>Co-residence with parents</i>		
With both parents	56.7	50.1
With father only	2.1	3.1
With mother only	12.6	10.9
With no parents	28.3	36.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>420</i>	<i>603</i>
<i>Family relation</i>		
Have relationship problems with one or more family members	30.4	33.5
No relationship problems with any family members	69.6	66.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>362</i>	<i>517</i>

Table 6.7
Proportions of youth who are *unlikely* to be able to pay the cost of major health care, should it happen, by sex and urban-rural residence

	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
% unable to pay the cost of health care in case of serious illness	61.6	61.6	66.4	67.3
% having no health insurance of any kind for self	64.3	73.3	68.8	68.1
% family having no health insurance of any kind	41.1	49.5	43.7	46.3

Table 6.8
Proportions of youth with incorrect knowledge about practices to prevent transmission of STD/HIV/AIDS, by sex and urban-rural residence

	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
On HIV/AIDS prevention				
<i>% saying these practices cannot prevent transmission:</i>				
- Not having sex with prostitutes	9.6	6.4	6.4	8.5
- No sexual promiscuity	4.4	2.2	2.8	4.7
- Not sharing needles	4.2	5.0	7.2	7.4
- Not taking infected blood	7.7	9.7	11.4	12.9
- Using condom at all sexes	14.6	14.3	9.4	10.5
<i>% saying these practices can prevent transmission:</i>				
- Taking preventive medicine before sex	16.4	18.4	25.2	24.5
- Taking flushing medicine after sex	17.0	15.7	22.6	20.9
<i>% believing that AIDS virus cannot be transmitted from a healthy looking person</i>	27.7	27.9	30.0	30.0
On STD prevention				
<i>% saying these practices can prevent STD transmission:</i>				
- Taking preventive medicine before sex	35.1	40.0	44.7	43.7
- Taking flushing medicine after sex	37.1	32.6	37.0	31.7
- Washing genital after sex	35.3	36.4	41.0	38.4
- Not using toilet with infected people	62.9	68.4	65.4	64.1
<i>% saying condom cannot prevent STD transmission</i>	11.2	15.5	12.9	17.1

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND FIRST SEXUAL EXPERIENCE

It is said that youth is that period when life is full of energy and enthusiasm. Being energetic and enthusiastic, young people are generally ready to explore and learn things by various possible means. With more freedom and independence than in the previous stage in their lives, many young people may go as far as taking behavioral forms entirely different from the conventional norms and practices. Such behavior, while valuable in the process of growing up of individuals, often involves some risks to the youth themselves.

There have been concerns, at the family as well as the societal levels, regarding various health risk behaviors of young people. Two things are of particular concern, and they will be the subject of our discussion in this chapter: (a) abuse of substances, and (b) sexual behavior. These are important issues since they not only are potentially risky to health but also can lead to other undesirable behaviors such as crime and violence.

In the context of contemporary Thai society the concern just mentioned above is particularly relevant for some reasons. Rapid economic and social changes during the past decades have made access to consumer goods and services more convenient. With the rising of urban way of life (which is no longer limited to urban areas only) and consumers' culture, consumption has been used beyond its conventional purposes and often has led to *abuse* of some forms. Consumption of alcoholic beverage, cigarettes and certain drugs is an example in this case. Lack of effective control of access to certain beverage and drugs is evidently one of the causes of the abuse, and hence the concern.

Another reason for a growing concern about risk behavior of youth (and of adults as well) has to do with ample availability of commercial sex and the rapid spread of AIDS epidemic. Thailand has been known in recent decades as a place where access to commercial sex can be obtained with relative ease despite the fact that it is outlaw. An accurate number of sex workers in the whole country is unknown but certainly there are a large number of them. Conservative estimates give the number in the range of 150,000 to 200,000 females prostitutes, but it is very likely that the actual number is much larger (Podhisita et al 1994; Muecke 1992). On the other hand, Thai men in general -- married or unmarried -- are also known for their use of commercial sex.

It is , therefore, not surprising that within the period of ten years from the time when AIDS was first detected HIV infection -- mainly through sexual contacts -- has gone rapidly through successive waves of spread from limited high risk groups of gay men and drug users to general population (Weniger et al 1991). The present stage of the epidemic in Thailand may be characterized as one in which nearly every individual is at some risk of infection. Under this circumstance family and social concern over sexual risk behavior of young people is not at all over-expressed.

The present survey was basically designed to investigate certain aspects of health risk behavior of youth. The intention is to gain insight into substance abuse and behavior surrounding first sex. However, since the main objective is not to study sexual behavior as such, the data on sex is limited to first sex of both males and females youth in the sample only.

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first section we focus on abuse of selected substances, and in the second section we present a description on sexual behavior. An attempt is made to gain understanding of these behaviors in terms of backgrounds of the respondents.

Abuse of substances

Table 7.1 presents information on use of seven selected substances, alcoholic beverage, cigarettes, marijuana, heroine, pain reliever, glue sniffing and amphetamine. For each of these substances information on proportion ever used, timing of first use and current use is provided. We consider first use at age 15 or younger as *early use* and of medical interest given the potential health hazard of these substances. We choose to present the data in this way because we believe that overall they may be of interest to the policy making community. It is appropriate to note, however, that since use of these substances involves different degree of social and legal sanction (disapproval), the number of users of some substances presented here may be under-reported. For this reason, comparison of these data with those from other sources should be made with cautions.

The pattern emerging from Table 7.1 is worth noting. *First*, males are far more active users of all these substances than females. Indeed, except for drinking and smoking, on the basis of the results presented here one can almost say that males are the exclusive users of these substances. *Second*, although age at first use varies from one substance to the next, early use is found among a number of youth. By age 15 a substantial proportion already had their first try. *Third*, if only the *ever*

users are considered, there is no significant difference between males in the urban and rural areas. But when the proportions beginning use at early age are compared, the difference between urban and rural youth in all substances, except drinking and cigarette smoking, becomes clearer. In all other substances urban males are more likely to begin at age 15 or younger than rural males.

Current and frequent users (defined as using 2-3 times per week or more) vary considerably between the substances with strong social and legal sanctions (i.e. all others except drinking and cigarette smoking) and those with mild sanctions. Current and frequent users for drinking and smoking, because of milder social and legal sanctions associated with them, are of much larger proportions. For the rest, (marijuana, heroine, pain reliever, glue sniffing and amphetamine) the number of current and frequent users is negligibly small. And for this reason, they will be discussed only briefly here.

National statistics on accurate number of drug dependents is limited. However, based on records of treatment centers located in different parts of the country, information is available for the number of those who voluntarily entered the treatment system. According to the report by the Institute of Health Research, Chulalongkorn University (Perngparn et al 1992), the number of old and new cases from all treatment centers increased from about 11,600 in 1980 to about 56,400 in 1989, with minor fluctuations in between. This probably represented only part of all drug dependents during that ten-year period, since a large number of them might not report to the treatment centers.

During the same period, 1980-1989, the number of drug-dependent youth aged 15-24 years who reported themselves to the treatment system increased from 2,080 to 4,498, an increase of more than two times. The above report also noted that in the decade of 1980's Thailand suffered the first epidemic of organic (industrial) solvent sniffing, mainly toluene in paint thinner, lacquer and glue, among the adolescents. The increase of new cases in the centers located in the northeastern region is noticeable.

As already noted above, abuse of substances other than alcoholic beverage and cigarettes is found only in a small number of youth in the present study. Obviously this is partly due to the tendency not to report the behavior in part of the respondents (especially when it is socially and legally unacceptable), and partly due to our sample size which is not large enough to be able to capture a large number of drug dependents. Nonetheless, proportions of males who reported ever use of marijuana, amphetamine and glue sniffing in this study are worth noting. For

marijuana, the proportion ever used is about 20 per cent, amphetamine, 11 per cent, and glue sniffing (which includes sniffing of paint thinner and lacquer), about 8 per cent. Given the sensitivity of behavior and the tendency not to reveal it, it is possible that the proportion of current users of all these substances among our sample is more than the one reported in Table 7.1.

Given relative availability of the substance and the apparent increase in the number of users, glue sniffing and use of amphetamine seem to be of particular concern among Thai youth now. Reports occasionally appeared in the media in recent years seem to suggest that glue sniffing is used largely by adolescents while amphetamine is used mostly by adult wage laborers such as long-haul truck and bus drivers and construction workers. Among the drivers, for instance, it was reported that about 1 per cent used amphetamine regularly and about 8 per cent used occasionally (National Statistical Office 1991). Use of amphetamine has been reported to be one of the leading causes of road accidents in Thailand now.

Drinking and smoking

Needless to say, alcohol and tobacco consumption is the most common behavior among all substance abuses. And men dominate the use of these substances. Recent survey by the National Statistical Office (1991) revealed that 31.4 per cent of Thai population aged 14 years and above were reported as drinkers. More than 4 in 5 of these drinkers were men (85 per cent). Definition of "drinkers" was not given in the survey, but it is understood that the term refers to current drinker of various types -- regular and occasional, for example. With regard to smoking, the latest survey by National Statistical Office (1993) reported that 23 per cent of the population aged 11 years and above were current smokers -- regular and occasional. Among all smokers, 86 per cent were men.

In our study (Table 7.1), 70 per cent of males in rural areas and 80 per cent in urban areas reported that they ever drank while about one half of females in urban and nearly two-fifths of those in rural areas ever did so. Note that more youth (both males and females) in urban areas ever tried drinking than youth in rural areas. However, when current and frequent drinkers (defined in terms of drinking 2-3 times per week or more in the past month) are considered, males drinkers in the rural areas are proportionally larger.

These young drinkers began their drinking behavior quite early. By the time they reached the age of 15 about half of male drinkers had already had their first try. In the national survey, about 47 percent of the drinkers were reported to begin

their first drink between age 15 and 19 and only 3 per cent started drinking before they were 15 years old (NSO 1991).

Smokers are slightly different from drinkers (see Table 7.1). Comparing to drinking, a smaller number of young people have tried cigarette smoking, 61 per cent for males in the urban areas and 59 per cent for those in the rural areas. A smaller proportion of females also tried smoking, less than one-fifth in urban areas and only about 6 per cent in rural areas. Note that the proportions of current male smokers in both residential areas are more than two times greater than those of current drinkers, 58 per cent for the urban and 67 per cent for the rural youth. (Current smokers include those who smoked *regularly* or *occasionally* in the past month prior to the survey.) Rural male youth are more active than their urban counterpart in smoking. Like drinkers, smokers began their first try early, by age 15 about half of male smokers had already had their first puff.

According to the report by the National Statistical Office (1993) 16.5 per cent of the male population aged 15-19 were regular smokers comparing to 47.4 per cent among those aged 20-24 years. The report notes that this is a decline from 23.4 and 54.3 per cent of the males in the two age groups respectively reported in the earlier survey of 1991. Indeed, the decline of the entire smoking population aged 11 and over has been noted by NSO. Between 1991 and 1993 the proportion of smoking population dropped from 26.3 per cent to 22.8 per cent. The largest proportion of declines was among youth aged under 20 years. This positive sign was believed to be resulting from the mass campaign against cigarette smoking in recent years.

If the person smokes he/she is more likely to drink, but if se/she drinks chances are less for him/her to smoke. Information in Table 7.2 shows that male youth who reported as current *smokers and drinkers* account for 28.2 per cent in the sample. However, *drinkers only* account for 24 per cent while *smokers only* are 9 per cent of all males. This means that far more smokers drink than drinkers smoke. (Note that smokers in Table 7.2 are those who smoked 2-3 times per week or more; drinkers are those who drank at least one time per week or more in the past month prior to the survey.)

To identify who these young smokers and drinkers are we present data in Tables 7.3. Here only male *frequent* smokers and drinkers -- those who smoke or drink 2-3 times per week or more -- are considered with regard to certain characteristics, namely age, residence, schooling status, number of close friends, peer group, amount of earning per month and co-residence with parents. Data for

females are *not* given for discussion in the Table, since the number of cases in each cell is very small (below 25).

When drinkers and smokers are compared against the same characteristics, a fairly similar pattern for both emerges. But, first let us note that *male* youth of *all* characteristics do involve in drinking and smoking, although in different proportions. The only *small* difference we want to point out here has to do with certain characteristics. The data in Table 7.3 suggest that youth with the following characteristics are *more likely* to involve in drinking and smoking than others: *Males* of older age, of rural origin, not currently in school, have more close friends and peer groups, earning more money per month, and male who are living in one-parent family. Note that the difference in proportions drinking and smoking is particularly greater in the following characteristics than in others: age, residence, schooling status, and income.

First sexual experience

Sexuality of youth, and of adult males in general, has been the subject of increasing interest in recent years. Because of demographic, social and health significance of the issue, a number of studies have been carried out in Thailand focusing mainly on the behavior of the sub-groups within the population considered to be at health risk or potentially at risk. (For some recent studies, see Deemar Corporation 1990; Sittitrai et al 1991; Nopkesorn et al 1991; VanLandingham et al 1993; Limanonda et al 1993; Soonthorndhada 1994; Podhisita et al 1994; Morris et al 1995.) The following presentation focuses on just one aspect of youth sexuality, namely the first sexual experience. Data on sexual behavior were collected in the self-administered part of the questionnaire.

Table 7.4 shows that males and females differ in their reported first sexual experiences. Residential difference is also observed, and in certain aspects this is worth noting. First, we are informed by this Table that nearly half of both urban and rural males reported ever had sex, while 37.5 per cent of rural and 28.9 of urban females did so. Note that this includes marital and non-marital sex.

For those who ever had sexual experience, their first intercourse began quite early. On average urban males began their first sex *before* they reached age 17, rural males soon *after* they turned 17, and females around the age of 18. If drinking and sex often go together among adolescents as it has been commonly believed, it seems that for the males as soon as they have tasted their first drinks (median age = 16, see Table 7.1) most of them are ready to explore sex. Some

males, however, are even earlier in their sexual experience than others, starting their first sex at age 15 or younger. Among these *early* youth, urban males account for 28.1 per cent and rural males 22.6 per cent. For females, however, sex at or before age 15 is found only in a very small number of cases.

Sex before marriage is very common among males. Indeed, our findings indicate that just about everyone, who ever had sex, had it the first time while they were still single. There is hardly any difference between male youth in urban and rural areas in this respect. Among females, the proportion having first sex before marriage is also substantial, with the urban females being far more active than the rural females. In fact, the proportions of female youth with pre-marital sex reported here are probably the highest ever. Nearly one in every two urban females who ever had sex reported that they had it the first time when they were still unmarried. Young females in the rural areas seem to be slightly more conservative, just less than one-fifths of them reported pre-marital sex.

First sex and especially the one before marriage is largely unprotected. This implies that most first sex acts are either at risk of unwanted pregnancy or of disease transmission, if one or both partners are disease carrier. First and unprotected sex is found in various high proportions ranging from about 56 per cent among rural males to about three quarters among urban females. The high proportions among females in both urban and rural areas are probably due to the fact that many of them had first sex within marriage. When the first sex takes place *before* marriage, the proportions unprotected among females are lower. But for males the first pre-marital sex is largely unprotected.

To understand more about youth who had pre-marital sex we present the findings in Table 7.5. Only males and females with pre-marital sexual experience are included and classified by selected characteristics. It is worth noting that the distributions of males and females across all characteristics are very similar, although with different proportions. Perhaps, this suggests that youth who involve in pre-marital sex tend to share similar characteristics. But since the difference between sub-groups within most characteristics is not very substantial, perhaps it is safer to just say that these characteristics are not good predictors of pre-marital sex of the youth. On the basis of the findings given here, one can only say that male and female youth who are *more* likely to engage in pre-marital sex are of younger age, live in urban areas, currently in school, have many close friends and peer groups, and do not consider female virginity and self-restraint as important values to them.

Of particular interest with regard to pre-marital sex are the greater proportion of males in the younger age-group than the older one and the greater proportion of the in-school than the out-of-school. Normally, one would rather expect the reverse. A reasonable explanation of this remains to be found. We speculate that this might have much to do with relative freedom that the in-school youth enjoy and the greater exposure of them to more friends of the opposite sex in school. It will be recalled (see Chapter Four, Table 4.2) that all the in-school youth are in secondary level or higher and most of them are of younger age. This being the case, it implies that the in-school and younger youth are more keen than the older ones as far as pre-marital sex is concerned. Friends and peer groups also seem to play an important influence on pre-marital sex as indicated in the Table. While youth in both the groups have pre-marital sex, it is those with many close friends and peer groups who are more likely to have it.

The two issues discussed above have an important implication for the family and other concerned institutions.

The first sexual partners of youth in the sample are presented in Table 7.6. If anything is of particular interest in this Table, it is the fact that relatively small proportions of males have commercial sex workers as their first partners, only about 14 per among urban youth and 22 per cent in the case of rural youth. This finding -- that commercial sex workers constitute the first partners of only a small proportion of males -- seems to be in contrast with the popular belief that most Thai young men have their *first sex* with prostitutes. Maybe such a popular belief no longer holds for the youth today. Indeed, that is what our findings seem to suggest. Non-commercial partners of various kinds, including spouse, constitute the first partners of most males in our sample.

Assuming that there is a shift in this aspect of sexuality of today's youth, what could be an explanation? In absence of empirical data, we can only speculate that a few social processes are probably working behind this. Let us discuss this subject briefly here.

First, we have but little doubt that today's youth sexuality is influenced by the *mass campaign* against HIV/AIDS which has been the subject of national concerns in recent years. A number of youth must have been aware of risk in having sex with the prostitutes and, therefore, avoid it. Their alternative is to find non-commercial partners, either their boy/girl friends or partners with less, or even no, intimate relation of any type. This point applies more directly to male than to female youth, of course.

Second, as women in Thai society are more and more liberated in many aspects, there seem to be shifts toward *western life style* characterized by higher degree of individualism in various personal behaviors. The western life style becomes more common in the sexual attitude and behavior as well.

And finally, social and economic transformation currently taking place has brought to young people more *independence and freedom*. This includes independence and freedom to move and to meet more freely with potential partners of their choice, often without knowledge and approval of their elders. Moreover, opportunities and places favorable for young people to meet are more plentiful nowadays than ever before, and it has been so in both urban and rural settings. These are mainly places for entertainment of various kinds where youth can more easily be led to involve in sex.

We believe that these key processes are important for understanding sexual behavior of the youth today.

First sex and first courting (in this case, implies having boy or girl friend for the first time) do not necessarily go together even when the first partner is a non-commercial sex worker. On the other hand, when the first sex takes place while still courting it does not necessarily imply that the partner is non-commercial one. This information is indicated in Table 7.7.

Given the fact that we are here dealing with the first sex of youth, all categories in Table 7.7 are interesting in themselves. However, some concerned individuals may find of particular interest those youth who had first sex *before* first courting and with *non-commercial* partners. Who were partners of these youth? Several observations are possible here but we want to point out just one. First sex before first courting (i.e. before having the first boy/girl friend) and with non-commercial partner could mean that the two parties involved come in contact purely for sexual pleasure rather than for other long-term relationship. Otherwise, one of the two could be involuntary. Such *fun-loving* youngsters are not unusual, though. Perhaps, many of those who had first sex before first courting with non-commercial partners in our findings belong to this fun-loving group.

Finally, we want to point out on the basis of findings in Table 7.8 that youth who reported having sexual experience tend to also have most of their friends with sexual experience. This is found in both males and females of both urban and rural areas. The finding seems to imply that friends and peers are generally people of similar characteristics. It also implies the influence of friends

and peers on youth's behavior. Another point, also worth noting, is that about one-third or slightly more of the youth in both residential areas reported that they had at least some friends with sexual experience. This indirectly implies relative prevalence of sexual experience among youth today.

Substance abuse and sex among young people will probably remain the issues of concern to the family and social institutions. As society undergoes changes in many aspects, family control over its young members becomes weakening while the role of non-family institutions -- such as school, temple, and other non-governmental organizations -- in guiding the youth behavior has not been strong enough. Under this circumstance short-term as well as long-term measures to strengthen the family institution are most desirable.

Table 7.1
Selected forms of substance abuse, by sex and urban-rural residence

Substance abuse	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Drinking				
Of all the cases, % ever drank	80.3	49.5	70.2	39.2
<i>N</i>	482	580	503	515
<i>Among ever drinkers:</i>				
% first try at age 15 or younger	49.9	37.6	51.6	33.6
% drinking 2-3 times / week or more	20.4	4.9*	23.9	--
Median age at first try	16.0	17.0	15.0	16.0
Number	387	287	353	241
Cigarette smoking				
Of all the cases, % ever smoked	60.0	17.9	59.2	5.5
<i>N</i>	482	580	503	615
<i>Among ever smokers:</i>				
% first try at age 15 or younger	52.7	40.4	49.0	41.2*
% smoked 2-3 times / week or more	57.7	15.4*	67.3	--
Median age at first try	15.0	16.0	16.0	16.5
Number	292	104	298	34
Marijuana use				
Of all the cases, % ever used	19.9	3.6*	20.3	--
<i>N</i>	482	580	503	615
<i>Among ever users:</i>				
% first try at age 15 or younger	33.3	--	18.6*	--
% using 2-3 times / week or more	--	--	--	0.0
Median age at first try	17.0	16.0	17.0	16.0
Number	96	21	102	3
Heroin use				
Of all the cases, % ever used	2.5*	--	--	0.0
<i>N</i>	482	580	503	615
Addict to pain reliever				
Of all the cases, % ever used	--	--	--	--
<i>N</i>	482	580	503	615
Glue sniffing				
Of all the cases, % ever used	7.5	2.1*	7.6	--
<i>N</i>	482	580	503	615

(Continue next page)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Substance abuse	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>Among ever users: (glue sniffers)</i>				
% first try at age 15 or younger	47.2*	--	--	--
% using 2-3 times / week or more	0.0	--	0.0	0.0
Median age at first try	16.0	16.0	17.0	15.0
Number	36	12	38	1
Taking amphetamine				
Of all the cases, % ever used	11.4	--	10.5	--
N	482	580	503	615
<i>Among ever takers:</i>				
% first try at age 15 or younger	23.6*	--	--	--
% using 2-3 times / week or more	--	--	--	0.0
Median age at first try	18.0	17.0	19.0	19.0
Number	55	6	53	9

Note * Number of cases is greater than 10 but smaller than 25.

-- Number of cases is 10 or smaller.

Statistics on ever-users of "heroin" and "marijuana" is not shown in the Table due to very small number of cases.

Table 7.2
Current drinkers and smokers, by sex

	Male	Female
Neither drinking nor smoking	38.8	81.3
Drinking only	23.9	17.2
Smoking only	9.1	0.3
Drinking and smoking	28.2	1.3
Total;	100.0	100.0
Number	985	1195

Note: Current drinkers include all who drink at least once a week in the past one month before the survey. Current smokers include all who smoke 2-3 times per week or more in the past one month before the survey.

Table 7.3
Frequent drinkers and smokers, by selected characteristics

	Drinkers		Smokers	
	<i>% freq. drinkers</i>	<i>Number. of ever drank</i>	<i>% freq. smokers</i>	<i>Number of ever smoked</i>
Age				
15-19	17.2	443	54.8	314
20-24	29.4	296	71.5	274
Residence				
Urban	20.4	387	57.7	291
Rural	23.9	352	67.3	297
Schooling status				
In school	16.9	308	43.0	200
Out of school	25.8	431	72.7	288
Number of close friends				
Few close friends	20.3	316	61.7	248
many close friends	23.4	423	63.2	340
Peer group				
yes	22.1	629	62.8	486
No	21.8*	110	61.8	202
Earning per month				
2,000 baht or less	21.5	214	63.9	183
More than 2,00 baht	25.9	212	70.7	191
Co-residence with parents				
With both parents	22.2	427	59.3	322
With one parent only	23.7	105	71.6	88
With no parents	20.8	207	64.0	178

Note: * Number of cases is greater than 10 but smaller than 25

Table 7.4
Sexual experience of youth, by sex and urban-rural residence

Sexual experience	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Of all the cases,				
% ever had sexual intercourse	45.7	28.9	45.2	37.5
Number of eligible cases	479	574	500	611
Median age at first sex	16.7	18.2	17.2	18.2
Of all who ever had sex,				
% had first sex at age 15 or younger	28.1	4.3*	22.6	2.3*
Number of eligible cases**	217	161	221	227
% had first sex before marriage	93.6	47.0	90.1	17.2
Number of eligible cases**	219	164	222	227
% had first sex unprotected	67.6	76.7	56.4	72.7
Number of eligible cases**	219	163	225	227
% had first sex before marriage and unprotected	63.0	35.0	49.8	13.2
Number of eligible cases**	219	163	223	227

Note: * Number of cases is greater than 10 but smaller than 25.

** Total number of cases for these categories are not the same due to different number of missing cases.

Table 7.5
Distribution of male and female youth who had premarital sex,
by selected characteristics

	Male		Female	
	<i>% had premarital sex</i>	<i>Number ever had sex</i>	<i>% had premarital sex</i>	<i>Number ever had sex</i>
Age				
15-19	97.3	188	30.9	136
20-24	87.7	253	29.0	255
Residence				
Urban	93.6	219	47.0	164
Rural	90.1	222	17.2	277
Schooling status				
In school	97.8	134	69.2*	26
Out of school	89.3	307	26.8	365
Number of close friends				
Few close friends	89.2	195	27.4	266
many close friends	93.9	246	34.4	125
Peer group				
yes	94.5	366	34.0	153
No	78.7	75	26.9	238
Attitude toward female virginity				
Female virginity is important	90.5	241	28.5	239
Female virginity is not important	93.5	200	31.6	152
Attitude toward self-restraint				
Self-restraint is important	91.7	336	28.8	292
Self-restraint is not important	92.4	105	32.3	99

Note: * Number of cases is greater than 10 but smaller than 25.

Table 7.6
Types of first sexual partners of youth in the sample,
by sex and urban-rural residence

Type of first sexual partner	Urban		Rural	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Boy / girl friend, fiancée	55.3	44.2	47.3	23.0
Friend, acquaintance	26.9	2.4	22.8	1.3
Spouse	4.1	52.1	7.6	75.7
Commercial sex worker	13.7	0.6	22.3	--
Partner of the same sex	--	0.6	--	--
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>224</i>	<i>226</i>

Table 7.7
Timing of first sex, first courting and type of first sexual partner of youth
who ever had sex, by urban-rural residence

	Urban	Rural
First sex before first courting with commercial partner	5.9	7.1
First sex before first courting with non-commercial partner	21.9	19.6
First sex same year or after courting with commercial partner	7.8	15.2
First sex same year or after first courting with non-commercial partner	64.4	58.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>224</i>

Table 7.8
Prevalence of sex among youth based on information provided by the respondents
about their friends, by sex and urban-rural residence

	Urban		rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<i>Respondent (youth) with sex experience</i>				
Yes, most of them had sex	43.4	29.7	39.6	21.0
Yes, some of them had sex	32.9	41.8	34.2	36.2
No, none had sex	10.5	12.1	12.0	17.0
Don't know	13.2	16.4	14.2	25.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>229</i>
<i>Respondent (youth) with no sex experience</i>				
Yes, most of them had sex	24.3	8.6	18.1	7.1
Yes, some of them had sex	35.9	42.3	34.7	35.6
No, none had sex	25.9	31.7	36.2	37.7
Don't know	13.9	17.4	11.1	19.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Number</i>	<i>259</i>	<i>407</i>	<i>271</i>	<i>379</i>

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters we presented the findings on selected aspects of the youth from our study. In this chapter we recapitulate the points which we believe to have some policy implications and discuss them particularly in that light.

The focus of this report is male and female youth aged 15-24 years, selected to represent as a national sample. In most aspects included here, youth are basically considered as part of their families rather than separated from them. But the discussions in many points often go beyond the family context. This is necessary simply because a number of aspects in the youth's life are found outside the family. With this in mind, we can now look at the key points that emerge from the findings presented in the previous chapters.

The findings on living arrangement of youth in the sample (Chapter 3) present some interesting points. The data indicate that substantial proportions of youth are living in single-parent families. In the rural sample the proportion living in families with only one parent reaches 15 per cent, greater than that of the urban sample. Although this does not tell us directly about the prevalence of single-parent families in Thai society, it gives us an idea that a fairly large number of young people grew up in *incomplete* families where only one parent is present. This being the case, it brings to attention the relative stability of marriage in the recent time. Perhaps, marital relations today is less stable than it is often assumed.

Close relationship with mother is predominant among the youth in our study. The proportion reported feeling especial close to mother is much greater than to father and other members of the family. This is quite consistent in terms of both emotional feeling and getting along with mother on a daily basis. We suggest that the *bias* in favor of mother is typical among Thai children and may be best understood in terms of child rearing practice in the Thai family. Because mother, and rarely father, takes a more active role in child care and child rearing, greater emotional attachment of children to mother is almost always true.

Another possible explanation of the finding in this regard has to do with the role of the mother in managing the household activities, and not just in child care. It has been a common practice among the Thai families that mother (wife), and rarely father, is the one who is in charge of the *household affair*, which includes, among other things, doing all the house work and taking care of all others in the

house. Perhaps, because of this role that the mother wins more closeness and love from children than father.

Even when increasing number of mothers work in the non-family sector as in the case of most urban families today, a large number of them are not free from their traditional responsibility for the household work. Mothers still take the larger part of child care and house work. Therefore, they remain the *center of the house* and still commands more love and emotional attachment of children.

Whatever the interpretation may be, the finding presented in this regard raises two points which have direct implications for the family. On the one hand, it points to a practical implication on the role of mother in socializing children's behavior and personality. Rather than considering this as the father's role (because father often has more power in the Thai family), mother can well take the advantage of her special intimacy with children to guide them into the desired path. On the other hand, the finding noted above also raises a valid question about the father's role in the family. Traditional role of father is that of the bread-winner. Important as it is, this role often keeps him from the kind of *closeness* to children that the mother has. Thus, despite his significant role, fathers in general remain at certain *distance* from their children.

To get an equal share of love and emotional attachment of their children, fathers should be encouraged to take more share in the child care and household tasks. Although this is highly desirable in the present circumstance where socio-economic changes call for equal participation of men and women in the household and non-household work, actual change toward that direction will certainly take time. Among other things, it implies changing gender attitude and role which requires long-term socialization within and beyond the family context.

Another point worth noting is the relatively higher proportion of urban youth who reported having relationship problems with other family members. It seems that relationships within the urban family is more vulnerable. If this is the case, what are the forces underlying it? In absence of empirical data, we suspect that the main forces behind this may lie in the urban way of life which is often characterized by high degree of individualism and competition.

We suggest that increase amount of time spent together among members of the family could be helpful in this respect. Indeed, most youth in our survey already indicated that if they had more time, they wanted to give it to other family members, rather than to themselves. How this could be possible remains to be

managed within individual families. Public programs which make urban transportation less time-consuming and those which provide more places and opportunities for the family members to spend time together (such as public parks) would also be very helpful in the long run.

On education (Chapter 4), we would like to draw an attention to the fact based on our findings that there is considerable educational gap between urban and rural youth and that between males and females. The urban-rural gap seems to be a direct outcome of socio-economic difference between urban and rural sectors. And this, in turn, has been the result of a strong emphasis on the urban sector in the previous national development plans. A short-term policy response to this problem require measures to provide more educational opportunities to the families of the lower social end economic stratum. (More schools of secondary level or higher in the rural areas, more educational loan for children of the needed families, for instance.) In the long run, the national social and economic development should consider rural sector as of high priority so that the gap between the two sectors is reduced.

The male-female differential in education, on the other hand, seems to be resulting from discriminating practice toward daughters within the family. Although this is by no means a strong bias comparing to some other societies in Asia, the effect on female's education, as demonstrated in our findings, does reflect more limited opportunity for daughter. It seems that where choice needs to be made between giving a son or a daughter higher education, the first priority in most cases often goes to the son. This is suggested by the finding in the present study which indicates that female's educational opportunity is more likely to be affected by the family circumstance than that of males. Thus, parents need to be informed of the importance of educational opportunity for daughters. At the policy level, the public measures to provide educational opportunities for children of low-income families suggested above should also be helpful in this case.

On social network outside the family, the importance of friends and peers is once again confirmed by our findings (Chapter 5). Naturally youth value friends and friendship quite highly. The influence of friends and peers on youth's attitude, behavior and world view is also quite significant. In many aspects it may even surpass that of other family members. Our findings on abuse of substances and sexual behavior show that youth who have more friends and peers are more likely to involve in drinking, smoking and pre-marital sex than others (see also Chapter 7). To some extent, this indicates how important the influence of friends and peers is on youth behavior.

The findings presented in Chapter 5 also indicates that substantial proportion of youth learned some important things such as courting, dating and sexual practices from friends and peers rather than from other sources. Indeed, it seems to be a tradition for Thai youth, males especially, to learn this kind of behavior from friends. The only problem this might cause is when friends and peers do not have the right knowledge.

Courting and dating (in the Thai context this means the same as ‘having boy/girl friend’) starts early among most youth. On average the onset of courting and dating falls around the age of 15-16. Since courting could lead to sexual relation, early courting, therefore, puts youth at risk of early and pre-marital sex. Onset of sex at early age can be a source of risks for unwanted pregnancy and health problems.

To prevent youth from these behaviors (courting, dating, sex) would be unwise, if not impossible, in the present-day world. A more sensible policy would be to strengthen the family and non-family institutions that would function as important sources of information and advice for those who need it in order to take care of themselves. Another alternative would be to provide sex education through schools and/or family. And finally, since medias play important role in the youth life style and behavior, constructive programs aiming at educating youth in this particular aspect would also be very helpful and desirable. Regardless of what kinds of programs that are made available, they should be culturally sensitive while keeping up with trends in the youth’s behavior.

The findings on health status and behavior (Chapter 6) present some points that are worth noting here. The difference in physical and mental health status of males and female youth is observed, although it is not to a considerable extent. Being female generally seems to be worse off, physically and mentally. Greater proportion of females show more indicators of health problems. They also reported more conditions indicating mental disturbances.

To the extent that this finding reflect the actual health status of youth in our study, the observed difference is difficult to account for with the data available to us now. We submit that if this is not due to differential health awareness and health perception of males and females, then the issue may be understood in terms of gender norms which impinges upon health status of females.

A young female in Thai society is expected to be different from a male in many aspects of her behavior. She is supposed to be less out-going, less expressive

(especially with regard to sex), more self-controlled and self-restraint, responsible for house work, caring for others in the family, and so forth. In short, a young female is supposed to behave within the framework set by cultural norms much more than a young male is. Perhaps, because of these cultural norms females are under more pressure than males. The pressure can be more under the situation where many aspects of society have been changed rapidly while the cultural norms surrounding gender roles and expectations remain relatively unchanged.

It is difficult to figure out effective policy responses to this issue. Although it is possible -- theoretically, at least -- to alter the gender norms, it will be less practical but more time-consuming to do so. What seems to be more practical is to first recognize the fact that females tend to be in a poorer health status than males, especially mental health. With such recognition, more attention (including efforts and resources) should be provided to women's health.

On the issue of mental well being our findings also reveal that urban youth seems to be in a poorer status than rural youth. More youth in urban area experienced the conditions indicating the mental disturbance than those in the rural areas. This is probably the only area where urban living is of more disadvantages. The urban environment and the urban way of life may be the main factors underlying this.

The findings show a large proportion of youth and their families who are not under any health care programs. This implies, among other things, that these youth and members of their families will face difficulties in absorbing the health care costs, should a major illness happens. In respond to this, the public program such as the Health Card Program should expand to cover all rural households. Programs in the private sector should also be encouraged and supported.

Our findings with regard to knowledge of the methods to prevent STD/HIV infection among the youth indicate some important gap that needs to be filled. Although the majority show that they know how the disease could be prevented, many do not seem to understand the safe methods for this. This group of youth needs special attention since they may turn out to be the vital group for transmission of the disease. The IE&C (information, education and communication) programs should thus stress not only what works, but also what do not, in preventing the infection.

On abuse of substances (Chapter 7), our data show that males dominate the abuse of all kinds. Although there is evidence of abuse of many substances, the

most common are consumption of alcoholic beverage and cigarette smoking. It is important to note that a large number of the ever-users began using the substances at an early age; half of male drinkers and smokers had their first try when they were 15 years old or younger. The early use may be due in part to lack of control of children's access to alcoholic beverage and cigarettes. To reduce the rate of early use it is important to enforce the law regarding children's access to these substances. Equally important is the example within the family. If parents or adults in the family do not drink or smoke, children tend to follow.

As for smoking, evidence from the recent national survey (NSO 1993) indicated that there was a reduction in the proportion smoking among younger generations. Obviously, this is an outcome of intensive campaigns in the recent years. It is, therefore, important to continue the campaign to further reduce the number of smokers.

The finding on first sexual experience of youth reveal some interesting points which may have policy implications. Needless to say, males are far more active than females with regard to sex. Here we just want to point out the fact that a fairly large proportion of males began first sex quite early, i.e. at age 15 or younger. First sex for males (who ever had it) is almost always before marriage, while nearly half of females in cities reported this. Another point of interest is the fact that a relatively small proportion of males had commercial sex workers as their first partners (23 per cent for rural males and about 14 per cent for urban males). Overall, the findings seem to suggest that the sexual tendency of young people today is toward early and premarital sex with non-commercial partner.

It will be more desirable if any public programs can be implemented to encourage youth to delay their first sex. But there is no guarantee that such programs will work under current trend of the youth's world. For this reason sex education is important. How this can be effectively provided, and who -- family or educational institutions -- should take the implementing role, is the question beyond the scope of this report.

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