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# Educational Stratification in Thailand: Gender and Residency Effects

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**Educational Stratification in Thailand: Gender and  
Residency Effects**

**by**

**Krittiya Kantachote**

**A Thesis Presented to the Graduate and Research  
Committee**

**of Lehigh University**

**in**

**Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts in Sociology**

**Department of Sociology & Anthropology**

**Lehigh University**

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Thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master of Arts in Sociology.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Although Thailand's education through secondary school is compulsory, nonetheless, educational inequality persists. Due to the inequality of the education system, people with less education have fewer chances of finding good careers and limited upward social mobility. Research on the educational inequality in Thailand will allow us to understand the causes of the inequality of the education system in Thailand. In this study, I am using both qualitative and quantitative data to analyze educational inequality. For the qualitative analysis, I conducted 30 in-depth interviews of Thai people of various backgrounds in both Thailand and in the United States. For the quantitative analysis, I used three waves of statistical data from the Child and Youth Survey. This includes data from 1992, 1997, and 2002: my research focuses on the subsample of people age 12 to 24. My analyses show that regional and gender inequality in educational access persists.

## INTRODUCTION

Before the establishment of a uniform national education system at the beginning of the 20th century, local Buddhist temples were the educational centers but this education was only available to males (Curran, S. et al., 2002).

In 1921, the Compulsory Education Act required that every child, boys and girls, from seven to fourteen, attend schools. Throughout 1921 to 1960, there have been many changes that increased the number of years of compulsory education; however, the level of schooling was not strictly enforced. From 1960 to 1978, four years of primary education was required and in 1978, six years of primary schooling was made compulsory (Curran, S. et al., 2002). During the 1980s, Thai government focused on expanding primary education and secondary education. Primary education was nearly universal regardless of income, regional location, and gender. However, enrollment in secondary education lagged. Eventually, beginning in 2002, nine years of schooling was made compulsory: six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education.

Currently, nearly all Thai adolescents are literate. Youths have a higher average literacy rate than the general adult population (World Health Organization, 2007). There has been a consistent gradual rise in the average number of years of educational attainment for Thai population age 15 and above. The Thai population age 15 to 21 has an average of nearly ten years of education suggesting that most children have completed at least lower secondary education (The World Bank, 2006).

Among older people in Thailand, approximately one-third (31.2%) have never gone to school (Bunnag, S. & Jitapunkul, S., 1999). Compared to Thai women over 60 years old, Thai men over 60 years old had greater opportunities for formal education. This

trend is accentuated in rural areas where older people had less chance for formal education than those in urban areas.

Thai government's first national Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) sought to achieve universal lower secondary education by 2006 and universal upper secondary education by 2015. The Thai Government committed itself to provide 12 years of free education in 1997 and 15 years of free education in 2009. Child labor laws, which prohibit employing children under the age 15 (Department of Labor Protection and Welfare, 1998), were an additional means to encourage educational enrollment.

The Thai government's efforts to expand access at the secondary level have produced dramatic growth in secondary enrollment. Compared to other countries in the region, Thailand began with much lower student attendance levels; nonetheless, Thailand steadily and impressively increased its gross enrollment rates (GER) between 2001 and 2007. In lower secondary (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades) enrollments went from 76% to 100%; in upper secondary (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades), it increased from 58% to 65%; and in higher education, from 39% to 50% (Gray, R. S. et al., 2011).

Currently, equity in access to secondary education has improved regardless of gender and across all regions in Thailand, in both urban and rural areas, and across all socioeconomic groups. The gap has grown smaller between urban and rural areas. There is, however, an increased difference between education for boys and girls with more girls going on to secondary and tertiary schools than boys. Household income remains a barrier to secondary schooling because of non-tuition expenses for library fees, exam levies, meals, and transportation. This is an obstacle for many poor families. Although these differences have narrowed over time, they have remained quite substantial.

For this study, I use both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative analysis, I used three waves of statistical data from the Child and Youth Survey. This includes data from 1992, 1997, and 2002. My research question on educational attainment is based on the subsample of people age 12 to 24. The research explored the extent to which educational inequality based on gender and residency (urban/rural) still exists in Thailand. For the qualitative analysis, I conducted in-depth interviews with a small sample (n=30) of Thai people of various backgrounds, differing in gender, age, residency, occupation, in both Thailand and in the United States. Using both types of analysis, I am able to see a broad overview as well as the individual's perspective on the advantages and disadvantages of Thailand's education system. My study reveals that education inequality still exists based on gender and where one lives. This study contributes to the existing literature on educational stratification in Thailand as well as providing information for educational policies and planning within Thailand.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Thai Educational System**

#### **Educational System Development**

In Sukhothai Siam (1249–1438), Buddhist monasteries functioned as the academies and universities. Children were permitted to run around the house until they are five or six years old. Boys were then sent to the monks to learn to read and write. When they could read and write properly, they began to learn various trades. The cleverest of them, on account of the greater talent they displayed, continued to pursue their studies until they were qualified to fill public positions and offices. Many intelligent and talented pupils on the other hand, remained in the monasteries, to become abbots

of temples and schools, or monks. However, few remained in school beyond puberty as most left to join their families in the fields (Wyatt, D., 1969). Male children were able to enter and leave school at any time as the studies was informal. There were no fixed classes or grades, but many short steps through which each boy passed at his own speed. This was the characteristic of the elementary education (Wyatt, D., 1969). While many sources claim that male children were able to benefit from educational opportunities, nonetheless, it is difficult to judge whether it is equally available throughout the kingdom (Wyatt, D., 1969).

Within each segment of society, especially the government service and the monkhood, mobility often was quite striking; but only rarely did a farmer's son become a high government official (Wyatt, D., 1969).

Until the seventeenth century, Western visitors were relatively rare, the Dutch, English, and French competed for trade and power in Thailand. During this period, French missionaries established a school at Ayudhya. A new textbook, the Chindamani (Gems of Thought), was written by Phra Horathibodi, King Narai's Court Astrologer, for teaching Thai and perhaps, for instruction or for the information of the foreign diplomats (Wyatt, D., 1969).

King Mongkut (April, 1851 – October, 1868) learned English and some western science through his contacts with Protestant and Catholic Christian missionaries. King Mongkut hired Mrs. Leonowens for the instruction of his sons. This marked the first step toward formal secular education. Mongkut's successor, King Chulalongkorn (October, 1868 – October, 1910), who had extensive English instruction in his youth, decided to establish modern-style schools in Thailand. In July 1878, the government

agreed to provide 9,600 baht<sup>1</sup> annually for the expenses of the school. The old Nantha-Uthayan Palace (Suan Anand) was renovated for the school. The school was a combination of boarding and day school, taught classes in both English and Siamese. Monks were the administrators while the king provided financial support. The education was free. Gathering pupils into formal class, using standardized textbooks, following a curriculum, and preparing for a common examination was standardized. This made possible further educational development (Wyatt, D., 1969).

Before the establishment of a uniform national education system at the beginning of the 20th century, local Buddhist temples were the educational centers but this education was only available to males. After 1909, primary schools were taken away from the Sangha, Buddhist community (Baron-Gutty, A. & Chupradit, S., 2009).

In 1921, under the reign of King Rama VI (October, 1910 –November, 1925), the Compulsory Education Act required that every child, boys and girls, from seven to fourteen, attend schools. Schools used the centrally designed curriculum and Central Thai language as a teaching medium (Baron-Gutty, A. & Chupradit, S., 2009).

In 1932 when Thailand became a constitutional monarchy, educating the whole population became a priority of the government. Since then there have been many changes that increased the number of years of compulsory education. From 1960 to 1978, four years of primary education was required and in 1978, six years of primary schooling was made compulsory (Curran, S. et al., 2002). Since 2002, nine years of schooling was made compulsory: six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1904, the wage rates for unskilled labor in Bangkok was .50 baht per day (Ouyyanont, P., 1999).

In addition to politics, other factors are linked to the success of the gross enrollment rates. Individuals' levels of educational attainment tend to rise due to changes in state policies, community contexts, and family dynamics (Buchmann, C., & Hannum, E., 2001).

### **Thailand Education Curriculum**

The 1978 Primary Education Curriculum (Revised in 1990), focused on 5 skills: 1. basic skills; 2. life experiences and character development; 3. habit-forming activities; 4. work-oriented experiences; and 5. special experience. The basic skills consisted of Thai language and mathematics. Life experiences and character development include habits, Buddhist morality, art, physical education, music and dance. Habit-forming activities include boy/girl scouts, girl guides and young Red Cross volunteers. Work-oriented experiences include housework, agricultural work and other selected work. Finally, special experience, dealt with activities based on the learners' interests. The 1978 Lower Secondary Education Curriculum (Revised in 1990), set the core subjects as Thai; science; mathematics; social sciences; physical health; and art studies. Elective subjects are available; however, the variety of courses offered depends on each individual school, most schools have only limited courses to choose from. The 1978 Upper Secondary Education Curriculum (Revised in 1990) has the similar pattern to that of the 1978 Lower Secondary Education Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000).

### **Urban-Rural/ Regional Differences in Thailand Education System**

More than 30% of the rural population in Thailand lives in poverty and income inequality is growing. Poverty is especially evident in Northeast Thailand where

people are disadvantaged economically and educationally compared to the rest of the country, especially in late 1980s (Curran, S. et al., 2002).

While historical rural–urban differences in educational inequality continue to exist since the 1990s, the difference has narrowed (Piotrowski, M. & Paat, Y., 2012). Equity in access to secondary education has improved across all regions. In the 1980s, there was concern over lagging enrollment rates of the most impoverished regions in Thailand, particularly the Northeast and the North; however, both regions are catching up with others (The World Bank, 2006). In 1990 the average years of education for those 15 years and older was highest in the central region with 5.8, in the northeast it was 5.2, in the northern region it was 4.9, and in the southern region, 5.7. In 2000, average years of education for those 15 and older were 7.1 in the central region, 6.3 in the northeast, 6.1 in the northern region, and 6.9 in the southern region. Overall the average years of education has risen, nonetheless the gap between the central region and other regions remains (Archavanitkul, K. et al., 2005).

Bangkok, followed by the central and southern regions, has the highest participation rate in education. The Northeast, with its high concentration of low-income families has the least access to secondary and higher education. The period from 2001 to 2005 showed some increase in the participation rates for higher education, nevertheless, regional inequalities persist (The World Bank, 2010). Here the sources differ in the World Bank reports, leading to different conclusions of which region have the lowest education participation rate.

Among first year secondary students, farmers' children are underrepresented by a factor of approximately three, while children of government officials and white-collar workers are overrepresented by a factor of about five (Fry, G. W., 1983). Even though the Northeast region of Thailand has 33% of the nation's population, only 7% of



Thailand's university students come from this region (Fry, G. W., 1983). This is because the admission to Thailand's major universities is based on a highly competitive joint entrance examination. This favors students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds who have access to better quality secondary schools (Fry, G. W., 1983). There are substantial inequalities in access to higher education by household income, which is why almost 50% of students from the highest income quintile participate in higher education, while less than 5% of students in the lowest quintile are enrolled (Gray, R. S. et al., 2011).

The quality of the primary schools also differs from one region to another. A national assessment of primary school achievement shows significant disparities among Thailand's major regions, children in Bangkok score on the average twice as high as children from the poorer, remote northeast (Fry, G. W., 1983). In early 2000, the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Public Organization) found that many schools did not pass the evaluation; the student's average score from the Ordinary National Educational Test in mathematics, Thai language, English language, social science and science in many education levels is less than 50 percent (Trirat, N., 2009). In order to reverse the declining standards of academic institutions, administration and management, as well as teacher training need to be improved (UNICEF, 2011).

### **Thai Government Roles in Thailand Education System**

In 1997, Thailand sought to improve the education system through the School Based Management (SBM). SBM stressed educational decentralization and the transfer of planning, decision-making, and/or administrative authority from the central government to local administrative units or nongovernmental organizations. Thailand

launched SBM reforms in hopes of reversing the decline in educational quality that was a result of poor coordination and an overly hierarchical bureaucratic administration (Shoraku, A., 2008).

In 2003, the Ministry of Education legally incorporated every public primary and secondary school to accelerate the reforms. This made public schools responsible for financing, receiving funds from outside, from their communities, NGOs and private companies. Primary and secondary schools in Thailand are no longer under the direct control of the government as the school is entirely responsible for improving the teaching and learning environment (Shoraku, A., 2008).

Nevertheless, the reforms have not been as successful as hoped. Teachers, principals, community members, and local governments lack the knowledge and experience to develop the curricula. The new school budgeting system also produces results counter to educational equality. Some local governments, Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket, for instance, have substantial resources to devote to their schools. Schools in other provinces with little revenue, especially in the Northeast will be financially troubled (Shoraku, A., 2008).

The Southern Provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat have an additional problem because of the level of violence with more than 10,000 incidents since 2004 (Southwatch.org., 2012). Many lives are lost, schools burnt, teachers killed, and these can cause permanent psychological damage. Most importantly, many students became orphans (Southwatch.org., 2012).

The current government, led by Yingluck Shinawatra (August, 2011 – current), has worked to develop the education system in Thailand. The government provides free education, which includes free tuition, textbooks, learning materials, school uniforms

and activities to improve student quality (Ministry of Education, 2012). There are a number of government funded scholarships such as: “One Amphur (district) One Scholarship” that provides scholarships for students to study abroad; “Income Contingency Loans,” that allows the students to pay back their loans once they are employed. There is also an “ASEAN Leaders Scholarship,” as well as others (Ministry of Education, 2012). The government promotes vocational education through “Fix-it Centers” which allows vocational students to utilize their skills and provide low cost maintenance for every community (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Acknowledging the inability of Thai students to communicate in English, Shinawatra’s government has included improving English language skills in their policy. By 2015, 80% of all Thai students should be able to communicate in English in order to thrive in the ASEAN community (Ministry of Education, 2012). As part of this, the government has projects to increase the quality of teachers and provide better language instruction. The government has tried to advance the professionalization of teachers’ through increasing their salary and other remunerations, organizing intensive education and training systems, and decreasing expenses (Ministry of Education, 2012). The government hopes that they will be able to attract competent people to the academic fields.

### **Bribery in Thailand Education System**

Because income depends on educational level, many parents resort to bribery so their children will be admitted to good schools. In 2001, those with university degree would earn approximately 18,000-19,000 baht per month, with a vocational degree 10,000-11,000 baht per month, a higher secondary diploma 7,000-8,000 baht per month, a lower secondary diploma 6,000 baht per month and a primary level 5,000 baht per month (SCB Economic Intelligence Center, 2011).

Bribery or *Pajea* is now part of Thai society, especially when dealing with bureaucrats. At the beginning of a new semester, there is always petition on school admission and the education minister always announces that they will get rid of bribery and yet it continues. The Ministry of Education often argues that bribery is an issue for individual schools; and not the Ministry of Education's problem (Trirat, N., 2009)

Bribery is connected to the school's educational quality. Parents believe that the educational quality at primary level and secondary level will affect which university their children will attend. Consequently, they try as hard as they can to get their children into good schools. Because of this, it opens the opportunity for school's administrations to reap the benefits by asking for money whether it is for the school development or for the personal use of such person in authority. If it is a primary to secondary school (12 years), the contribution can reach seven digits. If it is secondary school only (6 years), it will be six digits. The cost is fewer at school of lower quality, in the five digits range (Trirat, N., 2009). Bribery makes education an expensive commodity, one that one must have to succeed.

### **Gender and Education**

Thailand is a low fertility country that is influenced by Theravada Buddhism and there is no gender preference for boys (Wongboonsin, K., & Ruffolo, V., 1995). Rather parents desire at least one child of each sex (Kamnuansilpa, P. et al., 1982; Knodel, J. et al, 1988). Nonetheless, when it comes to making decisions about which child to send to school, boys are chosen over girls (Piotrowski, M. & Paat, Y., 2012). In 1970, 1980 and 1990, the illiteracy was higher among women than men. One possible explanation was that if a daughter received higher education, it was perceived to interfere with their duty to care for elderly parents in later life (Curran, S.

et al., 2002). The traditional family structure and labor market opportunities also contributed to the gender gap since it was expected that sons would become household heads and men have better access to civil service (Lawler, J., 1996).

The longstanding gender gap in educational attainment favoring boys over girls has narrowed. Thailand has made progress in promoting the rights and capacity of girls and other excluded children to learn (Bernard, A., 2005).

Parental educational investment decisions are now largely shaped by the perception that a child will succeed, irrespective of the child's gender (Piotrowski, M. & Paat, Y., 2012). This is indicated by the narrowing of the literacy gap between women and men since 1970: in 1970, 25.2% of women were illiterate compared to only 11.1% of men; in 1980, 13.9% of women are illiterate comparing to only 6.9% of men; and in 1990, 8.7% of women are illiterate compared to 5.2% of men. By 1990 illiteracy rates were less than 10% for both men and women, although the percentage remains higher for women than men (Archavanitkul, K. et al., 2005).

Equity in access to secondary education has improved for both genders (The World Bank, 2006; The World Bank, 2008). The educational gender gap that exists in many developing countries is no longer apparent in Thailand (The World Bank, 2008).

Beginning in 1992, Thailand, like other middle and high-income countries, experienced a reversal in the education gender gap as more female than male students enrolled in higher education (Gray, R. S. et al., 2011; The World Bank, 2010). Between 1990 and 2000, more girls than boys entered upper secondary school. In 1990, consistent with the notion of the closing gender gap, the odds of girls and boys continuing to the tenth grade were approximately the same. However, by 2000, girls were more than twice as likely as boys to continue in school in all regions in Thailand

(Archavanitkul, K. et al., 2005). On average, the gender gap favoring girls has grown significantly larger; girls outperform boys in secondary school participation and completion at the tertiary level (The World Bank, 2006; The World Bank, 2008). There is no clear understanding of the causes for this phenomenon and practically no policy discussion as to how to remedy this situation (The World Bank, 2006). Lower male students' participation in higher education is a consequence of lower enrollment rates of men at the secondary level, higher secondary school dropout rates, and greater participation in the labor market (The World Bank, 2010). This trend may be explained by women's increased participation in economic and political activities in Thailand (The World Bank, 2008). This may also be attributed to fewer opportunities in the agriculture sector so women more than men pushed to remain in school. Although employment opportunities increased between 1990 and 2000, unemployed women were more likely to pursue additional schooling rather than remain unemployed (Archavanitkul, K. et al., 2005).

### **Age and Education**

Currently, nearly all Thai adolescents are literate. Youths have a higher average literacy rate than the general adult population (World Health Organization, 2007). In my sample, all participants less than 30 years old have at least bachelor's degree as their highest education level. Three participants, who are all above 45 years old, have less than bachelor's degree; nonetheless, there are some exceptions as some participants who are older than 30 also have higher education.

There has been a consistent gradual rise in the average number of years of educational attainment for Thai population aged 15 and above. Thai population aged 15 to 21 have an average of nearly to 10 years education suggesting that most children have completed at least lower secondary education (The World Bank, 2006).

Older people in Thailand, approximately one-third (31.2%) have never gone to school (Bunnag, S. & Jitapunkul, S., 1999). More recently it was found that Thai men over 60 years old had a greater opportunity for formal education; with 71 percent of men and 48 percent of women over 60 respectively have finished grade 4 or higher (Older Population and Health System, Retrieved May 7, 2012). This trend is accentuated in rural areas where older people had less chance for formal education than those in urban areas. In my small sample, one participant is 76 and finished 4<sup>th</sup> grade accordingly. However, two participants, age 60 and 63, have bachelor's degree as their highest education level. Interestingly, both are of Bangkok residents, whereas the former is from a rural area in the Northeast. The claim that there is disparity between rural and urban areas seems to be true as older people in rural areas had less chance for formal education than older people in urban areas.

In addition, there are indications that although illiteracy level among elderly declined dramatically from 56 percent in 1980 to 25 percent in 2000, older people are significantly less educated than the general population. Gender disparity exists among older people; the proportion of older women who are illiterate is twice that of older men (Older Population and Health System, Retrieved May 7, 2012).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Education**

Educational stratification is much more complicated than one can imagine. Many theorists have contributed to the discussion of how the idea of formal education came to being and the function of such education. Emile Durkheim, for instance, sees education as a social creation, in which a society assured its continuity by socializing the young in its own image (Boocock, S., 1972). An educational system has its unity

and consistency and reflects a society's moral and intellectual values. Sarane S. Boocock argues that to understand the schools of any society, one must understand the society itself. This includes understanding the structure and interrelations of institutions and the values and techniques of rearing children (Boocock, S., 1972).

Structural-functional theory perceives society as a system of norms. In each society there exist functional differentiation, this differential evaluation results in unequal rewards; the most important positions are filled with the most qualified persons. The job skill requirements in industrial societies increased due to technological change leading to lower demand for less skilled jobs. Hence, those with formal education, which are often equipped with training, either specific skills or general skills, are considered more suitable for the highly skilled jobs. Because of the increase in educational requirements for employment, larger proportions of the population are required to spend longer periods in school (Neelsen, J., 1975).

Every society must distribute its members into various jobs within the division of labor and encourage them to perform their work proficiently. Hence, if all positions were equally important and required equal skills, it would make little difference as to which jobs are performed by whom, but that is not reality. Because of this, society offers rewards as incentives to acquire the skill needed to perform important jobs (Anderson, C., 1974).

Functionalists argue that the occupational structure is necessary for skilled labor as it is mandate for educational institutions to test, sort and allocate individuals according to ability and achievement into occupations (Johnson, O., 2008). Hence, functional theory places great emphasis on school outputs contribution to the occupational



structure and less on the social inputs, such as environmental resources and/or school-based systems of student differentiation (Johnson, O., 2008).

Conflict theory, which Karl Marx is the major proponent, viewed social conflict as the main driving force in society and that the distribution of power and authority which is structurally unequal. It always benefits some at the expense of others and the constraint forms the social inequality. Education is implicitly considered as an institution of the power elite. Contrary to the structural-functional approach, conflict theory does not allocate any particular role to education; nonetheless, inferences can be drawn from the relation between education, stratification and mobility. The educational system functions of class relations, is seen not as means of utilizing talent more effectively or of widening opportunities but rather as an agency of social control. Cultural reproduction, it is maintained, is necessary to social structural reproduction. Dominant classes therefore use their power in order to ensure that schools operate in an essentially conservative way (Goldthorpe, J., 2000).

Analyzing class affects on one's education then need to take into consideration goals that are conditioned by the resources allocations, opportunities and constraints that the class structure entails (Goldthorpe, J., 1996). Educational careers comprise of transitional series, children of less advantaged class origins have remained more likely to leave the educational system than children of more advantaged origins (Goldthorpe, J., 1996).

According to Jonathan Black, a director of careers at Oxford University, employers continue to recruit at all leading universities as long-term transferable skills of students of such institution are recognized (Black, J., 2011). Consider the employment

relations, service class members<sup>2</sup> are on average advantaged over working class members, in term of current incomes, incremental salaries, career prospects, chances of maintaining employment continuity and greater security in sickness or old age (Goldthorpe, J., 1996).

Despite considerable expansion in secondary and higher education, the social composition of the students' body is nonetheless exclusive and selective. Class succession occurs as the lower strata gained greater representation once the demands of the middle and upper strata had nearly reached the saturation point. Moreover, education as a major social institution of secondary socialization will mirror the ruling groups' norms. In addition, the incompatibility between subculture and dominant norms and values, will lessen the chances of people in the lower strata for social mobility. Lower strata members depend on their educational strength as a mean to social mobility. Nonetheless, according to the "institutional differentiation," while the lower strata improve their educational institutions at the post-primary level, the upper strata have already turned to higher educational institutions and better schools' quality at the same level (Neelsen, J., 1975).

Social inequality is that people are born into privileged or underprivileged family. While it is possible that the person can move upward or downward, where we end up is largely set from birth (Anderson, C., 1974).

The understanding of schooling that is functional yet Neo-Marxist relies heavily on the socializing influence of social class on children through families and schools' functions. In Capitalist societies employees are socialized to be dedicated to labor as

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<sup>2</sup> Service class members refer to workers of professional, administrative and managerial positions.

to guarantee profit and the maintenance of the stratified class structure to the benefits of the elite. Workers, through child rearing practices and education, unconsciously socialized youth to meet the demands of the occupational structure (Johnson O., 2008).

Liberal theory on the other hand perceives educational opportunity as widening and would result in weakening the influence of class on individual life-chances and that there will be reduction in class differentials in educational attainment (Goldthorpe, J., 1996). As education becomes the key to economic success, there is a tendency that children of all class backgrounds will continue in education as far as their abilities will take them (Goldthorpe, J., 1996).

### **Education: A Predictor of Mobility**

Martin Piotrowski and Yok-Fong Paat see educational attainment as a major predictor of upward mobility and economic development throughout the world (Piotrowski, M. & Paat, Y., 2012). Governments worldwide are making substantial efforts to expand public education since they believe that education eradicates poverty, improves a country's general welfare and betters the lives of citizens. Education facilitates upward social mobility, and it also has an implication on the maintenance of one's favored class position. Lack of education, will bring on downward social mobility or stability in a disadvantaged class position (Rogoff, N., 1968). Many other theorists hold similar views regarding education and social mobility. Burton R. Clark, for instance, states that individuals with some years in college are able to move upward in status or maintain high status and that college education is a prerequisite for better positions in business (Clark, B., 1968). Another example is David Victor Glass's study in Britain and Richard Centers' study in the United States. These two studies

share a same pattern that within lower status groups, a child with superior education is more likely to be socially mobile (Banks, O., 1968). Howard Steven Friedman too makes clear that education makes a difference in the United States context. Adults who grew up in low-income families but earned college degrees, only 16 percent remained in the lowest income quintile. Adults who started in the lowest income quintile and did not earn a college degree, 46 percent remained there (Friedman, H., 2012). People in higher status groups, superior education lessen their downward possibility (Banks, O., 1968).

John P. Neelsen points out that while education is a prerequisite for social mobility, education is merely a means for social mobility and not the end of the whole process. The democratization of access to education does not essentially signify egalitarian trends, as equal educational opportunity does not automatically mean equal opportunity in job allocations. In addition, institutional differences, on the other hand, may be more crucial in segregating social groups and strata than education level reached (Neelsen, J., 1975).

Bourdieu's argument that educational institutions are committed to the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge that reflects "high culture" or the society's greatest cultural products then is one explanation. Youths born into economically advantaged families receive the instruments needed to appropriate the knowledge transmitted in schools through rearing while youths that lack capital regrettably depend on schools to cultivate these dispositions; nonetheless, only culture but not the instruments for its appropriation can be transmitted. One's cultural capital then is primary responsible for social mobility (Bourdieu, P., 1977). Charles H. Anderson also points out, a person's economic powers can define one's ability to

exercise power over others, and hence, a person's economic standing is the foundation of his life as it determines his life's chances (Anderson, C., 1974).

A study published by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (Major, L., 2012) found that the expansion of higher education over the last four decades has reduced social mobility rather than increased it as children from wealthy families have disproportionately larger share of higher education places (Sparrow, A., 2012).

### **Macro-Structural Forces Shaping Educational Stratification**

The nation-state through its educational policies may shape educational opportunities and the educational system structure, for example, school quality improvement, compulsory schooling laws or emphasis on educational benefits (Buchmann, C. & Hannum, E., 2001).

In the absence of strong states, non-state actors such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can help develop and expand the educational system. International institutions, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank, for instance, propagate gender equity in education (Buchmann, C. & Hannum, E., 2001). Dependency theory argues that structural inequalities in the global economy and the developing countries' dependency on multinational corporations and international organizations constrained the educational opportunities in developing countries. Indebted governments are pressured by the IMF and donor agencies to privatize and decentralize their educational systems that may lead to greater inequities and decline educational participation (Buchmann, C. & Hannum, E., 2001).

### **Socioeconomics Effect on Students' Success in Education and Career**

Sarane S. Boocock argues that the family into which a child is born is one major determinant of his/her success in school (Boocock, S., 1972). Studies find strong

relationships between family SES and students' school performance. The higher the SES of the student's family, the higher the academic achievement of the student (Boocock, S., 1972).

Socioeconomic status, race or ethnic group, and religion directly and indirectly affect academic success (Boocock, S., 1972).

While there is a complex relationship between social status and success in school, direct economic effects cannot be overlooked. Not only do lower-income children lack money to pay for school supplies, they are also prevented from participating in extracurricular activities. This may raise absentee rates or keep students out of school (Boocock, S., 1972). High-achieving students tend to come from families that hold high expectations and are likely to set standards at an earlier age (Boocock, S., 1972).

While this popular explanation of more advantaged classes' culture may significantly explain class differentials in educational attainment, they do not explain why the cultural effects should have maintained the differentiating force over generations, especially in social transformations context of advanced industrialism and major educational expansion and reform (Goldthorpe, J., 1996).

John Neelsen claims that school remains secondary to the family as a socializing and allocating agency. Different motivation, values and use of language disadvantage the lower strata in academically oriented institutions. Specific mechanisms of sub-cultural diversity are functioning at every stage of education, independent of academic ability. Class background rather than teachers have a greater impact on students' educational and occupational aspirations and college education attainment (Neelsen, J., 1975).

Parents' education levels and occupation play a significant role in determining their children's educational attainment. Children whose parents are better educated are

more likely to be in school and less inclined to drop out. This is supported by the Coleman Report in the United States (Coleman, J. et al, 1966) and the Plowden Report in the Great Britain which concluded that family background was more significant than school factors in determining children's educational achievement (Buchmann, C., & Hannum, E., 2001).

In the United States, higher-income parents make enormous efforts to ensure their children's academic success. Children of poor parents on the other hand, begin the “college education game” later and with fewer resources (Haveman, R. & Smeeding, T., 2006). The gap between low-income students' population share and their enrollment in universities is due to low-test scores and other ability indicators that are indirectly correlated to family income (Haveman, R. & Smeeding, T., 2006). In Thailand, according to Ides Nicaise and others, parents can be unaware of the benefits of education; in rural areas, where the major source of income is agriculture, parents may have difficulty imagining lives of their children that are different from their own and thus may undervalue the benefits of education (Nicaise, I. et al., 2000).

William M. Cave and Mark A. Chesler further elaborate that in the United States race and social class segregate the entire educational system. A town or a city will have a school that is largely black or largely white, or largely lower class or poor and largely middle class or affluent (Cave, W., & Chesler, M., 1974).

In the United States and England, children of parents with tertiary education are approximately four times more likely to be in the top half of test scores than children whose parents do not have tertiary education. Canada and Australia is also approximately twice as likely (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2012).

Cristina Iannelli and Lindsay Paterson's study on education and social mobility in Scotland since the middle of the 20th century demonstrates that education can partially explain the relationship between parent and individual social class as there is a strong direct effect of parental class on individuals' achieved class that education did not mediate. Yet, among upper-secondary or tertiary qualifications people, parental social class was less influential in determining their entry to higher social class positions than less educated people (Iannelli, C. & Paterson, L., 2005).

The class sub-culture besides influencing one's educational aspirations and actual school success, also results in a "delayed effect," that is, parental class positions have influence on child's occupational achievement (Neelsen, J., 1975). Nonetheless, Iannelli et al. study (Iannelli, C. & Paterson, L., 2005) demonstrates that the expansion of education and professional jobs open opportunities for those of working class backgrounds to occupy top-level occupations, yet there still exists the gap between social classes in the chances of entering top-level occupations (Iannelli, C. & Paterson, L., 2005).

In developing countries, parents that are salaried employees, especially in non-manual occupations, are more aware of the importance of education, therefore are more willing to invest in their children's schooling (Piotrowski, M. & Paat, Y., 2012).

In Thailand, SES also plays an important role. Almost 50% of students from the highest income quintile participate in higher education, while less than 5% of students in the lowest quintile are enrolled (Gray, R. et al., 2011; The World Bank, 2010).

Nonetheless, according to Talcott Parsons, parents' occupational ambitions for their children are associated with the educational achievement pressure towards the children, leading to anomic strain (Parsons, T., 1968).



Allison Davis points out that class cultures have influenced lower-class children having less and middle-class children having more adaptability in working and conforming to behavioral standards of school (Becker, H., 1968). Low income produces inadequacies in socialization; this too have implications for educational achievement. In lower-class families, parents need to concentrate on economic survivals, this limits their attention allocated for activity which stimulate children's intellectual growth or educational plan (Cloward, R., 1974).

This does not means that students from poor families are less likely to move up the social ladder since strongly motivated students social background does not seem to hold them back (Boocock, S., 1972).

Educational reform in the nineteenth and twentieth century that focused on extending educational opportunities to wider sections of community; these reforms included free schooling, scholarship and grants for needy students. Nonetheless, many children still could not take advantage of the opportunities provided for them (Banks, O., 1968). Education is not really free, while attending public school does not requires direct payments, but there are other costs while the child is in school, such as clothing and food. This problem became acute when children reach the age where they can legally leave school and get a job. Staying in school means expenses to the parents and loss of earning power by the youngster (Bell, R., & Stub, H., 1968).

Richard A. Cloward reminds us that educational achievement is not just a matter of favorable attitudes, as opportunities must be available to those that seek them. Lower class people are aware of their limited opportunities to educational facilities and the goal of advanced education seems remote. In a family that can barely afford food, housing, clothing, young are pressured to leave school early to find job and help the

family (Cloward, R., 1974). In poor families, a common survival strategy is the allocation of children to productive activities in the home or the labor market, however, more research is needed to determine whether child labor interferes with schooling (Buchmann, C., & Hannum, E., 2001). Many studies found damaging effects of child household labor on schooling, for example, in Botswana (Chernichovsky, D., 1985), Malawi (Lockheed et al., 1989), Colombia, Bolivia and the Philippines (Grootaert, C. & Patrinos, H., 1999).

In Thailand, some students stop going to school due to the inconvenience of traveling from home to school, especially during the rainy season, the cost and the amount of time it takes to commute. Some despite going to school will skip from time to time due to shortage of money. Furthermore, some children do not go to school because there are no educational facilities within a reasonable distance (Nicaise, I. et al., 2000).

### **Siblings Affect on Students' Success in Education**

Apart from the family's socioeconomic status, the number of siblings can affect the children's educational outcomes. Martin Piotrowski and Yok-Fong Paat show both positive and negative consequences with large families. The negative side is that limited resources have to be shared among many children; this is the resource dilution hypothesis. Children with many siblings have to compete for parental expenditures for education; this lowers their educational prospects (Piotrowski, M. & Paat, Y., 2012). Douglas B. Downey also confirms that children with few siblings have more access to parental resources than children with many siblings, independent of background controls (Downey, D., 1995). Apart from material resources, parental attention is also diluted with additional children in the household (Buchmann, C., & Hannum, E., 2001). In places where education is not free, children with more siblings would likely

receive less schooling (Williams, L. et al., 1997). The resource dilution effect is supported with evidence from various settings, Ghana (Lloyd, C. & Gage-Brandon, A., 1994), Malaysia (Pong, S., 1997), Vietnam (Anh, T. et al., 1998), Japan (Kaneda, T., 1998), United States (Powell, B. & Steelman, L., 1993) including Thailand (Knodel, J. & Wongsith, M., 1991; Buchmann, C., & Hannum, E., 2001). Nonetheless, Curran, S. et al. stress that the negative effect of number of siblings upon education attainment differs and that family size tends to have a more pronounced effect upon girls than boys (Curran, S. et al., 2002). Interestingly, according to Douglas B. Downey's study in the United States that used the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study of eighth graders, he found that sibship size has a more negative effect on education years attained than other educational performance measures (Downey, D., 1995).

A positive view is the resource concentration/ resource-pooling hypothesis, which posits that a large family can pool their resources which increases investment in children's education. For example, older migrating siblings can provide financial support to younger siblings. Martin Piotrowski and Yok-Fong Paat's study in rural Thailand show that early-born siblings may receive notably less education than later born siblings, especially if they have to quit school to help support their younger siblings (Piotrowski, M. & Paat, Y., 2012). Judith Blake whose study is focused on American society expresses a contrary view, claiming that youngsters from large families have disproportionate school dropout rates as older children from large families have already been selected for intellectual ability (Blake, J., 1989). Hence, in examining educational outcomes, it is important to consider relative birth order.

In poor nations which lack legally enforced compulsory education, parents are the vital decision makers about whether children attend school or not (Korinek, K. &

Punpuing, S., 2012). According to Lindy Williams et al parental educational strategies in rural Thailand often involve choices between sons and daughters and between older versus younger children. Their study indicates that the more children in a family, the lower the proportion who are sent to secondary school. Parents tend to send more sons than daughters and youngest than eldest children. Sometimes the decision is associated with economic factors such as: children's perceived earning potentials, anticipated opportunity costs and parents' poverty status. Nonetheless, access to schools and the safety of children, particularly girls, are critically important. These concerns are often weighed as heavily or more heavily than economic considerations (Williams, L. et al, 1997).

Heyneman and Loxley found that in developing countries in contrast to industrialized countries, school quality rather than family accounted for more variance in educational achievement. Heyneman and Loxley conclude that the poorer the country, the greater it is impact by schools and teacher quality on achievement (Heyneman, S. & Loxley, W., 1983; Buchmann, C. & Hannum, E., 2001).

### **Teachers and School Effects**

While many people would argue that each individual student's moral and intellectual resources determine the success or failure; nonetheless the quality of the schools and of the teachers may influence students' successes or failures.

Others argue that student's success or failure is greatly determined by the school or teacher, not the individual students themselves. If the school or the teacher fails to support children's moral and intellectual resources that lead to academic success, then this reflects the failure of the school or the teacher.

Gerald H. Moeller argues that teachers are urged to be professional, meaning that they have to be self-directed and autonomous in judgment; nonetheless, the policy structure of the school system and the superiors' idiosyncrasies' of leadership restrict teachers. In the case where teachers think that they cannot make an impact on their job environment, teachers may divert their energy to do other activities that are more important to them rather than teaching their students (Moeller, G., 1968).

While teaching is a profession but it lacks the major criteria of professional status. That is, teaching is well known for long hours and low pay, limited prestige in the eyes of the community, and this affects the retention of old teachers and recruitment of new teachers. There is some evidence that teachers are not the most intellectually competent and some become teachers because they are not able to go into other more demanding academic areas (Bell, R., & Stub, H., 1968).

Boocock argues that teachers are not rewarded for student's increased learning. Salary increments are given for years of service rather than evidence of student improvement. Teachers that experiment new teaching materials do so on their own time and rarely are they rewarded for successful results. Some can say the reward of greater interest or achievement among students can be a potent incentive for many teachers, nonetheless, school systems often do not provide any formal means of recognizing this activity. In fact, teachers, who have their own syllabus rather than the regular one, run risk of being reprimanded or losing their jobs (Boocock, S., 1972).

### **Obstacles to Student's Education**

While for some, the distance to school may not be an obstacle, nonetheless, many researches have shown that the time to commute to and from school may prevent children from going to school. Village accessibility to schools and school proximity

affect Thai children's school attendance. Both boys and girls access to secondary education is affected when a school is established in a sub-district. The distance from home to school limits educational opportunities, particularly the transition from primary to lower secondary school. This decreased accessibility of both young men and women to the district town significantly lowers the odds of going to secondary school (Curran, S. et al, 2002). Building schools and providing better transportation will decrease the distance from home to school and can reduce the time and opportunity costs of education (Tzannatos, Z, 2003).

While schools in Thailand are free, many Thai citizens report that free education is not really free. In interviews conducted in 2001, in Kanchanaburi, a province in Thailand, they found compulsory school policy is not enforced and that parents are still paying for school costs, including but not limited to, tuition, books and uniforms (Korinek, K. & Punpuing, S., 2012).

### **Decision to Leave School**

Since the revival of growth in the late 1980s, child labor has declined in Thailand (Tzannatos, Z., 2003). Nonetheless, in the 1990s, 1.6 million children below the age of 15 are still out of school, 1.2 million are children between 12 and 14 years. These children often face harsh conditions that endanger their physical and mental development, and cause them to miss the benefits of schooling (Tzannatos, Z, 2003).

Many factors lead students to leave school. According to Kim Korinek and Sureeporn Punpuing, in Thailand the decision to leave school has been attributed to a combination of individual, family, and community-level factors which considers the opportunity costs associated with school enrollment (Korinek, K. & Punpuing, S., 2012). Child labor can be called for any time to reduce the effects arising from

household income variability, parent's unstable employment, families harvest's failures, and no savings to draw upon or assets to borrow (Tzannatos, Z., 2003).

At young ages, 9-11 years old, most out-of-school children in Thailand are engaged primarily in housework alone or in combination with unpaid work. These activities could be easily combined with schooling, and do not imply that the key motivation is for additional incomes from paid work (The World Bank, 1996). Children between 12-14 years old that do not attend school are the relevant age group for the transition from primary to lower secondary school. Education is a direct cost to the household rather than the need for additional income from child labor (The World Bank, 1996). For older children, 15-19 years, the importance of working increases, while lack of financial support remains the main reason for non-attendance (The World Bank, 1996).

Child work and schooling decisions are significantly related to the head of household's education. It reflects the human capital transfer from parents to children, that is, the more educated parents are, the more willing they are to keep their children in school longer. There is a positive relationship between parental education and household incomes, they are more able to send their children to school rather than work (The World Bank, 1996).

The Thai government has attempted to expand vocational education to combat child labor and the marginalization of youth who drop out of school (UNESCO, 2010).

There is also vocational track known as PorWorChor and PorWorsor. PorWorChor is available to students who graduated lower secondary school and applied to attend vocational college. It requires three years of studies. PorWorSor is the academic program available to students graduating from PorWorChor or year 12 in the general

education stream. It requires a minimum of 2 years to get this diploma (Baron-Gutty, A. & Chupradit, S., 2009).

## **METHODS**

Most studies regarding education use quantitative research, however, in order to get the richness and truly understand the voice of the people being affected by the education policy, I used mixed-methods. Quantitative data allows me to analyze and understand the inequality at the macro level while using the interviews to understand the micro level. For the quantitative analysis, I used three waves of the Child and Youth Survey from the Thailand National Statistical Office for 1992, 1997 and 2002. This allows me to see trends over the 10 years period. For the qualitative analysis, thirty interviews were conducted of Thai people residing in four locations: in Thailand: Bangkok and the Northeast, and in the United States: Pennsylvania and North Carolina. The interviews explored what participants thought about education and how they view the government's policy on free education.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

#### **Data**

The National Statistical Office (NSO) initiated the Child and Youth Survey in 1974 follow the recommendation and collaboration with UNICEF, the Office of the National Economic, and Social Development Board. From 1974 to 1978, the survey was carried out annually. There is a gap from 1979 to 1987, when the survey was restarted; it was done every five years rather than annually. The survey collects information regarding children and youths in Thailand, including demographic data, formal and non-formal education, employment, leisure time use, skills, and social



participation. The survey that will be used in this research is *The Child and Youth Survey 1992, 1997 and 2002*. The focus will be on analyzing education enrollment of Thai citizen ages 12-24 in regard to residency (urban/rural) and gender. The research will address the extent to which school enrollment is effected by residency and gender. This survey contains data that may be used in designing policies and developing a long-term plan to improve the well-being of children and youth in Thailand.

### **Sample**

The survey was conducted from July to September of 1992, 1997 and 2002, with a sampling frame that includes all children and youths in every household around the country. A stratified two-stage sampling was adopted for this survey. Regions were the constituted strata. There were five strata: Bangkok; Central region excluding Bangkok; Northern; Northeastern; and Southern regions. Each stratum was divided into municipal areas, and non-municipal areas. In the municipal area blocks were the sampling units while in the non-municipal areas, villages were the sampling unit. The secondary sampling units were private households.

From this sample, I drew a subsample of those ages 12 through 24 from each wave. I have also removed all cases with missing data on relevant variables.

### **Measurements**

#### **Educational Enrollment**

As the coding of the education level variable of the Child and Youth Survey for all three waves has been modified and was not constant, it cannot be used. Instead, I utilize enrollment information and student age as a proxy for age-appropriate school enrollment at each educational level: junior high (12-14 years old); senior high (15-17

years old); and college (18-24 years old). As primary education is universal in Thailand, it is intentionally left out of the analysis.

### **Reason Not in School**

Reason not in school is a categorical variable explaining the reason the student do not attend school. Originally, in the Child and Youth Survey in 1992 and 1997 there were nine categories: too young; sickness, physical disability or mental handicap; lack of financial support; distance of school and problem in commuting; need to earn a livelihood; not interested or useless for study; could not be admitted; misconduct; and others. For 2002, most categories remain the same except there is no too young variable and instead of useless for study variable, it is replaced by knowledge received sufficient for work. However, as there are only a small number of cases in most categories, I recoded the responses into three categories for analysis: lack of financial support, need to earn a livelihood, and the rest as others.

### **Education Expenditure**

The education expenditure variable is generated from six different variables in the Child and Youth Survey, including school fees; book; material and equipment; school uniform; transportation to school; food taken outside the home; and other expenses related to education. Note that some of the variables, the measurement is by month; however, I have changed it to per year as to make it comparable. The expenses are in Thai baht.

## Demographic Variables

The central analytic variable is the respondent's residency and gender. *Residency* is coded 1 if the respondent is from urban areas; and is coded as 0 if of rural areas in Thailand. *Gender* is coded 1 for female and 0 for male.

## Data Analysis and Results

### Descriptive Analysis of the Child and Youth Survey 1992, 1997 and 2002

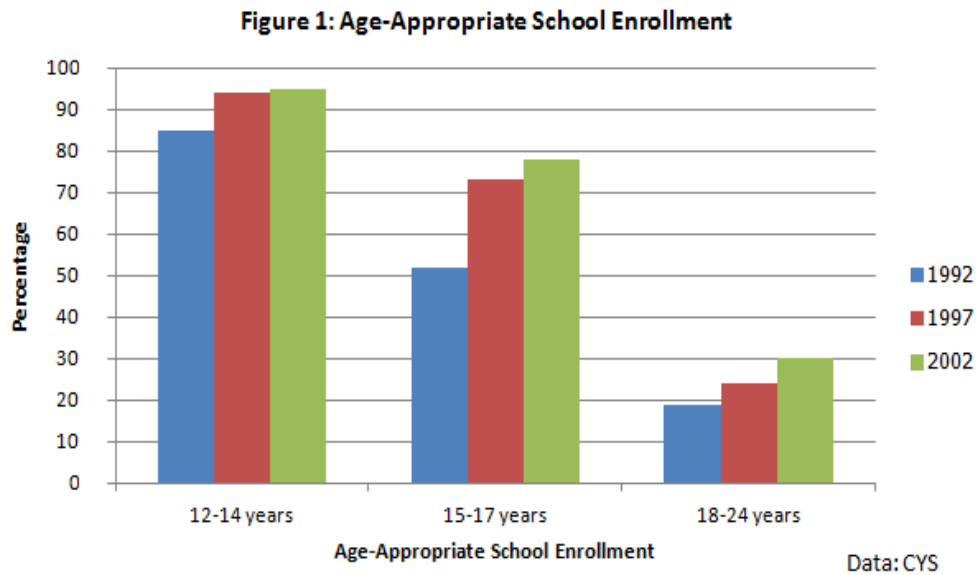
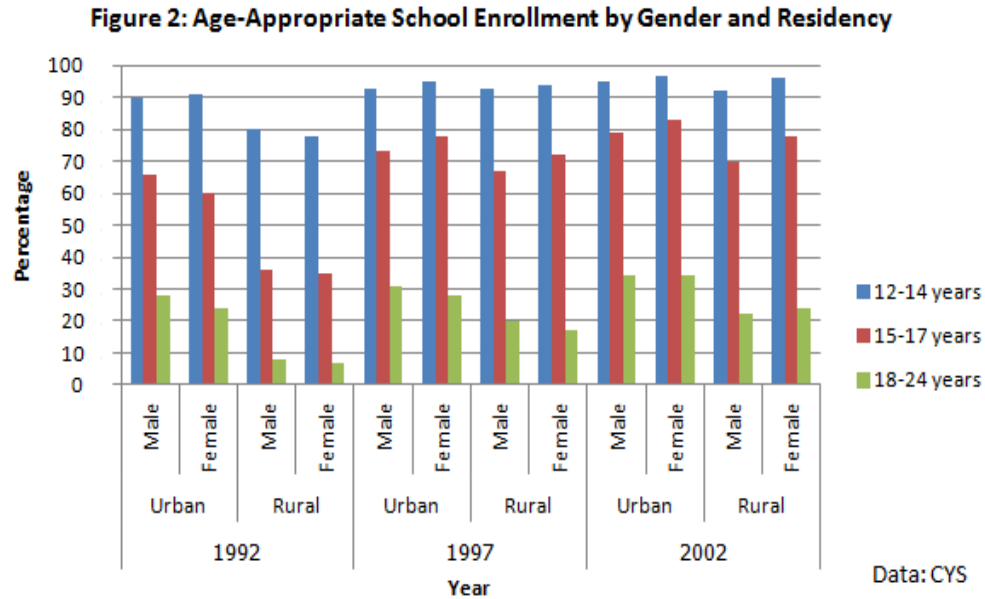


Figure 1 gives the general trends of age-appropriate school enrollment. From 1992 to 2002, all education levels succeeded in increasing the school enrollment. For junior high (12-14 years old) and senior high (15-17 years old), the increase in school enrollment from 1992 to 1997 is more prominent than that of 1997 to 2002. School enrollment at college level (18-24 years old) also increases through time, yet it is not as significant and the percentage of age-appropriate school enrollment at this level remains low. The results show clearly the expansion of school enrollment at all levels. Next, I am going to examine in detail whether there are any gender and residency differences over time in each age-appropriate enrollment.

The next figure (Figure 2) presents the percentage of age-appropriate school enrollment by gender and residency.



Over all, the age-appropriate junior high school enrollment is quite high. Still there is urban/rural difference in age-appropriate junior high enrollment (12-14 years old). In 1992, the enrollment in urban areas (91%) is about 12% higher than in rural areas and the difference is statistically significant. By 1997, the difference is no longer significant. In 2002, such difference became significant again, though there is only 2% urban/rural difference in school enrollment (See Appendix A, Table 1).

Figure 2 presents the percentage of age-appropriate junior high school enrollment by both gender and residency. In 1992, there is no significant gender difference in both urban and rural areas. In 1997, within the rural areas, there is no gender difference, however, in urban areas female enrollment (95%) is higher than male (93%). In 2002, there is gender difference in both urban and rural areas which favors female.

Age-appropriate senior high enrollment (15-17 years old) shows urban-rural differences in all years, 1992, 1997 and 2002. Those in urban areas enroll in school more than those in rural areas. School enrollment in 1992, 1997 and 2002 in urban areas is 63%, 76% and 81% accordingly, compared to 36%, 69% and 74% in rural areas (See Appendix A, Table 1).

Looking at Figure 2, in 1992, within the rural areas, there is no gender difference, however, in urban areas male enrollment (66%) is higher than female (60%). However, the gender difference reversed by 1997. In 1997 and 2002 in both urban and rural areas, female enrollment is higher than male. By 2002, urban female enjoys enrollment 4% higher than male, and rural female's enrollment is 8% higher than male.

Age-appropriate college enrollment (18-24 years old), shows urban-rural differences in all years, 1992, 1997 and 2002. Those in urban areas enroll in school more than those in rural areas. School enrollment in 1992, 1997 and 2002 in urban areas is 26%, 30% and 34% accordingly, compared to 7%, 18% and 23% in rural areas (See Appendix A, Table 1).

Looking at Figure 2, in 1992, within the rural areas, there is no gender difference, however, in urban areas male enrollment (28%) is higher than female (24%). In 1997, there is gender difference in both urban and rural areas which favors male. In 2002, within urban areas there is no gender difference, however, in rural areas female enrollment (24%) is higher than male (22%).

Even though the urban-rural differences in school enrollment at all levels narrow from 1992 to 2002, still it exists to the benefit of urban dwellers. Interestingly, gender differences reverse from 1997 onwards and to the benefit of females.

The next three figures (Figure 3,4, and 5) illustrate school non-enrollment due to lack of financial support and need to earn a living by gender and residency at each education level: junior high (12-14 years old); senior high (15-17 years old); and college (18-24 years old).

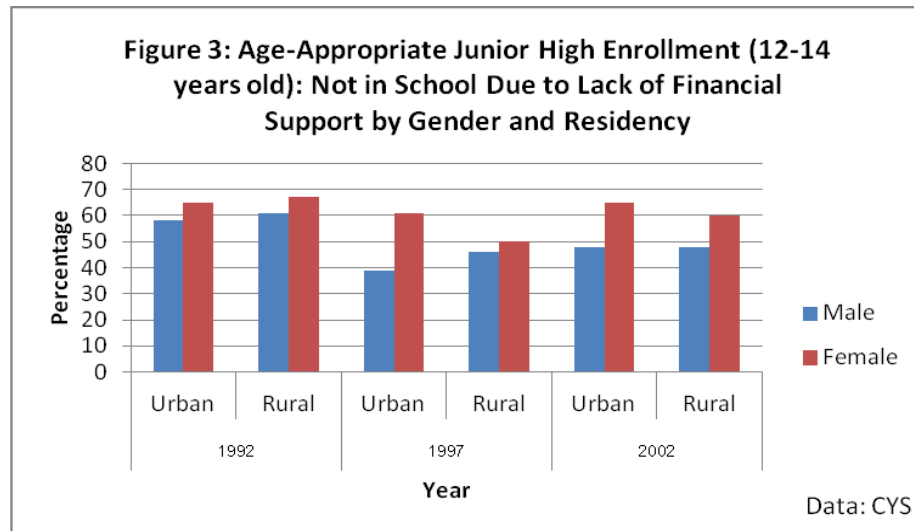


Figure 3 shows the descriptive statistics of school non-enrollment due to lack of financial support of age-appropriate junior high enrollment (12-14 years old) by region and gender. For this age group, I will focus only on school non-enrollment due to lack of financial support as at this age range, most students still depend on their family for financial support for their schooling. In addition, 12-14 years old is not a legal age for working, and only few cases reported need to earn a living as the reason for school non-enrollment, it is therefore intentionally left out of the analysis.

In 1992, in urban areas, there is no significant gender difference of the number of people not attending school due to lack of financial support; in rural areas however, there is a marginal difference. In 1997, the gender difference became more obvious in urban areas. In urban areas, among those who were not enrolled in school, many more females than males cited lack of financial support as their reason of dropping out. In rural areas on the other hand, there is no gender difference. By 2002, the gender

differences appeared in both urban and rural areas, with more female reported not attending school due to lack of financial support.

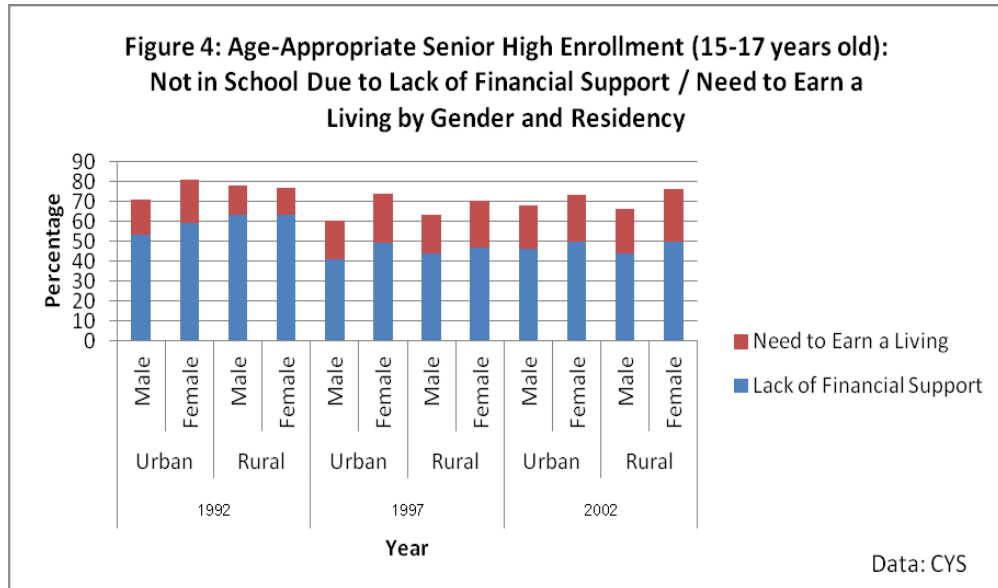


Figure 4 shows the descriptive statistics of school non-enrollment due to lack of financial support and need to earn a living of age-appropriate senior high enrollment (15-17 years old) by region and gender. At this age group, I look at two main reasons for school non-enrollment: lack of financial support and need to earn a living as more cases reported need to earn a living as the main reason for school non-enrollment.

School non-enrollment due to lack of financial support, in 1992 and 1997, there is a significant gender difference in only urban areas. In urban areas, among those who were not enrolled in school, many more females than males cited lack of financial support as their reason of dropping out. In 2002, the trend changes as there is significant gender difference of school non-enrollment due to lack of financial support which occurs only in rural areas with many more females than males cited lack of financial support as their reason of dropping out.

As for school non-enrollment due to need to earn a living, there is no significant gender difference for all year.

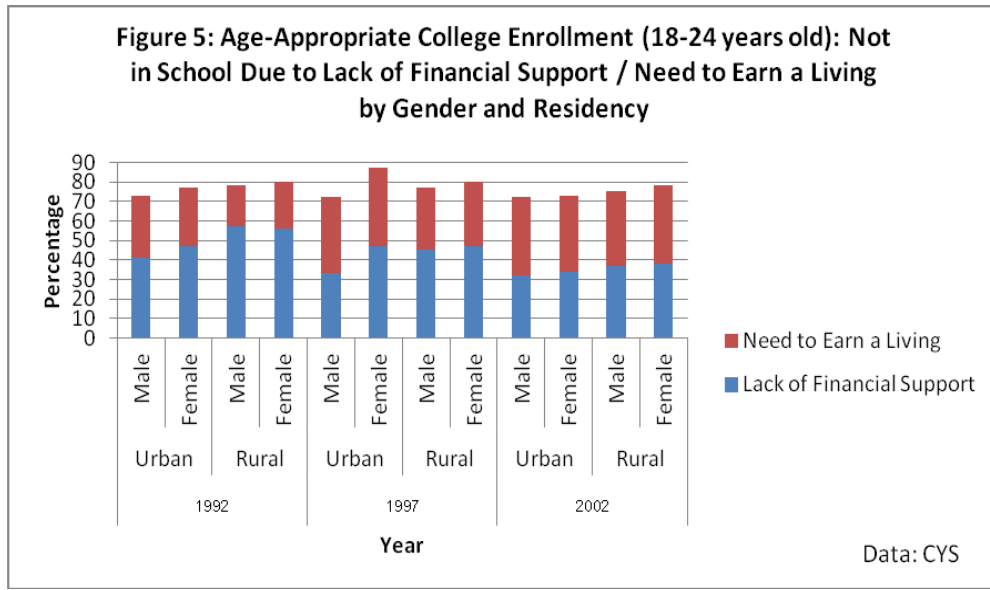


Figure 5 shows descriptive statistics of school non-enrollment due to lack of financial support and need to earn a living of age-appropriate college enrollment (18-24 years old) by region and gender.

School non-enrollment due to lack of financial support, for all 3 years, there is significant gender difference in only urban areas. In urban areas, among those who were not enrolled in school, many more females than males cited lack of financial support as their reason of dropping out.

As for school non-enrollment due to the need to earn a living, there is no significant gender difference for all years, except for 1992, in rural areas, more female than male reported “need to earn a living” as their reason to not being in school.



**Table 1: Education Expenditure by Gender and Residency (Baht/Year)**

	1992						1997						2002					
	Male			Female			Male			Female			Male			Female		
	Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural	
12-14 years	7,530 (7,747)	3,213*** (3,599)		7,434 (7,246)	3,359*** (3,938)		12,193 (12,320)	6,810*** (5,936)		12,065 (9,523)	7,007*** (6,499)		18,541 (17,100)	11,975*** (10,994)		19,102 (17,867)	12,368*** (11,387)	
N	1,519	1,173		1,541	1,110		951	1,047		996	1,035		2,866	2,485		3,042	2,469	
15-17 years	12,309 (9,409)	7,599*** (7,654)		12,534 (10,820)	8,235*** (5,647)		18,522 (11,750)	12,379*** (9,289)		17,448 (11,148)	12,347*** (8,136)		26,545 (22,264)	19,562*** (15,331)		25,840 (19,465)	19,589*** (15,331)	
N	937	386		936	352		713	579		780	621		2,045	1,403		2,234	1,541	
18-24 years	20,929 (15,268)	13,418*** (7,583)		20,459 (14,942)	14,334*** (15,910)		29,944 (20,846)	20,263*** (14,523)		31,296 (21,499)	21,366*** (14,971)		42,362 (33,218)	30,576*** (22,652)		43,120 (32,507)	33,551*** (26,749)	
N	828	161		886	152		592	267		662	253		1,727	753		1,901	797	
<b>Total N</b>	<b>3,284</b>	<b>1,720</b>		<b>3,363</b>	<b>1,614</b>		<b>2,256</b>	<b>1,893</b>		<b>2,438</b>	<b>1,909</b>		<b>6,638</b>	<b>4,641</b>		<b>7,177</b>	<b>4,807</b>	

Note: Significant t-test if difference by residency. \*\*\*p<.01

Note: Standard deviation in parenthesis

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for educational expenditure of the different age-appropriate school enrollment by gender and residency. In 1992, 1997 and 2002, there is a significant difference of the average amount of money spent on education for all age-appropriate school enrollments in both urban and rural areas for both male and female with a significant t-test (two-tailed) of 0.0000. The average educational expenditure for both genders is higher in urban areas than rural areas. As the time progress, the education expenditure for all age-appropriate school enrollments increases.

The regression analysis for educational expenditure does not tell much more than the descriptive analysis. For details of regression analysis, see in Appendix A, Table 3.

### **Multivariate Analysis of School Enrollment on Residency and Gender**

The logistic regression below is to test how residency and gender influence on one's school enrollment. The analysis will be discussed in three different tables according to the age-appropriate school enrollment: junior high (12-14 years old); senior high (15-

17 years old) and college (18-24 years old). Note that the interaction model of gender and residency has been tested for all years, 1992, 1997 and 2002 for all age-appropriate school enrollment levels; and there is no significant residential difference for both males and females.

**Table 2: Logistic Regression of Age-Appropriate Junior High Enrollment (12-14 years old) on Residency and Gender**

	1992			1997			2002		
	Full Sample	Female	Male	Full Sample	Female	Male	Full Sample	Female	Male
	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t
Residency (1=urban 0=rural)	0.955*** (12.918)	1.026*** (9.772)	0.884*** (8.491)	0.109 (0.876)	0.229 (1.208)	0.017 (0.104)	0.401*** (4.703)	0.302** (2.186)	0.461*** (4.252)
Gender (1=female 0=male)	-0.033 (-0.464)			0.297** (2.377)			0.558*** (6.371)		
Constant	1.341*** (23.483)	1.281*** (20.211)	1.367*** (21.481)	2.480*** (24.855)	2.724*** (21.757)	2.523*** (22.247)	2.476*** (37.748)	3.080*** (32.153)	2.450*** (34.465)
N	6,433	3,197	3,236	4,309	2,152	2,157	11,507	5,759	5,748
Pseudo R2	0.033	0.038	0.028	0.003	0.002	0.000	0.014	0.003	0.007

Note: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Note: T-statistics in parenthesis

Table 2 shows the logistic regression of age-appropriate junior high enrollment (12-14 years old) on residency and gender in 1992, 1997 and 2002. The full sample model includes both residency and gender.

In 1992, the full sample model shows that the coefficient for residency is 159.87%  $[(e^{0.955})-1*100]$ , indicating that people living in urban areas are about 160% more likely to attend school compared with people living in rural areas. In 1997, however, the full sample model shows that the coefficient for residency is insignificant. By 2002, the full sample model shows that people living in urban areas are about 49% more likely to attend school compared with people living in rural areas. Therefore, over the ten years period, the school attendance gap of urban and rural areas greatly decreases. In 1992, the gender effect is insignificant. In 1997 and 2002 however, the

gender effect shows that on average women are more likely than men to attend school.

Comparing females and males; in 1992, attending school averages 179% higher for females in urban areas than rural areas, but only 142% higher for males in urban areas than rural areas. In 1997, female model and male model, the coefficient is insignificant. In 2002, comparing females and males, attending school averages 35% higher for females in urban areas than rural areas, but 59% higher for males in urban areas than rural areas. Over the ten years period, the school attendance gap of urban and rural areas greatly decreases for both genders.

**Table 3: Logistic Regression of Age-Appropriate Senior High Enrollment (15-17 years old) on Residency and Gender**

	1992			1997			2002		
	Full Sample	Female	Male	Full Sample	Female	Male	Full Sample	Female	Male
	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t	coeff/t
Residency (1=urban 0=rural)	1.124*** (18.937)	1.020*** (12.184)	1.228*** (14.591)	0.325*** (4.390)	0.331*** (3.087)	0.320*** (3.122)	0.401*** (7.951)	0.334*** (4.465)	0.457*** (6.686)
Gender (1=female 0=male)	-0.165*** (-2.824)			0.237*** (3.203)			0.352*** (6.947)		
Constant	-0.499*** (-9.386)	-0.599*** (-9.097)	-0.558*** (-8.841)	0.696*** (11.045)	0.930*** (12.328)	0.698*** (9.685)	0.885*** (20.583)	1.271*** (23.432)	0.856*** (17.519)
N	5,100	2,576	2,524	3,706	1,867	1,839	9,309	4,689	4,620
Pseudo R2	0.053	0.043	0.064	0.007	0.005	0.004	0.011	0.004	0.009

Note: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Note: T-statistics in parenthesis

Table 3 shows the logistic regression of age-appropriate senior high enrollment (15-17 years old) on residency and gender in 1992, 1997 and 2002.

From 1992 to 2002, the full sample shows that people living in urban areas are more likely to attend school compared with people living in rural areas. In 1992, 1997 and 2002, the full sample shows that people living in urban areas are about 208%, 38%

and 49% respectively, more likely to attend school compared with people living in rural areas. Hence, the school attendance gap of urban and rural areas greatly decreases in 1997 from 1992, nonetheless, in 2002, the gap increased marginally compared to 1997. In 1992, the gender effect shows that on average women are less likely than men to attend school. Interestingly, in 1997 and 2002, the trend reverses as women on average becomes more likely than men to attend school.

Comparing female and male model, in 1992, 1997 and 2002, attending school averages 177%, 39% and 40% respectively, higher for females in urban areas than rural areas; attending school averages 241%, 38%, 58% respectively, higher for males in urban areas than rural areas. Therefore, the school attendance gap of urban and rural areas greatly decreases for both genders in 1997 from 1992, nonetheless, in 2002, the gap begins to widen again.

**Table 4: Logistic Regression of Age-Appropriate College Enrollment (18-24 years old) on Residency and Gender**

	1992			1997			2002		
	Full Sample	Female	Male	Full Sample	Female	Male	Full Sample	Female	Male
	coef/t	coef/t	coef/t	coef/t	coef/t	coef/t	coef/t	coef/t	coef/t
Residency (1=urban 0=rural)	1.478*** (22.991)	1.463*** (16.028)	1.494*** (16.490)	0.659*** (11.166)	0.686*** (8.294)	0.630*** (7.481)	0.564*** (15.982)	0.505*** (10.251)	0.626*** (12.368)
Gender (1=female 0=male)	-0.189*** (-3.775)			-0.161*** (-2.904)			0.040 (1.213)		
Constant	-2.436*** (-38.755)	-2.612*** (-31.485)	-2.448*** (-30.166)	-1.435*** (-25.691)	-1.614*** (-23.447)	-1.416*** (-20.753)	-1.233*** (-37.112)	-1.153*** (-28.536)	-1.274*** (-30.982)
N	11,205	6,053	5,152	7,131	3,864	3,267	17,533	8,959	8,574
Pseudo R2	0.063	0.058	0.066	0.017	0.017	0.015	0.012	0.010	0.015

Note: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Note: T-statistics in parenthesis

Table 4 shows the logistic regression of age-appropriate college enrollment (18-24 years old) on residency and gender in 1992, 1997 and 2002.

From 1992 to 2002, the full sample shows that people living in urban areas are more likely to attend school compared with people living in rural areas. In 1992, 1997 and 2002, the full sample shows that people living in urban areas are about 338%, 93% and 76% respectively, more likely to attend school compared with people living in rural areas. Over the ten years period, the school attendance gap of urban and rural areas greatly decreases.

In 1992 and 1997, the gender effect shows that on average women are less likely than men to attend school. In 2002, the gender effect is insignificant.

Comparing female and male model, in 1992, 1997 and 2002, attending school averages 332%, 99% and 66% respectively, higher for females in urban areas than rural areas; attending school averages 345%, 88%, 87% respectively, higher for males in urban areas than rural areas.

Over the ten years period, 1992-2002, the school attendance gap of urban and rural areas greatly decreases for both genders nonetheless, from 1997 to 2002, the urban and rural gaps for male did not have significant reduction.

At all age-appropriate educational enrollments (junior high, senior high and college), the pseudo R-squares show that although most of the coefficients are statistically significant, they account for a very small portion of the variation, implying that other factors are in play beyond residency and gender.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

While restricting the independent variables to residency and gender, the findings from *The Child and Youth Survey*, confirm previous studies that residency and gender disparities in the education system in Thailand still exist.

The findings based on *The Child and Youth Survey* confirm that residency and gender have affected educational enrollment. The descriptive and multivariate analyses confirm that average educational enrollment in urban areas is higher than that in rural areas. This may be a consequence of needing an educational certificate to find a job in the urban areas and this motivates people to get higher educations. While higher education is also important in rural areas, the agricultural sector remains a prominent job choice. People in urban areas have higher household income and consequently are better able to afford the non-tuition costs, such as library fees, meals, transportation, etc., as well as the costs beyond compulsory schooling. The gender disparity in educational enrollment over the year 1992 to 2002 benefits females. This could be due to the increase of women's role in economic and political participations in Thai society. Women nowadays are no longer expected to be just housewives, but to be part of the labor force and to provide wage income to support the family.

The logistic regression confirms the descriptive findings that school attendance for 12-14 years old is higher in urban areas than rural areas. At this age group, females have higher school enrollment compared to males.

For 15-17 years old, the school enrollment is higher in urban areas than rural areas. In this age group, in 1992, males have higher school enrollment compared to that of females; however, from 1997 onwards the trend reverses as female are at the advantage.

Looking at school enrollment of 18-24 year olds, the trend confirms previous studies that it is higher in urban areas than rural areas. However, gender disparity exists to the benefit of males. This is of great disadvantage to female in their later life chances. Higher paying positions such as white-collar jobs and civil servant positions require at

least bachelor's degree. Having low educational attainment can block social mobility, as they are not qualified for those high paying jobs.

Over the 10 years period, 1992-2002, even though females have an advantage to school enrollment for 12-17 years old, nonetheless at the higher educational level, males still are at an advantage.

In conclusion, while residency and gender play somewhat important roles in mediating individual's school enrollment, they account for only a little of the variation. This suggests there are many other factors including but not limited to, family's economic resources, family size and the education levels of both parents, however, these are beyond the scope of this paper.

As for school non-enrollment, the major reason is the same for all age groups, that is, lack of financial support. Interestingly, for 18-24 years old, from 1997 onwards, school non-enrollment due to the need to earn a living increases. For all years, 1992, 1997 and 2002, for all age groups, females have a higher proportion of school non-enrollment due to lack of financial support than males. This leaves us wonder whether parents' support towards child's education is still based on gender.

Educational expenditure for both genders is higher in urban areas than rural areas, this is probably due to the higher cost of living in urban areas as the education expenditure variables include school fees, learning materials, uniforms, transportation, and food.

## **Qualitative Analysis**

### **Sample**

In total, I conducted thirty interviews of Thai people during the summer 2012. Surveys and interviews ranged from twenty to forty-five minutes and took place in

various settings. Participants ranged in ages from 24 to 76. These interviews were conducted in Central and Northeastern Thailand; and two states in the United States, Pennsylvania and North Carolina. The Northeastern region sample consisted of four females and six males. The Bangkok sample had five females and ten males. In Pennsylvania there were two female participants and in North Carolina, there were three male participants. The highest education level were: one primary school; one lower vocational degree (Porworchor); two lower secondary; three upper secondary; nineteen bachelor's degrees; two masters degree and two PhDs. Ten of those with bachelor's degree are now pursuing their masters. Participants were asked their household annual income as an indication to their socioeconomic status; only one person indicated the household annual income of lower than 60,000 baht/annual (1,952 USD<sup>3</sup>).

My convenience sampling does not reflect the population of each region as the Bangkok population is 2,692,954 males and 2,981,889 females. Nakhon Ratchasima, the province in Northeast where I interviewed there are 1,278,327 males and 1,306,998 females (Department of Provincial Administration, 2011). There are 237,629 Thai citizens in the United States in 2010 with 4,103 in Pennsylvania and 4,782 in North Carolina (Thai Association of Southern California, 2011).

Overall, people in the sample were open in their comments on the educational system in Thailand. Many had interesting comments about the education in Thailand. While some questions evoked similar answers, others offer various interesting views; this is probably due to the different experience with education and the education policy on each individual's life. Most participants were willing to provide the details of their

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<sup>3</sup> Exchange rate as of September, 21, 2012 (1 USD= 30.73 baht) from <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=1&From=USD&To=THB>



lives regarding their education, although some might be embarrassed because of their low educational level and their decisions regarding education.

I conducted structured interviews by first briefing the respondents on the Thai government's 15 years of free education policy (pre-school to high school) which includes no tuition, free textbooks, learning materials, school uniforms, and expenses for activities to promote the quality of students. I then let the participants comment on the importance of education and the government policy. The impersonal questions allow the participant to feel at ease before asking more personal questions: their education level and the impact of their family on their education. The actual protocol for this study is as follows:

- 1) Do you consider education as an important factor for success in your life?  
Why?
- 2) Would you say your family agrees or disagrees with you? Why?
- 3) Do you think Thai government provides enough free education? (The 15 years free education)
- 4) Do you think it is effective?
  - a. If yes, why?
  - b. If you think it is not effective, can you explain why, and do you recognize any patterns in the inequality in education?
- 5) Do you think that it is possible for everyone to have equal access to education regardless of socioeconomic class?
  - a. If yes, why?
  - b. If you think it is not equal, can you explain why, and do you recognize any patterns in the inequality in education?

- 6) Do you think inequality exists in the education system? Please kindly elaborate.
  - a. If yes, do you think there are any variations that can lower or eliminate the inequality of Thailand education system?
- 7) Do you think the internal factors such as family financial status or family support have impact on the level of education you received? Why?
- 8) Do you think the external factors such as government policy have impact on the level of education you received? Why?
- 9) If you have a chance to further your study, would you do so? Why?
- 10) If you have children, would you encourage them to study to a high level? How and why?

And if the subject did not have a bachelor's degree,

- 1) Why did you drop out of school or did not further your study?
- 2) Did you made the decision yourself or was it made by someone else?

Five people declined interviews saying that they were not educated enough to give answers. Although I told them I was interested in only their opinions and that there is no correct or wrong answer, some still insisted on not participating. Others said they were too busy to be interviewed and were not interested in any study.

### **Auto-Ethnography**

My interest in education in Thailand stemmed from the fact that both of my parents are professors. I often heard them discuss educational problems in Thai society, whether from the lack of family support or Thai government policies. As I grew up and moved around Thailand with my parents, I saw many different aspects of the

educational system. My understanding of this topic was continually redefined as I grew older and had many experiences with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Even though there are many obstacles and challenges in doing this research, I believe that it is one of the most valuable things I have done in my entire life. I am very pleased that even though the sample size was small I discovered many common themes within a certain question.

### **Methods of Analysis**

Many studies of inequality in education system in Thailand rely on quantitative data provided by the National Statistical Office such as the household socio-economic survey. However, qualitative research can highlight hidden issues such as gender and bring them into the spotlight. This qualitative analysis is restricted to subjects' responses to my structured interviews. I used structured interview schedule based on the following assumption: (a) all individuals understand the basic functioning of the Thai education system and (b) the individuals have some knowledge of the free education system provided by the Thai government. The interview was open-ended, and provided in-depth understanding of how each individual defines education; the ways the educational system affected individuals, the effectiveness and equality of the education system, etc. Moreover, qualitative research findings may challenge longstanding assumptions.

Rather than focusing on only students I also looked at what adults think about the value of education and their decisions to study further and their plans for their children.

I recruited participants using a convenience sample. I walked up to the potential subject and asked him/her if he/she was willing to participate in my study. Interested

participants would then fill in the survey that asked for their background information and the interview process would start. The setting of each interview differed according to the place where I met the participants. The places include: on a street, in a mall, or some kind of residence. Nonetheless, the spaces chosen allow the participants to answer questions without worrying that other individuals would overhear the conversation.

I recorded and then transcribed each interview and analyzed it. When I was transcribing the interviews in Thai, I had some difficulty in translating them into English since some of the Thai words had no direct English equivalent. Each question was coded and then codes were developed for topics within each question. Using the codes, I was able to discover themes and patterns within the data. The analyses process was on going as I went back and forth with the transcripts; each time I worked through the transcript I was able to find interesting patterns. I am presenting the results in tables that make it easy for readers to digest and see the existing themes. I hope my categories reflect all what the participants saw as important and hope that this research help broaden the perspective on Thai education system.

## Data Analysis and Results

**Table 1: Education an Important Factor for Success in Life**

**Do you consider education as an important factor for success in your life?**

POSITIVE RESPONSE:	73% (22)	<p>is a basis for you to advance yourself to the goal and succeed.</p> <p>have positive attitude and better attitude which develop our life.</p> <p>able to go further on the academic field.</p> <p>helps us think systematically, have more knowledge., including the fundamental knowledge to do one’s job.</p> <p>give more opportunities (higher salary, ability to compete in the job market.)</p> <p>is a good determination of how successful you’ll be in the future.</p> <p>helps us live our lives.</p>
CONDITIONAL:	27% (8)	<p>is also up to other factors (opportunity, skills and experiences, ambition and effort, morality and honesty)</p> <p>depends on how you define success.</p> <p>is important but not the most important as those who are most successful are not always those who graduate the highest education. Many people in the society who do not succeed in education but succeed in career.</p>
NEGATIVE RESPONSE:	0%	

Most participants (73%) (n=22), regardless of their gender and their region of residence perceive education as an important factor for success in life. Many people perceived education as an end in itself; that is fulfillment of knowledge, a positive attitude in life, think systematically, and not to be fooled by others. Participants also believe it increases the ability to compete in the job market, open up their opportunities for a better future, advance in academic field, and integrate knowledge into their work.

Twenty-seven percent of the participants (n=8) believe that education is conditional value, that is, you need other factors to succeed in life. One should have experience or skills and be given the opportunity.

Most participants see educational attainment as a factor for upward mobility. There is a saying in Thai that says, “Focus on your study so that when you grow up you will be

the employer or the boss.” Good careers go to people with higher educational attainment. People with higher educational attainment receive higher wages.

One participant asked what I mean by success, however, it is clear that for most of the sample, success is a good career with high income. This reflects Thai social values; people look up to successful business people rather than those whose success is defined by family or good health. Even educational success nowadays is not praised unless it brings monetary success. There is a saying in Thai “Why even bother study if you will only earn that much?”

The government’s expected outcome for education is to create good citizens who can eradicate poverty, improve the country’s general welfare, and better the lives of citizens. Most participants agree with the government goals.

**Table 2: Family Thoughts on Education**

**Would you say your family percieve education as an important factor for success in your life?**

POSITIVE RESPONSE:	97% (29)	provides children with education as high as they can learn. supports the participant and his/her siblings to at least bachelor’s degree. supports the participant's education as the first priority. parents percieve the better education the child has, the more money he/she will make. education is very important.
CONDITIONAL:	3% (1)	high or low education cannot determine how successful you are in career and future.
NEGATIVE RESPONSE:	0%	

All my respondents except one (97%) (n=29) believe that their family sees education as an important factor for success. This reflects the reality that while there are exceptional cases of success in spite of little education, most parents seek to support their children to the highest education possible since this will provide them with the basic credentials for good jobs. The one participant who did not see family support of

education reported that education could not determine how successful you are in a career and in the future.

Younger people, mostly in their mid-twenties, believe that their parents see education as an important factor for success in life since their parents' supported their education or their belief that their parents will support their future education. One participant pointed out that the better education one has, the better one gets paid.

**Table 3: Thai Government Policy on Free Education**

**Do you think Thai government provides enough free education? (The 15 years free education)**

SUFFICIENT:	40% (12)	for higher education, Thai people should also help the government by paying for it themselves. 15 years free education has forced many people that do not want to study to study without paying much attention. sufficient as graduating year 12, Porworchor or Porworsor (vocational school), one meets the labor market requirement. Except if one wants to be a specialist, then one has to further his/her study.
CONDITIONAL:	3% (1)	more education should be provided but only to those that really want to study. (e.g. scholarships)
UNDETERMINED:	3% (1)	the quantity is sufficient but not certain of the quality.
INSUFFICIENT:	53% (16)	some wants to further his/her education but do not have the financial support. Government should help e.g. scholarship/ extend free education to bachelor's degree. year 12 is insufficient for the labor's market. free education is not in reality free. there is much difference of education opportunity at regional level.

Forty percent of the participants (n=12) believe Thai government with its policy of 15 years of free education has done enough. They think the government provides enough free education and that the student and/or his/her family should be responsible for their own tertiary education. They also think that the free education provided is sufficient for the labor market. Two participants with government careers understand the heavy burden the government has towards Thai citizen's education.

One participant (3%) believed that whether free education is enough is conditional and that more education should be provided but only to those that really want to study. The government can assist the citizens through scholarships, for instance. Another person (3%) thought that you could not determine if this was enough because the quality of education varies throughout the Thai educational system.

Fifty-three percent of the participants (n=16) believe the government is ought to do more for its citizens since education is insufficient for today's job market. Many participants mentioned that education is unequal for those with financial issues and that free education should be extended to a bachelor's degree.

One participant points out that at the bachelor's level it is their choice about what to study, this implies that the student's freedom to choose what they want to study only begins in college. Prior to that, the curriculum is highly structured. This choice only begins in college since there are more students which allow the courses to be available.

One participant talked about the vocational track but since the new policy was being implemented from 2012 to 2015; there was no way to determine if it is successful yet.

Some participants claim that even those with bachelor degree are not able to find jobs. From my personal experience however, it is not difficult to find a job if you are not choosy. Some college graduates see themselves as too important and prefer to remain unemployed rather than accept low paying jobs or less prestigious jobs.

Currently, the government provides loans for education, but some participants believe it takes too long to pay off the debt. Based on the some participants' answers, it could be implied that Thai people believe that the government is like their father who should



take care and provide for them when they are in need rather than give out loans. Others agree about the importance of having bachelor's degree but instead of giving it for free suggest that the government provides assistance, for example, scholarships or loans. These participants believe Thai citizens should be more independent.

Many participants view education's quality in term of the students' ability to apply what they learn to real world tasks. However, this is not what the teaching methods in Thailand teach since the methods rely on lectures and learning is rote. Pupils are seen as passive organisms that have to be 'filled' with knowledge and taught to not question and think outside the box. Thai government has tried to redirect these teaching methods and promote student-centered teaching as to develop independent thinking and problem solving skills.

Yingluck Shinawatra, the current prime minister, campaigned for quality education for all youths (Ministry of Education, 2012); however, there seems to be a disjuncture between how the government and the citizens view "quality." The government understanding of quality focuses on the fact that the citizen should become well-qualified workers. Workers have education credentials as a proof of their quality; however, an education certificate does not certify the individual's ability in work as most participants in the sample point out. To improve the quality of education, teacher's skills should be developed as it has a significant impact on students' learning performance. This can be done by supporting teachers to learn new pedagogical techniques through professional development where teachers could exchange experiences with their colleagues and learn from each other.

While the government tries to provide youths with equal education opportunity everywhere in Thailand (Ministry of Education, 2012), many participants mentioned that the quality of education varies between urban and rural areas.

**Table 4: The Effectiveness of Thailand Free Education System**

**Do you think Thai government free education is effective?**

POSITIVE RESPONSE:	20% (6)	gives fundamental knowledge.
CONDITIONAL:	20% (6)	have to wait and see after the first generation graduates (see if the future workers perform well). it is up to many factors (teachers, parents, students). effective only in urban area, but in rural area it still is inefficient.
UNDETERMINED:	3% (1)	don't have an opinion as not directly affected by the policy.
NEGATIVE RESPONSE:	57% (17)	the free education in reality is not free. the quality and quantity of the teachers, classes and school is different e.g. Bangkok and rural areas. the curriculum and the facilities in supporting students to learn is of low quality. need to improve the education quality. kids have to go to tutor school. it should be extended to higher education.

Only twenty percent of the participants (n=6) believe that the free education system, which Thai government provides, is effective. These participants saw 15 years of education provided to everyone regardless their gender and family background as providing sufficient fundamental knowledge.

Another twenty percent of the participants (n=6) believe educational effectiveness is conditional since it depends on many other factors. Schools alone cannot be held responsible for the students' academic success since the parents and the students themselves are also responsible for this. Many also believe that the free education may be effective in urban areas but not in rural areas. One participant believes that in

order to evaluate the effectiveness of the free education, we have to wait and see if the first generation of graduates are of good quality.

Another participant (3%) said that she could not evaluate how effective the free education policy was since she is not directly affected by it.

Fifty-seven percent of the participants (n=17) believe that Thailand free education is ineffective, although the reasons vary. The most cited reason is that the free education is, in reality, not free. A second major reason is the difference in quality between urban and rural schools. This is reflected in quality of the teachers, and the availability of educational resources and technology. Many of the participants believe that teachers are not devoted to their teaching career since many students nowadays go to tutor schools. Few participants also stated that it is ineffective due to the low quality of the education outcome; one participant even links it to the current phenomenon of tutor school.<sup>4</sup>

Few participants indicate the policy as ineffective since it only covers to upper secondary level which does not provide the skills necessary to get better jobs. However, they believe it would be effective if the free education is extended to tertiary education.

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<sup>4</sup> Tutor schools capture the medias' attention, including one of Bangkok Post (Wipatayotin, A., 2011). These reports argue that as long as students and parents believe government schools are not doing a good enough jobs, tutorial schools will always exist. Nowadays, the weekend is no longer days to rest since students spend the weekend getting private tutoring. Students believe that if they do not get this tutoring, they have less chance to get into good universities since university admission are competitive. Anusorn Sivakul, the owner of Chem-Ou Tutoring Institute, interestingly did a survey among his students and none of them would like to become a teacher because of the low salary. If this situation continues, it will be very difficult to find decent teachers in Thailand (Wipatayotin, A., 2011).

The current government has similar concerns which are reflected in the strategies for educational development from the Ministry of Education 2012 to 2015. The goal is to have quality student-centered education and schools of the same quality provided for everyone in cities, rural and distant areas (Ministry of Education, 2012). However, the government policy is stated broadly rather proposing specific solutions for particular problems such as quality of teachers and educational resources.

When participants talked about the inequality between city and rural areas, they are talking about this in general, not referring to any particular urban or rural areas. However, one participant specifically referred to the three southern provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat as an example of the educational inequality. While the government is spending much money trying to eradicate the problems in the three southern provinces, they have not succeeded according to these participants.

**Table 5: Education is Universally Equal**

**Do you think that it is possible for everyone to have equal access to education regardless of socioeconomic class?**

POSITIVE RESPONSE:	33% (10)	the government provides 15 years free education despite the individual's social status.
CONDITIONAL:	3% (1)	equal in the sense that students study in the same school, but not equal if students study in a different school e.g. in the city and rural areas.
UNDETERMINED:	10% (3)	not certain if distant schools receive free education. not certain if the quality of each school is equal but it may be equal in terms of access to education, in quantity. no opinion due to no knowledge on this policy.
NEGATIVE RESPONSE:	53% (16)	some students cannot commute to school from their house or village due to the long distance or cost of traveling. education does not reach students in some distant and rural areas. the different standard and quality of school, school curriculum, teacher, if the school society school equipment and facilities, e.g. Bangkok vs. the surrounding areas/rural areas, public vs. private school. middle and the upper class are more privelege as most qualified and well known school requires certain amount of money or social connection to get admitted. central region and rural difference, e.g. access to knowledge sources, motivation for triggering the learning process and access to scholarship/loan.

Most participants (53%) (n=16) believe that people of all classes do not have equal access to education, while only 33% (n=10) of the participants think access is equal. One (3%) participant think that it is conditional and 10% (n=3) believe that it could not be determined.

For those that believe access to education is equal to people of all classes, the most cited answer is that free education is available to all people despite their backgrounds. Two participants, despite agreeing that free education is equal to people of all classes, thought that rich people using their rights to get free education is inappropriate since rich people should help relieve the government from the burden of free education. For these two participants, equality depends on the status of each individual. Free education should be conditional and that family background needs to be taken into consideration.

Another participant (3%) said that education is the same. The school is the same for all but inequality exists in the differences between urban and rural schools.

Finally, three participants (10%) were hesitant to say whether free education was equal since they either did not understand the policy or that access to schools was equal but not the quality.

Those fifty-three percent (n=16) that think the policy was not equal to people of all classes, the most cited reason is that the education quality is different in urban and rural areas and that education was not available in distant areas or some areas within cities. There is also much difference between the private and public schools. Many participants also mentioned the inequality in terms of teacher's quality and instruction materials differ between urban and rural schools. There are more opportunities for rich children than poor children. A participant said that poor kids are at a

disadvantage as the education itself may be free; however, there are other living expenses that children from poor family cannot afford. A participant also mentions the ineffectiveness of the infrastructure that causes poor children to be out of school as they cannot commute to school due to the long distance. Many participants also suggest the lack of social connections as one reason for the poor children's marginality.

In the United States, race and social class segregate the entire educational system. A town or city will have a school which is largely black or largely white, or largely lower class or poor and largely middle class or affluent (Cave, W. M., & Chesler, M. A., 1974). In the Thai context, the socioeconomic status plays out in the schools the students attend. Children of middle and upper class are likely to attend famous public schools in the city or private schools. Children from lower-income households on the other hand attend public school nearby their homes because the associated costs are less. In public schools, the pupil teacher ratio is much higher than that of private schools.

The educational system is segregated based on the social and economic class. Many people use social connections and pay money for their children to get into good schools; this reflects the fact that the quality of each school is different. Initially, people used social connections to get their children or nieces and nephews into good schools, however, as time passed, money came into the process. This can be a voluntarily donation or building buildings for school use such as gymnasium or school supplies. Currently, the school holds the power and specifies the amount that needs to donate for student to be admitted (Vejjajiva, P., 2012). This may be a reason why some parents feel that their investment in their children's education will be

worthless since getting good jobs requires connections and poor families do not have connections.

**Table 6: Inequality in Thailand Education System**

**Do you think inequality exists in the education system? Please kindly elaborate.**

NO:	17% (5)	the government gives 15 years support to everyone and it is their choice whether or not to use that right. it's up to the individual whether they are diligent or ambitious
YES:	83% (25)	different education quality, educational devices and facilities, teachers and nutrition system, e.g. private vs. public institution, within public school, e.g. city areas vs. rural areas, within the same school, e.g. different classes. people with money have more opportunities e.g. choose to go to good ranking school, get admitted to school more easily "bribery", more chance for private tuition, get special attention from teachers. limited amount of scholarships. unequal government policy e.g. free uniforms (give only to poor kids, rich kids do not get them).

Most participants (83%) (n=25) believe that inequality exists within Thailand's educational system while only 17% (n=5) believe that it does not.

Those that believe inequality does not exist suggest that the government provides equal access to education to everyone but it is the individual's choice to use it and this depends on the individual's ambition and diligence.

The inequality most often mentioned is that between the urban and the rural areas. Urban schools have better instructional materials and better quality teaching. Urban areas teachers are more skilled, better educated, have greater experience and they are more devoted to the students. Many participants said that the recruitment process of teachers is flawed and it results in low-quality teachers. Some participants' comments reflect that the teacher's career is somewhat looked down in modern Thai society, different from the past when people praised teachers.

Teachers have inadequate career opportunities and poor support services from the government. The pay is low, some have debts and in trying to make ends meet, teachers seek extra income through other jobs, such as tutoring. This can be problematic as some teachers will hold back information when they teach during the school day and only go into details in tutor sessions. This explains why many students go to tutor school. The government could support teachers by increasing the incentives so that more intelligent people will be interested in academic employment. Teachers often claim that there is not just teaching but the many extra tasks that means they do not have sufficient time to respond to students' needs and problems.

Students in Bangkok have all the best educational materials, including internet access while those in rural areas are less well equipped and internet access is limited. This puts the rural students at a severe disadvantage. Variation in school quality is another cause of inequality; this is because of urban/rural difference or variation in school quality within urban areas. A participant refers to high-society schools which presumably will have only students from upper class families even though it is free. There is a division between the rich and the poor in the educational institutions. Some participants cite the inequality that comes from the individual's economic capital differences playing out in one's education.

Interestingly, a participant perceives that the inequality is going both ways, towards poor kids in the sense that they may not get admission to school and towards rich kids as they are not given the same equality of receiving free uniform. Again, we have to question ourselves what does it mean to be equal, is it that everyone gets everything the same or is it that we should consider the individual's needs.



**Table 7: Ways to Lower or Eliminate the Inequality in the Education System**

**If you think inequality exists in the educational system, are there any ways to reduce or eliminate the inequality of Thailand education system?**

POSITIVE RESPONSE: (OPTIMISTIC)	72% (18)	<p>improve government policy, e.g. the government should provide free education to bachelor's level.</p> <p>improve the infrastructure, e.g. communication (students from remote places will be able to commute to school.)</p> <p>improve the school quality (similar standard and quality) e.g. the learning and teaching facilities, e.g. providing education devices, internet access.</p> <p>increase scholarships and incentives for teachers (pay off by teaching in rural areas).</p> <p>improve the teacher's quality and character, e.g. teacher teach more effectively in class rather than at tutor's session.</p> <p>increase the school budget (sufficient for the amount of students admitted, including poor people and reducing bribery.)</p> <p>by making education more centralized, e.g. tests should be from the central institution and then distributed to other regions around Thailand (GPA of each school would be comparable).</p> <p>decentralize the education system, e.g. give power to the nearby community to have a say in developing the school.</p> <p>improve the country's economy (reduce the gap between the rich and the poor).</p> <p>support student's self-center.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education has to reduce the inequality in the system, e.g. rural and urban areas difference.</p> <p>get rid of the patron-client relationship and bribery.</p>
CONDITIONAL:	4% (1)	it can be fixed, but it's difficult and needs time and good planning.
NEGATIVE RESPONSE: (PESSIMISTIC)	24% (6)	it cannot be fixed due to many restrictions.

I asked this question to the 25 participants who believe that inequality exists within the Thai educational system.

Most participants (72%) (n=18) are positive and believe that there are ways to lower or eliminate the inequality in the educational system. Most suggestions are the ways the government can get rid of the inequality.

A participant points out that sometimes the policy itself is good but the people do not implement it well. This implies that while we are developing policy of any kind, we

ought to develop those who use the policy as well since doing so will make the policies more effective.

One participant suggested that we should stop paying bribes in getting admission. Another participant suggested the development of infrastructure. Some participants focused on the facilities in learning and teaching. When material conditions are inadequate, these inevitably affect students' learning processes. Kids in rural area have less access to educational technology than children in city or Bangkok. Children in rural areas begin learning English in year 4 or year 5 while in Bangkok and cities begin learning English in pre-school.

One participant mentioned the economy, when the economy is bad; children from poor families are more likely to drop out of school.

Many focused on developing the teachers' career; some even provided suggestions on how to put it into reality. A participant suggested that in order to improve the quality of the teachers is to select those with high scores to study at teacher's colleges and the teachers should have good mental and physical health. Many suggested that the incentive for becoming a teacher be raised through higher salaries. In addition, many participants mentioned the need to develop the teacher's character as many teachers nowadays focus on their teaching only in private sessions.

Some participants suggested solving the inequality in the educational system by centralizing education. A participant suggested that tests should come from the central institution and then distributed to other regions around Thailand by doing so the GPA of each school would reflect the same standard. Yet another participant disagreed and believes that the educational system ought to be decentralized and the community surrounding the school should be involved.

While most are optimistic and believe that educational inequality can be eradicated, one participant (4%) believes it is possible but difficult and needs time and good planning. Still other participants (24%) (n=6) are pessimistic and believe that inequality will always exist in the educational system.

**Table 8: Family Financial Status/ Family Support Impacts One’s Education**

**Do you think the internal factors such as family financial status or family support had an impact on the level of education you received? Why?**

REJECT (NO):	13% (4)	if one has a good education, one can always seek a scholarships. it’s up to one's ambition to study.
ACCEPT (YES):	87% (26)	help from the government is insufficient, especially student loans. parents that have little income have problems in supporting their children's education, e.g. transportation, food, accomodation, especially higher education. families that do not see the importance of education and want their children to work willl influence children to not study. family support and the oppourtunities the family provides have much influence on one's education, e.g. rich people provide a more suitable environment for their children (playing musical instrument, sports or learn foreign languages when they are little).

Most participants (87%) (n=26) believe that family financial status/family support affects one’s education, while 13% (n=4) do not. Many participants talked about the society issues in general while some talked openly about their personal experience regarding family financial issues and their own education.

Four participants said that family financial status is not an issue as long as someone has a good education and is ambitious. Good students can always seek scholarships.

Participants that believe family financial status/family support affects one’s education give various reasons. Most of the participants do not cite education fees as the reason children with low income parents did not attend school, but rather other expenses related to education, such as school supplies, transportation, food, accommodation,

and living expenses. Many participants said that the education they achieved was due to their family's support both financially and emotionally. Some parents do not support their children's education as they have no confidence in the education system, since some students graduate and remain unemployed.

Many participants pointed out that children born into well to do families have considerable advantages over those born into poorer families. These advantages include things such as music lessons, sports, and foreign languages. Children in low-income households need to work while studying in order to support themselves or in some extreme cases are asked to drop out of school. Some participants cited their own experiences of wanting to study but could not as their parents did not have the money to support them.

The school's curriculum is from the central area and is not suitable for local schools in other regions. This centrally planned curriculum, some parents think is inappropriate to their area. Students from agricultural areas have to go through a curriculum that is too academically oriented may become alienated and quit school.

Many of the participants know about the availability of student loan but think the loans have many restrictions. Many participants emphasize that family financial support becomes even more important for higher education.

**Table 9: Government Policy Affects One's Education**

**Do you think the external factors such as government policy affect the level of education you received? Why?**

REJECT (NO):	30% (9)	despite the government 's compulsory education, the participant will still study to year 12. one participant was always enrolled in private school.
ACCEPT (YES):	70% (21)	government policy influences one's decision in studying (level, field), e.g. through scholarships/ loans. compulsory education makes one study more than one would have without the policy.

Most participants (70%) (n=21) believe that government policy affects the education they received while 30% (n=9) of the participants do not.

Those that thought government policy had no effect on their educational level said that even without the government policy of 15 years free education, they would still study to year 12. Some said that they already graduated year 12 before the free education policy was in effect. One participant said this was not an issue as he has always enrolled in a private school.

For those that believe government policy had an effect on their educational level, most believe it allows people to pursue more education. For example, if the government has policy regarding loans and scholarships, it will allow students to have better access to education. Interestingly, the older generation, those above 50, believes that the government's compulsory education, 4 years of primary education, did not have much influence on their educational level.

Many suggested that the government policy, which emphasizes some fields by providing incentives such as loans or scholarships, influences students' choice of study. They went on to suggest that the government should prioritize the skills the country needs and provide incentives for students to study in those areas.

Still government policies can negatively affect student’s daily life making it more stressful. One participant said that constant changes in the educational policy confuse students. It is difficult for students to know what they should be doing and how they should perform.

One participant noted that good policy was important but the policy needed to be implemented at the local level in ways that made sense to the students and their parents.

**Table 10: Reasons to Drop Out of School**

**Why did you drop out of school or did not further your study?**

NO FINANCE/WORK:	100%	work to support family, e.g.support younger siblings’ education.
	(7)	no financial support from family.

There are seven people from the full sample of thirty that dropped out of school before bachelor’s degree. Those dropped out of school said that they did so because they needed to help support their family or to support themselves.

Three participants all above 48 quit school because their families had limited resources and what they did have had to be shared among their siblings. For the older generation when education was not free, children with more siblings would likely receive less schooling (Williams, L. et al., 1997).

One participant said that he had to stay home to take care of the cows and water buffaloes. This support the ideas that children from rural villages rarely get the chance to study. Children are forced to stay away from school during rice farming season because water buffaloes need to be kept out of the fields since buffalos would eat the crops. The participant’s mother asked him to stay home. His mother, like a 49-year-old grandfather with a 4<sup>th</sup> grade education in Ides Nicaise and others’ study may view

education as only an accessory in life and that survival was more important and that education could not fill the family’s stomach (Nicaise, I. et al., 2000).

Another participant dropped out of school in order to support her younger siblings’ education which conform to Martin Piotrowski and Yok-Fong Paat findings that early-born siblings may receive notably less education than later born siblings, especially if they have to quit school to help support their younger siblings (Piotrowski, M. & Paat, Y., 2012). However, as the research has only thirty participants there were no contradictory view to be presented that youngsters from large families have disproportionate school drop-out rates as older children from large families have already been selected for intellectual ability (Blake, J., 1989); nonetheless, such case is possible.

**Table 11: Who made the decision to drop out?**

<b>Did you made the decision to drop out of school or not further your study yourself or was it made by someone else?</b>		
SELF-MADE DECISION	86% (6)	parents allow participant to go to school, but participant decided not to go.
OTHERS' DECISION	14% (1)	

When asked who made the decision, 86% (n=6) of the participants decided themselves, while 14% (n=1) the decision to quit school was the parents. Most simply just said they needed to work to support their family. Their choices were restricted by their economic status. Such decisions can be interpreted as the participants’ sacrifice of their education for their family well-being. Alternatively, it could be that education was not important to them.

**Table 12: Reasons to Further or not further study**

**If you have a chance to further your study, would you do so? Why?**

POSITIVE RESPONSE (YES):	78% (18)	education makes you have more knowledge and have more ability. want to learn new things that did not know of before. education is endless (life-long learning). opens up one's opportunity, e.g. job market, career. a factor to success. not ready to work. social acceptance.
NEGATIVE RESPONSE (NO):	22% (5)	not interested in learning new things. already in high education. everything is already settled. old already.

Note that there are seven missing cases for this question from thirty participants.

When asked if they would further their study if given a chance, most participants (78%) (n=18) said yes, while a handful (22%) (n=5) said no. Most said that they wanted to further their study to be more knowledgeable, earn more experience, and have better career opportunities. A few also mentioned that they wanted the social acceptance. Many are passionate about studying and believe in life-long learning.

Those who do not want to study further gave the following reasons: two are doing their PhDs. so they no longer wanted to study; some are married and have families; and other said they do not have time and they are already too old.



**Table 13: Encourage Own Children to High Education**

**If you have children, would you encourage them to have high education? Why?**

POSITIVE RESPONSE (YES):	90% (26)	education is the fundamental to everything, education will teach children to be responsible to themselves, society and the country. (influences the person's quality. ) education gives us social status. education gives people the opportunity to succeed in life. love education. to prepare his/her children for their lives, e.g. education is one important factor that can lead them to good careers. the participant has little education, so the participant wants his/her childrens to have more education.
CONDITIONAL:	10% (3)	if the participant's children can support themselves, the participant did not see the point of his children furthering their studies. It's up to the children to decide. It depends on the economy at that time.
NEGATIVE RESPONSE (NO):	0%	

Note that there is one missing case for this question from 30 participants.

Most participants (90%) (n=26) stated that they would encourage their children to achieve high educational levels; nonetheless, their children will have to make the decision. Most want to provide their children with the knowledge to prepare them for good careers in the current competitive market. Some would encourage education because educated people have good social status and are able to live in the world and understand the world. Some participants said that education has positive effect on one's personality. Some participants want their children to have the opportunity for education because they did not have the chance to study when they were younger.

Those that said they will encourage their children to study said that they would do so by creating environment that would encourage their children to study.

Ten percent of the participants (n=3) however said that whether they encourage their children to study depends on a number of factors. One said that if his children can support themselves, he sees no point in furthering their studies. Another said that it is up to the children to decide if they wanted to further their study and one said it is up to the financial status of the family's household at that time.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This research focused on how a small sample of Thai living both in Thailand and abroad conceived of the Thai educational system and their evaluation of sufficiency of the government's free education policy. Regardless of the participant's residency, age, gender and occupation, they all view education as important. Most participants' families also believe education is very important as seen by support of participants to highest educational level possible. This reflects the influence of education on one's life. Participants and their families view education as affecting their chances of success in life and that success is inevitably linked to a good career with high income. This is further supported by the fact that 90% of the participants claim to have support or will support their children through higher education. Family financial and emotional support is especially critical during tertiary education.

Participants evaluated the Thai government policy of 15 years of free education differently. Those that considered it sufficient held this belief mainly because the knowledge provided is sufficient to find jobs. On the other hand, many believe the government should extend free education to the bachelor's degree level since high school diplomas do not provide the skills necessary to get better jobs and that many lack the financial support to continue their education through the college level. This is an issue of low-income households since tertiary education is generally located in

urban areas so most students will have to live away from home and the expenses will be higher. Despite the government providing scholarships and loans, few participants seek out such options as they have the impression that scholarships are too competitive and that loans leave them with heavy burden of debt.

Only a small number of participants believe the Thai government policy of 15 years free education is effective. This is based on their experiences with the education system. While everyone has access to 15 years of education, the quality varies. Most participants expressed their concern about the disparity between urban and rural areas, private and public schools, and rich and poor people. The participants view wealthy people living in urban areas and going to private schools have access to much better educations than those poorer people living in rural areas and attending public schools.

This sample was well aware of the inequalities in the education system. These inequalities help to explain the on-going problem of bribery. Parents will try their best to push their children into good schools, as they believe that it will influence the child's chance of being admitted to a good university which would lead to good careers. Whether the participants lived in urban or rural areas and whether they went to private or public schools, most were aware of the educational inequality.

As the participants' responses indicate, the free education in reality is not free. Most participants did not cite educational fees as the reasons children from low-income households not attending school, but rather other expenses related to education, such as school supplies, transportation, food, accommodations and living expenses. While the government may believe doing away with tuition will increase enrollment, yet from the participants' answers it is clear that expenses in the student's daily life are critical and this is something the government does not take into account.

Quality of teachers is a major object of criticism in Thailand's educational system since teachers nowadays are seen as not providing enough information which makes tutor schools a necessity. This adds another burden on students in rural areas and from poor households. The Thai government has been encouraging student centered learning but this has not worked well. Student centered teaching requires students to initiate topics and issues; however, this does not fit well with Thai cultural practices which students should respect and follow their teachers' instructions. In the past people respected teachers and teaching as a career, but this is no longer true.

One's decision to further study in this sample was not associated with age, both older and younger participants stated that they wanted to further their education if that were possible. Others, however, said they had too many other responsibilities or that they believe their current education is sufficient for their jobs. Most stated that they would support their children to highest educational level that their financial status will allow them.

Most participants are optimistic and believe that educational inequality can be lessened through various means. This includes but not limited to improving the government policy by providing free education to bachelor's level, improving the infrastructure so that students from remote areas will be able to commute to school, improving the school quality, increasing scholarships, improving quality and characters of the teachers, and getting rid of bribery. Yet I am critical and believe that improving education quality needs action rather than faith. The educational structure needs to be redesigned to incorporate everyone. Administrators and educators need to be retrained to make education more accessible and more effective. Thai citizens overall should be more involved with education and have a say in the education curriculum and the education policy that directly affects them and/or their families.

Realization of one's educational rights lies not only in educating the masses about the free education policy but in inviting everyone to contribute to such policy as well. By doing this, we may better understand the current state of the sufficiency and effectiveness of the education policy. Continued study on the perceptions of the effectiveness of the education policy is essential to better understand the obstacles of increasing the school enrollment at all education level as such an understanding contributes to evaluating and improving the education policy.

### **OVERALL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Regardless of the participant's residency, age, gender and occupation, the view of education as important is prevalent throughout participant interviews. Most participants' family too gives utmost importance to education through their support of participants to highest level of education possible. This enables us to understand why school enrollment is universal for children 6-11 years old and is increasing over the years for other age groups. Yet, family financial and emotional support alone cannot fully account for one's decisions to enroll in school. There are many other factors to be considered including the effectiveness of the government free education policy that effects these decisions. Qualitative analysis shows that most participants perceive Thai government policy of 15 years free education to be ineffective. While it may be true that the universal 15 years free education is said to be available to everyone as it provides to everyone despite their gender and family background. The free education is ineffective as in reality it is not free. There exist other expenses related to education, such as school supplies, transportation, food, accommodation and living expenses.

The quantitative analysis confirmed previous studies that residency disparities in the education system in Thailand still exist. The findings based on *The Child and Youth Survey* confirm that residency affects educational enrollment. The descriptive analyses confirm that average educational enrollment in urban areas is higher than that in rural areas. The logistic regression confirms the descriptive findings that school attendance for all age groups, 12-14 years old, 15-17 years old and 18-24 years old is higher in urban areas than rural areas. People in urban areas have higher household income and are better able to afford the non-tuition costs, such as library fees, meals and transportation, etc., as well as the costs for continuing beyond compulsory schooling. The findings of qualitative analysis are consistent with quantitative analysis. While the quantitative analysis points out that residency plays important roles in mediating individual's school enrollment, it account for only a small amount of the variation.

According to the quantitative analysis, gender disparity in educational enrollment over the year 1992 to 2002 benefits females for 12-17 years old, nonetheless at tertiary education (18-24 years old), male still are at an advantage. Interestingly, none of the participants in the qualitative analysis mentioned genders as an issue in school enrollment.

Financial support is a major factor in school non-enrollment for all ages. For all years, 1992, 1997 and 2002, for all age groups, females have a higher proportion than male of school non-enrollment due to lack of financial support. The qualitative analysis also suggests people dropout of school for financial reasons, yet the participants did not mention a gender dimension to this. Women and men are affected equally but differ by generation. Older generations were more likely to drop out of school and support their family than younger generations.

Hence, continued study using mixed methods on educational stratification in Thailand is essential to better understand the obstacles of increasing the school enrollment at all education level as such an understanding contributes to evaluating and improving the education policy.

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## Appendix A

**Table 1**

**School Attendance by Urban/Rural (1992,1997,2002)(%)**

	1992			1997			2002		
	Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural	
12-14 years	91	79***		94	93		96	94***	
15-17 years	63	36***		76	69***		81	74***	
18-24 years	26	7***		30	18***		34	23***	

Note: Significant chi-square by residency. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 2**

**School Attendance by Gender (1992, 1997,2002) (%)**

	1992			1997			2002		
	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female	
12-14 years	85	85		93	94*		94	96**	
15-17 years	53	51		70	75**		75	81**	
18-24 years	20	18**		26	24*		29	30	

Note: Significant chi-square by gender. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 3**

**Regression of Education Expenditure on Residency and Gender (1992,1997,2002): 12-14 years old**

	1992			1997			2002		
	(1) coefft	(2) coefft	(3) coefft	(1) coefft	(2) coefft	(3) coefft	(1) coefft	(2) coefft	(3) coefft
Residency (1=urban 0=rural)	4,198.122*** (24.536)	4,075.461*** (17.016)	4,317.698*** (17.672)	5,218.707*** (18.713)	5,057.807*** (14.026)	5,382.583*** (12.617)	6,651.063*** (23.082)	6,734.331*** (16.241)	6,565.799*** (16.422)
Gender (1=female 0=male)		7.173 (0.042)		39.539 (0.142)			484.287* (1.687)		
Constant	3,280.131*** (21.381)	3,358.605*** (18.393)	3,212.658*** (17.505)	6,888.348*** (28.908)	7,006.791*** (27.748)	6,810.347*** (23.138)	11,929.249*** (46.569)	12,367.573*** (40.146)	11,974.916*** (40.926)
N		5,343	2,651	2,692	4,029	2,031	1,998	10,862	5,511
Adjusted R2		0.101	0.098	0.104	0.080	0.088	0.073	0.047	0.046

Note: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Note: Model 2 (female), Model 3 (male)

**Regression of Education Expenditure on Residency and Gender (1992,1997,2002): 15-17 years old**

	1992			1997			2002		
	(1) coefft	(2) coefft	(3) coefft	(1) coefft	(2) coefft	(3) coefft	(1) coefft	(2) coefft	(3) coefft
Residency (1=urban 0=rural)	4,511.540*** (11.147)	4,298.746*** (7.098)	4,710.651*** (8.719)	5,601.515*** (14.007)	5,100.448*** (9.554)	6,143.688*** (10.247)	6,600.160*** (14.664)	6,251.443*** (10.550)	6,982.331*** (10.204)
Gender (1=female 0=male)		340.651 (0.934)		-609.374 (-1.532)			-406.759 (-0.919)		
Constant	7,739.557*** (20.139)	8,234.847*** (15.951)	7,598.539*** (16.712)	12,677.831*** (35.019)	12,347.424*** (30.997)	12,378.629*** (27.792)	19,788.959*** (47.477)	19,588.566*** (42.974)	19,562.294*** (37.121)
N		2,611	1,288	1,323	2,693	1,401	1,292	7,223	3,775
Adjusted R2		0.045	0.037	0.054	0.068	0.061	0.075	0.029	0.028

Note: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Note: Model 2 (female), Model 3 (male)

**Regression of Education Expenditure on Residency and Gender (1992,1997,2002): 18-24 years old**

	1992			1997			2002		
	(1) coefft	(2) coefft	(3) coefft	(1) coefft	(2) coefft	(3) coefft	(1) coefft	(2) coefft	(3) coefft
Residency (1=urban 0=rural)	6,831.284*** (7.554)	6,125.229*** (4.625)	7,510.891*** (6.096)	9,805.412*** (9.623)	9,930.234*** (6.747)	9,681.244*** (6.873)	10,639.505*** (11.430)	9,568.832*** (7.334)	11,786.125*** (8.877)
Gender (1=female 0=male)		-255.321 (-0.391)		1,278.817 (1.378)			1,421.583* (1.666)		
Constant	13,986.632*** (15.716)	14,333.974*** (11.714)	13,417.658*** (11.901)	20,177.247*** (20.847)	21,365.755*** (17.067)	20,262.820*** (17.327)	31,374.765*** (35.088)	33,550.740*** (30.635)	30,576.292*** (27.598)
N		2,027	1,038	989	1,774	915	859	5,178	2,698
Adjusted R2		0.026	0.019	0.035	0.050	0.046	0.051	0.025	0.019

Note: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Note: Model 2 (female), Model 3 (male)

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Protocol**

The following represents the questions for the interviews to be conducted for this study.

- 1) Do you consider education as an important factor for success in your life? Why?
- 2) Would you say your family agrees or disagrees with you? Why?
- 3) Do you think Thai government provides enough free education? (The 15 years free education)
- 4) Do you think it is effective?
  - a. If yes, why?
  - b. If you think it is not effective, can you explain why, and do you recognize any patterns in the inequality in education?
- 5) Do you think it is equal to people of all classes?
  - a. If yes, why?
  - b. If you think it is not effective, can you explain why, and do you recognize any patterns in the inequality in education?
- 6) Do you think inequality exists in the education system? Please kindly elaborate.
  - a. If yes, do you think there are any variations that can lower or eliminate the inequality of Thailand education system?
- 7) Do you think the internal factors such as family financial status or family support have impact on the level of education you received? Why?
- 8) Do you think the external factors such as government policy have impact on the level of education you received? Why?
- 9) If you have a chance to further your study, would you do so? Why?
- 10) If you have children, would you encourage them to have high education? How and why?

#### **Questions for interviewees with education level less than bachelor's degree**

- 1) Why did you drop out of school or did not further your study?
- 2) Did you made the decision yourself or was it made by someone else?

## **Appendix C**

### **Consent Form (Interview)**

#### **CONSENT FORM**

This form is to request your agreement to participate as a subject in the study on the inequality in Thailand education system conducted by Krittiya Kantachote under the supervision of Professor Yuping Zhang.

The purpose of the study is to understand the causes of the inequality of the education system in Thailand and distinguish what are the major causes of such inequality.

The procedures that will be used in this study are as follows: the interviewer will ask the interviewee ten questions regarding Thailand education system. During the whole interview, audiotaping will be activated.

Your participation in the study will involve a one-time interview which will last from thirty minutes to forty -five minutes.

The possible risks associated with the study are: some questions asked may be perceived as an invasion of privacy or inconvenience to the interviewee.

You may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, but participation may help to increase knowledge that may benefit others in the future.

Any data or answers to questions will remain confidential with regard to your identity.

Any information collected through this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

Your decision whether or not to participate is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without jeopardizing your relationship with Lehigh University. If you are uncomfortable in answering any of the questions, you have the right to skip that question.

If you have any questions about this study and what is expected of you in this study, you may call Professor Yuping Zhang at (610) 758-3820.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact Susan E. Disidore at (610)758-3020 (email: sus5@lehigh.edu) or Troy Boni at (610)758-2985 (email: tdb308@lehigh.edu) of the Lehigh University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

To confirm that you have read and understand the foregoing information, that you have received answers to any questions you asked, and to consent to participate in the study, please sign below.



**Appendix C cont.**

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Date

Subject's Signature

**Audio Recording Release Form**

I give consent to be audio recorded during this study:

Please initial: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No



## Appendix E

### IRB Approval



Office of Educational  
Systems and Programs  
126 Deane Hall, Coates  
Delaware, PA 18040-1946  
(610) 762-8821 Fax: (610) 762-9944  
http://www.lehigh.edu/lehigh

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DATE: March 5, 2012

TO: Krittiya Kantachote / Yiping Zhang, PH.D.  
FROM: Lehigh University IRB

STUDY TITLE: [08587-2] An analysis of the causes of the inequality of the education system in Thailand

IRB REFERENCE #: 12/135

SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Renewal/Progress Report

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: March 2, 2012

PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE: March 1, 2013

INITIAL APPROVAL DATE: March 2, 2012

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Renewal

Thank you for your submission of materials for this research study. The Lehigh University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design where the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with the approved submission. This approval is valid for one year.

This submission has received Expedited Renewal based on the Lehigh University Policy on the Protection of Human Subjects in Research.

Reapproval and Progress Report: The current approval will expire on March 1, 2013. If you wish to continue beyond that time, you must submit a renewal request and progress report on the Continuing Renewal form via IRBNet. This protocol will be due for continuing IRB renewal 80 days before the expiration date of March 1, 2013.

Informed Consent: Please remember that INFORMED CONSENT is a process beginning with a description of the study and his/her choice of subject understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must occur throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and the research subject. The Lehigh University policy requires each subject receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Changes or Amendments: If during the year you propose significant changes to your approved protocol, please submit these changes for review using the amendment/ modification form through IRBNet. The proposed changes may not be initiated without IRB approval (except where necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to subjects).

Adverse Events: All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms through IRBNet for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed. Any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to research subjects and others resulting from this study must be reported promptly to the Lehigh University IRB. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the committee.

Non-compliance or Complaints: Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

## Appendix E cont.

Completion of Study and Record Retention: Please notify the Lehigh University IRB as soon as the research has been completed. Study records, including the protocol and signed consent forms (originals) for each subject, must be kept in a secured location by the investigator for 3 years following the study's completion.

If you have any questions, please contact Susan E. Dickore at 610-758-3020 (E-mail: [sus5@lehigh.edu](mailto:sus5@lehigh.edu)) or Troy Boulat at 610-758-2985 (E-mail: [tb308@lehigh.edu](mailto:tb308@lehigh.edu)). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

cont

-2-

Generated on PS-Net

## Appendix F

### Sample Information

Participant	Region	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Highest Education Level	Occupation
1	Notheast	Female	38	Married	Lower secondary	Local restaurant
2	Northeast	Male	76	Married	Primary school	Farmer
3	Notheast	Female	49	Married	Lower secondary	Housewife
4	Northeast	Male	29	Single	Bachelor's degree	Sales representative
5	Northeast	Male	52	Married	Upper secondary	State enterprises officer
6	Northeast	Male	55	Married	Bachelor's degree	Teacher
7	Northeast	Male	37	Married	Upper secondary	Sales representative
8	Northeast	Male	50	Divorced	Upper secondary	Farmer
9	Notheast	Female	40	Married	Bachelor's degree	Merchant
10	Notheast	Female	47	Married	Lower vocational degree (Porworchor)	Bank officer
11	Bangkok	Male	26	Single	Bachelor's degree	Private company officer
12	Bangkok	Male	24	Single	Bachelor's degree	Student (Masters candidate)
13	Bangkok	Male	24	Single	Bachelor's degree	Student (Masters candidate)
14	Bangkok	Female	63	Married	Bachelor's degree	Retired
15	Bangkok	Female	27	Single	Bachelor's degree	Private company officer
16	Bangkok	Male	24	Single	Master's degree	Private company officer
17	Bangkok	Male	24	Single	Bachelor's degree	Private company officer
18	Bangkok	Male	24	Single	Bachelor's degree	Architecture, lecturer, own a business
19	Bangkok	Female	40	Single	Bachelor's degree	Own a business
20	Bangkok	Male	60	Married	Bachelor's degree	Consultant
21	Bangkok	Male	40	Single	PhD.	Government Officer
22	Bangkok	Male	35	Married	PhD.	Professor
23	Bangkok	Male	26	Single	Bachelor's degree	Lawyer
24	Bangkok	Female	27	Single	Bachelor's degree	Baby sitter
25	Bangkok	Female	24	Single	Bachelor's degree	Private company officer
26	Pennsylvania	Female	25	Single	Bachelor's degree	Student (Masters-PhD candidate)
27	Pennsylvania	Female	25	Single	Bachelor's degree	Student (Masters-PhD candidate)
28	North Carolina	Male	38	Married	Bachelor's degree	Student (Masters candidate)
29	North Carolina	Male	27	Single	Bachelor's degree	Student (PhD candidate)
30	North Carolina	Male	24	Married	Bachelor's degree	Photographer

# Krittiya Kantachote

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## EDUCATION

2011-Present **Lehigh University**, Pennsylvania

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Thesis: *Educational Stratification in Thailand: Gender and Residency Effects*

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Major: International Relations

Minor: English Language

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

Stratification and class, gender, globalization, social policy, education, immigration, Southeast Asian Studies, qualitative methods, quantitative methods

## RESEARCH TRAINING

**Qualitative Data Analysis Software-** Atlas. ti

**Statistical Programs-** STATA, SPSS

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

MA Thesis Principal Investigator, Educational Stratification in Thailand: Gender and Residency Effects

2011 Principal Investigator, Ethnography: Lehigh University Christian Fellowship

2011 Principal Investigator, Interview: An Analysis of the Effects of the American Dream on an Individual's Life

- 2011 Principal Investigator, Text Analysis: Have the Health Column in USnews.com Attempted to Attract a Larger Audience Group over the Year?
- 2011 Principal Investigator, Comparative Historical: Bethlehem Steel

### **AWARDS AND GRANTS**

- 2012 • Strohl Graduate Summer 2012 Research Fellowship to do an Analysis of the Causes of the Education Inequality in Thailand, Lehigh University
- 2010 • Royal Thai Government Scholarship to pursue Master and Ph.D. Degrees in Sociology, emphasizing in Globalization and Social Policy

### **ACTIVITIES**

- 2013 • Participant, Teacher Development Program, Lehigh University
- 2012 • Vice President of Thai Student Association, Lehigh University
- Participant, Study Trip to the United Nations, New York.
- 2009 • Participant, The Joint Online Course, Free Trade Agreements in East Asia, Thammasat University
- Vice President of U.S. Studies Club, Thammasat University

### **WORK EXPERIENCE**

April 2010-May 2011 Double A (1991) Public Company Limited, Thailand.  
Acting Compensation Manager

### **SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS**

- 2013 • Educational Stratification in Thailand: Gender and Residency Effects  
Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting. Boston, MA, March 21-24, 2013

### **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

- Eastern Sociological Society (Member)