Thai Family Demography :
A Review and Research Prospects

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Introduction

This paper attempts to give an overview of demographic knowledge on the Thai family and to suggest directions for future research. It should be noted that the field of family and household demography is in itself fairly new, especially when viewed in contrast to some of the other topics in the field such as fertility and mortality. Demographers who first began to define the field of family demography had to draw together studies from several different disciplines, including anthropology, history, economics and sociology, and from these formulate a basis for studying the family that is uniquely demographic (see Sweet 1977; Burch 1979; Bongarts 1983; Thornton and Fricke 1987). The newness of the field should be stressed, for not only is there no general agreement on appropriate measurement of such concepts as household structure and headship, but the theoretical focus for addressing such issues as family change under industrialization is continually under debate.

The fact that much remains to be known about the Thai family may actually be advantageous, since Thai demographers are in a position to make a significant contribution to the development of the field. This opportunity is especially challenging in light of the rapid socioeconomic changes in Thailand in the past two decades. There is an urgent need both to collate what is already known about the Thai family and to design and implement studies which fill gaps in this knowledge. An understanding of the traditional Thai family, including family relationships andstructure, and an examination of the mechanisms of change within the family is vitally needed to assess the impact of this process.

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Family Demography and the Thai Context

Demographers may be motivated to study families and households as determinants of other demographic processes (such as fertility); as outcomes of demographic processes or social change (such as divorce or industrialization); or as subjects of interest in their own right. The household is a key decision- making unit in demographic behavior such as fertility and migration, and demographers have begun to use the household rather than the individual as the unit of analysis for modelling this behavior. For this reason a great deal needs to be known about processes of family formation and dissolution, as well as about how decision-making occurs within the household. This includes an examination of the power structure within the household, as members often do not act as a unit (Dwyer and Bruce 1988). In fact, there is no uniform definition in social science for the terms household family. Anthropologists, and to a lesser degree sociologists, tend to define the family as a socially recognized network of individuals, who are kin (or possibly, fictive kin) to each other, but who do not necessarily co-reside. Households are defined by anthropologists as units of individuals who live together, but who do not necessarily share resources or are kin to each other (Yanagisako 1979; Thornton and Fricke 1987). Demographers usually define the household in the same way, but usually use the term family to describe only kin who co-reside (Burch 1979). As discussion about the appropriate focus of household and family demography progresses, these definitions continue to gain refinement.

Much research has attempted to assess how social changes affect the family, including an extensive debate over whether (and how) industrialization affects family structure (Goode 1963; Levy 1965; Burch 1979; Ruggles 1987). Critics of early theories have disagreed with the contention that the industrial family will converge to a similar form across cultures, ostensibly that of the nuclear household (Thornton & Fricke 1987; Xenos 1988; McDonald 1988). Bumpass (1990) maintains however that early theories were correct in predicting the rise of individual over community and family concerns, as evidenced by divorce patterns and changing roles for women in Western countries. The current consensus among many theorists is that a better understanding of the mechanisms of change within the household is the only way to construct a universal theory of family change. This would include an understanding of roles and obligations, decision-making and the power structure of the family, and a delineation of household formation and dissolution as well as the internal construction of the household in a given context.

Much of the theoretical focus of work on the Thai family has centered on an extensive debate on the "loosely structured" paradigm, which was developed in an article by Embree (1950) and in the work by Lauriston Sharp and colleagues from Cornell University in the Ban Chang village of the Central region (Sharp et al. 1978). The paradigm views Thai behavior and personality as relatively less governed by "standard" rules and norms. In other words, the Thai way of behaving allows considerable variation, and society as a whole shows a considerable degree of tolerance toward such variations. The most cogently developed critiques of this paradigm were put forward by anthropologists Sulamith and Jack Potter. Sulamith Potter (1977), by giving a detailed outline of the interconnections in the daily life of a northern Thai family, gave a synthesized description of the matrilineal system which has become the accepted basis of the Thai traditional family. Jack Potter (1976) further developed the theoretical basis of this critique. Others who have presented analysis of the roles and obligations of Thai family life have cited the influence of Buddhism. These include Keyes (1977) outline of the prominent cultural groups in Southeast Asia, Knodel et al.'s (1987) explanation of the rapid fertility decline in Thailand, and Pramualratana's (1990) description of the role of the elderly in a village undergoing rapid change

With the exception of extensive work on marriage by Chamratrithirong, Limanonda and others, strictly demographic descriptive works on the Thai household are few in number. Little attention has been paid to household size or headship. The same is true of marital disruption; while some have examined the impact of marital disruption on fertility, the impact of marital disruption on household structure, headship or the living arrangements of children have not been assessed. While many ethnographic works contain information on household structure, few have examined household type on a national scale or paid attention to change in household co-residence over time.

Lastly, the topic of social change and the family is only recently emerging as an important topic. The shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy has created an urgent need to study the urban family and to study how families change through migration. But in order to study change, there must be a clear understanding of the traditional Thai family.

Demographic Processes Associated With Families and Households

Marriage

Research on marriage in Thailand is found in ethnographies describing marriage patterns in relation to kinship networks, and in demographic studies of age of marriage, life-long singlehood and their correlates over time. Traditional Thai marriage is characterized by individual choice of spouse, often based on romantic love, although the approval of the parents is desired (Foster 1975; Keyes 1977; Podhisita 1985). Arranged marriage is cited mainly among upper class families and has declined in importance (Limanonda 1979). Studies of traditional rural life document that most Thais married from within their village but outside of their matrilineage (J. Potter 1976). Podhisita (1985) in his study of a village in Roi Et found that 45% of couples were of approximately equal socioeconomic status, with the remainder split roughly evenly between husbands or wives coming from higher status families. In many cases a bridewealth payment is made by the groom's family, but this is not a rigid system. Many ethnographies describe the courtship rituals of young village people and the Buddhist marriage ceremony. In modern Thailand, several types of marriage co-exist: formal marriage including either a Buddhist ceremony, legal registration or both; elopement; and simple cohabitation. Cohabitation is quite common in urban slums, and parents have little involvement in choice of spouse (Cherlin and Chamratrithirong 1988).

Studies on the Thai viewpoint of the appropriate age to marry find that, as in most cultures, marriage is associated with maturity and the ability to support children. For men, it is believed that compulsory military service and ordination should precede marriage (Pramualratana et al. 1984; Podhisita 1990). Average age at marriage, after a period of gradual increase, has stabilized at around 22 years for women and 24 years for men; there is little age difference between men and women (Knodel et al. 1984; Limanonda 1991). Moslem women tend to marry at younger ages than Buddhist women although this is on an upward trend, and there tends to be a greater age gap between Moslem spouses (Rachapaetayakom 1984). Several studies have examined determinants of age at marriage, including life cycle factors. An urban hierarchy exists for age at marriage, as rural women tend to marry earliest and Bangkok women latest, with migration also found to delay marriage. Among life cycle factors education has a strong impact, as does labor force participation and non-agricultural employment

(Limanonda 1983, 1988). Cheung (1984) found that while work entry generally precedes marriage, working outside the family is associated with earlier marriage. Limanonda (1989), by estimating proportional hazards models of the covariates of age at marriage, showed that higher educatic͏ ͏ ͏rnment employment, higher income, Bangkok residence, and Chinese heritage were associated with delayed marriage, while being the first born child and having fewer siblings predicted earlier marriage.

While marriage is nearly universal in Thailand, there is no negative perception of women who remain unmarried (Chamratrithirong 1984). Several village studies have shown that while men who remain single tend to be "abnormal" in some way, life-long single women tend to be those from higher status families who are unable to find a suitable mate (S. Potter 1977; Podhisita 1985). There tends to be an urban hierarchy in the proportion of women remaining single, as singlehood is also associated with higher education and employment (Limanonda 1988).

Marital disruption

Divorce is fairly common in Thailand and there is little social stigma associated with divorce and remarriage. Survey data from the mid-1970's to early 1980's showed that about 15% of first marriages would result in separation or divorce within 20 years (Smith 1981; Knodel et al. 1984). A recent study showed that 25% of women and 13% of men had considered divorce at some time(Limanonda 1991). But most remarry quickly (two-thirds within 5 years) and so those studying the impact of marital disruption on fertility have found little effect (Limanonda 1988). Covariates of marital disruption include low education, Moslem religion and migrant status (Smith 1981). Several studies have examined the proportion who report themselves married with spouse absent. While this is found to be quite common among migrants and especially in Bangkok, the fact that a much higher proportion of women than men report living separately from their spouse implies the possibility that many are "minor wives" (Goldstein et al. 1973; Knodel et al. 1984). But migration also causes many spouses to live separately.

Household size

There has been little research on household size per se, as family studies in the ethnographic form far outnumber demographic works on the household. Hutaserani

(1989) outlines the downward trend in household size in both rural and urban areas. Mason et al. (1986) estimated household projections for Thailand to the year 2015 that indicate this trend will continue. Findings from the Socioeconomic Survey (National Statistical Office 1976, 1988) show that the national average size has fallen from 5.5 in 1975/76 to 4.0 in 1988, and that the drop is consistent by urban status and region. Since this data treats sub-families who earn their own income as a separate household, these figures may underestimate household size; and of course, in large part the downward trend may be attributed to the rapid drop in fertility during the same period. Thus findings on household size alone tell little about the underlying processes of change in structure and co-residence.

Headship

Little is known about the nature of headship, as designated by national censuses and surveys. While there is a general understanding of the family life cycle of co-residence (see below), how this is translated into headship patterns that could be examined over time is unknown. For example, it is not known whether an elderly parent who is no longer economically active continues to be listed as the head of household, or whether this is consistent over time and across urban status. The Socioeconomic Survey shows an increase in female headed households from 16.7% in 1975/76 to 20.5% in 1988; the increase is consistent across region and urban status, and in Bangkok fully 26.5% of households were headed by women in 1988. Mason et al. (1986) used Census data to show that female headship increased with age, indicating that most female heads were widows living in an extended family. But little research has been done either on characteristics of female-headed households or on women and children's living arrangements after marital disruption. Thorbek's (1987) work in a Bangkok slum found that female-headed households were common. A recent paper using data from the Thai Demographic Survey showed that 15.7% of children aged 0-15 were living in a female headed household, with 7.3% in a household headed by their mother (Lloyd and Desai 1991). Women who mainly support their children themselves due to widowhood, divorce or an unreliable spouse are at great risk of poverty due to their limited earning potential (Richter and Havanon 1993). Since world-wide research has indicated that an increase in women-supported households often accompanies the industrialization process (Buvinic et al. 1978), further research on the Thai case is clearly called for.

Household structure

As in most countries of the world, household structure in Thailand is best understood when examined in the context of the family life cycle, outlined further below. Ethnographic studies consistently find a mix of nuclear and extended households, with nuclear households predominating when viewed in the cross section (J. Potter 1976; Podhisita 1985; Tominaga 1987). A common residence pattern both for urban and rural households is the family compound, where adult children build an independent house on the parental land. This pattern is often missed by conventional surveys if households are defined narrowly. The family compound is particularly important among middle and upper class families in urban areas (Keyes 1977). Hutaserani (1989) found a relationship between higher education and nuclear residence using survey data. Mason et al. (1986) predicted no decline in family households or in lineally extended families (containing three or more generations) into the next century, though they did see a decline in the inclusion of laterally extended members (such as siblings of the head or spouse). Since most conventional household typologies used by national surveys mask the underlying relationships of interest (e.g. combining nuclear and three-generation households and providing no information on the family members present), careful demographic delineation of household structure on a national level is badly needed.

Kinship, Family Relationships and Roles

The flexibility of Thai family structure

As mentioned above, early ethnographers in rural Thailand interpreted what they perceived as a lack of strong prescriptive kinship ties or norms for household co-residence as an indication of "loose structure". Several ethnographers have pointed out the reasons that previous researchers may have been unable to perceive the underlying structure of Thai kinship. These include the stress on individual freedom; the flexibility of co-residence; and the importance of women in the definition of structural ties even though men have formal authority. These factors may obscure the strong normative prescriptions for behavior, based on the Buddhist precepts of obligation to the parents (Potter 1976; Potter 1977; Yoddumnern 1985; Pramualratana 1990). The debate about "loose structure" is clarified if viewed in a comparative framework. As Keyes (1977)

says, "practically the only inalterable social attribute determined by birth is one's sex. Even one's kinship status is potentially changeable. In at least some central Thai villages, adoption and fosterage are well-developed patterns; even if one is raised within the same family through childhood, one eventually will establish a totally independent family....In contrast to these patterns, however, observers of village life in northern and northeastern Thailand and in Laos have reported patterns of enduring kinship relationships than last throughout the lifetime of the individual. These patterns too can be rationalized by reference to Buddhist beliefs as one's ascriptive kinship position is seen as a consequence of past karma. However nowhere in the region do we find socialization constrained by kinship patterns to the degree that it is in either India or China." (p. 165)

Kinship, as defined in the conventional anthropological sense, follows a bilateral system in Thailand. Kinship terms and relationships are based on sex, relative age and generation. These relationships are best understood if viewed in a structural context based on family roles, Buddhist principles and Thai economichistory. As a starting point, it should be realized that the household is important in the Thai context because rice production is a domestic enterprise (Foster 1984). The question of who among several children would inherit farmland requires some form of enduring kinship system. In the traditional Thai family, particularly in the North and Northeast which were the focus of most ethnographies, this system is the matrilineage. In its classic form the matrilineage is a group of related households which trace their common descent to a group of sisters who lived from 3-8 generations ago, which in the past were based on female centered spirit cults (Pongsapich 1990). In this system the key family relationships are between the parents and their daughters and sons-in-law (J. Potter 1976). While there has always been a great deal of variation in Thai household structure, the importance of matrilineal ties has persisted to the present (see Thorbek 1987; Podhisita 1990).

The family life cycle and inheritance patterns

The implications of the matrilineal system on the family life cycle are that the household has alternate phases of being nuclear and extended. Men normally move into their wife's parent's household for a period of one to three years and then establish a separate, economically independent household (Podhisita 1985). There is some resistance to having more than two married couples in the household at one time

(Foster 1975). The most common pattern is for the youngest daughter and her husband to remain in the parental household to care for the parents and continue the family enterprise. In the typical family life cycle, the non-permanent son-in-law (the husband of an older daughter) moves into the household when his father-in-law is still economically active and relatively powerful, because he controls inheritance. The permanent son-in-law moves in when the father-in-law is older and economically dependent. Although inheritance is normatively equally split among all siblings, there is a tendency to leave the house and possibly a larger share of land to the daughter and son in-law who remain in the parental household (Attig n.d.; Yoddumnern-Attig et al. 1992). Some researchers report tension within the family about inheritance, especially with land scarcity, and that old people may hold on to their assets to assure that their children will remain tied to them (Potter 1976; Pramualratana 1990).

Social Change and the Thai Family

Rapid economic development has transformed Thai society in the past twenty years. The impact of this change on social structure is perhaps best viewed through changes in the family, for reasons cited above. The main question is how the shift from an agricultural to industrial economy, resulting in new opportunities in urban areas and declining opportunities in rural areas, has affected the family.

Studies of change in the rural Thai family have outlined how these economic changes combined with the scarcity of land led to changes in inheritance patterns and co-residence. Some have maintained that economic changes caused the matrilocal system to break down in the Central region first and that this change would eventually spread to the North and Northeast as well (Keyes 1977; Mougne 1988). Foster (1975) found that the child most suited to farming tended to stay with the parents while the others migrated, and that this was no longer necessarily the youngest child; in some cases, all the children left the village. Several researchers have cited how parents may now choose to give their children education as an inheritance rather than land, as this provides more economic security (Keyes 1977; Podhisita 1985; Knodel et al. 1987; Xenos 1988; Podhisita 1991). In other words, external factors have affected the ability to conform to family norms. Changes have included an increasing role for sons, delay of marriage until a secure non-agricultural occupation could be established, and increased importance of siblings as household economic dynamics are transformed (Yoddumnern 1985). But an analysis of the Thai Demographic Survey found the lack of a major

change in post-nuptial co-residence patterns, as most still lived with parents; and a small-scale study showed that 70% of couples in the Northeast lived with or near the wife's parents in the year after marriage (Limanonda 1991).

There have been few studies of family ties and household structure in urban areas, particularly among the emerging middle class (Tominaga 1987; Keyes 1987). Higher education may increase female autonomy and delay marriage in these groups, although this is not yet clear (Cherlin and Chamratrithirong 1988; Limanonda 1989). Chamratrithirong et al. (1988) found an emerging pattern of "lucrilocality" for post-nuptial residence in Central Thailand. In Bangkok in particular couples tended to live where resources were available rather than following a matrilineal pattern. Some have maintained that marriage patterns and family structure are less traditional in Bangkok's slums, although extended families continue to be common (Keyes 1977; Cherlin and Chamratrithirong 1988). But Thorbek (1987) in her study of women in a Bangkok slum found that matrilineal links continued to be important, and particularly those between mother and daughter. In fact these links were the most stable unit in the community, as associations with men did not provide financial security. Sisters and mothers assisted economically, in child care and domestic work and in mediating conflicts with fathers and husbands.

Only a few studies have explicitly examined the impact of migration on family structure, either in the sending or receiving community. Pongsapich (1988) found that women left as heads of household in the village when their husband migrated usually became more self-sufficient, although they also tended to depend on their parents to a greater extend. She found that male migration to Bangkok or abroad generally had a positive effect on the family; overall adjustment was good and the family generally put the money remitted to good use. While several studies have examined migration consequences on the individual (e.g. Chamratrithirong et al. 1979), research on migration using the household as the unit of analysis is lacking in Thailand.

Kinship structure and household co-residence patterns have the greatest consequences for the most dependent members of the family, namely children and the elderly. Critics of the "loose structure" theory point to the fact that the vast majority of elderly Thais continue to live with one of their children. A fertility survey found that expectations of reliance on children in old age persist: 88% expected to rely on their children and 84% expected to live with their children (Arnold and Pejaranonda 1977). A

study of living arrangements of the elderly found that 80% of those with living children co-resided with a child, and 91% were in daily contact with a child (Knodel et al. 1992). Reliance on children in old age remains a deeply rooted cultural expectation attributed to the Buddhist precept of *bunkhun,* or parent repayment, with obligates children to reciprocate for the care that they were given when they were children (Knodel et al. 1987; Pramualratana 1990).

Migration and urbanization do have an effect on support for the elderly, however. In his study of a village near Bangkok Pramualratana (1990) found that, although twice as many sons as daughters lived with old parents, for active support old people considered daughters to be more reliable than sons. Many of the sons worked outside the community and lived at home as a convenience. The elderly people interviewed felt that sons didn't worry about them or give emotional support as much as daughters, who both monitored them and gave material support. This pattern shows how matrilineal links continue to be strong. Yet Pramualratana found that demands of modern jobs, such as time schedules and commuting, as well as the necessity to devote time and money to their own children did cut down the amount of care that children could give their elderly parents. The strains of new obligations and often separate residence lead to "consensual neglect", as old people realize that children are caught up in social change and realize the constraints placed on them.

Care of children, especially in the youngest ages, is another indicator of family change. As women enter the work force in greater numbers and migration breaks up the extended family, child care may be relegated to non-relatives and institutional settings such as nurseries. Richter et al. (1992), in a recent study of Bangkok mothers of young children, found that the grandmother is the preferred choice for child care if the mother is unavailable. Often the maternal grandmother was named specifically, and most reports of conflicts with relatives over child care were with in-laws. A not uncommon pattern, especially for low income and migrant women but found among others as well, was for young children to live apart from the mother until they reached school age. Child fostering is not new in Thailand, as anthropological studies reported that childless couples in the past would often informally adopt a relative, often a niece, who would care for them in old age and inherit the house and land (J. Potter 1976; Podhisita 1985; Yoddumnern 1985). A retrospective study of household structure found that about 8% of those aged 15-55 did not live with their mother at age 10 (Podhisita 1991). An analysis of the Thai Demographic and Health Survey showed that 7.0% of children

under age 15 were living separately from their mother; this was the highest figure among DHS countries outside of Africa and the Caribbean (Lloyd and Desai 1991). While this pattern was thought to be becoming less frequent with Thailand's fertility decline, it may be that migration and the preference for relatives over non-relatives and institutions for child care would continue the practice of child fostering. This is also a strategy that women supporting children on their own may use in times of economic crisis (Richter and Havanon 1993).

Future Directions for Family Research

This review has shown a solid background in several aspects of the Thai household and family. Details of marriage patterns, the underlying matrilineal structure of kinship and the flexibility of the Thai system are by now well understood. But many areas have not been well covered, and most importantly, the need for research on the impact of socioeconomic change on family relationships is of crucial importance. Some suggestions for future research are as follows:

1.   Family roles and obligations: According to the "loose structure" paradigm, the lack of strict rules about behavior and strong sanctions associated with them generally prevails in interpersonal relationships, including that among family members (husband-wife, parents-children, and daughter-son). Research in this respect is needed primarily not to support nor to falsify the "loose structure" paradigm but to suggest what might be considered standard roles and obligations toward the family among the Thai, and how they are observed or enforced. Research issues may also include the division of labor, economic contributions of daughters and sons to the family, decision-making and power and authority in the family. Studies in this respect can enhance comparisons of the Thai family, with those from other Asian countries. If it is possible to identify an acceptable set of standard roles and obligations, these can also serve as grounds for studies of family change.

2.   Marital stability: To date a number of studies have been conducted on nuptiality in Thailand. We now have a fairly good knowledge of the timing and prevalence (or pattern of the Thai marriage). Admittedly, we know relatively little about marital stability. Conservative views about this seem to assume that marriage in rural areas is more or less stable; marital disruption due to divorce, separation and death of the spouse happens but in insignificant proportions. This needs to be empirically

tested with a survey on a national scale. Scattered evidence from some field experiences seem to suggest that there is much to be learned about marital stability, including separate co-residence of spouses due to migration or other reasons, the existence of minor wives, and trends in formal divorce and remarriage in both rural and urban Thailand.

3. Family support to the elderly: The Thai population has recently reached an advanced stage of mortality and fertility transition. The inevitably profound effects of this transition on the population age structure have not yet been felt, however. With about 7% of the population aged 60 and above and given the current rate of growth, it will take about two decades or so before the Thai population has a significant proportion of old people i.e. 10% or more of the population being elderly (Chayovan et al. 1988). Nevertheless, rural Thailand begins to face some problems concerning its old people. The problems stem not from the population structure as such but rather from out-migration of the labor force which for many families leaves behind only the old and young. Part of the problem stems from a lack of sufficient welfare programs which benefit the elderly in rural areas. Although a small number of researchers have done some studies on this issue, more is needed which could address the state of problems encountered by the elderly and suggest the kinds of intervention programs needed.

4. Family support to the young generation: The theme of research in this respect may be understood under the concept of "transitions to adulthood". But the focus here is on the kind of material support and the pattern of support the family gives to its younger generation in order to help them establish their lives in the future. Traditionally land is the most important material support for children for establishing themselves in family life. But with increasing scarcity and fragmentation it becomes more difficult for a number of rural families to provide all children with sufficient land. Other mechanisms, therefore, need to be sought. Recently, employment outside the family farm is often exploited as the source of livelihood for some children of the family. Education is, of course, more desirable and necessary for that purpose, but only a small proportion of the families are able to afford it. Research in this respect may address, among other things, family strategies with regard to how resources are allocated to children in the process of transition to their adulthood. Questions such as the following are of interest: Who gets the family land and who gets education? How do families of different economic classes support their

children with regard to education? Who stays home (settles down in the same community) with parents, and who leaves? What are the differences in family support to daughters compared to that given to sons? Knowledge gained from these kinds of research may contribute to further understanding of the trend in social formation in rural areas.

5.   *Adolescence in rural areas:*   Complimentary to the above topic, it should be noted that little attention paid to those in this age group. Under circumstances of rapid change in rural areas brought about by expansion of mass communication and education, there is much to wonder as to what behavioral responses are taking place among rural adolescents. Research might address numerous issues such as: How do rural adolescents and youth spend their time, how much is allocated for their families, and how much for their own interests? What has happened in regards to their sexuality? Is there change in the adolescent problems that face rural society as compared to those taking place in the urban counterpart? In recent years a few researchers seem to have begun some work along this line (e.g. Ford and Saiprasert, 1993) but more research is needed to add to the present state of the arts on these issues.

6.   *Family response to AIDS epidemics:*   To date numerous studies have revealed the fact that HIV infection and AIDS have reached the stage in which all members of the family are at risk (e.g. Weniger et al 1991; Sittitrai, 1992) While the number of full-blown AIDS and AIDS related cases increases rapidly and tremendously in both the rural and urban sectors, there is a pressing need for the family to response to this crisis in a very positive way. On the one hand, family members -- and indeed, family as a whole -- need to be informed about how to change their behavior in order to protect themselves from HIV infection. On the other, family needs to be prepared for caring of its HIV/AIDS infected members as well as liiving with AIDS. These are crucial issues that are facing contemporary Thai family. Needless to say, a large number of AIDS studies exist in Thailand and will continue to increase, but very few have looked into the role of the family and its response to the crisis. Social scientists, psychologists and health scientists, to mention just a few, have much to do in this regard.

Since family and household studies are a relatively new area within demography, it is not surprising that much work remains to be done to understand and

describe Thai household and family structure. We would repeat that this challenge is one that must be met quickly, as rapid changes continue to transform Thai society.

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