

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research show that the male and female subjects want to choose their marriage partner by themselves and that they feel that they must love somebody in order for them to get married. These results show that the students feel that love is one of the most important aspects in the selection of their marriage partner. But love for another person is not an easy thing to have. In order for two people to really be in love it seems that number of things must be present. Prescott describes the characteristics of love in the following way.

Valid love seems to include the following components:

1. Love involves more or less empathy with the loved one. A person who loves actually enters into the feeling of and shares intimately the experiences of the loved one and the effects of these experiences upon the loved one.
2. One who loves is deeply concerned for the welfare, happiness, and development of the beloved. This concern is so deep as to become one of the major organizing values in the personality or self-structure of the loving person...
3. One who loves finds pleasure in making his resources available to the loved one, to be used by the other to enhance his welfare, happiness, and development.
4. Of course the loving person seeks a maximum of participation in the activities that contribute to the welfare, happiness, and development of the beloved. But he also accepts fully the uniqueness and individuality of the beloved and, to the degree implied by the beloved's maturity level, accords to the latter full freedom to experience, to act, and to become what he desires to become. A loving person has a non-possessive respect for the selfhood of the loved one. (13)

From these components we can see four important factors emerging as important qualities of love.

1. The knowledge of the opposite sex. If individuals do not understand the opposite sex it will be very difficult for them to love a member of the opposite sex. How can they understand each other is the question that may be raised here. Knowledge about the opposite sex can be obtained in a number of different ways:

(a) They can get knowledge of the opposite sex from the members of the same sex group who have had contact with the opposite sex.

(b) They can obtain this knowledge by extended contact with members of the opposite sex.

2. They must have the ability to trust members of the opposite sex; one of the most important characteristics of the love relationship is mutual trust of the two partners.

3. They must have the ability to understand the cues of members of the opposite sex. They have to know when one is accepted or not; they must be able to forgive and know how to please the person whom they love.

4. Respect is another important characteristic that appears in Areacott's concept of love.

However, for the actual interaction between boys and girls, as is seen in the results and which has been discussed in the first chapter, we can say that that boys and girls may not have sufficient interaction with members of the opposite sex in order to have the knowledge of the opposite sex which

is needed for them to love the person they will marry.

Most Thai boys and girls separated into same sex schools when they are studying in secondary school. This may indicate that they don't have any opportunities to contact each other while they are in secondary schools. Although they have the opportunities to study together in the same school at the pre-university and university level, they still continue to separate into same sex groups. The result that the female subjects said that girls cannot be as friendly with boys as they can with their girl friends seems to support this statement.

Another very important reason for the separation of boys and girls into same sex groups is family pressure. Both male and female subjects are afraid of being blamed by their parents when they make friends with members of opposite sex. They also said that if they have a boyfriend or girlfriend they ought to tell their parents, though they say they are not brave enough to tell their parents when they really have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

During adolescence, boys and girls are also separated into same sex groups as a result of pressure by their friends. Both male and female subjects feel that the girls who have close opposite sex friends will be looked at differently than others by their girl friend. They also feel that having a conversation with members of the same sex is more enjoyable than with members of the opposite sex.

When boys and girls separate themselves into same sex group, they actually will have little opportunity to gain knowledge about members of the opposite sex. The boys and girls in the university almost always stay in groups of the same sex; they usually sit together in small groups of boys and girls; the girls usually sit in the front seats of the class and the boys in the back seats. When they are out of class the boys and girls usually separate themselves into small groups of boys and small groups of girls. They may discuss deeply about various matters in these intimate groups, they may tease each other, make jokes, and share their problems. They may wait for the members of their intimate group to go to have lunch, make decisions together when they want to do something such as student activities, fieldtrips, make an appointment and go to see a film together etc. They always share their ideas with each other. The members of some intimate groups will be very close to each other for a long time; they may be in the same group all the time they are studying at the university level. The members of one group may have contact with other same sex groups but only sometimes will they have contact with groups of the opposite sex. Some girls may know only the name of the boys in the same class but may never talk to them. When they are in the same class, of course, they are physically in the same group, but the atmosphere of the class makes it seem that they are not close together.

This is not to say that there is no contact with members of the opposite sex. However, such contact is often done in

the presence of same sex group members. Only occasionally there is there an opportunity for a boy and girl to meet and talk to each other alone without others gossiping about their love for each other and the possibility of their getting married. This fear of gossip merely reinforces the lack of close interpersonal contact with members of the opposite sex.

As a result of this close same sex group contact and the fear of gossip, the pressures towards conformity are very great; the university student would find it difficult to be accepted if he was not a member of a small group. It is in this atmosphere of a desire for acceptance and the great pressure to conform that university students form and reinforce their attitudes; the attitude towards members of the opposite sex as well as other attitudes. In short, when individuals are placed in a new situation and desire acceptance by a group, they begin to accept the attitudes and values of that group.

Students enter the university, on the whole, with certain attitudes towards members of the opposite sex. As the university is a place where boys and girls can interact with each other, one would expect a great deal of knowledge of the attitudes of members of the opposite sex. However, we saw that this is not the case; 31 of the questions asked show significant differences between the male and female subjects' attitudes towards the behavior of boys and girls. What seems to be occurring is that there are strong pressures placed on the students by their own peers to conform to the accepted societal norms for girls and boys. As a result, the students

do not learn a great deal of new information about the behavior of the opposite sex but rather, in order to be accepted, maintain the attitudes and perceptions expected by the group. In other words, the desire to be accepted, which plays such a vital part in one's interaction with others, leads the students to accept the attitudes and perceptions of their peer group and not to approach members of the opposite sex with an open mind. The boys and girls are "set" to perceive members of the opposite sex in a certain way and, as a result, the information which is gathered from their interaction with the opposite sex may not be viewed in the same manner as the individual with whom they are interacting views the information. This could possibly explain the reason for the large number of significant differences between male and female subjects.

Similar interpersonal dynamics occurred in Hornum and Schild's study of a group of individuals entering a new culture about which they had a very strong stereotype. They found that individuals, faced with new experiences contradictory to their stereotype, become insecure and instead of attempting to change their stereotype they tend to move towards individuals who are in a similar condition. These individuals, who started with the same stereotype, provided support for each other; they provided each other with a "social reality" and, as a result, the group of individuals who entered the new culture served...

...As a potent referent group in regard to perceptions and attitudes relevant to the foreign environment. (5, P. 166)

Thus it may happen that the stranger's attitude to the host society may be determined as much by his interaction

with other strangers as by his interaction with the hosts (S, P 176)

The basic interpersonal dynamics discussed by Herman and Child are that individuals with the same experience will tend to move together and use each other as a frame of reference in perceiving those who are different than they are. This is especially true in situations which create insecurity.

Similarly boys and girls at the university develop and maintain their attitudes toward members of the opposite sex more by their interaction with their same sex group than by interaction with members of the opposite sex. This tendency is reinforced by the insecurity and anxiety generated by interaction between the sexes. This statement can be supported by the results that both male and female subjects said that talking or having a conversation with same sex friends is more enjoyable than it is with opposite sex friends and they also said that a girl who has a close opposite sex friend will be looked at differently from her friends. Therefore, their perception of the opposite sex is based more on a stereotype or image of the opposite sex maintained by their same sex peer group than by the information they have gathered after interaction with the opposite sex. The accuracy of this interpretation is seen in the data reported in chapter 3.

The significant differences of the responses between the male and female subjects to the 31 questions asked about the boys' and girls' behavior show a discrepancy of the perceptions between the male and female subjects. The male

subjects' responses in chapter 3 show that the boys said they can not trust the girl, and if boys are not careful they will be taken advantage of by girls while the female subjects said that the boy can trust the girl and they disagree with the idea that if boys are not careful they will be taken advantage of by girls, and vice versa. Male subjects said that girls should be as friendly with boys as they are with their girlfriends, while the female subjects said that girls should not be as friendly with the boys as they are with their girlfriends. It may be said that this is because the male subjects identified themselves with the group of the boys and the female subjects identified themselves with girls' group.

The image of the opposite sex they have is the image of mistrusting each other which may affect their behavior while they are interacting with each other. Because of this image of mistrust, the behavior of the boys may be viewed in a different way by the girls and vice versa. For example, because the male and female subjects have the image that the opposite sex can trust them, then they will not be careful while they are interacting with the opposite sex, but the opposite sex however will be very suspicious of their actions. As a result of this discrepancy in perception, they may not be able to correctly evaluate the behavior of the opposite sex. It may take them a very long time in order to understand each other because one believes one way but the others perceive his behavior in a very different way. The perception is

reinforced by the same sex group members to which the students look for their values as well as by the fear of gossip by their friends which will cause them not to become too close to members of the opposite sex or have deep discussions with them.

The difficulty of interacting with members of the opposite sex is also seen in the result that the female subjects fear that the boys will take advantage of them if they are not careful. This result also lends strong support to the finding that the girls mistrust the boys.

If we combine the subjects' tendency to place great emphasis on same sex group along with the mistrust of the opposite sex, and the fear of being taken advantage of by them, it is easily seen why students state that they would prefer having a conversation with same sex friends than with opposite sex friends.

From the above interpretations we can see that it is quite difficult for students to realize love in any way similar to Prescott's concept. What then do the students mean by love?

Love, in part, is conceived of as some sort of magical force. They feel as if they are destined to meet their future spouse because of their love in a previous life. Therefore, when their eyes meet those of the pre-chosen other, they will immediately "fall-in-love!" This type of love does ^{not} necessitate intensive interaction between the sexes or knowledge of the opposite sex. While this

concept of love is not consciously held by many students, it seems to be a good indicator of the way many conceive of love i.e. as an outside force which will bring them together.

But the students do not seem to be completely accepting of this type of love as a force which will make them happy in their future marital life. It is possible that the idea of an outside force and their general inability to interact deeply with members of the opposite sex makes them feel uneasy about their future. As we saw in Table 13, most of the male and female subjects said that both boys and girls are satisfied most during the period when they are single; a minority of students said they would be satisfied while married; many of the students said they would be most satisfied before they were married and while they were single without a girlfriend or boyfriend.

In short, it seems that the students are apprehensive of their future marriage. This possibly could also be attributed to the number of factors besides their lack of interaction with members of the opposite sex. For example, one often hears from people who are married that it is better to remain single, when one is single one is secure and doesn't have any responsibilities; also there is the economic security of the parents' home, one is always able to eat and sleep without having to worry about financial matters. Third, there is the general lack of information about matters related

to marriage, the students have difficulty discussing these matters with any knowledgeable adults. These factors plus the lack of knowledge of the opposite sex and the conception of love as a magical force leads the students to feel married life is an unknown period of life about which they know very little in which they feel they have little control.

This apprehensiveness about married life and the opposite sex leads the students not to interact closely with members of the opposite sex as well as causing the students to rely mainly in their same sex friends for knowledge of the opposite sex. The cycle is thus set in motion.

A number of the ideas discussed in this chapter are speculative and do not have research data to support them, e.g. the concept of love as a predetermined force, to be single is better than to be married. Some further research is needed to find out whether or not these ideas are accurate.