CONCLUSION

The interview data of farang women married to Thai men provided examples of Thai-farang marriage relations for analysis of patterns and changes in Thai-farang social interactions. A number of age-generational differences were found among the informants which suggest that Thai socio-economic and cultural changes, and increased Thai-farang social interactions have had reciprocal effects on each other, and in turn have affected the experience of the farang wife living in Thailand. Indeed, the main findings of this thesis implied that Thai socio-economic and cultural changes have facilitated the new-comers' adaptation experience, suggesting that on a wider scale Thai-farang interactions are less problematic than they used to be.

Age-generational differences arising from the interview data were found in a number of major areas: the woman's life experience before marriage; the place she met her spouse; her husband's independence from his family; her proximity to the extended family; her husband's propensity to change; the need to work and the social outlets available to her; the social pressure for her to speak Thai and conform to Thai social roles; the role of her children and the effects of social pressures on their cultural identity. Age-generational differences in the cultural expectations, perceptions and forms of these factors serve to highlight cultural differences and

social change in both Thailand and the 'West' over the past 40 years resulting in greater cultural flexibility on all sides of these Thai-farang marriage relationships.

Age-generational differences found in the experiences of the farang women interviewed in this thesis revealed a correlation between changes in Thailand's socio-economic conditions, Thai family obligations, Thai male/female role expectations, and Thai-farang social interactions, and the effects of these changes within Thai society upon Thai-farang marriage relationships and the farang women's marginal position in Thai society. The women's experiences not only provide an insight into Thai-farang marriages, but highlight the effects of social changes on the pattern of Thai-farang cultural and social interactions.

Changes in:

Socio-Economic Conditions

Socio-economic changes through out the world have affected the social backgrounds of both partners in these Thai-farang marriage relationships, while at the same time Thailand's rapid economic development has altered the socio-economic environment in which they live.

In general, the new-comers were found to be more independent, and had a greater sense of their own identity, which may be a function of social changes and women's liberation in the west over the past few decades. In addition to mass media and global information sources, many new-comers also had greater travel experience than their older-generation counterparts. Thus, due to their

greater awareness of different countries and cultures, the new-comers may have been better prepared for their lives in Thailand.

After over three decades of economic development, Bangkok can now boast the same modern facilities and material comforts of every modern city throughout the world, providing a superficial semblance for the farang women of life back home. In addition, the simple daily luxuries of air-conditioning and supermarkets make life less of a physical struggle today, despite the traffic, than it was for farang women moving to live in Bangkok over 20 years ago. These physical changes are the most obvious, but greater social changes beneath the surface of Bangkok's modern facade were also revealed which are believed to have facilitated the new-comers' cultural adaptation process.

One of the effects of Thailand's economic development to be seen was that the new-comers' husbands had greater job prospects and were more independent than their older-generation counterparts. While the older-generations' husbands commonly received low salaries from working for government agencies they also appeared to have more problems with peer pressure. On the other hand, the new-comers' husbands were far more likely to work for international companies or private businesses and received higher incomes. At the same time peer pressure seemed to bear less influence on their behaviour. In addition, the greater economic opportunities available to the new-comers' husbands not only reduced the necessity for their wives to work and supplement the income, but also granted the husbands more economic independence from their families. In fact, with increased financial independence, a decrease in family

socio-economic control 'and a change in Thai family obligations and residence patterns was seen.

Thai Family Obligations

Age-generational differences in the pattern of Thai family residence and social control may be a reflection of a number of socio-economic changes caused by Thailand's economic development. It is often no longer feasible for Thai extended familes to live together as there is no longer the space or economic resources for extended family compounds and it is increasingly common for Thai newly-weds to establish their own place of residence, perhaps in a town house or condominuim. In addition, the greater economic opportunites available to the new-comers' husbands have enabled these men to be more economically independent from their families and reduced the economic incentive to co-habit with the in-laws. Thus, it is no longer so difficult for a Thai man and his farang wife to live separately from his family.

Though the new-comers still complained about their in-laws' interference, changes in Thai family residence patterns, increased economic independence and phycical distance appeared to reduce the direct influence of family expectations and obligations, resulting in greater autonomy to the nuclear family unit and easing tensions between the married couple. A significant change was seen in the Thai husbands' attitudes towards their families in which the new-comers' husbands often resented any intereference from their families and were less inclined to play the 'filial son' role.

In addition to increased socio-economic independence from the extended family, a change was also found in the Thai husbands' attitude towards their relationships with their wives, reflecting apparant changes in Thai male/female role expectations.

Thai Male/Female Role Expectations

Thai socio-economic development appears to have reduced the degree of family interference and peer pressure on the new-comers' husbands who seem to be more independent in their way of thinking and behaving. While these husbands are not representative of all Thai men, their change in attitude may be an indication of the direction of social change. These apparant changes in Thai male attitudes may in turn be a reflection, or a result, of changes in the social position and expectations of Thai women. Indeed, greater economic opportunities and independence were also seen to affect the social position of Thai women and changes were also found in Thai male-female roles. Age-generational differences in the farang womens' experiences and perceptions of their marriage relationships suggested that the new generation Thai man looks more for companionship with his wife. That the new-comers have not noticed a drastic change in their husbands' behaviour after marriage, and share social lives with their husbands, may then illustrate the direction of, if not be a result of, changes in Thai male/female roles.

While the traditional Thai woman was apparently expected to make her husband's life comfortable and tolerate his infidelities in return for financial security and status, it was suggested that Thai women are

beginning to demand more from their relationships. With
increased educational and economic opportunities Thai
women are slowly gaining in social and economic
independence, and through the mass media and
globalisation, women are becoming more aware of the
options available to them. Higher divorce rates and
later marriage suggest that increased financial
independence together the physical threat of AIDS may
have encouraged a gradual decrease in Thai women's
tolerance towards their husbands' infidelitites. Thai
women appear to be challenging traditional Thai
male/female roles and Thai marriage expectations may now
more closely match the farang women's in which equal
partnership and emotional compatability are the priority.

Effects on:

Thai-Farang Marriage Relations

Changes in Thai family obligations and Thai
male/female role expectations were seen to affect the
Thai-farang marriage relationships in this thesis. As
the patterns of Thai residence are changing so too are
the nature of problems related to the extended family
experienced by the Thai-farang couples. In contrast to
the older-generation men, many of the new-comers'
husbands would stand-up for their wives against their
families and many even complained to their wives about
their families' demands.

Age-generational differences were found in the
Thai-farang marriage relations that appear to be results
of changes in Thai male/female role expectations. That
the problem of husbands visiting prostitutes or having

mia nois does not appear to be a threat to the new-comers
may be a reflection of a lower tolerance of Thai women
towards male promiscuity. In addition, the new-comers
were more likely to have companionship and a shared
social life with their husbands and, as the majority of
new-comers' husbands confide in their wives, it is
believed that the 'new generation' Thai men are looking
for more depth and meaning in their marital
relationships. Thus it appears that as a result of
socio-economic development and changes in Thai
male/female roles expectations, Thai and farang
expectations of marriage and social roles are becoming
more similiar.

Increased Thai-Farang Social Interactions

A major influx of farang to Thailand was seen
during the Vietnam War Era but after the withdrawal of
troops in the 1970's these farang were replaced with
foreign tourists, business men and advisors. The tourism
boom and increased foreign investment in Thai industries
have encouraged a steady flow of farang into the country
with various social and economic effects. Most notably,
the economic effects of the tourism and service
industries as major contributors to the national economy,
and foreign investment and multi-national corporations
have opened up business and employment opportunties for
both Thai men and women.

The social effects of the increased presence of
farang are more subtle but have been highlighted during
this thesis. As a result of more farang coming to visit,
study, live and work in Thailand, the interactions with
Thais of all classes and backgrounds has increased. Thais

are exposed to stereotypical farang 'culture' in the media and movies, and good or bad traditional social roles and behaviour are being compared and questioned. Meanwhile fashion conscious youths try to emulate their farang counterparts, and as a result *luuk-khrueng* children are now envied and admired rather than ridiculed and despised as in the past.

Indeed, age-generational differences in the children's social position and cultural identities also reflected many socio-economic changes. Due to the mothers' need to conform and speak Thai the older-generation children were rarely bilingual - let alone bicultural. All the children went to Thai schools and rarely if ever, visited their mother's home country during their formative years. Many children faced social problems for being *luuk-khrueng* and tried to identify as Thai. In contrast, most of the new-comers' children go to International schools and as flights home are cheaper than before, all the children are familiar with their mother's home country. Thus, many of these children are bilingual and bicultural. Those that are not have lived the first few years of their lives in their mother's home land and have only recently come to Thailand. The bias in these cases is toward farang identity rather than Thai. That the social position of *luuk-khrueng* has dramatically changed also corresponds with change in their farang mothers' social position.

For the farang women interviewed, the increase of farang living in Thailand has made them less conspicuous than they were in the past, and increased the social outlets and support networks available to them. Thus, farang women are no longer as isolated as they once were and their marginality and perception of their position have changed over the past few decades.

Farang Women's Marginality

The farang women's marginality and their perception of their position in Thai society was found to have changed. Thailand's vast economic and social changes over the past few decades together with increased Thai-farang social interactions were seen to have affected the position of farang women in Thai society. A combination of Thai social changes and increased social interaction between Thai and farang appears to have influenced this shift. Not only have the external social pressures and conditions that made farang women marginal in the past changed but the women's own internal perceptions of their marginality and the need to become Thai has also changed.

As there were fewer farang women living in Thailand over 20 years ago, the older-generation farang wife was in a more marginal position than the new-comers are today. In addition, the older generation women faced greater social and familial pressure to conform to Thai social roles and behaviour, learn the language and attempt to 'be Thai'. At the same time they had few close friends or social outlets and thus their desire to be accepted by the general public was more intense. After making so much effort, these women naturally felt frustrated and disappointed as they realised they would not be accepted 'as Thai'.

With more farang living in Thailand the new-comers' presence is less conspicuous. Meanwhile, socio-economic changes were also found to have reduced social and family pressures for the new-comers to conform and learn Thai, and thus the desire to 'be Thai' is no longer such an important issue. In addition, with increased

social outlets now available, the new-comer can surround
herself with other women in the same situation and also
shares a social life with her husband.   Thus,   in
comparison with the older-generation women, the new-comer
feels accepted in a variety of social situations thus
reducing her need to be accepted by the larger Thai
society.

With the increasing numbers of farang women moving
to Thailand, the marginality of the new-comers' position
was seen to be changing, if not decreasing.   Age-
generational differences suggested that the new-comers
are more able to be 'different' and their idea of
acceptance is now one of being themselves.   If this
reflects a change in Thai expectations of, and tolerance
to, farang and their in behaviour in Thai society, then
perhaps there is now more of a place for farang in
Thailand and perhaps one day these farang women may amass
enough force to be accepted as a social group in their
own rights.

Thai-Farang Social Interactions

A combination of socio-economic changes were seen
to have affected Thai male/female relations, and Thai-
farang marriage relations and the effects of such upon
the position of farang women living in Thailand are also
reflections of change and development in Thai-farang
relations.

The age-generational difference in the women's
perception of the need to be accepted reflects the
effects of socio-economic development in Thailand and
increased Thai-farang relations on the position of farang

women living in Thailand today. As all the variables discussed above are interdependent, change in one affects every other, and therefore age-generational differences found in this thesis highlight Thai social development and change in Thai attitudes towards non-Thai, farang.

With more farang coming to Thailand, and more Thais studying abroad than ever before, together with mass media and globalisation, Thai society is more exposed to western ideas and behaviour than before. Perhaps the ever increasing interaction and familiarity between Thai and farang, together with the rapid socio-economic development in Thai society and the globalisation process has narrowed the culture gap between the two groups. Indeed, Thai and farang cultures appear to be less different than they were two decades ago and thus perhaps there is greater cultural flexibilty and understanding between the two groups.

Implications For Further Study

The findings and conclusions of this study can be utilized as a basis for further research into Thai-farang relations, the social effects of Thai economic development on Thai society, as well as studies into marriage and mixed-marriage relationships as suggested below:

A comparison of Thai-farang marriages in which the farang spouse is the husband with a Thai wife would give another angle to the changes in Thai male/female roles and farang marginality.

A comparitive study with Thai-Thai marriage relationships to see the effects of cultural differences on marriage relationships.

Effects of socio-economic development on changes in Thai family relations and social obligations.

Effects of socio-economic development on changes in Thai male/female roles.

Changes in the position, role and status of offspring - *luuk-khrueng*, in the Thai society.

Concluding Remarks

To address the questions posed in the introduction to this thesis, age-generational differences found in the farang women's experiences revealed that socio-economic development and socio-cultural change are closely inter-related. The findings have shown that as a result of socio-economic development the pattern and expectations of marriage in Thai society were seen to be undergoing a process of change, as was the nature of Thai-farang marriage relationships. Close analysis of the issues raised in this thesis have helped towards understanding the factors which may have contributed to the dysfunction of the 'horror' story marriages described in the introduction, but the experiences of the women interviewed proved that not all Thai-farang marriages are doomed and that cultural differences are not necessarily the only factors to blame for failed relationships. However, that the new-comers no longer face the same difficulties as the older-generation, illustrated that Thailand's socio-economic development together with

increased Thai-farang interactions and globalisation have facilitated the new-comers ability to adjust. The factors that once hindered a successful relationship such as a husband's infidelity, the need to live with the in-laws and the desire to 'become Thai', are no longer common. On the other hand, while the social pressure to conform has reduced, the factors which were found to help farang women in these relationships, such as independence and support mechanisms provided by social networks, have increased. This suggests that Thai-farang social interactions in general have also changed and that as cultural awareness increases, cultural differences may perhaps be merging. However, while the new-comers no longer face the same difficulties as the older-generation, only time will tell what new challenges will arise for farang in Thailand to overcome in the future.