

Adolescents and Transition to Adulthood in Asia

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With rapid social changes taking place in recent decades, social scientists in Asia are enthusiastically studying the ensuing societal transformation and cultural maladjustments. Continuous efforts have been put toward unravelling the mechanisms, whether inhibiting or facilitating, that help explain the conflict between traditional versus modern values and behaviours. While social changes are pervasive in different parts of Asia and have significant impact on different social institutions, family is undoubtedly the core institution which receives and reacts to changing norms and practices. In the midst of massive changes, families have demonstrated unprecedented tenacity and enduring flexibility in facing challenges imposed on family structural arrangement as well as on family relations (Quah, 2009; Yi, 2014). However, among numerous studies on globalization and family changes, there has been an inadequate focus on adolescents and youth in the family. This chapter links global changes to current states of youth in the process of transition to adulthood. Family is the focal concern, and is discussed in the context of its relations to other major institutions such as formal educational institutions. The discussion begins with possible commonalities for Asian youths, then looks at East Asian youths who share similar cultural heritage, and lastly uses Taiwanese youths to explicate the continuity of and changes in both family ideology as well as family practice in the process of moving into adulthood.

Global Social Changes in Asia—Effects on Youth

The most fundamental social changes affecting youth in Asia occur at the particular stage of transition to adulthood. Youth in their 20s to early 30s are most directly affected by social changes such as the enhancement of females' education and labour force participation, to rapidly dropping fertility rates, and delayed marriage (Tsuya and Bumpass, 2004; Jones, 2007; Yeung, 2013). Thus, this cohort deviates from the normative expectation of orderly development. Two decades ago, Rindfuss (1991), using panel survey data on US high school students, pointed out that twelve years after graduation, only 28% followed the typical growth trajectory: i.e., continuous work or study then work. In recent years, a diverse pattern of transition to adulthood has been documented in Asia as well (Xenos, et al., 2006; William and Guest, 2005; Jones, 2005; Yeung and Alipio, 2013). Specifically, in more affluent societies, a delay in the transitional events is observed due to a longer period dedicated to formal education resulting, on the one hand, in later home-leaving, later entry into the work force and later age at

marriage; and on the other hand, prolonged co-residence between generations for unmarried youth or “the parasite singles” who have completed their formal education (Yamada, 1999; Johar and Maruyama, 2011; Lin and Yi, 2013). A substantial proportion of Asian youth who enjoy relative affluence seem to respond to the immediate social situation with a common protracted transition to adulthood. Specially, significant delay in key transitional events such as entry to the labour force, leaving the parental home or marriage was identified (Furstenberg, 2013; Yeung and Alipio, 2013; Xenos, et al., 2006). As a consequence, families need to cope with young adult children who choose to stay with their parents much longer than expected, and society is forced to face the unconventional support pattern with elderly parents taking care of young adult children.

The opposite situation is experienced by poor youth from less developed Asian regions. As important members of the family, their major concern is to help their families meet basic subsistence livelihood and to improve the family’s economic situation (Slater, 2004). Studies show that late adolescents in Cambodia and rural Vietnam often assume the care-taker as well as the family supporter’s role prematurely (Perez-Prado, 2004; Chin, 2004). These young adults lack educational opportunities as well as the necessary cultural preparation to enter the adult world that are available to youth in the more westernized and industrial Asian countries such as those in East Asia. In recent years, a large number of Filipino and Indonesian youth from impoverished areas have migrated to nearby affluent countries to work as domestic helpers or industrial workers (Alipio, 2013). Their participation in the international labour migration, especially into the “global care chains”, not only changes the traditional division of labour at home where males are the traditional economic providers, but it also delays the young migrants’ own entrance into marriage and parenthood subsequently (Parrenas, 2001). Hence, the diverse growth trajectory for Asian youth in the transition to adulthood needs to take into account various structural barriers embedded in individual societies that represent different and serious challenges to youth, to family, and to society.

Regarding various developmental patterns in the transition to adulthood, it is contended that females tend to experience more complex trajectories than their male counterparts (Nahar, et al., 2013; Alipio, 2013; Naafs, 2013). Reasons proposed include a priority on individual career and freedom (Jones, 2012), cultural submission to gendered expectations (Naafs, 2013; Bullock, 2004), ideological change due to higher education (Fuligni, 2007) and intention to improve family’s livelihood (Alipio, 2013; Gallin, 1966). Whether reports from South Asia or East Asia, a common picture is that female youth seem to be less autonomous in the transition to adulthood. For instance, the intense transition to adulthood for Nepalese female youth after marriage is argued to be an outcome of both marriage patterns and their educational level (Li, 2013). Whether to co-reside with the husband’s paternal parents after marriage partly depends on the birth order of the husband and the economic status of the couple (Thornton and Lin, 1994). In other words, a clear message is that the observed unequal development or diversified

growth trajectory of Asian youth is actually a result of the interplay between cultural norms and personal resources. Since females are less likely to enjoy the privilege of family investment in the predominant patriarchal culture of this region, female youth are shown to have more non-traditional attitudes, such as avoidance of marriage among urban and higher educated females (Jones, 2005).

In addition to the delay in transition to adulthood and the unequal growth experiences across societies and between genders, other important family dynamics which characterize Asian youth involve the conflict between tradition and modernity, which is often revealed by the gap between family values and actual family practice. Take a typical survey question for example: “*A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl*”, a statement which reflects the common patriarchal family value and pertains to the youth welfare. As shown in Table 1, it is clear that most Asians, in contrast with their Western counterparts, are more likely to endorse the male priority of advanced education in the family. A further comparison between less economically developed Southeast Asian countries (such as Philippines and Malaysia) and more advanced East Asian countries (such as Japan and Taiwan) points out a sharp difference, in that a greater proportion of families in poorer countries tend to invest in the education of male descendants as a viable family strategy. It should be noted that the preference for male offspring influences attitudes (Eun, 2013), so that it is not surprising that South Koreans show a relatively high agreement on male priority in college education.

(Table 1 about here)

Leaning towards tradition is expected, given the social context of less economically developed countries in the region. While parental control and guidance are common phenomena for youth worldwide, the practice appears to be much more extensive in Asia owing to the dominance of cultural traditions governing the code of conduct among Asian teenagers (Slater, 2004). Hence, growing up in a pervasive traditional environment, Asian youth are inclined to behave in accordance with the normative expectation of respect and obedience to parents as well as power subordination to authorities and elders.

If a single indicator needs to be selected to best characterize the life path of Asian youth, high parental expectation on educational achievement may be the majority choice (Byun and Park, 2011; Crystal, et al., 1994). Education is indeed considered the way out of poverty and the gate to future advancement for youth globally, but much more so in Asia. Getting into good schools brings family honour and personal opportunity; therefore, educational competition has been keen in this part of the world, and institutional arrangements are put in place to ensure fair access to higher education. It should be noted that the contemporary educational system in many Asian countries is partially adopted from the American or the European systems, depending on each country’s historical background and the modernization process. But most Asian countries utilize the comprehensive examination as the vehicle to attain fair educational competition (see Table 2). As a consequence, the worst nightmare for a typical Asian youth is

often failing the nationwide entrance examinations to senior high schools and college (Yi and Wu, 2004; Ahn and Baek, 2013). Compared to the United States and Finland, where student performance is more likely to be assessed by tests, the unanimous single criteria in Asia appears to be the comprehensive entrance examination. In Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, elementary school children need to take examinations at age 12, in order to enter desirable middle schools. Examinations have become the basis for educational competition for most Asian youth since childhood. In sum, the competitive apparatus entwined in the cultural heritage as well as family expectation has resulted in Asian youth facing greater pressure to become ideal, successful youth in the transition to adulthood.

(Table 2 about here)

Challenges East Asian Youth Face: The challenge of continuity and change

The existing literature points out that there are two major aspects in the study of global youth development: educational performance and psychological well-being (Furstenberg, 2004; Mcleod and Fettes 2007; Yi, 2013). These are particularly pertinent research objectives for studies on East Asian youth, owing to the high cultural value given to educational achievement and the competitive educational system implemented for youth from middle school to college. If school performance is regarded as important for youth overall, it is more vital for Asian youth who strive to accomplish the flight from poverty or to enhance the opportunity for future advancement. As for East Asian youth, the family's expectation of educational success is even more serious, such that an ideal youth is often defined by both deference and filial piety at home and good grades at school (Greenberger, 2000; Yoon, 2006; Ota, et al., 2012; Yi and Wu, 2004).

In the context of a strong patriarchal tradition, family and school are the two most significant social institutions affecting the developmental patterns of East Asian youth (Yi, 2013). With rapid social changes occurring in recent decades, "compressed modernity" (Chang, 2010), which denotes economic, political, social or cultural changes occurring in an extremely condensed time and space, with the coexistence of incompatible or disparate historical and social construction and reconstruction in a highly complex and fluid social system, has brought about fundamental changes in various structural components of the social system in East Asia, including the family system. Numerous studies have documented changes in the family structure and the concomitant changes in family intergenerational relations in this region (Yeung, et al., 2013; Tsutsui, 2013; Park, 2007; Lin and Yi, 2013; Yi, 2014). At the same time, studies also argue that the continuity of cultural traditions coexists, among East Asian families, with structural and relational changes as a reaction or compromise to the external environment (Hu and Scott, 2014; Yi, 2014; Yeh, et al., 2013; Yi and Tsai, 1997). We will use multi-generational co-residence as an illustration.

The Co-Residence Experience in East Asian Families

Recent studies of youth and their families document important changes in family structure such as single-parent families (Park, 2007; Pan, 2014), changing family values such as filial piety (Hu and Scott, 2014; Yeh, 2013), changing family relations such as parent-adolescent disclosure (Nucci, et al., 2013; Chou, 2013), and changing intergenerational relations such as those between grandparents and grandchildren (Chang, et al., 2008; Yi, et al., 2006). These changes have an impact on youth development. East Asian family scholars agree that is that attitudes and behaviours of individuals are the outcome of changing family dynamics. Hence, the process of moving into adulthood is influenced by the person's family socialization since childhood. Among significant family experiences, the prevalence of co-residence in East Asian families is a unique characteristic which tend to produce long-term effects on various developmental outcomes of youth.

The cultural value of multi-generational co-residence influences family attitudes and behaviours in East Asia (Yasuda, et al., 2011; Yi and Chang, 2008). Although co-residence is not a necessary condition for a close relationship between adolescents and their grandparents, the actual co-residence experience certainly facilitates bonding between grandparents and grandchildren, prompted by daily face-to-face interaction (Yi, et al., 2006). Let us look at the actual co-residence in East Asia by utilizing the East Asian Social Survey datasets (a collaborative project of China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan) (see Table 3). As can be seen, co-residence is still prevalent in East Asia between adults and their elderly parents or surviving parent aged 65 or above. The co-residence pattern is less pronounced in China and South Korea, with a little less than 1/4, Japan approaching 1/3, and Taiwan nearly half co-residing. These statistics are higher than the household census, but may reflect a more accurate picture of the current living arrangement among East Asian families. Although Table 3 pertains to adult samples, with the majority being married, it is likely that children spend their childhood in the midst of a multi-generational household.

(Table 3 about here)

Hence, for East Asian youth who have a much higher likelihood of living with grandparents, the co-residence experience, whether during childhood or adolescence, is very likely to affect their attitude on family relations as well as their own future family behaviour (Yi and Pan, 2005; Pan, 2014). Previous studies on East Asian families have found that in addition to family resources and parental demands, the cultural norm of filial piety is repeatedly confirmed to be a significant mechanism predicting co-residence between generations (Park, et al., 1999; Copen and Silverstein, 2008; Yasuda, et al., 2011; Lin and Yi, 2013; Hu and Scott, 2014). Under the strong norm of co-residence, East Asian adolescents who have actual daily contacts or are encourage to have close relations with grandparents may very well become

more receptive to the filial norm in the family. Hence, belief in filial piety and actual co-residence experience form a concomitant relationship resulting in co-residence with parents being a viable choice for East Asian youth in the transition to adulthood.

The Educational Competition for East Asian Youth

In addition to the multi-generational co-residence experience, educational competition is undoubtedly another important structural characteristic affecting the growth trajectory of East Asian youth. The centrality of educational success for East Asian youth is depicted in the literature, where most studies focus on the relations between educational performance and psychological well-being of youth. More specifically, Japanese students suffer more serious negative psychological adjustment from poor academic performance compared to Chinese and American students (Crystal, et al., 1994); Korean youth are constrained in their transitional stage to work and marriage by the educational institution attended (Park, 2013); Chinese youth's academic performance is affected by the one-child policy (Wang, et al., 2007; Falbo and Poston, 1993), and for Taiwanese youth, academic performance is linked with parental life-satisfaction (Chou, et al., 2010), with the number of siblings (Chen et al., 2009), and with young people's self-esteem (Tseng and Yi, 2013).

From the preceding discussion of the educational system, it is clear that the national comprehensive examination is the preferred method to assure the fairness of competitive access to the educational institutions in East Asia. The emphasis on academic success has a long history in the region, with the ultimate function of bringing family glory as well as fulfilling a personal filial duty (Hsu, 1948). It may be difficult for observers to comprehend the nearly unanimous social approval legitimizing the parental expectation that the adolescent's life should be centred on the pursuit of educational success only. To be accepted into the best school is considered the concrete realization of the family's expectation of their children. Examination and test scores are calculated carefully. To gain one or two points on each test becomes an indicator of potential improvement on future examinations. As a consequence, parents and teachers share a strong consensus in pushing students to work harder during and after school hours (Byun and Kim, 2008; Yi and Wu, 2004).

There are two national entrance examinations in China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, for entry into senior high and college which facilitate and deepen the keen educational competition for youth in the region. In order to achieve academic success, cram schooling or shadow education has been prevalent in many Asian countries, with a focused goal for students to attain higher grades (Chang, 2013; Byun and Park, 2011; Liu, 2009). Cram schools are usually more concentrated in urban areas, and have become a second shift of the daily schedule for most adolescents in East Asia. Available data indicate that cram schools in Taiwan tend to increase students' mathematical and analytical ability (Liu, 2007), especially among

middle-ranking students entering public high schools (Chang and Yi, 2004). A recent analysis delineates various effects of cram schooling on two national entrance examinations, and argues that while cram schooling helps adolescents in general to enter public high school as well as national universities, it is most helpful for natural science courses (Hsieh and Chou, 2013). Therefore, in a highly competitive educational system, as long as a few grade points mean a greater likelihood of acceptance by better schools, cram schools will continue their commercial success in the market. Only a gradual change in the family's value on young people's academic success may alter the current trend in the future.

In addition to cram schooling, sending children abroad for middle-school or for college education has appeared as a new family educational strategy in East Asia. The rapid economic progress in China, South Korea and Taiwan has produced an emergent middle-class (Hsiao, 2014). As a result, more affluent families are willing to invest a substantial proportion of their resources in their children's education. In large cities such as Shanghai, it appears that the gap between the number of high school graduates and those taking the college entrance examination is suspected to be the number of students who study abroad. For adolescents who have been away from their homeland since young, studying abroad not only creates conflict between parents (Ahn and Baek, 2013), but also poses potential adjustment problems due to cultural conflict in the transition to adulthood.

Let us turn to the opposite end of the educational competition outcome. For adolescents with poorer grades, their family and school life is often accompanied by low self-esteem, harsh parenting, and close monitoring. They not only suffer from harsh treatment, but also end up either choosing the vocational track or dropping out of school entirely. Since the educational system is overwhelmingly competitive in East Asia, the trauma of failure during adolescence produces long-term effects among young adults (Fang and Yi, 2011). Panel studies in South Korea and Taiwan confirm that the level of academic success has a significant and long-term impact on the psychological well-being of youth (Yi, et al., 2009; Ahn and Baek, 2013). On the other hand, academic stress is shown to result in suicidal behaviour as well as psychological maladjustment from early to late adolescence (Moon, 2006; Jwa, et al., 2009). In fact, the severe stress from academic performance outranks the stress from physical appearance, parents and friends among South Korean adolescents (Ahn and Baek, 2013). Even among academically successful young adults, who usually perceive higher parental expectation, depressive symptoms only begin to lessen when they are about to complete their college education (Yi, et al., 2013). In other words, we argue that the highly competitive educational system in East Asia accounts for diverse growth trajectories of youth from adolescence to young adulthood, both structurally and psychologically.

Structures and Relationships: The case of Taiwanese youth

As the exposure to multi-generational co-residence and a competitive educational system are common experiences for East Asian youth, let us explore further the structural and relational characteristics in the family which may extrapolate the transitional process from adolescence to adulthood. We will use Taiwan for illustration. Data are taken from the longitudinal panel datasets of the Taiwan Youth Project (TYP), which follows adolescents aged 13 and aged 15 in the years of 2000 to 2011 (Yi, 2013). Among various transitional markers during this life stage, we will first examine the long-term consequences of educational competition, then focus on leaving the parental home and the expectation of marriage and family establishment among Taiwanese youth.

Educational Competition and Psychological Well-Being

It should be emphasized that the two national entrance examinations taking place at the average ages of 15 and 18 not only contribute to the “study-first” lifestyle of East Asian youth, but are also the dominant factor affecting young people’s patterns of psychological well-being when moving into adulthood. In Taiwan, the two peaks of depressive symptoms occurring at age 15 and age 18 exactly correspond to the timing of the two entrance examinations (Yi, et al., 2009). The bimodal curve of depression during adolescence is clear evidence of the direct consequence of educational competition. Because in the West, clinical depression in adolescence usually increases rapidly between age 15 and 18 (from an average of less than 5% to nearly 20%), then gradually stabilizes or levels off by age 21, as shown in one American sample (Hankin, et al., 1998). For Taiwanese adolescents, the pattern is different because of the overwhelming pressure of taking the national examinations and maintaining high academic grades, which both exert salient impact on the developmental patterns of their psychological well-being.

It should be noted that in Taiwan, the first educational track bifurcation occurs at age 15, with the academic track enjoying higher prestige than the vocational track. Since crossing from one track to the other rarely occurs afterwards, high school graduates are further differentiated into academic versus vocational college education. In a recent analysis, it is confirmed that the pronounced effect of the educational tracking system on the psychological well-being of youth extends to the transition into young adulthood (Yi, et al., 2013). Figure 1 shows the mean score of depressive symptoms from age 13 to 24 across the four educational tracks—vocational high school, high school, technical college, and general college. As can be seen, three clear peaks of depressive symptoms are observed for all tracks. Vocational high school graduates from generally lower family and school backgrounds suffer more and they have the highest depression level over time. Technical college students, on the other hand, with relatively better family resources and less pressure from the educational competition, have the lowest level of depression. Youth in the academic track suffer higher depression during adolescence as expected, but after the third peak at age 20, college students report less depression, while high

school graduates show a steep increase, probably due to the lower human capital acquired by having only a high school diploma. In other words, the longitudinal panel analyses provide strong support to the premise that the educational tracking system in Taiwan imposes a hierarchical order on young people, and affects their psychological well-being from early adolescence to young adulthood.

(Figure 1 about here)

To further illustrate the net structural influence of educational tracking (i.e., taking into account family background and school experiences), we use the latent growth curve model to estimate the depression trajectories of Taiwanese youth in the four educational tracks (Figure 2). While three depressive peaks remain salient, the impact of educational tracks on the mental health of Taiwanese youth becomes significant only after age 17. For college students, academic and vocational tracks share a steady decline after age 20. But among high school level graduates, the vocational track demonstrates a clear decline in depressive symptoms after age 20, and by age 22, they already approach the level found among academic college students. It is contended that the early labour force experience helps vocational high graduates relieve the long-term negative effects on well-being as compared with their peers. In contrast, high school graduates, while enjoying less pressure from the college entrance examination, reveal a sharp increase in depression from age 19, and become the most depressed by age 21. It appears that a high school diploma is inadequate in the job market, thus leading to higher depression (Yi, et al., 2013).

(Figure 2 about here)

Hence, to delineate the impact of educational competition on the psychological well-being of young people in their transition to adulthood, the panel study from Taiwan provides evidence that the hierarchical tracks in the educational system produce corresponding long-term effects on depressive symptoms among young people. It also suggests that although the college track may be more stressful for young people during late adolescence, actual job experience facilitates their transition to adulthood.

Leaving the Parental Home during Young Adulthood

In the previous section, I propose that multi-generational co-residence is a unique family characteristic in Asia, and it is most prevalent in Taiwan. Co-residence with elderly parents has been regarded as an ideal realization of filial piety (Chang, 1994) and is in accordance with traditional cultural values (Hsu, 1948). In a similar vein, it is socially acceptable for young adults to co-reside with parents before marriage, except in circumstances when unemployed adult children stay with their elderly parents with no intention to leave the parental home (Lin and Yi, 2013). In other words, unlike their Western counterparts, young adults in Taiwan and in East Asia are not pressured to establish an independent household in the transition to adulthood. Growing up in a patriarchal family context, the co-residence experience as well as timing of

leaving the parental home are salient markers in the analysis of the transition to adulthood, and deserve closer scrutiny.

For typical Taiwanese young adults, half of them live with grandparents and parents before age 3 (see Table 4). The daily intimate contact with elderly family members is shown to affect the subsequent bonds between generations during adolescence (Yi, et al., 2006). Due to the normative influence of the Taiwanese patriarchal culture, 45% co-resided with their paternal grandparents in their early childhood, compared with 6.7% co-residing with maternal grandparents. This proportion diminished steadily to 22% by the time they graduated from junior-high school at an average age of 15; and 10% by age of 25; needless to say, co-residence with grandparents and parents fluctuates over the family life course (Chien and Yi, 2001). But the actual experience and intimacy established suggest that the early co-residence experience of youth is a salient structural mechanism affecting their family values and practices in their adulthood.

(Table 4 about here)

The majority (67%) of Taiwanese young adults aged 25 live with their parents. Data from an unpublished study suggest that the early three-generation co-residence experience is not a good predictor for the timing of leaving home. Since the transition to adulthood involves several significant life course events (e.g., entering college, getting a job, military service for males, getting married, etc.), the overall trend of leaving the parental home at this stage reflects reasons behind the action.

Figure 3 shows the proportion of young adults leaving the parental home from age 19 to age 26 in three areas. It is evident that transitional life events are associated with patterns of leaving home for young adults. Whether in urban Taipei or in rural Yilan, the climax of leaving the parental home occurs at age 22, when most youth graduate from college or begin their military service. Further analysis indicates that youths from white-collar families are more likely to leave their parental homes than their counterparts, because leaving home may imply a better developmental opportunity (Huang, 2013a). But for rural youth, the push factor from a disadvantageous environment results in a much higher proportion of youth from Yilan County leaving home for work or for education (Huang, 2013a). It should be noted that the increase in leaving home between age 24 to age 26 is mainly the result of Yilan females leaving home to join the workforce.

(Figure 3 about here)

Whether leaving the parental home may signify autonomy for Taiwanese young adults needs careful deliberation. Financial independence is a crucial motivation to leave the parental home, but is not necessarily related to the perception of autonomy. Indeed, even when leaving home, social norms support the strong bond between young adults and their parents, not only financially but also psychologically. This bond, in turn, facilitates the interdependence between generations (Huang, 2013a, 2013b; Ting and Chiu, 2002; Wu and Yeh, 2011). Hence, the

prolonged and delayed process of leaving the parental home in East Asia reflects the various structural and cultural phases in the transition to adulthood (Yang and Chen, 2002). Factors explaining the decision of young adults to leave home early (or at least earlier than the conventional practice of leaving after marriage), are different for different social classes, and are certainly more than an issue of autonomy versus dependency in a social context where the norm of filial piety often encourages interdependency between young adults and their parents.

Marriage and Parenthood Expectations

Taiwan has suffered from the lowest low fertility in the world in recent years. Only children of legally married parents are socially accepted. Thus, scholars agree that the lack of marriage intention plays a key role in the low birth-rate (Chen and Chen, 2012). Previous studies offer multiple explanations for the decline in marriage and childbirth rates, and propose that the impact of cultural norms should be investigated (Yi and Chen, 2014). Let us look at the total fertility rate (TFR) first. In 2010, TFR was 0.895, but 2010 was also the Year of the Tiger in the lunar calendar, and for cultural reasons, is believed to be an unsuitable year for childbirth. In 2011, Taiwan celebrated her 100th national birthday since the establishment of the Republic of China. Because the following year, 2012, was the year of the Dragon—the ideal year to bear children—the dual effect of the year 2011 led to a rise in the crude marriage rate, from 5.8 ‰ to 7.1 ‰ (i.e., from 2010 to 2011). As a result, the total fertility rate of the following dragon year did increase to 1.27 (the previous dragon year was 2000, which had a high TFR of 1.68) but then declined again to 1.065 in 2013. It is clear that while young adults seem to be delaying the timing of marriage and parenthood in Taiwan and in East Asia, a proper stimulus from cultural traditions do sometimes propel them to enter the prescribed sequential stage of mature adulthood.

Marriage versus Parenthood

Under the circumstance of prolonged transition to adulthood, age at first marriage for Taiwanese males corresponds to the general trend, and reached 32 years old for males and 29.5 years old for females as of 2012. In the latest wave survey of the Taiwan Youth Project (from fall, 2011 to early spring, 2012), the average age of study subjects was 25, a good age at which to explore marriage and parenthood intentions among young adults. Hence, questions concerning the likelihood of marriage and parenthood were raised. Using age 30 as a threshold for marriage plans for young adults (Huang, 2013b), Table 5 shows that, excluding the approximately 7% (N=216) who married early, both male and female study subjects have similar expectations, with minor differences. Females are slightly more inclined than males to believe they would marry before age 30; and a substantial proportion of both genders have no marriage plans before age 30, a sign of unsupportive attitudes towards marriage from the perspective of mean age of marriage.

(Table 5 about here)

With regard to the likelihood of becoming a parent by age 30, Table 5 shows that young adults are planning childbirth significantly later in life compared to previous generations. The most noteworthy difference between marriage and parenthood plans is that about one third of young adults estimate a zero possibility of them becoming parents by age 30. Males are slightly more likely than females to estimate a lower probability of becoming parents before age 30 (30.4% vs. 25.3%), and females, in contrast, are more likely to report a higher possibility of becoming parents (18.9% vs. 14.5%). This is the same gender pattern as the marriage plan. Therefore, when young adults are asked about their future marriage and parenthood plans, marriage is reported to be likelier than parenthood, but only a minority give enthusiastic responses.

Son Preference among Young Adults in Taiwan

It has been contended that a salient factor explaining the decision to have children in Asia is the son preference rooted in the patriarchal culture (Wu, 1977; Wesley and Choe, 2007; Das Gupta, 2009). The rapid enhancement of education and labour force participation of females in East Asia has led to changes in gender role attitudes (Lu, 2011) as well as in the value of children (Nauck, 2007). However, the son preference, although in gradual decline over the past decades, is still prevalent in Taiwan, and has become even more evident as fertility rates decline (Yi, 2014). Bearing a son not only carries on the family name and guarantees the mother's status in the family, but it also fulfils the ultimate filial duty of descendants (Hsu, 1948; Thornton and Lin, 1994). Due to the continuing importance of the son preference across different educational levels, it is important to explore if this dominant cultural heritage is shared by young adults.

Attitudes toward son preference were ascertained with this specific question: "*If you already had 2 daughters, but no son, would you want to continue childbearing?*" Table 6 shows that among average 25-year-old Taiwanese young adults, who are mostly unmarried, the majority (nearly 80%) replied "No". A further analysis by educational level points out that those with high school education, in contrast with the college educated, are more likely to consider having another child in order to bear a son (33% vs. 22%). But the gender differences only appear among the highest educational level (i.e., those with at least a Master's degree): among that group, 26% of males versus 18% of females express the intention to have a third child in the hope of having a son. It may be too early to predict the future childbirth rates based on the responses of these young adults. However, the fact that son preference remains important in the general population as well as among highly educated young adults suggests that the cultural norm favouring the male descendant deserves close attention in the transition to full adulthood in a Confucian society such as Taiwan.

(Table 6 about here)

Sexual Experience before Marriage

Previous literature has documented the divergent growth trajectories among Asian youth well. One salient change is the occurrence and prevalence of premarital sex among adolescents and young adults (Yeung and Hu, 2013; Chiao and Yi, 2011). Against the taboo imposed on youth, a rapid surge of sexual engagement during adolescence and before marriage has emerged as an inevitable trend in the region (Zabin, et al., 2009). In the social environment of East Asia, where premarital sex is strongly prohibited and premarital pregnancy unaccepted, sexual engagement before marriage is often seen as deviant behaviour (Tseng and Yi, 2013). Numerous studies point out the negative consequences of premarital sex on the mental health of youth (Meier, 2007). Adolescent sex is also shown to be linked to alcohol use and smoking behaviour as well as to other deviant acts (Chiao, et al., 2012; Chen, et al., 2008; Tseng and Yi, 2013). Nevertheless, sexual experience is considered important among teenagers, and male students are estimated to report four times more experiences than actual incidents, while females are less inclined to exaggerate (Li, 2012).

In order to better understand young people's attitudes toward and practices of premarital sex and its impact on their future family formation, it is useful to compare gender differences at the age of the onset of sexual engagement. As mentioned above, males report more premarital sex during adolescence and young adulthood than females (Figure 4). Specifically, a very small proportion of respondents reported having their first premarital sexual experience before or during junior high school, but this proportion increased rapidly during the high school stage (i.e., age 16-18) for both males (28.3%) and females (22.2%), and continued to increase during the college years (i.e., age 19-22) with 29% and 27% for males and females respectively, but then declined sharply after age 23 (10% and 11%). In other words, among Taiwanese young adults in their mid-20s, two thirds of them have engaged in premarital sex, thus those without premarital sex experience are a minority among their peers.

(Figure 4 about here)

There are several important mechanisms explaining the onset of premarital sex for Taiwanese youth. In addition to peer influence reported in the literature, the school context may play a protective function in lowering the likelihood of premarital sex among young adults (Chiao and Yi, 2011). With the noticeable increase of colleges in Taiwan since the late 1990s, over 70% of youth aged 18 and above have access to college education. Compared to their same-age peers in the workforce, college students are less likely to engage in premarital sex (Chiao, et al., 2013). However, among those who report having premarital sex before age 25, approximately one third of them had only one sexual partner; 21% had two partners; and 17.4% had three partners. From an unreported analysis on TYP Wave11 data, it was found that over half of early married young people in the sample have childbirth within 7 months after the

marriage. This finding suggests that engaging in premarital sex may have two opposite effects on family formation. While premarital sex may contribute to early marriage if pregnancy occurs, it also delays the incentive to get married, since the sexual impulse can be satisfied outside the marriage institution. Hence, studies on premarital sex among Taiwanese young adults suggest that it has become a growing trend which very likely will produce salient effects on marriage and childbirth expectations in their adulthood.

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to delineate mechanisms affecting the transition to adulthood in Asia, with a particular focus on family and educational influences. After looking at the common process of delayed transition in contemporary Asia and examining the unequal process of growth trajectory as well as the impact of the patriarchal culture, the discussion continues with challenges East Asian youth face pertaining to the co-existence of continuity and change in values and practices at home and in education. The last section uses data on Taiwanese youth to illustrate specific transitional processes in educational competition, leaving the parental home, and future marriage and parenthood plans. The findings suggest a divergent growth trajectory of Asian youth as the outcome of the interplay between cultural norms and individual resources.

Previous literature points out that young Asians are affected by social inequality: youth from poor Asian countries suffer from inadequate educational opportunities and assume the major responsibility of contributing to their families' livelihood. Females, constrained by patriarchal norms, often experience a more complex transition due to family expectations. Overall, it is contended that in the transition to adulthood, educational competition is more acute in Asia because it is an important channel to overcome poverty for poor youth, and the gate to future development for others.

As for the relatively affluent East Asian youth, keen educational competition, accompanied by the high parental expectation on educational achievement, has been repeatedly documented to produce salient effects on various transitional patterns in young adulthood. Numerous studies emphasize the pressure from taking the national entrance examination and the consequent negative impact on mental health from early adolescence to young adulthood throughout East Asia. The specific functions played by cram schooling and studying abroad in terms of grade improvement and family adjustments are briefly discussed. Another salient family characteristic of East Asian youth is the three-generation co-residence experience since childhood. The relative prevalence of a complex family structure in East Asia implies daily contact. Close proximity facilitates the close bonds between grandparents and grandchildren, and is shown to affect family attitudes and behaviours of young adults. Since co-residence between generations coincides with the norm of filial piety in the region, it is likely that this

traditional living arrangement may be observed in the midst of changing family dynamics in the near future.

The rich datasets of the longitudinal panel study of Taiwanese youth permitted analyses of ten consecutive waves since junior high school to depict the overall configuration of the transition to adulthood. Perhaps the most noteworthy development among youth aged 13 to 25 is the three peaks of depressive symptoms which correspond to the timing of two national entrance examinations and of military service. The hierarchical educational track not only sharpens the educational competition, but also has long-term effects on the psychological well-being of youth from late adolescence to young adulthood. Clear rural-urban differences were found in the process of leaving the parental home, in that family resources result in different reasons for the decision. While young adults aged 19 to 22 leave home for education or for work, rural youth are more likely to leave home after age 24 in order to find jobs in the city. The family's prolonged educational investment in young adults, recognized by the cultural norm, indicates inter-dependence between parents and young adults in the transitional period. The issue of low marriage and low fertility rates in Taiwan propels us to explore the marriage and parenthood plan of young adults in their mid-20s. In general, young adults are less likely to get married by age 30, with parenthood occurring much later. But more females than males perceive a higher than 50-50 chance they would get married by age 30. Regarding the cultural preference for a son among young adults, approximately one third of young adults endorse the son preference. This cultural norm of having at least one son is also expressed by highly educated males at graduate schools. The continuity of cultural norms as well as the varying effects of personal resources highlights the importance of studying the changing family dynamics and its impact on young adults as part of the co-existence and the interplay of traditional and modern aspects of family values and family practices.

This chapter ends with an examination of the onset of premarital sex among young adults with an intention to explore potential impacts on future family formation. The analysis indicates that two thirds of young people engaged in sexual encounters from early adolescence to young adulthood. Those without sexual experiences are a minority. Several relevant factors, including the school's protective function, limited number of sexual partners, and marriage taking place after premarital pregnancy, seem to suggest that future family formation among young adults depends on their perception of incentives to marry and have children. Since the influence of cultural norms and personal desires may not go in the same direction, longitudinal studies are needed to observe its future development.

In sum, transition to adulthood in Asia is characterized by the unique family experience of multi-generational co-residence and the competitive educational system. Evidence illustrated in the text supports the continuing influence of the patriarchal culture in the region. Strong parental expectation of educational success is delineated, and its linkage to diverse growth trajectories is explored in the process. Changing family-related attitudes among young adults,

particularly marriage and parenthood plans as well as filial duty, suggest that change and continuity co-exist in contemporary Asia and have become imminent challenges for Asian youth in the transition to adulthood. Based on previous literature and empirical findings, this chapter proposes that research into patterns of youth development in Asia needs to take into account the interplay of cultural norms and individual resources.

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Table 1. Proportion Agreeing with “University Education More Important for Boys than for Girls”

Country	Years			
	1995-1999 (N)	2000-2004 (N)	2005-2009 (N)	2010-2013 (N)
Indonesia		16.5%(165)	19.2%(387)	
Thailand			27.4%(420)	
Viet Nam		22.7%(227)	20.4%(305)	
Philippines	37.0%(444)	37.2%(446)		39.1%(469)
Malaysia			46.0%(552)	43.0%(559)
Singapore		15.2%(230)		26.1%(515)
China	22.9%(344)	9.1%(91)	18.2%(362)	22.1%(508)
Japan		17.8%(242)	18.4%(202)	16.2%(396)
South Korea	37.1%(463)	22.7%(272)	29.3%(352)	25.7%(308)
Taiwan			15.5%(190)	12.3%(152)
United States	14.3%(221)	7.3%(88)	7.7%(96)	6.5%(145)
Sweden	8.7%(88)	6.5%(66)	1.1%(11)	2.6%(31)
Spain	16.0%(194)	11.2%(135)	12.6%(151)	11.6%(138)

% indicates proportion agreeing with the statement

Source: World Value Survey Database (<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs>)

Table 2. The Education System in Asia: Selective Countries

Country	Japan	Korea	China	Taiwan	Thailand	Malaysia	Singapore	Indonesia	USA	Finland
Primary -> Secondary	X	X	X	X	X	Primary School Assessment Test (UPSR)	Primary School-leaving Examination (PSLE)	National exam (academic and psychological test)	X	X
Junior High-> Senior High	High school entrance exam	Entrance exam	General ability test (since 2002)	General Scholastic Ability Test (GSAT) (National Examination)	Partial (some schools require entrance exam)	Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR)	Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Normal/Technical Level Exam	National exam (academic and psychological test)	X	National Joint application system
Senior High-> College	University Entrance Exam	College Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT) (since 2004)	National College Entrance Exam, NCEE (since 1952)	1. Advanced Subject Test (National Exam) 2. Individual application 3. Stars Program	Entrance exam (through Central University Admission System) (since 2006)	Malaysia Higher Secondary School Certificate (STPM)/Matriculation exam	Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Normal/Technical Level Exam*	National Entrance Exam	American College Test (ACT) Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)	National Matriculation Exam

Sources: World Data on Education 7th edition 2010/11, International Bureau of Education: Japan, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Finland; Ministry of Education, Republic of China (Taiwan); Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea; The Singapore Education Landscape, Ministry of Education, Singapore; Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, United States.

* 17- to 19-year-old students are in the post-secondary system in Singapore, where university starts at age 20.

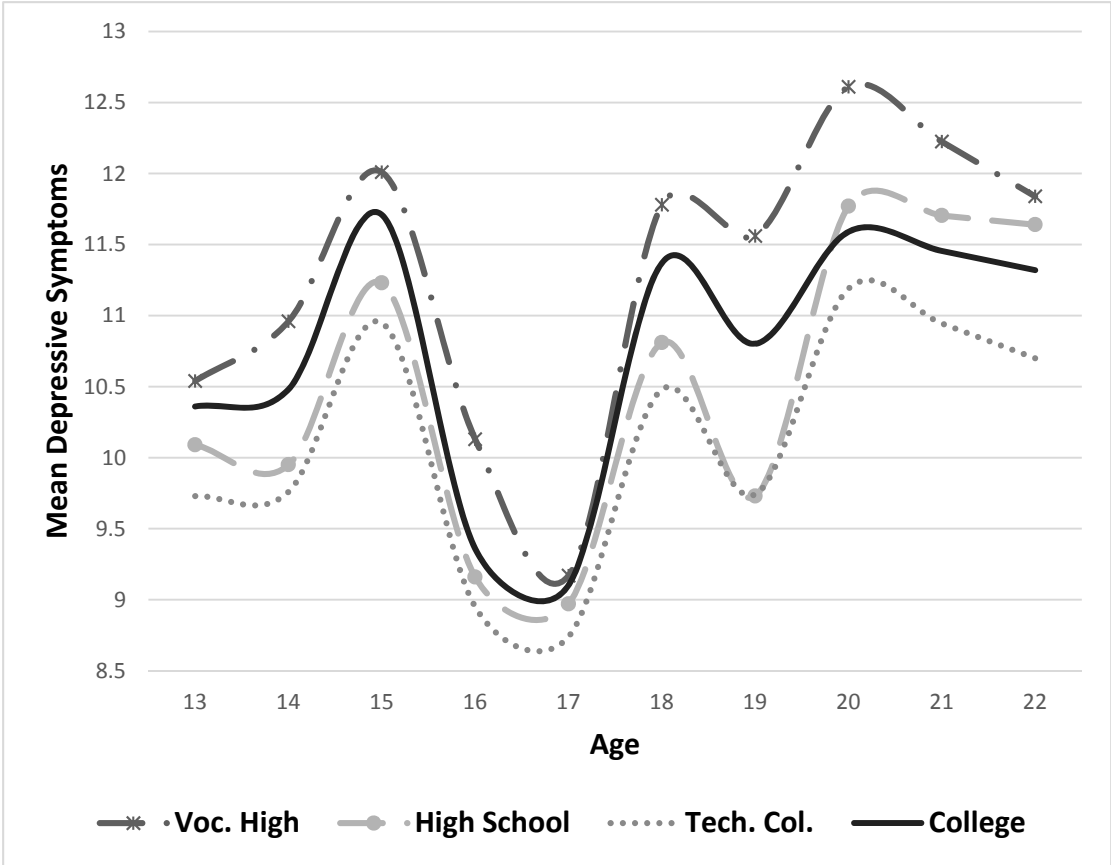
Table 3. Three-Generational Co-Residence in East Asia:
China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan¹

	China (N=1849)	Japan (N=1137)	Korea (N=1130)	Taiwan (N=1430)
Co-residence ² (%)	24.0	31.6	23.5	47.4
Filial Norms ³ (1-7)	5.29 (.94)	4.45 (1.13)	5.32 (.099)	5.52 (1.01)

Source: Data are taken from Lin, J.P. and Yi, C.C. (2013) "A comparative analysis of intergenerational relations in East Asia," *International Sociology*, 28 (3).

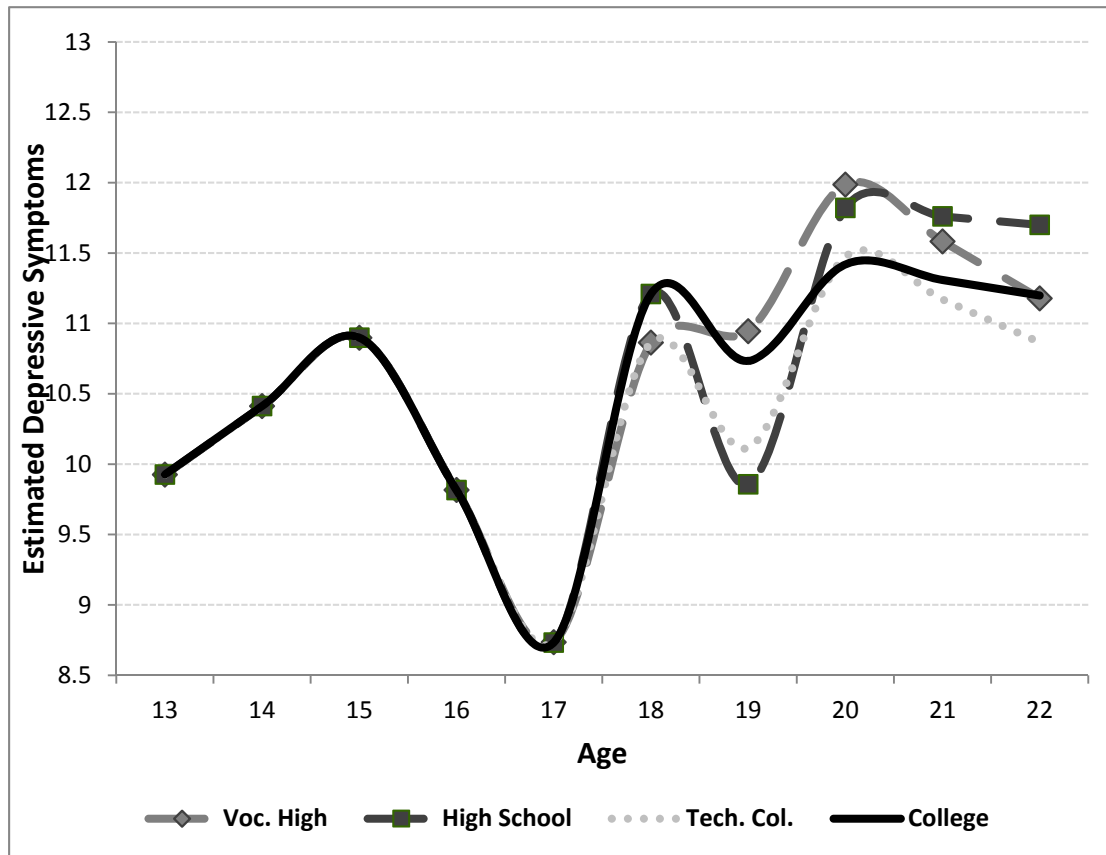
1. Individual adults with at least one parent alive are included in the analysis.
2. Filial norm is defined as the adult child's perception of the obligation to provide financial support to parents, and is measured by a four-item scale. 7 Likert-type answers are provided ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), so that higher scores denotes higher agreement.

Figure 1. Mean Depressive Symptoms from Age 13 to 22 by Educational Track in Taiwan



Source: Yi, Fan and Chang (2013) “The developmental outcome of Taiwanese youth: Effect of educational tracking during adolescence,” in C.C. Yi (ed), *The Psychological Well-being of East Asian Youth*, Dordrecht: Springer Publishing, 2: 170.

Figure 2. Estimated Depressive Symptoms from Age 13 to 22 by Educational Track in Taiwan



Source: Yi, Fan and Chang (2013) "The developmental outcome of Taiwanese youth: Effect of educational tracking during adolescence," in C.C. Yi (ed) *The Psychological Well-being of East Asian Youth*, Dordrecht: Springer Publishing, 2: 177.

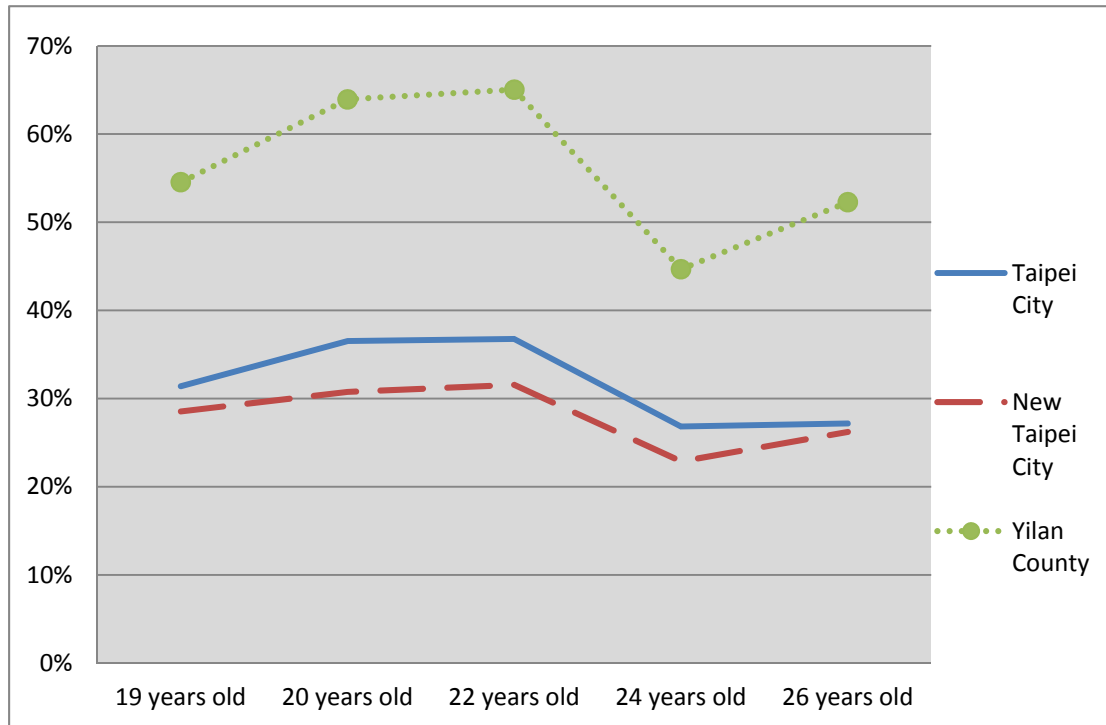
Table 4. Co-Residence with Grandparents among Taiwanese Youth: Age 3, Age 15 and Age 25

	Paternal Grandparents (%)	Maternal Grandparents (%)	Total % (N)
Age 3	44.83	6.72	100 (2023) ¹
Age 15	21.56	2.96	100 (5515)
Age 25	9.43	2.46	100 (3129)

Source: Yi, C.C. (P.I.) (2011) *Taiwan Youth Project: A longitudinal panel study of Taiwanese youth, wave 2011*, Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

1. Numbers are restricted to J3 parents' sample in Wave 7

Figure 3. Proportion of Taiwanese Young Adults Leaving Home by Rural-Urban Residence:
From Age 19-26



Source: Yi, C.C. (PI.) (2011) *Taiwan Youth Project: A longitudinal panel study of Taiwanese youth, wave 2011*, Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

Table 5. Estimation of The Likelihood of Marriage and Parenthood
by Taiwanese Youth Aged 25

Estimated likelihood	Marriage before Age 30		Child-birth before Age 30	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
0%	16.64	13.39	32.73	29.75
1%-49%	30.12	24.00	30.42	25.35
50%	19.13	20.28	15.24	17.38
51%-99%	24.83	29.28	14.51	18.86
100%	9.29	13.05	7.10	8.65
Total(N)	100% (1647)	100% (1479)	100% (1647)	100% (1479)

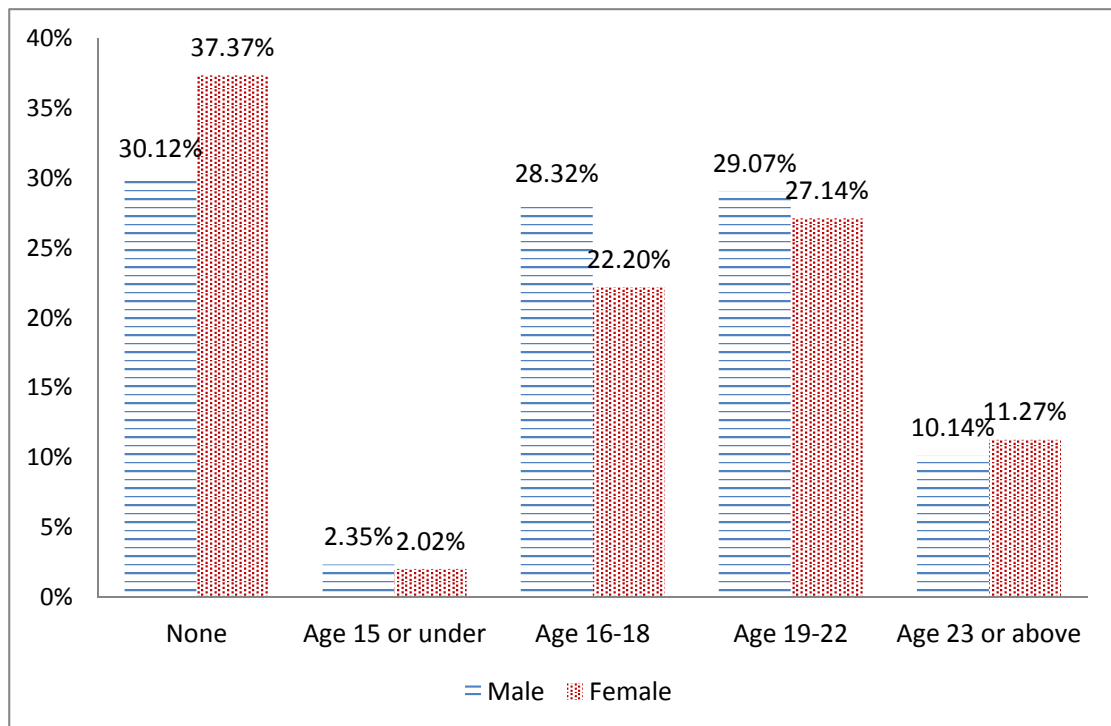
Source: Yi, C.C. (P.I.) (2011) *Taiwan Youth Project: A longitudinal panel study of Taiwanese youth, wave 2011*,
Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica. Taiwan.

Table 6. Childbearing Intention after Having Two Daughters by Taiwanese Youth Aged 25

High School or Under			Total (N)
	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Male	32.06	67.94	100% (340)
Female	33.14	66.86	100% (172)
College/University			Total (N)
	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Male	23.10	76.90	100% (987)
Female	21.21	78.79	100% (1108)
Graduate School			Total (N)
	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Male	25.95	74.05	100% (316)
Female	18.23	81.77	100% (192)

Source: Yi, C.C. (P.I.) (2011) *Taiwan Youth Project: A longitudinal panel study of Taiwanese youth, wave 2011*,
Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica. Taiwan.

Figure 4. The First Occurrence of Sexual Behaviour among Taiwanese Youth



Source: Yi, C.C. (P.I.) (2011) *Taiwan Youth Project: A longitudinal panel study of Taiwanese youth, wave 2011*, Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.