

**BODY, CONSUMPTION AND BRACES WEARING
OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN BANGKOK**

THANIDA POTHIDEE

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
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MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY**

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Thesis
Entitled

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OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN BANGKOK**

.....
Miss Thanida Pothidee
Candidate

.....
Assoc. Prof. Luechai Sringernyuang,
Ph.D. (Medical Anthropology)
Major-Advisor

.....
Assoc. Prof. Pimpawan Boonmongkon,
Ph.D. (Medical Anthropology)
Co-Advisor

.....
Prof. M.R. Jisnuson Svasti,
Ph.D.
Dean
Faculty of Graduate Studies

.....
Assoc.Prof. Sucheela Tanchainan
M.A. (Development Studies)
Chair
Master of Arts Programme in
Medical and Health Social Sciences
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

Thesis

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**BODY, CONSUMPTION AND BRACES WEARING
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for the degree of Master of Arts (Medical and Health Social Sciences)

On

May 14, 2007

.....
Miss Thanida Pothidee
Candidate

.....
Assist. Prof. Suphot Dendoung ,
Ph.D.
Chair

.....
Assoc. Prof. Luechai Sringernyuang,
Ph.D. (Medical Anthropology)
Member

.....
Assist. Prof. Chulanee Thianthai,
Ph.D. (Bio-Cultural Anthropology)
Member

.....
Assoc. Prof. Pimpawan Boonmongkon,
Ph.D. (Medical Anthropology)
Member

.....
Prof. M.R. Jisnuson Svasti, Ph.D.
Dean
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Mahidol University

.....
Assoc.Prof. Suree Kanjanawong, Ph.D.
Dean
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Mahidol University

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Thanida Pothidee

**BODY, CONSUMPTION AND BRACES WEARING OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS
IN BANGKOK**

THANIDA POTHIDEE 4537130 SHMS/M

M.A. (MEDICAL AND HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES)

THESIS ADVISORS: LUECHAI SRINGERNYUANG, Ph.D., PIMPAWAN
BOONMONGKOL, Ph.D.**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this study were to interpret the phenomenal characteristics of tooth alignment; to explore the experiences, ways of thinking, symbolic meanings and values attributed to tooth alignment; and to explain the social contexts influencing young adolescents to pursue tooth alignment. The main purpose of the study was to reflect on and interpret adolescent characteristics occurring in urban society. The key informants were students in one of the demonstration schools in Bangkok. In-depth interviews and observation were utilized in the data collecting process.

The results suggested there are various experiences that have symbolic meaning and value relating to tooth alignment of adolescents. These are divided into three groups. First, braces have become ornaments employed by adolescents to present their personal images. Second, braces demonstrate luxury, wealth and modernity. Finally, braces are consumed for use as future physical capital. The social contexts influencing adolescents to have tooth alignments are: the marketing strategies and results of professional stimulation, peer group, and parental pressures. The study results indicated that lifestyles of adolescents vary in forms of consumption, from functional use to identification purposes containing such aspects as beauty, nicety, social class and economic status, which are used to manifest social meaning and identity. The meaning and intent of orthodontic treatment is not only aesthetic and functional but also has social value. Moreover, identity and sign value of the appliances among adolescents, and their aim to construct the paradigm of the ideal body, go hand in hand with their parents' desire to achieve physical capital for their children through the process of tooth alignment.

**KEYWORDS: BODY / SIGN CONSUMPTION / IDENTITY / ADOLESCENT /
BRACES WEARING**

118 P.

ร่างกาย การบริโภค และการใส่เหล็กจัดฟันของวัยรุ่นในกรุงเทพมหานคร (BODY, CONSUMPTION AND BRACES WEARING OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN BANGKOK)

ธนิดา โพธิ์ดี 4537130 SHMS/M

ศศ.ม. (สังคมศาสตร์การแพทย์และสาธารณสุข)

คณะกรรมการควบคุมวิทยานิพนธ์: ลือชัย ศรีเงินยวง, Ph.D., พิมพวัลย์ บุญมงคล, Ph.D.,

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่ออธิบายถึงปรากฏการณ์การจัดฟันของวัยรุ่น ประสพการณ์ วิธีคิด การให้ความหมาย และคุณค่าเชิงสัญลักษณ์เกี่ยวกับเครื่องมือจัดฟัน และบริบททางสังคมที่มีส่วน ผลักดันให้วัยรุ่นมีพฤติกรรมการจัดฟัน เพื่อสะท้อนภาพของวัยรุ่นที่อาศัยอยู่ในสังคมเมือง โดยมีพื้นที่ ในการวิจัยเป็น โรงเรียนสาธิตแห่งหนึ่งในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร และใช้เทคนิคในการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก และการสังเกตเป็นเครื่องมือในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า วัยรุ่นมีประสพการณ์ การให้ความหมาย และคุณค่าต่อเครื่องมือจัดฟันที่ หลากหลาย สามารถแบ่งเป็นประเด็นใหญ่ๆ ได้ 3 ประเด็น คือ (1) เครื่องมือจัดฟัน เป็นเครื่องประดับ ที่วัยรุ่นบริโภคเพื่อใช้แสดง “ภาพลักษณ์ / อัตลักษณ์ของตน” (2) เครื่องมือจัดฟัน เป็นสื่อที่ใช้ แสดงสัญลักษณ์ทางชนชั้น ความร่ำรวย และความทันสมัย (3) เครื่องมือจัดฟันเป็น เครื่องมือที่นำไปสู่ การสร้างทุนทางกายภาพให้กับชีวิต ส่วนบริบททางสังคมที่ผลักดันให้วัยรุ่นมีพฤติกรรม การจัดฟัน ได้แก่ กลยุทธ์การตลาดและผลจากการผลักดันของวิชาชีพ กลุ่มเพื่อน และผู้ประกอบการ แสดงให้เห็นว่า วิธีชีวิตของวัยรุ่นมีการบริโภคมากมายหลายระดับ ตั้งแต่การบริโภคตามความจำเป็นเพื่อการดำรงชีวิต ไปจนถึงการบริโภคที่มากเกินไปเกินความจำเป็นของร่างกาย แต่เป็นการบริโภคเพื่อแสดงสัญลักษณ์หรืออัต ลักษณ์ตัวตน เช่น ความสวยงาม น่ารัก ชนชั้น และฐานะทางเศรษฐกิจ การจัดฟันของเด็กวัยรุ่นจึงมี ความหมายไปไกลกว่าการรักษา เพราะเครื่องมือจัดฟันมีความหมายในเชิงสังคมด้วย ซึ่งวิธีการที่ วัยรุ่นใช้ในการสร้างสัญลักษณ์และอัตลักษณ์เช่นนี้ยังนำไปสู่เป้าหมายของการมีร่างกายที่สมบูรณ์แบบ สวยงามตามลักษณะในอุดมคติเพื่อประโยชน์ในการนำไปใช้ในการสร้างทุนซึ่งตรงกับความต้องการ ของผู้ประกอบการด้วย

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Problem

At present, the popularity in tooth alignment is widespread particularly in the adolescent group. We have noticed that many adolescents have teeth strapped with wire and rubber bands in different colors stacked in their oral cavities. Even the actors, who are portrayed in the music videos of adolescents' hit songs produced by many companies and advertisements, have their teeth aligned. Orthodontic appliances are utilized as a symbol of attraction and sales promotion to consumers through advertisements. Although the products in the advertisements are not at all related to teeth, such as in the advertisements of fuel oil, student shoes, or the advertisement in using international long distance telephone codes.

Though orthodontic treatment in Thailand originated more than 50 years ago (Department of Orthodontics, Faculty of Dentistry, Chulalongkorn University, 2004), the popularity in tooth alignment has just become widespread in recent years. From the experiences of the researcher studying in the lower secondary standard at Singburi provincial school (during 1988-1991), we can see at that time the school had approximately 2,000 students, and not more than five students had their teeth aligned. The common characteristics of the children having their teeth aligned were due to the fact that the upper teeth over protruded, much like the horse face or the chin was protruding too much. At that time orthodontic treatment was not available in the province. This group of children could only receive this kind of treatment at the university hospital in Bangkok. Specialist dentists, orthodontists, were not available at general dental clinics. However, at present current students in this school told the researcher that around 100-200 students have had their teeth aligned. Now there is a total of four dental clinics available to provide service in tooth alignment in the central city of the province.

Aside from the group of adolescents having their teeth aligned, there were also adolescents who did not have their teeth aligned, but are interested in doing it in the future. From the preliminary data collection in the field before the study through conversations with the adolescents and their parents at Singburi in 2004 and from the internet data survey, the researcher found that adolescents were enthusiastic in searching for and exchanging information about tooth alignment in terms of service premise, price, or some children asked their parents to have their teeth aligned. For example:

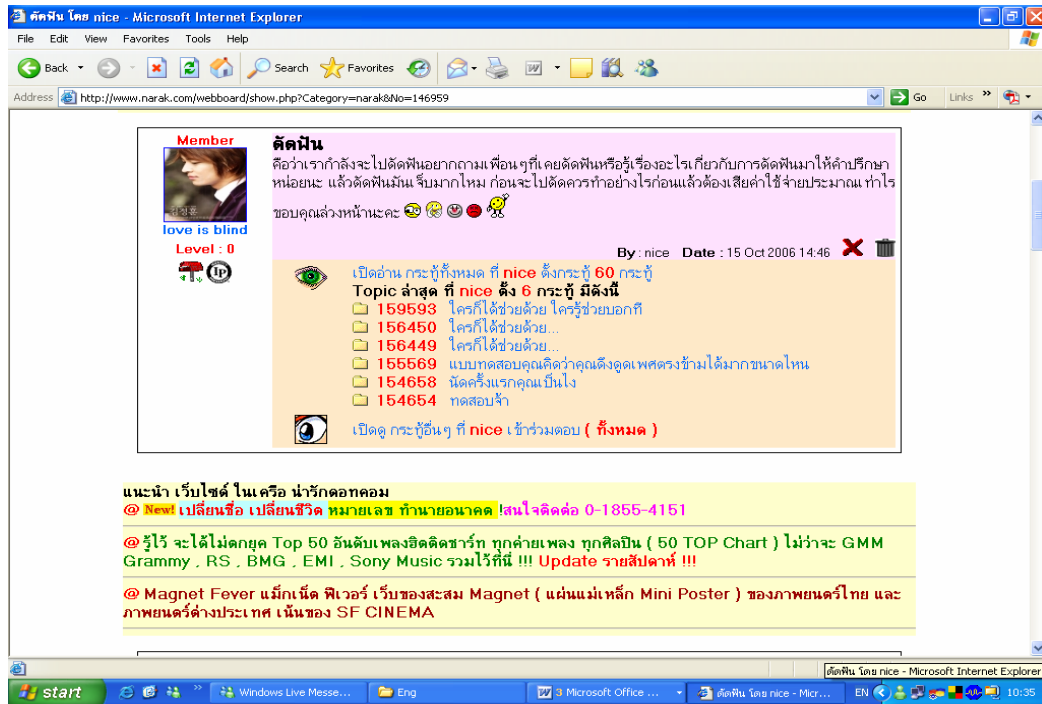
“Fah has one slanted incisor, but Fah does not have any problems with it. Fah wants to correct this tooth and have a tooth alignment. In this case whether Fah should have tooth alignment, if yes, what type of tooth alignment should Fah have, how much does it cost, and how long will Fah have to use it. Please give me additional information” (Fah, 2004)

“I am going to have a tooth alignment. I want to ask friends experiencing it or knowing something about it to give me consultation. Will the tooth alignment hurt me? Before going to have tooth alignment, what should I prepare? How much does it cost? Thank you in advance” (Nice, 2006)

“Where are cheap fashionable dental braces available? How much do they cost? I seriously want to know. Can anybody give me telephone number for the contact? For the experienced person in it, could you clearly tell me the service premise? Thank you very much” (Yakroojungbokmangdi, 2006)

“My daughter seriously wants to have her teeth aligned. She insists me everyday, so that I feel annoyed. I have to tell her that during school vacation, I will take her to a dentist for examination, and she

calmed down, otherwise she will woo me everyday” (interviewing a father at Singburi)



(Figure 1. An example of some topics posted in a web board via the internet)

Actually the objective of tooth alignment in adolescents is for the treatment of malocclusion¹, however many adolescents having no problem in the malocclusion of teeth used “fashionable” dental braces (meaning the use of dental braces, but the braces do not effect the movement of the teeth, or the use of fake devices so that it seems as if the person using the fake devices is having his or her teeth aligned, the researcher) to make their oral cavities colorful. The fashionable dental braces are available in a tailor-made type and another is easily made by using ordinary wire strung with colorful glass beads and attaching them to their teeth. The latter type is inexpensive and just for ornamentation. Many people, from secondary school students to university students, including primary school students, like to wear these easily

¹ Malocclusion is defined as an irregularity of the teeth or a malrelationship of the dental archs beyond the accepted range of normal. (Jones and Oliver, 1994)

made fashionable dental braces. This fashion statement was big news in November 2004 (Khaosod, Thairath, Komchadluek newspapers, edition on 13 Nov. 2004).



(Figure 2. Headline news taken from two newspapers, Komchadluek and Khaosod)

The function of orthodontic appliances has evolved from devices the dentist uses in the prevention and treatment of the abnormality in malocclusion into a need that matches the desire of the adolescent. Sometimes we may see a person having their teeth aligned, but we feel that they do not this procedure. This person’s teeth are beautiful and do not overlap at all. Some adolescents may come into a dental clinic asking; “Is the service in fashionable tooth alignment available?”, as the researcher (who is a dentist) has personally experienced, or some people express their opinions on the internet, for example

“Has anybody experience in fashionable tooth alignment? I actually do not want to have the real tooth alignment. Where is it available? How many types does it have? Is the removable tooth alignment available? Is the feature of fashionable tooth alignment like the real one? How much does it cost? I seriously want to know. Thank you in advance” (Sornpraram, 2006)

“I heard that the fashionable tooth alignment was available. Was it true? How much did it cost? I wanted to use dental braces too, I saw other people using them, and it was so cute.” (Konchangsongsai, 2004)

“What did fashionable tooth alignment have an effect to teeth? My daughter asked me to take her to have fashionable tooth alignment. I did not know whether it would be harmful to her teeth, if she had it. Moreover, her teeth were in good condition, but it was just fashion. Please give me an answer, thank you very much” (Yaksabka, 2003)

From the adolescent's behavior about tooth alignment as mentioned above, the researcher has questioned; “Why is there a widespread popularity among the adolescents for tooth alignment at the present time?” In the viewpoint of the researcher, who is also a dentist, tooth alignment is a complicated and time-consuming process because when a patient comes to see a dentist for tooth alignment, the dentist must examine and record a large amount of medical and dental data. Furthermore, the malocclusion of teeth must be recorded with a mouth cast by making a model of the teeth. The radiograph must be taken at the areas of teeth, face, and head. The patient must visit the dentist often. After dental braces are attached, every 4-6 weeks the patient still must visit the dentist according to the appointed schedule to adjust the wire used in moving the teeth for at least two years.

Moreover, the tooth alignment is likely to make a person having their teeth aligned or a person wanting to have his or her teeth aligned uncomfortable, since metal wire or teeth strap metal attached in his oral cavity for a long time often causes a strange feeling towards the one who views it. The person using orthodontic appliances does not like to chat or smile due to their embarrassment. Furthermore the appliances may annoy them due to the obstruction in the functioning of facial muscles and oral cavity. At every dental visit for dental braces adjustment, the person having his teeth aligned will receive a lot of pain. Some patients may not be able to chew food for many days and others must take pain medicine to relieve the symptoms. Besides this, verbal pronunciation is not clear and the patient must take special care in the cleanliness of their oral cavity. Otherwise dental caries will occur because the dental braces will cause food particles to be easily accumulated at the crown.

As for the cost of service, although the dentists specializing in this field are increasing, the price for tooth alignment is still high, between 20,000-60,000 baht depending on the severity and dental service premise. For example, the price at a

government hospital is around 20,000-30,000 baht, but the patient must be in queue for a long time before receiving the treatment; whereas the treatment in the private clinic or hospital will be faster, and the price is higher (Chalat Sue, 2001).

Due to the complications, pain, time consuming process and cost, the researcher believes that the popularity in tooth alignment should not be high. However, contrary to the fact, many people, particularly the adolescent, want to have their teeth aligned even though there is no indication or necessity to have it done. Someone who does not have any money or not enough money still tries to pursue it or search for the inexpensive or fake dental braces to wear. These questionable motivations and contradictions are where the idea for this study originated. If we consider the tooth alignment phenomenon in the adolescent as a “symptom” of something that is happening, existing, and eventually dissipating according to social context and situation, the interesting questions for the analysis of the phenomenon are as follows: Why does the popularity in tooth alignment occur? How does it happen? What does the phenomenon reflect on or point out about the adolescent in Thai society?

Research Questions

Main question

What does the current widespread tooth alignment phenomenon reflect on or point out about the adolescent in Thai society?

Minor questions

To answer the main question of the study, the researcher separates the issue into minor questions as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of the tooth alignment phenomenon in the adolescent?

- How widespread is tooth alignment in the adolescent group and what are the adolescent characteristics?

- What are the behaviors of adolescents having their teeth aligned such as what type of alignment do they receive, where do they have the tooth alignment, and what is the cost?

- What are the experiences of adolescents having their teeth aligned?

2. What are the ways of thinking, the symbolic meanings and values given in the adolescent tooth alignment?

3. What are the social contexts influencing the adolescent in making decisions about tooth alignment and how do the factors or contexts work?

Research Objectives

Main objectives

To study and explain the social implications; its meanings, indications or reflections on the adolescent in Thai society because of the widespread phenomenon of tooth alignment application

Specific objectives

1. To explain phenomenal characteristics of tooth alignment in the adolescent occurring in urban society.

2. To explore the experience, the ways of thinking, the symbolic meaning and value related to tooth alignment of the adolescent in society.

3. To explain the social contexts influencing adolescents to have tooth alignment behavior.

Expected Benefits

1. To obtain the social and cultural knowledge in tooth alignment behavior of adolescents in Thai society.

2. To view and understand the reflected image of adolescence in Thai society through the tooth alignment phenomenon.
3. To be a guideline in the presentation of medical policy in the oral health.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Orthodontics: Rationale and Medical Concepts

It has not been stated obviously when orthodontic treatment in Thailand started since there is no supporting evidence. However, the Department of Orthodontics, Chulalongkorn University, which is regarded as the first institution providing graduated orthodontists to perform dental service for people in Thailand, found that after Orthodontist Thawin Tantikun, a graduate of the first class of the Department of Orthodontics had received a governmental scholarship to make a tour of inspection and further his study in the United States of America from January 13, 1950 to 1952, he improved the orthodontic curriculum and started an orthodontic clinic to provide orthodontic service to people (Faculty of Dentistry, Chulalongkorn University, 2004). Therefore, it can be concluded that orthodontic treatment in Thailand began in 1952 when the first orthodontic service was provided.

The meaning of orthodontics is defined by the American Association of Orthodontics (A.A.O.) as the branch of dentistry that specializes in the growth, modification and stability of dental positioning, malocclusion as well as skeletal and facial structure, focusing on irregular development and dental irregularities. The growth and the relation of the skeletal, facial and dental structure cause malocclusion which affects the mastication, beauty and oral, physical and mental health of a person (Surachai Detkhunakorn, 1996).

Hence, orthodontic treatment can be divided into three main purposes:

- (1.) Function: Dental irregularities are treated in order to bring teeth into proper alignment to masticate effectively.
- (2.) Stability: After alignment, teeth are stable in the new position without any changes.

(3.) Esthetic: After the orthodontic treatment, teeth look beautiful improving facial appearance (Surachai Detkhunakorn, quoted).

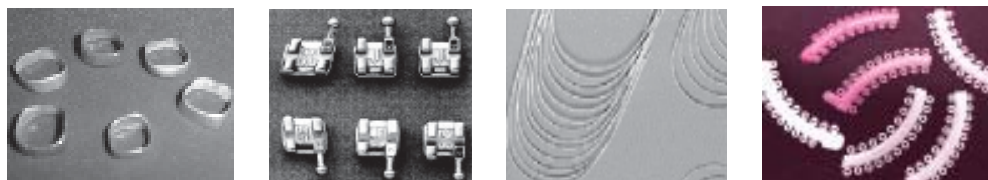
Orthodontic appliances can be classified into two main groups (Pornratchanee Sawaengkit, 1998 and Suwannee Lapnapornlap, 2005):

1. Removable appliance is the appliance that the patients can wear and remove by themselves. It is used for minor tooth movement in order to align some teeth when all teeth do not develop completely and it is often made of plastic. The patients can remove it to clean during the orthodontic treatment; however, the treatment of dental irregularities is limited.



(Figure 3. Illustration of removable appliance)

2. Fixed appliance consists of bands and brackets fixed to each tooth. Most of them are made of metal with fixed wire and rubber band to bind the wire and the appliance. The patients cannot place and remove this type of appliances by themselves; therefore, they cannot clean them. Orthodontists will remove this appliance after the orthodontic treatment is completed. The fixed appliance is used to move several teeth in different directions.



Band

Bracket

Wire

Rubber band



(Figure 4. Illustration of fixed appliance)

The orthodontics procedure aims at protecting and treating malocclusion. Orthodontists treat the dental imbalance to cure the malocclusion by means of the orthodontic appliances that activate the teeth to move to the proper position. The orthodontists advise that children aged between 12 and 14 years should undergo orthodontic treatment since children of this age group perform the most facial growth and change. However, specific age is not indicated since it depends upon the type and severity of the dental irregularity. The average period of the orthodontic treatment is two years; however, it might take more or less time for some patients depending on several factors such as the severity of the dental irregularity, the patient's age and treatment response. The positional change of teeth and jaws affects the front and sides of the facial shape. (Wanna Suchato, no date)



(Figure 5. Before the treatment, During the treatment and After the treatment)

Although the orthodontic treatment can treat dental irregularities and strengthen the patients' confidence, some side effects might occur such as having a toothache after seeing an orthodontist for modification of the orthodontic appliances or if the patients do not take proper care of their oral health, they might have dental decay, periodontal (gum) diseases or decalcification since left-over food particles often become stuck in the orthodontic appliances and on the teeth (Chalat Sue, 2001: 28).

Furthermore, it was found in the review of recent researches that the analysis of adolescents' orthodontic behaviors was not considered or evaluated by social scientists. Most of the researches on orthodontic treatment were focused on medical issues concerning the development of appliances and techniques as well as treatment methods. Some were focused on opinions, perceptions and effects from the orthodontic treatment analyzed in terms of quantitative research emphasizing the relation of different variables (Soonthorn Raphisuwan, et al. (2002), Kilma, et al. (1979), Graber and Lucker (1980), Kenealy, et al. (1989), Burden and Pine (1994), O'Brien, et al (1996) and Al-Sarheed, et al. (2003)).

Apart from the medical concept, Trulsson, et al. (2002) had analyzed collected data from qualitative researches based on the grounded theory method. After interviewing 28 adolescents aging between 13 and 19 years old on the waiting list for orthodontic treatment in Sweden, it was found that adolescents' concepts and values of orthodontic treatment can be divided into five related points:

(1) Forced decision-making: it is found that the adolescents' decisions rely on social criteria and value created by their environment and media portraying the ideal body image as well as support by dentists, friends and family members. This is the main reason why adolescents decided to undergo the orthodontic treatment and shows the influence of social procedure and pressure affecting their decisions.

(2) Being like everyone else: the adolescents think they will belong to the same group if they undergo the orthodontic treatment.

(3) Being diagnosed: the orthodontists found their teeth irregular.

(4) Focusing on the mouth: they focus on their mouth and teeth.

(5) Obeying social norms: it is related to being accepted by their peer group.

The mentioned research illustrates the adolescent's reasons for undergoing orthodontic treatments which are different from medical reasons. However, my research aims at analyzing the backgrounds of the orthodontic phenomenon, the adolescents' reasons for undergoing orthodontic treatments, the implications of this phenomenon, and the reflection of adolescents in modern society through orthodontic treatments.

At first, you must understand that the orthodontic treatment is not only a method to treat dental irregularities, but it is also regarded as cosmetic. It is obvious that those

who wear braces confidently smile to show their colorful rubber bands without any embarrassment caused by having orthodontic braces in their mouth.

According to previous studies, the adolescent's orthodontic behaviors at present can be categorized into two approaches: The first approach considers the orthodontic treatment as a part of youth culture related to consumptive culture with sign that supports adolescents to present their identity to the public whereas the other approach considers the orthodontic treatment as regulated management of the body to create physical capital of life according to Bourdieu's concept.

Adolescence and Youth Culture

Laurence Steinberg (1996) and Hurlock (quoted in Sucha Chan-em, 1986) explained the word "adolescence" as being stemmed from the Latin word "Adolescere" which means the time period between the beginning of puberty and maturity. In other words, adolescence is the state that someone is in between puberty and adulthood without any specific boundary when it starts and when it ends. However, we can consider the physical change important by starting from girls' menstruation and boys' sperm. Ordinarily, girls enter adolescence 1-2 years earlier than boys, but there is no exact time since some might enter it earlier whereas some might do it late depending on several factors. Adolescence ends when they attain maturity and are capable of living independently without parental controls as well as being responsible for their own life.

The difference in adolescents' age of maturity makes it difficult to indicate a specific age when adolescence starts and ends. Psychiatrists and educationists, from the past to the present, have specified the period of adolescence differently, for instance:

Pramuan Dickinson (1977) divides adolescence into two stages depending on the growth; in the first stage between 12 and 14 years old, adolescents tend to be similar to children more than adults whereas in the second stage (late adolescence from 14 years old to complete adolescence development, 22-25 years old), they tend to be similar to adults more than children.

Sucha Chan-em (1986) and Laurence Steinberg (1996) divide adolescence into three stages depending on average age as the starting point of adolescence and indicate that 21-year-old adolescents enter adulthood since they have legal rights; however, the age span of early adolescence is slightly different:

1. Early adolescence: according to Laurence Steinberg, adolescents from 11 to 14 years old enter this stage whereas according to Sucha Chan-em, those from 13 to 15 years old enter it. They are different because western adolescents enter adolescence earlier than Thai adolescents. During this stage, both males and females have complete sexual development which is the symbol of adolescence.

2. Middle Adolescence: 15-18 year-old adolescents have gradual physical and mental changes; however, a lot of physical changes can be seen before maturity in adolescence.

3. Late Adolescence: 18-21 year-old adolescents enter complete maturity in which mental development can be seen greater than physical, especially in their thought process and philosophy of life.

Chan Chummuangpak (2004) divides adolescence into four stages including pre-adolescence from 9 to 12 years old.

Adolescents' development is not focused only on physical changes which increase body sizes, but also focuses on other aspects of development:

When entering adolescence, young people often feel alienated and different from childhood and adulthood since adolescents enjoy having fun; therefore, they are not expected by society to have similar roles and responsibilities as adults. They like being with people of the same age, interests and ideals and consider having friends very important. Likewise, their social groups have a lot of influence on them. There are rules within a group that all members respect and follow such as unique grooming techniques and use of slang words (Suriya Chatupornphiphat quoted in Kunlapha Wachanasara (2001) and Sucha Chan-em (1986).

Furthermore, adolescents attempt to discover their own identity in order to know what they want and do not want. The adolescents' self-seeking process begins with being accepted by their friends. They pay a lot of attention to similarities and differences in physical appearances, activities or experiences between their friends and themselves. In addition, they want to be a part of the group as well as be accepted,

praised and impressed with their behaviors by their friends; therefore, they take good care of their figures and are concerned about their personalities. What they are worried about is their height, shortness, fatness, thinness and misshapeness. Each adolescent is worried about different things, such as pimples, odors, short eye-sight or dental irregularity. Hence, they try to fix their defects and improve their personalities since they do not want to be different from their group. In the same way, they begin to learn, compare themselves with the world around them, realize their identity and choose to play their appropriate and obvious roles (Pramuan Dickinson (1977), Phatthana Sucharitwong quoted in Kunlapha Wachanasara (2001), Sucha Chan-em (1986) and Laurence Steinberg (1996).

Since adolescents aspire to find their own identity and want to be accepted by the others, they make an effort to create their own space, activity or unique subculture which is different from other groups' or subcultures.

Youth culture

Phatthana Kiti-asa (2003) talked about vogue culture (according to Phatthana, adolescent culture is regarded as vogue culture; therefore, if his research is mentioned again, "adolescent culture" will be used instead of "vogue culture" in order to be in accordance with the content of this thesis) which is a trend defined as the "space" of creation, negotiation and re-identifying of several groups in the society in order to find, choose or deny their groups. While negotiating or creating cultural meaning for their lives, they sometimes develop their own vision, action or view that opposes those of authority figures in society such as parents, teachers or government officials. Thus, they struggle to find a way to present their voices, opinions, visions or identities constantly. Vogue trends in various forms such as ceremonies, pop music, dramas, fashion, etc. are ways in daily life that they can apply their ideals in the struggling war of cultural negotiation.

Likewise, Michael Brake (quoted in Kunlapha Wachanasara, 2001: 20-21 and Amit-Talai and Wulff, 1995: 14-16) define the meaning of adolescent culture as; what adolescents take care of and pay attention to. Adolescent culture has two key elements: identity and resistance. Brake explains that the adolescent subculture has interesting

aspects due to the resistance or challenge with adults or societal regulations. Adolescents are fun lovers, who escape from the limitation of works and families, search for a fun space, and create their own practices to give new meaning and presentation to their alternative culture in order to find an identity apart from the roles and expectations of family, work and school. Furthermore, they create mutual group unity and develop their individual identities without the control of adult powers. It can be seen in the adolescents' conventional behaviors that they try to wear fashionable clothes with brand names, wear hairstyles similar to that of their favorite stars, paint their faces, pierce or tattoo their skins, go out to restaurants in department stores and chat with friends.

Hence, identity means perception of ourselves as who we are, what we are like and how other people think about us. Nietzsche and other philosophers in the post-modern era mentioned that identity is created by the society and related to culture and social status; therefore, the identity creation process is not created since the childhood. Instead, it is varied depending on the social context (Seri Phongphit, 2003 and Bandit Piyasin, 2005).

Adolescent culture can contain identity and turn up apparently to the society due to considerable social contexts, especially major changes such as the importance of the market and consumption, the growth of free-time industries focusing on adolescents, goods and services designed to attract teenagers, the development of mass communication emphasizing advertisements and public relations to promote the products widely (Kunlapha Wachanasara, 2001: 15).

Due to the rapid growth of capitalism, profit making and the search for the largest economic benefits, the definition of "goods" changed from "economic goods," which are goods necessary for life and have use value in which the production and consumption of are based on the reasonability of usage, to the term "cultural goods". These are based on symbols representing the meaning of something in accordance with adolescent culture in which adolescents grab or seek some meaning or symbol from to establish and display their identity and reflect their lifestyle.

Patterns of goods production were changed from mass production to a production dependent on the differences of marketing targets. Capitalists not only produce goods for consumption, but also create an "image" or "identity" for goods so as to specify

certain consumer groups. In addition, adolescents are chosen as major marketing targets because they like wearing fashionable clothes and have purchase and consumption powers since their parents give them an opportunity to decide what they want to buy. Furthermore, they have a lot of free time because they do not have the responsibility of working to earn an income for their families. Since their major duty is only to study, they search for fun in their life by consuming various forms of goods which can be anything that suits their needs. Goods become signs which do not need to be in accordance with their presentation. This reason can explain why some adolescents must dine in McDonald's or buy expensive clothes with brand names. Namely, it is a form of consumption to convey a meaning of something as well as representing their status, identity and image. In other words, consumption has become a means of defining their way of life and style (Nithi Iawsiwong, 2004).

Boudrillard (quoted in Kunlinee Mutthakalin, 1998) proposed a theoretical concept about materialism and consumption in society; the understanding of current consumption is not based on the theory of utility or pleasure as used by economists. Instead, it should be based on the understanding of value and meaning creation for materials, referred to as "sign consumption", for conveying meanings as well as creating human differences in capitalist society, stimulating endless consumption: the more they consume, the more they want to further their consumption.

According to Boudrillard, consumption is changed from the importance of use value and value of trading in goods to the importance of sign value. In his opinion, semiotics considers the conveyance of code meaning or code value by using goods and consumption as a process of conveying value or cultural meaning which will be transmitted to social recipients. Hence, goods in current society are not only useful due to their natural characteristics, but they are also indicators reflecting an implied code value, for instance credit cards represent power and cars represent the owners' success.

Sign consumption is a system using signification and value as a way to respond to the interpretation of individual differences in society. People realize that their belongings such as clothes, ornaments, furniture, and cars are interpreted and classified as good taste or bad taste, for instance mobile phones can indicate the owners' social status since they are expensive, especially in the past when a mobile phone cost around 100,000 baht. Hence mobile phones can represent wealth and

power and be ornaments for the owners' (Chusak Phattharakunwanit, 2003: 97). Signification and value cause endless consumption since consumption becomes the process of absorbing signs as well as being absorbed by the signs at the same time (Kunlinee Mutthakalin, 1998 and Sasiya Wichitchamaree).

Adolescent culture is regarded as consumptive culture with signification because all of their selected goods such as clothes, shoes, bags and mobile phones are not only used for utility, but can also be interpreted for special hidden meanings showing their tastes, modernity and attractions. Otherwise, they are used as tools to indicate their status. Nithi Iawsiwong (quoted) stated that humans in any consumptive society use consumption to reveal their "identity". They choose their social status, taste, lifestyle and relation to other people in society by selecting one of the consumption patterns that leads their "identity" to connect with other people in the society. Thus, adolescents use consumption to demonstrate their groups' identity and their own identity as well as create a new identity.

As a result, in consumptive culture people in the lower classes aspire to emulate people's taste in the higher classes, for instance laborers make an effort to upgrade their status to the middle class through culture and education. Since they always check, consider and improve their personality, they are interested in learning about lifestyles and taste to eliminate class boundaries created by the system of production. Rare goods which were once limited to the higher classes are sold to people in all classes. On the other hand, people of high class try to find new tastes to keep the distance between the classes. Namely, high class people are searching for what William Leiss (quoted in Sasiya Wichitchamaree) called "positional goods" which are honorable goods because only a small amount of them are produced; therefore satisfaction depends upon possession or consumption of rare goods. Due to the change in the relationship between what materials a person buys and the outcome of that purchase, everywhere people visibly spend money on luxurious goods or services to support their prestige, wealth and social status. They pay a lot of attention to brand names of limited goods focusing on showy style and extravagance.

Several goods create signs which are not natural occurrences since mass media and advertisements take part in creating sign value for goods. In an economic system with increasing competition of production and sales, manufacturers need to adapt their

policies to focus more on sale strategy by means of advertising planning. Advertisements are not only used to show condition and quality of the goods in the market as in the past, but they create and increase consumers' demand for the goods. Persuasion strategy urges buyers to desire possessions and the consumption of the goods. Furthermore, advertising adds various forms of social value to the goods to make consumers feel that this type of goods or this brand name is valuable and meaningful to them. Hence, consumers not only buy objects, but also purchase a place in a higher level in the social hierarchy. Therefore, for this reason, consumers think it is reasonable to consume the goods although at first they may not desire those goods. (Seri Wongmontha (1983), Kunlinee Mutthakalin (1998) and William quoted in Khatsara Khamawan, 1994)

Personal consumption in the current society is not only done to achieve basic needs, but people also consume for feelings and values varying in accordance with time. Thus, the psychological feelings of the buyer are considered by the sellers along with goods themselves in advertisements. Consumed goods under consumptionism are not only significant in their physical appearance, but also in the abstract meaning those goods contain due to complicated advertising strategies. In addition, implied meanings in the advertisements of goods needs to be interpreted, for example present day coffee advertisements have added some new meanings to stimulate buyers to consume more signs than the real characteristics of the coffee itself. Hence, the significance of coffee consumption not only meets general basic needs, but consumers also consume coffee significance or sign in coffee. Sarinthorn Ratcharoenkhachorn (2002) found that those who choose to drink coffee in StarBucks demonstrated a meaning for freedom of selection because there are many kinds of coffee to select from in this café. And this brand name of coffee represents excellence and meticulousness replicating American standards and consumed by the middle class and upper class on account of the coffee in StarBucks is quite expensive. In addition, the lights in this café are appropriate for reading; therefore, it reflects that StarBucks is a space for literates or educated people affecting the culture of the middle class.

Advertising is the medium of creating images and popularity for goods among consumers. Therefore, manufacturers try to advertise their products in the media where it can easily access their target groups, for instance if they would like to reach

adolescent groups, they advertise in media devices that adolescents are interested in for free-time activities, such as televisions, radios, magazines, newspapers, posters or even the internet. Presently parents let their children learn about the outside world through electronic media, especially computers, the internet and cable television in order to support and encourage their children's need to know about modern news, people and situations worldwide. Hence, domestic and foreign products such as clothes, music, movies, magazines and consumer goods compete in producing sign, value and significance to adolescents' cultural spaces through various types of media. The goods selected by adolescents must represent smartness, modernity, style and taste.

Even though orthodontic treatment is not allowed to advertise directly to persuade consumers to undergo service in clinics due to violation of dental ethics according to Dental Council (an act of dentistry, 1994 and regulation of Dental Council, 1995: 70-74), reflection and information on orthodontic treatment are propagated to teenagers through advertisements or media channels. Clinics advertise in media sources the adolescents are interested in: television, magazines or internet sites such as health programs, movies, dramas, advertisement or music videos in which the main characters wear colorful braces in their mouths. Clinics or hospitals also show posters of stars who are wearing braces or display pictures or messages on calendars such as "Overbite does not look good, so let's undergo orthodontic treatment to wear braces, wires and colorful rubber bands. You will like it and thank orthodontists because other people will admire you." These pictures, messages and famous people function as stimulants for adolescents to believe that orthodontic treatment is desirable since it not only treats dental irregularities or brings facial misshapeness into normal shape, but in addition, these repeated pictorial portrayals lead adolescents to believe that orthodontic treatment is valuable and meaningful because many people, especially stars and singers wear braces. Thus, the trend to have orthodontic treatment performed is very popular among teenagers.

An interesting question that still needs to be answered is what significance, value and sign hidden under adolescents' need to have orthodontic appliances are and what the sign means as well as how that sign is related to other conditions in society.



(Figure 6. Sample picture advertised on the internet)

Yet, Nithi Iawsiwong (quoted: 115-119) stated that the influence of the media and advertising cannot only explain the reason for cultural consumption, for there are some elements of culture ingrained in consumers which makes them easily accept the ideas of the media and advertisement. That culture element is the concept that considers our body as goods that can be sold in the market and their price can be increased or decreased. It means that if people in the past had had media or televisions as in the present, the advertisements would not have been able to persuade them to even dream of orthodontic treatment or physical make-over as people do today. This was because they did not regard their body as goods like people at present. Thus, in the next part, we will discuss the concept of body and physical capital.

Body and Physical Capital

In the past, when we talked about “body”, we imagined a picture of a body consisting of many organs with a head, torso and limbs assembled to be a living organism that can function under the brain’s orders. When people were born, some might be fortunate to be good-looking with beautiful teeth alignment and skin, while others may have had disabilities, misshapeness or defects that had to be accepted because we cannot choose to be born perfect. Nevertheless, present day opinions about the body have changed. The body in the post-modern era is regarded as a changeable object and can be made over. Although we have had our body since we were born, medical evolution and technological advancement provides options for people and their body. Consequently, people tend to consider body as an entity in the process of becoming something or an unfinished project. It means that body is not a finished or

complete object. Instead, it always is in the process of creation and change in relation to other objects. Accordingly, humans can presently change and control their body as never before. In addition, body becomes a stage to show individuality and a center of identity creation that the owner wants to display to other people (Paritta Chalermphao Ko-anantakun, 1998: 2, 17).

Bourdieu (quoted in Chris Shilling, 1996 and Paritta Chalermphao Ko-anantakun, 1998) is a French social scientist who proposes a theory about social reproduction. He considers body as an important physical capital that people in the upper class and middle class in society can use as tools to maintain the benefits of their class because body in capitalist society is regarded as a source of sign value that can create physical capital. Namely, there is a way to change body into physical capital. He focuses on the process that changes body to goods in that body is significant in labor trading; those who have huge strong bodies are more valuable than small boney ones. Furthermore, like goods, it means the way body can possess power, status and an excellent sign value to fulfill or lead to the accumulation of resources to increase life capital.

Body takes part in creating and continuing difference and inequality in society. Bourdieu explains that due to three factors the body has a class crest stamped on it:

Social location refers to the class-based material circumstances which contextualize people's daily lives and contribute to the development of their bodies. These locations consist of the overall volume of capital possessed by an individual, the relative weight of their different assets, and the change in these properties over time. Social locations can also be measured by their "distance from necessity" or financial, cultural and social want (Bourdieu, quoted in Chris Shilling).

The Habitus is the second main factor which contributes to the development of the body. The habitus is a "socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structure" which provides individuals with class-dependent, predisposed ways of relating to and categorizing both familiar and novel situations. (Brubaker, quoted in Chris Shilling) According to Bourdieu, the habitus is formed in the context of the people's social locations and inculcates in them a "world view" based on, and reconciled to, these positions. As such, it tends towards reproducing existing social structures. The habitus is located within the body and affects every aspect of human embodiment. Indeed, the way people treat their bodies 'reveals the deepest

dispositions of the habitus' (Bourdieu, quoted in Chris Shilling). This is evident in 'the most automatic gestures and the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body such as ways of walking or blowing one's nose, ways of eating or talking and engage the most fundamental principles of construction and evaluation of the social world'.

Taste means the processes whereby individuals appropriate as voluntary choices and preferences, lifestyles which are actually rooted in material constraints. In other words, taste makes a virtue out of necessity. People develop preferences for what is available to them. The development of taste, which can be seen as a conscious manifestation of habitus, embodies and deeply affects people's orientations to their bodies. As such, Bourdieu has defined taste as 'a class culture turned into nature, that is embodied. It is an incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and digests and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically'.

These three factors support humans to improve, change or remain in their physical differences in each social class and affects alternatives for social life as well.

Humans can produce physical capital by developing, decorating or changing their parts of body through methods that enable them to change their body to attain their desirable goal which has value in accordance with their particular social context. Production of physical capital is related to social class since it is obvious that the elite and upper class has both plenty of time and resources to treat their body as a never-ending project. They try to change and improve their bodies as well as do activities indicating their physical skills such as golf, polo or dancing which are regarded as sports for the higher classes owing to the requirement of space, special physical skills and expensiveness of these activities. This group of people does not consider building their body to be huge, strong and powerful, but are concerned with keeping their body slim and having an elegant poise.

Apart from physical development, high-class people support their offspring's physical development by giving them an opportunity to study in famous schools or universities not only for gaining degrees to work but also for physical training and outward improvements such as apparel, manner and expression in order to socially articulate perfectly. Furthermore, parents support them to do activities that can improve their body and physical mannerisms such as ballet, tennis and horseback

riding. Therefore, even though body means individual physical characteristics such as fatness, thinness, strength, weakness, and black and white skin, according to Bourdieu, body is not specified only by physical appearance, but it includes physical skills, poise, abilities and manners as well.

In contrast, body is a limited project for the labor-class of males and females. They regard body as tools or machines to work for wages. Those who have huge and strong bodies are more valuable than skinny ones. They pay heed to their body only when they are sick and need treatment. Thus, body is a relatively limited capital to change into other objects because they need only healthy, strong and powerful bodies to maintain their efficiency in working.

Furthermore, Bourdieu (quoted in Chris Shilling) stated that conversion of physical capital means changing physical participation in working, doing activities and spending free time into different forms of capital such as economic capital (money, products and service), cultural capital (education) and social capital (connections or networks linked in the society). He clarified that some physical abilities can be changed into large income such as sportsmen, actors or singers. Accordingly, when body can be changed into other forms of capital, humans try to improve and change their body into tools in exchange for what they need.

It is apparent that while physical development is related to class position, it becomes an economic crest to indicate an individuals' class position. Namely, when people in high class have more opportunity to develop their body more than those in the class of laborers do, their developed body can be used to exchange for other forms of capital for the owners. On the contrary, people in labor class have little opportunity to develop their body; therefore, their body has a limitation to be used to exchange with other forms of capital. Physical development is regarded as the reproduction of physical capital enabling people in the higher class to possess more capital than ones in the labor class.

However, Bourdieu indicated that body contains differences, and social inequality stems from giving definition and sign value to the desirable body differently in each society. According to Chulanee Thianthai (2004), it was found that Thai adolescents' desired female bodies that have a light complexion, are well-shaped, slim and tall whereas a desirable male body must be firm, tall and well-shaped. Body

definition and meaning can be flexible and changes constantly depending on powerful social groups who have authority to control and give definition. For instance in the past, when General Po Phibunsongkhram was Prime Minister, he declared an act of betel palm prohibition. After that, the value of black teeth changed and people admired white teeth instead.

Social groups' acceptance of body value and significance depends on which authority defines the meaning. Hence, several social groups try to seize power in order to indicate the direction of body. Apart from physical definition by authorities to control people's desirable characteristics, capitalists who produce goods are the other group that would like to seize power in order to plan fashion trends, media and advertising for the benefit of industrial capital administration providing forms that can help manage body. (Chris Shilling, 1996)

At present, we see many advertisements related to body from head to toe such as shampoos for silky hair, facial foams, face-lifting cream, mouthwash, deodorant, whitening lotion and cracked heel cream. These advertisements focused on presenting renown performers such as actors, models or singers to be a role model to convey to adolescents that "if you want to look as good as me, use the same product as mine". These advertisements not only introduce products to adolescents, but pictures of super stars also associate with and remind the buyer of the ideal body which is not only in conformity with the advertisements but also a desirable body for the general public.

Consequently, advertisements and media such as dramas, movies or even health programs have an influence on production of the so-called "body standard" (Nithi Iawsiwong, quoted). Thus, "healthy hair must have volume and spring. Every part of the body must be white – face, skin and armpits. Shapes must be slim. Vulvas must be dry and fragrant as well as teeth must be white, beautiful and well-aligned. Otherwise, teeth need to be aligned by orthodontists.

Adolescent image in Thai society has a pattern or standard which is not dramatically different since apart from self confidence and being accepted by friends, it has sign value according to Bourdieu. Although orthodontic treatment cannot increase physical value in term of labor, it can be explained that orthodontic treatment is a form of physical capital production because after they have their teeth aligned, their personality will become more attractive and they have a chance to study or work

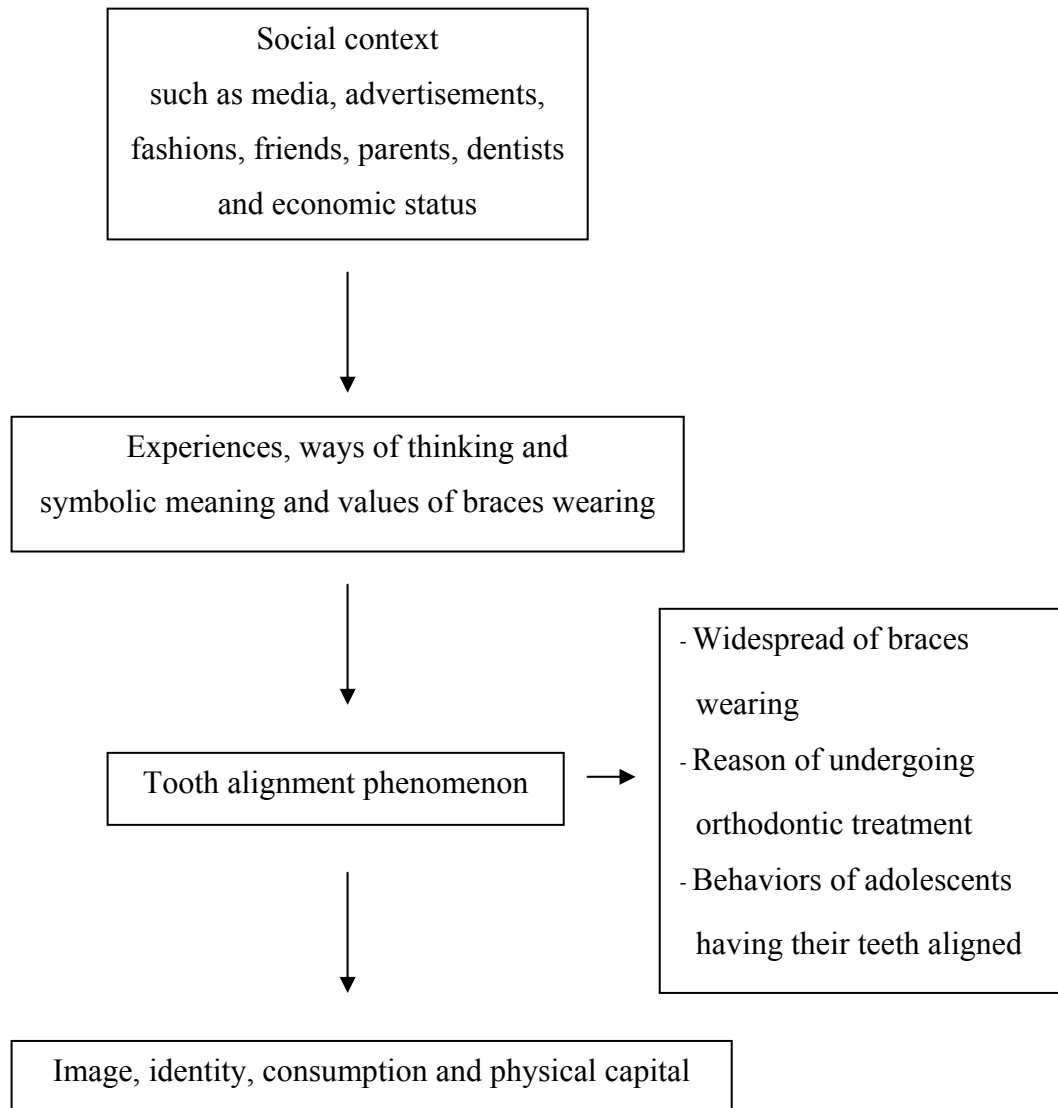
in famous institutions and require high salaries as people with good physical appearance and personality are generally desired by people.

Another significant factor is while adolescents are wearing dental appliances, they gain confidence because their new identity satisfies the appropriate status level as defined by society that the teeth aligned have good sign value. Accordingly, they can exhibit the poise and mannerisms accompanying their good sign value without embarrassment, when participating in the public space.

Nonetheless, orthodontic treatment costs a lot of money (around 50,000 baht). Adolescents themselves cannot afford the cost to change their body into physical capital. Consequently, orthodontic treatment is paid for by parents in the middle and upper classes who acknowledge its importance and want to support their children's opportunity to improve and change body, as well as expect the process to expand their children's future opportunities in many aspects.

To understand adolescents' orthodontic behaviors at present, orthodontic concepts are divided into two approaches: the first one considers orthodontic treatment as a part of an adolescent culture which is related to a consumptive culture associated with several signs that allow adolescents to reveal their identity to the public. The other one considers orthodontic treatment as a way to manage and control body to create physical capital for life according to Bourdieu's concept. Body becomes a stage to act out individuality and a center of identity that can be conveyed to others. However, although these two concepts stem from the economic change in the capitalist period as mentioned above, the scope of this research is not focused directly on the pattern or influence of capitalism on orthodontic treatment, but capitalism, media and advertising are considered as supporting factors for phenomena, conditions and other social contexts such as friends, parents, dentists and economic status.

Conceptual Framework



This conceptual framework is a tool to analyze braces wearing phenomenon which might be right or wrong. I do not mean to prove the theories as Komatra Chuengsathiansap (1999) mentioned that any criteria or concepts are reliable depending on social context: a criterion or concept is appropriate for one certain context and can be used to solve a problem appropriately. If the context is changed, the criterion or concept might not be in accordance with new situation; therefore, new criteria or concepts need to be sought to be in conformity with the situation.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative research using an ethnographic approach. The objective in this study is to explain and analyze the widespread tooth alignment phenomenon in the adolescent group living in urban society. The researcher wants to understand and explain how adolescents give meaning or place value to tooth alignment, what is the social context promoting the occurrence of this behavior, and what does this phenomenon reflect on or point out about the adolescent in Thai society?

In this chapter, the researcher will talk about the study setting, the approach to key informants, data collection, data analysis and the pattern in data presentation. In order to prevent the potential negative effects, the researcher will use pseudo names for informants, schools and medical premises.

Research Setting

From the review literature in the survey of tooth alignment phenomenon in the adolescent group and clinical work experience of the researcher, it is found that most of the adolescents having their teeth aligned have considerable economic power. As a result, the adolescents who will be the key informants in this study should be the adolescents in the educational system and in the schools where most of the students are in somewhat good economic status. Furthermore, the researcher wants to analyze the relationship between peer groups and the key informant in tooth alignment. Consequently, the area to be studied is selected by a purposive sampling technique, that is, the researcher selects a school as the research setting.

In the beginning, the researcher considered selecting the secondary level provincial school where the researcher studied as a youth as the research setting. The researcher thought that their life experience as a secondary school student in this school would help the researcher to easily understand the social cultural context of the adolescent

group. However, due to the limitations of distance and time, the researcher decided to select “Mathayom Udomkarn School” located in Bangkok as the research setting to answer the research question; “what does the widespread tooth alignment phenomenon in adolescent reflect on or point out about the adolescent in Thai society?” Aside from the reason that the adolescent students like to have their teeth aligned in this area, this research area was chosen because of the convenience in entering the field and the familiarity established with the students through the introduction and aid of the daughter of the academic advisor. The daughter is studying in a secondary standard class at this school. Due to the identity of the researcher who is not accustomed to developing relationships with strangers, the researcher started to approach the key informants through the daughter of the academic advisor. The researcher felt that through this way, the relationship between the researcher and the adolescents in this secondary school would begin easily. Otherwise it would be difficult for the researcher on their own to become familiar with the key informants.

In September, 2004 the researcher presented a letter asking for permission to collect data to the school Director. After the submission of the official letter, the daughter of the academic advisor introduced the researcher to a school boy having his teeth aligned who studied in grade nine. During the conversation, a few friends of his came to participate in the conversation with the researcher too.

This conversation was the starting point of the relationship between the researcher and adolescents having their teeth aligned in the field. They had an astute manner, spoke unequivocally, and were self-confident. After the conversation, the researcher analyzed it and found that the school boy and his friends focused attention on giving information about tooth alignment mostly based on the medical reasons. The researcher interpreted that they wanted to preserve their image due to the fact that it was their first meeting and self introduction and that the researcher was a graduate student visiting the school for a research. Nevertheless, the researcher hoped that if the relationship between the researcher and key informants became closer, the researcher would know the full story and the in depth reasons about why they chose tooth alignment. On that day the conversation between the researcher and adolescence students about having their teeth aligned ended when the bell rang for afternoon classes.

Besides the conversation with the students, the researcher walked around the school to make a rough survey. The school area was not spacious, but crowded with three-story classroom buildings. The space on each floor was allotted to different rooms. All classrooms were equipped with air conditioners and a library, music, computer and conference room were properly separated, which reflected the availability of funds for the school management.

The researcher walked around to survey the shops outside the school and drove around in a car to view the environment in the school area. The researcher found that the school was located in the same area as the private schools. They were the well-known schools in Thailand in terms of the efficiency in teaching and requiring a huge tuition to attend. The traffic jams was serious in the morning and evening since the guardians used their private cars, most of which were luxury cars, for their children's transportation. The cars implicitly confirmed the economic status of the families of the students studying in the schools in this area.

Although the school where the researcher performed their work was a public school, it was a famous and popular school among the guardians due to the fact that the students, who completed their school work here, often passed the exam to study in universities and it was a demonstration school. The school had an image that prompted guardians to select it for their children to study. Most of the students had good study habits and results and came from middle class families. From the researcher's inquiry, the guardians of the students in this school were government officials, business owners, and etc. The types of cars, i.e. sedans, sport utility vehicles, vans, waiting for their children in the evening indicated the owner's well-to-do economic status.

Key Informant

After the researcher studied the document and found that early adolescent group were more likely to have their teeth aligned (Supanee Soontornlohanakul, et al., 2004), the researcher specified the key informants' attributes as follows: the adolescent group studying at the lower secondary standard level, aged between 12-15 years, wearing

dental braces or being in a queue to receive tooth alignment from a dental service premise at the time when the researcher conducted interviews in the field.

Aside from the school boy whom the daughter of the academic advisor introduced, later the school Assistant Director of the research section introduced the researcher to the students in class M.2/3, where she was teaching. Since all students in that class had been told that the researcher was a dental student who came to perform a research study concerning orthodontic treatment, they knew that the researcher was a dentist who was studying in a Master's Degree program. On that day the researcher met Kook. At that time she did not have her teeth aligned, but Kook acted as the researcher's assistant so that the researcher could build up relationships with other key informants easily. Kook introduced the researcher to her classmates having their teeth aligned, as follows: Bas, Porn, Mud, Im, Oon, Auo, Poon, and Fon. After that these children introduced the researcher to their friends having their teeth aligned who were studying in different classes. As a result, the researcher's network of adolescent key informants grew more and more. In the end, Kook herself became the most important key informant whom the researcher learned about the background for the original ideas behind choosing tooth alignment and the way of life of adolescents who went this route.

Among adolescent key informants having their teeth aligned in the study, the researcher found that different persons had different social contexts, family backgrounds, and economic status. Some children's parents lived from hand to mouth whereas other children's parents were well-to-do. Some children came from much disciplined families where they must strictly obey the parents' instruction. Some children were overly-protected and did not have to help in any household work. Whatever they wanted, they could easily obtain.

After collecting data from key informants having their teeth aligned or being in a queue to receive tooth alignment in the field for sometime, the researcher reviewed and analyzed the data. Most of the adolescent's reasons for receiving tooth alignment were because of their dental problems or on the recommendation of the dentist. None of the informants talked about the other reasons since they were afraid of promoting a negative image such as being child of luxury, wasting money, making their parents spend unnecessary money, or following fashion, due to the high cost of tooth

alignment. This is a remark made by one adolescent to her friend having her teeth aligned; *“I thought she had no problem about her teeth, her canine tooth was cute. But after her tooth alignment, she liked to smile to showoff”*. From this information, the researcher decided to expand the scope of key informants to include the adolescent group wanting to have teeth aligned or the friends in the same group of adolescents having their teeth aligned as key informants. This was done in order to reflect the view of adolescents who wanted to have their teeth aligned, but their teeth were not aligned yet, and to interpret the view of friends towards adolescents having their teeth aligned. The expansion of scope in the key informants assisted the researcher in clearly seeing the social images associated with tooth alignment and its reflection on the Thai adolescent.

Aside from the adolescent key informants, the researcher interviewed their parents and school's instructors. Since the beginning, the researcher obtained the data from the field assuming that the parents were regarded as the group influencing, supporting and promoting their children to have their teeth aligned. The teachers were included in this study due to the fact that they were able to contribute the students' data because of their close relationship.

Data Collection

The immersion of the researcher into the field to search for the explanation how the adolescents gave value and meaning to tooth alignment and what was the social context supporting the occurrence of the behavior started in late September 2004 until April 2005. The researcher asked permission from the school Director by informing them of the necessity to spend time sharing the lives with the students in order to interview them and observe the social cultural context of their daily life. The Director assigned Assistant Director of the research section to give recommendations and take care of the researcher during the study.

The researcher observed the classroom of secondary standard M2/3 since the Assistant Director of the research section was the permanent teacher in the Science section and taught the students in this class. Participation in the classroom with the

lower secondary school students in all subjects gradually made the researcher familiar with the adolescents.

On the second floor, in an air-conditioned class room, desks and chairs were arranged in great disorder. A student could sit near anybody by simply taking his chair close to that person. The researcher noticed that the adolescents paid attention and answered the teachers' questions in only the major subjects such as Sciences, Mathematics, and English. For the minor subjects such as Guidance or Business, the children often did not pay attention. Some of them read comic books, others slept, or did homework on other subjects, or talked loudly without caring about the feelings of the teacher.

During the initial observation, the researcher chose to sit at the back of the classroom, next to Aom who was the class monitor. The researcher hoped to ask her about the life stories of the other school children. However Aom paid more attention in her studies so the researcher did not want to bother her. In contrast, Kook, who was a close friend of Aom's and sat next to her, was a talkative and cheerful girl. She always persuaded the researcher to talk with her. The affairs about school teachers, friends, seniors, and juniors were transmitted from Kook to the researcher. Aside from the talkativeness, Kook also had more free time than other students since she did not attend the extra classroom after finishing her regular class like her friends. Besides, her home was near the school, and she did not have to go home immediately. The researcher spent most of the time with Kook. Sometimes we made appointments with her friends, when they finished the extra classroom early, to buy sweets and sometimes we went to rent comic books at the market near the school or played games, saw movies, or listened to music at Kook's home.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher tried to look for adolescent students having their teeth aligned to talk with them, but the work was not proceeding well because the children were not acquainted with or knew the researcher. The researcher asked one question, the students gave one answer; no information in depth came forth. The researcher often complained about the situation to Kook. She recommended that the researcher should first talk to this person or that person because he was talkative, or approach her talkative friend and persuade her to take the researcher to talk with an adolescent having his teeth aligned later. The researchers inability to become

acquainted closer with the key informants was an important problem for the researcher and most of the data during this period came from observation.

By the beginning of October, which was final examination time and school vacation, the relationship between the researcher and the children was still in the acquaintance level as they often saw the researcher come to the school for sometime now to attend their class. However, intimacy was hardly established since most of the time that the researcher met the children was during classroom time. During the daytime break they always had a lot of activities to perform such as cheer rehearsal, group activity, doing homework; while in the evening the children had the special classroom. After school hours, their parents would take them home by their private cars so that the researcher rarely had a chance to talk with them.

During the school vacation, the students in this classroom must come to school for preparation in a historical play by the social studies department and the researcher had a chance to talk with them in the time they used to relax. The researcher tried to build up a relationship and hold conversation with these adolescents. The researcher sat down among them to assist them in the work instructed by their teacher, for example cutting paper, drawing pictures, painting colors, walking with them to buy things, buying snacks for them, or playing cards and games with them. These activities made the relationship between the researcher and the students more intimate.

They introduced the researcher to their friends who used to be in the same class of secondary standard 1, but their classrooms were separated when they advanced to a high grade. However they still kept in touch, had lunch together, and gathered to chat about various matters in their free time. Some students were close to the students studying in the different classroom because their homes were in the same location or they took the same regular transport car to and from home and school. The network of relationship between the researcher and the adolescents gradually expanded. The researcher started to know and become acquainted with the students, who had a sense of belonging to the same group, in different classrooms. The conversation between the researcher and them became more natural. We started to do social activities together, aside from spending time together only in the school.

The researcher had a chance to join the Ayuddhaya study tour with the group of secondary standard 2 students. This trip allowed the researcher to see another side of

the adolescent life outside of the school context. The boy and girl students gathered around to sing hit songs of famous youth singers in the lower compartment of the two-story air conditioned tour bus, and complained that the tour guide discussing the history on the upper compartment of the bus annoyed them. Some boys and girls sat close together in a romantic mood. Some students had talked on the phone the entire time until reaching the destination.

During the school vacation, Kook and Bas who were the key informants of the researcher invited the researcher to watch a movie with their friends at the department store located not far from the school. On that day, though we missed seeing the movie, they invited the researcher to join in on Karaoke songs and take photos of the memory at a studio. The children seemed to be happy and have a lot of fun.

The data collection was done all the time the researcher was with the adolescent group by means of the observing the way of life of the adolescent group and exchanging opinions about the current fashion. In regarding tooth alignment, the researcher found that aside from 57 adolescents in the lower secondary standard class having their teeth aligned; the researcher observed that the students having their teeth aligned often had teeth rubber bands in bright colors such as red, blue, pink, purple, and green. Some had rubber bands in alternating colors; nobody had gray color rubber bands like the researcher's friends used in the past. The children who had their teeth aligned could live a normal life, chat, smile, and laugh without the sense of shame of metal wire stacked in their oral cavities like the persons who had their teeth aligned in the past. Furthermore, to show how little they were concerned or embarrassed about tooth alignment, one student went to the photo studio for a photograph and grinned with a big smile to fully show his dental braces and rubber bands.

After this the relationship between the researcher and the adolescent group became very close, other than the interviews and chatting at school. The researcher also had a chance to meet the student's orthodontists on appointment day and phoned to the students' homes to talk with their parents over the phone about their children's tooth alignment.

Aside from interviewing the key informants as presented, the researcher also collected data on tooth alignment of the adolescent group from other information sources. These were different media sources which included television, newspapers,

magazines, electronic media, and some websites via the internet without any participation in any topics. The researcher also had interviews with some highly respected lecturers from the Faculty of Dentistry, Chulalongkorn University and some teachers from the Mathayom Udomkarn School. After the researcher analyzed these secondary data with the data taken from observations and interviews with the adolescents, the explanation in the tooth alignment phenomenon in the adolescent group became clearer.

Data Analysis

The researcher periodically analyzed the data and contents obtained during the interview and observation in the field, along with performing an analysis of the data obtained from other secondary sources and the time spending life with the adolescent group at Mathayom Udomkarn School. The review, including the arrangement in order, and data interpretation to search for the meaning was continually done until the researcher obtained the explanation for the research questions.

From the field data analysis at the initial stage, the researcher found that the adolescents applied meaning to the dental braces beyond medical equipment. Braces can be defined as meaning a social tool to promote and enhance charm for social intercourse, a chance to build equality in the social classes and a creation of positive images for the person having them.

Through the strategy of data analysis along with data collection, the researcher adjusted the method in data collection from the emphasis of interviews in accordance with prepared questions about tooth alignment to natural conversation in the matters associated with the ways of life of the key informants; as they told them. Then the researcher searched for the linkage with their tooth alignment. Aside from the adjustment in conversation with key informants, the researcher also changed the scope of the key informant group, i.e. the researcher started to interview students desiring to have tooth alignment and asked their opinions about tooth alignment. The researcher also talked with students who had not received tooth alignment but about their friends

who had. The researcher could collect extensive and comprehensive data from these activities.

The researcher daily classified and grouped all data collected from the field and other secondary sources, raised the issues and then attempted an explanation of the research questions until the researcher could make conclusions about the tooth alignment phenomenon occurring in the adolescent group.

The data analysis was done at both individual and group levels to project the representation of the adolescence group having their teeth aligned. The main issues in data analysis consisted of meaning and value applied to tooth alignment, reason and experience in tooth alignment linked with the contexts living in society as an adolescent. The researcher also raised the level of tooth alignment phenomenon analysis to; “what about the adolescence in current Thai society, does the tooth alignment phenomenon reflect on or point out?”

The Study Result Presentation

The researcher will present the result of the study in description and narration about the tooth alignment of adolescence into three parts as follows:

The first part will be an interpretation of the general tooth alignment phenomenon of adolescents that the researcher found from different types of media, the adolescent’s attempt in searching for the service premise, the market mechanism, the business competition to appeal to the customers desire to have their teeth aligned, and the patterns in tooth alignment of the adolescent group.

The second part will evaluate the way of life of the adolescent in the school where it is a study area in terms of their daily lives in the school, leisure time for doing activities, and belongings and ornaments.

The third part will look at the adolescents’ experience, the ways of thinking, the meaning and value given towards tooth alignment, and the social contexts related with the tooth alignment through the presentation in eight adolescence case studies.

Protection of the Information Providers' Rights

The researcher was concerned about the protection of the information providers' rights during each step from the commencement of data collection to the research presentation. After having sent a formal letter that clearly revealed the research's objectives, means and its expected benefits and after a verbal communication with key informants, the researcher obtained formal permission from the school's director prior to the data collection in the school.

In addition, the information providers were assured by the researcher that all obtained data would be kept confidential and would cause no harmful sequel to any of them. In case that the usage of a camera or sound recorder was necessary, the permission from each of informant would certainly be asked in advance. During presentation, a substitution of pseudo names without any relationship to their names would be performed.

During the data collection in the field, the researcher strove to be a friend, as well as being an older sister, to talk, to take care of them, to exchange each person's ideas in every aspect, apart from being an investigator to observe, interview, and participate in their various activities in order to obtain the necessary data, and to answer all of their questions relating to continuing education, as well as dental information about orthodontics. At all times, the researcher attempted to not influence the prospective data. However, it could not be excluded that the data to be presented were unbiased or were lacking of any psychological relationships with the information providers.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this chapter, the researcher will present the results of the study in three parts as follows:

The first part, “Tooth alignment: New trend in the adolescent group”, will provide data on the general tooth alignment phenomenon of adolescents that the researcher found from different media sources. This part also reveals the reasons why the teenagers wear the dental braces, the adolescence’s attempt in searching for the service premise, the market mechanism, the business competition to appeal to the customers desiring to have their teeth aligned, and the patterns in tooth alignment of the adolescence group.

The second part, “Area and lifestyle of the adolescent”, will be about the way of life of teenagers in the school where the study was performed, in terms of their daily lives in the school, leisure time for doing activities, and belongings and ornaments. The information revealed that fashion trends influenced these teenagers’ consumption patterns. Fashionable consumption patterns are used to reflect the image they want to convey in society.

The third part, “The experience of tooth alignment in adolescent: Variety styles and reasons”, will be about the adolescents’ experience, their way of thinking, the meaning and value given towards tooth alignment, and the social contexts related with tooth alignment through the presentation in eight teenager case studies as follows: Bas, Porn, Noon, Mo, Poon, Oui, Kook, and Mud.

Tooth Alignment: New Trend in the Adolescent Group

At present, the popularity in tooth alignment is widespread in persons in every age group, from children age 10 and under, to middle age persons. According to the survey by the Faculty of Dentistry, Mahidol University, the popularity in tooth

alignment was found in two groups. These are people in the age groups between 12-15 years and 16-19 years. While, the Prince of Songkla University found that the group, aged between 11-15 years, were the majority of people having the tooth alignment (quoted in Supanee Soontornlohanakul, et al., 2004). These data indicated that the tooth alignment was most popular in the teenagers, aged between 11-15 years.

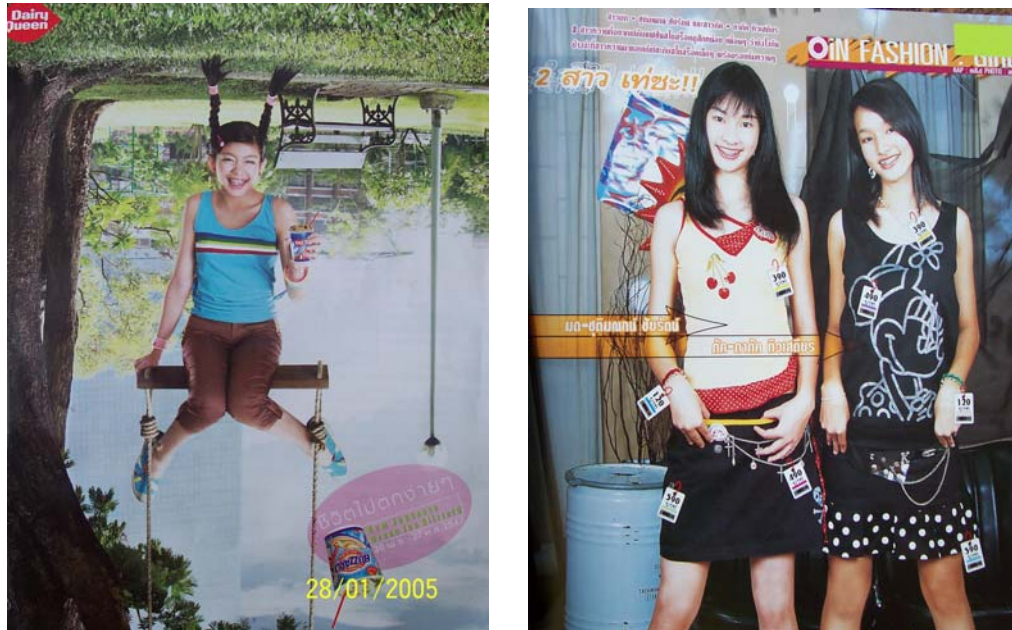
The tooth alignment phenomenon is quite noticeable in different forms of media such as the television, movies, magazines, and the internet.

Pictures of tooth alignment in numerous media

In the television shows, many of the actors/actresses or singers have their teeth aligned such as Sakonrat Wora-uai (Four, actress and singer), Thanchanok Rittinaka (Bebe, actress), Yaadthip Radchapal (Yaad, actress), and San Ittisuknan (Earth, VJ) or the singers from a show, The star, in February 2006. The models in many advertisements are chosen among those having their teeth aligned. They are portrayed in advertisements such as, roll on deodorant for the teenager, soymilk named “Lactasoy”, and shoes for students’ named “Phoebus” (in April 2006).

Moreover, there are different formats of presentations relating to tooth alignment in the magazines. These include the educational columns in Klai-Mor magazine and Chalat Sue magazine, the advertisement for “Esthetic Dentistry” from the private hospital, and the advertisement of fashion clothing and accessories in many periodicals. The magazines for teenagers (such as i-spy, j-spy, iDee, the Boy, oops, or ice) present the photographs and interview columns of the group of teenagers, who currently have their teeth aligned. In the photographs, these teenagers give a big and comfortable smile.

Not only do the pictures of all these actors/actresses, singers, or the advertising models present the advertising products, but also their images, styles, or the influence of their personalities in the form of role models for the teenagers’ lifestyles. Many of the adolescents imitate the superstars’ behavior they see in the movies or in the magazines. The imitations include clothing or accessories styles, hair styles, and tooth alignment.



(Figure 7. Some samples of pictures with tooth alignment in advertising, despite their irrelevance. They include the advertisement for ice-creams, clothing styles, and stamp collections)

An increase in the interest and demand among the adolescent

The desire for tooth alignment in the adolescent became evident while the researcher worked as a dentist in a private clinic. The adolescents, who are interested

in having teeth aligned, frequently come in the clinic and ask for information about the price, payment method, procedures, and steps in the tooth alignment. Some examples of the questions asked are: “How much does the tooth alignment cost?”, “How do I pay for the treatment fee? (How much do I have to pay for the first visit, and then every month?)”, “Are there teeth that need to be extracted?”, “What are the procedures needed to be done?”, “Does it hurt?”, or “Do my teeth need to be aligned?” Besides these questions, other groups of adolescents come into the clinic and ask “Do you provide the fashion tooth alignment?” or “How much does the fashion tooth alignment cost?” When the researcher asks them about the reasons for the fashion tooth alignment, the most common answers are “My teeth do not have any problems but I want to wear the dental braces” or “Wearing the real dental braces is very expensive, so I want to have the fashion one. It looks good.”

The information on the internet can be found on many websites talking and or writing about the tooth alignment either by professional practices (dentists), health care providers, or persons searching for the knowledge and information about the subject. The examples of websites created by professional organizations, such as the dental council or Thai association of Orthodontics are www.thaidental.com, www.judfun.com, www.thaiortho.org, and www.thaiclinic.com. These websites provide professional information and opinions about tooth alignment. Other websites created by private clinics or hospitals also give information about the tooth alignment procedure and recommend their own service by providing the address, map, telephone number, price, and the choice of payment method for the customer.

Moreover, there are some general websites, such as www.pantip.com and www.narak.com, providing a web board for discussion for groups of people having the same interests. The tooth alignment is one of the topics that people discuss different issues and raise varied questions, including searching for the service with a reasonable price, exchanging opinions and giving suggestions about tooth alignment, asking about the treatment procedures, or asking whether his/her teeth need to be aligned.

The popular web board at www.thaidental.com suggests a clinic that provides the tooth alignment service for an inexpensive price. Hundreds of persons, who would like to receive detailed information from the clinic, leave their e-mail addresses for the web board writer.

Just got teeth aligned, Cheap price, Many people got the treatment. Fixed the braces for only 2000-2500 baht, this does not mean that it is not good but just do not need to pay for the x-ray. Next time you change the rubber bands, pay not more than 500 baht. The dentist graduated from Chulalongkorn University. Guarantee the results. This female dentist is very good (Posted: Saturday August 7, 2004, 11:50 am Post subjects: Cheap tooth alignment, already done)

Would like to know the detail about the price, location, telephone number of the tooth alignment clinic. Please send the information. Thank you. jetaimec9@hotmail.com (Posted: Sunday September 12, 2004, 1:55 pm Post subject: Would like to know the details)

Would like to get the information very much. Please give me the details. amorn_tpjj@hotmail.com, nengdeejai@yahoo.com (Posted: Monday November 15, 2004, 5:01 pm Post subject: Re: Would like to know)

Provide very little information. Is it in Bangkok? Please send me an e-mail because my teeth have so many problems. Ready to start the treatment now if it is not very expensive. jeed_jadka@yahoo.com (Posted: Friday April 01, 2005 2:55 pm Post subject: Tooth alignment)

Attempts of service providers to call for customers' interest

These people who need the service look for information to find the clinic with the cheapest prices that they or their family can afford. The service providers, which have increased in numbers, try to compete with each other by offering different payment options in order to appeal to the target costumers to have the service at their clinic. Several small payments at intermittent times, rather than one large payment attract

customers who come for the service at the clinic but do not have good financial status. For example:

The first clinic: Pay the first two visits when the braces are fixed on the upper and lower teeth, 6,000 baht each time. For every visit after this, pay 1,000 baht when the wires are changed until the total price is paid.

The second clinic: Pay the first two visits when the braces are fixed on the upper and lower teeth, just 5,000 baht each visit. The third visit when the wires are changed, pay 3,000 baht. For every visit after this, pay 1,000 baht until the total price is paid.

The third clinic: Offers the payment option in seven different ways as follow:

Method 1: Pay 2,000 baht every month for 5 months; pay 1,500 baht for 10 months and 1,000 baht for another 15 months.

Method 2: Pay 1,000 baht every month for 10 months; pay 2,500 baht for 9 months and 2,000 baht for 5 months

Method 3: Pay every month 1,500 baht for 28 months.

Method 4: Pay 2,900 baht for the first visit. Then pay every month 2,000 baht for 8 months, and 1,000 baht until the total price is paid

Method 5: Pay 2,000 baht for the first visit. The second and third visit, pay 2,500 baht each. The fourth visit, pay 4,000 baht, then pay 1,000 baht every month until the total price is paid.

Method 6: Pay 3,000 baht every month for 4 months. Then pay 1,000 baht every month until the total price is paid

Method 7: Pay 5,000 baht every month for 2 months. Then pay 1,000 baht every month until the total price is paid.

The third clinic offered another option; if the customer made a one-time payment of the full price, he will receive 5% discount and free tooth cleaning for five visits (information from Siam AirCare Co., Ltd., (no date), Clinic Dr. Thongchai, (no date) and the guardians please read here, (no date)).

The tooth alignment is considered as a dental treatment or improvement that leads to good oral health. However for a different reason, a variety of media sources stimulates the desire for tooth alignment in adolescents. Moreover, these media have influenced a change in the definition of tooth alignment as dental treatment to one of fashion, beauty, modernism, and luxury due to the colorful appliances.

This view coincides with an interview with Associate Professor Lady Kamolthip Hutasingh, DDS (part-time instructor in Department of Orthodontics, Chulalongkorn University), who was the fifth orthodontist in Thailand since 1969 B.E. She kindly shared with me her theory on the evolution of the orthodontic appliances. According to her, in the beginning the appliances were made by metal were of a large size, not beautiful, and difficult to use. Then the manufactures tried to improve the appliances by making them smaller in size, with tooth-color materials, and easier to use. For example, in the past, the metal bands needed to be welded for fitting with the teeth. Now, there are the pre-sized bands, which can be chosen to match with each individual tooth. Another example is that the previous dental brackets were unable to control the tooth movement in different directions but now it can be done easily and with a variety of colors and shapes also. In the beginning the dental rubber bands were developed from using ligature wire, then the gray-colored bands, and now orthodontists are using colorful bands to attract the target costumers.

Therefore, there are many people chatting on the web boards about the topic of color choice of the dental rubber band (If, 2004):

I'm having the teeth aligned but don't know which color I should choose. Don't wear the fashion braces. It is cheap, not good, makes the gums turn bad, and dangerous. Too cheap, not like the real one. Wearing the real braces is better. It's torture. I become thinner, cannot eat anything, now. Wearing blue-white color is pretty. But want the two-mixed color. Don't want the idiot color or a color for a brace. It's funny (By: If Date: 30 Oct 2004)

Wear the cross or X shape in pink and the rest in white. โคตรแจ่ม (codejam, literal meaning). It shows the X-shape when smile. โคตรเท่ แนวสุดๆ (codetae, nailsudsud, literal meaning). (By: tooth alignment person Date: 20 Sep 2005)

I recommend dark-ocean blue. In women, this will match with clothes. In men, it makes him very kissable. I want to kiss myself (By: Graf Date: 15 Dec 2005)

Wear the black one. It's cool. Makes the teeth look whiter (By: Via Date: 23 Jan 2006)

I wear the brackets that can hold two bands in one. I wear red and green color, very outstanding. My friends changed to this color after seeing mine. If you want to see the pictures, let me know. I'll send to you. (By: tooth alignment person Date: 24 Nov 2006)

Some people try to use the colorful or mixing style bands for changing their personalities into qualities such as “Beauty, Pretty, เท่แนวเปรี้ยว (tae, nail, preaw, literal meaning)”. But some are unsatisfied by the color provided by the dentist, so they ask for and pay more money for the color that suits them from other clinics and bring these bands to their orthodontists. (Graf, 2005)

I'm wearing the rubber bands, which provided by the clinic. But I want more bands in different color for mixing them together. Now I'm wear only one color, want to have the X-shape. ...Afraid that the dentist will complain about wasting his bands. So I would like to buy for him (Graf Posted: 2005-09-23)

If you are having the tooth alignment treatment, I don't recommend changing the rubber by yourself. This may affect the tooth movement. If you want to change the color, you may order the bands from the clinic and bring to the dentist. (Aek Posted: 2005-09-26)

An increase in the number of orthodontists to fulfill the patients' demands

As the need for the tooth alignment is increasing, the number of specialists in the tooth alignment (orthodontist) is continuously growing in the double figures. In 1979, the Faculty of Dentistry, Chulalongkorn University had only the Master degree program in Orthodontics. Since 2002, the program of the Thai board in Orthodontics was offered. The graduates of this program are qualified to take the examination for the Thai board in Orthodontics from the Dental Council. Then in 2004, a new program was offered, which is the higher graduate diploma in Orthodontics (Faculty of Dentistry, Chulalongkorn University, 2004). The Faculty of Dentistry at Mahidol University also increased the number of graduates in Orthodontics by offering both the Master degree program (academic year 1986) and the higher graduate diploma in Orthodontics (academic year 1994), and the Thai board in Orthodontics program (academic year 1996) (Faculty of Dentistry, Mahidol University, 2003).

At the same time, the researcher also found that orthodontics is the dental specialty field that dentists (DDS) want most to study in the graduate program. From the survey, the numbers of dentists that applied for the master degree program in Orthodontics in Chulalongkorn University in 2006 was 171 persons. The number of the positions open for this program were only six (the competitive ratio 1:28.5) compared with dental surgery, periodontics, prosthodontics, and pedodontics which only had 20-30 applicants each (Faculty of Dentistry, Chulalongkorn University, 2004). Therefore, currently the number of the new orthodontists and applicants is increasing and will help to provide more treatment compared to services in the past.

From the data in surveyed June 2006, there were 300 persons who graduated as orthodontists or applied for the membership of Thai Association of Orthodontists (The Dental Association of Thailand, no date) from the total of 9,475 Thai dentists. Furthermore, some dentists do not study in the specialty program, but they study independently through experience, training or self-study to provide the orthodontic treatment for the patients.

Expansive distribution of fashion metal wire to cheap market

Even as the need for tooth alignment of the adolescence group increases, the expensive treatment fee is a limitation for some teenagers that do not have good financial status. Therefore, during the time of data collection, the occurrence of a cheap market for this service was discovered. Smart merchants had found a way to use the metal wire with the colorful beads attached to the teeth in order to give the appearance that the adolescent is wearing the orthodontic appliances.

During that time, the researcher found that the price of these fashion orthodontic appliances was between 50-100 baht. These products can be found or bought at any shopping mall and market either in Bangkok or the other provinces. Every time a person walks by these shops, many people from teenagers to the working-age group, both male and female are crowded around the shop to buy these products. A lady in the working-age group, around the age 30 years old, told the researcher after buying the artificial appliances that “Wearing them for fashion like people in Japan. The real treatment is expensive, about 10,000 baht but these are just tens of baht”.



(Figure 8. Some samples of the fashionable metal wire observed in cheap market)

After the appearance of the fashion orthodontics appliances for a few months, in November 12, 2004, Thai Dental Council made an announcement warning of the dangers of the fashion orthodontic appliances such as the residual toxins used in the construction of these appliances including arsenic, lead, or rust. The council also warned that the beads can drop into the throat and swallowed causing an air-way obstruction or even death. When the announcement was published in every newspaper

and announced via the radio channels, the fashion orthodontic appliances were discontinued from the market, immediately.

However, the popularity of fashion tooth alignment has not decreased by the elimination of the aforementioned market. There still is another type of fashion tooth alignment available for the teenagers who want to wear the orthodontic appliances imitating the real tooth alignment. This type of fashion appliance is a little bit expensive (the price is approximately 2,000-3,000 baht). The dental impression is needed for preparing the appliance fitted with the teeth. It looks more like wearing the authentic orthodontic appliances than wearing the one with the wire and beads. The rubber bands can also be changed like the real one.



(Figure 9. Some samples of fashionable metal wire that looks real)

According to this phenomenon, we can not deny that nowadays, adolescents pay more attention to tooth alignment. This conforms to the collected data from “Mathayom Udomkarn School”, which is the area of research for this study. The adolescent group in this school favors the tooth alignment and the popularity is continually increasing. At the beginning of the study, the numbers of students in junior high school having their teeth aligned were 57 out of the 432 total students (13.2 percent). Then, in the middle of the study after about six months (September, 2004 to April, 2005), the numbers of the students having the teeth aligned continued to increase until the end of the study. The numbers of total students having their teeth aligned was up to 70 (16.2 percent). This data were supported by a teacher in the first-aid room, who exchanged the opinion with the researcher as follows:

I do not understand why the tooth alignment becomes fashion. Some do not need the treatment but do it, while some need but do not do it. The tooth alignment for students is a fashion fad. This can be observed by that in the past there was not many students getting tooth alignment, but now even though they do not need it, they got the tooth alignment with a variety of colors. However, there are some parents, who really care about the oral health, so they allow their children having the tooth alignment for treatment. This treatment group will not wear the colorful bands just simple color, but the fashion group will wear the colorful bands.

Area and Lifestyle of the Adolescent

“Mathayom Udomkarn School” is a demonstrated school located in the middle of Bangkok surrounded by three or four government and private secondary schools, and two higher education institutes. The students in this school are surrounded by adolescents.

The adolescents in this school are cheerful, self-confident, and talkative. They hang out with a group of friends of the same and opposite gender. They like to show their group identity and imitate each other. For example, they wear the same t-shirt, such as an orange colored one, when they are camping or they applaud and cheer out loud when a teacher praises one of their group members.

They want their friends to pay attention to them and give praise when they are having a conversation or telling a story to the group. Some of them try to have outstanding personalities making them different, but at the same time they do not want to be different in an inferior way. For example, friends will make fun of a person who is fat, dark-skinned, short, having protruded teeth, or outdated. Even the mimics are not sensitive about the words they say and the imitated person feels angry, sulks, is ashamed and flushed with embarrassment. The imitated person feels even more upset and expresses more emotion, if the mimics are of the opposite gender.

School life

The students' lives start very early in the morning and for some it is a very long day. Their guardians or parents drive them to school. Some of them come to school by bus or walk to school if their house is close to school. After the activities in front of the national flag, they follow one after another to the classroom. The classes start at 8:30 am. and end at 3:30 pm. After the regular classes, some of them, which accounts for more than 80% of the students, have an extra tutorial class in the school for another hour. Some of the students have another extra tutorial class with a popular institute outside the school afterward. These students get back home around 8 or 9 pm.

Aside from the regular class, this school also has additional activities for students to relax or express their talents in different fields, not only in the academic area. During the six month period of data collection, the researcher saw a variety of activities, such as the exhibition of students' projects, "Mathayom Sathit" academic fair, "mathematic true fans" competition, and "Sathit" sports day. "Sathit" sports (arranged at Nakornsawan province this year) is the sports competition between all of the "Mathayom Sathit" schools in Thailand. They intensely practice dancing and cheering during the lunch break or whenever they have any free time. Moreover, there was the school field trip to Phranakhon-Sri-Ayutthaya, and the "Saisumpan" party arranged to be held after the final examination but before the academic year ended.

Relaxing time

Relaxing period during study time

After finishing the classes, the researcher observed that students walked out from their classes. Some students went to bathroom or played with their friends. Some used mobile phones to contact someone else. Then, the next lecture began.

At noon, they were back in their rooms for the activities after lunch due to the limited time of the schooling period. Although there are three buildings, there are few spaces for activities. During Sport Day's preparation, they practiced the songs and dance. Those without a special activity went to a library or computer room. They liked to play internet games, chat with friends, look for their horoscope and read

entertainment news from the websites. The most important activity for them, especially the girls, was talking, discussing and commenting about their friends, seniors, juniors, stars and the previous night's television drama.

Some groups of girls spent time reading teenage magazines like i-spy and i-like. They concentrated on Japanese stars, fads and fashion apparel from these books. The boy's activities consisted of embarrassing the girls, playing sports (football, badminton and table tennis), reading cartoon books, reading football magazines, or playing and talking about computer games. Computer games are very popular among male adolescents. Some will even skip their class and avoid studying to play this kind of game. According to a comment from the nurse teacher,

“The children are so addicted. Their parents bought a computer for them and have never seen what they did or what they play. Some students reached school at early morning (5:00-6:00 a.m.) and visited internet café in front of the school, not only in the morning but also in the evening after class. Some parents asked for their children at school. The students did not come to school and did not go back home. We found him at the game shop. We could not complain at the shop because the shop owner said you should control your student. Moreover, the school's computers are bought for educational reasons. Students downloaded games and deleted after finishing. McDonald's guard sometimes called us to inform that our students were staying there during the study periods.”

After classes, most of them spent time involved in special lectures. They waited for their parents to pick them up. Some couples waited for the bus at the bus stop. Some students who love sports went to the basketball field, volleyball field or table tennis table. Some students, who went back home by themselves, would sometimes visit department stores to relax or buy something on the way home.

Relaxing period on weekends

They spent their weekends at home listening to songs, playing computer games, chatting with friends via MSN, watching television or reading teenage books. The books such as i-spy, j-spy, hamburger, ice, i-like and TV pool, are entertainment magazines that included news of the stars and teenage fashion, and are popular among the students. For example, j-spy presents the fashion and news from Japan. In addition, some students spent their weekend at department stores with friends or family.

The researcher had a chance to go to the department stores, which were located near the school, with a group of adolescents. Their activities are eating fast food (e.g. KFC, McDonald, Didomon and Chester's grill) and talking loudly. Taking photos also is one of their favorite activities. They were always presenting many of their photo collections to the researcher. Boys are also interested in photo taking. They showed almost 20 pictures they had in their wallets. They decorated their body with special accessories such as flowers, hats, dolls and etc. available at the photo shop.

Adolescence's activities

Going to the department store

During long holidays the researcher met Bas, one of the informants, at the department store by chance. Bas persuaded the researcher to join his group on the upcoming Sunday. The researcher accepted the invitation.

Around 11 a.m. after the researcher picked up Kook and Bas and arrived at the central department store, Air called Bas (second round) to ask if we were coming. They (Air, Maprang and Yok) were playing the "Photo Hunt" game on the second floor. When we arrived, Kook and Bas joined them to have fun with the game.

The researcher observed that they wore fashionable clothes. Someone was dressed in a spaghetti shirt which was opened to expose their backside. One of them looked like someone who had just returned from a foreign country. She wore a sleeveless shirt, a jean skirt, long black socks and boots that made a hit with the other people.

After finishing the game, we went to fifth floor for a movie. Unfortunately, our movie had already been shown and would not show again until the afternoon which

was much too late for us. Air advised that we should do Karaoke singing instead. Everybody agreed with her.

We had lunch at Chester's grill, according to Maprang's need, before Karaoke singing. At first, the researcher tried to persuade them to have lunch at the food center but they rejected this idea. While eating the meal, they were loud and noisy which made us stand out in the restaurant. We spent two hours at the Karaoke shop and then went to the photo shop. We had to wait for a while because many adolescents (less than 15 years old) were also waiting to have photos taken.

When our turn eventually came, they dressed their bodies with accessories like hats, flowers, pillows and dolls and posed like stars. We selected the photos after we took more than 20 photos, and had to wait for another 30 minutes. They selected only the nice photos.

During the time waiting, they bought Japanese cartoons books (one or two books per person). They enjoyed the books very much and spent a few minutes to finish reading them. The researcher went to look for a book from the rental shop with Kook previous to the examination period.

Saisumpan party

The objectives of the party are to earn money for the school and celebrate the graduation of grades 9 and 12. From the student's point of view, the party is a time when they are released from rules and restrictions and can relax and be themselves.

In the late evening, the researcher drove the car to enter the school. The researcher saw a lot of sexy young girls with spaghetti shirts and could not specify their names. Somehow their character had changed from being neat and polite girls to sexy and fashionable girls.



(Figure 10. Adolescents in Saisumpan party)

The school environment was also changed into a lively affair and the room was filled with students and their parents who were waiting for show. There was a food court available on the right side. It included chicken rice, red pork rice, noodles, Kapaw-pla and snacks. Many tables were set for their meal. On the left side, there was a section for shows with both teachers and students participating. Applause and cheering occurred loudly after each show finished, followed by appreciative comments and laughing.

At the back of the stage, they returned to change their costume when the shows finished. Although they still had their own show to perform, they preferred to see the shows performed by the juniors or seniors first. At that time, with the help from their friends (assisting in costume and make up), they looked good before going onstage.

At the food table, boys and girls sat together for the dinner and watched the show. They created a loud noise. They were excited about the many programs they would be involved in over the long holidays, for example; going abroad, meeting their relatives, joining activities, studying special lecture classes, and going to the fun park, cinema and department store. They talked and talked until midnight, when the party ended.

Accessories

The researcher found that some students had a different physical appearance, other than the one normally associated with polite and disciplined students.

In the researcher's imagination, she thought of the teenagers school uniform as being; white socks and black shoes, black leather bag, a polite hair style according to school criteria (clipped short hair or long hair held with a black or dark blue ribbon)

and stainless or leather band watches. On the other hand, the researcher saw students who wore school uniforms and decorated their body with fashion products. These products included various styles and colors of clips or ribbons, small and nice Disney's bags and various sizes and styles of watches. They used not only stainless and leather band watches, but also plastic hair bands with bright colors, hand ring style or wrist bands.

Moreover, ear bombing is also popular in this school. It begins by adding a plastic stick in the ear lobe hole until it becomes a big ear ring hole. *"Add sticks one by one until we get big ear ring hole (pen size). Then we will buy "Jew" to insert in this hole (Jew is the word for accessories, probably from the term "jewelry"). A big hole means great and brave."* Some boys liked to make a hole on their elastic shoe base and stick the favored brand of "Nike" on.

This picture was much different from the researcher's perception of the traditional student's uniform. Many adolescents did not use products only for the benefit of its use value. But these items were used to create meaning and importance to their image, a symbol of their group and social status.

Products that are used for functional purposes; plain style, and the normal uniform, are different from those used for image identification. The latter products are usually related to fashion and name brands for attractive reasons. For example, the Gucci watch, which face can be changed into five or six different colors, is the vogue among adolescents, as is the large size watches popularized in fashion magazines, to present their well-to-do economic status.

Similar to these fashion statements is the mobile phone's popularity. Eighty percent of the grade 7 to 9 students has mobile phones according to a questionnaire survey. Most of them use it for making appointments with their parents. However, their mobile phones are often specialized and contain several functions. The phone becomes a form of decoration in which to compare with their friends who may or may not have a new or expensive model.

One of the teachers provided this information about the student's mobile phone habits:

“All of them have a mobile phone although we did not see the necessity. Pagers have boomed in popularity. They all have one. Mobile phones have become popular in the present. They also have one of these. Their phones are very modern and trendy compared to mine. They suddenly change their phone when the new generation model comes on the market. They threw away the old one or pretended to forget it so they could buy a new one. Their parents will buy a new one for them. Some parents complained of the waste of money for their children’s phone.”

The meaning of orthodontic appliances also changed. If the adolescent thought that treatment was necessary for a functional adjustment of their teeth, the colors and shapes of brackets and rubber bands would be meaningless. Since rubber bands at present have many colors (red, blue, pink, violet, green or mixed colors), those with a grey color are no longer selected. In addition, the changing of the rubber bands’ colors becomes a topic among the students. They can be shown to their friends as soon as the new ones are installed. Moreover, the appliances themselves are expensive. They are not available for everyone so the person who wears them postulates his special status. Presently, teenagers with braces can now speak and smile without the shame that was identified with braces in the past. In addition, they intentionally show their smile with braces at the photo studio. Braces are “accessories” that escaped the school’s uniform code rules. Wearing an earring or colored ribbon is not accepted. Students with those items that are against the dress code have to hide themselves from the teacher. Braces are the exception. From the teacher’s point of view, this is medical treatment by the dentist.

Although the researcher found students without braces, it did not mean that they did not require them. They are close with their teeth aligned friends and frequent with the same group. The relationship between the others and their friends make them want to wear the appliances. These are several views advocating the orthodontic treatment.

“I prefer braces. It looks nice and colorful. I would like to try the red band. It probably looks similar to Christmas. But I can’t ask my

mom because my teeth are not so bad. Anyway, I always see some persons with their teeth aligned but have little problems with their teeth. They received the treatment because of the brace's image." (Pla, grade 7)

"I need it. Nice and smart! It probably makes me stand out with beautiful teeth. I prefer the white band first. It looks smart like teeth. Someone received the treatment without any need of treatment. But the dentist treated him because of the money." (Pim, grade 7)

"They have braces because it's nice and outstanding. Boys will pay attention to them. Girls started to have contact with boys since grade 7-8. In fact, they courted each other since grade 5-6." (Kook, grade 7, no brace period)

"It was a hit for the last one or two years. A lot of students had it. I think it is smart and makes someone look better. One singer, who entered "The star" project this year, has his teeth aligned. It is so smart and nice. Everyone will be interested in it. It looks very fashionable. Oh! I can't explain. I also would like to have braces." (Aom, grade 8)

"Braces become accessories, like earrings. Someone fits with it. Someone do not. Someone looks good with long style while the other is good with candle style. It is different. Someone is not going well with braces." (Poo, grade 8)

"It looks high class because of its cost." (Nok, grade 8)

"His teeth are ugly, crowding and protruded. One whose teeth are abnormal always receives the treatment. Anyway, it has become the fashion now. They would like to be similar to their friends and stars."

It is nice. There are artificial braces that can be suddenly inserted into the mouth.” (Group discussion, grade 8)

From the adolescents' point of view, the orthodontic treatment gains attention. It is not only for the treatment, but also for fashion purposes and way to derive attraction. It enhances their image because of the color and modern look and it attracts looks from the opposite gender. And it also makes that person appear to be wealthy because of the expensive cost. No one in this group commented about the benefits of the treatment in occlusal adjustment.

The Experience of Tooth Alignment in Adolescent: Variety of Styles and Reasons

The researcher found that there is a variety of styles and reasons for the adolescence in making the decision have tooth alignment. These are some opinions from the sample group; Bas, Porn, Noon, Mo, Poon, Oui, Kook, and Mud. Their opinions are varied according to the social context and situation.

Bas: The family's expectant

“Having protruded teeth is more offensive than the handicapped, which are mostly the poor. However, it's one's destiny. One with completed 32 organs but affected with acnes or protruded teeth seem deeply offensive. These make them feel like a completely constructed car but unable to be driven, and also makes them feel defective, facially ugly, and thoughtful.”

Bas told the researcher this with a feeling of hopelessness. Although he has had tooth alignment for seven months, he still remembers the unforgettable bad experience.

He is a son of a family from the countryside. His father works at a private company, and his mother works at the Ministry of Science. He is very close with his parents, which is different from the other young adolescents that were always separate and mysterious. Bas can consult or discuss everything with his parents.

Bas is also familiar with the researcher because our homes are not so far apart. When the researcher went to or returned from the school after collecting data, we sometimes would go home together. Bas always talked about his future education and always asked the researcher questions about the faculty he should select, which one was difficult or easy to study, the differences in entrance scores for each faculty, etc. Sometimes when he got any new educational information from the internet, he always informed the researcher.

Actually Bas would like to study the French language, but his parents disagree with him on this point. Their reason is that the chance of getting a good profession is less likely studying Art Sciences compared with Natural Sciences. He told me that his mother would like him to study Medicine or Pharmaceutical Science because of the better chance to achieve a good profession and high salary. He would like to study the Arts because he would like to be a novelist (he always posts the novel that he wrote onto the internet), or a teacher. His mother disagrees because of the difficulty in finding a good position after graduation. Also, his father doesn't like the novel writing idea or reading the French Language book, he thinks it is a waste of time.

The first two or three times we met together the researcher contacted Bas by phone to become familiar. After talking for a while, Bas was always called by his mother and he would say to me; *"I have to go now, mom called me to go read the book."* His mother told him to study for one hour everyday; in addition he has to take the special class everyday after the school's classes. During the vacation he also has to take a special class at another educational institution.

Bas is a boy that enjoys a challenge to perform and speak, presents any ideas he wants to, and always articulates himself clearly. The researcher remembered the first time going to the school to collect data and seeing him attend the game "Mathematic true fans." Bas is in the top level of his class and he always answers the questions from teacher loudly which makes some of his friends not like him. Sometimes he

insults his friends when talking to them, for example; *“You cannot do this? It’s very easy.”* or *“Kook, you didn’t do the homework? Copy mine?”*

He rarely arrives home late. After the class or going outside he hurriedly goes to the bus stop to return home. On the holidays during a luncheon appointment or at the movies with his friends, his parents sometimes call him and tell him not to come home too late. On the day of the “Saisumpan party” (special day that was held by the school) the researcher picked him up at our appointed time of 6:00pm. Although it had not reached 6:00pm, Bas called me two or three times before picking him up. Then after having dinner and watching the show, he asked me to take him home because of his father’s call. I asked him to stay for a while until 9:30pm. Although the show had not ended and was so funny, we still had to go back home.

Bas talked to his parents about everything every evening, for example, today’s test score, difficulty of the test, his classmates, something strange on the way to school, and also about his teeth that his friends kidded him about since the 6th grade at the former primary school near his home. They always called him “Yhern” (means too much extruded anterior teeth). When he moved to his present school, he was kidded more and more which made him more timid. He talked about this to his parents and finally his mother decided to take him to the dentist for a tooth alignment.

“At the former primary school, when I argued with my friends they called me “Yhern”. When I moved to this school at first the new friends who didn’t remember my name always called me “a boy with too much protruded teeth (Yhern). When the time of presentation in front of the class came, which I like to do, someone looked at me and said “your anterior teeth are protruded too much”, someone kidded. They said it so many times that I felt offended, imperfect, and so worried. So I think that I have to go to have a tooth alignment to become good looking and have more confidence.”

From the data above, Bas feels imperfect and discusses this with his parents. They try to resolve this problem. His mother collects data about tooth alignment from her friend who is a dentist, or a friend that is having tooth alignment. She is informed

that tooth alignment performed in children is better than when an adult. Bas also received many comments from his sixth grade primary school classmates that he should be treated for the problem of protruding teeth.

“Having protruded teeth (Yhern) makes me feel imperfect. When I look at the mirror, it’s ugly. I am very worried. So I have to resolve this problem. If I was born in the generation that had no tooth alignment, I wouldn’t feel awkward or different, because my teeth protruded because there wasn’t knowledge of tooth alignment at that time”.

Bas decides to have tooth alignment because he thinks that it will make him become good looking. Especially because as a young adult, he has been affected with a bad case of acne on his face, grown very tall, and wears thick eyeglasses. This makes him feel a loss of self-confidence. However, he thinks that tooth alignment will resolve his problems.

After the graduation of grade 7, his mother took him to see the dentist to have the tooth alignment. The expense was about 50,000 baht. He said *“At first I wouldn’t do it because four or five teeth have to be removed. But it will make me better looking so I decided to do it.”* After having the tooth alignment, he feels more confident because of the belief that tooth alignment helps him to be more handsome and gain a better personality.

“After the beginning of the tooth alignment, I felt better for a while and more confident because the teeth were not protruding. Before the treatment I couldn’t close my mouth. Now Kook (his friend) also praises me that my face looks elliptical. That makes me more confident with a good personality. Actually I am a courageous boy, and when I have tooth alignment, it makes me feel more and more confident”.

Bas' mother is also hopeful that his oral health will become better with beautiful teeth and the accompanying good personality will lead to better social communication in the near future.

Although the researcher has departed from the research area for almost one year, the researcher is still always in contact with Bas by phone or e-mail. After the removal of the tooth alignment appliance Bas sent a call message to the researcher; *"The appliance was removed."* When the researcher called him, he said with excitement, *"The appliance was removed yesterday, the teeth are surprisingly straight, now I have to wear a retainer that makes me speak unclearly like there is something in my mouth."*

In the case of Bas, his family is an example of a urban family that has to compete for their good fortune. Parents influence the future of their children particularly their education and social life. So the tooth alignment is not only fashionable, but it is also can be the change people of the social middle class need to compete for and achieve a higher education, a good profession, higher salary, and a good personality (not less than the others).

Porn, Noon, Mo, Poon, Oui: The sassy gang of girls of the class

This group of the girls had become familiar with each other since they were in the first grade at junior high school. When they entered the second grade, Poon and Mo were separated into class No. 1, Noon and Oui in class No.2, and Porn by herself in class No. 3 (the King or top level class). They had to study with the new friends; however, they still stayed in contact with each other.

The first two or three times the researcher entered the school she remembered the outlandish behaviors of these girls such as their loud laughing and use of the ancient Thai Language (King Ramkhamhaeng's Generation). Sometimes they shouted without any shyness toward the second floor of the school building to each other and to some of the young adult males. In addition, they always broke the school regulations regarding the uniform, hair style, finger nails, and fashionable earrings.

Another group of students that were familiar with the researcher study in the top level class. Their grade point averages reached above 3.00. After the daily school

classes they continued studying in the special class in the evening. They were in stark contrast to the rebellious and wild group of girls that always went to the department store to shop or look for popular fashions after the class.

Oui: "Shall we go to Central? I will take you to see the belly-button piercing."

Pad: "Ok, by the way, Ann, if there is a call from my dad, don't tell him I know about that. How about you, Ning?"

Ning: "Uhhh (thinking) do you think I should go? Today I have special class in the evening. However, I will go because you know I always cut the class."

One of the group members, Oui, told the researcher that she used to go shopping at an area around Central department store with Bum (her senior, ninth grade) to buy fashionable dental braces (colorful fake devices). There were many shops and the price varied from 50 baht to 90 baht. After purchasing the braces they immediately went straight to the restroom in the department store to put them on. *"I quickly wore it but it looked fake, the beads are not in the right position and not beautiful, so I removed them and didn't wear it at all."*

The researcher asked Oui about wearing the fashionable dental braces and she said that at first she would very much like to wear it. She thought that it would make her look beautiful; the teeth would become colorful, especially when she smiled. However, in the end she decided not to buy them because it was expensive (in her opinion, 90 baht could buy her many meals). However, she thought that if it made her feel good she would buy and use it because she would be considered as the new trend setter.

There are three girls in this clique that are their having tooth alignment now, Porn, Noon, and Poon. Porn has had tooth alignment since fifth grade of her former primary school. Poon began wearing braces since the summer holidays before first grade junior high school. Noon has just begun wearing appliances since she first contacted and became familiar with the other members of the clique. At this time she

asked her mother to let her have the tooth alignment. This is the background information about these three girls and their tooth alignment experience.

Porn: The perfect girl

One day during the lunch time the researcher went to the school and found a dancing girl surrounded by her cheering friends. This girl was not so tall but she looked outstanding with long sliced hair, a shirt that was too big, a colorful hair bow, big hair clip, and very long socks. This was Porn.

She is nicknamed “Sour girl” by her classmates. While the other students paid attention to studying and tried to get a good grade point average, Porn and her group members were not like that. Her grade point average was not always good compared with the others. She was moved to the top level class which was different from when she was in the first grade junior high school. The teacher hoped that her grade point average would improve by this change, but in contrast, it made her more stressful. Porn always complained to her friends about her study results which were in the lower level grade scores.

When she was with her close friends, they always talked about fashionable dressing, super star magazines, greeting the seniors or the boy, or sometimes they discussed their boyfriends. Her classmates paid attention to Porn only during the time of cheers, dancing or singing. And when she brought the latest fashion magazine to the school and let them read it. Porn said *“I have “i-spy, j-spy, ice, i-like” every volume because I buy it every month.”*

Porn’s family works in the gold business. Their income per month reaches many hundreds of thousands of baht. So Porn’s life is luxurious and economically perfect. Everyday she comes to school and returns home with her own driver. Sometimes she rides in a taxi because her mother may have duties to perform. Her mother allows her to do anything. She does not have to do housework although she is the only daughter in a family of three children. Even in the cooking class, the teacher told her to wash the dishes and she told the researcher that *“I couldn’t, I have never done it, even at home.”*

On the holidays when all of the students have to prepare for the drama show, the researcher did not see Porn. Her friends said that Porn prefers to pay more money for the materials needed for the show, instead of coming to the school on holidays. Porn has a lot of friends because of changing many schools. Sometimes they make appointments to watch movies or go shopping. In addition, she has many boyfriends, confirmed by the researcher. Once on the way to Ayutthaya for educational observation, Porn spent all of the time talking with her boyfriend on the phone. On Valentines' day she received a lot of roses and presents. It can be said that she is quite the popular girl.

“Porn has many boyfriends but no one knows. Each of them thinks that he is the only one that can be her boyfriend.”

Porn has had tooth alignment at Yanhee hospital since fifth grade primary school. At that time there was only a few of her classmates who had tooth alignment. Her reason for having the tooth alignment was to do the same as her older brother. She felt that it was beautiful, with Doraemon's figure brackets. This made her decide to do it. Her parents also encouraged her decision. Porn made this statement:

“When I saw Benz (her older brother) with Doraemon brackets, I would like to have tooth alignment also. Then I asked mom and we decided to go to the dentist next week. I knew that I would be allowed because my father's teeth are protruded and he said that I have to do it.”

When Porn went to the hospital, the dentist told her that the Doraemon bracket was out of stock. She had to have tooth alignment with common squared-shape brackets. She felt slightly angry, however, the elastics could be changed with a variety of colors. Porn could select the color freely, being able to choose the fashion in style of the adolescences at that time.

“I like the light-blue elastic, and I always ask the dental assistant for the popular color. For example, the green and yellow were the in trend colors of last month. So I asked the dentist for green and yellow. Black and white color are also beautiful, I have always wanted to wear the rainbow colors.”

In addition, Porn hopes to wear the retainer after removal of dental braces because one of her friend’s retainers is colorful, and can be designed by the patient.

“Now I would like to remove the brace. When it is removed, the other one which has only one line of wire will be used. So I can select the color, this appliance is made of the hard plastic and the sticker also be filled in.”

However, when the researcher asked her about the ideal tooth alignment that she would like, she told her that she would like the changeable brackets for every month.

“To get beautiful in tooth alignment, I think everything depends on the patient’s needs, that is, for example, Doraemon bracket for this month and the others for next month. I also have always seen the half-cut lemon character of bracket.”

After entering the first grade at this junior high school, Porn was one of the first persons to popularize having tooth alignment. One of the followers of this fashion statement was Noon, one of the members of the gang of friends.

Noon: Teeth alignment as friends

Noon used to be Porn’s classmate and they knew each other well. Now they are in separate classes. Porn suggested the researcher talk with Noon; *“Noon is easy to approach, she talks naturally.”* After talking about tooth alignment with Noon the researcher felt that she looked shamefaced. Noon said that she needed to have tooth

alignment because the problem of crowded teeth, rabbit-like teeth, etc. When we became more familiar, Noon told the researcher that she actually made the decision because of Porn. Porn's dental braces looked beautiful, colorful and the braces were changeable. So she would like to do it and asked her mother if it was possible.

“One who would like to have tooth alignment because the braces are popular with the adolescents (quiet). I do that because of beauty purposes, the super stars also do it. For me, I would like to be beautiful, as Porn (Noon said shamefaced), so I asked mom and she told me to consult the dentist and follow his suggestion. The dentist suggested that I have no need to do it. But for the reason of esthetics, he said that I can do it. Finally, I asked mom for having tooth alignment.”

Her mother also discussed the same opinion of this experience as Noon. When she entered first grade at the demonstration junior high school, Noon asked her if she could have tooth alignment. Her mother said when she was in the primary school Noon said the reason for doing it was because of her rough large primary teeth, which slightly protruded, but Noon denied doing that. She was afraid of dental treatment especially when she was young, she experienced painful tooth removal. However, when she found that tooth alignment was now fashionable she changed her mind to do the same as her friends. This is what her mother said:

“Fashion is one of the reasons of tooth alignment. A couple of her close friends also have tooth alignment. I used to ask her to do it at first, but she denied the option. She thought that it was terrible. But when entering the first grade demonstration junior high school she became more adolescent, and her close friends also did alignment. So she asked me for having tooth alignment. I was warned that it would hurt and the teeth will be removed. She still would like to do it. My colleague was surprised when she knew that because she knew Noon's character well. At the time of tooth removal, Noon didn't feel

hurt or strange. She may be thoughtful at first, but decided to do it because it's fashionable and good for her."

Noon is lucky that her mother allowed her to have tooth alignment, she said; *"If I was not allowed I may not have done it and felt sad."*

Noon's mother said that Noon generally liked costuming and always asked her to buy everything she liked for example, clothes, costuming accessories, and tooth alignment. When she took Noon to see the dentist, Noon felt excited and always asked for the selection of colors of the elastic bands. *"Which one is better?"* or *"Can I take every color?"* Her mother made suggestions to Noon about the selection of color, but sometimes both of them would choose the color by looking at the other patients'. Sometimes Noon was introduced to a color selection by her classmate. After the treatment Noon always went out with a big smile, sometimes with complaints such as; *"Today the doctor treated my appliances with too much force, the brace was twisted too much."* Her mother told her to be patient if she would like to be beautiful.

Although Noon felt happy with her tooth alignment, she complained about the disadvantages that made her have toothaches. She had to take Paracetamol (pain killers). She told the researcher that she did not know beforehand that having tooth alignment would result in having pain like this. *"I really didn't know, whenever I had toothache I would like to remove the braces. It's so much pain that I would like to remove it immediately."*

Poon: The fashionable girl

Poon is one of the outstanding girls in her group, not only for disobeying the school rules concerning hairstyles but also because of her way of copying fashion book dressing. The researcher had met with Poon on her summer holidays. She looked like a lady; dressed in a short shirt and sweet color skirt while her friends wore a dress shirts or T-shirts and trousers. No one wore a dress skirt for the group activity, except Poon. Children from the excellent room (M.2/3) that the researcher knows always say that *"She is ุุุุ (literarily means rad), walking around all day and calling out for attention."*

The girls in this group considered Poon to be like the stars in the fashion magazines. Not only in pictures similar to Porn's magazines, but Poon also dressed like the images in another fashion magazine called "NOK NOK". Poon, Mo and Aui (who came later) informed the researcher that this is the special book for trendy boys and girls (called "Dek Naew") to show their new dressing styles.

"The color of this style is softer than Punk. Punk prefers dark tone. Indy is softer. Naew is similar to Indy. But we actually did not know what the differences are. We will show you later. Scot pants are popular now."

Poon said she had seen the orthodontic treatment for first time from "NOK NOK" magazine.

"My mom took me for some dental treatment and she asked the dentist about the need for the teeth aligned treatment. The dentist told us it is not necessary unless you have an esthetic aim." That was the starting point for her reason to do the treatment. Poon said her teeth were a little bit overcrowded but her mother wanted to make them aligned. Mo who sits beside Poon in school, informed the researcher that *"Poon's parents are rich. We cannot stop her."*

Poon had her teeth aligned although it was not so necessary. She looked happy and the treatment made her life more colorful. *"It is good because of the various colors of elastic bands. And it can be changed all the time. I love the pink one. It is the most beautiful color."* Mo supported her opinion by saying that the person with braces looks like a rich person. We have to pay at least a thousand baht for one visit of elastic band changing. So the person with teeth aligned must be wealthy.

"Mo thinks that it looks expensive because the teeth aligned person must have money. One visit of treatment, OH! we have to change wire and band. I told my boyfriend, John, to change the band's color. He said he had no money. I reminded him many times until we separated."

When the researcher asked about the cost for this procedure, Poon told her she went to a clinic that was next door to Mahidol University. Her dentist asked her to pay 5,000 baht on her first three visits. This was the brace's fee and then she would have to pay 1,000 baht per visit for wire changing until the treatment was finished.

Although she thought that the cost was quite expensive, she said that *"I did not worry because I did not pay by myself."* Poon expects that her face will look better after the treatment. She did not like her gums because they showed when she smiled. The orthodontic treatment decreased this problem. *"I think I will look better (laughing). I would like to have Bebe's face and Paula's shape. It looks nice and slender."*

Unfortunately, the researcher had the chance to interview Poon only once. The researcher felt that Poon was a good example of this adolescent generation who concentrated on their personal image, particularly the beauty of the face and body. This was observed because tooth abnormality and non-functional tooth purposes were not included in their thinking when they chose to have a tooth alignment. Poon often presented image concerned answers when we asked about the treatment need or the importance of the treatment. *"If it looks better, we should do it. Someone is not fit with it"* which means if the treatment is appropriate with the face, it will support the image. This perception of image can be related with the choice in the color of the elastic band. Poon added that *"Beautiful color is beautiful but too bright is not beautiful."*

Moreover, in Poon's case, she is one of the adolescents from the urban environment (similar to Bas) whose parents are economically well off and would like to support and promote their child in every prospective way. If there are new innovations or products that promote health, esthetics, fun and happiness, they will no doubt purchase these items for their child. Although the treatment might correct only a little bit of the overcrowded teeth, Poon's parents thought it was worth the expense.

Kook: A crow in the flock of swan

"Sister Ning. How come?" Kook shouted loudly after the long holidays in December. On this day the researcher has just noticed that Kook has new braces. She intended to present herself to show her aligned teeth. She had a confident smile, and

talked in a loud voice. She tilted her chin up, contacted the researcher's eye and widely smiled. These were not her normal expressions.

The first time that the researcher met Kook was three months previously, after a teacher had introduced the researcher as the dental student who would collect data about the orthodontic treatment in the school. After the lecture finished and this teacher had left the room, Aom (who is the class leader) came to the researcher and said *"See the one who sits here, be careful of your head from her front teeth."* Later, a tall, thin and pretty girl appeared and sat at that chair. Her long hair was not neatly clasped in the back and her dress looked clean.

However, her non-aligned protruding teeth decreased her charm. Half of the students laughed at her. Her face turned to dark red and expressed her feeling of anger and shame. The researcher felt pity for the poor girl.

After that, the researcher talked with Kook. During the conversation, she often concealed her mouth and escaped eye contact with the researcher. This is the first time that the researcher had met her.

Aom, Bas, Maprang and Air are Kook's close friends. Most of them came from affluent families. Their parents are government officials or professionals and are respected in society. For example: Aom's mother is a doctor, Bas' mother works in the Ministry of Science, and Maprang's parents are both dentists.

So the children were treated well and received everything they needed. All of Kook's friends have a mobile phone, except Kook. She felt that she was strange from her group so she asked her aunt to buy the mobile phone; *"All of my friends have it. My aunt has to buy one for me. However, no one called me so I do not use it now."*

"I was shamed. My friends caused me to be embarrassed about my teeth.

They called me "Yhern".

I should receive the teeth aligned treatment."

Her upper anterior teeth were protruding and she could not close her mouth and was often an embarrassment to her friends. Her friends were always having group discussions. Kook came to join them and her friend said *"Kook! Don't protrude your*

face!” Kook felt sad and a little bit angry and went away from this group, while her friends smiled and moved their eyebrows to embarrass her more.

Kook told the researcher that she has always been embarrassed by her friends about her teeth since elementary school, however she did not feel much shame at that time though it increased when she came to study here.

“My previous friends at school did not embarrass another person because of their inferiority complexes.” and

“When I studied in grade 7, I learned Chinese language. The word “Yhern” in Chinese means human. All of the students laughed. At first, they probably laughed at Bas and me. However, Bas was gone and I was the only one left to laugh at. I wanted to have braces since grade 7. In fact, it was from grade 6 but not so much of a need. Not so serious. But my friends frequently asked when I would receive the treatment. They were good friends. I have become embarrassed since I came here.”

Early one night, the researcher had an appointment with Kook’s mother for dress repair. When the researcher went to the third floor building, the researcher saw an over-weight, middle-aged woman around 50 years old sitting at a sewing machine. She seemed to pay attention to her work without any perception of my entrance. After the researcher called, she said hello to the researcher with a smile and asked the researcher to enter her home. Then she called Kook. During that time, we started a conversation. She previously had many customers who ordered their dresses to be made by her. Someone ordered more than ten dresses in one visit and brought his/her own favorite pattern without any request for a bargain. However, Kook’s mother told the researcher that her work had clearly decreased at present. The income she makes from customers orders for dresses is how she helps herself and her children. She had even hired someone to help her with some of the work. She worked all day and night. Easier parts of the work like cutting the end of trousers or changing dress zippers were rejected

because of being a waste of time. However, she has to do all of it by herself now. Kook helps her sometimes.

Kook's parents divorced when she was young. Her father returned to the southern part of Thailand without providing any support his children, although he is economically well off. So Kook's mother was left alone to complete the tasks necessary to take care of her three daughters. She commented that it was very hard and tiring to earn the money she needed. She often goes to the temple to release her stress. At that time, she consulted the researcher about Kook's younger sister, Maew that will enter grade 7 soon. She has to find a new school for Maew because Maew signed a quit form from the previous school by herself. In case Maew studies at a temple school next door, she will probably get inappropriate treatment. On the other hand, Kook's mother must pay 10,000 baht for her to reenter the previous school. However, the researcher was informed later that Maew is studying at that temple school next door.

Kook often came to school without money for snacks or food because of her economic situation. She rejected her friends with sadness when they tried to persuade her to let them buy snacks. *"I will not go. I am not hungry."* Sometimes her friends said they would pay for her. That increased pressure on Kook. She sometimes went together with her friends to the snack shop but she did not buy anything. The researcher used to ordered a six baht piece of toasted bread for her. She would always refuse it. Finally the researcher tried to put it in her hand. Kook accepted the toast and said that she will return the money to the researcher later.

Kook's home is not far away from the school. It is located opposite the school and 20 meters from the road side so it was easy for the researcher and her friends to use her home as an appointed meeting place. Her friends often used her home for seminars, doing reports, watching the movies and playing games.

One evening after class, Kook told the researcher that she was going back to her home to pick up her homework. The researcher decided to go with her because the other children were studying in an additional special class, Porn also wanted to go with us to buy a snack while waiting for her mother. When we arrived, Kook's mother was doing her work with Kook's uncle. She asked Kook where she was going. Kook answered that she was going to send her homework. Then her mother said *"Oh! I plan*

to take you to the dental clinic.” Kook answered with a smile *“Really? I will be back before 4 pm!”*

After finishing her task, the researcher, Porn, Bas and Kook together left the school. The researcher told Bas that Kook’s mother was going to take her for the orthodontic treatment. Bas asked *“Really? When will they go?”* Kook has always told Bas since grade 7 that she would probably receive the treatment the same time with Bas. Bas was also surprised; *“Do you have money?”* After that, Bas separated from the group and returned to his home.

Kook informed the researcher that she had received a dental impression for taking the orthodontic treatment a long time ago. But the process was stopped because the dentist asked her to pay 8,000 baht for wire and band application and her mother did not have the money at the time. So now Kook was happy and smiled all the time.

Nevertheless, when we arrived home, her mother told her without eye contact *“Not today. We will see the dentist at the end of this month. I was too busy.”* Kook looked very sad *“Oh, Mom!”*

“I intended to allow her to have her teeth aligned. But we have to wait for the money. I needed a cheaper price and guarantor.”

On that day, Kook’s mother told the researcher that Kook often was embarrassed by her friends and this sometimes occurred in front of her. For example her mother had heard her friends say *“Don’t get close to me. Your teeth will hurt my head.”* In addition, Kook’s relatives also embarrassed her. Kook’s mother felt sad because of the severity of her teeth problem. When someone visited her home, she/he always said that Gib (Kook’s elder sister) and Maew (Kook’s younger sister) were beautiful and that Gib should be supported to become a star. Anyhow, no one ever referred to Kook as being beautiful. The dentist informed her mother that Maew should receive the orthodontic treatment because of her gum structure. However, Kook’s mother thought that it was not unattractive or a serious problem. But Kook’s status worsened and her mother had been concerned about Kook’s need for treatment since she was 12 years old. But their economic situation dictated that it was not the appropriate time for this type of expense.

Her mother expressed that she had intended to procure the tooth alignment for Kook and she had searched many clinics to check the prices. She needed good quality service and an inexpensive cost. At last she selected the clinic A at Taopoon according to Kook's friend's recommendation. The cost was 40,000 baht. She later commented that *"We paid a lot for the dental fee and Kook's teeth had already impressed."*

However, her mother still looked for another clinic. She said that she has to know all of the data before making a selection. She wanted to find a clinic that had good service and a cheap price. Anyway, she could not pay 50,000-60,000 baht for the treatment. She contacted many clinics by phone and sometimes surveyed persons who had their teeth aligned. Some clinics (for example; clinic B) promoted the low cost treatment. Patient will pay only 2,000 baht for the first four months or 4,000 baht at one time. She worried about whether the clinic would provide inappropriate treatment due to the low cost. Most of dental clinics asked for 8,000-10,000 baht for the first visit. For example, at clinic A, 8,000 baht for first visit (not including impression and x-ray costs) was requested. However, Kook's mother took her to the government community health center for the other dental treatments because of the cheaper prices. Eighty baht for a filling compared with 200-300 baht at the clinic. Less than 300 baht for scaling compared with more than 500-600 baht. She must carefully look at the expenditures due to her child raising expenses. So she needed a guarantor, a cheap price and good quality service.

Kook seemed to understand her family's economic status and situation. She tried to save money and ignored embarrassing comments made by her friends. Her answer after the cancellation of the dental appointment was; *"I was not sorry. I was familiar with it. I did not care."* And her mother also supported Kook,

"Kook did not complain about anything and did not express her inferiority complex. She was stable when her friends embarrassed her. She did not show shame but always asked me about our financial needs. Anyway, she understood me."

However, Kook sometimes showed her hurt feelings to the researcher. She complained that her mother did not care about her feelings. Kook once asked her

mother. *“My friend’s parents teach them their homework everyday. I have to do all by myself. You did not pay attention to me (Her eyes filled with tears during our conversation). Do you ignore me?”*

But her mother responded with an important reason. *“I have to do my job. You have to do it instead of me if you need my teaching. Do you need it?”*

Although she finally received the treatment, she still expressed hurt feelings. She lost her self-confidence because of the embarrassment caused by her present friends. Her mother did not allow the treatment although she often asked for it.

“I had not been embarrassed by my previous school’s friends. So I did not care. However, I lost my confidence when I came here. I told my mom every month. She also gave me a promise every month but we had never visited the dental clinic (Her voice shakes like she was going to cry.) I did plenty of complaining until my teeth were aligned. She did everything to save the money.”

The researcher had a chance to interview Kook’s mother after Kook’s teeth were aligned. She asked clinic A if they would accept 4,000 baht for the first two visits. The researcher asked her the reason for pursuing the treatment because according to her financial status she was just making ends meet. She answered that Kook’s teeth were seriously malformed. And Kook would soon become an adult. She worried that her daughter would continue to have an inferiority complex because of her unattractive teeth. The appearance of her teeth makes her lose confidence and present a bad personality. Kook may be losing her chance for good job. Her mother had many reasons why Kook should have the treatment.

“She will become an adult. She will feel shame until her secondary school or university education. No one accepts a person containing protruded teeth for work. Teeth aligned will support her personality. When Kook was together with Maew, her sister was always selected for the activities because her teeth are normal. Kook has the problem from her loss of confidence.”

Kook also supported that.

“I agreed. My elder sister (Gib) is charmed. Many boys like her. She is nice and always smiles. My face has a frown. Maew also is nice. A lot of boys like her. She has cried when someone bothered her. I complained and made the boys go. Maew is innocent and no trick. Boys are interested in both my sisters. Now no one is interested in me.”

Kook’s teeth did not crowd in the past. But her anterior milk teeth broke in the same time and 2 permanent teeth erupted. Permanent tooth was 2 times bigger than milk teeth. So she cannot do anything related with her teeth. She could not join musical band of her primary school. She was decided play Bells because of her protrusion teeth. She could not be an announcer. She also could not join the activities due to her ugly face. They always selected Maew, so Kook was quite ashamed. Kook is active but her teeth decrease her confidence. Not only teeth but also acne was her problems. Her nose looked bigger according to her acne. Kook’s mother thought that Kook should have the confidence that will be her good experience for the future. But if she doesn’t have it, her future will be doubted.

Kook informed the researcher that her family members were excited about her aligned teeth after the first visit. They asked her to smile and Maew asked to touch the appliances. At school, her friends also asked her to smile. Someone asked about her teeth aligned experience. Boy friends whispered *“Hey! Kook’s teeth have already been aligned.”* At the first visit, she selected white color rubber bands. The reason was *“It was beautiful at first sight. This may be caused by the light. Anyway, it was not so much beautiful when I got it.”* She selected light orange at the next visit.

“I intended to select the blue one. It may be looked fresh. However, it was pale blue and not beautiful Gib and I together spent long time to select it. This color was not nice. That color also was not o.k. At last, we decided to pick up this orange color. But I already planned that I will select the pink one next time.”

Her two previous color choices were not her favorite color. Her relatives commented that it was too pale and suggested that she select the bright one next time.

The researcher had a chance to visit Kook's dental clinic with her on the third visit. When we arrived and gave them the appointment card, the dental assistant brought us plenty of colors of rubber band to look at. They included red, pink, light blue, dark blue, blue, green, yellow and violet. Kook spent a long time to select one. Anyway, she could not decide so she requested the researcher's advice. The researcher advised her that selecting two colors might be beautiful (one color for upper teeth and another for lower teeth). She was confused because this was her first experience in choosing two colors. She was worried that the dentist would not accept her choices so the researcher asked the dental assistant and the assistant said it was alright to choose two. But Kook still could not decide. The dental assistant prompted her to make a choice by looking at the dental room and her face. At last, she decided on two colors, violet for the upper teeth and green for the lower teeth, according to the researcher's suggestions.

After returning from the dental room, Kook had a big smile and asked "*How is it? Is it beautiful?*" The researcher answered "*It looks beautiful. But why did the dentist change our two colors?*" Kook looked surprised and asked "*What has happened? I have not seen them yet and I would like to see.*" However, there was not a mirror available at the clinic. So we crossed the road and went to the opposite department store to look in the mirror in the bathroom. Kook had big smile and said,

"It looks good. I was always concerned about the green color because it was not beautiful on my friend's teeth. But this is beautiful (she explained with a smile and looking so proud)."

When we returned to school, the researcher felt that the teasing voices from her friends had disappeared although Kook has just started her treatment a few days ago. Her teeth were not changed much. Kook said, "*I felt good because my friends did not tease me about my protruded teeth. I had more confidence to talk with them.*" She also embarrassedly stated that she would like to have a special boy friend. She could not have had this relationship if she had not received the orthodontic treatment. Her

prominent teeth had kept her from having a popular personality and had given her a loss of self-confidence.

“I would like to learn to love. It would not occur if my teeth were not aligned. My personality was introverted. I could not show my ability because of the protruded teeth. I could not smile with anybody when I went outside. It especially occurred with boys. Oh! I lost my confidence when I contacted them.”

Kook became a confident girl and now she could smile and felt comfortable in expressing her abilities. It sometimes seemed that she made an effort to purposely show off her aligned teeth. Her mouth became the part of her body she presented to people. Moreover, Kook liked to talk about the treatment, especially the topic of changing bands. She always asked her friends about how it looked and the colors. Moreover, she did not care about the progress of her treatment. She said she would like to have the braces on as long as possible. She did not want to take the appliances off because the braces made her look nice. The appliances are popular among the adolescent group and gave Kook the appearance of wealth because of its expensive cost. Kook had this to say about her new found identity,

“The objective of braces in adolescents is brace presenting. It is more beautiful and makes them have self- confidence. They would like to prolong it as long as possible. They did not need their teeth quickly aligned. Braces are beautiful and make us look nice. Everyone, whose teeth were aligned, loves their teeth with braces. It looks more beautiful like the advertisement girl. It increases attraction and attention from the opposite sex. I want them to feel that I look good. I have more confidence and smile. I have a confident smile now. It also makes me look rich. When someone asked how much the treatment costs, I answered 35,000 baht. He said “Oh! It really is expensive.”

From Kook's case study, value and meaning of the orthodontic treatment were changed according to definition and period of time. At first she was embarrassed from the ridiculing from her friends about her protruded teeth. For Kook, the treatment was needed to end this type of harassment. From her experience and the information she had gathered, she thought that the treatment could correct and modify her image. Her friends would quit mocking her and accept her as one of the same group. Her friends often embarrassed her by asking for the reason why she had not received the treatment. This reminded her of her poor economic status as compared with her friends.

After she received the treatment, she did not want to perform the procedure of eliminating the braces. She wanted to prolong it as long as possible. Braces constructed an image she enjoyed; the nice rich girl. Changing the appliances became her topic of discussion.

However the value and meaning of the appliances was different for her mother. Her mother hoped that the treatment would change her image and make her more beautiful. In addition, her daughter would be finally accepted in the school social groups. Although her financial status and family income were not good, her mother tried to search for the low cost treatment. She was aware of her daughter's problems that included embarrassment, a loss of social participation and self-confidence. These problems could affect her daughter's future plans.

Mud: Hurt experiences from mother's love

In grade 8 classroom three, there are many handsome boys that are considered popular to many of the secondary school girls. Mud is a boy in one of these popular groups. Mud is not only handsome, but also he is talkative and outstanding. He always makes his friends laugh and smile due to his stories or funny antics. The researcher often saw Mud dancing in front of the room while his friends were singing. Although what he does is funny, his friends told the researcher that Mud is a very polite boy when he is at home. Mud's mother is a strict soldier and wanted her son to be a neat and polite person.

Mud's way of dressing always looked good. When he came to school for the holiday activities, he wore a Reebok shirt and Adidas socks and shoes. He has never worn short trousers and slippers. He was always concerned about his dress and worried about its cleanliness. He took his shirt off during the color painting period. Although he wore an under T-shirt, he still looked shameful. So he brought his friend's football playing T-shirt and wore it. He gave the reason that "*My mom will be angry if my shirt is dirty.*" Moreover, Mud has never joined football playing with his friends instead he prefers to talk with the girls.

Mud informed the researcher that his aligned teeth was his mother's idea and she had never ask him if he needed the treatment. He did not desire the procedure because his friend told him the treatment was painful. But he could not refuse his mother's need. Mud said his teeth previously protruded a little bit. His mother took him to Pramongkut Hospital because her friend works there. After the braces, Mud was in pain; spoke unclearly, and had poor gums and chewing pain (including pain from chewing bubble gum). Moreover, he had to brush after each meal and this annoyed him. The treatment process also disturbed his periods of study because he had to visit the dentist during government working time.

Furthermore, the girls in his group (J, Pim, Miew, Mam, Mint and Auy) felt that Mud should not have received the treatment. He looked good previously and his protruding teeth did not make him unattractive. Attaching braces was not appropriate with his looks, not beautiful and induced his to lip open. "*It was okay for his long face. A little bit protrusion is accepted. But when he had braces, Uhu!*"

Mud also complained with an unhappy voice that his friends often teased him about his protruding lip after the braces application. The wire caused his lip protrusion to be more pronounced. No one previously had made fun of or embarrassed him. The treatment made him lose his self-confidence, especially when he smiled or talked. Consequently, he said he would not have received the treatment if he knew what the effects were going to be beforehand.

CHAPTER V

FINDING AND ANALYSIS

Finding

According to the study result, information on orthodontic treatment can be found widely in the society through various kinds of media such as televisions, magazines and computers. Modern adolescents have become more interested in orthodontic treatment with both orthodontic appliances from orthodontists and dental appliances for fashion. This information is in accordance with collected data from “Mathayom Udomkarn School” since adolescents apply different meanings to orthodontic treatment from the medical concept. In their opinions, orthodontic appliances not only can treat occlusion and bring teeth to normal condition with beautiful tooth alignment, but also be a supporting device for them to gain more confidence when appearing in the public. Hence, several teenagers wear orthodontic appliances on their teeth although they are imitations without functional value. However, the researcher failed to find the phenomenon of wearing the fashionable imitated version of dental appliances among this school’s students, due to the context that the majority of them are in the middle-class family with a fairly good economic status and could afford authentic devices. Interestingly, some students who wore appliances for fashion evaluated them negatively, because the appliances when worn did not look real and were detectable as fakes. Eventually, those students themselves absolutely gave up the idea of wearing the appliances for fashion.

Adolescents’ meaning of orthodontic appliances

In regard to data collection and eight case studies, it is found that adolescents at present define orthodontic appliances in various aspects which can be divided into three points:

1. Braces: the ornaments for adolescents

On account of the colorful varieties of orthodontic appliances which can be attractive for adolescents, orthodontic appliances are used as ornaments to adorn their faces.

After interviewing adolescents, many words linked between orthodontic appliances and physical appearances were mentioned, for example: When wearing orthodontic appliances, “they are fashionable, beautiful, attractive, smart and outstanding as well as show sex appeal.”

“I want to undergo orthodontic treatment because I have never worn braces. I think I will be outstanding when wearing braces. Moreover, I want to have beautiful teeth. If I wear it, I will use white rubber bands since it is similar to real teeth and looks smart. Yet, I found that someone was wearing braces although their teeth are regular. Orthodontists let him wear braces because they want the money.”
(Pim, wearing no orthodontic appliance)

Likewise, as for Porn and Noon’s cases, a dental problem is not the main point for them to undergo orthodontic treatment. Instead, their brother’s brackets with a cartoon pattern or colors of rubber in orthodontic appliances influenced both of them to do it without consideration of the cost. In their opinion, orthodontic appliances make them more outstanding among their friends.

Furthermore, adolescents’ consideration on wearing orthodontic appliances is not much different from the selection of jewelry. They need to be tried on or imagined what they will look like after wearing before making the decision on appliances. If orthodontic appliances will suit their faces or make them more attractive; as a group of adolescents (who were not wearing dental braces) told me that *“If we wear braces that suit our teeth, faces and personalities, we will look good.”* As for the case of two students, Oui and Bum, they tried wearing imitated fashion dental braces to see what the affect would be when wearing authentic braces. In addition, Poon, Boom and Poo told me respectively that:

“Some look good when wearing braces, but some don’t. Looking good means suitable and pretty; however, some don’t look pretty when wearing them.” (Poon, wearing an orthodontic appliance)

“Once I always thought about wearing dental braces, but when I looked at myself in the mirror, I thought that braces might not suit my face. So, I decided not to wear them. Besides, my teeth are regular. In fact, if one looks good, they can wear braces beautifully. On the other hand, if one does not look good, it might make no difference. If those who are dark wear braces, I think...Urgh....” (Boom, wearing no orthodontic appliance)

“I think dental braces are as ornaments like earrings. Some might look good on them, but some might not. Some should wear long earrings and some wear luxurious ones. It depends. So, some don’t look good when wearing dental braces.” (Poo, wearing no orthodontic appliance)

After making a decision to undergo orthodontic treatment, they feel a sense of joy and excitement when considering and choosing orthodontic band colors whenever they see the orthodontist. “Orthodontic band color” is a psychological or physical component that adolescents choose to represent their identity. Color can express various meanings, for instance pink represents sweetness, black smartness and blue darkness. Consequently, orthodontic bands are selected to the suit wearers personality as well as a consideration for suiting the wearers’ facial appearance. As in Porn’s case, she told me that she chose orthodontic band colors according to what was popular with the other adolescents’. Thus, she needed to know what color is popular in order to be in vogue. However, she sometimes chose her favorite colors, for example blue is her favorite color and she sometimes mixed colors such as black and white which made her look smart.

Furthermore, experience from interaction with other people can help in considering the orthodontic band colors as Bas’ case as follows:

“I mostly use red, dark blue and sky blue rubber bands. Once I used light blue ones, I felt embarrassed because they didn’t suit my face. Next day I didn’t dare to talk with other people and tried to cover my mouth. I think my most suitable color is red because it looks good when I’m smiling while other colors don’t suit me. Actually, there are around 40 colors, but I use only some colors. I can’t explain why pink and light blue aren’t suitable for me. Anyway, I notice what color of rubber bands my friends are wearing because if they look good, I will wear them, too.”

As for this point, orthodontic appliances are similar to other fashion accessories such as clothes, necklaces and earrings since they are chosen to be worn to show their identity to the public when interacting with one another. When adolescents decide to undergo orthodontic treatment, orthodontic appliances can create a new fashion and impress other people, especially adolescents who are interested in friends and the opposite gender. If they were not concerned about expressing their image or identity, any kind or color of orthodontic appliances would satisfy them because the treatment would perform functional duties rather than ornamental.

However, if we define orthodontic appliances as an article of fashion accessories on the adolescents’ body, orthodontic appliances might become outdated in the future and their value might change dynamically since humans redefine their taste in styles in accordance with age, period and surrounding context

2. Braces: the signifier to show luxuriousness, wealth and modernity

During the interview with Asst. Prof. Dentist Lady Kamoltip Hutasingh, she discussed her viewpoint about orthodontic treatment in the past when she had graduated from a foreign country and worked in Thailand. According to her, previously, those who underwent orthodontic treatment were school children with good economic status and whose parents were well-educated. Most of them were doctors’ children who studied in foreign private schools.

“Formerly, those who underwent orthodontic treatment were the rich who were well-educated. Most of the patients were doctors’ children who studied in Materdei, St. Joseph Convent, Assumption Convent or Bangkok Christian School. Few of them studied in public schools. No one studied in Satriwittaya or Satri Mahaphruettharam School.”

Furthermore, previously there were not as many orthodontic clinics as in the present; therefore, those who could afford orthodontic service had to have a special “economic and education level leading to acknowledge modern news.” Orthodontic image was associated with wealth and an understanding of modernity.

At present, orthodontic clinics try to be financially accessible by means of many strategies such as installment plans and price reduction. Nonetheless, the total sum of orthodontic expenses still costs tens of thousands of baht. Consequently, to participate in the dental service system, only people having a lot of money are the ones who can undergo orthodontic treatment.

“I think I look like a rich girl when wearing braces because those who can wear braces need to have a lot of money. It costs a lot of money when having tooth alignment, such as changing brackets and rubber bands. I told John (her boy friend) to change rubber band color, but he said that he didn’t have the money. After I had told him to do so many times, I stopped talking about it.” (Mo, wearing no orthodontic appliance)

“Wearing braces can make that person look like high-class people because they are expensive.” (Nok, wearing no orthodontic appliance)

“A lot of teenagers are wearing dental braces because some may think that braces can make them modern. But for me, I’m wearing braces because I have a dental problem. Some may wear braces

because their friends do. They are afraid that their friends will think that they are not trendy and modern.” (Im, wearing an orthodontic appliance)

Consideration of orthodontic appliance as sign to improve or demonstrate a particular social identity can be apparently seen in Kook's case. Although her protruded teeth were extremely embarrassing and her classmates teased her, her family's low economic status when compared with other classmates embarrassed her even more. Her family's inability to pay for the dental services portrayed to the other students that Kook was from a lower economic status. Their teasing not only embarrassed her and made her worry about her physical appearance, but they also reminded her of her family's economic position. As Bas, her best friend, asked about her, *“Oh! Does she have money?”* when I told him that Kook would undergo orthodontic treatment.

In Kook's social context, she lives in an urban society and has several friends from the middle class whose parents are government officials. As a result, she feels as if she is crippled when compared to other people because her mother is a dress maker. In addition, she has been stigmatized with so-called “ugly teeth” as defined by society that should be treated. If she does not undergo orthodontic treatment, her friends will tease her about her economic position. Hence, when she undergoes orthodontic treatment, orthodontic appliances not only have use value which aligns her teeth to the regular position, but they can also upgrade her economic standing in the eye of her classmates. Furthermore, this will reduce her feeling of humility since it shows she can afford expensive orthodontic treatment which even some middle-class people cannot afford.

Kook had to wait a long time until her family had enough money to allow her to receive the orthodontic treatment. After she had worn orthodontic appliances, all of her embarrassment and her classmates' teasing disappeared. Although her teeth are still not in the regular position, orthodontic appliances helped her hide her defective teeth and assumed “ugliness” since “her friends stopped mocking her when she wore braces” or “she is more confident when wearing bracing.”

“I feel good because my friends stop teasing me about my protruded teeth. So, I have more self-confidence when talking with my friends.”

And

“After wearing braces, I’m a lot more self-confident. So, I often smile. Actually, I like smiling. Now, I can smile without embarrassment. Wearing braces also looks like high-class people. Once someone asked me about the braces price and I said it cost 35,000 baht, he said, “Oh! It’s very expensive.”

Accordingly, for Kook orthodontic treatment was so desirable that she had to struggle and importune her mother to receive it since this was a way for her to be accepted by her friends and included in the group. Because her family can afford orthodontic appliances this makes her similar to the others in the aspect of physical regularity and economic status. Apart from the dental function of bringing her teeth to the regular position this also served the function of increasing her economic sign value as soon as she started wearing them.

However, orthodontic treatment contains more significance than use value. Adolescents wearing orthodontic appliances present a combination of images in society: **luxuriousness, wealth and modernity**. Therefore, those who wear orthodontic appliances look outstanding and interesting to other people because not many people wear orthodontic appliances as well as the appliances are colorful as mentioned above. Other than use value, it contains a new value exhibiting “high class and in trend” which attracts attention. According to Boudrillard, this is called “sign value” which can be attributed to orthodontic appliances that entice adolescents to undergo orthodontic treatment since it can create value and identity that makes them distinct and different from others.

While adolescents who undergo expensive orthodontic treatment from public and private dental clinics and hospitals show a sign from orthodontic treatment that they are from a higher class, those who cannot access this service because of their distressed economic situation turn to the less expensive imitated model of orthodontic appliances for fashion that are produced by an inferior market. This meets the

adolescents' need to show a luxurious image or upgrade their identity beyond class boundaries in order to be equal to the others in the society. It is much like the use of imitated goods with brand names such as clothes, shoes, handbags and watches.

However, imitated goods need to have good quality (like the authentic ones) in order to be able to eliminate class boundaries. If the goods have a considerably different quality from the authentic ones, other people will recognize this and not believe in their applied image. Thus, the users are not confident with the image as well, for instance Aui told me that she had always bought imitated dental braces for fashion with a student in ninth grade.

“After I had bought it, I tried wearing it immediately. It didn't look like the real one because brackets were not placed on each tooth. When anyone saw it, he would know that it was artificial. It looked strange. So, I removed it and have never worn it again.”

No matter if adolescents use orthodontic appliances for accessories or sign conveyance, they use orthodontic appliances to express their identity. Seri Phongphit (quoted) stated that identity means realization of who we are, what we are like, who other people think we are and how we are different from them. Post-modern philosophers explained that identity is created by society in association with the culture and society of the person and is instilled by media, markets and manufacturers. Therefore, what adolescents want to be like is indicated by the society and mass media, for example why does Kook, who has a relatively low economic status, want to have her teeth aligned even though her protruded teeth did not affect her mastication system or pronunciation? It is because the society instills in her an ideal image that should be white, slim and good-looking. Physical appearance is related not only to the body and skin color, but eyes, ears, noses and mouths. Those who have Chinese eyes, dull noses and protruded teeth are defined as “ugly.” Consequently, they have surgery on their eyes to increase eye layers, have their noses operated on to make their noses more pointed and have their teeth aligned in order to be as beautiful the societal ideal. Furthermore, orthodontic appliances can create image and sign that coincide with adolescents' desires: looking pretty, showing good economic status and creating

confidence since the appliances can make them look different from those who do not wear orthodontic appliances.

In urban societies where people are aware of modern news there are many orthodontic specialists standing by to treat orthodontic irregularities. Those that have dental irregularities are expected to undergo orthodontic treatment; therefore, if someone in a group is expected to undergo orthodontic treatment and still does not do it, he/she will be teased by their friends.

3. Braces: appliances leading to physical capital

According to the study, it is found that malocclusion and irregular tooth alignment can cause adolescents' embarrassment, diffidence, stress and worry. Especially protruded teeth, for instance in Kook's case, she had to cover her mouth with her hand all the time while she was talking with me at the beginning of the interview as well as Bas, when he rendered his story with sadness and embarrassment. Protruded teeth caused a lot of trouble to them since they are not considered beautiful and their classmates harassed them. Accordingly, they feel humiliated, embarrassed and alienated from other friends all the time as in Phu's case:

“(He spoke quietly) I feel bored and embarrassed with my teeth. I'm not confident and have a bad personality when talking with girls. Besides, a few of my friends often tease me. So, my father took me to Mahidol Hospital to sign up in the queue- up list since I studied in seventh grade. The official told me to wait around one and a half years. Now, I want to have my teeth aligned. I wonder why it takes so long.”

At present, people know more about orthodontic treatment through various kinds of media such as the academic media and word of mouth from other people. As a result, they know that after undergoing orthodontic treatment, their personalities or physical appearances can be improved. If adolescents with dental irregularities such as mal-occluded teeth, protruded teeth or misaligned teeth are contrasted with or teased by the surrounding people, they will undergo orthodontic treatment to improve their

personalities; to reduce their anxiety and be accepted instead of feeling a sense of alienation.

Apart from adolescents' opinions to undergo orthodontic treatment to improve personalities and eliminate ridiculing by friends, opinions by parents' express a concern that dental irregularities can limit opportunities for work or performing activities at present and in the future. For instance Kook's mother thinks that her protruded teeth can limit her opportunities; she cannot be a master of ceremonies and play any musical instruments. When Kook studied in primary school, she joined a military band, but she could not blow any musical instruments due to her protruded teeth. Hence, she had to play a xylophone instead. When she was offered to be a master of ceremonies in Ants' Power Camp, she could not accept because her mal-occluded teeth made her diffident. Her mother also explained, *"If she can do everything today, she will have more experiences in the future. On the other hand, if she is not confident, she will be like that forever and she won't be able to do it in the future."* However, after Kook finishes the orthodontic treatment, she will gain good opportunities for her career in the future.

"Now, she's a teenage girl. So, she is embarrassed. She'll be more embarrassed when she studies in high school or university and even worse when she works. Who will admit an officer with protruded teeth to work? The tooth alignment can improve her personality as well. At least when she graduates, her face can improve her personality whereas her teeth can destroy her personality."

Accordingly, although Kook's family has insufficient funds as her mother is the single provider and has to earn an income for five family members; her mother struggled to find a way to have Kook's teeth aligned. She started with seeking a dental clinic providing inexpensive dental service and let Kook have her dental decay treated and dental plaque removed in a health center since the price is cheaper than in dental clinics.

According to the social context of this school, most students come from affluent and educated families. I found that in many families, although students have only a small dental problem which cannot be obviously noticed such as slightly mal-occluded

teeth or slightly misaligned teeth, their parents attend to these dental irregularities as if they were very serious in order to attain the the “perfect body” for their child. For instance in Poon’s case, she said that she had a slightly misaligned tooth which was not obviously noticeable; however, her mother wanted her to undergo orthodontic treatment. In addition, in Oon’s case, he had never known beforehand that he had one missing tooth resulting in misaligned teeth until an orthodontist advised his mother that he needed orthodontic treatment and she arranged it for him.

Orthodontic appliances in this significance are body (teeth) accessories leading to perfection and beauty according to the paradigm of the ideal body. Body in term of middle class’s meaning is different from the lower class’s interpretation since middle-class people do not need a muscular body for doing physical labor. Instead, a middle-class person’s body is used to contain social meaning because current social value is focused on the graceful and svelte body. As for teeth, if “teeth are white, well-aligned and suit the owners’ mouths”, the society will accept these characteristics. Furthermore, beautiful tooth alignment is associated with facial beauty; therefore, appealing teeth can improve the owners’ self-confidence which in turn enhances their personality.

Men or women who have a good physical appearance and self confidence have opportunities to be admitted into the well-paying jobs since as for current recruitment, if two candidates have an equal education, abilities and experiences, they will be judged by physical appearance and personality. Accordingly, if their teeth are not beautiful, this can destroy their physical appearance and charisma as well. Because of this type of social discrimination, parents try to improve or change their adolescents’ body and personality in order to attain perfection and prepare them (since they are adolescents) for real life in the future. When they have attained the appropriate image, their bodies become body capital for working and doing activities as to earn good incomes, increased salaries, honors and dignities as well as create well-being for their families in the future.

Social factors or contexts pressuring adolescents to undergo orthodontic treatment

1. Marketing strategies and results from professional stimulation

As for general goods, marketing strategies in current capitalistic economy need to stimulate consumers in order to consume the most profit. Accordingly, the markets need to produce goods for people in all social classes to easily access consumption so as to gain benefits. The markets do this by many means of promotional strategies of the marketing process; utilizing the media, advertisement, and public relations and by offering discounts and installment plans. Furthermore, consumption needs to be continuously stimulated. If consumers are not satisfied with what they are currently consuming, they need to further their consumption to perpetuate their identities in society.

1.1 Utilization of advertising media and public relations

If the goods are orthodontic appliances, those who are in charge of consumption stimulation are the orthodontists. The Dental Council declares dental regulation in terms of dental ethics (1995) in section 3 concerning dental advertisements No. 22 that “dentists must not advertise, hire or allow other people to advertise dentistry or knowledge on their dental profession.” Hence, according to this regulation dentists cannot advertise to persuade people to undergo dental treatment in their clinics or hospitals. They can only show details about their dental professions in their offices such as names, surnames, degrees, qualifications in accordance with the Dental Council’s regulation, dentistry branch, office address, telephone numbers and office hours. However, if dentists would like to inform people about academic information or answer dental questions, they cannot include their office addresses or telephone numbers in order to advertise their services (No. 25-27) (Dental Council, 1998). This regulation contradicts the economic criteria in which dentists need to receive the benefits from their economic investment (of dental clinics).

Data collection through internet and magazines shows that academic knowledge on orthodontic treatments is widely publicized. As a result, people can acquire more

information on orthodontic treatment including irregularity diagnosis, dental treatment, treatment process and advantages of orthodontic treatment. When people are knowledgeable and instructed by the dental system, they can easily diagnose their dental irregularities; even small ones such as misaligned or mal-occluded teeth and decide themselves if their teeth need to be treated. Furthermore, consumers can access dental services more easily. As a result, more adolescents and other people undergo orthodontic treatment at present.

In addition, information was found on the internet and in magazines that included many websites and dental clinics attempting to benefit from academic information by persuading consumers (patients) to undergo dental treatment in their clinics.



(Figure 11. Illustration of the dental advertisements)

It is obvious that not only is such information provided to inform people about the self care of oral cavities (for treatment of dental irregularities), but also people are enticed into demanding the dental treatment with an expectation of beauty.

It is found in the study that some adolescents who desire to undergo orthodontic treatment owing to slightly misaligned teeth go the dental clinics and are advised that *“You have only slight dental irregularity. You can choose between undergoing orthodontic treatment or not.”* If adolescents decide to undergo orthodontic treatment, the orthodontists will procure more patients and income as Poon and Noon’s cases:

“I need to have my teeth aligned because I had misaligned teeth. Actually, they could not be seen obviously because they are slightly misaligned. My mother took me to see the dentist and asked him if I

had to have my teeth aligned. He said that it was not necessary, but if I wanted my teeth to look more beautiful, I should do it.” (Poon)

My teeth were misaligned and I had rabbit teeth near my upper molar teeth. So, I thought that I had to wear braces.” and “...The dentists told me that I don’t need to wear it, but if I want my teeth to be beautiful, he can do it for me. So, I decided to do it.” (Noon)

Unlike the observable academic media created by groups of dentists, the general media that do not directly represent or are related to any orthodontic treatment were quite visible. In my opinion these media help adolescents’ construct an impression of normal desirable bodies or teeth since while adolescents are watching media, they not only perceive knowledge or entertainment from the contents of the program, but they also observe other factors. For instance actors, singers or even beauty queens are praised as good-looking since most of them have beautifully-aligned teeth such as Pui (Porntip), Pop (Areeya), Maem (Cattleya), Paula Taylor, Noon (Woranoot) or Tik (Chetsadaporn). In addition, some super stars act in dramas or television programs despite wearing orthodontic appliances. It shows that teeth are so important that even actors (who sell their physical appearance) pay a lot of attention to their teeth and orthodontic appliances without embarrassment. Subsequently, orthodontic appliances are not embarrassing for adolescents as well.

“I’m not embarrassed while wearing braces because many people are wearing braces. Media has a lot of influence on me because when I saw teenage stars wearing braces as “Four” who advertised in GSM advertisement said “You hang up the phone first,” I wanted to wear braces like her. I think it is very common and not embarrassing.” (Fon, wearing an orthodontic appliance)

Formerly, dental characteristics which were an individuals’ uniqueness such as misaligned, mal-occluded or protruded teeth, were not regarded as strange or different. In contrast, at present humans receive a lot of information from many sources of the

media resulting in a redefinition of the dental characteristics; as abnormal teeth needing to be treated or aligned to attain dental normalcy or well-aligned teeth without dental misalignment, malocclusion and protrusion. Because of this orthodontic treatment has become a common service to achieve normal positioning of teeth.

The forms of media displaying popular personalities is an influential factor in making young people ponder or give meanings to the treatment since much of the academic media and advertisements try to produce and create an image of adolescents' desirable body such as a slim figure, soft white skin, a young face without pimples or pointed nose, a beautiful mouth and well-aligned white teeth. As a result, adolescents attempt to alter or improve their bodies to obtain this paradigm of the ideal body. As for teeth, they try to improve their teeth to be accepted and similar to other people. Furthermore, the media creates the image that orthodontic treatment can increase a person's looks, intelligence and charm as well as create a sign of luxuriousness, wealth and high class, because most people portrayed in the media are famous actors or high-class honorable people. Hence, the image of orthodontic treatment associated with these people contains social class sign as well. Namely, orthodontic treatment is not only a method to lead the owners to have society's desirable body (teeth) after finishing the treatment, but also achieving signs showing social benefits while they wear orthodontic appliances.

1.2 Utilization of strategies of discounts and installment plans

As mentioned above, orthodontic expenses are relatively expensive from 20,000 baht to 60,000 baht depending on the type of hospital or clinic (public hospitals are cheaper than private one, but patients need to queue up for a long time). Expensive orthodontic procedures eliminate many of those who have a relatively low economic status, in undergoing orthodontic treatment. Consequently, dental clinics invented different pricing strategies to attract more patients by means of discounts and installment plans with no need to pay the total amount in the beginning, for instance:

"I went to a dental clinic in Tao Poon. It cost around 35,000 or 38,000 baht. I can't remember. I must ask my mother. At first, I had to pay 4,000 baht and the dentist cemented my upper dental braces.

He told me that I had to wait till I got used to the upper ones and he would cement the lower ones for me. A week later, he made an appointment with me to wear my lower ones and I had to pay 4,000 baht. After that, I paid 1,000 baht monthly until it was finished.” (Kook, wearing an orthodontic appliance)

“I went to a dental clinic in Soi Chao Phraya, Bangphlat. At first, I paid around 10,000 baht and after that I pay 1,000 baht monthly until it’s finished.” (Auo, wearing an orthodontic appliance)

“I went to Chulalongkorn Hospital. I have paid 850 baht per visit since the beginning.” (Fon, wearing an orthodontic appliance)

“I went to Wichaiyut Hospital. It costs around 40,000 baht. At first, I paid 10,000 baht for my upper dental braces. The dentist told me to wait till I got used to it and 6 months later he would cement the lower ones for me. I paid 10,000 baht for my lower braces. After that, I have to pay 1,000 baht every time I go to change my dental rubber bands.” (Pan, wearing an orthodontic appliance)

Thus, when orthodontic treatment expenses and payments are changed to be in conformity with the economic status of adolescents’ families, more adolescents and their parents tend to pursue orthodontic treatment at present.

Furthermore, market mechanisms try to produce goods for every social class. For high-class people, the markets produces expensive orthodontic appliances costing several tens of thousands baht for them to purchase and demonstrate their difference in social class and construct signs of wealth, high class, difference and superiority. On the contrary, for those who have a worse economic situation the low markets produce inexpensive imitated fashion dental braces and sell them to create the illusion for the wearers that they have upgraded their social class and eliminated social class distinctions so as to be equal with the high-class person.

1.3 Attractive modern technologies

Apart from discounts and installment plans, it is found that some dental clinics try to attract consumers by means of modern technologies to stimulate consumption, for instance they change dental wires into colorful rubber bands as well as change gray rubber bands to colorful rubber bands that patients can choose according to their favorites. Thus, patients are not bored with the same color because they can change rubber band colors monthly. Most adolescents wearing orthodontic appliances said that, *“I like colorful dental braces which can be changed monthly.”*

Apart from dental rubber bands, dental brackets are changed from metal brackets to porcelain brackets which look like the teeth color and to brackets with different beautiful forms such as animals, fruits or cartoons. At present, there are orthodontic appliances placed on the inside surfaces of the teeth for those who do not want to show others that they are wearing dental braces. The improved styles of orthodontic appliances attract adolescents to become more interested in orthodontic treatment because the appliances offer diversity of colors and appearance. They did not look strange as in the past when looking into a mouth, a person saw unattractive metal orthodontic appliances and the wearers were referred to having “metal teeth.” Formerly, some children did not dare to undergo orthodontic treatment because they were afraid that their friends would ridicule them. In contrast, orthodontic value has changed because more people, especially adolescents, undergo the orthodontic treatment.

2. Peer group

For young people adolescence is the period of the beginning of many changes in the body, mind, and emotions and in societal acceptance. It is very important for them to be able to take part in society, especially with their friends groups. Their actions such as dressing well and having material items as well as their manners and expressions are essential because adolescents want to be praised, accepted and impressed and not be different from their friends.

Peers are regarded as important reference people since adolescents always interact with their friends. In addition, being accepted by their group is very significant

because they can abide in this small part of society without embarrassment. Imitations of their friends aids them in being accepted by their group and so do positive differences such as richer, prettier, more expensive possessions and better taste. Chanthanee Charoensi (quoted) explained that at the time when lifestyles are not certain and identities are not firm as in the period of adolescence, consumption plays an important role in creating adolescents' identities in the current social context since it reveals their public identities, especially in their groups of friends that are adolescents' significant others. Thus, they cannot stand it if they are looked down upon as if a joke or teased in their peer groups due to an embarrassing physical disfigurement or financial status. Especially when they interacting with friends of the opposite gender, they exhibit strange actions for instance as in Kook and Bas' case, they told of bad experiences about being teased by their friends to their parents so they could undergo orthodontic treatment although both of them were top students in the class.

The influence of peers also affected Noon, who began to think about orthodontic treatment when she joined this group of friends after she had moved to study in seventh grade in Mathayom Udomkarn School. As well as Mud who could undergo orthodontic treatment due to his mother's persuasion. However, his friends' feedback made him unsatisfied with the image of his orthodontic appliances. It is obvious that friends are considerably significant in adolescent relationships.

As for Kook, she seemed to be born in the wrong place because growth in the urban city and social context of this demonstration school instilled her (with help of the media and modern technologies of the urban city) with the idea that defected parts of the body could be treated, by means of technology, in a way as to return them to their normal position. Furthermore, medical knowledge and mass media portrayed an ideal image of men and women with slim figures, tall bodies, white skin and well-align teeth without protrusion. As a result, her image was judged by people in her life as an ugly irregularity that needed to be improved. In addition, her surrounding friends are government officials' children of an educated and affluent middle class who assign a heavy importance on the value of physical appearances. Accordingly, Kook's dental irregularity and difference are regarded as an abnormality that needs to be treated. On the other hand, Kook's economic status was not good; therefore her family needed to

struggle to enable her to undergo orthodontic treatment. Furthermore, Kook is an adolescent who pays attention to physical appearance and the opposite gender. As a result, she felt more embarrassed when her friends ridiculed her and alienated her enough to sanction her to a particular group. In addition her friends conceived a dislike for her every time she joined the conversation because she was different from them. If Kook was born in a rural society where the surrounding friends and people were not concerned about physical appearances and there was no accessible media affecting her thought, she might not have struggled so hard for orthodontic treatment.

3. Parents

Parents are regarded as people who have an important influence on adolescents since they are very close to adolescents and still have a relative amount of control over what they do. Furthermore, adolescents cannot earn their own livings; therefore, they are dependent on their parents for finances and expenses.

According to the study result, it was found that parents are the other group that had a large influence on adolescents' decisions to undergo orthodontic treatment since parents consider the results from adolescents' improvement and physical change as an attainment of a beautiful, flawless, ideal body. This is a way to construct body capital for their children in the future in aspects of expanding career opportunities, creating a life of stability and increasing mate opportunity. For instance, as in Kook's case, her mother recognized the value of body capital, although she had to work harder and save more money, at last she decided to let Kook undergo orthodontic treatment. In addition as in Mud and Oon's case, their mothers managed to take them to see the dentists to undergo orthodontic treatment.

As for Porn, Noon and Poon's cases, there were some differences between their purposes of orthodontic treatment and their parents' because for these students orthodontic appliances are regarded as a component to support their image to be good-looking and pretty and to attract interest from the opposite gender. On the other hand, for their parents, orthodontic appliances are regarded as a component to treat dental irregularities. However, their desires were in accordance with their parents' because, although they had different purposes, orthodontic treatments have the same process.

They can wear orthodontic appliances as they desire; therefore, they easily decided to undergo orthodontic treatment.

Analysis

According to the study result, it is found that adolescents' lifestyles contain several levels of consumption from consumption in accordance with life's necessities to excessive consumption to show their signs or identities. In the same way, orthodontic appliances are used to treat dental misalignment in term of dental protrusion and to display images and signs of wealth, high class and modernity so as to hide social inequalities such as economic status and class. Hence, adolescents' orthodontic treatment contains meanings far beyond normal treatment since although some adolescents have dental malocclusion, orthodontic appliances have both use and social value because they can help create images and signs matching adolescents and parents' desires as well.

Current society constructs values and pays more attention to physical appearances than abilities and mental virtue; therefore, adolescents need to improve or change their bodies to treat and improve physical defects. "Body" becomes their main issue since adolescents are instilled with perceptions about what the ideal body should be through various types of mass media personalities such as actors and models as well as pictures or contents in advertisements and subsequently, which goods should be consumed or refrained from buying to express their own identity and good taste

Physical value and identity are constructed on account of an economic change to capitalism that tries to produce and spread the sale goods in order to urge consumers to consume endlessly. They become bored quickly of old objects and struggle to buy new goods all the time. This type of consumption is greatly influenced by mass media's opinions and tastes; therefore, the media is instrumental in image construction perpetuating consumerism. Modern products are focused more on designs, physical appearances and signal powers since the more the consumers are urged to consume images and signs, the more goods can be sold.

Adolescents are searching for an identity; therefore, they become a target group of the capitalistic market and advertising because young people have a lot of free time and high purchasing power (Chulaporn Masathianwong, 2004). All goods they buy such as clothes, shoes, handbags and mobile phones do not only have use value, but they interpret concealed special meanings showing their groups' uniqueness as well as their identity, taste, modernisms or economic status. Nithi Iawsiwong (quoted) explained that humans in all consumptive societies use consumption to display their identities: where they are placed in the society, how they show their tastes and life mottoes or how they are associated with other people. They choose a pattern of consumption to link their identities with other people in the society.

If orthodontic appliances are regarded as goods produced by orthodontists who are considered trustworthy professionals, then according to the findings in the research information there are some ambiguities between academy and commerce because orthodontists are considered as a factor that stimulates excessive consumption and distorts information on diagnoses as mentioned, "*It is not necessary, but if you want your teeth to look more beautiful, you should do it.*" Meanwhile, the dentist did not provide other needed information for making the decision especially the bad effects that occur. Furthermore, the orthodontists have many strategies to attract customers to undergo dental service in their dental clinics.

In addition, the Dental Council has warned people about the harmful effects of imitated dental braces for fashion generally sold in low-end markets, resulting in their immediate disappearance. However, the Council cannot control orthodontists who cement expensive orthodontic appliances so adolescents' can make a fashion statement. This illustrates that the Council does not have a good control system to regulate the dentists who use the adolescents' desires to gain their own personal economic benefits.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

It was found in this study that adolescents have their teeth aligned because of their demand for the abstract meaning associated with appliances', which is converted into a palpable existence, when attached to their bodies (teeth) in the consuming processes. By doing so, adolescents believe that an interesting point about themselves could be established or their personality and identity could be altered, either of which was considered their new and visible identity for others to view. It is not an argument that an identity is established by society and changes in accordance with time and generation, and is evaluated by those in the society. In the past, Thai society from aristocratic to common families evaluated shiny black teeth as being a socially accepted condition. At that time, Thais enjoyed chewing betel nuts which made their teeth black and charming, making them different or special from others. At present, having black teeth however, is unacceptable, represents an older and an elderly sign, looks ugly and risks the infection of oral diseases. Consequently, the identity of having black teeth has changed and become obsolete. A similar phenomenon, the metal wire is now considered a social mechanism establishing value and beauty, possessing the sign of wealth, and aids in concealing real financial status. It is then thought that those with metal wire are rich, have no difficulties with spending large sums of money excessively, and are in vogue.

The aforementioned use of capital has occurred due to the growth and development of market capitalism. Effects from the attempt of profit seeking result in an alteration of a goods' meaning. Instead of being an object with a use value, it becomes a symbolic value that can stimulate a consumption of the goods' meaning to represent the meaning or to show one's identity as sign value as stated by Boudrillard. This sustains a drive for never-ending consumption. If the capitalist did not establish a

new symbol, the market would stand still and consumption would disappear. For example, generally a car is effectively used during the first five to eight years. There is no need for an owner to change a car if it is in a good condition. In this case, if a capitalist still needs to be able to sell some more cars, stimulating processes for people's consumption of a new car will be necessary. Newly designed cars are then released and may cause the consumers to feel that their cars are out-dated and obsolete. A demand of the consumers to possess a new car is subsequently established in order that the new car's owners are socially considered wealthy and stylish. This is applicable to the orthodontist's metal wire. In the past, the socially visible figure of an orthodontic treatment included several strings of ligature wire and changeable rubber bands with only a gray color. On the contrary, nowadays the rubber bands have a variety of colors to choose from resulting in different selections, depending upon what identity the adolescent wants to display. When an outstanding appearance in a month is needed, the black and white colors may be their favorites. When a sweet-looking affect is needed, in the following month the pink color may be selected. The rubber bands are then able to stimulate popularity of orthodontic treatment. Unlike those in the past, the adolescent's identities at present can always be changed as desired.

All goods utilized by the adolescent are a response for their demand of establishing diversity. The adolescents do realize that utilization of the goods (which include clothes, shoes, and ear-rings, and so on) and participation in activities (which include spending time during holidays and going out for photography, karaoke, and special academic tuition) are socially interpreted as whether they are tasteful or tasteless and whether they are trendy or passé. Consequently, the adolescent selects goods to consume hoping to express the positions and relationships of their identities among others.

That some kinds of goods possess sign value is not a spontaneous incident. Mass media and advertisement directly and indirectly play some role in the establishment and the determination of such sign value. In the case of metal wire, the sign values are bound with movie stars, fashion-models, and the rich person's offspring who have their teeth aligned. All of the pictures in the media frequently seen by the adolescent, as well as conversations with surrounding persons about

experiences and incidents, are able to stimulate the demands to gain and to imitate those symbols for themselves.

Some parents financially support their children for an orthodontic treatment, due to foreseeing an advantage of the treatment which improves their children's personalities. Their expected result is that their children gain wider social opportunities, that is, a higher probability to be an announcer, get a good career, and achieve a high income. These ideas have already been stated by Bourdieu (quoted in Chris Shilling, 1996 and Paritta Chalermphao Ko-anantakun, 1998) that the parents in a group among civil-servants or in the middle class with a good financial status do not care to establish a healthy physical condition for laboring. They stress the importance of making and changing the physical appearance to be beautiful for a future capital of income from their careers. In the case of Kook, it was found that wearing the metal wire made her be accepted by friends in the upper class. She was then able to participate in several activities with more confidence. Although the advantage of establishing the physical capital by changing physical conditions is foreseen and more highly expected by the parents than by the adolescent, it cannot be excluded that the adolescent realizes all of these conversions to some extent. For them it illustrates an establishment of social capital.

The production of physical capital by means of an orthodontic treatment contains limitations as to who can appropriate these physical changes. It is known to be related with a social location. The orthodontic treatment is more easily accessible for those in the upper class than those in the lower class. In this study, Porn got permission from her parents as soon as she asked for an orthodontic treatment, whereas Kook spent much more time begging her mother, the reason of which points out differences in financial states between the two families. Since the production of physical capital needs a high cost, the physical changes of adolescent are unequal in each class.

Interestingly, the meanings of beautiful teeth have already been defined by dentists via several media. They must possess a neat alignment and be in neither protruded nor crowded positions. The adolescent groups, particularly those driven by their parents' demands, want to own such a condition by wearing metal. The dentists then increase their income by providing an orthodontic treatment to those seeking for the condition of beauty.

When the adolescent's consuming demands of wearing metal wire in order to establish sign value and to show their identities are congruent with the parent's goals of their offspring's physical changes for the production of physical capital, they initiate similar means to reach their own goals. An orthodontic treatment in adolescents then becomes more popular in the context of the present city society's phenomenon.

Suggestions

This section will be divided into two small parts: some suggestions after data collection in the field and some suggestions from the present research's results

Some suggestions after data collection in the field

As for data collection from adolescent informants, the researcher found that adolescents are active all the time because they always have activities to perform. The informants in this age group are not supposed to sit still and wait for us to interview and ask for information since adolescents are vigorous, have changeable emotions and can continuously change their interests. Accordingly, researchers who would like to interview them need to be alert and talkative as well as understand their feelings, know what they are interested in and listen to their problems.

In the social context in which there are various kinds of people, adolescents are cautious about the way they live; therefore, they do not trust anyone easily and it is difficult to make friends with them. If the researchers are officially introduced by their school, it will be easier to make friends with them. The researchers, however, also need some time to obtain a closer relationship, to converse with them in more topics, and to participate in various activities that interest them so as to gain more social acceptance. This becomes the basis for establishing relationships and forming a better comprehension of the numerous contexts the young people participate in.

The advantage of data collection in the school is that the researcher could continuously meet the adolescents and when there was any missing information, the researcher could ask them. In contrast, the disadvantage of this school context is that students rarely had free time to talk with me since there were a lot of activities, both academic and extra activities. Consequently, the researcher often met them while they were studying, having after school classes and practicing cheers. They hardly had free time for me to ask about the issues that concerned my research.

Gaining an understanding of adolescent's real life-styles in the school is still limited, due to the fact that the adolescent is restricted by several regulations concerning a strict educational program, appropriate behaviors, self-decoration by accessories regarded to be polite, neat, and appropriate to their age. All of which cause them to be unable to clearly express their own identities. Some other opportunities and social spaces are then needed for the researcher to be able to participate in other events and experiences, apart from their mentioned life-styles. By doing so, the researcher may be able to find a window in which to view their learning and comprehensive processes of daily practices, thinking styles and other related contexts. Such information should be able to better reflect their real world.

Some suggestions from the present research's results

The suggestions include two parts, that relating to the adolescent and that relating to the dental profession.

Because the adolescent is in the processes of physical, psychological and social growth development, they need to establish a role among their friends and demand acceptance from others. This causes them to be cautious about their personal care, when comparing themselves to their friends; whether they possess similarities or differences including clothes, physical and facial appearances, and even teeth. In addition, the adolescents care about and compare with their friends the similarities in participation of activities and experiencing particular incidents. The reason of which is the opportunities to converse among their friends about the same topics, for example, a joyful experience during taking photographs in the department store's studios. In order

not to be excluded from their friends, not to be old-fashioned, and ostracized because of being different, whoever misses the activities or experiences will develop a sense of inferiority. Consequently they will try their best to participate in such activities and experience the events together.

In contrast to attaining similarities when comparing themselves to their friends, adolescents sometimes create personality differences so their identity will stand out among others in the group. To achieve this, they change their personalities in accordance with those of the movie-stars or the persons of reputation by wearing alternative clothing, using the accessories, changing a hair-style, and imitating famous personages. It points out that nowadays Thai adolescents do whatever follows the latest trends and fashion.

According to the study result, it is found that living in a capitalistic economy where marketing conditions attempt to construct a goods' value and significance through advertisements and public relations, adolescents consume a lot of products such as fashionable goods including clothes, shoes, handbags and orthodontic appliances which are consumptive devices to display their signs or identities to the public.

Desires to show their signs or identities instill adolescents with the need to consume more goods endlessly because the markets continuously produce goods with new signs to urge them to consume more. This results in an extravagant compulsion to possess more goods without sufficiency even though they do not earn incomes as well as degrading their concept of virtue due to applying so much value to owning possessions.

As for this aspect, the researcher would like to suggest for those who are concerned about adolescents such as parents, teachers, lecturers or educational institutions; strengthen their immunity against compulsive consumption and assist them in understanding and not being misled by changing trends of capitalism and globalization. An awareness or knowledge regarding these phenomena can help them to make their adjustments to face and live in the society wisely.

Furthermore, adolescents need to learn what model is and what real identity is. Copy or imitation is the simulation of physical appearances, thoughts and actions since images or signs are only illusions that can change their significances according to

contexts. Hence, how should adolescents give significance and value to their identities? Adolescents' process of identity construction is caused by individual experiences in terms of considering and defining themselves and being defined by other people (Chulaporn Masathianwong, quoted).

As for dentistry, educational institutions in bachelor degrees should establish virtues, merit and professional ethics since it is found that at present more newly graduated dentists resign from public hospitals to work in private hospitals. In addition, the rate of dentists who would like to further their specialization in orthodontics is greater than the rate of other branches because orthodontists can earn a large amount of money. It is obvious that this group of professionals begin to pay attention to commerce which is the beginning of gaining benefits from having more knowledge whereas adolescents are slaves to material consumption in order to express their identities. Hence, some dentists take advantage of this opportunity to reap personal benefits resulting in the stimulation of the consumer's desire for beauty and the financial exploitation of them through excessive treatments.

While the adolescent considers the metal wire a self-promoting device, the dentists must possess a standard set of business ethics when diagnosing and performing the treatment and a case-selection for those whom an orthodontic treatment is really necessary. It is well known that it costs a large amount of money for an orthodontic treatment. Some unwanted symptoms such as toothache are induced due to the appliances fixed onto the teeth and the tooth movement during the treatment. In addition, dental decay and gum diseases may occur because of the food particles left over the appliances and the teeth. Consequently, if adolescents do not pay attention to their teeth because they are interested only in the consumption of images or signs from the dental appliances without care for their oral health, they might contact oral diseases resulting in a waste of more money on oral treatments.

Providing the orthodontic information by professional dentists is also an important process. It should include not only the advantages of an orthodontic treatment, but also the disadvantages that might occur. The samples of which can be seen in the two cases of Noon and Mud. The former is so much concerned about the severe painful symptoms from the appliances that she would like the appliance to be removed, while the latter found more difficulties in the oral-cleansing process. It is thus indicated that

many an adolescent has never known about the negative effects from the orthodontic treatment. Taken together these considerations, providing all treatment details to the patients is appropriate for the patient to make an informed decision.

Likewise, the Dental Council that is directly responsible for controlling dental professions must increase measures to inspect and to control dental professionals strictly and equally, such as a determination of a standard and low cost price for an orthodontic treatment. The patient really in need of an orthodontic treatment but has a low income will then be able to access the service. In addition, the answer to some questions concerning equality at present should be addressed, for instance: Why are cheap imitated dental braces for fashion banned while some private dental clinics can provide dental braces for adolescents' fashions? Furthermore, measures to control advertisements that seek benefits from news and information should be strictly enacted because consumers may experience many of the disadvantages accompanied with the orthodontic treatment.

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BIOGRAPHY

NAME	Thanida Pothidee
DATE OF BIRTH	12 May 1976
PLACE OF BIRTH	Singburi, Thailand
INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED	Mahidol University, 2000 : Doctor of Dental Surgery Mahidol University, 2007 : Master of Arts (Medical and Health Social Sciences)
POSITION & OFFICE	: Faculty of Dentistry, Naresuan University Pitsanulok, Thailand : Lecturer Tel. 0-5526-1934 E-mail : thanidap@nu.ac.th
HOME ADDRESS	18 Moo 10 Tambon Cheungglad, Amphur Bangrajan, Singburi, Thailand 16130