Marriage and Migration Timing in Nang Rong, Thailand

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Introduction

How does birth cohort during fertility transition affect marital patterns in settings of high rates of migration? Previous research by the authors has provided supporting evidence that children born in Thailand's fertility peak reap the benefits of the demographic dividend that emerges when individuals come of age in a time of relative freedom to migrate. Individuals born during the fertility rise, and peak demonstrate different migration patterns from those born during the fertility decline. We hypothesize that different migration patterns lead to a change in timing in marriage for migrants. We suspect that migrants from older birth cohorts migrate after marriage in order to diversify household resources, while migrants from younger birth cohorts may migrate in order to become more marriageable. In exploring these mechanisms, we argue that a gender difference exists in the interaction between migration and marriage. This may be because of gendered marital patterns, or due to the increasing feminization of the migration stream as younger cohorts come of age. We employ a mixed methods approach drawing on a longitudinal survey covering 16 year period – including pre-, during, and post fertility transition cohorts – and several years of field work by one of the authors.

Setting & Data

We utilize the longitudinal life history survey that is part of the Nang Rong Project conducted by the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina and the Institute for Population and Social Research at Mahidol University in Thailand. We employ the first three waves of data (collected in 1984, 1994, and 2000) for our analyses. The 1984 data collection was a census of all households and individuals residing in 51 villages within Nang Rong. It included information on individual demographic data, household assets and village institutions and agricultural, natural, economic, social, and health resources. Further, village-level data were collected from all of the villages in Nang Rong district. The 1994 survey followed all 1984 respondents still living in the original village, as well as respondents from 22 of the original 51 villages who had moved to one of the four primary destinations outside of the district, plus any new village residents. The 1994 surveys included all questions from the 1984 survey, as well as a 10-year retrospective life history about education, work, and migration, a survey about the age and location of siblings, and a special survey of migrants' migration experiences and histories. The 2000 round of surveys built on the previous data collection efforts by following all of the 1994 respondents and adding to the database any new residents and households in the original villages.

[map about here]

The 1994 and 2000 surveys included a migrant follow-up component. This was conducted among persons who had resided in 22 of the original 50 villages surveyed in 1984, and defined a migrant as someone who was a member of a 1984 household and had since left a village for more than two months to one of four destinations: the provincial capital, Buriram; the regional capital, Korat or Nakhon Ratchasima; Bangkok and the Bangkok Metropolitan Area; or Eastern Seaboard provinces. The migrant follow-up in 2000 included migrants identified and interviewed in 1994, and individuals who had lived in the village in either 1984 or 1994 but subsequently migrated to one of the four primary destinations. The retrospective recall items in the survey allow us to measure timing and sequencing of moves (outgoing and returning), migrant destination, occupation in destination, and duration of stay. The data for these analysis focus only upon villagers from the 22 villages where there was a migrant follow-up component. In these villages, the follow-up rate is fairly high (about 78\%) because the survey team relied on a multiple search methods (see Rindfuss et al. 2007). This means that migrant selectivity bias is minimized among this group of villagers and villages.

Our analysis file relies primarily on the data found in the life history modules implemented in both 1994 and 2000. With these data we construct an analysis file that is comprised of person-year-move records. For each individual we have information about their sequence of residences and moves within a year for the preceding 10 years in the case of the 1994 survey and for the preceding six years for the 2000 survey. Retrospective life histories were collected for most individuals who had ever resided in Nang Rong in any 1984, 1994 or 2000 household and who were 13-44 years old at some point during this time period. Our analyses examine individual behavior prospectively from 1984 and 1994 to 2000 and do not include individuals who newly appear in households in 2000. We measure migration as any move outside of the Nang Rong district for 2 months or more.

Using the life history surveys, we construct a panel dataset, and subset the data to focus on individuals who migrate at any time in the dataset. This new dataset consists of over 45,000 person-years from 1984 to 2000. We create categorical variables to indicate the timing of marriage and migration. Each category represents a different sequence that individuals may proceed through, as follows.

1. Not yet migrated & not yet married
2. Married first, not yet migrated
3. Married first, migrated second
4. Migrated first, not yet married
5. Migrated first, married second
6. Migrated and married in the same year

Methodology

Using the categorical variable described above as our dependent variable, we leverage the robust survey data available through the Nang Rong Project to control for individual-, household-, and village-level variables.

Our primary variables of interest are the birth year cohort groupings, detailed in previous research by the authors. These three-year cohorts are clustered around fertility rise (1958-1960, 1961-1963, 1964-1966), peak (1970-1972), and decline (1973-1975, 1976-1978). Control variables include Gender, Education (time-varying), Household landholdings (time-varying), and macro-economic growth patterns, including GDP and unemployment rates.

Because our dependent variable is categorical, ordinarily least squared regressions cannot produce an accurate linear estimator. We intend to use a multinomial logit model.