Transition into Adulthood among Young People in the Thai Context
: Timing and Sequencing of Leaving School and First Migration

Aree Jampaklay*, Barbara Entwisle**, Nathalie Williams**, Ramesh Adhikari*
* Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University
** Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Short abstract

Quality of young adults depends on how successfully they go through transition into adulthood. In many developing countries, transition into adulthood has only recently attracted attention. Our study will look at leaving school and first migration as two events of transition into adulthood in one setting of Thailand, Kanchanaburi Province. We will address a research question of what factors are associated with leaving school and first migration and their sequencing. We will use the existing longitudinal data set available for public use, the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System (KDSS). The project annually collected data from 2000 to 2005 and followed up again in 2007 and 2009, thus allowing for following households and individuals for an eight year period. We will follow those individuals who were in school and have not yet experienced migration event at the beginning of the period. An Event History Analysis to model factors associated with this transition will be conducted.

Extended abstract

Background

The growth in the size of the population of young people in developing countries is unprecedented. The absolute number of 10-24-year-olds is estimated to have reached 1.5 billion in 2005. This constitutes 30% of the population of these regions and 86% of all young people in the world. About 70% of young people live in Asia. In India and China alone, the proportion of young people constitutes 42%. The number of young people in developing regions is projected to continue to increase until 2035 (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academic, 2005: 2). Transition into adulthood is a critical stage of human development during which young people leave childhood behind and take on new roles and responsibilities. The nature and quality of young people's future lives depend on how successfully they go through this critical stage. However, transition into adulthood has only recently attracted attention in many developing countries.

Our study will look at two events generally considered in previous literature as among markers of transition into adulthood—leaving school and first migration in one setting of Thailand, Kanchanaburi Province. Our research question is what factors determining leaving school and first migration of individuals in changing contexts and what factors are associated their sequencing. We will answer our research questions using an existing longitudinal data set available for public use, the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System (KDSS).

Central to studies on transition into adulthood is how successful is the transition into adulthood among young people. Previous study describes the successfulness of the transition into adulthood as the taking on of adult roles in an appropriate time and sequence where young people have the opportunity to gain human and social capital, knowledge to maintain health later in life, and the capacity to make choice through getting hold of a sense of self and competence (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academic, 2005: 2).

One important transition that many young people all over the world make is leaving their place of origin and migrating to somewhere else. The main motivation of migration is to search for work. Past studies consistently show that the probabilities of migrating peak at ages 15-24 (Collinson, 2009). One explanation is that young people perceive lower opportunity cost of migration, given that they have not yet established in job, are still single, or have no children.

Methods

We will make use of an existing large survey-base, longitudinal dataset available for public use, Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System (KDSS). The project annually collected data from 2000 to 2005 and followed up again in 2007 and 2009, thus allowing for following households and individuals for an eight year period. We will focus on two events as transition to adulthood, i.e., age at first leaving school and leaving home. We will further explore patterns of transition to adulthood for women and for men, which we expect to be different.

Followings are plans for data management and data analysis:

The study sample will include individuals who have not experienced migration event, we will follow them annually through 2009. We will employ an Event History Analysis in modeling factors affecting the risk of experiencing first school exit and first migration. The unit of analysis will be person-years from 2000 to 2005, 2007, and 2009 (eight years). Thus, for those who experienced a given transition in 2001, they will have two person-years (records) in the analytical sample, and so on. For example, for those who remain un-experienced migration at 2009, they will be right-censored and contain eight person-years (records). So, the dependent variable in the multivariate analysis is whether or not an individual experiences for the first migration. The dependent variable will be dichotomous in nature.

The independent variables will be classified into community, household, and individual levels. Potential independent variables include, but are not limited to,

- Community level: residential place, cohort size, availability of school, availability of job
- Household level: family background (economic status -- wealth index, debt), household dependency ratio, family size, living siblings, health status, etc.
- Individual level: age, gender, ethnicity, health status, marital status

Study Setting

Kanchaburi is the third largest province of Thailand bordering Myanmar on the west. The study site is suitable in studying transition into adulthood for many reasons. First, because the area borders Myanmar, cross-country migration, especially around border districts, is common. The diversity of residents does not only stem from immigrants, but also from residents who were locally born, but reported themselves as non-Thai ethnicity. This social environment allows the opportunity to explore adulthood transition among people of various ethnic backgrounds.

Second, Kanchanaburi has a wide range of ecological characteristics which determines the economic activity and lifestyles of residents. The KDSS has divided the study area into five strata based on residents' occupations as well as ecological characteristics. They are urban/semi-urban, rice, plantation, uplands, and mixed economy. Linking people with residential context allows us to test if there are different perceptions, sequences, and factors associated transitions into adulthood across residential context.

Third, the study setting is equipped with a rich longitudinal data set, KDSS. The project annually collected data since 2000 to 2005 and followed up again in 2007 and 2009. Thus, in total, the data set allows us to follow people for nine years. This is a public use data set. For more information, please visit http://www.ipsr.mahidol.ac.th/ipsr/Research/KanchanaburiProject/default.htm. In Thailand, longitudinal data sets are rarely available. Thus, KDSS is exceptional and most suitable with the topic of the proposed study which has a longitudinal nature in research questions.

Fourth, although KDSS is a public-use data set with which many researchers and graduate students have delved into the data looking at many topics, the issue of transition into adulthood has received relatively little attention. Among a few, they only look at one event as a marker of transition, e.g. transition into motherhood (pregnancy) (Jahan, 2008). Our study extends existing literature on transition into adulthood by looking at several events considered as transitions into adulthood at the same time. We will also address the significance of coinciding events, combinations and sequencing.

References

Collinson M.A. 2009. Age-Sex profiles of migration: Who is a migrant? pp 49-64. In: The dynamics of migration, health and livelihoods. INDEPTH Network Perspectives. Edited by Collinson M, Adazu K, White M & Findley S. England.

Jahan, N.K. 2008. Teenage marriage and educational continuation in Thailand. *Journal of Population and Social Studies.* Vol. 17 no. 1 (July, 2008) p. 135-153.

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academic, 2005. *Growing up Global: the Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries*. Edited by Cynthia B. Lloyd. The National Academies Press. Washington, D.C.