Intergenerational Occupational Mobility in Rural Thailand 1997-2017

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This research provides a contemporary study of intergenerational occupational mobility in Thailand. Using data from the Townsend Thai Project Household Survey from 1997 to 2017, mobility rates across three generations are analyzed for the first time. Employing EGP class schema, I divide the sample into seven social classes, and cross tabulate the results in standard mobility table and outflow mobility table, to calculate the total upward/downward mobility rates. To solve the constraint of changing occupational structure overtime, I calculate the odd ratios to measure relative chances of individuals in attaining a certain class. The results show that 29.5% of individuals in Thailand experience upward absolute mobility in comparison with their parents. However, individuals from higher socioeconomic background have significantly higher chances to remain in their current social strata. Following the top class, the petty bourgeoise (class IV) has the second highest mobility rate upwards. Surprisingly, in contrast with other developing countries women in Thailand exhibit higher mobility rate than men, and women also move upwards to a higher degree than men.

Keywords: Intergenerational mobility, social mobility, occupational mobility, Thailand

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Parents in Thailand generally teach their children the value of hard work, which they believe will eventually lead them to success, social mobility, and bring fame to their families. Children are introduced to intensive competitions at a very young age, and these competitions continue throughout their lives. In fact, numerous empirical studies highlight the significant challenges faced by children from lower socio-economic backgrounds in their quest to climb the social ladder and reach the top. In high-inequality countries like Colombia, it could take as long as 11 generations for children from the bottom to reach the mean income (OECD, 2018), while children from higher origins have significantly higher chances of remaining at the top (Roine & Waldenström, 2012).

Empirical evidence demonstrates that inequality and social mobility are associated (Clarke et al., 2022; Carneiro, 2020; Blanden, 2013; Corak, 2013). High-inequality countries experience lower social mobility, whereas low-inequality countries experience higher social mobility. This phenomenon is referred to as the 'Great Gatsby' curve (Corak, 2013). In Thailand, the wealthiest 10% held 48.8% of the nation's income, while the bottom 50% held a mere 13.9% in 2021 (World Inequality Database, 2023). Moreover, the possession of land, which is crucial in developing countries where the agricultural sector is still prominent, is drastically unequal. The bottom 50% of Thais own only 2.27% of the country's land (Laovakul, 2013, p. 17). From this, it can be inferred that social mobility in Thailand is likely to be low. However, it is not conclusive, as inequality is not the sole determinant of social mobility, and a study aiming to investigate this is still lacking. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by providing an analysis of contemporary occupational mobility.

Social mobility extends to moral concerns and has captured the attention of young people, leading to demonstrations around the globe. The number of Google searches related to welfare state, inequality, emigration, and demonstrations in Thailand has skyrocketed since 2017 (Nuttapattanun, Thammaboosadee & Bumroongkit, 2022, p.53). This information implies dissatisfaction among Thai citizens. If the most hardworking people do not receive the rewards they strive for, but instead, it is the already wealthy individuals who do not need to work hard to achieve success, the concept of "wrong rewards for wrong people" could erode social cohesion and trigger social unrest (Therborn, 2013). By providing a concise mobility rate, this study challenges the myth that hard work inevitably leads to success. It is also crucial for policymakers to understand this when addressing inequality in Thailand.

The existing studies on occupational mobility conducted in Thailand offer limited perspectives based on short periods of dataset. The studies were conducted as far back as 40 years ago, and they focus on occupational mobility within a short timeframe rather than intergenerational mobility. Moreover, the previous studies did not employ a comparative and contemporary methodology for social mobility studies, making it difficult to

compare Thailand's social mobility rate with studies conducted in other countries. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a contemporary intergenerational occupational mobility study in Thailand, using a new source of panel data – The Townsend Thai Project (2009, 2018). Ultimately, this study presents the first social mobility analysis spanning three generations.

Theory and Previous Research

Intergenerational Transmission

The standard theory of social transmission, initiated in 1979 by Becker & Tomes (1979), presents a two-period utility framework for a family composed of one parent and one child. During the first period, the parent must balance their disposable income between personal consumption and investing in the child's human capital, such as education or health. In the second period, the child's income is determined by the human capital acquired from the parent's investment and any other heritable endowments. The first channel mechanism indicates that higher income parents have higher resources to invest in children's human capital, and the second mechanism is high-income parents have greater income-enhancing endowments. These investments and endowments, in turn, increase the income of the children in the next generation. On the contrary, children born in poorer families experience lower investments in human capital, which is the first mechanism of the model (Case et al., 2005). These factors are also transmitted to the next generation through cultural influences and genetics (Piraino, 2021, p.38), continuing the pattern of social immobility.

Adopting standard theory to analyze developing countries poses some problems, as developing countries tend to have lower returns on human capital due to a large proportion of the informal economy. Parents in developing countries tend not to acknowledge the benefits of investing in children's education due to information friction (Piraino, 2021, p.39-48). The second channel of the main theory can also alter the returns of human capital investment. Certain traits are transmitted through genetics and family culture, which have a multiplying effect on upward mobility. For example, parental networks increase the number of prospective jobs the child is offered for a given education level (Piraino, 2022, p.39). Children absorb the way their parents do things; if parents like to read, children tend to imitate the behavior. Children who love to read often come from families that love to read, compared to families that do not. Empirical evidence shows that Parents can directly transmit their socio-economic status to their children through various channels; education (Hertz et al., 2007), mother's height and health (Bhalotra & Rawlings, 2011 & 2013), and socio-economic status (Case et al., 2005). This is the reason why intergenerational persistence is prevalent.

Previous research in Thailand

This section provides an overview and summary of limited existed studies on occupational mobility in Thailand.

Urbanization and occupational mobility from 1970-1980 changed in the same direction in middle to highly urbanized areas. In rural areas where the urbanization rate was low, increased urbanization resulted in lower mobility among individuals with high socioeconomic status due to a change in occupational structure from agriculture to industry. The beneficiaries of this change were non-local people who invested in the industrial transformation of land uses. Former landlords in rural areas faced a decrease in income from land rent. Their status changed from "landowners" to "wage earners," (Wongbuddha, 1988, p.v). Conversely, individuals with lower socioeconomic status enjoyed greater opportunities to transition from wage-earning farmers to wage-earning industrial workers. Individuals with high socioeconomic status live in

highly urbanized communities, while those with middle and low social status live in lower-urbanized areas (Wongbuddha, 1988, p.iv).

Occupational transitions mainly involve moves into farm self-employment and non-farm employee positions rather than into farm laborer, non-farm self-employment, or farm or non-farm employer positions. The earnings of farm laborers are consistently lower than those of self-employed farmers, and the earnings of self-employed farmers are, in turn, lower than those of farm employers each year. In Thailand, Chawanote and Barrett has shown that the "earnings distribution of non-farm employers and non-farm employees stochastically dominate those of non-farm self-employed individuals (without employee) and of all the farm sector earnings distributions" (sChawanote & Barrett, 2014). It is therefore important to differentiate between non-farm self-employment without hired workers and those household enterprises that hire non-family members, which we term entrepreneurs. Different employment relations possess different levels of income and other characteristics.

For this reason, individuals who engage in high-productivity rural non-farm economy (RNFE) enjoy the most upward earnings mobility, which is a group of a small number of individuals with higher initial wealth and human capital, reflecting the difficulty of establishing and maintaining a business with employees (Chawanote, 2013). During the period of 2005-2010, less than one percent of household-owned enterprises in rural Thailand employed more than ten employees. Only a minority of these enterprises demonstrated significant employment growth over the period (Chawanote, 2013, p. 11). Therefore, we can imply that the transition from farm employment to non-farm employment was rare in Thailand during 2005-2010. Moreover, most of the newly self-employed individuals and entrepreneurs transitioned from wage employment rather than from unemployment. However, they found extremely low transitions from self-employment to entrepreneurship, and vice versa (Chawanote, 2013). Thus, we can confirm that self-employment is a lower class than real entrepreneurship in rural Thailand.

Empirical evidence points out intergenerational transmission of occupation in Thailand. There are five factors influencing the chances that children of agricultural families remain in agriculture: children's experience in agricultural work, attitude towards agriculture as an occupation, the number of agricultural laborers within a household, problems with agricultural resources in the past, and marital status (Rayasawath, 2018). The first four factors are intergenerationally transmitted. The first, third, and fourth factors can only be experienced if children live in an agricultural household.

Data source and management

I employed the Townsend Thai Project, a household panel data covering the period of 1997–2017. The data covers villages in four rural provinces (Townsend, 2009 & 2018). The relevant sections for the studies included household composition, primary and secondary occupation, employment status, children living outside the house, parent's characteristics, inheritance, income, and household business. The number of observations from the initial survey in 1997 was 2,870 households, while it decreased to 1,201 households in 2017.

I limited the age of the samples to individuals aged 30–60 years old. At the age of 30, individuals typically reach a stage where their occupational choices tend to become more stable and settled. This age marks a lower threshold for what is considered "occupational maturity", individuals are less likely to frequently change jobs or careers. The upper bound, 60, represents the legal retirement age. Examples of studies that limited age are Zhou (2019, p.18) at 31-64, Erikson, Goldthorpe & Porcatero (2010) & Wongbuddha (1988, p. iii) at 35 and older, Chawanote (2014) at 15-70. From the dataset, individuals older than 60 accounted for

1,379 observations out of the total 18,746 observations in the 1997 dataset, constituting only 7% of the total.

After removing unusable observations, the number of households that can be intergenerationally linked amounted to 1,632 observations of the parent generation, 933 observations of the children generation, and 352 observations of grandfathers. The statistics are summarized in *Table 1*.

Methodology

I chose to measure occupational mobility rather than income and education. Occupation is a summary indicator of a person's wealth, human capital, risks, and societal influence – what income cannot capture alone (Blanden, 2013, p.41). Ultimately, occupation is easier to measure in developing countries where long-term income data is lacking, and a high number of individuals work in non-standard conditions. I employ a comparative EGP (Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero) class schema, as an occupational classification system. In EGP schema, occupational hierarchy is assigned by human capital, skills, and socioeconomic status.

EGP schema also provides three mechanisms that generate mobility: direct inheritance, sectoral barriers, and occupational affinity (Heath & Zhao, 2021, p.181). I adjusted the schema to the sevenfold version, as *Table 2* shows.

I employ standard mobility table as the primary methodology. The cells in the table represent the frequency of class distributions (Hout, 1983, p.8). For relative mobility, I employ outflow mobility table to examine the movement in each class. Finally, I employ odd ratios to assess the likelihood of individuals from two distinct social classes attaining a specific class status and avoiding a different one (Heath & Zhao, 2021; Breen, 2004: Fachelli et al., 2021).

$$Odd\ ratio = \frac{\left(\frac{Number\ in\ Class\ A\ who\ originated\ in\ Class\ C}{Number\ in\ Class\ B\ who\ originated\ in\ Class\ C}\right)}{\left(\frac{Number\ in\ Class\ A\ who\ originated\ in\ Class\ D}{Number\ in\ Class\ B\ who\ originated\ in\ Class\ D}\right)}$$

Table 1 Summary of Statistics

	Total	Grandfather	Father	Mother	Son	Daughter
Parent 1997 combined with children 2017, age 30-60	2955		518	584	896	955
After removing families that cannot be measured	1632		324	373	444	489
Three generations	1230	352			413	460

Source: Townsend (2009 & 2018)

The limitation of this methodology is that it only examines the individuals and the starting point (parent), and destination point (children) at the time the surveys were collected. Meaning other factors that can influence the outcome of mobility are omitted, such as changing to better or worse occupations, temporary shocks, and migration to work in urban area. The methodology also ignores the secondary or more occupations of individuals. This is particularly important where people in developing countries tend to engage in more than one informal job. Furthermore, the data is limited to only 4 provinces of rural areas in Thailand. Urban area theoretically tends to have higher rates of upward mobility due to higher prospective of high-paid jobs, number of jobs, and higher economic development, making it complex to compare with results from other studies in developing countries where data is collectively collected.

Table 2 Erikson, Goldthorpe, Porcatero (EGP) Class Schema comparison

Class	Original	Sevenfold	Fivefold	Threefold
I	Higher-grade professionals, administrators and officials; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors	I + II 'service class'	I + II + III 'white-collar'	I + II + III + IVa + IVb 'nonmanual'
II	Lower-grade professionals, administrators and officials; higher-grade technicians; managers in small business and industrial establishment; supervisors of non-manual employees			
III	Routine non-manual employees in administration and commerce; sales personnel; other rank-and-file service workers	III 'routine non-manual class'		
IVa	Small proprietors; artisans, with employees	IVa + b 'petty bourgeoise'	IVa+ Ivb 'petty bourgeoise'	
IVb	Small proprietors; artisans, without employees			
IVc	Farmers and smallholders; self-employed	IVc	IVc + VIIb ' farm'	IVc + VIIb 'farm'
V/VI	Lower-grade technicians; supervisors of manual workers; skilled manual workers	V/VI	V/VI	V/VI + VIIa 'manual'
VIIa	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers	VIIa	VIIa	
VIIb	Agricultural workers	VIIb		

Source: Author's reconstruction from Erikson, R., Goldthorpe, J. H., & Portocarero, L. (2010, p.189)

Table 3 Standard mobility table of total sample (male+female), N = 898

Father's Class	Children's Class							
	I+II	III	IV	IVc	V	VII	VIIb	Total
I+II	1.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	2.9%
III	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%
IV	1.9%	0.1%	0.8%	1.1%	0.6%	4.3%	1.0%	9.8%
IVc	2.3%	0.7%	3.2%	3.2%	1.0%	11.7%	5.9%	28.1%
V	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	1.0%	0.3%	1.6%
VII	2.8%	1.8%	5.5%	4.9%	1.3%	18.6%	5.9%	40.8%
VIIb	2.4%	1.2%	1.2%	2.7%	0.7%	6.5%	2.0%	16.7%
Total	11.4%	4.1%	10.8%	12.1%	3.7%	42.8%	15.1%	100.0%

Source: Author's calculations

Results & Discussion

Table 3 represents a standard mobility table for total respondents. To interpret the table, for example, 18.6% of respondents originated from Class VII and remained in the same class. Another 2.4% of respondents came from Class VIIb and experienced upward mobility to Class I+II. The main diagonal line (the darkest shade) running straight through the table from the top-left to bottom-right, represents respondents who are intergenerationally immobile. Summing these cells provides the total immobility rate of the table, which is 26.5%. Total upward mobility can be calculated by summing the light grey cells in the bottom-left of the table, amounting to 29.5%. Conversely, the downward mobility rate can be computed from the dark grey cells in the top-right of the table, totaling 25.5%. The unshaded cells represent horizontal mobility, or individuals who moved into adjacent Classes but not perceived to be of higher hierarchy. Classes VII and VIIb are in the same hierarchy, as are Classes IV, IVc, and V, which are higher than Classes VII and VIIb. From the table, the horizontal mobility rate is 18.5%. Lastly, the bottom row demonstrates the total percentage of a certain Class for the whole society.

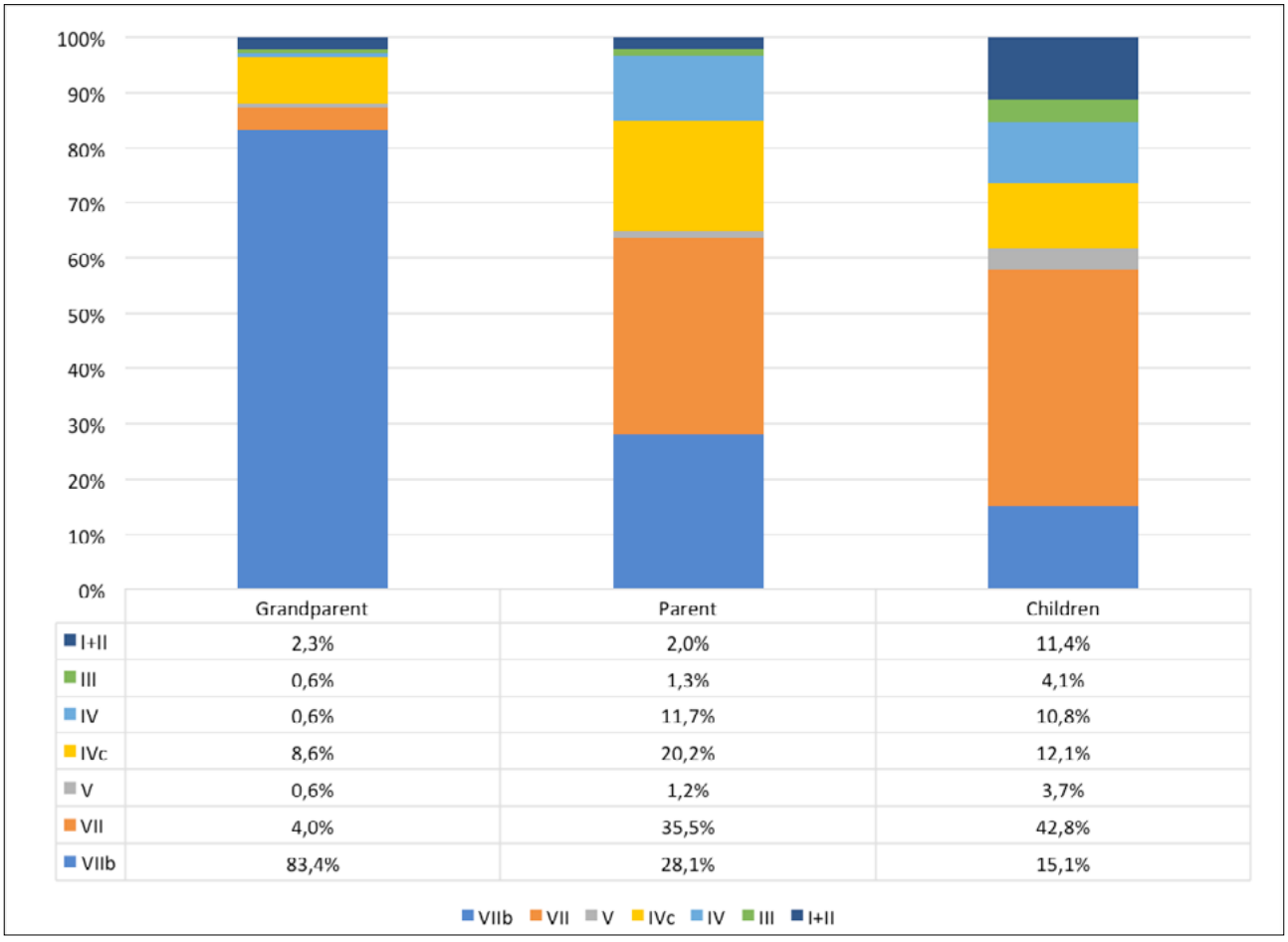
As the economy has developed, absolute mobility rates might appear better from class structural transformations. Relative mobility could have stayed the same as individuals from advantaged backgrounds may remain at the forefront of upward mobility. When comparing the absolute mobility rate to the total class structure in *Figure 1* & *Figure 2*, the surplus of upward mobility results from the changing total class structure. For instance, 2% of parents were in Class I+II, but this expanded almost sixfold to 11.4% for children. Both Class III and Class V expanded approximately threefold. Moreover, the agricultural workers' class contracted from 28.1% to 15.1%. The expansion of occupational opportunities within higher classes, coupled with the contraction of opportunities in lower social strata, contribute to upward absolute mobility.

The trends of movement in developing countries, particularly the shift from agriculture to the informal service sector, contrast with the patterns observed in developed countries at the beginning of the industrialization processes, where the movement was towards the manufacturing sector (Iversen, 2021, p.18-19). From the figures, it is evident that the agricultural class, including self-employed farmers, has indeed contracted, while Class VII, mainly related to the manufacturing sector, has

expanded. The professional Class I+II has also expanded and Class III, the service class, has slightly grown. The expansion from, 1997 to 2017, can be attributed to workers transitioning to casual service jobs in hotels, restaurants, retails, or gig work. These trends – that Thailand experience an expansion in the service class, the wage-earner class, and the professional class –contrast with those observed in other developing countries.

Despite the decrease in the agricultural class (IVc & VIIb), the unskilled Class VII has become larger. This stands in contrast to European countries, where lower-grade occupations are declining (Fachelli, 2021, p.215). Individuals in Thailand might have lost their lands due to changes in the relative returns from land as result of industrial expansion and investments (Wongbuddha, 1988). Consequently, these individuals have moved to Class VII, and while this could explain why Class VII has grown larger, they have not moved upward from this class. Hence, the sectoral barrier to the intermediate class remains strong.

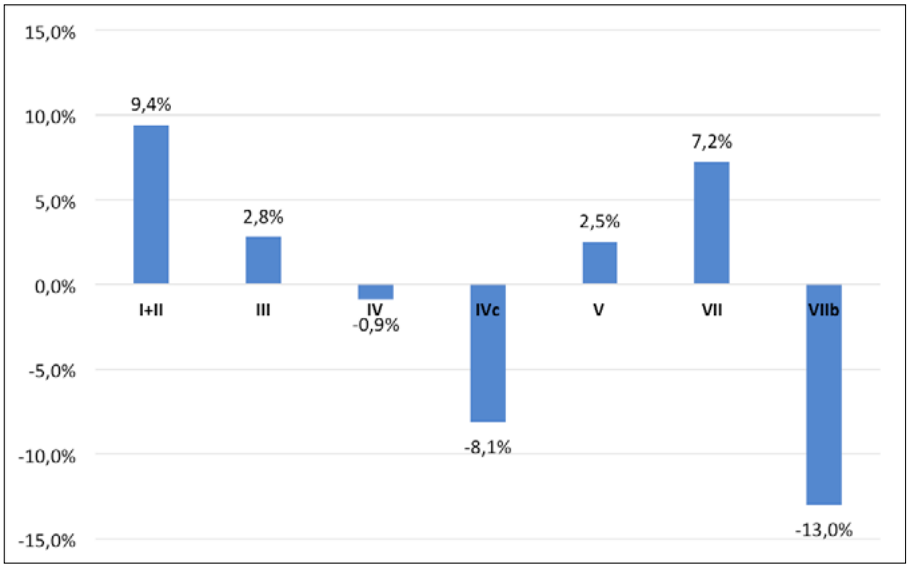
Figure 1 Structural change of Class of occupations in three generations



	Grandparent	Parent	Children
I+II	2,3%	2,0%	11,4%
III	0,6%	1,3%	4,1%
IV	0,6%	11,7%	10,8%
IVc	8,6%	20,2%	12,1%
V	0,6%	1,2%	3,7%
VII	4,0%	35,5%	42,8%
VIIb	83,4%	28,1%	15,1%

Source: Author's calculations

Figure 2 Structural change between parents and children, 1997 & 2017



Source: Author's calculations

Table 4 & *Table 5* present the standard mobility table of male and female samples, and *Table 6* provides a summary of mobility rates calculated from each table. When examining the results by gender, it is surprising to find that women experience higher rates of upward mobility. This contrasts both with the findings in other developing countries like China, Chile, and India, where men have higher rate, and with developed countries where men and women have equal rates (Heath & Zhao, 2021, p.185). Further analysis reveals that women have moved into the salariat and intermediate class. The combined mobility rate to Class I - IV is 22.5% for women, whereas it is 17.1% for men. Movements to Class I - IV account for over one-third of the upward mobility. Moreover, the percentage of women in Class I – IV is higher than that of men, with 30.6% for women and 21.5% for men. In contrast, the agricultural class (Class IVc and VIIb) is significantly larger for men, constituting 31.4% compared to 23.6% for women. Typically, people believe that skilled technician positions are occupied by men, making it a noteworthy point that the size of Class V is larger among women (4.5%) than men (2.8%).

Table 4 Standard mobility table of male sample, N = 427

Father's Class	Son's Class							
	I+II	III	IV	IVc	V	VII	VIIb	Total
I+II	1.6%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	2.3%
III	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.5%
IV	0.7%	0.2%	0.9%	1.4%	0.2%	4.9%	0.9%	9.4%
IVc	1.9%	0.9%	1.6%	4.4%	0.7%	10.3%	7.7%	27.6%
V	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	2.1%	0.5%	2.8%
VII	2.8%	0.9%	4.0%	6.1%	0.9%	20.1%	5.6%	40.5%
VIIb	3.0%	1.2%	1.4%	3.0%	0.7%	6.1%	1.4%	16.9%
Total	10.1%	3.5%	8.0%	15.2%	2.8%	44.3%	16.2%	100.0%

Source: Author's calculations

Table 5 Standard mobility table of female sample, N = 471

Father's Class	Daughter's Class							
	I+II	III	IV	IVc	V	VII	VIIb	Total
I+II	2.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	3.4%
III	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
IV	3.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.8%	0.8%	3.8%	1.1%	10.2%
IVc	2.8%	0.4%	4.7%	2.1%	1.3%	13.0%	4.2%	28.5%
V	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.4%
VII	2.8%	2.5%	6.8%	3.8%	1.7%	17.2%	6.2%	41.0%
VIIb	1.9%	1.3%	1.1%	2.3%	0.6%	6.8%	2.5%	16.6%
Total	12.5%	4.7%	13.4%	9.3%	4.5%	41.4%	14.2%	100.0%

Source: Author's calculations

Table 6 Summary statistics of absolute rates of mobility

	Immobility	Upward Mobility	Downward Mobility	Horizontal Mobility	Observations
All	26.5%	29.5%	25.5%	18.5%	898
Male	28.6%	27.9%	27.6%	15.9%	427
Female	24.6%	31.0%	23.6%	20.8%	471
Three generations	15.3%	39.9%	8.0%	36.8%	873

Source: Author's calculations

Focusing on relative mobility, *Table 7* displays the outflow mobility table. It shows where individuals from a certain class have ended up, and the table is constrained to class structural shifts (Blanden, 2013, p.42). For instance, 65.4% of individuals originating in Class I+II remain in that class, whereas only 14.7% of individuals from Class VIIb can attain Class I+II. Conversely, no individuals from Class I+II end up in VIIb, but 12% of Class VIIb individuals remain in the same class. The odds of individuals from Class I+II and Class VIIb attaining Class I+II are 4.4 times higher (65% and 14.7%). Similarly, the odds of individuals from Class I+II and Class VIIb attaining Class VIIb are 12 times higher (0% and 12%). These odd ratios are summarized in *Table 8*.

The class with the highest mobility to Class I+II, besides the owner class, is Class IV. This finding supports my assumption and the results of Chawanote & Barrett (2014) that Class IV is the most promising class for upward mobility due to their assets and human capital. Additionally, factors such as affinity, which lower information friction, influence the first channel of Becker & Tomes (1979) main theory. Furthermore, the transmission of entrepreneurial traits, the second channel of the main theory, explain this trend. However, these theories only partially explain why Class VIIb has higher mobility to Class I+II than the adjacent Class VII, even though Class VII and VIIb are at the same level in the hierarchy. Their affinity should be relatively similar.

Additionally, *Table 7* shows that only 12% of Class VIIb individuals remain in their origin, a rate lower than that of other classes moving down to Class VIIb. This contrasts with Xie's (2022) results in China, and Rayasawath (2018) in Thailand where occupational inheritance is particularly strong for

agricultural workers. A possible reason is the minimal differences between the two classes agriculturalists and unskilled manual laborers. These work in factories during the off-agricultural season and in agriculture during the peak agricultural season (Sonsaneeyarart, 1998).

Table 9 & *Table 10* demonstrate the outflow mobility of men and women. Three-quarters of the individuals from Class IV who moved into Class I+II are women. For men in Class VII, 49.7% remain in the same class, and 15% move to Class IVc. In contrast, only 42% of women from Class VII remain immobile, and 9.3% move to Class IVc. Women also have a higher rate of Class IVc individuals moving to Class I+II.

Table 7 Outflow Mobility Table of the total samples, N = 898

Father's Class	Children's Class							
	I+II	III	IV	IVc	V	VII	VIIb	Total
I+II	65.4%	11.5%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	19.2%	0.0%	26
III	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	2
IV	19.3%	1.1%	8.0%	11.4%	5.7%	44.3%	10.2%	88
IVc	8.3%	2.4%	11.5%	11.5%	3.6%	41.7%	21.0%	252
V	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	7.1%	0.0%	64.3%	21.4%	14
VII	6.8%	4.4%	13.4%	12.0%	3.3%	45.6%	14.5%	366
VIIb	14.7%	7.3%	7.3%	16.0%	4.0%	38.7%	12.0%	150
Total	11.4%	4.1%	10.8%	12.1%	3.7%	42.8%	15.1%	898

Source: Author's calculations

Table 8 Relative Mobility: Odd ratios

	I+II/VII	I+II/VIIb	IVc/VII	IVc/VIIb	VII/VIIb
All	22.66	79.8	13.9	1.0	10.1
Son	25	31.1	1.4	3.9	12.9
Daughter	20.75	83.0	29.5	2.2	7.6

Source: Author's calculations

Table 9 Outflow Mobility Table of sons, N = 427

Father's Class	Son's Class							
	I+II	III	IV	IVc	V	VII	VIIb	Total
I+II	70.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	10
III	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	2
IV	7.5%	2.5%	10.0%	15.0%	2.5%	52.5%	10.0%	40
IVc	6.8%	3.4%	5.9%	16.1%	2.5%	37.3%	28.0%	118
V	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	75.0%	16.7%	12
VII	6.9%	2.3%	9.8%	15.0%	2.3%	49.7%	13.9%	173
VIIb	18.1%	6.9%	8.3%	18.1%	4.2%	36.1%	8.3%	72
Total	10.1%	3.5%	8.0%	15.2%	2.8%	44.3%	16.2%	427

Source: Author's calculations

Table 10 Outflow Mobility Table of daughters, N = 471

Father's Class	Daughter's Class							
	I+II	III	IV	IVc	V	VII	VIIb	Total
I+II	62.5%	12.5%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	18.8%	0.0%	16
III	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0
IV	29.2%	0.0%	6.3%	8.3%	8.3%	37.5%	10.4%	48
IVc	9.7%	1.5%	16.4%	7.5%	4.5%	45.5%	14.9%	134
V	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	2
VII	6.7%	6.2%	16.6%	9.3%	4.1%	42.0%	15.0%	193
VIIb	11.5%	7.7%	6.4%	14.1%	3.8%	41.0%	15.4%	78
Total	12.5%	4.7%	13.4%	9.3%	4.5%	41.4%	14.2%	471

Source: Author's calculations

Table 11 represents a standard mobility table for three generations. From *Table 6*, the total upward mobility in the table is 39.9%, compared to the upward mobility from father to son at 29.5%. This implies that the absolute mobility of the grandfather's generation to the father's generation is quite low. The downward mobility over three generations is 8%. However, the rate of horizontal mobility, where individuals remain in the original hierarchy, is remarkably high at 36.8%. Most of this is accounted for by Class VIIb individuals moving to Class VII but being unable to progress further.

I also present a condensed version of the standard mobility table in *Tables 13* and *14*, combining the class categories into three broader groups: farm, manual, and non-manual occupations. This simplified version provides an overview of the mobility rates across three generations.

Table 11 Standard mobility table for three generations, N = 873

Grandfather's Class	Grandchildren's Class							
	I+II	III	IV	IVc	V	VII	VIIB	Total
I+II	0.7%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.9%	0.7%	2.6%
III	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.7%
IV	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
IVc	0.8%	0.1%	0.6%	0.6%	0.2%	3.6%	1.4%	7.2%
V	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.7%
VII	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	1.7%	0.5%	3.0%
VIIB	8.9%	3.9%	9.9%	11.7%	3.4%	35.3%	12.4%	85.5%
Total	10.9%	4.2%	10.9%	12.8%	3.8%	41.9%	15.5%	100.0%

Source: Author's calculations

Table 12 Outflow Mobility Table of three generations, N = 873

Grandfather's Class	Grandchildren's Class							
	I+II	III	IV	IVc	V	VII	VIIB	Total
I+II	26.1%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	0.0%	34.8%	26.1%	23
III	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6
IV	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3
IVc	11.1%	1.6%	7.9%	7.9%	3.2%	49.2%	19.0%	63
V	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	6
VII	3.8%	3.8%	7.7%	7.7%	3.8%	57.7%	15.4%	26
VIIB	10.5%	4.6%	11.5%	13.7%	4.0%	41.3%	14.5%	746
Total	10.9%	4.2%	10.9%	12.8%	3.8%	41.9%	15.5%	873

Source: Author's calculations

Table 13 Standard Mobility Table threefold version, N = 894

Father's Class	Children's Class		
	Non-Manual	Manual	Farm
Non-Manual (I+II+III+IV)	4.7%	5.7%	2.2%
Manual (V+VII)	10.2%	21.0%	11.3%
Farm (IVc+VIIb)	11.2%	19.8%	13.9%
Total	26.1%	46.5%	27.4%

Source: Author's calculations

Table 14 Outflow Mobility Table threefold version, N = 894

Father's Class	Children's Class		
	Non-Manual	Manual	Farm
Non-Manual (I+II+III+IV)	37.2%	45.1%	17.7%
Manual (V+VII)	23.9%	49.5%	26.6%
Farm (IVc+VIIb)	24.9%	44.1%	30.9%
Total	26.1%	46.5%	27.4%

Source: Author's calculations

Sensitivity Check

Since the odd ratios between Class IVc and Class VIIb is exactly equal 1, and Class VIIb has a higher upward mobility rate to Class I+II than Class VII. Sensitivity check is required to examine whether Class IVc, Class VII, and Class VIIb are the same class, and whether each class is distinct based on wage levels. Following studies by Long (2013) and Chawanote & Barrett (2014) that show the usefulness of including earnings in social mobility data, I demonstrate the earning distribution of each Class in table 15. However, only a few numbers of observations contain wage data.

Table 15 Average wages of each Class of occupations

Class	Wage(THB)	Observations
I+II	32,642	7
III	-	0
IV	9,533	23
IVc	5,706	23
V	300	1
VII	9,465	21
VIIb	8,479	9
Total	10,340	76

Source: Author's calculations from the dataset

From Table 15, Class I+II has the highest wage, as it is supposed to be. However, Class VIIb has a higher wage than Class IVc. This implies that they are not different in terms of human capital, and individuals in Class IVc probably choose to be free from unfavorable employment relations than taking a higher wage. Otherwise, there are barriers to moving back to Class VIIb.

Moreover, Class IV, the small business owners, and Class VII, the unskilled workers have almost identical wages. Possibly, because most of the individuals in Class IV are not rural non-farm enterprises (RNFE), as Chawanote and Barrett (2013) suggest. This denies the higher investment in human capital. The possible reason left is Class IV parents transmit entrepreneurial traits to their children.

Another method to check is to combine Class IVc and VIIb together (Long, 2013). Class IVc and VIIb possess the same skills, the same affinity but differ by inheritance effects from owning lands. *Table 16* shows a standard mobility table of the combined agricultural class version. *Table 17* shows an outflow mobility table. According to *Table 17,* Class IVc+VIIb still has a higher mobility of moving into Class I+II than Class VII (10.7% & 6.8%). The combined agricultural class also has the highest rate of moving into Class VII. As the odd ratio of moving between Class VII and Class IVc+VIIb is low at 2.2, according to *Table 18*, a summary of odd ratios of the combined agricultural class version. In sum, the results demonstrate the same hierarchy of Class VII and Class IVc+VIIb, in terms of skills, and affinity. The barrier between the two classes is low. However, it is unclear why Class IVc+VIIb have slightly higher chances of moving into Class I+II.

Table 16 Standard mobility table combined Class IVc & VIIb, N = 894

Father's Class	Children's Class						
	I+II	III	IV	V	VII	IVc+VIIb	Total
I+II	1.57%	0.34%	0.00%	0.00%	0.56%	0.11%	2.57%
III	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.11%	0.11%	0.00%	0.22%
IV	1.90%	0.11%	0.78%	0.56%	4.36%	2.13%	9.84%
V	0.00%	0.00%	0.11%	0.00%	1.01%	0.45%	1.57%
VII	2.80%	1.79%	5.48%	1.34%	18.68%	10.85%	40.94%
IVc+VIIb	4.81%	1.90%	4.47%	1.68%	18.12%	13.87%	44.85%
Total	11.07%	4.14%	10.85%	3.69%	42.84%	27.40%	100.00%

Source: Author's calculations

Table 17 Outflow mobility table combined Class IVc & VIIb, N = 894

Father's Class	Children's Class						
	I+II	III	IV	V	VII	IVc+VIIb	Total
I+II	60.9%	13.0%	0.0%	0.0%	21.7%	4.3%	23
III	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	2
IV	19.3%	1.1%	8.0%	5.7%	44.3%	21.6%	88
V	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%	64.3%	28.6%	14
VII	6.8%	4.4%	13.4%	3.3%	45.6%	26.5%	366
IVc+VIIb	10.7%	4.2%	10.0%	3.7%	40.4%	30.9%	401
Total	11.07%	4.14%	10.85%	3.69%	42.84%	27.40%	894

Source: Author's calculations

Table 18 Odd ratios of combined agricultural class (IVc+VIIb)

	I+II/VII	I+II/IVc+VIIb	VII/IVc+VIIb
All	11.2	40.3	2.2

Source: Author's calculations

Conclusion

The main aim of this study is to provide a contemporary measurement of intergenerational mobility in Thailand. I have answered the question by providing absolute and relative mobility rate, and odd ratios of father-children and grandfather-grandchildren during 1997 and 2017, using comparative EGP class schema.

The results suggest that the absolute mobility rate is surplus, but the rate might become better from the expansion of the higher-class occupations due to structural transformation. The results show that Thailand contrasts with other countries at the beginning of industrialization process: workers move into casual service jobs, industrial jobs, and professional jobs. In Western countries, workers moved from agriculture to industry, and in

developing countries, workers moved from agriculture to casual service sector.

The relative mobility rate is low and opportunities for children to attain a higher class are conditioned by the origins of parents. The findings thus align with other social mobility studies, which indicate that if an individual is born rich, he/she possesses higher chances to remain rich (Clarke et al., 2022; Carneiro, 2020; Blanden, 2013; Corak, 2013).

Surprisingly, women in Thailand exhibit higher mobility rates than men, given that men typically have higher mobility rates than women in other developing countries, whereas men and women tend to have nearly equal mobility rates in developed countries. Furthermore, women demonstrate higher rates of transitioning to Class I – IV.

Class IV, the petty bourgeoisie, exhibits the second highest rate of mobility into Class I+II besides the owner class. However, sensitivity check shows that the wages of Class IV are not different from Class VII. A possible reason is that most of Class IV are not in the non-farm sector where the highest incomes are generated. A possible explanation is that the transmission of entrepreneurial traits, coupled with Class IV's affinity to the higher Class, influences parents in Class IV to invest in human capital and thereby facilitate mobility.

In the future, more theoretical approaches should be reviewed to analyze the unexplained phenomenon found in this study: Why women have higher rates of upward mobility than men, why Class IV is the second most prospective class to the top even their income is not higher, and why Class IVc+VIIb have higher chances of moving into Class I+II compared to Class VII. Moreover, this study only shows the frequency of moving into each class, and does not measure the distances between social classes. Finally, this study uses the father's occupation as a proxy for individual's origin. Future studies could contribute to increased understanding of gender dimensions by applying the mother's occupation as a proxy so to distinguish the effects of social transmission from different parent gender.

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