

Research Statement

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My primary research areas are Applied Microeconomics, Population Economics, Health Economics and Labor Economics. In my Ph.D. study, I became interested in how individuals make personal decisions about their employment, health, education and marriage under different socioeconomic conditions. I began my research in explanations of marriage formation with changes in earnings' inequality and public policies. The following statement summarizes my current work and future research plans.

I was initially inspired by the literature linking female marital decision to male wage inequality in the U.S. (Loughran, 2002; Gould and Paserman, 2003). They find that under a marital search framework, women will delay marriage because their minimum acceptable wage of their potential partners becomes higher when male wage inequality becomes larger in a metropolitan area in a year in the U.S. However, similar results are neither supported using data in Taiwan (Kuo, 2008) nor investigated using data in other countries.

I then apply their methods to data from Chinese Health and Nutrition Survey in the working paper *Male Income Inequality and Female Marital Decisions in China*. Instead of a marital delay, I find that a one-standard-deviation increase in the Gini coefficient of male income increases a woman's probability of being married by 5.8 percentage points in urban areas and 6.9 percentage points in rural areas for women aged 20 to 34 from 1989 to 2009. This is conditional on female personal characteristics including age and education and city or county characteristics including sex ratio, overall income level and gender wage gap. The results are explained by the polarized income distribution and the essential functions of marriage for social security and risk sharing in the Chinese society, which are not consistent in U.S. data.

Also, I notice that there are endogeneity and reverse causality in investigating the effect of male wage inequality on female marital decisions. Previous literatures (Loughran, 2002; Gould and Paserman, 2003; Kuo, 2008) only address these problems by controlling for metropolitan area fixed effects and time trends in the country or in each metropolitan area. To make further improvement, I apply skill-biased technological shock as an instrument for male wage inequality

following the example of Mocan and Unel (2011) in my job market paper *Skill-biased Technological Change, Male Wage Inequality and Female Marital Decision*. Male wage inequality is measured by the wage gap between high and low educated men. I discover that a low educated woman's marriage propensity becomes lower but a high educated woman's marriage propensity becomes higher when there is an increase in the wage ratio between high and low educated men, using the 1990 and 2000 U.S. censuses as well as the 2007 American Community Survey. The results help to explain why the marriage decline trends for high educated women become slower than that for low educated women.

I continue the inquiries on what aggregate changes in the socioeconomic conditions can impact marriage formation. As housing is a noticeable determinant on marriage formation especially for Chinese, I begin to investigate the impact of home-ownership on marital decisions. The 1994 Housing Reform provides an exogenous policy change (Gan, Yin and Zang, 2010) in people's decision in purchasing houses as well as the decisions to get married. In the paper *Housing and Marriage: Evidence from the 1994 Housing Reform in China*, I adopt a difference in difference approach to investigate the impact of housing on decision to get married applying Chinese Health and Nutrition Survey (CHNS) data.

Other policies such as varieties of financial aids on mothers with dependent children may also affect those women's decisions to get married. To study these effects, I plan to explore the variations in the eligibility standards of the state assistance programs in the U.S. In paper *Financial Aids from States for Single Mothers and Their Decisions to Get Married*, I will check whether the changes in the eligibility of assistance by states for a woman with dependent child would affect her decision to get married.

Moreover, I want to ask why marriage matters. I plan to study children's development outcome under different family conditions. To be specific, I am researching on the impact of father's time spent with a child on the child's health, cognitive development, and emotional well-being using the U.S. national representative surveys on kindergarten children from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study in *The Effect of Father's Time Involvement on Children's Development Outcome*.

References

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