Migrants vs. stayers: Are fertility differences a matter of migrant selection?

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In how far does migration influence fertility decisions? This major question in migrant fertility research brings up an important point: is migrant fertility a consequence of distortions caused by the migration process, or is the migrant group selective in advance (Goldstein and Goldstein, 1982, p. 4)? Studies on migrant fertility usually take the perspective of the non-migrant population in the country of destination. Fertility decisions of migrants are compared to that of native "non-migrants", focusing on assimilation processes that are assumed to be immanent to migration itself. Here, we take the opposite perspective, studying the fertility behavior of migrants from Ghana in relation to the fertility of those Ghanaians who never migrated. This approach takes into account the heterogeneity in the country of origin and allows us to get insight into selection processes of migration. According to selection theory, migrants and non-migrants differ regarding a number of predisposed individual characteristics. Some are observable, like differences in educational attainment, age at marriage, employment status; and others are unobservable, e.g. ambition, openness to change, family orientation. As these characteristics are strongly associated with fertility decisions, migrants are a select group with distinct fertility preferences compared to non-migrants (Goldstein and Goldstein, 1982; Ribe and Schultz, 1980)

Until now, migrant selection is mostly studied in the internal migration context, focusing on rural-urban migration (Hervitz, 1985; Ribe and Schultz, 1980; Zarate and de Zarate, 1975) rather than on international migration (Kahn, 1988; Lindstrom and Saucedo, 2002). It reveals that migrants are selective on education or employment status (Chiquiar and Hanson, 2005; Kahn, 1988; Quinn and Rubb, 2005), depending on a number of country-specific factors (Borjas, 1987). According to Lindstrom and Saucedo (2002) the selectivity of migration depends also on the migration strategy. A similar

finding by Penninx et al. (1994) shows that migration streams which are dominated by family reunion are less selective.

Chattopadhyay et al. (2006) focus on selection effects in Ghana, studying urban-rural migration, which is found to be highly selective. The fertility behavior of internal migrants differs markedly from that of non-migrants in the same region, and approaches that of the population at origin, even before migration. Internal migration in Ghana is characterized by a high degree of circular migration, thus the population is well-informed about possible destination areas and migration is particularly selective. Another issue in the examination of selection theory is the choice of perspective. Most studies compare migrants' characteristics and their fertility behavior to that of the native population at destination (e.g. Andersson, 2004; Carter, 2000; Milewski, 2007). Others focus on migrants in their country of destination only (Ford, 1990; Kahn, 1988). Most of the studies comparing the fertility behaviour of migrants to that of stayers examine internal migration streams (e.g. Hervitz, 1985; Ribe and Schultz, 1980). International migration streams were so far only studied in the case of US migration (Choi, 2014; Lindstrom and Saucedo, 2002; Perez-Patron, 2012; Singley and Landale, 1998).

The fact that migrants are rarely compared to non-migrants from the same origin is mostly due to a lack of suitable data sources. Fortunately, the transnational setting of the MAFE project (Migrations between Africa and Europe) allows us to study both, migrant's demographic behavior as well as that of those who never migrated. Differences between both groups can help us understanding selective effects of migration. For our analysis, we use the Ghana sample, including Ghanaian non-migrants and return migrants as well as a sample of migrants who lives in the UK or the Netherlands. In a first step, we are interested in how far Ghanaian migrants and non-migrants differ regarding their completed fertility. By addressing the total number of children ever born we are able to focus on the long-term effects of migration on life course fertility rather than on temporary effects and changes in fertility timing. Even if fertility decisions might be postponed due to migration, the completed fertility is not necessarily affected (e.g. Carter, 2000; Perez-Patron, 2012). If postponed fertility is made up for, migrants' total number of children should not differ from that of non-migrants. The number of children ever born and it's determinants are investigated applying Poison regression methods. Our main covariates are educational attainment, age at first marriage and age at first employment. To complete our picture of migrant and non-migrant fertility differentials, in a second step, fertility transitions to the first and second birth are examined

separately, based on an event history setting. This allows us to examine differences in the timing of childbirth among migrants and non-migrants. Furthermore, time-varying covariates like marital status or employment status can be incorporated.

First results indicate a lower number of children ever born for Ghanaian migrants compared to those who never migrated. The remaining task is to find out what the reasons are. According to selection theory, the completed fertility of migrants is lower since migration is selective towards those with lower fertility preferences. Apart from that, migrants' fertility might be lower because fertility was interrupted after migration. To disentangle both possible explanations, the additional analysis by birth order is promising. It helps us understanding in how far migrants' child birth is postponed after migration and if they were able to catch up afterward.

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