

Second Generation Immigrants and Age at Motherhood. A Longitudinal Study of The Impact of Intergenerational Transmission of Fertility Behavior.

Maria Stanfors & Kirk Scott

Center for Economic Demography and Department of Economic History

Lund University, Sweden

Maria.Stanfors@ekh.lu.se

Kirk.Scott@ekh.lu.se

Extended abstract

This paper makes use of a newly-created multigenerational register to examine the fertility integration of the second generation of immigrants in light of the fertility history of their mothers, their background group, and the native population. The main question answered is to what extent the children of immigrants have assimilated to host-country norms in terms of age at entrance into motherhood. This study will focus upon the role of labor market status of the individual as well as parental characteristics on the process of becoming mothers for groups from varying national backgrounds and native Swedes. Using register data comprising the entire Swedish population, we are able to study the process of becoming parents for second-generation immigrants while controlling for the entire reproductive and labor market history of the parental generation. The underlying hypothesis is that intergenerational reproduction of age at motherhood should be lower for immigrants than natives if integration is occurring over the generations.

With an increasing share of foreign-born residents in Sweden, the issue of immigrant integration has become a pressing social concern. A large body of research has addressed the issue from different angles with somewhat mixed results. On the one hand, evidence suggests that assimilation is occurring in various areas of life, such as education, socioeconomic status, position, and intermarriage. On the other hand, a number of studies show differences with respect to immigrant experience and nationality and argue that modern day immigrants face challenges that complicate their prospects for assimilation and lead to segmented assimilation among immigrants (cf. Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997). This segmentation is not only problematic for first-generation immigrants but also for their children, since it may hinder upward mobility for subsequent generations or even lead to downward socioeconomic mobility across generations. While integration and assimilation has been extensively examined for first-generation immigrants, much less attention has been paid to the question of second generation migrants' integration into society, neither in comparison to the integration of their parents' generation nor to native Swedish-born of the same age.

Since we believe that the true story cannot be understood without taking an intergenerational approach, this paper will take us one step further when it comes to understanding immigrant fertility and assimilation in Sweden by investigating the childbearing behavior of a number of groups of second generation women in relation to otherwise comparable native women with Swedish-born parents during the period 1981–2005. We examine the propensity of childless women to enter motherhood in order to detect differences in patterns between second generation immigrants with differing origins but also between them and the native Swedish-born. We use register-based information on the individual's education and labor market experience together with information on their parents' origin and fertility behavior to examine to what extent different economic activities and social experiences affect the transition to parenthood. The results make a contribution to our understanding of demographic effects of integration and indicate in what way nationality, family norms and differing immigrant experiences affect fertility behavior.

The fertility patterns of immigrants is a topic that is now extensively covered in a very rich literature (see e.g. Abbasi-Shavazi & McDonald, 2000 on Australia; Andersson, 2004; Andersson & Scott, 2005, 2007, on Sweden; Bean, Swicegood & Berg, 2000; Blau, 1992; Fischer & Marcum, 1984; Ford, 1990; Forste & Tienda, 1996; Glusker, 2003; Lindstrom & Saucedo, 2002; Ng & Nault, 1997; Stephen & Bean, 1992 on North America, notably the United States). The core issue in all of these studies has been whether immigrants adapt to life in their new country and the mechanisms through which this adaptation may occur. Related to this issue is in what way duration of residence in a new country is associated with assimilation and what the determinants of fertility are among different ethnic groups.

In the case of Sweden today, the childbearing patterns of women born in the Nordic and EU countries are very similar to that of Swedish-born women. The variation between different nationalities is little. Obviously, there is not only adaptation to Swedish childbearing norms, but a gradual assimilation process going on, indicated by the fact that the youngest cohort is the most similar to Swedish-born women when it comes to the propensity to have a child. Immigrant women born outside of Europe have higher fertility than the Swedish-born and women coming from less developed countries have the highest fertility. Change is occurring, although not equally among all nationalities, depending on the country of origin. Women from more developed countries are adapting somewhat more and quicker than women from less developed countries, who deviate the most from the childbearing pattern of the Swedish-born. Duration of residence in Sweden as a new country is associated with assimilation, and the propensity to have a child, irrespective of parity, is clearly higher among those who have arrived recently, especially from less developed countries from which many refugees come. The general picture is, however, an adaptation among immigrant women to the fertility pattern of the Swedish-born. When it comes to the determinants of fertility among different ethnic groups, Andersson (2004) shows that period trends in childbearing during the last decades have been quite similar for immigrant and Swedish-born women in a way that suggests that both groups have been affected quite

similarly by changes in economic and social factors that together make up the general climate of childbearing. In a thorough study of labor market status and economic independence, Andersson & Scott (2005) find further support for this in that the effects of earned income, various forms of participation and non-participation in the labor market do not vary much between immigrants and the Swedish-born. The similarity in patterns across national groups supports the notion that various institutional factors affecting all subgroups of society are crucial in influencing childbearing behavior.

Our previous study (Scott & Stanfors 2009) examined the fertility behavior of the second generation itself, with the only aspect of intergenerational transfer being the origin countries of the parents. This study examined the extent to which the daughters of immigrants of different nationality have integrated to Swedish fertility norms, and confirms that the second generation manifests fertility adaptation and that the children of immigrants also appear to be affected by policies working through economic incentives. The fact that the category social assistance is no longer significantly different from being employed for the second generation, while it had a significant depressing impact on fertility for the first generation, may indicate integration not only in fertility patterns but also in reliance on and belief in the welfare state. While this may not be an optimal outcome of integration, it is indicative that the second generation behaves more like natives than their parental generation. Differences between the groups arise largely from timing and the effects of education, suggesting that there may actually be a process of segmented integration occurring, with some groups investing more in careers and education, while others may see family formation as an alternative to less than desirable labor market prospects. Clearly, the most important aspect of immigrant integration, both for first generation and their descendants, is the working through the labor market

The current study takes this one step further. Integration can be seen at both the macro level as well as the micro level. The previous study can be seen as a more macro approach, despite using register data on individuals. We examined merely the mean fertility decisions of various groups of women, with no consideration of their families' fertility patterns. The only intergenerational aspect considered in that study was national origin of the parents. While the fertility integration of groups is obviously of importance, we are also interested in how fertility behavior of daughters differs from that of their parents.

To this end, we now exploit a fairly recent data opportunity found in the Swedish Multigenerational Register (*Flergenerationsregistret*). The data used come from the Swedish population registers maintained by Statistics Sweden, and information on biological and adopted children to all index persons in the sampling frame. From this dataset consisting of all individuals in the birth cohorts 1942–1989 who resided in Sweden at any time from 1961 onwards, we select all childless women contingent upon having a mother in the database as well. We follow individuals beginning in 1989, to woman's age 45, the birth of a first child, emigration, or death, or the end of the study period in 2005. Given the special construction of the Swedish registers, the focus will be upon the woman's situation, since partners in non-marital

unions are impossible to identify in the absence of joint children. For each individual we have linked register-based information on place of residence, income, education (level and field), branch of employment, as well as demographic events (deaths, external migration, and changes in civil status).

This register allows us to follow the childbearing careers of two generations of women in Sweden, and thereby identify differences or similarities in fertility between generations while controlling for within-family norms. This study takes two approaches to examining entrance into motherhood. The first is a fairly uncomplicated model where the entire Swedish population is observed, and we control for individual characteristics of both the daughter and the mother (during her fertile period). The second approach uses a subsample of the population consisting of families with two daughters. This portion of the study will allow us to better examine the impact of family norms on fertility through the use of a sibling approach with family fixed-effects. As mentioned above, a difference in the prevalence of intergenerational transmission of fertility behavior with second-generation immigrants being less similar to their mothers than Swedes is interpreted as a continuing integration process through the generations.

This study differs from earlier studies where the intergenerational transmission of fertility behavior is analyzed. First, we are not looking at completed fertility but rather at factors influencing the timing of the birth of a first child. A second, and more important difference, is that most studies (c.f. Blau & Kahn 2007, Blau et al 2008; Fernandez & Fogli 2009 for recent examples within the economics literature) measure intergenerational transmission using the characteristics of the parental immigrant generation as a whole, due to understandable data restrictions. We, however, are able to identify the parents in the population registers dating back to the late 1960s, and are thus able to use actual data regarding the parents' situation prior to birth, at the time of birth, and up to their death, emigration or the closing of our sampling frame. Using actual parental information, combined with information of the immigrant group as a whole, we come closer to disentangling the impact of "ethnic capital" from the impact of parental norms.

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