

# Fertility of the Second Generation

Do children of immigrants adjust fertility to host country norms?

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## Abstract

This paper explores the fertility behavior of immigrants in Sweden from an integration perspective. While first generation immigrant fertility is an interesting topic, it only addresses a small portion of the integration question. In this study we are interested in examining the fertility of the second generation of immigrants and contrasting it with that of their parents and the native population. Using a register-based panel consisting of complete families we are able to take a multi-generational approach to the issue of fertility assimilation. Examining childless individuals born in Sweden from 16 national backgrounds we investigate the transition to parenthood and find that there is a difference between the second-generation and the first. While the first generation displays tendencies towards reduced fertility during establishment in the labor market, the second generation shows signs of segmented assimilation where childbearing is seen as an alternative career in the face of labor market difficulties.

## Extended abstract

Immigration patterns, return migration and the labor market integration of immigrants are topics that have been extensively covered in a very rich literature. In recent research, the fertility patterns of immigrants have been investigated (see e.g. Andersson 2004, Andersson & Scott 2005 on Sweden; Bean, Swicegood & Berg 2000, Blau 1992, Fischer & Marcum 1984, Ford 1990, Forste & Tienda 1996, Lindstrom & Saucedo 2002, Montgomery & Casterline 1996, 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 adaptation occurs. Related to this issue is in what way duration of residence in a new country is associated with assimilation and what are the

determinants of fertility among different ethnic groups. Despite this active research, the fertility behavior of second generation immigrants has received much less attention.

While integration and assimilation can be examined for first-generation immigrants, 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 determinants of the transition to parenthood among second generation immigrants and by explaining potential changes in behaviour between the first and second generation of immigrants.

Most studies of the relationship between immigration and fertility apply theoretical frameworks stressing separation, assimilation, adaptation, selectivity and/or diffusion. If migration leads to the (temporary) separation of couples, there may be a negative effect on fertility among immigrants (Bongaarts & Potter 1979, Menken 1979) but this effect seems to be limited, however (Lindstrom & Saucedo 2002). Immigrant fertility may also be lower in the destination country than in the country of origin due to assimilation/adaptation or the process of immigrant selection. Immigrants may both assimilate to the cultural norms of the host country (Andersson 2004, Chiswick 1978, Park & Burgess 1969, Rindfuss 1976, Rumbaut 1997) and adapt to new behaviors and goals when the advantages of small families become obvious (Blau 1992, Ford 1990, Lindstrom & Saucedo 2002). Assimilation is thought to take time and become stronger across generations (Bean, Swicegood & Berg 2000, Ford 1990, Lindstrom & Saucedo 2002). Although the outcome of assimilation and adaptation is the same, the underlying processes are different, with assimilation being more determined by the social and cultural context in the destination country while adaptation is more a response to economic opportunities and the relative costs of children and childrearing (Becker 1981, Willis 1974). Immigrant selection is also important since there may be systematic differentials between migrants and non-migrants that account for fertility differentials between the two groups. Selection may work through education or occupation but also through unobserved characteristics such as ability, aspirations and open-mindedness, and lead to lower fertility among immigrants than among non-migrants who remain in the country of origin (Blau 1992). When it comes to diffusion, cultural theories stress factors that shape and transmit values through different learning processes, quite similar to assimilation. Lindstrom & Saucedo (2002) is an example of how diffusion may affect fertility both among migrants, return migrants, and non-migrants. Diffusion may also be of importance for the fertility of immigrants depending on what kind of communities they reside in and relate to (cf. Portes & Rumbaut 1996).

Immigration and fertility research is often focused on the experiences of adult immigrants who are assimilating and adapting to their new home country. There is much less research on the fertility of second-generation immigrants despite the fact that assimilation is a long process which changes immigrants and their situation over generations (e.g. Bean et al. 1984, Lindstrom & Saucedo 2002, Rosenwaike 1973). Assimilation, especially that of the children of immigrants, is often seen as a straight-line process but, increasingly, the second generation, both in Europe and the United States follow the more diverse pattern of segmented assimilation (Portes 1995, Zhou 1997, Waldinger & Feliciano 2003). With segmented assimilation, children of immigrants may adopt the host country's behaviour, language and norms but nevertheless find themselves identified with belonging to a minority, and assimilate into society and the economy but retain a strong attachment to the group of origin (Portes 1995). In situations in which immigrants come from cultural and ethnic backgrounds that differ greatly from that of the host country, the second generation is more likely to fall into

the patterns of segmented assimilation. Similar to what Boyd & Grieco (1998) found for Canada, children of immigrants who are *visible minorities* may be more likely to experience segmented assimilation rather than direct assimilation in Sweden today.

Until now, there have been very few studies concerning the second generation of immigrants in Sweden due to the simple fact that immigration is a fairly recent phenomenon. With the large waves of immigrants not arriving until the 1960s or later, it is only recently that second-generation immigrants have reached the age where studies of labour market assimilation and entry into parenthood can be carried out.

This paper explores the fertility behavior of immigrants in Sweden from an integration perspective. While first generation immigrant fertility is an interesting topic, it only addresses a small portion of the integration question and neglects an important part of the assimilation process - the time dimension. In this study we examine the fertility of the second generation of immigrants and contrast it with that of their parents and the native population using two register-based panels consisting of complete families, allowing for a multi-generational approach to the issue of fertility integration. The Swedish Longitudinal Immigrant database (SLI) and the newly created Multi-Generational Register are taken from Swedish population registers, and include detailed information on income and transfers from the taxation register as well as information on demographic events. The SLI contains data from 1968 - 2001 and was initially constructed explicitly for studying the integration of the first generation of immigrants from 16 different countries. The data was then expanded to include children of those selected in the original sample, and as such it allows for a study of the second generation as well. The Multi-Generational Register covers people born in 1932 and later that have been included in the national register as residing in Sweden at any time since 1961. The Multi-Generational Register encompasses more than 8.5 million unique individuals, links children to parents (both biological and adoptive) and provides an excellent opportunity to investigate issues to which kinship relationships are central. The Multi-Generational Register provides us with basic demographic and migration data for all family members and we use information on union formation, the timing of births, migration histories etc. The Multi-Generational Register is complemented with several variables (i.e. education, labour market attachment, earnings and different sources of income, place of residence and characteristics of the local community) from other Swedish national registers. In this study we analyze the transition to parenthood for childless women aged 16-45 by labour-market status. Relative risks are obtained using a piecewise-constant hazard model, which allows for the baseline to remain fixed during various age intervals (cf. Andersson & Scott 2005).

Preliminary results give some support to a straight-line assimilation hypothesis, but interestingly the results also indicate that there is a difference between the second-generation and the first when it comes to the transition to parenthood, notably when it comes to the importance of indicators of labor market attachment and earnings. While the first generation displays tendencies towards reduced fertility during establishment in the labor market, the second generation shows signs of segmented assimilation where childbearing is seen as an alternative career in the face of labor market difficulties.