



Family Behavior of Migrants

An Overview

Gunnar Andersson

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Gunnar Andersson

Stockholm University

Abstract:

Family behavior and family dynamics have undergone drastic change during the last half a century. This has produced considerable diversity in family structures across and within countries in Europe. In recent decades, increasing levels of international migration has contributed to this diversity. Many migrants come from contexts with other family systems or socio-demographic development than what prevail in the country where they settle. The family behavior of migrants can be influenced by factors that relate to the contexts of origin as well as destination, through processes of socialization, selection and adaptation. Family behavior may also be influenced directly by intervening factors linked to the process of migration itself. This holds for international as well as for domestic migrants. The current contribution outlines the state of art in terms of family-demographic research on migrants, with attention to conceptual issues, empirical research and scope for future research on the family behavior of migrants in Europe.

Key words: family systems, marriage, fertility, divorce, migration, Europe

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Introduction

Research on the family behavior and family dynamics of migrants may rely on and consider all different topics that are considered elsewhere in the *Sociology of the Family*, it also involves a number of considerations that are specific to migrants and the migration processes they experience. This is a very promising line of research with the capacity to uncover complexities and relationships that are not as easily tracked when studying less mobile populations or not considering that most individuals are, at least to some extent, geographically mobile. The study of the family behavior of migrants can take both a population and an individual-level perspective. Migration events and family dynamics have an impact on societies at large and are influenced by contextual factors both in the societies from which migrants come and those where they reside at any given point in time. Migration and family-demographic events are intertwined in the life courses of individual actors. What makes the family behavior of migrants so intriguing is that their life courses unfold over time across two or more spatial contexts, under the influences of all the social factors that belong to those contexts.

Migration and demographic change

Most migration events occur when women and men are in their twenties. This holds for short-term domestic migration as well as for migration across a national border. Migration is closely related to the process of family formation and getting established as an adult: it comprises events related to leaving the parental home, establishing an own household, union formation and dissolution, marriage and divorce, and becoming a parent. Migration events typically precede, happen in tandem, or follow shortly after these family-demographic events. At the population level, migration contributes to population increase or decrease, and the rejuvenation or ageing of population age structures, both directly and indirectly. As the age-schedule of migration peaks in the early to mid-20s, immigration adds people at relatively young ages in receiving areas and subtracts people at the same ages in the sending areas. Migration thus has the largest impact on population structures at ages that are also dense with events related to family formation, childbearing and labor-force participation. Regions that receive immigrants not only add young adults but soon also a number of new-born children, while the opposite holds for regions that produce out-migrants. These dynamics are fueled by the fact that age-specific migration rates peak at lower ages than those of age-specific

fertility. Migration more often precedes family formation and childbearing than the other way around.

The size and composition of populations in Europe with a migration background are produced by the past history of migration between regions and countries in Europe, as well as that of immigration from and emigration to continents outside Europe. During and in the wake of the demographic transition in the 19th and early 20th century (Notestein 1945), population size in Europe increased exponentially and the continent produced huge numbers of emigrants to America and other parts of the world. Calculations for a set of countries in Western Europe show that the direct and indirect effects of long-term international migration on population size is only now about to produce any visible surpluses – as compared to the hypothetical situation of no international migration from and to these European countries during the last few centuries (Murphy 2016).

For Europe as a whole, the continent turned from being a net emigration area to an immigration region after the end of World War II. The turnaround to a migration destination was most pronounced and more early in Northern and Western Europe, while Southern Europe for several decades contributed to intra-European South to North migration. At the same time, several of the previous colonial powers of Europe received migrants from their past spheres of influence outside Europe. Due to the barriers of the Iron Curtain of Europe, there was little East to West migration until the fall of communism in 1989. The latter type of migration has subsequently gained in importance. During the last few decades, most countries in Southern Europe turned from emigration areas to destinations of migration, both from countries in Eastern Europe and from outside the continent. Enlargements of the EU and the related more free movement of people within Europe have contributed to making intra-European migration more smooth than before. It has also made the distinction between domestic and international migration less salient. All this migration history (cf. Castles et al. 2013) has produced and keeps producing the population of individuals that serves as the basis for this chapter on the family behavior of migrants. Many of the processes that link migration and family behavior have similar logics no matter if migration occurs domestically between regions of a country or across national borders. In many cases, however, migration that occurs across longer distances, be they geographical or social, involves more of contrasts, ruptures, opportunities, and challenges for the migrant individuals and the contexts in which they are embedded.

Evidently, migration contributes to a wide array of dimensions of social change, both in migrants' regions of origin and in their destinations. As migrants, we contribute to ongoing family and demographic change in the societies in which we live. Origin and destination areas may be at different stages of any demographic transitions in terms of fertility change (Notestein 1945), or any second-demographic transition of family-related change (van de Kaa 1987; Lesthaeghe 2010). Migrants both contribute to and are influenced by those processes of social change. In terms of demographic contribution, we note that migrants from outside the EU stem from countries with higher fertility as well as contexts with similar or lower fertility than that prevailing in many migration destinations in Europe; there is increasingly a shift towards contributions from destinations with low fertility (see Figure 1 below). Migrants within Europe often stem from countries with low or very low fertility who arrive in destinations in Northern and Western Europe with higher aggregate levels of fertility. In these cases, migration contributes to already ongoing processes of population rejuvenation and population ageing and decline.

Life courses across origin and destination contexts

Much sociological research takes a micro-level perspective in the study of migrants and the dynamics that are at play in shaping migrants' life courses and the family behaviors that occur at different stages of the life course. This also suits demographic logics of analyses where longitudinal duration data are analyzed with statistical event-history techniques. As stated above, what makes the study of migrants so intriguing is the fact that their life courses evolve over different social and geographical contexts, which allows for more refined research on how different contextual factors linked to places of origin and destination relate to individual behavior, as well as how the migration process itself intervenes in the processes of family formation, family dissolution, and childbearing. These approaches also link nicely to migration theory that discusses the role of push (from origin) and pull (from destination) factors in migration decisions, as well as the role of the many intervening factors that stem from the migration process itself (cf. Lee 1966). Studies on the family behavior of migrants need to consider both pre- and post-migration circumstances, as well as the intervening process of the migration. This research also needs to consider the various multi-level dimensions of individual characteristics (with micro-level data), social networks (in meso-

level data), and contextual factors related to culture, institutional factors and broader social change (as measured in macro-level data) in relation to individual behavior.

The role of contextual factors as manifested by welfare states, social-policy regimes, social citizenship, business cycles, political climate, demographic regimes, local family systems, family law, religion, culture, and social norms in relation to family behavior are all factors to consider in any *Sociology of the Family* and are discussed elsewhere in the related volume. Europe indeed makes an ideal laboratory for comparative family-demographic research with its huge variation at the national and sub-national levels in all kinds of combinations of different aspects and dimensions of these factors. With its many refined sets of comparative contextual and individual-level data infrastructures, Europe is today the perhaps most rewarding region of the world to study with any research design that involves comparative family-demographic research.

With this being said, the study of migrants brings even more opportunities and potential for truly insightful quantitative sociological and family-demographic research. To a large extent, this is still an untapped reservoir of research opportunities. Migration between countries and regions in Europe multiplies the many contextual factors that are worth considering when factors related to origin as well as destination combine in shaping individual behavior.

Migration from outside Europe brings influences from new contexts of origin that cover the entire spectra of worldwide family systems and patterns of family-demographic change, and all other contextual factors that may be at play in shaping migration, family behavior, as well as onward and circular migration. A small fraction of migrants may stem from high-fertility regimes that are yet to experience the demographic transition and its fertility decline. Others may come from low-fertility regimes but still from societies that have experienced less of the individualization processes that are assumed to contribute to contemporary family change in Europe. In short, the study of migrants may make the icing of any family-demographic research cake. With migrants, all the world's and all Europe's family systems are brought together at analytical display.

Family-demographic behavior of migrants: contextual factors and individual behavior

Family-demographic life-course research typically considers a standard range of individual-level factors related to different demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the study subjects. Some of these factors are time-varying while others are fixed in time. In

sociological research, factors related to norms, social interaction between individuals, and the broader social context are often considered. When migrants are studied, factors related to culture seem to be in focus more often than when national native populations are under scrutiny. Migrants often seem to be perceived as having more of cultural traits than what the analyst perhaps perceives his or her own ancestral population of having. The role of childhood socialization into different modes of norms and behaviors is almost always stressed when migrants are studied. Socialization is perceived as having occurred in and being influenced by the migration-origin context, while different institutional and labor-market factors more often are considered at play in the migration-destination context – together with factors that may indicate a process of acculturation. Recent extensions of research to also consider the role of trans-national networks and trans-national space have the capacity to make a more nuanced approach to these issues (Glick 2010).

As already stated, a multitude of contextual factors are at play and worth considering in family research. The role and influences of different family systems in migration origins and destinations within Europe and beyond deserve particular attention when the family behavior of migrants is studied. In Europe, the Church early on had a decisive impact by breaking down the influences of clan systems and the importance of lineages in family decisions (cf. Goody 1983). This was done by posing severe restriction on, for example, consanguineous marriages. The purpose was to strengthen the power of the Church but it also had long-lasting impacts on family systems that stretched into later processes of family nuclearization and increased individual autonomy. In many other parts of the world, family systems build more decisively on the logics of lineages, in some cases clan systems act as crucial factors in family-related behavior and family-demographic decisions (cf. Goode 1963; 1993). However, there is also quite some variation in family systems within Europe, both historically and in contemporary family-demographic change. The Hajnal line between family systems poses an East-West divide in family logics that stretches from around St. Petersburg to Trieste (Hajnal 1965; 1982). East of this line was a historical pattern of early and universal marriage, with considerable involvement of extended family and kin. West of this line was a system of more late and non-universal marriage, and a more strong nuclearization of family patterns. There is also quite some variation in the West of Europe, with much more familistic systems of influences in the Mediterranean region than in the North (Reher 1998). Some of these differences are reflected in ongoing family-demographic change, which often poses a North to South movement of individualization and related increases in the diversity of family forms

and family-related behavior. This Second Demographic Transition of family change (van de Kaa 1987; Lesthaeghe 2010) also involves a considerable amount of change in the role that gender plays in family behavior and family decisions. In more recent development of family-demographic theory, gender is put at the core of explanations, where an ongoing gender revolution is said to drive family-demographic change (Goldscheider et al. 2015; Esping-Andersen & Billari 2015).

Other contextual factors to consider are described in several chapters of the *Sociology of the Family*. Evidently, labor-market characteristics and welfare-state setups may have an even more decisive impact on the family behavior of migrants than for those who are better established in a given society. Sometimes immigrants can be seen as being more at the margin of different societies (Bledsoe 2004), and social policies differ across countries in the degree that they are inclusive to new residents, citizens or non-citizens, in a given country. Policies that are linked to the marital or parental status of an individual may be more decisive, for migrants and non-migrants alike, in conservative welfare states than in the universalistic welfare regimes of Northern Europe (Neyer, 2020). Policies that regulate the right to marry someone from another country may differ as well, with particular impact on people with current or prospective migrant status. In the EU some of these policies are harmonized, which may produce barriers towards marriage-related migration from outside the EU but facilitate family connections within the union. Still, family law is a quite complex arena with the potential to create obstacles in family-demographic processes that take place also across different countries within the EU.

Clearly, economic factors are important, both in relation to migration propensities and to family formation, childbearing and other aspects of family dynamics. This holds for factors that can be measured at the individual level as well as for more structural factors that belong to the contextual setup of different migration origins and destinations (cf. Massey et al. 1993). Again, it helps to consider the transnational nature of different economic relations. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an account of different theories that pose migrants and non-migrants as economically rational actors in family, work, and other life-course decisions. However, most researchers do consider a wide array of (socio-)economic factors in their research designs. To some extent, recent changes in international migration have maintained a bifurcation of the economic dynamics of migration into different segments of, for example, low-paid service workers and high-paid professionals (cf. Castles et al.

2013). The family considerations at different levels of social stratification may differ quite substantially.

The role of contextual factors in individual behavior is often mediated by interactions in different social networks to which individuals belong, at the meso-level in researchers' analytical designs. In the case of migrants these networks often stretch across regional and national borders. Cultural factors may matter for family behavior, and culture can be viewed as something that is maintained and re-created within the realms of social networks (Bachrach 2014). For migrants, family and community networks help maintain their ties to a multitude of locations across space and time (Boyd 1989).

Family dynamics, marriage and divorce

As is clear from the summaries above, the family dynamics of migrants may be influenced by factors related to their regions of origin as well as their (re-)current destination. Research on marriage and divorce of international migrants in Europe demonstrates quite some heterogeneity in patterns, also within a given country context. To a large extent these differentials seem to reflect behaviors that are prevalent in migrants' countries of origin and thus give some support for the role of early-life socialization in maintaining norms that underlie different family systems and the prominence of marriage in relation to, for example, non-marital cohabitation. For example, Andersson et al. (2015) find marriage, divorce and re-marriage rates of immigrants in Sweden that are sometimes higher, sometimes lower than those for the native population of ancestral Swedes. In many cases these differentials can be connected to patterns that hold in migrants' countries of origin, with, for example, a high degree of "churning" as reflected in high rates of marriage, divorce, and re-marriage among migrants from regions of Africa and the Arab Mid-East, a high focus on early and stable marriage among migrants from Turkey, and late marriage and low divorce risks among migrants from southern Europe. Hannemann et al. (2020) present similar findings in a cross-country study of partnership dynamics among immigrants in four European countries. They find, for example, high rates of marriage formation and low divorce risks among migrants from South Asia, and the opposite for migrants from the Caribbean in the UK. Their cross-country comparative study adds analytical depth by demonstrating that country context in Europe seems to matter as well; the authors highlight that different types of migrants in Spain seem particularly geared towards marriage, just as native people in this country. In some

study populations, patterns sometimes fail to conform to expectations as posed by theories of country-specific early-life socialization. In such cases, researchers may seek explanations in theories of behavioral adaptation, where norms and attitudes to marriage and its alternatives are expected to change as migrants are exposed to new normative and behavioral contexts (e.g. Kahn 1988). Marriage is a symbolic status marker (Cherlin 2009) and norms indeed are likely to matter in nuptial behavior. For migrants, such norms may be in more swift adjustment than for others, as they are exposed to a larger array of contexts, to networks that stretch across space and time, and to networks that may be embedded in different segments of a given population (Portes et al. 2005). However, other explanations to differences in observed behavior are also helpful. In many cases, such differences may be explained by different selection mechanisms, as migrants from a given country rarely represent the average of people that reside in their country of origin. If selective migration is produced along dimensions that can be tracked by observable characteristics then differentials in behavior and outcomes can be linked to those factors. It is also instructive to pay attention to the many instrumental and structural factors that support different types of family behavior in a given context, and which sometimes may have similar, sometimes different logics for migrants and native people.

Marriage may, for example, be perceived as offering a more secure status in a new and less familiar context and thus be felt as more attractive for many migrants than for non-migrants. On the other hand, in their new context migrants may feel more free to resist normative pressures to conform to ascribed modes of family-related behavior. For some migrants, however, the civil status of marriage is entirely imperative for them to secure a legal status in their new context (Bledsoe 2004). Marriage and family re-unification are common motives for migration, and couple formation across an external EU border often requires that a marriage is registered. In other cases, marriage and migration are also highly interlinked processes, even when migration takes place between different regions of a country or between countries within the EU (cf. Haandrikman 2014). Family (re-)unification events thus help supporting higher rates of marriage formation for many groups of migrants in a given context. This may be visible in the marriage rates of male migrants, in particular in the situation where couple-related migration takes place with a male pioneer that is later joined by his female partner. It is also more common for a person with a migration history to marry someone from abroad than what it is for the average ancestral individual. Some of the literature on the family behavior of migrants focuses explicitly on the role of intermarriage

and the extent to which different groups of migrants are likely to marry endogamously, with someone from their own country of origin, or exogamously, with someone from their new country of residence (Dribe and Lundh 2011). Such inter-marriage is often seen as a marker of social integration into the new context.

Divorce risks are often higher for migrants than for non-migrants with similar characteristics (Andersson et al. 2015). To some extent, divorce risks are influenced by norms that support or hinder the initiation of divorce. In a new context, normative pressures to stay married may be felt less strong. But divorce risks may also be stimulated by the fact that migration is often a stressful process, and by the fact that it opens up for entirely new and often unexpected opportunities in life. In longitudinal research, migration is sometimes perceived as having different disruptive effects in family-related behavior. This can be reflected in circumstances that stimulate divorce, it can also be conceived as disruptions that help postpone the process of forming a marriage in the first hand.

This section mainly paid attention to research designs that deal with marriage and divorce. This only taps into a larger set of family-demographic research with the potential to better include migrants in studies that deal with patterns of leaving the parental home, non-marital union formation and dissolution, non-marital childbearing, re-partnering, step-family formation, and other forms of family complexities (Thomson 2014). Migrants sometimes stem from regions with much more complex or dynamic family systems than in their new origins, as is the case, for example, for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe or from Sweden to Spain, or the other way around, as for migrants from familistic contexts such as Italy or Poland to less familistic ones such as France or Norway (cf. Andersson, Thomson and Duntava 2017). Migrants experience family change that takes place in their own life courses, which in turn are embedded in larger processes of family change, both in their regions of origin and destination.

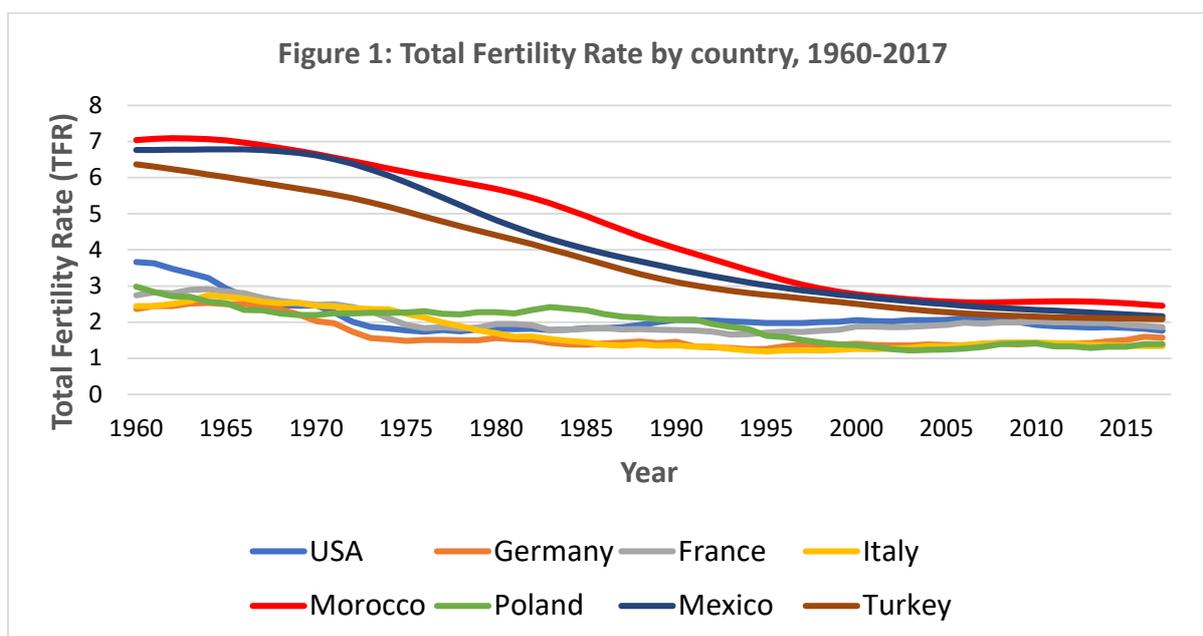
Migration and fertility

In European family-demographic research, fertility is a much larger topic than that of marriage and the processes that relate to marriage. This is quite different from the situation in American research where marriage is very much in the focus of attention. This can partly be explained by the fact that many countries in Europe face severe challenges as posed by extended periods of low and lowest-low fertility (Billari and Kohler 2004). In situations with

below-replacement fertility and the prospects of population decline, immigrants may counteract the process of population ageing with their relatively young age structures. They may perhaps also contribute with relative fertility rates that might be higher than those of the ancestral populations in their destination countries. These propositions motivate some of the interest from demographers in the fertility of migrants (Sobotka 2008), and help explain why research on migrant fertility is a relatively large topic in European family demography.

Contrary to expectations, however, the fertility patterns of immigrants rarely provide any evidence of sustainably elevated fertility rates. If fertility patterns are studied with proper longitudinal data and relevant analytical techniques, one rather finds that most groups of immigrants very soon display fertility patterns that are remarkably similar to those that prevail in their different destination contexts. In contrast to what was reported in the section above on marriage and divorce, differences in fertility behavior between different groups of immigrants often seem unimpressive (for instructive examples based on data from Sweden, see Andersson and Scott 2005, 2007). Decisions to have a child is a much more irreversible step in couples' and individuals' lives than that of deciding on the status of being married or not. In most European contexts, such decisions have more long-term, material and practical consequences in the life courses of the people involved. Decisions on having a child may be more affected by structural factors in society and individuals' life circumstances while decisions on civil-status events may be more prone to the influence of different ideological and subjective factors among individuals and their networks.

A crucial reason for why migrants rarely bring any high-fertility behavior to their new contexts of residence, apart from that produced by their youthful age structures, is that there are little migration-sending contexts that still belong to any high-fertility regimes. With the exception of sub-Saharan Africa, the world-wide demographic transition is about to come to its end. Most regions outside Europe, just as all countries within this continent, nowadays have demographic regimes with replacement or below-replacement level fertility. The impact of these changes has been observed in the U.S. (Frank and Heuveline 2005), where the claim that Mexican migrants would bring any culturally based high-fertility behavior to the North is questioned by the fact that aggregate fertility in Mexico is no longer visibly higher than that of the U.S. Similar arguments can be made for most migrant-sending regions that are located close to Europe, which once had relatively high fertility but nowadays fertility levels that hardly differ from those in Northern and Western Europe. This holds for key migration-sending areas such as Turkey, Iran, and North Africa.



Source: Fertility database, The World Bank

From a sociological and social-science point of view there are many motives why the study of immigrant fertility is an interesting field of research. It has the potential to provide information on processes of social integration as migrants' childbearing behavior is prone to change over time when locations and life situations change. It may also help reveal the role of contextual factors related to elevated or depressed fertility, for example, when actual fertility in a given context fails to conform to demand for children as expressed in people's stated fertility intentions (Beaujouan and Berghammer 2019). Clearly, it is equally instructive to study migrants who move from a high- to a low-fertility setting (e.g., Milewski 2007; Dubuc 2012) as it is to study those who move from a low- to a less low-fertility context (e.g., Hwang and Saenz 1997; Okun and Kagya 2012; Tønnessen and Mussino 2020; Mussino et al. 2020). The study of migrants from low-fertility settings has the potential to reveal some of the reasons for unmet demand for having children in their countries of origin and, perhaps, the logics of the low and lowest-low fertility of many regions in Europe. When people change their residential and social context in the course of their lives one may be able to disentangle the roles of current structural factors from those of cultural background in childbearing behavior. As stated above, with its diversity in institutional and social settings, Europe makes the ideal research laboratory for any design in comparative fertility research.

Data on fertility are based on events that happen only a few times in most peoples' lives – or not at all. Sometimes these data are aggregated to summary statistics for a given country or population sub-group: the most common fertility metric is the Total Fertility Rate (TFR). The period TFR is constructed by summing the age-specific fertility rates of women aged 15 to 49 for a certain calendar year. It can also be calculated for a birth cohort of women who are followed over their reproductive career to provide a summary measure when that cohort of women have reached age 49. The period TFR is the most common summary statistic on fertility as it provides an up to date and seemingly intuitive measure of childbearing outcomes; Fig. 1 provides an example of such data for a selection of countries and calendar years. However, the TFR is not a very good measure when the purpose is to study individual behavior; in this case researchers have better to rely on longitudinal life-course data and suitable regression techniques. The TFR is particularly ill-suited when applied to migrants in a given country; TFR statistics often provide inflated numbers on the childbearing outcomes of immigrants. The reason for this is that migration, family formation, and childbearing are often inter-related events. Migration often occurs in relation to family formation, be it international migration or a domestic move. In situations like this it is much more common to first make the move and then having a (first) child than the other way around in the sequencing of events; this logic produces elevated fertility rates in the region in which immigrants are located. An immigrant is no migrant until a migration has occurred and the fertility rates of immigrants are based on just a sub-section of their life courses. Research based on longitudinal data reveal elevated fertility rates of immigrants at short durations since migration and subsequent moderation in childbearing intensities so that fertility at more advanced durations display less of differences between immigrants and native populations than what first meets the eye (cf. Andersson 2004; Toulemon 2004; Milewski 2007; Parrado 2011).

Research based on longitudinal life-course data has the potential to uncover some of the underlying forces that contribute to elevated or depressed fertility of a given group of migrants. Early-life socialization in migrants' countries of origin may contribute to relatively high or low fertility depending on whether they were socialized in a context that values large or very small families. When migrants are exposed to a new context they may adapt their fertility behavior to that prevailing in their destination: this may be due an acculturation in terms of changing norms in relation to family behavior or to the adaptation of behavior to the structural constraints that provide incentives or dis-incentives for having children in the new

context. The interrelation of migration and family formation tend to produce elevated fertility at short durations since migration. On the other hand, this process may produce a disruption in childbearing behavior immediately before the migration occurs. If none of these factors provide satisfactory explanations to empirical findings the researcher may argue that the selectivity of migrants from a given context contributes to outcomes that differ from those prevalent in migration origin as well as destination. Most publications on immigrant fertility provide an overview of these competing but not mutually exclusive hypotheses on selection, socialization, adaptation, disruption, and interrelation of events (for instructive overviews see Kulu 2005; Kulu and González-Ferrer 2014).

Another line of research focuses on the children of immigrants in different contexts, the so called second generation. These people are not migrants themselves but have a migration background through their parents. With the more extended migration history in many countries in Europe this has become an increasingly important population to study. Many of the hypotheses applied to immigrants do not apply to the second generation. As there are no own individual migration trajectories to account for one has to focus on issues of early-life socialization, perhaps in relation to segmented assimilation in communities of local minorities, and to the structural constraints that children to migrants may face in the society in which they grow up. This research is valuable as it provides insight into processes of inter-generational relations and the more long-term processes of social change that may follow in the wake of international migration. Some research on second-generation people in different countries in Europe show surprisingly low fertility in the second generation (Andersson et al. 2017; Kulu et al. 2017), other findings report fertility levels that remain high for specific sub-groups in the second generation (Kulu and Hannemann 2016). In general, these findings suggest that the scope for long-term fertility-enhancing effects of international migration at the population level is very limited.

Data and methods and challenges for research

Evidently, there is a wide array of theoretical approaches, analytical designs and methodological techniques to consider in any empirical research on the family behavior of migrants. The focus in this contribution has mainly been on issues to consider in life-course research based on longitudinal data on migrants and their family behavior. In this case, the researcher has to deal with dimensions of both space and time. As for life-course research in

general, one needs to track time-varying data with information on changes in characteristics and the occurrence of life events as they evolve over time in the life course. Ideally, one would like to have access to data that also cover all relevant spatial dimensions of such processes. There are a few examples of such multi-location studies with information on migrants and non-migrants in their origin as well as in their (re-)current destinations (cf. Singley and Landale 1998; Baykara-Krumme and Milewski 2017; Kraus 2019). However, in most cases, the researcher is confined to data that cover one geographical entity only, and the fact that migrants can only be observed in their current region of residence. This poses some challenges that are specific for research on migrants. The researcher has to deal with issues of left- and right-censoring to properly start and stop any analyses at the time of immigration and any subsequent re-migration, and consider the influences of entry and exit selection in the interpretations of empirical findings based on longitudinal data on migrants. We have already discussed how the interrelation of migration, family formation and becoming a parent may contribute to artificially high levels of immigrant fertility when this is summarized based on only aggregated data. Similar “migration effects” may produce mis-leading conclusions on immigrants’ mortality. If some migrants are prone to move back to their country of origin in anticipation of poor health, many deaths will be recorded in the origin and the mortality rates for a given group of immigrants in their assigned destination will appear artificially low; see Andersson and Drefahl (2017) for evidence of such “salmon effects” in migrant mortality in Sweden.

Much family-demographic research is based on retrospective data with information on migrants and issues that occurred also prior to immigration. The latter type of data may be valuable as background information on events and processes that are at play after migration has occurred. However, they are not suitable for much longitudinal analyses of the processes that occurred prior to migration. The reason for this is that they do not represent any real-world population in their country of origin: a migrant is no migrant until a migration has occurred. Hoem (2014) and Hoem and Nedoluzhko (2016) discuss the many pitfalls and biases that are attached to studies that try to build on negative durations (since migration) in pre-migration spells and the conditioning on the future that is attached to such anticipatory logics.

As mentioned, different approaches and analytical designs may produce different conclusions on immigrants and their family-demographic behavior. Different statistical metrics provide information on the tempo and quantum of family-demographic outcomes. Some metrics are

suitable to provide information on the timing of specific events in the life course, other metrics are more suitable to provide information on the current or ultimate number of accumulated events. One way to avoid the many challenges of left- and right-censoring in research on migrant fertility is to focus on the completed fertility at the end of the reproductive career (e.g. Wilson 2019). The same holds for any design that focusses on immigrants who arrived as children (e.g., Mussino et al. 2020), as this avoids the many issues of left-censoring that need to be considered when migration events at adults ages are interrelated with those of family formation.

There may also be differences between countries in who to consider a migrant and thus to include in different studies on the family behavior of migrants. At first sight, this may seem trivial as a migrant is readily defined as a person who originates in another country or region than that in which he or she currently lives. Many statistical agencies produce statistics on foreign-born individuals, i.e., on immigrants. However, many countries also consider other concepts in their approaches to trace migrants and national minorities. Different concepts of ethnicity, race, citizenship, nationality, national minority, and ancestral natives are applied in statistics in different countries and sometimes make comparative research on minority populations difficult. We have already considered the concept of the “second generation”, which concerns people who are not migrants. In some cases, the second or any subsequent generation of people with migration background through their parents may develop into and become considered an ethnic minority in a given country. This is also reflected in fertility research that sometimes applies concepts from migration research to the study of ethnic minorities (e.g., Kulu and Hannemann 2016). Minority status is sometimes considered to contribute to low fertility, in cases when a focus on social mobility make individuals compromise their fertility desires for their socio-economic advancement (Goldscheider and Uhlenberg 1969). However, any processes of segmented assimilation of minority individuals can take entirely different routes of social and behavioral change.

As a final remark, it is imperative for family-demographic research to pay equal attention to the life-course careers of women and men. This holds for family research in general, and for family-demographic research on migrants in particular. Clearly, previous research has lost many opportunities for a better theoretical understanding of different aspects of family-demographic behavior by focusing too much, or exclusively, on women. In the case of migrants, such a gender bias is even more detrimental. A proper understanding of how the different processes of migration, family formation, and childbearing are interlinked requires a

better consideration of the sometimes different spatial and temporal logics of the life course dynamics of male and female migrants.

Conclusions and directions for future research

As evident from this contribution, research on the family behavior of migrants is still very much an un-tapped reservoir of opportunities with the capacity to produce entirely new insights into a wide array of research topics. It still remains to explain the differential speeds and directions of behavioral change in relation to marriage, childbearing and divorce for different types of migrants, across and within migrant generations. Future research needs to pay equal attention to migrants from low- and high-fertility settings, to women and men. Some researchers have found it useful to focus on migrants who arrived in their destination during childhood: this 1.5 generation of migrants may provide insight into the role of early-life socialization in different contexts, depending on their age at migration (Adserà et al. 2012; Mussino et al. 2020). Patterns of residential segregation and the scope for segmented assimilation may matter for this category in particular (Wilson and Kuha 2017). Any research design has the capacity to benefit from the rich contextual variation in European societies and the societies from which migrants in Europe originate.

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