Comparing the fertility of Ghanaian migrants in Europe with non-migrants in Ghana

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Since migration is an incisive event in the human life course, it can be expected to have a strong impact on the occurrence and timing of childbirth. Most of the previous studies on this topic focus on the comparison of the fertility behaviour of migrants and native non-migrants in the country of destination to study assimilation processes towards the majority population (e.g. Andersson, 2004; Carter, 2000; Milewski, 2007). But to understand the mechanisms of migrant fertility it is important to know what distinguishes them from the population they originate from. Fortunately, the transnational setting of the "Migrations between Africa and Europe" project (MAFE) allows us to contrast the fertility of stayers with those of migrants. Using the Ghanaian sample we compare those who never emigrated from Ghana and Ghanaian migrants who are residing in the UK and the Netherlands.

Within Africa, Ghana holds a forerunner position regarding demographic change and urbanization. It has experienced a sharp fertility decline, particularly occurring in urban areas. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has been rapidly decreasing during the last decades from about 6.4 in 1988 to 4.0 in 2008 and is lowest among highly educated women living in urban areas (Garenne, 2008; White et al., 2014). Ghana suffers from a *brain drain*: about 46 per cent of the skilled labour force emigrates, causing severe problems in the Ghanaian society and the health sector in particular (Docquier and Marfouk, 2005). The lack of opportunities for further education, long working hours and low wages enhance especially nurses and doctors to emigrate to the US, Canada and the UK as well as to other European countries (Anarfi et al., 2010). The brain drain is highly relevant for our

investigation of migrant fertility in Ghana. Even if there are numerous discussions on how to explain and model migrant fertility, research scholars are in substantial agreement on the fact that migrants are not a random sample of the population at origin (Borjas, 1987; Lee, 1966; Ribe and Schultz, 1980). *Who* emigrates largely depends on certain individual characteristics, like education, employment status, marital status, ambition or willingness to leave the home country. In Ghana, the selectivity of migrants seems to be strongly correlated with the educational status of a person. To learn more about selection effects we compare Ghanaian migrants to their non-migrant counterparts in Ghana. Discrete-time regression models allow us to examine first childbirth from a life-course perspective. Therefore we model the migrant status in a time-varying manner, which helps to understand the effect of migration on first birth timing. We apply Poisson regression techniques to evaluate whether differences in first birth timing between migrants and stayers might be mirrored in a diverging number of children ever born later in life. As emigration from Ghana is particularly likely among the highly-skilled the educational level is our main covariate. This way we hope to disentangle the impact of selectivity of migration towards low fertility from timing effects that occur due to the migration itself.

We find that Ghanaian migrants postpone first childbirth compared with non-migrants. Differences between migrants and stayers are largest at age groups 20 to 24 among women and at 20 to 29 among men, which are the main childbearing years for first births. The educational level of Ghanaian migrants is higher compared with non-migrants in Ghana, an effect that is even more pronounced among women than among men. However, this difference is not that relevant for differences in first childbirth timing, which leads us to conclude that the postponement of first childbirth results from the process of migration itself. However, our findings on completed fertility show that differences by educational level occur later in the life course. We find that migrants have fewer children by age 40 compared with non-migrants in Ghana. Once we control for the educational level the difference between migrants and non-migrants diminishes, again this holds to a larger extent for women than for men. It appears that migrants seem not to catch-up fully after their late first childbirth which leads to fewer children by age 40.

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