

Chapter 4

Discussion

In this chapter we discuss the results in the context of the theories and our working hypotheses on the impact of international migration on fertility. Some reflections are then offered on the work presented here. The study concludes with perspectives for further research.

The analyses of the transitions to the three parities have shown the importance of distinguishing between immigrant generations when we study the fertility behavior of immigrants from Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, and Spain in West Germany. First-generation immigrants are more likely to have a first, second, and third child than are West Germans, whereas women of the second generation have the higher transition rates only for the first (and the third child without significance). The differences in fertility risks between first- and second-generation immigrants are significant for the transitions to a first and second child, but not for the third child.

4.1 Conclusions for Hypotheses

4.1.1 *Disruption*

None of the three analyses finds any evidence for a disruptive effect of migration on fertility. On the contrary, first-generation immigrants have higher transition rates to each of the three births than women of the second immigrant generation and West Germans. In fact, we find that women who immigrated with a child have higher parity-progression rates than first-generation immigrants who had their first child in West Germany. Even so women in the latter group have higher birth-transition rates than West Germans. Therefore, we conclude that there is neither a short nor a mid-term disruption effect of the migration (or due to a minority-group status) as such on fertility.

There is only a single exception, namely that this generalization does not hold for the third birth when the country of origin is taken into account. We find that first-generation immigrants from Southern and Southeastern European (SSEE) countries actually have significantly lower third-birth risks than West German women (Turks show higher risks than do West Germans). Since the lower risks occur only in the third-birth behavior, we do not see this as a disruption effect. We would rather place the lower third-birth risks of women from SSEE countries in the context of socialization and see these differences as reflections of the fertility changes in the respective countries of origin along with adaptive behavior at destination.

The results of this study also contradict the assumption of fertility disruption in the second immigrant generation. The women in the sample have either slightly elevated or similar transition rates compared to West Germans. One reason for the fertility-disruption hypothesis has been that belonging to a minority group could cause frustration and uncertainty as a reaction of negative experiences, such as discrimination by members of the majority population, which may lead to reduced birth intensities. The fact that the fertility rates of second-generation immigrants are no lower than that of the majority population does not prove the absence of minority-group experiences, of course. It only suggests that a minority-group behavior – if it exists – does not result in a low-fertility strategy.

This fits with our findings related to the second part of the minority-group assumption: the effect of employment. Based on household-economic considerations, it has been posited that immigrants of both generations may give priority to economic goals, and thus may invest less in fertility. This should lead to lower fertility among immigrants when employment status is taken into account. In addition, we believed that non-employed women would have lower fertility than gainfully employed women if their actual goal was to achieve economic position instead of, or prior to, investing in family formation. We did not find this in our data. Therefore, the disruption assumption based on economic arguments and minority-group status must be rejected for women of Turkish, Yugoslavian, Greek, Italian, and Spanish descent in Germany. Like everywhere else, women's employment and fertility are increasingly seen as competing careers in West Germany, and this trend also applies to West Germans.

4.1.2 Interrelation of Events

By contrast, the hypothesis that family events and migration are interrelated is supported: first-generation immigrants who move to West Germany without a child experience migration, first marriage, and first conception within a short time span. Child-transition rates are highly elevated in the first 2 years after arrival. This effect would be even more pronounced if the analysis had included women of the first immigrant generation who had become pregnant shortly before migration, because one might suspect that the pregnancy occurred in anticipation of the move.

The analysis of the first birth demonstrates the strong connection between the first marriage and the first child, and suggests that these transitions are endogenous to each other (Baizan et al. 2003). For the first child, marriage duration seems to be a more important factor than the immigration background of the partner; it matters little whether the partner immigrated from the same or another country, or is of West German origin. First-child risks are high in the first year following a woman's immigration and in the first year of marriage in any case.

Taking spatial separation of the spouses into account, we have found higher transition rates to motherhood for immigrants who followed after their husbands, and for women who moved to West Germany in order to form a household with either a second-generation migrant or a West German, as compared to immigrant women who moved together with the husband. The conclusion is, therefore, that the temporary separation in itself does not trigger the transition to motherhood. Temporary separation can rather be seen as indicating that one of the spouses has already become familiar with the living circumstances at destination. This familiarity may facilitate the decision to have a first child, in contrast to situations in which both partners have to get used to the new living environment at the same time. However, the size of the sample used for this part of the analysis is not large, and, accordingly, the number of women in a few categories is smaller than we would like to see.

As the transition to a first pregnancy is much accelerated in the first year following the move of first-generation immigrants, it seems that having a first child marks the end of a couple's migration process. A child may also strengthen the position of an immigrant wife, since becoming a mother "completes" the union of the partners and solidifies the status of the family. Especially in patriarchal family structures, motherhood confers value and prestige upon a woman.

This mode of thinking has been confirmed in interviews with immigrants in Germany, and with women and men in and from the respective countries of origin. The work on this doctoral thesis was accompanied by unstructured interviews with immigrants and migrant children from the five countries of origin in Germany. During travels to Italy, Spain, and Turkey, I also conducted interviews with men and women there.

Additionally, it has been emphasized in the literature that a child also strengthens the connection between the two families of origin.¹ If a marriage was arranged or supported by family members in a traditional manner, having children early may be seen as desirable by the young couple and their relatives. This attitude is reflected in the transition rates to motherhood; such rates remain slightly elevated for second-generation migrants of Turkish background.

The analyses of the subsequent births show, however, that the hypothesis of the interrelation of events is not only true for the "three-pack" of migration, first marriage, and first child of first-generation immigrants. The study reveals that

¹Straßburger (2003) has shown, for example, that second-generation migrants of Turkish descent in Germany see their union as constituting a link between the two families.

women moving with one or two children also exhibit higher subsequent birth risks than women who immigrated before they had any children, and also higher rates than West Germans. This “arrival” effect may be related to at least four factors.

First, there is the uncertainty factor. A situation that entails major life changes, such as those associated with international migration, may create feelings of uncertainty for individuals or couples. Children may be seen as reducing uncertainty in such instable situations (Friedman et al. 1994). In interviews with immigrants in Germany, they frequently said that mothers also anticipate and appreciate the role of a (small) child within the new living environment. A child attending a German *Kindergarten*, for example, would learn German much better and faster than the parents, and may even be expected to help the parents with language problems later on. Moreover, having children would make it easier to build up a social network in the new place. These arguments may also apply to first-generation immigrants who were childless at the time of the move.

Second, as in the case of the first-child considerations, the move of the woman may serve to complete a migration project of a whole family and end the spatial separation of the husband and wife. Even when the couple does not get married, the process of the formation of the new household or the reunion of the spouses and the family may lead to a “confirmation” effect as well.

Third, relatively high transition rates after a move could be interpreted as catch-up behavior for births that were postponed in the phase preceding the move. This remains a speculation, however, for it cannot be demonstrated with the data used here since the dataset does not contain information about the women who remain in the respective countries of origin. (Given adequate data one would look for reduced fertility after the separation of the spouses).

Fourth, women who moved after the first or second child had been born were relatively young when they became mothers. Younger women may be more prone to have a bigger family than women who become mothers at later ages would have, as is traditional in the respective countries of origin, and may therefore intend to have more children. Again, this is a speculation that cannot be checked with our data.

4.1.3 Adaptation

The study supplies ample evidence supporting the hypothesis of adaptive behavior of first-generation immigrants. Women who arrived childless in West Germany show birth risks that decline with increasing length of stay in Germany, and the risks of having a subsequent birth is lower than that of first-generation immigrants who arrive only after having one or two births. For the first birth, we have suggested that German citizenship and the German residence permit do not have a direct impact on the fertility of women in the traditional migrant-worker groups. We do not suspect that women of “guest-worker” groups aim at acquiring the German nationality by childbirth in Germany, since the numbers of naturalizations among

“guest-worker” groups are relatively low in general (Diehl 2002b). This suggests that persons of these populations do not need to secure their status by acquiring German citizenship. One may, however, hypothesize that persons who have attained German citizenship may feel that their stay in Germany is thereafter more secure, and that their circumstances are therefore more appropriate for family formation. A test of this hypothesis must, however, be left to future research.

However, there are other (West) German laws that may directly or indirectly affect the childbearing behavior of immigrants. The first is the law relating to the childcare benefit, which is generally paid for 2 years: women from EU countries receive the benefit even if they give birth to and raise the child in their country of origin, provided that they worked in Germany before the childbirth. This is in contrast to rules that apply to families from non-EU countries, who, since 1986, only receive child benefits for children born and raised in Germany (Schwarz 1996). Hence, women from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia may postpone childbearing in anticipation of the move. Note that the mean age at immigration of the first-generation immigrants in the first-child sample is about 20 years. Compared to the women in the country of origin, Turkish immigrants, for example, may have postponed the birth of a first child in anticipation of the move to West Germany; almost every second woman who lives in Turkey has become a mother by this age.²

The work permit is the second law that is relevant in the context of the fertility behavior of immigrants. Since the end of the recruitment policies, foreigners moving to Germany have not been allowed to work immediately.³ People coming from EU-member states are not affected by this rule, in contrast to family members of persons from non-EU countries who move to Germany for reasons of family reunion. Since 1974, persons immigrating for reasons of family reunion have not received a work permit during the initial years following the immigration (Münscher 1979; Angenendt 2002). Therefore, the first 2 or 3 years following the move may be seen as a time that offers few opportunities likely to compete with childbearing and childraising; in other words, immigrants may view this interval as a good time to have children.

This reasoning seems to be supported by the effect of employment status in the analyses. However, caution should be used in interpreting the employment figures. On the one hand, women of the first immigrant generation may anticipate family formation, and may therefore not intend to become gainfully employed during the first few years following arrival (endogeneity). On the other hand, non-employment has a fertility-increasing impact on second-generation migrants and on West Germans as well (Kreyenfeld 2001a). Given that, for a long time, West Germany

²If compared to the first-generation immigrants who gave birth before they moved to West Germany, immigrants coming without a child are on average about two years older at entry into motherhood. This may indicate that migration postpones childbearing, however, such a comparison is not reasonable since it conditions the emigrants on the later move, and we do not have information on all women in the countries of origin, either.

³The recruitment of highly qualified IT specialists from non-EU countries has been an exception since 2000.

has encouraged young mothers to stay at home, women may regard motherhood as an alternative career in general.

Concerning the second child, the association of non-employment and higher birth risks is confirmed, again both for immigrant women and for West Germans. In addition, the impact of women's educational attainment on birth risks is similar for immigrants and West Germans, in that birth risks among women with higher levels of education are higher for the second and also for the third child. The results of this study stress that immigrants react to similar circumstances in ways similar to persons of the host society. This applies to the effects on fertility of educational attainment, employment status, and union formation, and confirms the hypothesis of adaptation, as it has been found for other countries. Note that these patterns vary between countries, however: Whereas non-employed women in Germany are more likely to give birth than women in the workforce, the birth risks are lower for non-employed women in Sweden, for example. The speed and nature of converging behaviors between immigrants and native-born persons may also depend on the degree of similarities or differences between the countries of origin and destination (Carlson 1985b; Kreyenfeld 2002; Nahmias 2004; Andersson and Scott 2005, 2007).

Another channel of the adaptive process can be seen in the origin of the partner. Whereas the background of the spouse does not play a role in first-birth behavior, it does so for the second child: women who are married to a West German partner or a man from a third country have lower second-birth risks than women in a homogeneous marriage. The sample size is too small to allow for distinctions to be drawn between West German and third-country men, but it may be concluded for West German men that, because West Germans grew up in a lower-fertility context, they may have lower fertility preferences than the immigrant wife. Hence, the influence of the West German husband may play a role in the decision-making process concerning a subsequent child. It is, however, also possible to regard immigrant women who marry a partner from West Germany or from a third country as a selected group whose fertility intentions are lower anyway compared to those immigrant women who marry a partner of the same origin.

4.1.4 Selection and Characteristics

The "three-pack" of marriage, migration, and first child suggests that women of the "guest-worker" population are a selected group. First-generation immigrants were found to have moved to West Germany mainly for reasons of family reunion or family formation. Immigrants who move for these reasons may be prone to having a first child faster. Unmarried women immigrating to West Germany, by contrast, have lower transition rates to a first birth than their counterparts who were married by the time of the move. The lower birth rates of single migrants may be attributed to the partner-selection process, a process that may last a relatively long time because it takes place in a new living environment. The lower transition rates

may also be the result of selection, as single immigrant women may come to Germany for different reasons than married women. Consider here, for example, the participation in higher education.

In addition, our analyses confirm the hypothesis of compositional differences between the immigrant generations and West Germans. Fertility differentials are diminished or disappear when we control for socio-demographic factors of the women. This applies both to first- and second-generation immigrants. For the first-child analysis, however, compositional differences, such as by educational attainment, do not fully explain fertility differentials between the immigrant groups and West Germans. Marriage is the covariate with the largest influence on fertility.

In order to fully address the hypothesis of selection, it is necessary to take into account the completed number of children, since this theory refers to lifetime intentions. Compared to West Germans, on the one hand, first-generation immigrants appear to have higher fertility preferences and a higher realized number of children. On the other hand, international migrants are a very selected group, also in terms of spatial mobility. As in the case of traditional “guest workers,” the men, but also their spouses and female migrant workers, left their countries in order to find work, that must have looked more promising to them than the opportunities available at home. People who willingly face the challenges associated with international migration – such as uncertainty, spatial separation if already married, a postponement or interruption of the family-formation process – can be assumed to be different from the persons who do not emigrate. Therefore, the emigrants are supposed to have lower fertility preferences than the ones who stay behind at origin.

The results of the transitions to three births in this study suggest that women of the first immigrant generation are a selected group with an ideal of having children, but of a family size that is somewhat smaller than is typical of the respective countries of origin.

4.1.5 Socialization

Fertility differentials that remain after controlling for duration factors and compositional differences between the groups under investigation are usually attributed to the impact of socialization. This study finds evidence for the socialization hypothesis as well.

The first aspect of the socialization hypothesis is the comparison between the immigrant generations: second-generation migrants have birth-transition risks that resemble more closely those of West Germans than those of first-generation immigrants. The second aspect, differential fertility due to differences in the countries of origin, has also been shown to be true in our study. Although country differences do not occur directly in the first-birth analyses – probably because they operate in this context through the marriage channel – they are especially apparent in third-birth behavior. Large differences in third-birth risks are found for first-generation immigrants by country background, with Turks having much higher

birth risks than West Germans, and women from the former Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, and Spain having even lower transition rates than German women. This confirms Kane's (1989) prediction that the number of children of Turkish background in West Germany would remain higher than that of West Germans in the decades to come.

The fertility differences between women of Turkish descent and women of SSEE background continue in the second generation, with Turks having higher fertility. Since one of the working hypotheses of our study is that the welfare-state framework and the low-fertility context in West Germany tend to influence fertility behavior to the extent that women of the second immigrant generation start to exhibit fertility behaviors similar to those of West Germans, the question arises as to why the "Turkish case" is different. Coming back to the minority-group argument, the study does not suggest that Turks in Germany follow a path that leads to "segmented assimilation" (e.g., Portes and Zhou 1993). According to the segmented-assimilation theory, the socio-demographic development of a minority group would follow a path that is distinct from the pattern of another group. Since social capital and inter-generational mobility are not the topic of the study presented here, no conclusion can be drawn on this subject. The sample does, however, give the impression that there is a trend towards higher educational attainment among the second generation than among the first generation. Although the socio-demographic structure of all immigrant groups may still be characterized by the former "guest-worker" milieu, there appears to be a development towards a differentiation within each country group. This has also been pointed out by several authors (e.g., Bade 1984; Fritzsche 2000).

Even though the segmented-assimilation theory cannot be supported for the West German context, it seems that the argument of cultural sub-groups receives support: family norms, values, and behavior are influenced by the socio-cultural context. Fertility behavior can, therefore, provide a hint as to whether a social context exists that provides its members with values that are different from others. In the "Turkish case," it seems that there continues to be a stronger orientation towards marriage and a higher number of children than is the case among Germans and women from SSEE countries.⁴

What are the specific differentiating factors? First, there is the strong association between leaving the parental home and marriage in the Turkish community. Young women often mention marriage as the only way they may leave the parental home (Straßburger 2003). Second, marriage and childbearing are themselves connected. That not only means that non-marital childbearing is not tolerated, but also that childless marriages are not well-regarded (e.g., Yavuz 2008). Third, a high share of transnational marriages, i.e., with persons from Turkey, reinforces "traditional" Turkish values that are often seen as pure, and in opposition to German majority values and behaviors (Straßburger 2003). Obviously, there is a Turkish family

⁴This has also been shown for women and men of Turkish descent in The Netherlands (de Valk 2006).

culture which is subject to norms and ideals, and which also transmits these values. Religious affiliation does not appear to have an impact on fertility behavior, but culture clearly does.

4.2 Reflections and Perspectives

Our study confirms findings based on macro indicators and other findings from the literature that suggest that immigrants will have higher fertility levels than persons of the receiving society. Although some of our findings fall within the range of conventional expectations – such as the differences between the first and second immigrant generations, or the almost self-evident transition rates to motherhood of first-generation immigrants – our study gives more detailed insights into the impact of international migration on fertility behavior than was previously available. The parity-specific view that takes into account the length of stay in West Germany allows us to detect the dynamic nature of the family-formation process (Kulu and Milewski 2007). The analyses also take the partner's characteristics into account, since decisions about fertility are not usually made by a single person. Controlling for traits of the socio-cultural background and living circumstances indicate that the current societal context has a strong influence on fertility behavior.

There appear, however, to be a few points in our study that should be highlighted. In future research, they may deserve special attention or a different treatment in the analysis.

4.2.1 *Disruption and Union Dissolution*

Our results strongly suggest, for example, the rejection of the hypothesis of short- and mid-term impacts of international migration, or being of immigrant descent, on fertility. However, our analysis takes into account only persons with very specific migration conditions (migrant workers and family reunions). Moreover, it includes only women who are single or in their first marriage; it excludes the time after the first marriage in cases of separated persons. The sample restriction was due to the small number of occurrences of marriage dissolution in the first- and second-generation sub-samples. Nevertheless, the point needs to be made that international migration, or having an immigration background, must not necessarily have a *direct* influence on fertility. Spatial separation of the partners, “cultural shock,” maintenance of an extended family network over several countries, changes in the conditions of daily life, language problems, and other factors accompanying international migration may lead to a union disruption. In such a case, fertility disruption following union dissolution would then occur only as an *indirect* effect of international migration.

The number of divorced persons is, however, very small in the immigrant groups in our study. Therefore, we think that the exclusion of the period of time after the first marriage from the sample did not harm our model specifications. The small number of union dissolutions in the respective age groups in our study rather suggests that an indirect disruption impact does not seem to be important in the “guest-worker” population.

It is, however, also important to keep in mind that divorce may not be an option for first-generation immigrant women who moved to West Germany for the purposes of family reunion. First, the right to a residence permit and marriage are interconnected for non-EU persons for the first years of marriage (cf. Fleischer 2007). Second, divorce rates have been very low in the respective countries of origin. The situation may be different for women who are married to a West German man or a partner from a third country. They are a selected group anyway, and their divorce rates are higher than those of homogeneously married couples (Roloff 1998). Hence, researchers may wish to bear this in mind when considering future developments, since the number of persons of the second immigrant generation in Germany is growing, and their divorce rates appear to be rising, as well.

4.2.2 Adaptation and Selection of First-Generation Immigrants

For first-generation immigrants, another possible avenue of research would be to investigate the hypotheses of adaptation and selection in more detail. Our study mainly centers on comparisons between first-generation immigrants who arrived childless in West Germany, and those who moved to West Germany with one or two children, as well as on the impact of stay duration on these women.

Another possibility worthy of investigation is a comparison of the fertility behavior of emigrants with that of women who stayed in the respective countries of origin. Our study indicates, for example, differences in first-birth behavior. Turkish women who move without a child to West Germany tend to become mothers at higher ages than their counterparts at origin. For a third birth, we find that about 75% of Turkish two-child mothers of the first immigrant generation also have a third child in West Germany. When we compare this share to the progression rates of women in Turkey, the levels appear similar. In Turkey, however, there is a fertility-declining trend towards the two-child family that is most apparent for Turkish-native speakers (and less so for ethnic-language minorities; cf. Yavuz 2008). Therefore, it may be hypothesized that, when international migrants are a selected group, a cross-over will appear for Turkish emigrants and those who remain in Turkey (this has been seen, for example, in the case of Mexicans emigrating to the United States (Frank and Heuveline 2005)).

Moreover, comparisons could be made between the experiences of emigrants from the same country, but at different destinations, in order to take into account more effectively the role of the receiving society in shaping or changing the fertility behavior of international migrants.

4.2.3 *Second-Generation Immigrants*

In general, the sample is very small. For the purposes of future analysis, it may be worthwhile to further differentiate the second immigrant generation; for example, to distinguish persons who moved with their parents from persons who were born at destination. Immigrant children who moved country during childhood may feel more attached to their country of origin and be more likely to maintain social networks there than persons of the second generation who were born in Germany only after their parents' move. Therefore, the influence of the culture of the country of origin and of social networks, both in the country of origin and in Germany, may be different for the two groups of the second generation, and may lead to differences in family formation and fertility as well.

4.2.4 *Family Patterns*

Finally, we would like to point out that fertility behavior must be seen in a wider context. Our analysis is able to show fertility patterns of immigrants in West Germany and influencing factors, but it cannot explain in full why these patterns and differences between the sub-groups occur. In order to fully understand fertility behavior of immigrants, one must probably also take into account union formation and its interplay with education within a sub-cultural setting. We may illustrate this with an example: the interrelation of educational attainment and marriage among members of the Turkish community, since employment and family have been seen as almost excluding each other for long. Therefore, women who do not intend to seek gainful employment may not participate in any school education that exceeds the basic school-education requirements in the respective countries of origin or in Germany.⁵ Therefore, women without a school degree or with a first-grade certificate may not have higher fertility because they have a lower levels of education than others; rather, they may choose to forego higher education because they want to marry relatively early and have children. Accordingly, the age at entry into motherhood turns out to be the crucial factor for the second birth, as does the age at second birth for the third child. The younger a woman was when she became a mother, the more likely she is to have more children than later mothers. Therefore, women may fall into a "family trap" when they become mothers at a young age, after which they can no longer catch up with further education.

By contrast, women who are more work-oriented may fall into an "education trap" by postponing family formation in order to continue in higher education, and

⁵Kelek (2006) has pointed out that "the" strong Turkish family coincides with a high degree of social control, as well as a lack of individualization and self-responsibility. Early marriage is seen as desirable mainly for women. Parents may not invest in the (higher) education of their daughters when they assume that the daughter will marry at age 16.

settle first in work before having a child, as seen in recent developments in Italy (Delgado Perez and Livi-Bacci 1992). As far as the immigrant generations from Southern and Southeastern European countries are concerned, one cannot draw conclusions about a sub-group behavior in West Germany by looking only at fertility. Both the developments in the respective countries of origin and the fertility behaviors of the immigrants and Germans in West Germany show similarities. In order to answer the question of whether strong family ties continue to exist in Germany, one also has to investigate other factors, such as age at leaving the parental home, non-marital cohabitation, living in extended households, and gender roles.

Attention to gender roles is especially important in the context of family policies and women's policies. Immigrant sub-groups within a population may be different from, or show more variations than, the majority population; examples are prominent in family structure, social inequality, family relations, and division of labor between women and men. Since welfare states are based on certain assumptions about the relative homogeneity of their populations, it may be rewarding and necessary to investigate the effects of policies on sub-groups who differ from the majority population.

"Guest workers" and their descendants are only one of the immigrant groups in today's Germany. Future research may also consider other immigrant groups, such as refugees and asylum seekers, and newer immigrant types, such as single migrant women. Initial studies (e.g., Fleischer 2007) show that the fertility behavior of women in these groups seems to be quite different from that of the "guest-worker" population. One may, however, conclude that in general the low-fertility context in West Germany has a large impact on international migrants in Germany, and that they tend to adapt to the low fertility levels relatively quickly. Hence, our study confirms other research that has indicated that low-fertility countries, such as Germany, cannot rely on the immigrant population to compensate for low fertility (Sørensen 2007).