

**Session: 104 Fertility Intentions: Causes and Consequences**

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**Title: The Link between Migration and the Intentions to Have Additional Children in Mexico**

Previous research on the fertility transition has demonstrated that major changes in women's reproductive patterns have taken place: women are marrying later, using contraceptives, postponing the birth of their first child, and choosing to remain single or childless. Together this has highly reduced fertility worldwide in the last fifty years. Early studies on the subject have offered both socioeconomic and cultural explanations on the phenomenon. These explanations or theories have commanded great appeal from social scientist and policy-makers, perhaps because of their straightforwardness in identifying and defining some of the social and economic processes through which fertility and reproductive behaviour operate.

For several decades, demographers and population researchers have demonstrated that fertility intentions are associated to demographic and socioeconomic factors (Díez, 1965; Campbell y Campbell, 1997; Harbour, 2011). More recently, fertility intentions have been related to social networks and support, residential satisfaction and stability (Bühler y Frątczak, 2004; Park et al. 2007). Nevertheless, processes which undertake the fertility transition are also fundamentally linked to migration. Cultural diffusion and assimilation, economic development and income growth, and the transformation of family roles and role relations are important processes in reducing fertility (Lindstrom and Giorguli, 2007). At the same time, these processes have been recognized as outcomes of both rural-to-urban and overseas migration. Migrants for instance, are potentially influential agents for fertility change through the diffusion of contraceptives knowledge (Lindstrom and Muñoz-Franco, 2005), whereas the selective migration of men may increase the possibilities for women to assume new economic and social roles (Goodson-Lawes, 1993).

A number of hypotheses have been proposed suggesting migration may impact fertility behavior. These can be distinguished as the socialization hypothesis, the assimilation hypothesis, the adaptation hypothesis and the selectivity hypothesis (Hervitz, 1985; Lindstrom & Giorguli, 2002, 2007; Milewski, 2007). Each of these hypotheses provides a tentative explanation to the migrants' fertility levels, compared with other populations. For example, the selectivity hypothesis highlights the differences in fertility between emigrants and non-migrants in sending countries, whereas the adaptation and the assimilation/accluturation hypotheses compare the fertility of immigrants with the fertility of the native population in receiving countries. While migration seems to have important implications for fertility (Macisco et al. 1970; Goldstein, 1973; Goldstein & Goldstein, 1981; Bach, 1981; Brambila, 1981; Massey & Mullan, 1984; Carlson, 1985; Kahn, 1988; Stephen & Bean, 1992; Lindstrom & Giorguli, 2002, 2007; Andersson, 2004; White & Buckley, 2011), relatively little work has been done on how migration may affect fertility preferences (Kahn, 1994; Zerden *et al.* 2013).

On the other hand, spousal separation resulting from migration disrupts intercourse and combined with physiological consequences of the stress commonly associated with spousal separation affect the timing and spacing of births. The drop in fertility attributable to

disruption is expected to be temporary, and an accelerated pace of fertility is expected to resume as migrants return to their communities of origin (Hervitz, 1985; Massey & Mullan, 1984; Lindstrom & Giorguli, 2002, 2007). Evidence provided by these studies strongly supports the disruption hypothesis and suggest that, at least initially, the demographic effects of migration are more or less mechanical, and do not require changes in motivation, norms, or attitudes towards fertility intentions. Nevertheless, I argue in this paper that spousal separation resulting from migration is likely to affect the intention to have additional children.

In an attempt to understand the relationship between migration and fertility intentions, in this work I explored the following questions: 1) Do migrant wives have different fertility intentions than non-migrant women and women with migrant husbands only? And 2) which are the pathways through which spousal separation resulting from migration affect fertility intentions?

In order to address the first question, the data used in this study is derived from the Mexican Family Life Survey (MxFLS) or, in Spanish, la Encuesta Nacional sobre los Niveles de Vida de los Hogares (ENNViH) which is a multi-thematic database. The information collected during the survey was organized into different databases, each one of them containing specific information on fertility, fertility intentions, contraceptive histories, international migration, internal migration and socioeconomic characteristics, such as education and employment. The subjects were 1,682 married women between the ages of 15 and 46, living with their husbands.

The dependent variable was the intention to have additional children. To find out if migration had any effect on fertility intentions, I defined four categories based on whether one or both partners had had any migration experience: (0) women in non-migrant household; (1) women with migrant husband only; (2) migrant wife with no-migrant husband; and (3) migrant wife and husband. Demographic variables included the woman's age, woman's age at marriage, the number of children she had already had and the sex composition of children ever born. Socioeconomic indicators included educational attainment and occupation class. Other variables that were included in the analysis were contraceptive use, type of residence, type of residence at 12 years old, the migration intensity index and socioeconomic characteristics of husbands.

I divided the statistical analysis into two parts. First, simple descriptive statistics are used to describe selected independent variables, such as women's age at marriage, contraceptive use, education, labor force, and fertility intention differentials according to each migration category (women in non-migrant household, women with migrant husband only, migrant wife with no-migrant husband and migrant wife and husband). Then the analysis turns to Binary Logistic Regression to predict membership of the following fertility intention categories: (1) woman does not desire additional children; and (2) woman does desire additional children.

To address the second research question, I conducted a qualitative study using in-depth interviews. The study population was recruited in two rural communities located in Veracruz, an eastern Mexican state. Since de mid-1990's, the crisis in traditional agriculture and industrial activities in the state and the regional effects of the international coffee crisis have become the principal macroeconomic determinants of migratory flows in the region (Mestries, 2006). Interviewees were married women aged 18 to 52 years old, with and without migratory experience and who had had at least one or more children.

Based on the information from the interviews, I attempted to reconstruct the trajectory of the fertility intentions in order to identify changes associated with the migration process.

As expected, results from the Binary Logistic Regression analysis showed that women's age and the number of children ever born had a significant effect in reducing the desire for additional children. On the other hand, a significant and positive relationship existed between husbands' desire for additional children and wives' desire for additional children. Women who had only daughters had higher desires for additional children than women who had both sons and daughters. The links between migration and the intention to have additional children are outwardly noticeable, especially among migrant wives with non-migrant husbands. This group of women, if compared to the other groups, had higher desires for additional children.

As for the qualitative results, the interviews showed that migrant women's intentions to have additional children are strongly influenced by the fact that emigrating often requires married women to separate from their children that they already had. This means that the psychological effects of family separation have important implications for fertility intentions in a context where migration has become pervasive. On the other hand, spousal separation resulting from male-selective migration does affect the timing and spacing of births. Most of the women with migrant husbands expressed their intentions to have additional children. Nevertheless, they also mentioned their intentions to postpone births. Among these women, typical reasons for postponing births related to not trusting their migrant husbands; their husband's intention to emigrate once more; the possibility that their husbands may not come back from the United States; the possibility that their husbands may cheat on them; and the burden of raising children alone.

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