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Pathways into Family Life among Migrant and Majority Populations in Scandinavia

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Abstract

Using high-quality administrative register data, we investigate differential pathways into family life among all migrant- and majority-background individuals born between 1972 and 1989 in Sweden and Norway. Beginning a family via marriage or via the birth a child, and the relative timing of these transitions may be evidence of differences (or similarities) in the meaning attached to family formation across majority and migrant-background subpopulations. We analyze the hazard of family formation, differentiating the two pathways within a competing risk framework (multinomial logistic regression). We account for migrant generation and (parental) region of origin, educational attainment, and residential context. We find evidence that those pursuing the Scandinavian modal family formation route (i.e. parenthood), are more similar in their timing of family formation, regardless of migrant background status. Results also highlight the unique position of the second generation with respect to union formation behaviors.

Extended Abstract

European populations are becoming increasingly diverse. Migrants and their descendants are an important part of the social fabric of their countries of residence. Despite this, popular and academic discourses tend to focus on simple migrant/non-migrant dichotomies. Going beyond debates about assimilation and adaptation, open or closed borders, and approaches to immigrant integration, this study focuses on the relative position of second generation in Sweden and Norway. These individuals are socialized within their countries of residence and share the same institutional contexts, including educational and political institutions, cultural outlets, such as the media, and social networks, with majority populations (Huschek et al. 2010, Bernhardt et al. 2007, De Valk and Milewski 2011). At the same time, norms, practices and behaviors of their or their parents' countries of origin may be transmitted and maintained through links to first generation family and friends (De Valk and Liefbroer 2007, Foner 1997, Nauck 2001). In such a way, these migrant-background individuals occupy a "sociocultural middle ground" between their countries of descent and their home countries (Foner 1997; Holland and De Valk 2013, p. 258).

We study the family formation behaviors the second generation, first generation immigrants arriving in their countries of residence prior to age 16 (the so-called "1.5 generation"), and majority populations, those who were born and whose parents were born their countries of residence. In particular we are interested in the incidence and relative timing of two key family life course transitions: marriage and childbearing. Family life behaviors have been central indicators of immigrant incorporation, adaptation and social distance (Bean and Stevens 2003; Glick 2010; Kalmijn 1998; Rosenfeld 2002; Szalay and Maday 1983). Chief among these is intermarriage, which is often considered the strongest indicator of social distance and

boundary crossing between groups (see, for instance: Bean and Stevens 2003, Rosenfeld 2002, Kalmijn and Van Tubergen 2010, Pagnini and Morgan 1990, Kalmijn 1998). However, due to a well-documented tendency toward homogamy across a variety of characteristics (race, ethnicity, education, as well as nativity), partner choice may not be an ideal measure of more subtle “boundary blurring” between groups (Alba 2005; Sassler and Qian 2003). Sassler and Qian (2003) argued that the timing of marriage may also be informative as to integration and social distance, particularly in contexts where union formation processes in immigrant countries of origin and among majority populations in countries of residence are distinct. Their investigation into the timing of marriage among ethnic Europeans immigrants to the United States born between 1850 and 1950 revealed that with longer duration of residence in the United States, ethnic Europeans began to adopt a particularly American pattern of marital timing.

Sweden and Norway are a particularly appropriate modern-day context for employing Sassler and Qian’s approach to investigating adaptation across immigrant generations. The Nordic countries are on the leading edge of many aspects of family changes associated with the Second Demographic Transition (Andersson 2008; Neyer and Andersson 2008, Lesthaeghe 2010). Majority populations in these countries share similar patterns of family formation, including later ages of union formation, marriage and childbearing, and the reordering of family life course events, whereby a majority of first births occur prior to (or in the absence of) marriage. While these trends are emerging in other Northern and Western European countries, from a global perspective this pattern of family formation is distinct.

We take advantage of the unique patterns of the timing and context of union formation in Scandinavia to explore social distance of between Swedish and Norwegian majority populations and migrants and their descendants, from a global range of origin countries. We extend Sassler

and Qian's approach investigating the timing of family formation to take advantage of diversity in the *pathways* taken into family life in Sweden and Norway. Beginning a family via marriage or the birth a child, and the relative timing of these transitions can provide further evidence of differences (or similarities) in the meaning attached to family formation across majority and migrant-background subpopulations. So too is the comparison of family formation behavior across sub-populations within two countries similar family formation regimes is particularly useful for understanding the processes shaping family trajectories of migrants and their descendants. As Neyer and Anderson (2008) have emphasized, it is important that comparative contexts have sufficiently similar institutional, economic and cultural characteristics. Such studies produce empirical findings that better identify the relationship between aspects of behavior that may be attributed to migrant background, generation and country of origin, rather than to unobserved differences between residential contexts.

Data and Methods

Data for these analyses comes from administrative register data, covering the entire populations of Sweden and Norway born between 1972 and 1989, who grew up in Sweden and Norway or arrived as children (prior to age 16). These high quality data are extremely unique globally. They allow for the exploration of family formation dynamics across migrant subpopulations, groups often too small to be captured in nationally representative survey data and often hard-to-reach due to social exclusion, a lack of trust, language difficulties, or residential mobility (Stoop et al. 2010, Barnes 2008).

We distinguish subpopulations based on country of birth and number of foreign born parents: the 1.5 generation (foreign-born, migrated prior to age 16) and second generation, including both those with one and two foreign-born parents. We contrast these groups with

majority-background individuals, i.e. those individuals born in their countries of residence to native-born parents. We further disaggregate immigrant-background populations by region of (parents') origin: the Nordic countries; Europe (excluding Eastern Europe), North America and Oceania; EU Eastern Europe; Non-EU Eastern Europe; Asia; Africa; and South and Middle America. For the 1.5 generation, region of origin is assigned based on country of birth. For the second generation with one foreign-born parent, we region of origin is assigned based on country of birth of the foreign-born parent. For the second generation with two foreign-born parents, we follow the standard rules employed by statistical organizations: region of origin is assigned based on mother's birth country; if mother's country of birth is missing, region of origin is assigned based on father's birth country. We are able to identify all individuals in comprising these groups who are legally registered in Sweden (N = 1,914,488) and Norway (N = 1,013,779).

We identify all first marriages and first births occurring after age 18 (between 1990 and 2007). We will then describe differences in the timing of first marriage and first birth from age 18 for all men and women who are unmarried and childless at age 18 (Kaplan-Meier estimates). In these analyses, we distinguish individuals by gender, origin, and generation across the two countries.

We will then model the risk of first marriage and first birth within a competing risk framework (multinomial logistic regression). For this analysis we will use the full 1.5 and second generation populations and a 10% random sample of the Swedish and Norwegian majority populations. The model takes the form

$$\ln \frac{\hat{\pi}_{ij}}{\hat{\pi}_{i1}} = a_j + \beta_j \mathbf{X}_i \quad (1)$$

where the dependent variable is the log of the odds of first marriage or first birth (j), relative to continuing to be unmarried and childless (J), α is a constant and β is a vector of regression odds ratios on covariates \mathbf{X} for individuals i . The primary duration dependence (“clock”) of interest is age in months and spells consist of unmarried, childless periods after age 18 and is specified with linear and second degree polynomial (squared) terms. Individuals are censored if they experience a registered partnership with someone of the same sex, out-migrate, or die, or in December 2007. In addition to accounting for migrant background and generation, and region of (parental) origin, we standardize for educational attainment (low (reference), middle, high, and unknown) and residence in one of the three largest cities in Sweden (Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö) and Norway (Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim). All analyses are conducted separately for women and men.

Preliminary Results

Tables 1 presents descriptive statistics for the populations of migrant- and majority-background individuals born between 1972 and 1989, that were born (second generation or majority) or grew up (1.5 generation) in Sweden and Norway. About 9% of the Swedish and over 4% of the Norwegian population are first generation migrants arriving in their countries of origin prior to age 16. A further 14% and 7% of the Swedish and Norwegian populations, respectively, are the descendants of migrants. About two-thirds of the second generation in Sweden have one foreign-born and one Swedish-born parent. In Norway, four in five members second generation have one Norwegian-born parent.

In Tables 2a and 2b, migrant-background populations are disaggregated by their regions of (own or parental) origin. The distribution of regions of origin of the 1.5 generation in Sweden and Norway are quite similar: about 7% of this group originate in other Scandinavian countries;

7-9% were born in Northern, Western, Southern and Central Europe, North America or Oceania; 4-6% originate in EU Eastern European countries and about 16% in non-EU Eastern European countries; and over 40% are from Asia. Sweden and Norway differ in their shares of 1.5 generation migrants from Africa and South- and Middle-America.

The regions of origin of the second generation with two foreign-born parents are different in Sweden and Norway, reflecting somewhat different histories of migration in the two countries. In Sweden, nearly 40% of this population originates in other Scandinavian countries. One-in-eight originate in Northern, Western, Southern or Central Europe, North America or Oceania and about a quarter originate in Eastern Europe (with a larger share of these with parents born in non-EU countries). A quarter of the second generation with two foreign-born parents originate in Asia, less than 3% in Africa, and about 6% in South- and Middle-America. In Norway, over two-thirds of the two-foreign-born-parent, second generation population originates in Asia. About 4-6% of this population has parents born in each of the various regions of Europe. Nearly 9% have parents born in Africa, and 3.6% have parents born in South- and Middle-America.

There is more similarity in the regions of origin among the second generation with one-foreign born parent in Sweden and Norway, perhaps suggesting similar underlying selection processes of intermarriage between first generation and majority populations. The largest share of this population has origins in other Scandinavian countries, followed by those with origins in Northern, Western, Southern and Central Europe, North America or Oceania. Slightly larger shares of second generation with one-foreign born parent have a parent born in EU Eastern Europe (13% versus 4.6%) or Asia (10.6% versus 6.7%) in Norway versus Sweden.

We now consider the pathways into family life, via marriage or via a first birth, for Swedish and Norwegian majority- and migrant-background individuals. Table 3a presents the

incidence and timing of marriage or first birth for women. In both Sweden and Norway, the 1.5 generation is more likely to enter family life via marriage than via a first birth. Among the second generation with two foreign-born parents, there is evidence of differential patterns in Sweden and Norway: in Sweden this group is more likely to enter family life via parenthood; in Norway, this group is more likely to enter family life via marriage. This differentiation is most certainly attributable to the different distributions of regions of origin of the second generation with two foreign-born parents in Sweden and Norway. In future multiple regression analysis (discussed in the methods section above) we will account for these differential distributions. Pathways into family life for the second generation with one foreign-born parent and for the majority population is remarkably similar: in Sweden, about 10% of these groups enter family life via marriage, while 22-25% enter via parenthood; in Norway, around 15% of these groups enter family life via marriage, and 28% and 40% enter via parenthood, respectively.

Turning to the timing of family formation, among all groups the transition to family life among women occurs faster when the pathway is marriage versus parenthood. There are notable differences in the timing of family formation by migrant-background status and generation. Regardless of the pathway taken, the 1.5 generation transitions to family life the fastest, followed by the second generation with two foreign-born parents. Similar timing patterns are observed for the second generation with one foreign-born parent and majority-background women. By and large, these timing patterns hold for populations in both Sweden and Norway. Interestingly, there is less differentiation in the timing of family formation across migrant- and majority-background groups among those women who enter family life via parenthood. Parenthood is the modal family formation pathway in Sweden and Norway, where a majority of first births occur outside of marriage (Andersson 2008; Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). That there are smaller

differences in timing of parenthood across groups suggests that those migrant-background women that follow the Scandinavian modal family formation pathway, also are also more likely to follow the Scandinavian modal family formation tempo.

Table 3b presents the incidence and timing of marriage or first birth for men. Here we see some key differences from those patterns observed for women. Men of both migrant and majority-background in Sweden are more likely to begin their families via parenthood than marriage. This pattern also holds in Norway for all groups except second generation men with two foreign-born parents; again, this may be attributable to differences in the distribution of regions of origin for this group in Sweden and Norway. We also find that the timing patterns of family formation differ for men: for all sub-populations, again excepting second generation with two foreign-born parents in Norway, the transition to family life occurs faster when the pathway is parenthood versus marriage. In Sweden, we see a gradient in the transition to family life (for both pathways), whereby 1.5 generation men transition the fastest, followed by second generation men with two foreign-born parents, second generation men with one foreign-born parent, and majority men. For men in Norway, this gradient is less pronounced but still evident. As found for women, there are smaller distinctions between the timing of family formation among migrant- and majority-background men following a parenthood pathway, although the variation in timing of both marriage and parenthood across groups is not as large as observed for women.

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Table 1 Migrant Generation (birth cohorts 1972 - 1989)				
	Sweden		Norway	
	n	%	n	%
Immigrated prior to age 18(Generation 1.5)	171,623	8.96	43,944	4.33
Second Generation				
1 parent migrant	171,681	8.97	59,435	5.86
2 parents migrants	98,034	5.12	13,599	1.34
3rd+ Generation, Majority	1,473,150	76.95	896,801	88.46
Total Analysis Sample	1,914,488	100	1,013,779	100
Source: Swedish and Norwegian administrative registers.				

Table 2a. Region of (parent's) origin by immigrant status and generation, Sweden										
	Immigrated prior to age 16 (1.5 Generation)		2nd Generation				Non-migrant		Total	
			2 parents migrants		1 Parent migrant					
Sweden	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1,473,150	100.0	1,473,150	76.9
Other Scandinavia	12,614	7.3	38,211	39.0	87,794	51.1	0	0.0	138,619	7.2
Europe (excluding Eastern Europe), North America, Oceania	15,286	8.9	12,197	12.4	43,539	25.4	0	0.0	71,022	3.7
Eastern Europe (EU)	9,647	5.6	3,534	3.6	7,902	4.6	0	0.0	21,083	1.1
Eastern Europe (non-EU)	27,389	16.0	12,549	12.8	9,038	5.3	0	0.0	48,976	2.6
Asia	72,596	42.3	22,727	23.2	11,447	6.7	0	0.0	106,770	5.6
Africa	10,508	6.1	2,831	2.9	3,735	2.2	0	0.0	17,074	0.9
South and Middle America, Other	23,583	13.7	5,985	6.1	8,226	4.8	0	0.0	37,794	2.0
Total	171,623	100.0	98,034	100.0	171,681	100.0	1,473,150	100.0	1,914,488	100.0
Source: Swedish administrative registers.										

Table 2b. Region of (parent's) origin by immigrant status and generation, Norway										
	Immigrated prior to age 18 (1.5 Generation)		2nd Generation				Non-migrant		Total	
			2 parents migrants, same origin		1 Parent migrant					
Norway	0	0.0	0		0	0.0	896,801	100.0	896,801	88.5
Other Scandinavia	3,424	7.8	815	6.0	20,954	35.3	0	0.0	25,193	2.5
Europe (excluding Eastern Europe), North America, Oceania	3,141	7.1	674	5.0	18,573	31.2	0	0.0	22,388	2.2
Eastern Europe (EU)	1,714	3.9	557	4.1	7,733	13.0	0	0.0	10,004	1.0
Eastern Europe (non-EU)	7,379	16.8	611	4.5	801	1.3	0	0.0	8,791	0.9
Asia	19,920	45.3	9,255	68.1	6,275	10.6	0	0.0	35,450	3.5
Africa	5,896	13.4	1,192	8.8	2,758	4.6	0	0.0	9,846	1.0
South and Middle America, Other	2,470	5.6	495	3.6	2,341	3.9	0	0.0	5,306	0.5
Total	43,944	100.0	13,599	100.0	59,435	100.0	896,801	0.0	1,013,779	100.0
Source: Norwegian administrative registers.										

Table 3a. Women's time to first marriage or first birth, by migrant background status and country of residence																	
		Marriage								Parenthood							
		Immigrated prior to age 16 (1.5 Generation)		2nd Generation				Non-migrant		Immigrated prior to age 16 (1.5 Generation)		2nd Generation				Non-migrant	
				2 parents migrants		1 Parent migrant						2 parents migrants		1 Parent migrant			
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sweden																	
	First marriage observed	16,546	19.92	7,434	15.69	8,413	10.06	77,137	10.80	12,928	15.57	8,378	17.69	18,241	21.82	178,891	25.04
	Time to first marriage (months)																
	Mean	59.6		71.4		104.4		102.2		72.0		79.7		85.6		90.8	
	SD	44.9		46.0		46.4		41.6		46.0		47.2		47.6		46.1	
	25%	23		33		71		74		35		41		46		54	
	50%	49		67		107		105		64		75		82		90	
	75%	89		104		139		132		103		114		122		125	
N		83,046		47,367		83,594		714,488		83,046		47,367		83,594		714,488	
Norway																	
	First marriage observed	5,657	27.33	2,057	31.16	4,145	14.44	71,624	16.41	3,887	18.78	662	10.03	8,103	28.23	170,898	39.16
	Time to first marriage (months)																
	Mean	59.8		60.9		95.2		93.7		61.3		76.6		85.6		83.9	
	SD	42.1		40.3		45.2		42.7		43.1		48.0		51.4		48.4	
	25%	28		28		62		63		28		38		43		45	
	50%	52		56		95		93		52		69		80		80	
	75%	87		88		128		123		87		109		124		118	
N		20,697		6,601		28,705		436,442		20,697		6,601		28,705		436,442	

Source: Swedish and Norwegian administrative registers.

Table 3b. Men's time to first marriage or first birth, by migrant background status and country of residence																	
		Marriage								Parenthood							
		Immigrated prior to age 18 (1.5 Generation)		2nd Generation				Non-migrant		Immigrated prior to age 18 (1.5 Generation)		2nd Generation				Non-migrant	
				2 parents migrants		1 Parent migrant						2 parents migrants		1 Parent migrant			
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sweden																	
	First marriage observed	9,719	10.97	4,382	8.65	5,957	6.76	57,264	7.55	10,472	11.82	7,017	13.85	13,866	15.74	136,673	18.02
	Time to first marriage (months)																
	Mean	83.6		97.1		114.9		119.1		86.9		96.4		102.9		107.8	
	SD	44.7		45.5		43.5		39.6		45.5		45.9		45.9		44.1	
	25%	49		62		85		93		51		61		68		76	
	50%	81		98		117		122		84		96		103		109	
	75%	115		130		147		147		120		131		137		141	
N		88,577		50,667		88,087		758,662		88,577		50,667		88,087		758,662	
Norway																	
	First marriage observed	2,478	10.66	848	21.24	2,935	9.55	54,214	11.78	4,937	21.24	1,129	16.13	6,641	21.61	134,584	29.23
	Time to first marriage (months)																
	Mean	91.2		91.4		113.9		111.7		88.1		95.3		104.2		104.5	
	SD	44.8		41.7		44.4		43.6		44.4		42.4		49.7		47.8	
	25%	57		61		82		81		54		64		65		68	
	50%	87		88		115		112		85		94		104		104	
	75%	120		120		147		142		119		126		142		140	
N		23,247		6,998		30,730		460,359		23,247		6,998		30,730		460,359	

Source: Swedish and Norwegian administrative registers.