Marrying transnationally?
The Role of Migration in Explaining the Timing and Type of Partnership Formation Among the Senegalese

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Abstract

In this paper we analyze the role of migration in partnership formation among Senegalese individuals. We use data from the survey «Migrations between Africa and Europe» (MAFE-Senegal) and event history models to examine differences concerning the timing of entry into first partnership by gender and migration status (non-migrants, migrants in EU, returnees from EU, migrants in other countries, and returnees from other countries). Our preliminary results indicate that being a migrant in France, Italy or Spain significantly increases the chances of entering into first partnership, for both men and women. For women, this is especially visible the year of their migration, which clearly points to the increasing phenomenon of marriage migration also among Senegalese migrants. Furthermore, the results show that education and socio-economic status are clearly linked to the propensity to enter a first partnership transnationally, but this effect differs by gender.

Introduction

International migration is closely associated with other life course transitions such as partnership formation. Such association exists not only for women, as had been traditionally stated, but also for men. However, the direction in which reciprocal influences operate may vary by gender. Accordingly, the consideration of the linkages between family-life cycle and migration allows for an appropriate introduction of the idea of "household strategies" and "gender" into immigration studies.

In this paper we analyze the role of migration in partnership formation among Senegalese people. First, we examine differences concerning propensity and timing of

entry into first partnership by gender and migration status (non-migrants, migrants in EU, returnees from EU, migrants in other countries, and returnees from other countries). Our preliminary results indicate that being a migrant in France, Italy or Spain significantly increases the chances of entering into first partnership, for both men and women. For women, this is especially visible the year of their migration, which clearly points to the increasing phenomenon of marriage migration also among Senegalese migrants.

Next, we analyze the partner choices made by women living in Senegal and men living in Europe. In particular, we examine how the propensity of women in Senegal to choose a migrant living in Europe as partner (versus a man living in Senegal or remaining without partner) varies across different socio-economic backgrounds; likewise, we examine which factors explains the decision to enter into partnership with a woman living in Europe versus one living in Senegal among Senegalese migrants living in Europe.

Previous evidence and new hypotheses

Stark (1988) suggested that "marriage, migration and related phenomena such as marital stability, fertility and investment in human capital may be better explained by studying marriage and migration jointly". However, empirical studies aimed at disentangling the reciprocal influences between marriage and migration, are still limited and inconclusive (see Mulder and Wagner, 1993, for an exception). In addition, previous research in the area of migration and life course studies has clearly shown that migration and family formation are gendered processes. Marriage and child-bearing embody different household demands for men and women over the family-life cycle, which are likely to considerably affect their respective motivations, propensity and timing to migrate.

While the effect of children on male or female migration is fairly well understood in the Mexican-US case, the evidence concerning the different impact of partnership on men's and women's propensity to migrate, and the timing of their migration, remains controversial. While Kanaiaupuni (1995) found a significantly higher likelihood of migration among cohabitating women and no effect on men's propensity to migrate, Donato and Kanaiaupuni (2000) concluded that marriage reduced women's odds of migration. In the case of men, Massey et al. (1987) stated that never-married men were the most likely to migrate, whereas newly married husbands and fathers of older children appeared the least likely to migrate to the US.

A more recent study by Parrado (2004) provides a greater understanding of the complex link between men's international migration and marriage in Western Mexico. International migration is expected to relate to men's marriage timing in two principal ways at the individual level due to the close association between migration and men's economic position. Firstly, migration could delay marriage while the migrant is residing

in the U.S; and secondly, migration to the U.S. could accelerate union formation once the migrant returns to his home community. In contrast, the relationship between marriage and migration for women remains less clear.

In the European context, marriage migration (i.e. marrying someone in the country of origin while being in Europe) has been found to be a very common phenomenon, especially among migrants with a Muslim background, like Turks and Pakistanis. For male immigrants in Europe, the decision to marry someone still in their (or their parents) country of origin seems to be associated with the scarcity of potential partners in the host marriage market that result for male-dominated flows, as well as with lower educational level (González-Ferrer 2006). The pressures of close relatives, traditional values and taste for "unspoiled" wives have been assumed to drive the choice for a female marriage migrant as a partner (Lievens 1999, Hooghiemstra 2001, Celikaksoy 2004). However, so far we lack of empirical studies that test whether the characteristics of marriage migrants chosen by male immigrants as partners actually differ in the expected direction from potential female partners available in the European immigration countries, or not.

In any case, if Senegalese also recur to marriage migration as often as other immigrant groups in Europe, it is quite likely that the marriage delay during migration and the marriage increase upon return found for male migrants in the US-Mexican case will not happen in our case. In fact, Senegalese men in Europe suffer from both qualitative and quantitative disadvantages in European marriage markets. First of all, due to the strong gender imbalance in Senegalese flows to Europe they have to cope with a clear shortage of potential Senegalese partners in their host countries. However, the situation clearly differs in each European country and period of time, due to the different migration histories and the resulting different composition of the population by sex. Secondly, Senegalese men in Europe have, on average, low socio-economic status and are assumed to be poorly acculturated into Western modern values, especially regarding gender roles and intergenerational relationships. As a result, the native marriage market is likely to be also much reduced for most of them.

Marriage at a distance (regardless of whether there is immediate or delayed reunification in Senegal or in Europe) might be not only a way out of the marriage market rigidities in the country of immigration but also an efficient manner to satisfy wishes and expectations of individuals in Senegal. Marriage at a distance is likely to be seen as beneficial by both the man's family and the family of his new partner in Senegal. On the one hand, by marrying someone in the country of origin, the migrant sends a signal to their left-behinds that he is likely to come back and in the meantime he will continue sending remittances.

On the other, for the woman's family, a migrant spouse represents a "good choice" to the extent that men in Europe have, compared to their counterparts in Senegal, higher income and social position. If the collective imaginary about migrants in Europe

presents them as a symbol of success, it is quite likely that male migrants in Europe are sought for by women and their families in Senegal. Marrying a men living in Europe can also be examined in the context of household strategies to increase and diversify resources (Stark 1991; de Haan 1999). Having a family member abroad can provide remittances and income in case of need (insurance role). Perhaps more importantly, can provide the social capital needed to access European labor markets to the wives' family members (brothers, cousins, etc). This type of social capital has been shown to be crucial for increasing the migration probabilities for the Senegalese (Baizán and González-Ferrer 2013).

All in all, in the context of extended families and multi-generational households that dominates in Senegal, marrying a migrant remains an attractive option to diversify risks and income (Stark 1991) and a likely chance of upward social mobility for women in Senegal and their families.

Bearing all this in mind, we intend to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Migration increases partnership formation probabilities.

Hypothesis 2: Most women migrate either simultaneously to marriage or as family re-unifiers.

Hypothesis 3: Male migrants in Europe are more likely to form a partnership with a woman living in Senegal if (a) they live in a country with few single women relative to men or if (b) their socioeconomic position is low.

Hypothesis 4: Women with better social position or education will be more likely to marry Senegalese men abroad.

Data

The empirical analyses in this paper are based in the survey «Migrations between Africa and Europe» (MAFE-Senegal)[1]. This transnational dataset results from the use of

identical questionnaires that were administered to representative samples of the Senegalese population residing in France, Italy and Spain, as well as in the region of Dakar (Senegal). In 2008 1,067 persons were interviewed in the region of Dakar and about 200 in each of the European countries involved. In 2011, a second survey took place in Spain, adding 405 individuals to the dataset. A weighting scheme is applied to obtain a representative sample of the Senegalese populations concerned.

The data used here are time-varying by nature, since they result from individual life-histories collected in retrospective biographical questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed to collect longitudinal retrospective information on a yearly basis from birth until the time of survey (2008/2011), for each sampled individual, whatever his/her country of residence at the time of the survey. The data collected include a large range of information on the individual's life course, including detailed partnerships histories (including both marriage and informal unions), as well as fertility, migration, education, and occupational histories. The amount of data concerning the interviewee partners' characteristics is much less detailed, but crucially for our purposes, it allows to know her/his country of residence at the time of union formation. In all countries, the eligibility criteria for selection into the sample established that individuals had to be between 25 and 75 years of age (to have long enough life histories), born in Senegal (to exclude second generation in Europe) and of present or past Senegalese nationality (to exclude immigrants in Senegal).

The places covered by the MAFE Senegal survey offer a good coverage of Senegalese migrants. On one hand, in Europe, France, Spain and Italy accounted for 45 percent of the international Senegalese migrants declared in the 2002 Senegal Census. On the other hand, the region of Dakar is home to about a quarter of the national population in the 2002 Senegal Census and is the region of origin of 31% of the international migrants declared in 2001-2002 by Senegalese households in the ESAM-II survey. Varied sampling methods were used to select the individuals. In Senegal, a stratified probabilistic sample was drawn. The municipal register in Spain (Padrón) offered a national sampling frame from which documented and undocumented migrants could be randomly sampled. Respondents in France and Italy were sampled through varied non-probabilistic methods (e.g. snowballing, intercept points, contacts obtained from migrant associations) in order to fill pre-established quotas by sex and age. Additional information can be found in González-Ferrer and Beauchemin (2011) or on the website of the MAFE project: http://www.mafeproject.com/.

Techniques

We applied multivariate discrete-time event history analyses techniques to study the determinants of first union formation, including both marriages and informal unions. In some analyses (Models 3 to 6) we distinguished whether the partner of the interviewed person lives in Senegal or in one of the European countries studied. This involved the

application of a competing risk model, in which the individual histories are censored from the year that they form a union if the partner of the interviewee does not reside in Senegal, France, Italy or Spain.

Models are specified as follows (Yamaguchi 1991):

$$\log[P_{riy} / (P_{siy})] = \alpha_r + \beta' X_{riy}$$

where P_{riy} is the conditional probability that individual i experiences a first union, versus remaining single (denoted by the subscript s), at the year y, given that the individual has not entered a union yet. In the competing risk specification we distinguish the partner's place of residence: Europe or Senegal (the place being denoted by the subscript r). α is a constant term, and X_{riy} a vector of covariates (including the baseline hazard function), with β denoting the value of the estimated coefficients of the model for each variable.

We restrict our competing risk models, in the one hand, to interviewed women living in Senegal, because few women living abroad choose a man living in Senegal (Models 3 and 4); and in the other hand, we analyze interviewed men living in Europe, because few men living in Senegal choose a women living abroad (Models 4 and 5).

In order to analyze the possible interrelationship between the events of partnership formation and migration, we plan to use structural-equation event history models with correlated unobserved heterogeneity of the type introduced by Lillard (1993). The results presented below do not involve this type of models yet.

Results

Table 1 reports the results from the discrete-time event history model predicting the odds of first partnership formation for Senegalese men (Model 1) and women (Model 2). The results show a bell-shaped partnership formation risks according to age, in which men have a much delayed pattern with respect to women. Partnership formation is nearly universal in the Senegalese population, so these data mainly reflect differentials in timing. These results are consistent with a recent Demographic and Health Survey, except that in MAFE data men marry somewhat earlier (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2012). It should be kept in mind, however, that DHS results refer to more recent birth cohorts and to the whole Senegalese population, while MAFE data mainly reflect the situation of the Dakar region.
Also consistent with DHS data are the differentials according to educational level, that show that women with an increased level of education marry later. For men, the differentials are not significant, although the pattern of delayed timing for the better educated is also present.

The results concerning the activity status show that being enrolled in education significantly reduces the odds of first partnership by a half, both for men and women. Consistently with the idea that resources are crucial for men's partnership formation is the fact that unemployed or other inactive men also show much reduced odds.

In Models 1 and 2 we include the variable "migration status" of the interviewed person. The categories of this variable distinguish whether the individual has never migrated outside of Senegal, is a returned migrant, "lives in France, Italy or Spain", or lives "in other country". In addition, in order to study the possible simultaneity between migration and union formation (Mulder and Wagner, 1993), two specific categories are included for the calendar years in which the interviewee out-migrates or returns from abroad. The results of this variable are consistent with our first hypothesis that states that migration leads to increased migration probabilities. Thus, for men, being a migrant in France, Italy or Spain implies an increase of the of the odds ratio of about 60 per cent with respect to non migrants. It is interesting to see that the odds of first partnership for individuals living in other countries (mainly other African countries) is lower than for non migrants, possibly indicating that in these countries the resources available to Senegalese migrants do not favor union formation. This last results needs to be interpreted with caution, given that the survey was not taken in those countries. A more surprising result is that the odds of migrant women in the European countries studied is positive and significant (1.63), possibly reflecting a very favorable marriage market. In contrast, returned migrants, irrespective of the country of migration, do not show significant results, although the coefficients show the expected positive direction. The results for the category that indicates a simultaneity between migration and first union formation for women are highly in line with our second hypothesis. The year of migration women have 4.85 higher odds of first partnership than sedentary women. This result has not a male counterpart, showing the highly gendered specificity of marriage migration. In fact, men show a reduced odds of union even in the year that they return from abroad. It should be kept in mind that many women do not join their partners the year of marriage, but start living as transnational couples (Baizan et al 2011). This situation may last several years, and in nearly half of cases end with a reunification in Senegal. Women who join their partners from the year of marriage show a preference for a conjugal type of couple (as opposed to a traditional arrangements that often involve separate residence).

In order to explore our hypotheses 3 and 4, we have constructed competing risk models that predict the odds of partnership formation for women living in Senegal (Models 3 and 4) and for men living in France, Italy or Spain (Models 4 and 5). The competing risks refer to the location of the partner: Senegal in the one hand, or in the other hand France, Italy or Spain. The two hypotheses advanced basically propose opposing effects by sex with respect to which groups of the population will enter a prtnership transnationally. For women it is predicted that a better social position or education will increase the likelihood of marrying Senegalese men abroad. Indeed, the results clearly support this hypothesis, as women who marry transnationally are the most educated

(odds of about 3 times higher for secondary or tertiary educated women, with respect to women with less than primary education); while the pattern according to education is the opposite for women who marry men in Senegal. When in Model 4 we add the socio-economic status of the job (for those women with a job), the pattern again shows that a high socioeconomic status is linked to a higher odds of first partnership with men living in France, Italy or Spain; while partnership formation with men living in Senegal do not show a clear gradient according to socio-economic status.

When we turn our attention to men living in France, Italy or Spain (Table 3), we see that the better educated form a partnership with a women living in Senegal less often than the lower educated (odds of 0.49 for tertiary educated men with respect to men with less than primary). Also the pattern according to socio-economic status of the job held by the men is consistent with our hypothesis 4, according to which male migrants in Europe are more likely to form a partnership with a woman living in Senegal if their socio-economic position is low. However, these results of Table 3 need to be considered with caution, given the low number of cases involved. Finally, the hypothesis that male migrants in Europe will be more likely to form a partnership with a woman living in Senegal if they live in a country with few single women relative to men, could not be tested in these preliminary results.

**Table 1. Time to first partnership (odds ratio)**

	Men	Women
	Model 1	*Model 2*
Age	1.78***	2.21***
Age square	0.99***	0.98***
Educational level		
Less than primary (ref.)	1	1
Primary	1.00	0.71**
Secondary	0.85	0.68*
Tertiary	0.70	0.51*
Activity & SES		
Student	0.49***	0.51***
Unemployed	0.25***	0.46*
Not working	0.31***	1.11
Professionals & employers	1.05	1.34
Routine non manual	0.88	1.00
Skilled manual	0.49***	0.39***
Unskilled manual (ref.)	1	1
Farmers & agric. workers	0.81	1.83
Migration status		
Senegal, non migrant (ref.)	1	1
Returned from F,I,S	1.23	2.01
Returned from other country	1.14	1.32
In France, Italy or Spain	1.39**	1.63*
In other country	0.58*	1.78
Departure year	0.78	4.85***
Return year	0.46*	1.31
Events	*812*	*970*
No. individuals	*1002*	*1073*

Table 2. Time to first partnership for women living in Senegal, by partner's location (odds ratio)

	Man is living in Senegal		Man is living in F,I,S	
	Model 3	*Model 4*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*
Age	2.34***	2.34***	2.12***	2.22***
Age square	0.98***	0.98***	0.99***	0.99***
Educational level				
Less than primary (ref.)	1	1	1	1
Primary	0.69**	0.71**	1.50	1.20
Secondary	0.62**	0.62*	3.24**	1.55
Tertiary	0.49	0.44	2.54*	1.12
Activity & SES				
Student	0.47***	0.42***	0.70	3.83**
Unemployed	0.43*	0.37**	0.37	2.12
Employed (ref.)	1	-	1	-
Not working	1.21	1.10	0.65	2.99**
Professionals & employers		1.07		18.60***
Routine non manual		0.93		7.21***
Skilled manual		0.36***		3.01*
Unskilled manual (ref.)		1		1
Farmers & agric. Workers		1.62		4.07**
Events	*704*	*704*	*161*	*161*
No. individuals	*1060*	*1060*	*1060*	*1060*

Table 3. Time to first partnership for men living in France, Italy or Spain, by partner's location (odds ratio)

	Woman is living in Senegal		Woman is living in F,I,S	
	Model 5	*Model 6*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
Age	1.63***	1.70***	2.59	2.56
Age square	0.99***	0.99***	0.99	0.99
Educational level				
Less than primary (ref.)	1	1	1	1
Primary	1.21	1.22	0.96	0.95
Secondary	0.61	0.66	0.58	0.57
Tertiary	0.49*	0.52	1.80	1.75
Activity & SES				
Student	0.59	0.62	1.08	0.92
Not employed	0.47	0.51	0.00***	0.00***
Employed (ref.)	1	-	1	-
Professionals & employers		0.55		0.79
Routine non manual		1.11		0.59
Skilled manual		0.77		1.13
Unskilled manual (ref.)		1		1
Farmers & agric. workers		2.31**		0.37
Events	*137*	*137*	*23*	*23*
No. individuals	*214*	*214*	*214*	*214*
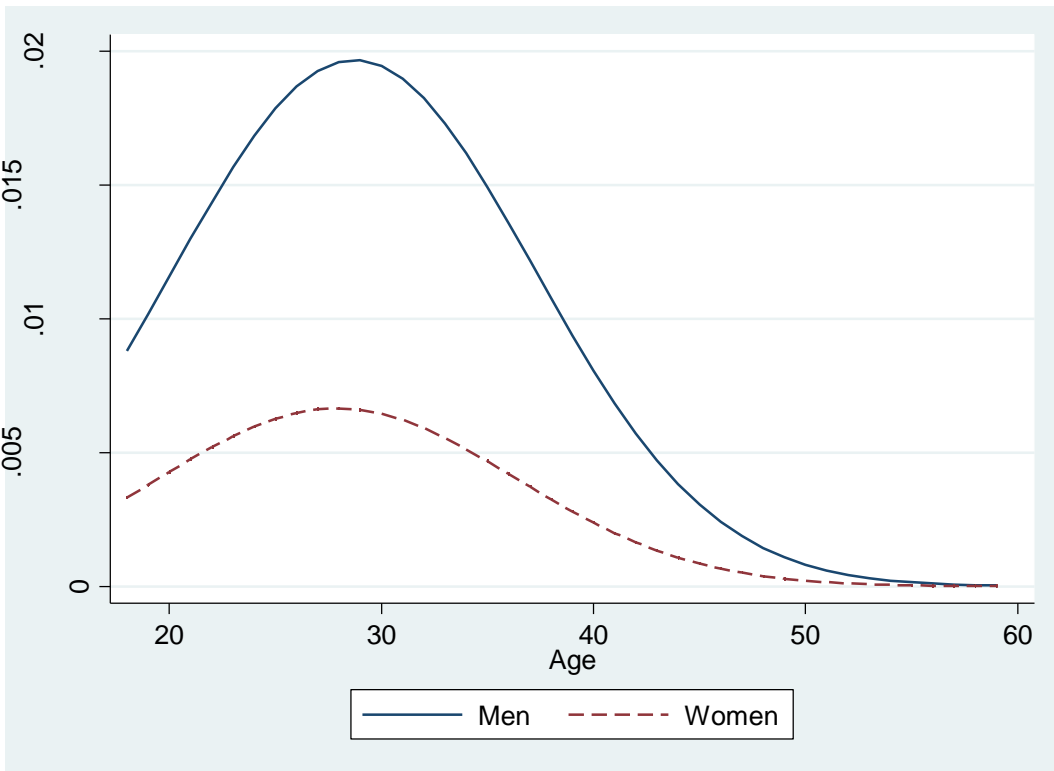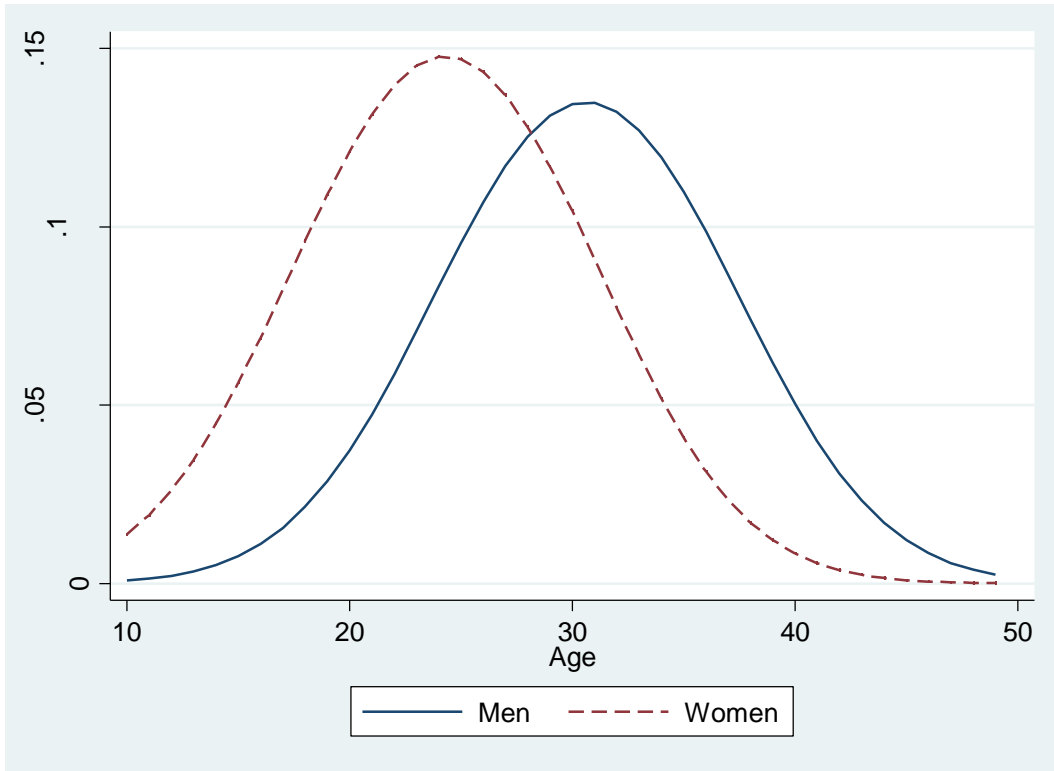
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