

What is the influence of childhood exposure to cultural norms? The role of segregation and community composition in explaining migrant fertility

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There are a range of theories which predict that the fertility of migrants is influenced by exposure to cultural norms. However, only a handful of studies explore this prediction directly, using measures of exposure such as community population composition. Moreover, previous studies measure community composition after childbearing has commenced, and their results are hard to interpret because of issues relating to selection, simultaneity and conditioning on the future. This study proposes a new method, and uses longitudinal data for England and Wales to investigate the relationship between completed fertility and six different measures of community composition in childhood, including residential segregation. The results support the childhood socialisation hypothesis. The completed fertility of immigrants is further from native fertility norms if they grow up in areas with a more dominant migrant community. This also true for second generation Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, who show evidence of culturally entrenched fertility.