Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Migration

Preliminary Analytic Approach

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Introduction

- Migration as a key factor of demographic change becomes more important particularly for highly industrialized countries.
- Most empirical work concentrates on immigration from developing or emerging countries and the integration of these immigrants in wealthier societies.
- Only little is known about the structure and the motives of emigrants and the outcome of emigration from highly industrialized countries.
State of Research

- u-shaped macro-level relationship between average LS in the source country and emigration rates (Polgreen & Simpson 2011)
- LS of immigrants compared to natives in destination countries is lower (Safi 2010; Bartram 2011) and differ according to their origin (Baltatescu 2007; Amit 2010; Bartram 2011)
- no difference in LS between emigrants and stayers at the point of migration (Erlinghagen et al. 2009)
- some increase of LS of emigrants comparing their situation prior emigration and after arriving in their destination country (Erlinghagen et al. 2009)
- positive correlation between LS of emigrants and their duration of stay abroad compared to stayers (Erlinghagen 2011; Bartram 2013)
The emigration process

- Few results for LS at time of emigration
- Some results for LS after emigration ("adaptation")
- No results for LS prior emigration ("anticipation")

$t_0$: event of emigration
Research Question & Hypotheses

The emigration process

- $t_0$: event of emigration
- Few results for LS at time of emigration
- Some results for LS after emigration ("adaptation")
- No results for LS prior emigration ("anticipation")

Research question:
How does individual LS develop prior to emigration?
Theoretical Background

- Individual actors try to maximize their individual utility
- Aim of migration: Maintain or increase SWB by maintaining or increasing life satisfaction (LS)
- But: Only little research on emigration and LS
Theoretical Background

Possible developments of life satisfaction (LS) prior emigration (1)

- Increasing LS
- Constant LS
- Decreasing LS

$t_0$: event of emigration

Development after emigration
Theoretical Background

The emigration process (II)

- $T_{-3}$: decision to emigrate
- $t_0$: event of emigration

Life Satisfaction (LS)

- Incubation period
- Preparation period
- Development after emigration

Time

-6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
Theoretical Background

Possible developments of life satisfaction (LS) prior emigration (2)

- $T_{-3}$: decision to emigrate
- $t_0$: event of emigration

Development after emigration

Life Satisfaction (LS)

- hump shaped LS
- constant LS
- u-shaped LS

Time

-6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
Theoretical Background

Estimated anticipating and adapting effect of moving on life satisfaction

Source: Frijters et al. (2011: 200)
Data & Methods

- Data from the German Socio Economic Panel Study (SOEP) provided by the German Institute for Economic research (DIW), Berlin (www.diw.de)
- SOEP started in 1984; panel information on more than 12,000 households and their members (Wagner et al. 2007)
- Access for national as well as international researcher (German and English data set & documentation) (www.diw.de/en/soep)
- SOEP on Youtube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OKJyfhHAW4

Measuring General Life Satisfaction in the SOEP (Longitudinal data available since 1984)

In conclusion, we would like to ask you about your satisfaction with your life in general.

Please answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means completely dissatisfied and 10 means completely satisfied.

How satisfied are you with your life, all things considered?

(scale from 0 to 10, with options for completely dissatisfied and completely satisfied)
Preliminary Analyses Strategy & Time Line

**Preliminary analyses strategy**

- Fixed effects panel regression models (cf. Clark et al. 2008 or Frijters et al. 2011 on anticipating and adaptation LS to marriage, divorce, unemployment etc. based on SOEP data)

**Time line**

2013/10 – 2014/2  Literature review and development of a preliminary analyses approach

2014/3 – 2014/7  data preparation and analyses

2014/8 – 2014/10 preparing presentation and paper for conference in Paris
Thank you very much for your attention!
References

Amit, K. (2010): Determinants of Life Satisfaction Among Immigrants from Western Countries and from the FSU in Israel. Social Indicators Research 96(3), 515-534.


