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Intergenerational Integration Trajectories:
Status Transmission along Immigrant Life Courses

Research on social integration of ethnic minorities is often concerned with outcomes. However, immigrant incorporation in receiving societies is an inherently dynamic process which unfolds along time, often stretching over subsequent generations. Emphasizing the inherent process-perspective in integration research, hence, has two major implications: first of all, a process-perspective demands a detailed assessment of the dynamics of individual life courses and secondly, it requires a conceptual link of consecutive life courses of parents and children. Summarized by the notion of ‘intergenerational integration trajectories’ this paper assesses the relationship between first generation work life trajectories and second generation attainments. The analysis is based on the German Socio-Economic Panel, which not only allows for identification of direct father-child-pairs but also provides relevant longitudinal data, informed by both prospective and retrospective data collection, to reconstruct complete immigrant employment trajectories from time of immigration onwards. Using the example of former guestworkers in Germany – a group which has lived in the country long enough to allow for reconstruction of substantial parts of their life courses – the indicator-based empirical analysis of approx. 600 individual trajectories feeds into a typology of immigrant work-life patterns obtained by Latent Class Analysis (LCA). In a final step, the results of LCA are introduced into multi-nominal logistic regression models in order to assess the intergenerational patterns of status transmission. First results are in line with findings from intergenerational social mobility of ethnic minorities, which show a generally less tight intergenerational link among migrants than natives. However, by way of framing the analysis from a life course perspective the results give insight into the process of status transmission along successive generations, revealing for instance that ascending trajectories initiated in paternal life courses face intergenerational barriers that cause disruption of successful continuation in the second generation. Hence, this research on intergenerational integration trajectories fills the ‘black box’ of outcome-centered research.