

Intergenerational Patterns of Family Formation in East and West Germany

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Abstract:

Why is intergenerational transmission of family formation weaker in some country contexts than in others? This paper employs the historically unique situation of the German division to study country context effects on intergenerational regularities in family formation. We use the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) to analyze the longitudinal family formation trajectories from age 15-35 of children born 1953-1978 and their mothers. Findings show that East German mother-child family formation trajectories are more dissimilar than West German mother-child family formation trajectories. Further, East German mother-child dyads are more likely to be categorized as patterns of intergenerational contrast, whereas West German mother-child dyads are more likely to display strong transmission. To account for these differences in intergenerational transmission of family formation between East and West Germany, we propose to combine multichannel sequence analysis, multinomial logistic modeling and decomposition methods for nonlinear probability models. This methodological approach enables us to show that differences in parental education and children's educational mobility in East and West Germany mediate the strength of intergenerational transmission and contribute to explaining differences in intergenerational patterns of family formation in the two contexts. We conclude that the proposed approach is promising to disentangle cross-national differences in intergenerational regularities in family formation.

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