



Intergenerational Trajectories: Parental Initial Legal Status, Economic Assimilation, and Children's Educational Outcomes

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Introduction

Initial Legal Status, the Elephant in the Room for sociological research

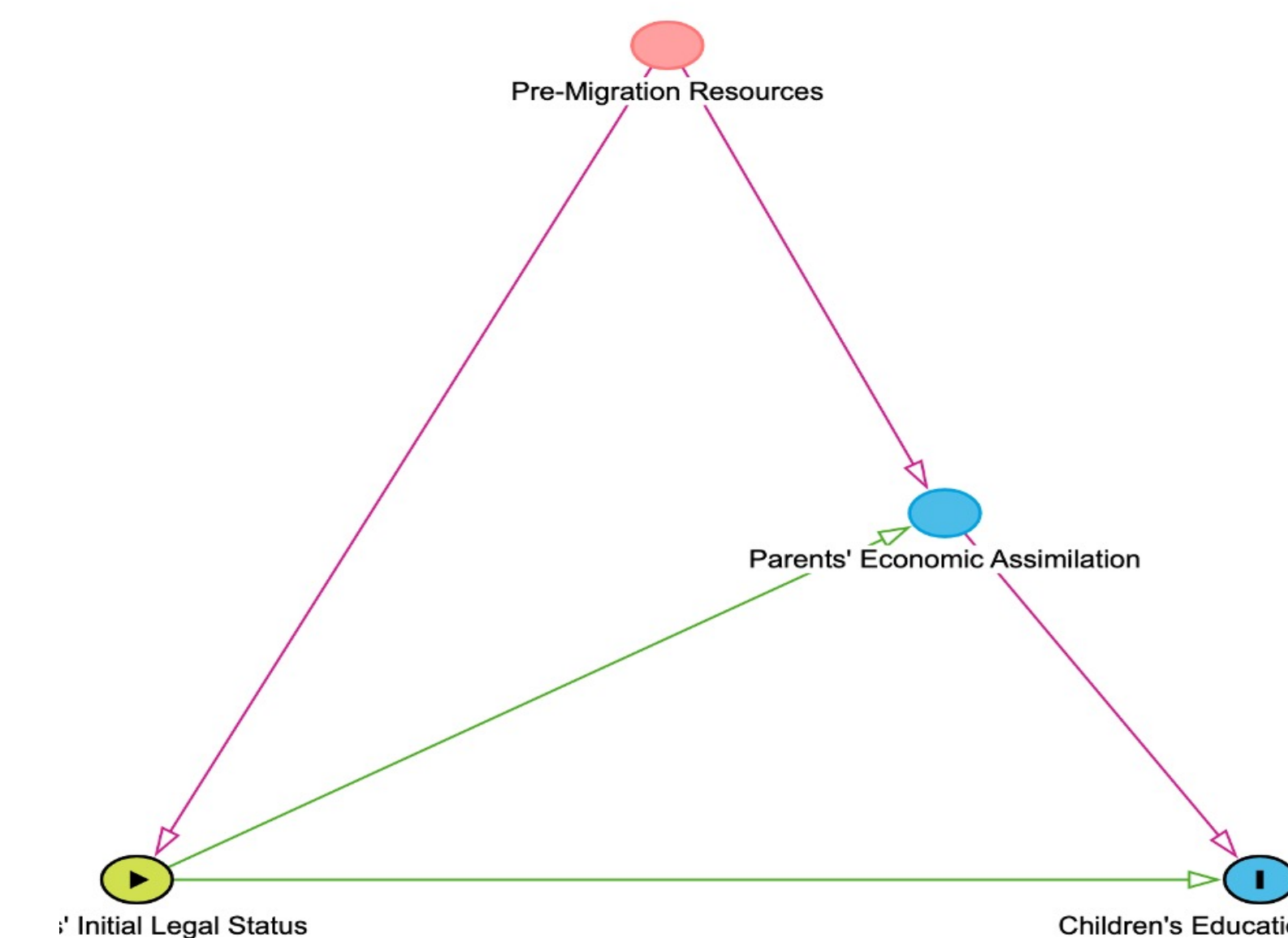
- Inequality among immigrants well understood after immigrants' arrival, specifically in the context of undocumented immigration.
- Undocumented children face educational challenges, including but not limited to worse performance, lower school aspiration, and performance regression in higher education.
- ILS has rarely been conceptualized as an independent social variable that can generate longitudinal effects on immigrant families.

This study seeks to examine Inequalities among immigrants influenced by initial legal status during the pre-arrival and initial arrival stage.

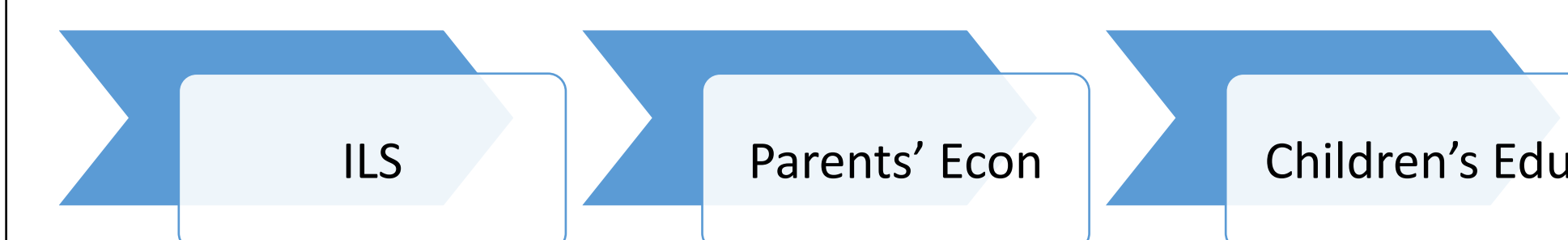
Literature Review

- ILS' sorting effect
- ILS first stratifies immigrants by sorting them into different visa groups or classes of admission and assigning unequal socioeconomic advantages across the legal groups.
 - ILS also influences economic assimilation.
 - employment-based migrants own jobs with higher prestige & wages, and easier accumulation of assets. Undocumented migrants face the greatest disadvantages.
 - Children with undocumented backgrounds also face sustained disadvantages in education.
- 5 groups of immigrants examined in this study: family-based, employment-based, refugee, undocumented, and diversity program.

Framework



Longitudinal, intergenerational effect of ILS, with pre-migration resources a significant confounder



Economic assimilation through employment and asset accumulation; educational outcomes through cognitive development and school aspiration

Using the New Immigrant Survey, examined 796 households over their assimilation after 5 years of receiving their LPR status

Results

- Employment-based migrants have advantages in all employment & asset performances. Undocumented migrants have the greatest disadvantages, while family-based migrants have the second-highest disadvantages.
- These advantages and disadvantages are sustained in their children. Undocumented & family-based children receive lowest developmental scores.
- However, children from all groups have similar school aspirations.
- In addition to income, house ownership becomes a significant partial mediator.
- Significant controls include region and highest degrees among parents. The other two variables about pre-migration resources (parental childhood environment / childhood household income) are not significant confounders.

Limitations include a small sample size and the lack of initial legal status information from both parents. Alternative conceptualizations, such as categorizing immigrant households into mixed-status and other types.

However, the evidence of house ownership, in addition to income, being a significant mediator points to newer trends in immigration studies. Instead of nativity, income, or numeric SES per se, an indirect expression of SES that reflects immigrants' social environment reflects immigrants' longitudinal experiences more accurately. Potentially from a policy perspective, improving the sociopolitical & ethnic environment and making resources available for immigrants from different sociopolitical/ethnic backgrounds are more important in the long term.