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Policies and gender equality in the family realm

Conference on “Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Equality: The Role of Family Policies and Exchange of Good Practices”

19-20 April 2016, Amsterdam
Life course perspective: increasing popularity among policy makers

- Early experiences shape later life
- Linked lives (family!)
- Macro influences
Life course perspective: increasing popularity among policy makers

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Today’s talk

Interdependence
Gender
Policies

ERASMUS UNIVERSITEIT ROTTERDAM
A focus on interdependence in families

• Is consistent with demographic reality
6 generations of same family living in Ontario

Baby boy is introduced to 4 generations of grandmothers

CBC News  Posted: Jul 14, 2013 6:34 PM ET  |  Last Updated: Jul 14, 2013 10:14 PM ET

6 generations of same family living in Ontario  2:28
A focus on interdependence in families

• Is consistent with demographic reality
• Draws attention to similarities in the needs of young and old
In my work, I focus on laws and policies in

- EU-28 + Norway + Switzerland
- US, Canada
- But sometimes OECD, world
Structuring the lives of men and women: Gender in laws and policies

Roles limited to one gender, e.g.
- suffrage
- conscription
- care leaves (Switzerland: parental leave for mothers only)

Gender differences in age borders
- age of majority
- marriageable age (Luxembourg: age 16 women, age 18 men)
- age of consent
- pensionable age (several EU-countries: lower age for women; privilege??)
Structuring the lives of men and women: Gender in laws and policies, cont’d

Gender differences in **credits for role engagement**

- care credits (debate between ‘care feminists’ and ‘employment feminists’)
- survivors’ benefits (redistribution to ever-married)
Policies shaping interdependence*

*financial, material, emotional, practical reliance on / responsibility for family members

• mandate generational interdependence (e.g., legal obligations to provide financial support),
New China law says children 'must visit parents'

By Celia Hatton
BBC News, Beijing

Grown children in China must visit their parents or potentially face fines or jail, a new law that came into effect on Monday says.

China's new "Elderly Rights Law" deals with the growing problem of lonely elderly people by ordering adult children to visit their ageing parents.

The law says adults should care about their parents "spiritual needs" and "never neglect or snub elderly people".
Policies shaping interdependence*

*financial, material, emotional, practical reliance on / responsibility for family members

• mandate generational interdependence (e.g., legal obligations to provide financial support),
• block generational interdependence (e.g., grandparents not granted the right to raise grandchildren when parents cannot provide adequate care; migration laws not granting temporary visits to enable the provision of care),
Policies shaping interdependence*

*financial, material, emotional, practical reliance on / responsibility for family members

- **mandate** generational interdependence (e.g., legal obligations to provide financial support),
- **block** generational interdependence (e.g., grandparents not granted the right to raise grandchildren when parents cannot provide adequate care; migration laws not granting temporary visits to enable the provision of care),
- **explicitly shape** intergenerational interdependence (e.g., daddy quota),
Has the special quota for fathers made men more caring?

Kotsadam and Finseraas (2011): parents with children born after the introduction of the daddy quota less likely to have conflicts over the division of household tasks, and more likely to share them.

Boll and colleagues (2014): increased levels of child involvement by the father after the introduction of the daddy quota, particularly for highly educated men.

Herlofson and Ugreninov (2014): men more involved in childcare after the introduction of the daddy quota, but not more involved in care for frail parents.
Policies shaping interdependence*

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• mandate generational interdependence (e.g., legal obligations to provide financial support),
• block generational interdependence (e.g., grandparents not granted the right to raise grandchildren when parents cannot provide adequate care; migration laws not granting temporary visits to enable the provision of care),
• explicitly shape intergenerational interdependence (e.g., daddy quota),
• implicitly shape intergenerational interdependence (e.g., grandparental care in Southern Europe in the absence of publicly funded parental support).
Predicted probability of caring for a grandchild of a working daughter by level of effective leave and services

Source: Bordone et al. 2016, based on SHARE, MULTILINKS.

Different implications for gender and socioeconomic inequality

**Cash for care payments**: taken more easily by women than men, and by low paid women than high paid women

**Services**: better assist men and women in reconciling paid and unpaid work
Empirical evidence is now emerging, e.g.

ECHP data
Abendroth et al (2014): the motherhood occupational status penalty is
• lower in European countries where expenditures on public childcare are higher

SHARE data
Schmid et al (2012): imbalance in proportions of men and women providing intensive care is higher
• when aging parents receive cash for care payments (in addition to the care received from adult children)
• than when they receive services in kind
Wrapping up (1)

Overall: gender convergence in structuring of interdependence by laws and policies

Yet: everyday practice shows differences in men’s and women’s lives (Levy, 2013: men and women have different master statuses)

Yet: gender differences in use of public provisions, e.g.
  • women more often recipients of survivors’ benefits (differential life expectancy)
  • women more often users of care leaves (economic incentive)
  • women less often recipients of home help (gender bias in implementation)
Wrapping up (2)

- Important to avoid a “chopped up” notion of what families are about
- Interdependence structures people’s life course decisions and their life chances
- The challenge is to develop, implement and evaluate* policies that do not reinforce gender inequalities and social class inequalities

*natural experiments, combinations of longitudinal survey data and registry data, cross-nationally comparative data
Questions?

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