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Generational squeezes under different life courses and the structural and cultural contexts

Introduction

The paper focuses on strategies about care intergenerational transfers to be chosen under different policy, economic and cultural contexts. Given the increased prevalence of families with three, four and even five generations, it is likely that the generation of adults at late-middle age, particularly women, will face commitments to simultaneous support for their elderly parents and their adult but still partly dependent children, i.e. so-called “generational squeezes”. We would like to identify the life course patterns and contexts under which middle generations attempt to support equally up and down and those under which the young are prioritized over the old. An important question is whether the provision of support to parents reduces the likelihood of helping children (and *vice versa*). We base our analysis on Reher’s (1998) considerations concerning strong-week family ties division of European countries, existing care models (Pfau-Effinger 2005, Pfau-Effinger & Geissler (ed.) 2005, Anttonen & Sipilä 1996, 2005), and the classification of countries with respect to care arrangements towards children and the elderly (familialism vs. de-familialisation) proposed by Saraceno&Keck (2010). Our hypothesis is as follows: More familialistic countries (with strong commitments to solidarity) and weak formal care provision tend to assist more both generations, whereas those with high level of de-familialisation of care and welfare are less likely to provide care to both generations, prioritizing the young ones. We would like to answer the following research questions:

- How individual characteristics determine care provision between generations?
- Do country-specific care models matter for care provision?

Method & Data

The data used come from the Generations and Gender Survey, the panel survey carried out in selected European countries. The countries representing different welfare settings, care regimes and living arrangements are to be selected for the study (i.e. Poland, France, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Romania, Germany, Estonia). The logistic regression models will be applied. The dependent binary variable describes a fact of giving care support both up and down generations. In particular, two models will be estimated: one with focus on care provided to younger generations (grandchildren) and the second one – on care provided to older generations (parents/ parents in low/ grandparents). It is worth mentioning that other kinds of care (towards partner, siblings, friends etc.) are excluded from our analysis. The models will include individual characteristics of care givers (age, sex, education, employment, living arrangements, disability), variables regarding attitudes towards care

(people's opinions towards care responsibilities) and also a variable 'country' representing the socio-economic-cultural context.

Results

One might expect that families differ in their commitment to intergenerational exchange and solidarity: more familialistic countries (with strong commitments to solidarity) and weak formal care provision tend to assist more both generations rather than prioritize recipients, whereas those with high level of *de-familialisation* of care and welfare are less likely to provide care and financial transfers to both generations, prioritizing the young ones. The preliminary results regarding Poland, Italy and France suggest that three dimensions of care provision (family ties, institutional settings, attitudes towards care) are important for care provisions both up and down generations. Moreover, they seem to contest the hypothesis about "generational squeezes".

Conclusions

The revealed interdependencies between patterns of intergenerational transfers and the context may suggest how to adapt social policy to changing relations between different generations over the life course.