Pearl Dykstra

Cross-national differences in intergenerational family relations:
The influence of public policy arrangements

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Dutch Matroesjka's uit Middelburg:
(v.l.n.r.) Linde (0),
Judith (23), Lia (45),
Hannie (69) en Marie (96).
Reher (1998): source of inspiration for many

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>“Weak” families (NE)</th>
<th>“Strong” families (SE)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving home</td>
<td>At young age</td>
<td>Not until marriage</td>
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<td>Care for needy</td>
<td>Public/private institutions</td>
<td>Family</td>
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<td>Values</td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>Collectivistic</td>
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</table>
Research repeatedly shows North-South divide in inter-generational transfers in families
• Highest *frequencies* in North
• Highest *intensities* in South

Interpretation: transfer regimes (Albertini et al. 2007)
• *Specialization* between state and family (e.g. Brandt et al. 2009)
• *Redistribution* of state support at the family level (e.g. Mudrazija 2016)
So: telling *descriptions* of patterned links between public and family streams of support

But: little research on *how* the regime context shapes mechanisms of transfers at the micro-level of families

This brings me to the first area of progress in the literature:

analysing how family members respond to *incentives* of the *macro-level* context
General framework

Hagestad & Dykstra (2016): *generational interdependence*

- rewarding elements such as rights, support, continuity and protection against risks
- unsettling elements such as obligations, and vulnerabilities related to events of others beyond a person’s control.
Now, studies are emerging of how generational interdependence varies, depending on the transfer regime context

• Albertini & Kohli 2013: *residential autonomy* of the younger generation is not graded by level of parental education in NE, but it is in SE

• Bordone et al 2016: grandparents least likely to provide *daily care* to grandchildren in countries where childcare services and parental leaves are least generous

• Leopold & Raab 2011: the greatest prevalence of *short-term reciprocity* in SE; no prevalence of short-term reciprocity in NE
Second area of progress in the literature

Rather than focus on sector expenditures (or policy packages), studies are now starting to examine the effects of specific policies.
Gender inequality: importance of distinguishing whether public care support is offered *in cash* rather than *in kind*

Cash transfers: more attractive to women than men (given the difference in earnings)

Services in kind: better enable participation in gainful employment (and thus: financial autonomy)
Now, studies are emerging that demonstrate the importance of distinguishing *types* of public provisions

Schmid et al (2012): imbalance in proportions of men and women providing intensive care is higher

- when ageing parents receive cash for care payments than when they receive services in kind
Third area of progress in the literature

Unravelling economic and *cultural* influences on intergenerational family relations

Kohli et al. 2010: institutional, structural and cultural factors do not vary independently among countries; they come in “packages”
A long-term perspective:
• Aassve et al (2013): a long history of political independence (State Antiquity Index) provides opportunities to build social trust, which in turn generates greater confidence in substituting the family’s safety with support found in the wider community

A natural experiment:
• Manacorda and Moretti (2006): increase in fathers’ income linked to changes in the Italian Social Security System resulted in a higher proportion of young men living at home
Wrap-up (1)

I organized the literature by identifying how public policy arrangements create generational interdependencies in the family realm or—on the contrary—lighten them.

Note: a focus on nation states by definition overlooks within-country differences and regional patterns that go beyond national borders.

Today I neglected the findings on CE and EE.
Wrap-up (2)

Cross-national comparisons of intergenerational family relations not only offer a basis for making theoretical progress, but also offer serious *methodological* challenges.

Another challenge concerns *co-residential* and non co-residential households.
Wrap-up (3)

Further opportunities for improvement
• more judiciously *theorize* about connections between public safety nets (or their absence) and expectations, obligations, rights, and vulnerabilities in the intergenerational family realm
• more critical *empirical assessments* of theoretical mechanisms (e.g. natural experiments)
• include information about family members’ *eligibility* to benefits
More information?

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