A life course approach to leave policies

The Belgian case as example

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Overview

- The Lifecourse approach
  - Emergence, principles, popularity, an approach, tool for policy

- Leave policies in Belgium
  - Objectives, employment and family contexts, Leave policies presentation and limitations

- A Lifecourse approach to Leave policies
  - Application of the principles, evaluation
I. The Lifecourse approach
I. Lifecourse: Emergence of a paradigm

20-30s: Interest in child development, interactions individual & social context
- Life histories (Thomas and Znaniecki) ‘generation’ (Manheim)
- ‘life cycle’, ‘lifespan’ (human development studies)

40-50s: Individual experience of historical event, changes in society
- Age differentiation as a structural category (Parsons)

60-70s: Development of longitudinal surveys & methods, population ageing
- Demographical concept of ‘cohort’ (Ryder), first Lifecourse research

80-90s: De-chronologisation of the life-stages
- Theorisation of the Lifecourse approach (Elder)

2000s: Growing interest in the ‘sustainability’ of social security
- Use of the Lifecourse approach in policy (e.g. Olivia framework)

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I. Lifecourse: ‘principles’ (Elder 1994)
I. Lifecourse:

An ‘approach’

Approach
or paradigm
or middle range theory:

“A theoretical orientation that established a common field of inquiry by defining a framework that guides research in term of problem identification and formulation, variable selection and rationales, and strategies of design and analysis”

(Merton 1968)
I. Lifecourse

Popularity

- ‘All inclusive’
  - dynamic and contexts
  - constraints and freedom
  - Methodological individualism but holistic approach

- ... help yourself
  - Demography: marriage duration, transition to adulthood ‘lifecourse transition’
  - Sociology: social and family relationships over time, socio-professional trajectories, ‘life course approach’, ‘life course regime’
  - Criminology: deviance
  - History: experience of war, great depression, etc.
  - Epidemiology: cumulative risks ‘over the life course’
  - Psychology: ‘lifespan’ development, ‘life cycle’
I. Lifecourse

A tool for social policies?

- Objectives
  - Specific situations

- Conception
  - Action field(s)
  - Target groups
  - Accounting for the time

- Evaluation
II. Leave policies in Belgium
II. Leave policies in Belgium: Objectives

To implement policies allowing to combine work with other aspects of life (e.g. caring for children and elderly)
II. Leave policies in Belgium

Employment situation

- **Employment rate**
  - 15-64: women 51% men 69% (a)
  - Parents: women 67.5% men 92% (b)
  - 55-64: women 26% men 43% (a)

- **Work conditions**
  - Public sector: women 48% men 38% (c)
  - Part-time: women 40% men 7% (c)
  - Fixed-term work contract: 15-24y women 36% 15-24y men 29% (d)

(a) OCDE 2007 (b) ECEO 2003 (c) Eurostat 2005 (%act pop)
(d) Work Forces 2005 (%employees)
II. Leave policies in Belgium

Family configurations & changes

- ↑ Cohabitation, ↓ marriages (↑ divorces, ↓ 2nd marriage)
  ➔ Reconstituted family and other new forms of family

- ↓ total fertility rate 1.7, ↑ Life expectancy 80
  ➔ Population ageing (65+): 6.2% (1900) ➔ 17% (2008)

- ↑ education duration, delay of first birth
  ➔ De-chronologisation and de-synchronisation of the life stages

  ➔ ➔  ↓ household size, ‘sandwich generation’

INS (a) 2005 (b) 2006 (c) 2008
II. Leave policies in Belgium

Federal basis

- Event related
  - Maternity leave, paternity leave
  - Sick leave, palliative leave, etc.
  - Imperative reasons

- Life stage related
  - Parental leave
  - 50+, early retirement scheme

- Flexible but cumulative
  - Time-credit/career break

!!! Regional differences
II. Leave policies in Belgium

Common critics

- Gender differences
  - Women use leave more often

- Specific cases are not accounted for
  - e.g. multiple births, disabled child, etc.

- Fixed allocation
III. Lifecourse approach to Leave policies
III. Leave policies & Lifecourse: An example

- Population: women (childless at labour market entry)
- Life events:
  - single ↔ union
    (cohabitation, marriage)
  - parity 0 → parity 1 → parity 2
    (single birth, in union, irreversible)
  - full-time ↔ part-time ↔ no work ↔ full-time
    (any sector, no work-parity 0 states not considered)

!!! Assumption: no simultaneous transition
Maternity leave+
Paternity leave
Parental leave
Time-credit/career break

…sick child,
elderly care,
progressive retirement
Frail statuses (risk groups)

transitions (thematic policies)

trajectories

Lifespan (1)
Lifespan (2)

trajectories

Not necessary the straight line

...Unemployment spell

...Part-time spell

...Single hood spell

Or a combination of them
Timing of transition

Employment rate (fe)
Total Fertility Rate
Mother employment
Ever married
Single parent

1 9
7 ~30%
5 2.25 24%
98% 6.3%

2 0 0 5
69% 1.7 67.5%
45% 12%

Woman age 20 25 30 35 20
Average age at 1st child

1985-90
1990-95
1995-00
2000-05

2002:
-Career Break reform
-Time credit

1994:
Flemish Premium reform
Incentive increase

1985:
Career Break

1995-97
Thematic Break

Cohort 1960-64
Cohort 1965-69

Flemish Premium

1995-97: Time credit

2000-05:
-Career Break reform
-Time credit

Period

Woman age

40
35
30
25
21
Linked Lives

- Availability of grand-parents or other family members
- Elderly care responsibility
- Child care access to services (OECD 2004)
  - <3 yrs old: 38.5%; 3-5 years old: 99.5%
- Dual income/ mono-parental family: cumul

Source: INS

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III. Leave policies & Lifecourse

New views

- Gender differences
  - Women use leave more often
  - + long term consequence on career, lifetime income (pension)

- Specific cases are not accounted for
  - e.g. multiple births, disabled child, etc.
  - + trajectories, importance of additional resources

- Fixed allocation
III. Lifecourse & Leave policies
New approach to social policies

- Objectives
  - Specific situations: Event, sequence

- Conception & evaluation
  - Action field(s): Multi-dimensional
  - Target groups: Trajectory
  - Accounting for the time: Timing and duration, cumulative (dis)advantages
Thank you for your attention

Questions?

Comments?

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