Effects of Family Policies on Childbearing Behavior in Developed Countries

Gerda Neyer

United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Recent and Future Trends in Fertility
New York, 2-4 December 2009
Fertility and Family Policies in Europe

- Increase in low fertility concerns
  -- 2/3 of EU-countries, Japan, South-Korea, Singapore, Australia, Canada, and several other developed countries

Upsurge in family policies to raise fertility
-- 3/4 of EU-countries, Japan, South-Korea, Singapore, Australia, and several other developed countries

- Family policies – impact on childbearing?
Fertility and Family Policies as Research Area

- What are family policies?

- How should we study (potential) impact of family policies on demographic behavior?

- Do family policies affect fertility?
What are Family Policies?

- governmental activities directed at the family
  (Kamerman/Kahn 1978)

1950/60s
- family law
- taxation
- cash benefits
- population policies

2000ff
- work-care policies
- cash benefits
- childcare services
- gender policies

change of family policies – form and focus
What are Family Policies?

- state activities which aim ‘to favour a certain kind of family organization and to strengthen those who are in a position to conform to this form of organization’ (Bourdieu 1996)

- normative aims of family policies
- cultural ordering
What are Family Policies?

- policies that **structure society and markets through structuring private relationships**, that is:
  - partnerships
  - parenthood


- family policies part of (welfare-)state policies
- institutional aspects of family policies
(Welfare)-state and family-policy impact

(Welfare)-state & institutional setting

family policies

society/market

partnership

parenthood
Conception of Family Policies

• **set of different policies**
  - belong to different policy areas
  - vary across countries and/or regions, communities
  - change over time

• **embedded in socio-economic, political, and cultural environment**
  - in line with or contrary to other policies
  - interact with environment and its changes

• **normative/cultural aspects**
  - symbolic meaning
Consequences for Research

➢ Policy Analysis:
  – WHAT: content of policy and policy context
  – WHEN: timing aspect (‘critical junctures‘)
    - before-after
    - implementation, and sequencing
    - socio-economic, political changes
  – WHERE: spatial and cultural aspects
    - regional, single country, comparative perspective
  – For WHOM: applicability and usage aspects
    - application of policy to different groups
    - use of policy

➢ Proper data
➢ Proper methods
Effects of Family Policies on Childbearing Behavior

- ’critical junctures’ (what and when):
  - introduction of employment-supporting family policies
  - effect of such policies under different socio-economic conditions

- spatial and cultural aspects (where)

- use of policy: differential effects of policies on different social groups (who)
Effects of Income-related Parental-leave Benefits on Second-birth Risks

Neyer, Andersson, Rønsen, Hoem, Vikat 2006
Effect of Speed-Premium (Sweden) and Care-Policies (Finland) on Second-birth Risks in Sweden and Finland by Duration since First Birth
Impacts of Family Policies & Economic Development on Second-birth Risks

Rates relative to Sweden in 1977

- Finland
- Norway
- Denmark
- Sweden

Neyer, Andersson, Rønsen, Hoem, Vikat 2006
Effects of Policies on Childbearing

- policy may have an effect on childbearing behavior (on timing and quantum) (effect may be delayed)
- changes in behavior may also be brought about by other factors than policies
- policies may have only temporal effect
- policies may have different effects in different socio-economic circumstances
Effects of Family Policies on Childbearing Behavior

• ‘critical junctures’:
  – introduction of employment-supporting family policies
  – effect of such policies under different socio-economic conditions

• spatial and cultural aspects: where

• use of policy: differential effects of policies on different social groups (who)
Space – Symbolic Implications?

- Child-care characteristics – differences between regions
  - Interaction/feedback effects – Norway
  - Cultural effect – Germany
First-birth Risks and Availability of childcare (0-3 Jahre) in Germany

Hank/Kreyenfeld 2004
First-birth Risks and availability of childcare (0-3 Jahre) in Germany

Hank/Kreyenfeld 2004
Effects of Policies on Childbearing

- Cultural aspects may determine the effects of policies (congruence or cleavages between cultural aspects and policies may determine effect)

- Transferability of policies to different (cultural) settings (?)
Effects of Family Policies on Childbearing Behavior

• ‘critical junctures’:
  – introduction of employment-supporting family policies
  – effect of such policies under different socio-economic conditions

• spatial and cultural aspects

• use of policy: differential effects of policies on different social groups: who
Changes in second-birth rates, 1990 relative to 1981, by duration since first birth and country of origin
Effects of Policies on Childbearing

- Different effects of policies for different social groups (intended or unintended)

- Policies may only apply to specific groups (overall effects negligible)

- Selection effect (only childprone persons make use of a policy)
Family Policies, Fertility & Research

- Policies matter for childbearing and fertility
- Which policies matter where, when, for which persons and for which parity (?)
- No effects of policies on childbearing are also effect
- Methodological advancement in demography-policy-nexus
Thank You