

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

GOSTA ESPING-ANDERSEN (Ed.) *Family Formation and Family Dilemmas in Contemporary Europe*. Bilbao: Fundacion BBVA, 2007, 286 p., index.

When Gosta Esping-Andersen published *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* in 1990, his comparative analysis quickly became one of the most important studies in the welfare state literature. There were nonetheless critiques of his threefold typology, with other authors suggesting the addition of further regime clusters. There were also feminist critiques that welfare state literature was giving limited systematic attention to gender. According to some feminists, male-centered welfare state theory overlooks the importance of women and family in the production and consumption of social welfare. In light of these critiques, Esping-Andersen paid greater attention to family and gender in subsequent analyses. For instance, *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies* (1999) analyzes not only the state but also the market and the family as the main pillars in the management of social risks.

The present collection, *Family Formation and Family Dilemmas in Contemporary Europe*, includes substantial introductions and conclusions by the editor, who is also the author or co-author of two chapters. Esping-Andersen pursues these topics of demographic changes and family formation. The six chapters are on fertility, caring, and children in Europe; and thus the content is somewhat narrower than the title implies.

The analyses are based on data from the European Community Household Panel (ECHP). The panel design involves persons aged 16 and over who are, in principle, interviewed in each of the years between 1994 and 2001. Because of its standardized design and its comparability across time and countries, the ECHP represents a unique data set for analyzing longitudinal demographic changes, income, employment status, family characteristics, along with the dynamics of life course behaviour (29).

The focus is on key aspects of fertility in light of the changing life course of individuals. In effect, the last three decades have seen a substantial body of literature on fertility changes over the world. This increased research interest on fertility stems from the changing economic and social structures associated with ageing populations. The main explanations of fertility decline can be summarized through economic and cultural considerations. The declining economic contributions of children in urban industrial societies, increases in women's participation in paid work, and new economic roles have been incompatible with large family structures. On the cultural side, the rise of post-materialist values such as gender equality, self-realization, and secular values make marriage and childbearing difficult for individuals.

However, the comparative analyses included in this book demonstrate the difficulty of constructing a unifying fertility decline theory, as the conceptualizations associated with the demographic transition prove insufficient to understand fertility trends of different societies. For example, the chapter by Esping-Andersen, Guell, and Broadmann reveals that sexual equality in education and the labour market have revolutionized women's opportunities in the labour market. But the comparison of fertility trends in Spain and Denmark shows that only in Denmark does the relatively equal division of infant parenting encourage career-oriented educated women to have a second child. The authors demonstrate that for Denmark the equal division of infant parenting is as important as mother-friendly policies. Hence, women can achieve economic independence and follow their career paths as mothers. In the Spanish case, however, couples continue to follow a traditional family role. This indicates the importance of looking at the male roles in child care when discussing fertility patterns and trends.

The chapter on "the impact of labour market status on second and higher-order births" can also be highlighted as a significant contribution. Baizan argues in this comparative analysis that the relationship between fertility and women's labour market participation is highly dependant on each welfare state's institutions. His findings reveal significant differences between the negative effects of women's employment on childbearing in Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, compared to the positive effect of having a job in Denmark. As other authors in this book show, employment status has positive effects in Scandinavian countries, while in other countries women with low incomes have a higher probability of childbearing. These findings substantiate the importance of women's employment security in childbearing.

Two of the chapters scrutinize how welfare institutions in different European countries affect having a first birth and women's adult caring obligations. As in other studies by Esping-Andersen, the present book concludes that state institutions should play key roles in managing social risks. This argument is followed by policy recommendations not only to increase fertility levels in Europe, but also to construct better families and healthier children in the post-modern world. These suggestions are not new, but it is vital to emphasize the significance of social policies: mother-friendly policies, longer paid child leaves, the importance of fathers taking part of the child care, affordable housing, employment security, and job satisfaction.

In this comparative analysis, the authors display the complexity of social and economic trends relevant to work-life balance and fertility. Their life course approach demonstrates how individual preconditions, social policies, and the social context underlay fertility patterns. This book also shows that we need further research on fertility and family change to understand recent demographic challenges.

It should be noted that, in spite of its title, this study does not analyze all European countries, but rather focuses on Western Europe, especially Denmark and Spain. It would be constructive to analyze the sharp fertility decline in the

former Soviet countries and compare these trends with the low fertility of Southern Europe.

In spite of these limitations, there is much valuable and original research in this volume. This book is essential reading for anyone studying fertility and the welfare state, and valuable for researchers in a range of fields including demography, sociology, family, and work. The advanced statistical models are not for the casual reader, but the volume makes substantial contributions to comparative fertility research.

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