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Chiara Saraceno (ed) (2008) *Families, Ageing and Social Policy: Intergenerational Solidarity in European Welfare States*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp 320, £75, hardback. ISBN: 978-1-84720-648-0

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This outstanding edited collection brings together a range of foremost authors to examine the ways that welfare state regimes impact on intergenerational relationships in mainland Europe. The topic is significant for social policy given increases in life expectancy and the ageing of populations, as well as changes in family structure, such as increases in divorce and childlessness.

The study of welfare regimes and intergenerational relationships provides insights into both the reproduction of norms and social values, and into the extent and mechanisms relating to the reproduction of social inequalities across societies. Welfare states influence obligations within family generations, such as through the provision of maternity/paternity leave, child benefits and social care, while also framing the context within which intergenerational obligations within families are embedded. The goal of the book is to link meso and macro

level changes in social institutions to micro-level changes in the family and social interactions.

Chapters in the book provide new analyses of comparative data from a range of cross-national European datasets, such as SHARE (Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe) and OASIS (Old Age and Autonomy: The Role of Service Systems and Intergenerational Solidarity). This enables a nuanced analysis of the attitudes and family practices in different European societies, and how these relate to different welfare regimes.

Intergenerational relationships are examined in terms of exchange, support and solidarity. Chapters focus on transfers of money, time, practical help, social support and co-residence. Intergenerational transfers between family members across generations are shown to link to the nature of welfare state provision in terms of public transfers of pensions and welfare support for children and frail older people. In more generous welfare states, private inter-generational solidarity is found to be more widespread but also less intense. For example, in Italy, where the familiaristic welfare state means that private intergenerational solidarity is more necessary, this leads to longer dependence of young adults on their parents and greater dependence of frail older people on women of the middle generation.

The relationship between the public and private inter-generational contract is explicitly examined in several chapters which address the ‘crowding in’ and ‘crowding out’ debate. The data presented shows that greater welfare state

provisions for children and older people are associated with a 'crowding in' of family support. Martin Kohli and Marco Albertini provide a methodologically sophisticated analysis using SHARE data for 10 countries of the provision by midlife/older parents of 3 types of transfers (financial, social support and co-residence). They focus on parental responses to two types of transition, first when an adult child becomes a parent, and second in the event of marital breakdown of an adult child. They demonstrate that welfare regime differences have a key impact on the parental responses to their adult child's needs with patterns of intergenerational exchange closely following the typology of Scandinavian (social democratic), Continental (conservative) and Mediterranean (familiastic) regimes. For example, an adult child's marital breakdown leads to greater levels of co-residence in Spain, while in Sweden it results in an increase both of social support and financial transfers.

A key theme is the impact of family changes such as divorce and repartnering on intergenerational relations, which are shown to vary by gender and the presence of children. Divorce is found to generally weaken father-child relationships and the paternal intergenerational chain. The mechanisms through which stepfamilies and repartnering may weaken inter-generational links are examined. The growth of childlessness has implications for future support in the event of illhealth and old age, with childless midlife/older men more vulnerable to lack of family support. Thus, chapters illustrate a range of ways in which ageing and changing family forms influence the quality and intensity of intergenerational relationships within the family in different mainland European welfare states.

Studies show that financial transfers primarily flow downwards from the oldest generation, except in countries with high levels of elderly poverty and very weak pension systems. In contrast transfers of time and care flow in both directions.

The effects of international migration and the situation of migrant groups is examined in several chapters (e.g. by Claudine Attias-Donfut) showing how the nature of intergenerational relationships is altered through transnational migration, as well as the poverty of migrant groups. The extent to which financial transfers in the form of remittances can substitute for the geographical constraints on providing care and support 'at a distance' is examined.

Chiara Saraceno's edited collection demonstrates the continuing importance of the family as a welfare provider beyond the nuclear household, especially along the generational lineage. It shows that the family, state and market need to be seen as interconnected providers of welfare with the type of Welfare regime having a vital impact on the nature of micro-level intergenerational relationships and the wellbeing of the young and the old, as well as the midlife generation. It is refreshing to see a continuing sensitivity to the intersections of class, ethnicity and gender throughout the book. *Families, Ageing and Social Policy* provides an outstanding set of theoretically sophisticated and policy relevant analyses of how and why the nature of intergenerational relationships differ across European welfare states.

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