ABSTRACT

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SESSION III: FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY SOCIAL NETWORKS

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FAMILY STRATEGIES, SOCIAL POLICIES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

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Our research explores the link between family strategies, social policies and individual social capital. Social capital is classically defined as resources stemming from the possession of support and sociability (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital includes practical aspects, such as sociability ties, and normative aspects, such as norms of solidarity and trust (Coleman 1988). Recent research has emphasized the importance of family relationships and the norms of solidarity in individual social capital (Widmer 2006). Social capital can be described as bonding when family plays a prominent role in sociability and norms, with the exclusion of other sources of solidarity (Widmer 2010). Bridging social capital is an alternative to bonding social capital when personal ties are more heterogeneous, they include family, associations, friendships, neighborhoods, and work (Putnam 2002).

The development of welfare state increases economic autonomy of individuals from their family members. One origin of this influence is associated with the nuclearization of the family (Durkheim ((1892) 1975). A second origin of welfare impact on the family is associated with individualization; modern welfare states have promoted a multiplication of the levels of integration in society (Elias 2001). The increase of individualization produces greater normative autonomy between parents and children (Attias-Donfut and Arber 2000). A third origin of welfare impact is associated with the crowded-in and crowded-out effects of state policies (Kohli 1999; Albertini, Kohli and Vogel, 2007). Finally, welfare presence has been associated with the decreasing financial interdependence of individuals within the nuclear family itself (Esping-Andersen 1990). Measures of conciliation between family and work life indeed have allowed a growing share of women to be more
financially independent from their male partners’ earnings (Lewis 1997). However, the influence of welfare state on the social capital might be explored in the interaction with the family strategies (Castel 1995). The family strategies include inheritance, employment, marital strategies, divorce, fertility, parenthood, and education (Bourdieu 1972).

In our research we exploited two analyses. The first analysis is qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). It allows us to explore the interaction between welfare policies and family strategies and their influence on the social capital in four social regimes according to Esping-Andersen typology: Mediterranean regime countries (Spain, Italy and Cyprus), corporatist regime countries (France, Germany and Austria), liberal regime countries (USA, Canada, Switzerland and Great Britain), and social-democratic regime countries (Denmark, Finland and Norway) (Esping-Andersen 1990). We have not disposed the results of QCA analysis so far. They foresee for the date of the interim meeting. The inclusion of this analysis will allow us to take into account the influence of the family strategies on the individual social capital.

The second analysis includes the cluster and regression analyses. It allows us to explore the impact of welfare state on social capital in same counties without taken into account the family strategies. For this purpose we use data collected by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP 2001) ‘Social relations and social network’.

We hypothesize that the social capital depends on the type of welfare regime. In Mediterranean and corporatist regime countries the internship between the family strategies and modest and selective social policies influence on the appearance of family oriented relationships and norms. Therefore, social capital may hold a bonding form, with a strong emphasis on family solidarity. Because countries among the Mediterranean regime are more oriented toward parents and children than countries of the corporatist regime, we expect the focus on family ties and bonding social capital to be even stronger in their case. In social-democratic regime countries there are more opportunities to develop social interactions beyond kinship, for example, in networks related with work or in ties provided by associative memberships and other more formal groups. The norms of solidarity may focus less on the family as the universalism of the welfare state decreases the need for family support. The interaction between the family strategies and social policies provides some independence from family members. In this situation social capital may comprise a series of alternatives to family ties, such as friends, colleagues, representative of the state social services and relationships developed in associations. It is harder to make hypotheses about the social capital of individuals living in liberal regime countries. On one side, the commitment to self-reliance and the internship between the family strategies and modest and selective social benefits may decrease the family solidarity. On the other side, the weakness of state support may lead individuals to seek alternative sources of social capital in their family.

The empirical results show that individual social capital to a significant extent depends on social policy regimes. The logistic regression analysis confirms the impact of welfare regime on the individual social capital when control variables such as sex, age, marital and educational status were included. Individuals from Mediterranean regime countries more often develop bonding social capital based on family ties for solidarity practices. The hypothesis of a strong normative family support in Mediterranean regime countries is not confirmed. At the normative level, individuals from such regime more often choose the interplay between the state and the family. Respondents from corporatist regime countries more often develop interplay between kinship, associations, and sparse contacts for sociability practices. The hypothesis about a strong normative focus on family support in corporatist regime countries is not confirmed either. At the normative level, individuals in such countries more often prefer state support or the interplay between the state and the family. Thus, in corporatist regime countries, the relationships and the norms are based on a larger number of sources of solidarity, a situation that is beneficial to bridging social capital. Individuals from countries with a liberal regime more often depend on associations or on self-reliance at the practical level. Ties with children, however, also play a significant role in their social capital in contrast to ties with parents, which remain rare in all countries with a liberal regime. This shows the
The long lasting importance of the nuclear family as a launching center for young adult children in this institutional context. At the level of norms, there is a strong reliance on the self, complemented by family support. Normative state support and mixed support are underdeveloped in such contexts. This situation may account for a relative deficit of social capital, either bonding or bridging, in liberal regime countries. The state guarantees of the social-democratic regime are associated with more diversified relationships, which include friends and associations as well as family members, especially parents, but also a larger number of people with no or very little sociability. There is a greater variety of sociability practices in such countries than in countries of other regimes. Interestingly, the normative focus on family solidarity is weak in such institutional contexts, as family solidarity is considered to be only a marginal complement to state support. Therefore, social capital has a bridging form in social-democratic regime countries.

References


