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Reviews

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Chiara Saraceno (ed.), *Families, Ageing and Social Policy: Intergenerational Solidarity in European Welfare States*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, 2008, 336 pp., hbk £75.00, ISBN 13: 978 1 84720 648 0.

European comparative research on intergenerational solidarity has expanded considerably in recent years. One of the central questions is how differences in welfare systems contribute to differences in patterns of intergenerational support. This book builds on this tradition by examining the relationship between the public and private generational contracts. Sparked by demographic changes, public debates on how to develop and sustain this public contract are ubiquitous. If and how demographic changes affect the private contract has received less attention. This book aims to fill this void by focusing on patterns of intergenerational solidarity in 'tall and lean' families. Such families, with fewer people in the same generational positions and each generational role lasting longer than ever, are becoming more common as a result of increasing average life expectancy and declining birth rates.

The first substantive chapter by Hagestad argues that scholarly work has too strongly focused on the middle generation. Her message is to pay greater attention to both extremes of the generational line (the 'book ends') and their shared marginal position compared to the middle generation. Unfortunately, this challenging message remains a theoretical one as the empirical chapters use other guiding perspectives. The remainder of the book is divided into sections that address intergenerational solidarity in the context of various welfare systems, although different chapters take different generational perspectives. Some chapters conceptualise intergenerational solidarity as support from older parents to their adult children (*e.g.* Kohli and Albertini). Others use the reverse perspective by focusing on care provided to the older generation, such as Van der Pas and Van Tilburg, who use unique cohort data to examine changes in the quality of adult parent–child relationships.

A wide variety of intergenerational exchanges is considered, from contact between family members to transmission of home ownership, and from elder care to monetary transfers. A consistent theme is that of the strong link between intergenerational solidarity and welfare regimes: even in today's vertical families, state and family support are complementary rather than two sides of the same coin. This is also what Künemund concludes in his comprehensive overview of the theoretical arguments from economics and sociology underlying the interplay between formal and informal care.

The final three chapters provide a very welcome addition to the literature in that they address intergenerational solidarity in migrant families. Migrant families are known to send remittances to their family in the country of origin, and are thus exemplary of families with a strong sense of intergenerational solidarity, but

as Attias-Donfut and Wolff write, 'the transfer behaviours of migrants living in Europe have not been sufficiently studied' (p. 260). What the authors show is that migrant families are just as likely to support their parents as their children, in clear contrast with earlier European studies that have shown that the direction of support is predominantly downwards.

Two remarks about the general content of the book seem justified. Firstly, the book claims to focus on European welfare states, but there are no contributions on any of the Eastern European countries, which is unfortunate if understandable given the general lack of appropriate data. These countries have only relatively recently begun to implement welfare policies, and for the most part differ considerably in their demographic composition, making them a particularly interesting area of study. Secondly, the title suggests that social policy is an important aspect of the book. Although most of the chapters use typical welfare regimes as their conceptualisation of social policy, the actual policies assumed to have implications for the type of intergenerational exchange remain largely unknown. As in most scholarly work, welfare regimes are merely used as an overlapping construct to explain any type of exchange, from elder care to monetary support. The question of what specific policies are responsible for differences in exchange patterns between European countries is not answered. Historical and cultural patterns, also operating at the macro level, may turn out to be equally plausible explanations. As Keck writes in his contribution, 'cross-country comparisons … often fail to consider that it is not just the provision of social services that may account for different degrees of family solidarity' (p. 150). This critique applies to some of the chapters in this book as well. That said, this book encapsulates the state of the art in the European intergenerational solidarity discourse. Scholars and students alike will find it very informative. For those new to the subject, the development of scholarly work on intergenerational solidarity in Europe is clearly sketched in the introduction. Those already familiar will appreciate the combination of innovative empirical chapters and thought-provoking theoretical chapters.

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Rocio Fernández-Ballesteros, *Active Aging: The Contribution of Psychology*, Hogrefe and Huber, Gottingen, Germany, 2008, 194 pp., pbk €29.95, ISBN 13: 978 0 88937 360 0.

This book provides a timely overview of the concept of 'active ageing', which is increasingly used by policy-makers. It aims to present the perspective of psychology. The chapters cover population ageing, theoretical models and active ageing in relation to behavioural health and physical fitness, cognitive functioning, emotional and motivational functioning, social functioning, and social participation and promotion, including the contributions of sociology, public health, health promotion, epidemiology and clinical medicine, as well as