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<http://tsigeto.info/pr/1507.pdf>

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第25回日本家族社会学会大会 報告要旨原稿 (2015年9月6日 追手門学院大学)

What Will We Witness When We Seriously Try to Boost Fertility? Normative Constraints against Universal Child Benefits

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1. Question

Many contemporary societies suffer from low fertility for two reasons: (1) the desired number of children has declined and stabilized at a relatively low level between 2.0 and 3.0 [1: 201-207], near replacement level fertility, and the realized fertility is below replacement level because (2) most people cannot achieve their desired number of children [2: 12-19]. If we consider these as serious problems and try to raise fertility to replacement level, what resources should we mobilize? Furthermore, what obstacles to such policies could we anticipate? This study addresses these issues by focusing on the economic aspects of the work-life balance (WLB) and universal child benefit (UCB) policies in Japan.

2. Model and analysis on WLB/UCB effects

This study used a model of people's expectations about their future equivalent incomes, measured as the household income divided by the square root of the number of household members. Suppose an unmarried person earns income s without any family responsibilities. He or she expects life in a household consisting of x children and m adults with an expected equivalent income $y(x) = s(wm+bx) / \sqrt{m+x}$, where w denotes the effect of WLB and other adults' contribution and b denotes child benefit per child. Both w and b are measured by s . We assume that $m = 2$ to focus on households comprising a couple with children.

Analyses of the function $y(x)$ found limited effects of WLB. Even under the fully achieved WLB ($w = 1$), the equivalent income $y(x)$ exceeded s only where $x = 1$, if $b = 0$. If UCB (b) is low, $y(x)$ decreases as x increases, regardless of the size of w . In addition, w cannot be so large under the current conditions in Japan that a majority of young unmarried women will not want to pursue fulltime careers [3: 62, 162]. Therefore, WLB policies are not promising mechanisms to raise fertility.

In contrast, UCB improved the equivalent income of parents. High UCB ($b > 0.54$) let $y(x)$ exceed s and increase monotonously, with a small effect of WLB ($w = 0.6$). The effect was strong enough for policymakers to pursue UCB as a fertility booster.

3. Discussion on normative constraints and a probable future society

High UCBs are controversial in contemporary Japan because they violate some fundamental normative beliefs, such as reproductive egalitarianism [4] and that parents have primary responsibility for maintaining their children [5]. In contrast, the WLB policies are conservative and can coexist with those beliefs. High levels of UCB can be developed if we find ways to overcome the normative constraints and constitute a new family system in which most parents would come from a specific subpopulation of the overall society, bear large numbers of children, and take no (or secondary) economic responsibility for their children.

(See <http://tsigeto.info/15y> for details)

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Key words: ideology, family policy, Japan

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第 88 回日本社会学会大会 (2015 年 9 月 19-20 日 早稲田大学) ポスターセッション要旨原稿 (審査中)

Maintaining Diversity in Policy-Oriented Research: Alternatives of Work-Life Balance Measures for Gender Equality in Japan

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1. Problem

Policy-oriented research often suffers from overconcentration on a narrow topic. For instance, research on gender equality in Japan has concentrated on the effects of work-life balance (WLB) measures on continuous regular employment of women in their childrearing stage. Although we have already compiled negative evidence indicating that there has been no increase in women's continuous regular employment despite expanding WLB measures [1], we are still spending a large amount of resources on WLB research. Overconcentration reduces diversity and the capacity of social sciences to make appropriate contributions to public issues.

This problem partly arises from a defect in the PDCA (plan-do-check-act) cycle model, which policy-oriented research is always based on implicitly. It offers no motivation to break the cycle. The cycle is merely a repetition of fine-tuning in a production process to achieve the given goal, as is naturally expected given that the root of PDCA was a product management system used in private companies [2]. There will thus be no chance to set another goal, to discover a new research topic, or to appeal to the public to overwrite the fundamental philosophy behind the policy.

2. Solution

I put forward a proposal for a new framework for policy-oriented research: "ideology-institution dynamics with causal modeling" (IIDCM), a framework upper-compatible with the PDCA cycle. Like the PDCA cycle, IIDCM assumes a cycle between consideration of ideology (what we perceive and think about the real world) and observation of social phenomena in the real world. In addition, IIDCM offers a schema to analyze ideology as a system of interdependent beliefs about how the real society is, how the ideal society should be, and what we should do according to the social status we occupy.

In the IIDCM framework, the researcher sets policy goals after consideration of interdependent beliefs constituting ideology. Different ideologies give different policy goals, as well as different concrete measures. The researcher should also consider existing normative beliefs in a specific social institution, which sometimes let people act against the given policy goal. These features of IIDCM let researchers have a bird's-eye view of the dynamics of ideology and institution and write diverging scenarios for possible future societies, taking into account whether the policy goals are achievable, what the feasible measures are, and how we can solve by-product problems.

3. Case studies

In this paper, I will introduce three issues for gender equality in Japan: negative evidence against WLB policies and how the focus of WLB research has recently shifted [3], debates on reforms of the divorce system and redefinition of core beliefs about "equity" between (ex-)spouses [4], and expected effects of universal child benefit and opposition by "traditionalists" [5]. I will locate the current state of these issues on the IIDCM framework, find normative constraints in legal/political discourses, and discuss what scenarios are probable in the future. (See <http://tsigeto.info/15x> for details)

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