

Residential Choice and Attitudes towards Family and Work

Extended abstract

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Introduction

Research on many kinds of human behaviour has shown that aspects as life course careers, resources and restrictions, and demographic as well as socio-economic characteristics, can only partially explain the differences in behaviour. Individuals with similar characteristics show different behaviour. Therefore, more and more researchers are including values and attitudes in their theoretical framework. However, in common practice information about values is not frequently available in datasets and the conceptualization of values is often a complex process in which one has to be careful in making a distinction between values and behaviour (Lesthaeghe and Moors, 2002). In this paper the relation between attitudes towards family and work and residential choice will be examined.

The term residential choice is used for behaviour with respect to housing quality and residential location. Residential choice is an important aspect of the quality of people's lives, because of its influence on social status, and relation to access to jobs, schools, facilities and social networks. Previous research on residential choice has given some attention to individual motivational factors like goals, values and attitudes (Coolen and Hoekstra, 2001). The relation between family attitudes and demographic behaviour like patterns of household formation and fertility has been examined more extensively (Barber, Axinn and Thornton, 2002; Clarkberg et al, 1995; Fawcett, 1983; Hakim, 2003; Lesthaeghe and Moors, 2002). The concept of family solidarity used by Bengtson & Roberts (1991) refers to feelings of obligation towards family members and to the actual exchange of support within families. Obligations towards family members living outside the household have to compete with other obligations, such as those towards work. Concerning residential choice, De Jong and Fawcett (1981) explained differences in residential relocations by examining motivations and preferences individuals can have for migrating, where Brun and Fagnani (1994) related family or work oriented lifestyles to preferences urban or suburban locations. However, most research focuses on either work values or family values, and family values are often restricted to values about the nuclear family.

In this paper a theoretical framework in which values and attitudes are linked to residential choice will be set up. Data from the first and second waves of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS; Dykstra et al, 2005) will be used to examine the impact of attitudes towards work and family on residential relocations, but also the changes in attitudes after relocation. Concerning the relocation, we study the changes in housing type and housing tenure. Regarding attitudes, an extensive measurement of (the changes in) both work and family values is available. The focus will not be on the nuclear family only but on the wider family context as well, including siblings, children en parents living outside the household. Attitudes on work and family are chosen because they can be considered to be competing life course careers when it comes to residential choices (Barber et al, 2002; Wijsen, 2002). The methods used are binomial and multinomial logistic regression analyses.

Theoretical framework

When studying the relationship between attitudes and a certain type of behaviour, an important assumption is that individuals that have similar characteristics will differ in their behaviour because despite these similarities, they have different attitudes. For instance, two individuals in the same phase of their life course (of the same age or both at the end of their educational career) can make different choices on family formation because they have different preferences or attitudes. The concept of attitudes is therefore closely related to values people have. The conceptualization of values is a complex issue. Many social scientists do not specify what exactly they mean with values or assume an intuitive understanding. Other researchers lack to make a distinction between terms as values, norms, beliefs, preferences and orientations and use them as synonyms (Lesthaeghe and Moors, 2002). Another problem concerning the conceptualization of values is that attitudes and values are often not distinguished from each other. The concepts are sometimes used as interchangeable and sometimes as different levels of abstraction (Rokeach, 1968; Ajzen, 1991).

Value systems and attitudes

The social psychology has a long tradition of using values in theoretical frameworks. An approach that is often been followed by social scientists in other sub disciplines is the definition of values developed by Rokeach (1968). Rokeach defines values as enduring beliefs that a particular mode of conduct or particular end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence (Rokeach, 1968: 550). The term 'enduring' however, should not been seen as complete stability in values over the whole life

course (Lesthaeghe and Moors, 2002). Following Rokeach (1968) and Coolen et al (2002), values are here defined as desirable end states that are preferable over other end states and that serve as guiding principles in a person's life. Values are based on beliefs that relate to end-states such as 'all men are equal' (Lesthaeghe and Moors, 2002). Values can vary in importance and moreover, their importance depends on the situation. Values lead to certain preferences which (bearing in mind the available resources and restrictions) in their turn will lead to certain choices. The more important a value is the more positively evaluated are factors that facilitate the achievement of that value. The assumption is that people know how important life values can be achieved and that values therefore influence everyday life and choices (Coolen et al, 2002). Behaviour has consequences that lead to a certain end situation which implies that values (indirectly) influence behaviour (Coolen et al, 2002).

Life values can range from individualistic values as privacy to religious values as salvation. Several researchers have examined the way in which single values can be categorized in a smaller number of value domains. Within every domain there are several values that can be distinguished. For instance, within the domain of achievement there are the values of success and ambition. De Jong and Fawcett (1981) consider migration to be instrumental behaviour for achieving certain values. They reviewed the existing literature on migration with the aim to gain more insight in the motivations people have to migrate. This resulted in a list of seven value clusters: wealth, status, comfort, stimulation, autonomy, affiliation and morality. While De Jong and Fawcett (1981) lay the basis for empirical analyses, their work itself was mostly theoretical. Schwartz (1994) empirically found ten universal motivational value domains that can be derived from fundamental human needs, namely power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security. Coolen et al (2002) repeated Schwartz' test and found eight value domains.

Since not all values are of the same importance, individuals will organize and structure their value domains. This structure and hierarchy of value domains is called a value system. The relative importance between the different value domains can change the value system. We can expect that the hierarchy of value domains will change over the life course.

Now that values and value systems are defined, a distinction with the concept of attitudes needs to be made. Lesthaeghe and Moors (2002) use the principle of an abstraction ladder to make this distinction more clear. With the concept of value system at the top of the ladder, one step

down, we find the concept of attitudes. Attitudes can thus be defined as domain specific opinions. Values define attitudes that in their turn influence intentions and behaviour. With this definition it is possible to speak of political, religious or family attitudes, all referring to the values in the corresponding value domain. Attitudes towards children and marriage are than both part of the family values domain (Lesthaeghe and Moors, 2002; Moors, 2002).

Career orientation

In the life course literature, a distinction is made between several life course domains or careers as the educational or occupational career, the family formation career and the residential career. Important changes in an individual's life are referred to as events. The life course careers run parallel and influence each other during the life course. Individuals make choices that might affect one or more of the careers. More over, individuals prefer some careers over other careers. These differences in preferences are called career orientation which is defined as attitudes towards the importance of different careers (Bootsma, 1998).

Changes in the value system can therefore cause a change in the career orientation of an individual. The reverse is of course also possible. A change in the career orientation can cause a change in the value system. The first causal direction can be referred to as a selection effect: different value systems lead to different life course trajectories. The second direction is referred to as the adaptation effect which can lead to either reinforcement of previous held values or to reconsideration of them (Lesthaeghe and Moors, 2002).

Previous research findings

Several researchers have been linking values and lifestyles with residential choice. Coolen et al (2002) find eight value orientations or value domains of which family values and power and achievement are two of them. Values belonging to the domain of family values are harmonious family life, safety for family, mature love and good parenthood. Values concerning power and achievement are power, wealth, success and influence. They examine the relationship between housing tenure and value domains and goals and find that the value domain of power and achievement is related with a tendency to buying, while the opposite result is found for family values. The specific attitudes on wealth (belonging to the domain of power and achievement) and harmonious family life (belonging to the domain of family values), behave in the same way as their associated domains. Other value domains turn out not to have a significant effect on housing tenure.

In his lifestyle study, Bell (1958) distinguished between familists, careerists and consumerists. Familists, he states, tend to live in the suburbs, while careerists and consumerists have a preference for living in the city. Brun and Fagnani (1994) have comparable results as well. They examine the growing fashion of the upper middle class couples for living in the city centre of Paris, despite high costs and small dwellings. Brun and Fagnani find that in the Parisian households, people are characterized by an extroverted lifestyle, while choosing the suburbs as residential location is related with a family oriented lifestyle (Brun & Fagnani, 1994).

One of the main results of Bootsma (1998) is that, even after accounting for actual family status and occupational participation, people more oriented towards work tend to live in urban areas, whereas those more oriented towards the family are more likely to live in suburban or rural areas.

Data & Methods

For this paper, data from the first and second wave of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS; Dykstra et al, 2005), will be used. This panel study, of which the first wave was collected in 2002-2004 and the second wave in 2006-2007, includes information on a broad range of socio-economic, demographic and family and household characteristics. For both waves about 6600 respondents, all residents of the Netherlands and aged 18-79 during the time of the first wave, were interviewed using CAPI questionnaires (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) and filled out a self-completion questionnaire as well. Between the first and second wave, 1050 individuals moved once and another 145 individuals moved more than once. The changes in residence and the changes in attitudes between the two waves will be examined.

Residential choice is measured in three different ways. The degree of urbanization of the place of residence (in four categories), housing tenure and housing type are taken into account. Concerning housing type, a distinction is made between (semi-)detached dwellings, row (and corner row) houses and apartments.

Attitudes towards work include values on the importance of having a job and doing it well, the willingness to put in extra effort and whether work should always take first place even if that means less time for other life course careers. These attitudes are measured with eight items in which the respondent is asked to indicate how important work is to him or her on a five point

scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale that is formed by these eight items shows a high internal consistency.

Family attitudes are measured in a very extensive manner. One variable on attitudes towards the nuclear family is created, measuring the extent to which the respondent thinks the ties within the nuclear family are strong. Two variables on wider family attitudes are created as well. The first variable measures the actual family solidarity. Respondents indicate to what extent they are proud of their family, trust and respect their family, they think they receive sufficient support from family members and in what way they perceive their family as having a pleasant atmosphere. The second variable measures the attitudes towards family support: to what extent should family members support each other? Should they always be able to count on each other and help out in good times and bad? The items are on support in general, from parents to their children and vice versa. All three variables are scale variables (created by taking the mean value on the selected items) that show a high internal consistency.

The resources of an individual are measured by educational degree, occupational status (ISEI classification of the current job or in case of unemployment the classification of the last job) and household income per month. Other aspects that will be controlled for in the analyses are sex, employment status, household type and an indicator for the country of birth (the Netherlands or a foreign country). The methods used are binomial and multinomial logistic regression with the different aspects of residential choice as dependent variables.

Preliminary results

Preliminary analyses, in which only the first wave of the NKPS data is used, show that there is an association between attitudes towards work and family and the current type and place of residence. Higher family support norms are associated with living in an area with a higher degree of urbanization and in row houses or apartments. Higher family support norms are also negatively related to living in an owner-occupied dwelling. The results for family solidarity are more or less opposite to those for family support norms, meaning that showing more solidarity towards the extended family is associated with living in owner-occupied, (semi)detached houses in less urbanized regions. The same holds for attaching more value towards work. These analyses will be expanded by improving the variables on income and employment and by including the data from the second wave so that inferences about the causal relationship between attitudes and residential choice can be made.

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