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## **The Life-Course Research into the Impact of Social Policy**

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# The Life-Course Research into the Impact of Social Policy

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## Abstract

This article reviews the reflection of the Guidance Theory upon the impact of social policy on the society and examines its implications for the social policy research in Taiwan. The Guidance Theory stresses that the state has to be aware of the limit and ambivalence of its social policy. The key issue is the ability of the state to perceive social change and realize possible outcomes of its social policy. The life-course research, which is widely applied in recent decades, can be utilized in such analyses. This approach emphasizes the molding effect of the welfare state on the individual life courses: on the one hand, the state marks for its society members age lines of critical phases in their life courses, setting up a time table for the entry and exit of the labor market; on the other hand, a foreseeable time horizon emerges in the consciousness of individuals under such institutional regulations, which in turn justifies the *raison d'être* of such institutional design. The institutionalization of the life course is not only the premise of welfare programs but also their necessary outcome. Yet the change of life course patterns has equal influences on the social policy, posing new problems to the original welfare arrangements. It is thus essential for researchers to assess the impact of social policy on the individual life courses as a reference for future policy-making.

**Keywords:** Welfare State, State Guidance, Policy Effect, Life Course.

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