

Welfare Policy, Subjective Well-Being and Social Justice

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Context

- In the twenty-first century, class conflict seems to be defunct and its place taken over by generational conflict
- Justice between age groups and generation has become one of the major issues of contemporary societies.
- Older people are the main clients of welfare state.
- What extent have the new intergenerational conflicts really crowded out traditional intragenerational ones?

Key Question

- Which type regime of welfare state is considered as fair by younger and older generations and how welfare state impacts on individuals' subjective well-being of younger and older people.

Justice: Empirical Perspective

- justice research at the level of attitudes
- Justice research as institutional analysis
- Discourse analysis of the semantics of justice

Justice research at the level of attitudes

- Studies of attitudes or beliefs about the fairness of the distribution of resources across whole societies.
 - Public beliefs about whether social arrangements are just play an increasing role today. Processes of societal individualization have reduced the power of traditional loyalties and at the same time raised the level of expectations toward democratic polities.
 - Public issues of aging are, above all, issues of social security and the welfare state. This may be the arena where the reference to principles of justice is most marked.

The drawbacks of attitude research

- The attitude statements in surveys are never fully defined.
- The attitude, no matter how assessed, is only one of the factors that influence behavior” (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), but not much more.

Institutional Analysis of Justice

- Justice research as institutional analysis aims to describe or to reconstruct the principles embodied in institutions such as those of the welfare state.
- The interest in such an analysis is threefold:
 - institutions have differential chances of survival according to the plausibility of the moral principles they rely on;
 - Institutions can themselves be read as moral statements of the purposes that a state or society aims at;
 - Institutions may in turn influence public attitudes by highlighting certain principles and discarding others.

Discourse analysis of the semantics of justice

- Discourse can be understood as “policy discourse,” a form of systematic communication, used by governments to argue the case of institutional change.
- In any case, just as the welfare state could not exist without the support of strong normative arguments and moral convictions, discursive attempts to gain support for retrenchment must convincingly appeal to values, including those values of solidarity on which the traditional welfare state was built.

Justice: Normative Perspective

- There are three basic principles by which distributive of resources are justified: need, merit and equality.
- These principles operate at the 3 levels:
 - level of normative theories (e.g., Miller, 1999)
 - level of popular beliefs (e.g., Forma & Kangas, 1999; Swift et al., 1995)
 - level of welfare state institutions (e.g., Leisering, 2004; Palme, 1990; Rothstein, 1998)

For the specific topic of justice between age groups and generations, it is first of all necessary to analytically separate these dimensions.

Principles of Justice and Regime of Welfare State

- The pension system should conserve the level of income that the individual achieved when in the labor force(merit) – conservative regime of welfare state
- The pension system should ensure a basic income floor (need) - socio-democratic and liberal regimes of welfare state
- Most welfare states have some combination of the two, as when an income-maintaining pension system is complemented by a minimum guaranteed pension for those below a certain threshold.

Decommodification

- In Esping-Andersen's definition of decommodification: "labor is decommodified to the degree to which individuals or families can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independent of market participation"
- Decommodification reflects the quality as well as quantity of social rights and entitlements; the mere presence of social assistance or insurance may not necessarily bring about significant decommodification if they do not substantially emancipate citizens from market dependence (Esping-Andersen).

Decommodification index

- for sickness and unemployment benefits are computed by annualizing the benefit for a 6 month spell of illness or unemployment.
- for pensions benefits are computed as if retirement commences on 1 January of the year

Main Hypotheses

- The welfare policies will have a more positive effect on levels of subjective well-being of generation older 65 years.
- The type of welfare state impacts on justice attitudes and principles of justice.
- The conflict between generations may be caused by different understanding of role of state in the public distribution and justice attitudes .
- The attitudes to older people depend on type of welfare state, age group and generation.

Method and Sample

- Data about OECD countries from cumulative World Values Survey 1981-2009.
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis and SEM

Dependent variables:

- Generational conflict:
 - Older people are not respected much these days
 - Old people have too much political influence.
 - Companies that employ young people perform better than those that employ people of different ages
- SWB of younger generation (18-30)
- SWB of middle generation (35-55)
- SWB of older generation (older 60)

Independent variables:

- Justice attitudes and beliefs
 - “Incomes should be made more equal”
 - “We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort”
 - “Wealth can grow so there’s enough for everyone”
- Welfare state regime is decommodification index (from the time-serial Scruggs dataset)
- Understanding of role of state in the public distribution
 - “Older people get more than their fair share from the government”
 - “Older people are a burden on society”

Core Variables

Control variables

- Individuals level:
 - Education
 - Marital status
 - Employed status
 - Number of children
- Country level:
 - GNP
 - Population over retirement age
 - Persons in labor force who are above retirement age

Thank you for your attention!