

Welfare Policy and Subjective Well-Being in Aging Societies: Generational Conflict or Generational Contract

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Social Context

- Generational conflict and justice between age groups and generations have become one of the major issues of contemporary societies.
- The issues focus on sharing of public resources between separate cohorts before, during and after the working life.
- The thesis of generational inequity and generational conflict has developed as a part of the broader discussion about the future of welfare states in societies with ageing population.

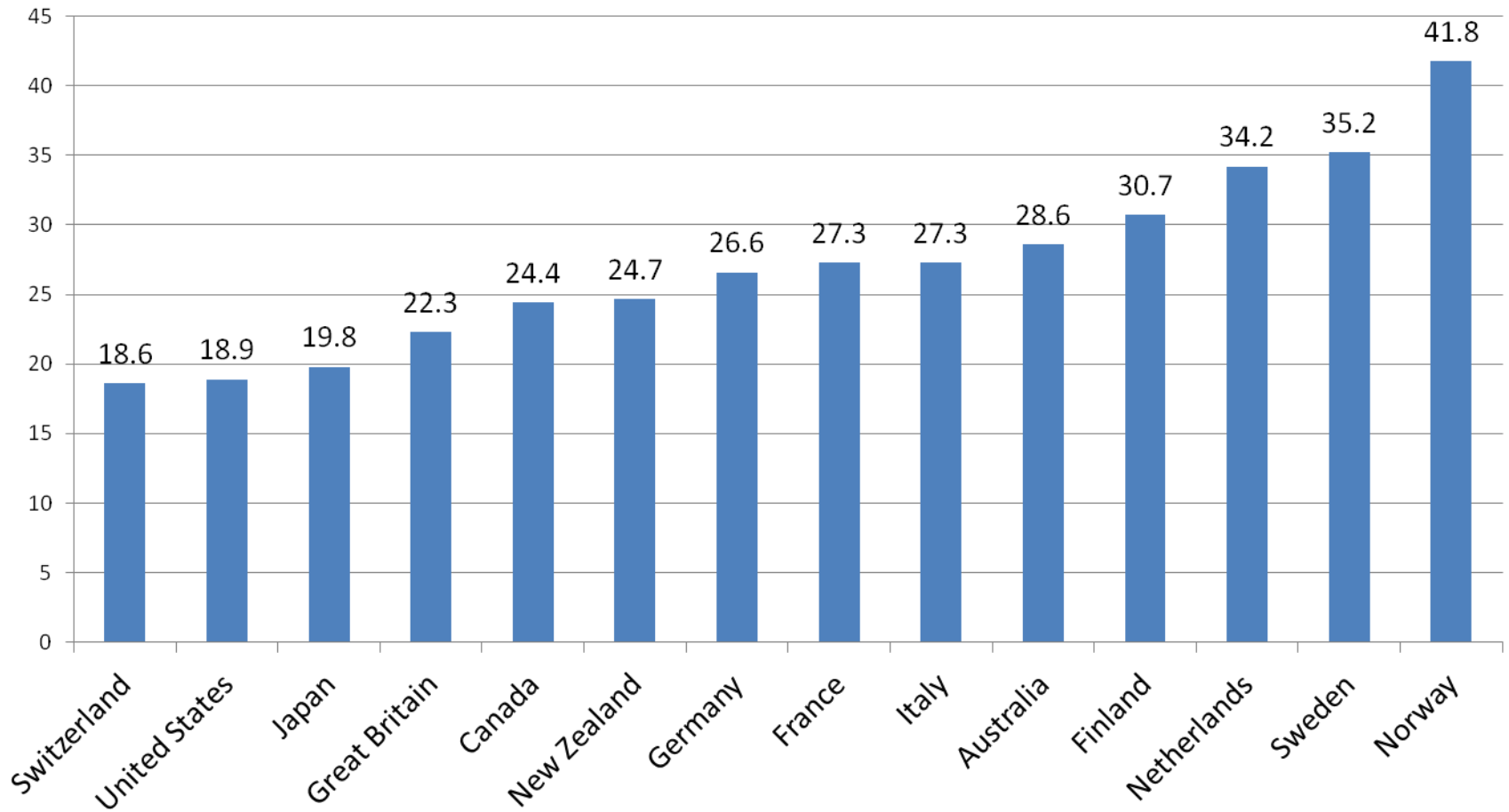
Key question

- How does the welfare state impact on individuals' subjective well-being of people from different generations

Theoretical Framework

- Esping-Andersen “The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism” (1990)
- The concept 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" (1990, 37)
- Societies can be included in a continuum based on decommodifying social policies

Decommodification index distribution



Hypothesis

- We have tested our central hypothesis of that welfare policies have a positive effect on the levels of subjective well-being, but this effect has generational differences.
- We suggest that when the efforts of a welfare state increase the SWB of one generation and reduce the SWB of another generation, the conflict between generations can be arise

Data and Method

- 5th wave of WVS (2005-2007) and 6th wave of ESS (2006)
- 20 advanced countries: USA, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Cyprus, Greece, Norway, Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom.
- Multilevel regression analysis.

Concept of generation

- Historical or social generations. Karl Mannheim (1952). People who live through a period of rapid social change develop a separate 'historical-social conscience' or collective identity, which influences their attitudes and behavior and distinguishes them from preceding generations.
- Welfare generation. Kohli (1996) described 'welfare generations', which are the product of the process of institutionalization of society into distinct ages, defined according to the sequences of education, work and retirement. Generations are distinguished by participation in paid employment, the contributions they make to systems of social security and the benefits they receive.

Generations in the project

- Cohort 1945 and older. Surviving generation. This generation is the main receiver of welfare benefits, and this generation doesn't make the contributions to welfare state.
- Cohort 1946-1965. In Europe and North America this generation is widely associated with privilege, as many grew up in a time of widespread government subsidies in post-war housing and education, and increasing affluence. Now, older members of this generation have become the pensioners, so-called "welfare generation".
- Cohort 1966-1980. This generation came to age when the economic decline occurred. Competition for jobs was high. This generation is a smaller population than either or the follow generation. Now this generation is the main contributor in the welfare system.
- Cohort 1980 and younger. This generation is in the stage of establishment. This generation is growing up under conditions of dramatically high level of youth unemployment and youth poverty. They don't receive the support of welfare state, but they also don't contribute to welfare state.

Variables

Dependent variable:

- level of SWB index

Independent variables:

Individual level:

- Cohorts (4 dummy variables). Cohort 1945 and older – reference category.
- Control variables: gender, marital status, income, number of children, whether the chief wage earner is unemployed, the frequency of church attendance, person's beliefs of whether he controls their life or not.

Country level

- de commodification index from Struggs dataset

Multilevel regression model

Items	
First Level	
Constant	,111***
Cohort 1946-65	-,066***
Cohort 1966-79	-,016***
Cohort 1980 and younger	0,028
Control variables	
Female	,030***
Partner	,097***
Church attendance	,052***
Income household	,080***
Number of children	,002
Freedom of choice	,459***
Unemployment status of head of household	-,017**
Second level	
Decommodification index	0.02***
Interactive effects	
Cohort 1946-65*Decomindex	,001
Cohort 1966-79*Decomindex	,004***
Cohort 1980 and younger* Decomindex	,002
R – square, %	22.8

Discussion

- The results of our research show that welfare state affects well-being by improving security from the negative aspects of the market.

Generational differences:

- Cohort 1946-1965. A large cohort creates more competition for schooling and jobs, leading to negative consequences for socioeconomic achievement and psychological well-being. Therefore this generation has lower level of happiness than preceding and successive cohorts.
- Cohort 1966-1980. They have sometimes been called the "sandwich generation", because they have to support larger generations. Therefore in the societies where decommodification is index higher, subjective well-being of individuals from generation 1965-1980 is higher too.
- Cohort 1980 and younger. Many scholars describe generation 1980 + as optimistic, engaged, and team players. Economic prospects for the generation 1980+ have worsened due to the late 2000s. We suggest that their SWB depend on support of families, communities and corporate.

Next steps

- My next step is to understand how generational differences predict differences in attitude, values behavior.
- Public issues of aging are, above all, issues of social security and the welfare state. The welfare state directly bases its legitimacy on principles of just distribution, and therefore its legitimacy is especially dependent on whether it is perceived as fulfilling these principles.
- Justice beliefs and attitudes are thus critical because, at the collective level, they condition the public acceptance of welfare state reforms. Therefore justice beliefs and attitudes of different generations are the main subject of our further investigations in this project.
- Add post-communist countries.

Thank you for attention!